

The background of the page is a solid blue color. Overlaid on this is a large, faint, light blue circular seal of the U.S. Department of Education. The seal features a central tree with a globe as its base, surrounded by a circular border containing the text "DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION" at the top and "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" at the bottom, separated by a star.

Overview
of the
U.S. Department of
Education



Overview
of the
U.S. Department of
Education

U.S. Department of Education
2010

U.S. Department of Education

Arne Duncan

Secretary

Office of Communications and Outreach

Peter Cunningham

Assistant Secretary

November 2009

Revised September 2010

This publication is in the public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted. While permission to reprint this publication is not necessary, the citation should be: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Communications and Outreach, *Overview of the U.S. Department of Education*, Washington, D.C., 2010.

To obtain copies of this report:

Write to ED Pubs, Education Publications Center, U.S. Department of Education, P.O. Box 22207, Alexandria, VA, 22304

Or **fax** your request to 703-605-6794.

Or **e-mail** your request to edpubs@inet.ed.gov.

Or **call** in your request toll free to 1-877-433-7827 (1-877-4-ED-PUBS). Those who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) or a teletypewriter (TTY) should call 1-877-576-7734. If 877 service is not available in your area, call 1-800-872-5327 (1-800-USA-LEARN).

Or **order online** at <http://edpubs.gov>.

This publication is also available on the Department's Web site at <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/whattoc.html>.

On request, this publication is available in alternate formats, such as Braille, large print or computer diskette. For more information, please contact the Department's Alternate Format Center at 202-260-0852 or 202-260-0818.

All URLs in this publication were last accessed on July 14, 2010.



Contents

A Message From the Secretary	v
What Is the Department of Education?	1
How Does the Department of Education Serve America's Students?	5
What Is <i>Not</i> Part of the Department of Education's Role? ...	9
How Is the Department of Education Organized?	11
Where Is the Department of Education?	17
Where Can I Get More Information?	19



A Message From the Secretary

Education is my life's work. When I was young, I learned the difference a quality education can make. My mother and father were educators who knew the extraordinary potential of children. Today, I am honored to serve as the U.S. secretary of education and be part of such an amazing team of people. We are all proud of the services the Department provides, and we are dedicated to improving our nation's education system.

This booklet will give you the big picture of the Department's functions, mission and goals. If you value education—as a student, parent, teacher or community member—you are key to the success of our nation. Quality education is the civil rights issue of our generation. Excellence and equity in education are essential to achieving social justice and ensuring that our nation can compete in a global economy.

We are at a unique moment in our work to create world-class schools in America. Governors and chief state school officers are working together to raise the bar and create common standards that prepare students for success in college and careers. In districts across the country, unions and community leaders are working together to turn around schools, create new evaluation systems, and partner for performance pay plans. They are moving beyond the battles of the past and finding new ways to work together. States are creating bold plans to reform their schools so their children are prepared for success in the 21st-century workforce. This is a quiet revolution that is taking hold in communities across the country.

As you will learn in this brochure, education at the federal level represents only a small part of the entire education enterprise. Our role is to be an engine of innovation, supporting the great work that is happening in schools across the country.

In this booklet you will find out how the U.S. Department of Education is working to fulfill these goals, and you will find out how to contact the various offices for more information. If you have questions or ideas about what we can do to better fulfill our mission, please let us hear from you by visiting our website at www.ed.gov. Now, let's get to work to help our children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arne Duncan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Arne" being more prominent than the last name "Duncan".

Arne Duncan



What Is the U.S. Department of Education?

The U.S. Department of Education is the agency of the federal government that establishes policy for, administers and coordinates most federal assistance to education. It assists the president in executing his education policies for the nation and in implementing laws enacted by Congress. The Department's mission is to serve America's students—to *promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.*

In 2007-08, the Department's elementary and secondary school programs served approximately 55 million students (pre-K through grade 12) attending some 100,000 public schools and 34,000 private schools. Department programs also provided grant, loan and work-study assistance to about 10 million undergraduate students.*

When Congress created the Department in 1979, it declared these purposes:

- (1) *to strengthen the Federal commitment to ensuring access to equal educational opportunity for every individual;*

*SOURCES: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Data from the Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey for the 2007-08 school year; the 2007-08 Private School Universe Survey; and the 2007-08 National Postsecondary Aid Study. For the most current data visit <http://nces.ed.gov>.

-
- (2) *to supplement and complement the efforts of States, the local school systems and other instrumentalities of the States, the private sector, public and private educational institutions, public and private nonprofit educational research institutions, community-based organizations, parents, and students to improve the quality of education;*
 - (3) *to encourage the increased involvement of the public, parents, and students in Federal education programs;*
 - (4) *to promote improvements in the quality and usefulness of education through federally supported research, evaluation, and sharing of information;*
 - (5) *to improve the coordination of Federal education programs;*
 - (6) *to improve the management and efficiency of Federal education activities, especially with respect to the process, procedures, and administrative structures for the dispersal of Federal funds, as well as the reduction of unnecessary and duplicative burdens and constraints, including unnecessary paperwork, on the recipients of Federal funds; and*
 - (7) *to increase the accountability of Federal education programs to the President, the Congress and the public. (Section 102, Public Law 96-88)*

The Department's History

Although the Department is a relative newcomer among Cabinet-level agencies, its origins goes back to 1867, when President Andrew Johnson signed legislation creating the first Department of Education. Its main purpose was to collect information and statistics about the nation's schools. However, due to concern that the Department would exercise too much control over local schools, the new Department was demoted to an Office of Education in 1868.

Over the years, the office remained relatively small, operating under different titles and housed in various agencies, including the U.S. Department of the Interior and the former U.S. Department of Health Education and Welfare (now Health and Human Services).

Beginning in the 1950s, political and social changes resulted in expanded federal funding for education. The successful launch of the Soviet Union's Sputnik in 1957 spurred nationwide concern that led to increased aid for science education programs. The 1960s saw even more expansion of federal education funding: President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty" called for the creation of many programs to improve education for poor students at all levels—early childhood through postsecondary. This expansion continued in the 1970s with national efforts to help racial minorities, women, people with disabilities and non-English speaking students gain equal access to education. In October 1979, Congress passed the *Department of Education Organization Act* (Public Law 96-88). Created by combining offices from several federal agencies, the Department began operations in May 1980.

In the 1860s, a budget of \$15,000 and four employees handled education fact-finding. By 1965, the Office of Education had more than 2,100 employees and a budget of \$1.5 billion. As of mid-2010, the Department has nearly 4,300 employees and a budget of about \$60 billion.



How Does the Department of Education Serve America's Students?

In fulfilling its purposes as declared by Congress in Public Law 96-88, the Department engages in four major types of activities.

1. The Department of Education—
establishes policies relating to federal financial aid for education, administers distribution of those funds and monitors their use.

Like most federal activities, Department of Education programs must first be authorized by Congress through legislation that is signed into law by the president. The Department then develops regulations that determine exactly how a program will be operated. These regulations are published in the *Federal Register* for public comment and reviewed by Congress. Congress must also vote to appropriate the money that each program will receive annually.

The Department distributes financial aid to eligible applicants throughout the nation for early childhood, elementary, secondary and postsecondary education programs. Federal programs benefit all students, and special programs exist to serve individuals with disabilities, those who live in poverty, American Indians, immigrants and those with limited English proficiency. Federal funds for education are distributed using three methods: a set formula, competition and financial need determination.

By formula: Some programs follow a formula prescribed in the bill approved by Congress authorizing a program. Such a program might

be set up so that qualified agencies receive an amount of money that is determined by the number of students meeting certain criteria in that state or school district. For example, under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, the Department allocates money to the states to help them provide a free, appropriate public education for children with disabilities based on the number of children reported by each state as having special developmental or educational needs.

By competition: Federal money also is awarded on the merit of competitive applications. Applicants are ranked in order of merit and the most qualified applications are awarded funds. Those eligible for such funding include state and local education agencies or school districts; education partnerships (programs jointly sponsored by education institutions and the private sector); colleges and universities; individual researchers; and community-based organizations such as non-profit agencies.

By financial need determination: The third basis on which federal money is awarded is financial need. For example, postsecondary students applying for grants, loans and fellowships must prove family financial need according to established guidelines.

2. The Department of Education—
collects data and oversees research on America's schools and disseminates this information to Congress, educators and the general public.

The Department oversees research on most aspects of education; collects data on trends; and gathers information to help identify best practices in education, including teaching techniques that work. Employees of the Department, as well as contractors and grant recipients, carry out the research.

Research findings and statistics are disseminated to educators, policymakers, parents, researchers and the general public in the form of reports and publications—both printed and online. Recent publications have covered the latest national assessments of educational progress in a variety of subject areas, innovations in education, the condition of education in America, annual reports on a variety of federal education programs, how to improve mathematics education and many other pertinent education topics. In a typical year, the Department publishes hundreds of publications and millions of copies to meet the public’s demand for information.

3. The Department of Education— identifies the major issues and problems in education and focuses national attention on them.

The Department makes recommendations for education reform. The secretary advises the president in this regard and leads the Department in implementing the president’s education policies in many arenas—from the preparation of legislative proposals for Congress to decisions about education research priorities. Of vital importance in formulating and implementing policies is the Department’s close work with a variety of advisory groups and organizations composed of citizens from all walks of life who have an interest and expertise in education and who provide significant ideas on key policies and programs.

In addition, the secretary brings national attention to education issues by giving speeches, writing articles for publication, addressing the media and making personal appearances in schools and other education settings. The Department further highlights education issues by sponsoring and participating in national conferences and other similar activities, such as the Blue Ribbon Schools and Presidential Scholars award programs, the Teaching Ambassador Fellows Program, the Student Art Exhibit Program, and special events and ceremonies to honor teachers or students.

4. The Department of Education—

enforces federal statutes prohibiting discrimination in programs and activities receiving federal funds and ensures equal access to education for every individual.

The Department enforces five civil rights statutes to ensure equal educational opportunity for all students, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age. These laws extend to all state education agencies, elementary and secondary school systems, colleges and universities, vocational schools, proprietary schools, state vocational rehabilitation agencies, libraries and museums, and other entities that receive U.S. Department of Education funds. Specific examples of those whose rights are protected include homeless children with disabilities, individuals with limited English proficiency, women and girls in athletic programs, and people in need of vocational rehabilitation.



What Is Not Part of the Department of Education's Role?

In creating the Department of Education, Congress specified that:

No provision of a program administered by the Secretary or by any other officer of the Department shall be construed to authorize the Secretary or any such officer to exercise any direction, supervision, or control over the curriculum, program of instruction, administration, or personnel of any educational institution, school, or school system, over any accrediting agency or association, or over the selection or content of library resources, textbooks, or other instructional materials by any educational institution or school system, except to the extent authorized by law. (Section 103[b], Public Law 96-88)

Thus, the Department does not

- establish schools and colleges;
- develop curricula;
- set requirements for enrollment and graduation;

-
- determine state education standards; or
 - develop or implement testing to measure whether states are meeting their education standards.*

These are responsibilities handled by the various states and districts as well as by public and private organizations of all kinds, not by the U.S. Department of Education.

* Since 1969, the Department's National Center for Education Statistics has conducted the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). It is the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what American students know and can do in major academic subjects and provides a wealth of data about the condition of education in the U.S. NAEP is not the same as testing done by each state to measure how well its students meet the state's academic standards; however, a large discrepancy between children's proficiency on a state's test and their performance on NAEP may suggest the state needs to take a closer look at its standards and assessments and consider making improvements.



How Is the Department of Education Organized?

The *secretary of education* leads the Department and promotes public understanding of the Department's mission, goals and objectives. The secretary is nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate. As a member of the president's Cabinet, the secretary is the principal adviser to the president on federal policies, programs and activities related to education in the United States.

The *deputy secretary* plays a pivotal role in overseeing and managing the development of policies, recommendations and initiatives that help define a broad, coherent vision for achieving the president's education priorities, and the *under secretary* oversees policies, programs and activities related to postsecondary education, vocational and adult education, and federal student aid. In addition, the secretary appoints an assistant secretary to oversee each of the nine program offices (see list below).

The *Office of the General Counsel* serves as the principal adviser to the secretary on all legal matters affecting Department programs and activities and represents the secretary, other officers and the Department in court and in some litigation. In addition, OGC provides legal advice and services to the secretary and other Department officials, prepares regulatory documents and legal instruments, drafts legislative proposals, and reviews proposed and pending legislation. The *Office of Inspector General* promotes the effective and efficient use of taxpayer dollars in support of American education by detecting and preventing fraud, waste and abuse in the administration of

Department programs and operations. OIG serves as the principal adviser to the secretary on these matters.

The *Office for Civil Rights* enforces federal laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, handicap or age in educational programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. It directs, coordinates and recommends policy for related civil rights activities.

The *Office of Communications and Outreach* leads the Department in informing the public about and engaging it in the president's and secretary's education agenda and the Department's mission of fostering educational excellence and promoting equal access to education. Audiences are the general public as well specialized publics, such as educators, the media, policymakers, business and community groups, and researchers. The *Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs* serves as the Department's liaison to Congress and the secretary's principal adviser on matters concerning the Department's legislative program and congressional relations. And the *International Affairs Office* works with external partners, for example, other federal agencies, foreign governments and international organizations, as well as internal offices, to coordinate the Department's international programs and initiatives and build a U.S. presence in the international education community.

The *Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development* serves as the principal adviser to the secretary on all matters relating to policy development and review, strategic planning, program performance measurement and evaluation, and budget processes and proposals. It is home to the Department's Budget Service and Family Policy Compliance Office. It also coordinates the activities of the *Office of Educational Technology*, which has as its main goal maximizing technology's contributions to improving education nationwide through developing national educational technology policy and implementing it Departmentwide.

The *Office of Management*, the *Office of the Chief Financial Officer*, the *Office of the Chief Information Officer*, and the *Risk Management Service* are responsible in their respective operational areas for making the Department a high-performing organization.

Four White House education initiatives have their home at the Department so that its senior officers may serve as the liaisons between the executive branch and the constituencies of these initiatives: the *White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, the *White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities*, the *White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans*, and the *White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders*. Also, the *Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships* was established at the Department with the goal of enlisting faith-based and community organizations in support of the Department's mission.

The Department has nine program offices.

1. The *Institute of Education Sciences* provides national leadership in expanding fundamental knowledge of education and produces rigorous evidence on which to ground education practice and policy. This is accomplished through the work of its four centers: the National Center for Education Research, the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, and the National Center for Special Education Research.
2. The *Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students* administers, coordinates and recommends policy for developing and supporting high-quality instructional programs designed to serve the education needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students, thereby helping these English language learners and immigrants attain English proficiency and academic success.

-
3. The *Office of Elementary and Secondary Education* provides leadership, technical assistance and financial support to state and local education agencies for the maintenance and improvement of both public and private preschool, elementary and secondary education. OESE administers programs designed to advance the academic opportunities of the nation's neediest children.
 4. The *Office of Innovation and Improvement* administers and coordinates programs and activities designed to support and test innovations throughout the K-12 system, including a number of teacher quality programs and reforms that expand parental choice of schools for their children and information about best practices. It is also the Department's liaison to the non-public education community.
 5. The *Office of Postsecondary Education* is responsible for formulating federal postsecondary education policy and administering programs that address critical national needs in support of increased access to quality postsecondary education for all students. OPE also promotes the domestic study of foreign languages and international affairs and supports international education research and exchange.
 6. The *Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools* administers, coordinates and recommends policy for improving programs and activities that promote the health and well-being of students in elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education. Such programs and activities comprise drug and violence prevention programs, character and civic education, and a variety of other comprehensive efforts to promote students' physical and mental health.
 7. The *Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services* supports programs designed to meet the needs and develop the full potential of children with disabilities, reduce dependency and enhance the productive capabilities of youths and adults with disabilities, and support research to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities, regardless of age.

-
8. The *Office of Federal Student Aid* administers the systems and products related to providing tens of billions of dollars annually in federal financial aid to millions of students pursuing postsecondary education and training opportunities. The office provides the information and forms needed to apply for loans, grants and work-study funds, as well as information for students, parents, financial aid administrators, lending institutions, auditors and others in the field. It also leads the U.S. government-wide initiative to deliver Web-based services from government agencies and organizations to postsecondary students (see <http://students.gov>).
 9. The *Office of Vocational and Adult Education* supports a wide range of programs and activities that provide adults with the basic skills necessary to obtain a high school diploma or the equivalent and support them in their pursuit of postsecondary, career or technical education and lifelong learning.

You can find more information on the Department's website on each of the offices mentioned above. Visit <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/index.html> and select the link for the office in which you are interested.

If you want detailed information on any of the approximately 200 Department programs authorized and funded under federal law, check the *Guide to U.S. Department of Education Programs* at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/gtep/gtep.pdf>. It also includes information on the laboratories, centers and other facilities funded by the Department that provide important resources for education.

For help with any question you may have, check with the Department's Information Resource Center or another of the sources listed at the end of this booklet.



Where Is the Department of Education?

The headquarters and most operations are in Washington, D.C., where the staff of approximately 3,100 occupies parts of several different buildings. The main building, where the secretary's office is located, is the Lyndon Baines Johnson Building at 400 Maryland Ave. SW. Additionally there are about 1,100 employees who work in 10 regional offices around the country. These offices represent the Department's programs and interests on a regional basis.



Where Can I Get More Information?

GENERAL INFORMATION

Information Resource Center

- General information about U.S. Department of Education programs, funding opportunities, services and publications
- Referrals to Department programs and offices
- Directory assistance to Department staff
- Information about legislation and policy

1-800-USA-LEARN* (1-800-872-5327)

TTY: 1-800-437-0833

<http://answers.ed.gov>

Washington, D.C. Headquarters

U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20202

<http://www.ed.gov>

FINANCIAL AID

Federal Student Aid Information Center

- General information about student financial assistance programs, such as Pell Grants and student loans
- Questions about the application process, status of loans and location of lenders
- Information on teacher loan forgiveness
- Financial aid publications

1-800-4-FED-AID* (1-800-433-3243)

TTY: 1-800-730-8913

<http://studentaid.ed.gov>

*Spanish speakers available

PUBLICATIONS

Education Publications Center

- Order Department publications and products
(Braille and other alternative formats available)

- Search for Department publications online

1-877-4-ED-PUBS* (1-877-433-7827)

TTY: 1-877-576-7734 or 1-800-437-0833

E-mail: edpubs@inet.ed.gov

www.ed.gov/pubs

CIVIL RIGHTS

Civil Rights Hotline

- Report discrimination at education institutions on the basis of race, sex, disability, national origin or age
- Information on civil rights compliance programs
- Procedures for filing discrimination complaints
- Access to civil rights regulatory and policy documents

1-800-421-3481*

TTY: 877-521-2172

E-mail: OCR@ed.gov

www.ed.gov/ocr

RESEARCH AND STATISTICS

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

- Statistical information
- Reference assistance

1-800-424-1616

TTY: 202-205-7561

<http://nces.ed.gov>

*Spanish speakers available

TEACHING RESOURCES

Doing What Works

- Psychology of learning
- How to organize your instruction
- Essential concepts

www.dww.ed.gov

Teacher Ambassador Fellowship

www.ed.gov/programs/teacherfellowship/index.html

Federal Resources for Educational Excellence

www.ed.gov/free/index.html

Teachers Website

www.ed.gov/teachers

GRANTS AND PROGRAMS

Grants and Programs Websites

- Grant information (finding and applying)
www.ed.gov/fund/landing.jhtml
- Programs (purpose and eligibility)
www.ed.gov/programs/landing.jhtml

RECURSOS EN ESPAÑOL

Education Resources for Spanish Speakers

Frequently asked questions about education at all levels

<http://respuestas.ed.gov/>

REGIONAL OFFICES

Region I

(Connecticut, Maine,
Massachusetts, New Hampshire,
Rhode Island, Vermont)

U.S. Department of Education
POCH Building
5 Post Office Square
9th Floor, Room 24
Boston, MA 02110
Telephone: 617-289-0100

Region II

(New Jersey, New York, Puerto
Rico, Virgin Islands)

U.S. Department of Education
Financial Square
32 Old Slip, 25th Floor
New York, NY 10005
Telephone: 646-428-3905

Region III

(Delaware, District of Columbia,
Maryland, Pennsylvania,
Virginia, West Virginia)

U.S. Department of Education
100 Penn Square East
Suite 505
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Telephone: 215-656-6010

Region IV

(Alabama, Florida, Georgia,
Kentucky, Mississippi, North
Carolina, South Carolina,
Tennessee)

U.S. Department of Education
61 Forsyth St. SW
Suite 19T40
Atlanta, GA 30303
Telephone: 404-974-9450

Region V

(Illinois, Indiana, Michigan,
Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin)

U.S. Department of Education
500 W. Madison St.
Suite 1427
Chicago, IL 60661
Telephone: 312-730-1700

Region VI

(Arkansas, Louisiana, New
Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas)

U.S. Department of Education
1999 Bryan St.
Suite 1510
Dallas, TX 75202-6817
Telephone: 214-661-9500

Region VII
(Iowa, Kansas, Missouri,
Nebraska)
U.S. Department of Education
8930 Ward Parkway
Suite 2043
Kansas City, MO 64114-3302
Telephone: 816-268-0400

Region VIII
(Colorado, Montana, North
Dakota, South Dakota, Utah,
Wyoming)
U.S. Department of Education
1244 Speer Blvd., Suite 615
Denver, CO 80204-3582
Telephone: 303-844-3544

Region IX
(Arizona, California, Hawaii,
Nevada, American Samoa,
Guam, Northern Mariana
Islands)
U.S. Department of Education
50 Beale St., Room 9700
San Francisco, CA 94105
Telephone: 415-486-5700

Region X
(Alaska, Idaho, Oregon,
Washington)
U.S. Department of Education
Jackson Federal Bldg.
915 2nd Ave., Room 3362
Seattle, WA 98174-1099
Telephone: 206-607-1655

You may also visit the regions at
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/contacts/gen/regions.html>



The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

www.ed.gov