

REAUTHORIZATION OF THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT

Overview

The fiscal year 2015 request for the Department of Education aligns Federal education resources with key priorities and principles included in “A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act,” the Administration’s comprehensive plan for reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that was released in March 2010. The “Blueprint” is available at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leq/blueprint/blueprint.pdf>.

The “Blueprint” proposes changes in the ESEA intended to help ensure that all children graduate high school ready for college and rewarding careers in the globally competitive American economy of the 21st century. The proposal does this by refocusing the Federal role in education on innovation, improvements in teaching and learning, and more productive use of existing resources. The Administration’s goals are to accelerate student achievement, close achievement gaps, and inspire our children to excel so that by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.

To accomplish these goals, the fiscal year 2015 budget request would invest in a reformed ESEA focused on raising standards, encouraging innovation, and rewarding success, while allowing States and districts more flexibility to invest resources where they will have the greatest impact. Consistent with the principles that have guided the Administration’s Race to the Top, Investing in Innovation, and School Improvement Grant programs, our ESEA reauthorization proposal would expand the use of competition and other incentives for States, school districts, and schools to develop and implement comprehensive reform and improvement plans that will both raise student achievement and close achievement gaps. For example, the fiscal year 2015 budget would expand investments in evidence-based approaches to improving student outcomes, including \$165 million for a new round of grants under the Investing in Innovation (i3) fund to provide incentives for the development and expansion of innovative strategies and practices that have been shown to be effective in improving educational outcomes for students.

In addition, the Administration’s reauthorization plan would restructure current ESEA program authorities to reduce the number of programs administered by the Department of Education, focus more closely on desired program outcomes, and expand State and local flexibility to achieve those outcomes. The reauthorization proposal would consolidate roughly three dozen existing authorities into 11 new programs that use competition to identify high-quality proposals and projects, give communities greater flexibility to select the activities and reforms that meet their unique needs, and expand the role of evidence in Federal funding decisions. While Congress has yet to act on reauthorization of the ESEA, it already has demonstrated acceptance of the need for consolidation of existing programs by eliminating or consolidating funding for more than 20 of these authorities over the past 4 years.

The \$14.4 billion request for the reauthorized Title I, Part A College- and Career-Ready Students program (Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies under current law) would support key reforms based on college- and career-ready standards and aligned assessments, new systems of differentiated recognition and accountability that emphasize turning around our lowest-performing schools and closing achievement gaps, and ensuring that all students have access to effective and highly effective teachers. The fiscal year 2015 request includes \$505.8 million for a reauthorized School Turnaround Grants program (School Improvement

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Grants under current law) that would help LEAs carry out required interventions and build State and local capacity to turn around the Nation's lowest-performing schools.

The request also would provide \$378 million for a reauthorized Assessing Achievement program (State Assessments under current law) for formula and competitive grants to help States implement and improve the quality of their assessment systems as they transition to assessments aligned with college- and career-ready standards. Under the reauthorized ESEA, States would use these improved assessments to measure student academic growth; more reliably measure student achievement and teacher and school effectiveness; help teachers better tailor instruction to student needs; and provide more useful information to students and their families.

Other requests that would support the goal of graduating every student college- and career-ready include \$248.2 million for Expanding Educational Options, which would promote high-quality charter schools and other forms of public school choice; \$100 million for Promise Neighborhoods, which funds comprehensive health, education, and social services for children in distressed communities from birth through college and career; and \$214 million for Successful, Safe, and Healthy Students, which would fund efforts to create safe and disciplined school climates and promote student health and well-being .

A key emphasis of the Administration's ESEA reauthorization proposal is supporting State and local efforts to improve teacher and leader effectiveness, including ensuring the equitable distribution of effective teachers and leaders across districts and schools. Longstanding achievement gaps closely track the talent gap found in the classrooms and schools attended by many poor and minority students. The Administration's reauthorization plan would require States to set clear standards for effective teaching and to design evaluation systems that identify effective teachers, while also restructuring the ESEA to help school districts more effectively recruit, train, reward, and retain effective teachers and school leaders. For example, the proposal would increase to 10 percent the national activities reservation under Effective Teachers and Leaders State Grants to support efforts to improve the pathways through which candidates prepare for and enter teaching and school leadership. The request also would provide \$320 million for an expanded Teacher and Leader Innovation Fund, built on the strengths of the current Teacher Incentive Fund, to support State and district efforts to reform their human capital systems; \$35 million for a redesigned School Leadership Program that would focus on evidence-based professional development for current school leaders; and a total of \$528.5 million for new authorities that would make competitive awards focused on high-need LEAs to improve instruction in the areas of literacy, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and other subjects.

In addition to continuing to focus Federal education resources on students from low-income families through the Title I, Part A College- and Career-Ready Students program, the Administration's ESEA reauthorization plan would retain longstanding programs and authorities designed to meet the needs of special populations, including English learners, migrant students, neglected and delinquent students, Native Americans, and homeless children and youth.