

SUPPORTING RURAL EDUCATION

Nearly half of all school districts and about one-third of all public schools are located in rural areas. These schools serve approximately 24 percent of the nation's students. Rural schools have unique needs and face unique challenges. They may have difficulty recruiting and retaining effective teachers and providing students in these communities with access to a rigorous, well-rounded education.

The President's 2015 budget request includes investments that may address the specific needs of rural schools and support them in preparing students for success in college and careers.

- **Dedicated formula funding to improve rural education (\$170 million).** The budget maintains funds for the Rural Education Achievement program (REAP) to ensure that rural districts receive extra formula funds that are crucial for these schools.
- **High School Redesign (\$150 million).** The budget supports a new competition that will 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. Special consideration will be given to partnerships that focus on areas with limited access to quality career and college opportunities, such as high poverty and rural districts, as well as to partnerships with employers that can provide students with career-related experience or career-related credentials.
- **Reauthorized Perkins Career and Technical Education program (\$1.1 billion).** The President's budget would fund a reauthorized Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. The reauthorization proposal will strengthen alignment among secondary and postsecondary career and technical education (CTE) programs and business and industry; create a better accountability system for improving academic outcomes, technical skills, and employability outcomes; and provide competitive funding to promote innovation and reform in CTE. The budget request for CTE State Grants also includes a competitive CTE innovation fund, which may include projects that expand the capacity of rural and remote communities to provide access to articulated pathways to industry-recognized postsecondary credentials or degrees for in-demand industry sectors and occupations.
- **ConnectEDucators (\$200 million).** A key goal of the Administration's ConnectEDucators initiative is to work in conjunction with the ConnectED initiative, which will connect 99 percent of America's students to the digital age through next-generation broadband and high-speed wireless over the next five years, to help ensure that teachers and principals in rural areas have the support they need to be able to take full advantage of technology to help address longstanding educational opportunity gaps, such as access to rigorous advanced coursework in hard-to-staff subjects and fields.
- **School Turnaround Grants (\$506 million).** The program will continue to fund grants to States and subgrants from States to districts to help low-performing schools implement rigorous interventions that bring about dramatic improvements in student achievement and school performance. Since 2009, rural schools have received nearly one-fifth of the over 1,500 subgrants awarded by States. Beginning in fiscal year 2014, rural schools will have additional flexibility to modify one element of interventions funded through this program. In addition, the Department plans to include a priority on providing turnaround leaders in rural areas in a new competition funded through fiscal year 2013 School Improvement Grant national activities funds.

- **Technical Assistance (\$48 million).** Our proposal would continue to make improvements to technical assistance and support through 22 comprehensive technical assistance centers to help increase State capacity to assist districts and schools in meeting student achievement goals. This is particularly important in rural States with small administrative teams, small schools, and high-need students. In competitive programs, we will continue to leverage technology to provide greater access to technical assistance and support.
- The President’s budget request supports schools and communities working together on their shared responsibility to support student success. Under the **Successful, Safe, and Healthy Students program (\$214 million), the Promise Neighborhoods program (\$100 million), and the strengthened 21st Century Community Learning Centers program (\$1.15 billion)**, districts and community-based organizations will have the flexibility to design a variety of projects based on their specific local needs. This flexibility will enable rural communities to implement programs that increase or expand learning time and community supports that address the unique challenges rural schools face.
- Under **ESEA flexibility**, rural districts have greater local flexibility in using Federal funds to intervene in struggling schools, so that rural communities can decide what works best for their schools.
- We will continue to put in place safeguards to **ensure rural participation in grant competitions** by using tools that include shorter pre-application processes, using absolute and competitive priorities, and encouraging partnerships and consortia applications.