

Mission and Organizational Structure

Our Mission

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

History. In 1867, the federal government recognized that furthering education was a national priority, and created a federal education agency to collect and report statistical data. The Department was established as a cabinet-level agency in 1979.

Our Public Benefit. In the nation, the Department is committed to ensuring that students develop the skills they need to succeed in school, college, and the workforce, while recognizing the primary role of states and school districts in providing a high-quality education, employing highly qualified teachers and administrators, and establishing challenging content and achievement standards. Internally, the Department is also setting high expectations for its own employees and working to improve management practices, ensure fiscal integrity, and develop a culture of high performance.

What We Do. The Department engages in four major types of activities: establishing policies related to federal education funding and administering distribution of funds and monitoring their use; providing oversight on data collection and research on America's schools; identifying major issues in education and focusing national attention on them; and enforcing federal laws prohibiting discrimination in programs that receive federal funds.

Who We Serve. During school year (SY) 2011–12, America's schools and colleges are serving larger numbers of students as the population increases and enrollment rates rise. As of the fall of 2011, more than 49.4 million students attend public elementary and secondary schools. Of these, 34.9 million are in pre-school through 8th grade; 14.5 million are in grades 9 through 12.

As of data published in early September 2011, expenditures for public elementary and secondary schools will be about \$525 billion for SY 2011–12, excluding capital and interest. The national average current expenditure per student is projected for SY 2011–12 at \$10,591, the same as actual expenditures in SY 2008–09. In fall 2011, a record 19.7 million students are expected to attend the nation's 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities, an increase of about 4.4 million since fall 2000.

Our Organization in FY 2011

The Required Supplementary Stewardship Information section of this report contains summary information about offices within the Department. Follow the link for more detail on how the Department is [organized](#) and the roles of the different offices, or view an [interactive chart](#) of current positions.

