

Equity and Opportunity: Ensuring All Students Have the Education Opportunities Needed to Succeed

America's schools play an important role in meeting the educational needs of an increasingly diverse student population and ensuring that all students get a fair shot at the American dream. A child's zip code should never determine their destiny, but today, the neighborhoods where children grow up impact their odds of graduating high school and their lifetime economic opportunities. In many places, great public schools are making a difference despite the challenges of poverty, but far too often our schools are not doing enough where our students need it the most. As a country, we cannot let the potential of these students go to waste. Our future economic prosperity is tied to the success of all students.

President Obama is working to ensure that there are ladders of opportunity that will give millions of hard working Americans in high-poverty communities a leg up into the middle class. Education plays an important role in those plans. Nearly all of the Department of Education's investments are aimed to improve equity of opportunity in education, and the President's 2015 budget builds on these investments. Key investments include:

- **Preschool for All (\$75 billion over 10 years) and Preschool Development Grants (\$500 million).** A mandatory investment, Preschool for All, would support formula grants to States to improve and expand existing state preschool programs that are aligned with elementary and secondary education systems. The Department would partner with States to provide universal access to high-quality preschool for children from low- and moderate-income families. The program would also promote access to full-day kindergarten and encourage the expansion of high-quality programs to include children from middle-class families and children under four. The federal funding over ten years is \$75 billion. It is fully paid for by raising Federal tobacco taxes, which will also help to discourage youth smoking and save lives. In addition, the budget includes \$500 million in competitive Preschool Development Grants to pave the way for the successful implementation of Preschool for All by enabling States and localities to build the fundamental components of a high-quality preschool system or expand proven early learning programs. An additional \$250 million would be provided through the Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative, for a total discretionary investment of \$750 million.

- **Race to the Top Equity and Opportunity (\$300 million).** This new initiative is designed to aggressively target opportunity and achievement gaps. Building on previous Race to the Top competitions, RTT-Equity and Opportunity (RTT-Opportunity) aims to support, spotlight, and drive systemic changes at the state and local level. Grantees would enhance their data systems to place sharp focus on the districts, schools, and student groups with the greatest disparities in opportunity and academic performance, while also being able to identify the most effective interventions. They would develop thoughtful, comprehensive strategies for addressing these gaps, and use the data to continuously improve. Grantees would invest in strong teaching and school leadership, using funds to develop, attract, and retain more effective teachers and leaders in high-need schools through strategies such as individualized professional learning and career ladder opportunities. States would collect data on school level expenditures, make that data transparent and accessible, and use it to improve the effectiveness of resources and support continuous program improvement. Participating districts would be required to ensure that their state and local funds are distributed fairly by implementing a more meaningful comparability standard based on this school level expenditure data. Grant funds could also be used, for example, to provide rigorous coursework; improve school climate and safety; strengthen students' non-cognitive skills; develop and implement fair and appropriate school discipline policies; expand learning time; provide mental, physical, and social emotional supports; expand college and career counseling; and identify and carry out strategies that help break up and

mitigate the effects of concentrated poverty. The program also will help states and districts to improve the use and effectiveness of resources from other federal programs.

- **Promise Neighborhoods (\$100 million).** This request would greatly expand the program that puts high-quality schools at the center of comprehensive supports for students and families. The request would increase the number of projects that significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youth by providing a birth-to-career continuum of rigorous and comprehensive education reforms, effective community services, and strong systems of family and community support, closely connected to high-quality schools.

- **The Creation of Promise Zones.** The Administration launched the Promise Zones Initiative by designating five communities as Promise Zones in January 2014. The Administration will designate an additional 15 Promise Zones in the year ahead, selecting communities that identify a set of positive outcomes for their proposed Zone and its residents, develop an evidence-based strategy and implementation plan, encourage private investment, and realign Federal, State, local, and Tribal resources to achieve those outcomes. Promise Zones designations are intended to lead to the revitalization of many of America's highest-poverty communities by creating jobs, attracting private investment, increasing economic activity, expanding educational opportunity, and reducing violent crime. The Budget request includes tax incentives to stimulate economic activity and create jobs within and around Promise Zones. In addition, applicants from Promise Zones will receive competitive preference points for other Federal discretionary grant programs that will contribute to the Promise Zone goal attainment.

- **High School Redesign (\$150 million).** This new high school competition would fund competitive grants to school districts and their partners to redesign high schools in innovative ways that better prepare students for college and career success so that all students graduate from high school with college credit and career-related experiences or competencies, obtained through project or problem-based learning, real-world challenges, and organized internships and mentorships. Grantees would work to: (1) align academic content and instructional practices more closely with postsecondary education and careers; (2) personalize learning opportunities to support the educational needs and interests of individual students; (3) provide academic and wrap-around support services for those students who need them; (4) make available high-quality career and college exploration and counseling on options for students after high school graduation; (5) offer multiple opportunities to earn postsecondary credit while still in high school; and (6) strategically use learning time in more meaningful ways, such as through technology, a redesigned school day or calendar, or competency-based progressions.

- **College- and Career-Ready Students program (\$14.4 billion).** The request would continue the Administration's significant support for schools with high percentages of low-income students through the College- and Career-Ready Students program (Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies under current law). This program would strengthen school, district, and State accountability by continuing to require disaggregated reporting of achievement data for all subgroups of students, asking States to implement meaningful interventions in schools with the largest achievement gaps, and measuring student growth as well as achievement.

- **IDEA Part B Grants to States (\$11.6 billion).** These formula grants support States and districts in providing special education and related services to students with disabilities. The grants are critical to the efforts of states and districts to provide the more than 6.6 million students with disabilities ages 3 through 21 served by Part B a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that meets their unique needs. By maintaining significant support for Part B, the Administration is helping to ensure that students with disabilities can participate in the general education curriculum to the maximum extent possible and are prepared for college and careers. This request also includes \$100 million for a new Results Driven

Accountability Incentive grants program to states committed to implementing reforms that would improve results for children with disabilities, such as school readiness, academic performance and graduation rates. States receiving grants would have to demonstrate commitment using data on results in making their IDEA-required local determinations to support their efforts to implement evidence-based practices that have a demonstrated positive impact on results for children with disabilities.

- **Migrant Education State Grants (\$374.8 million).** This program would continue to help address the educational needs of approximately 223,000 children of migrant agricultural workers and fishers during the regular school year and summer session, allowing them to complete high school or a GED program and obtain employment. The Department also uses a portion of the funding to improve inter- and intra-State coordination of migrant education activities, including State exchange of migrant student data records through the Migrant Student Record Exchange System.
- **Helping Migrant Students Complete High School and College (\$34.6 million).** This request would support approximately 45 High School Equivalency Program (HEP) projects and 40 College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) projects, as well as outreach, technical assistance and professional development activities. HEP projects help low-income migrant and seasonal farm workers gain high school diplomas or equivalency certificates, and CAMP makes grants to provide stipends and special services, such as tutoring and counseling, to migrant students who are in their first year of college.
- **Neglected and Delinquent State Grants (\$47.6 million).** This program would continue to support education services for neglected and delinquent children and youth in local and State-run institutions, community day programs, and correctional facilities. These services would help an estimated 98,000 neglected and delinquent students return to and complete high school or a GED program and obtain employment.
- **Homeless Children and Youth Education (\$65 million).** This program provides formula grants to States, which subgrant most funds to local educational agencies for services that help homeless children enroll in, attend, and succeed in school. In addition to ensuring homeless children and youth have access to academic instruction, the program increases access for these children to preschool programs, special education, and gifted and talented programs. The Administration's reauthorization proposal would improve the funding formula to better reflect shifts in State counts of homeless students and target funds to where they are needed most.
- **Disconnected Youth (\$8 million).** This program would support youth who are neither employed nor enrolled in an educational institution or who are at high-risk of dropping out of high school. A portion of these funds would be used to invest in innovative re-engagement strategies and comprehensive approaches to prepare this population for college and career success. This initiative would also support Performance Partnership Pilots, which give States and localities flexibility in administering Federal youth-serving programs in exchange for greater accountability for results. The budget request also includes \$5 million for a new youth data pilot that would enhance communities' tracking of and performance on multiple outcomes for at-risk youth using existing data sets.
- **College Pathways and Accelerated Learning for low-income students (\$74.8 million).** This new program would provide grants to school districts and other entities to provide college-level and other accelerated courses and instruction in middle and high schools with high concentrations of students from low-income families. Although students who drop out, or are at risk of doing so, are often thought of as low achievers who need a watered-down curriculum, educators find that often the opposite is the case. This program will increase graduation rates and college enrollment and success by providing college-level and

other accelerated courses and instruction in low-income middle schools and high schools, including Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses.

- **School Turnaround Grants (\$506 million).** Funds will continue to support subgrants from States to districts to help low-performing schools implement rigorous interventions that bring about dramatic improvements in student achievement and school performance. Over 92% of the more than 1,200 subgrants awarded by States in fiscal year 2009 were provided to medium to high poverty schools. In fiscal year 2010, medium to high poverty schools received more than 85% of the grants.

- **GEAR UP and TRIO (\$1.1 billion).** This investment will support the GEAR UP and TRIO programs, which provide intensive services to students in middle school through college. GEAR UP, which serves students beginning in the middle grades, provides early college preparation and awareness activities to entire cohorts of students at individual schools to help them set on a path to higher education. The 2014 GEAR UP competition will encourage projects that provide students more customized college application and selection counseling and that are designed to assist students at risk of needing remediation. The TRIO programs play an important role in supporting low-income, first generation students in accessing and succeeding in postsecondary education. The 2015 request would continue the Department's efforts to expand the reach of TRIO projects and expand their effects on schools that need the greatest help in sending more students on to college.