

## The Department's Priority Goals

The Department has identified six Agency Priority Goals for FY 2012–13 that serve as a particular focus for its activities. These Priority Goals reflect the Department's cradle-to-career education strategy and will help concentrate efforts on the importance of teaching and learning at all levels of the education system. In most cases, progress is reported through the third quarter of FY 2013. Quarterly updates are available on [performance.gov](http://performance.gov).

### Progress on the Department's FY 2012–13 Priority Goals

#### Priority Goal: Improve students' ability to afford and complete college

**Goal for FY 2012–2013:** By September 30, 2013, the Department will develop a college scorecard designed to improve consumer decision-making and transparency about affordability for students and borrowers by streamlining information on all degree-granting institutions into a single, comparable, and simplified format, while also helping all states and institutions develop college completion goals.

#### *Supports Strategic Goal 1.*

**Overview:** As more and more jobs require postsecondary education and training, college is becoming a vital necessity for most Americans. Yet too many students fail to complete college and are burdened by high student loan debt. Institutions raise tuition and fees as states cut education funding for postsecondary institutions. Even with increased federal Pell Grant funding, many Americans remain concerned about whether they can afford the high cost of college. Many Americans do not know about or are confused by the maze of information that is available about colleges and how to pay for college. To help students and their families make decisions about college, the Department has developed a number of resources, such as [College Navigator](#), the [College Affordability and Transparency Center](#), and the [Net Price Calculator](#). In order to meet the national goal to increase the number of college graduates, the Department is committed to helping states and institutions increase the number and percentage of students who complete their postsecondary educations.

The Department will support college completion by identifying and promoting successful evidence-based practices and by highlighting noteworthy state efforts in key areas such as transfer, performance-based funding, and college-and-career readiness. The Department has achieved the goal that was set to implement the College Scorecard. The challenge that remains is that the Department must work with the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to ensure that its Paying for College tool complements and aligns with the data used in the scorecard. Regarding state completion goals, the primary obstacle is that the Department has little influence over states' decisions to set goals.

**Progress:** The scorecard was released in tandem with the President's State of the Union address in February. This is a first version of the scorecard, with future versions to incorporate additional information, such as earnings data once logistical issues for obtaining such data have been addressed. The number of states with completion goals has grown from 38 to 40 since November 2012 (completion defined as either attainment, graduation, or degree production), with a variety of target dates and levels of specificity. The Department has little influence over state decisions to establish goals, although it continues to encourage goal setting and highlight states that have goals in speeches, editorials, and conversations.

## Priority Goal: Improve learning by ensuring that more students have an effective teacher

**Goal for FY 2012–2013:** By September 30, 2013, at least 500 school districts will have comprehensive teacher and principal evaluation and support systems and the majority of states will have statewide requirements for comprehensive teacher and principal evaluation and support systems.

### *Supports Strategic Goal 2.*

**Overview:** The Priority Goal is based on the premise, supported by abundant research, that teachers are the single most critical in-school factor in improving student achievement. Principals are often cited as the second most influential in-school factor. Teacher and principal evaluation systems supported by the Department's contributing programs enable the development and identification of effective educators and provide the needed information to improve the educator workforce or provide incentives to teach in challenging schools or shortage areas.

The Department will help strengthen the profession by focusing on meaningful feedback, support, and incentives at every stage of a career, based on fair evaluation systems that look at multiple measures, including, in significant part, student growth.

The Department will support state and district efforts that provide time for teacher collaboration, on-the-job learning opportunities, and professional advancement. As states transition to new college- and career-ready standards, the Department will support opportunities for teachers to enhance their instructional expertise related to the new standards.

The Department continues to ensure adherence to timelines regarding development and adoption of state requirements for comprehensive teacher evaluation systems and for district development and implementation of comprehensive educator evaluation systems.

Current challenges center on maintaining momentum for reform, given districts' and states' current fiscal situation, potential changes in leadership, ongoing development of student growth measures in non-tested grades and subjects, and the scaling up of systems in a relatively short time frame. Another challenge relates to the coordination required of the Department's programs to ensure policy and communications consistency. With multiple programs interacting with the same grantees (e.g., states and districts), to a varying degree, it will take a significant shift in the Department's culture to break down silos to improve coordination.

**Progress:** The Department has made significant progress in leveraging its programs to support state- and district-led efforts to ensure that more students have effective teachers by better training, recruiting, identifying, and retaining effective teachers, especially in areas with high needs. In particular, the Department's efforts are focused on:

- encouraging teachers to play active roles in the development of these policies through the [Recognizing Educational Success, Professional Excellence, and Collaborative Teaching \(RESPECT\)](#) project and the [Teacher Incentive Fund \(TIF\)](#);
- encouraging school districts to leverage best practices to recruit and retain effective teachers (through TIF grants);

- encouraging the development and adoption of innovative strategies to transform the teaching profession that will ultimately impact student outcomes through TIF, Investing in Innovation (i3), and other grants; and
- creating a critical mass of states that have created the conditions for education innovation and reform through [Race to the Top](#) (RTT), *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) Flexibility, [School Improvement Grants](#) (SIG), and other initiatives.

As a result of these efforts:

- Twenty-five (25) states have received approval of their evaluation system guidelines through either ESEA Flexibility (21 states) and/or Race to the Top (4 additional states).
- Race to the Top states plan to have 2,012 participating local educational agencies (LEAs) with qualifying evaluation systems for teachers in the 2012–2013 school year.
- Race to the Top states plan to have 1,978 participating LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems for principals in the 2012–2013 school year.
- ESEA Flexibility States plan to have all LEAs with qualifying teacher and principal evaluation systems ready to implement in the 2014–2015 school year.
- And 213 LEAs are implementing evaluation systems under the SIG Transformation Model.
- In addition, 162 LEAs are implementing reformed educator evaluation systems as part of a TIF 3 (2010) grant. 159 LEAs plan to have reformed educator evaluation systems ready to implement in the 2013–2014 school year as part of a TIF 4 (2012) grant.

### **Priority Goal: Demonstrate progress in turning around the nation's lowest-performing schools**

**Goal for FY 2012–2013:** By September 30, 2013, 500 of the nation's persistently lowest-achieving schools will have demonstrated significant improvement and will have served as potential models for future turnaround efforts.

#### ***Supports Strategic Goal 2.***

**Overview:** The goal seeks to prepare all K-12 students for college and career by improving the education system's ability to consistently deliver excellent classroom instruction with rigorous academic standards while providing effective support services.

Through RTT, the SIG program, ESEA Flexibility, and other federal programs, the Department is providing significant resources to dramatically improve the nation's lowest-achieving schools by using intensive turnaround models and identifying the low-achieving schools that are showing strong evidence of successfully turning around.

The Department is focused on supporting innovation, not just compliance monitoring, and is focused on spurring growth in achievement, not just absolute achievement measures as done in the past. Central to these efforts has been the creation of the [Office of School Turnaround](#) (OST). Through OST's monthly check-in calls with all 50 states, the School Turnaround Learning Community, and the many OST-facilitated peer-to-peer learning opportunities, states, districts, and schools are learning from each other and scaling up promising practices. In order to better provide technical assistance and support for what is working, OST has created a National Activities Plan to effectively use up to 5 percent of the more than \$500 million annual SIG program.

Key barriers and challenges include:

- sustainability of reforms in schools as SIG grants end;
- capacity challenges at state, district, and school level mean some intervention challenges persist;
- insufficient focus on comprehensive turnaround efforts at the state and district level, including alignment of SIG, Race to the Top, and ESEA Flexibility; and
- lack of quality and completeness data/knowledge allows others to define success.

Engagement with external stakeholders includes the following:

- The Department implemented a communications plan that prioritizes regional and local media outreach to share promising stories and proven practices.
- And conducted several outreach events, including SIG/turnaround forum with external stakeholders.

**Progress:**

- The federal government has made significant investments in turning around the nation's persistently lowest-achieving schools, in large part through SIG, RTT, and the Department's work to grant states flexibility regarding specific requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB).
- With more than 1,400 schools now implementing one of the four SIG intervention models, schools around the country have hired new leadership, recruited effective teachers, increased learning time, changed school climate, and offered teachers data-driven professional development aimed at increasing student achievement.
- Thirty-four (34) states and the District of Columbia are carrying out plans to implement turnaround principles in their priority schools under their Department-approved ESEA Flexibility plan.
- Overall, from 2009–10 to 2010–11, 64 percent of SIG schools increased their student proficiency rates in reading, and 65 percent increased their student proficiency rates in math. The remaining SIG schools showed similar proficiency rates or decreases in proficiency rates over these two years. Because there are so many factors that contribute to student proficiency rates, and because these data are only based on one year of SIG implementation, it is not certain that it is attributable to the SIG program.
- Office of School Turnaround has profiled nearly 100 states, districts, and schools implementing promising school turnaround practices, and is using National Activities funds to profile 100 more to eventually share publicly.

**Priority Goal: Prepare all students for college and career**

**Goal for FY 2012–2013:** By September 30, 2013, all states will adopt internationally-benchmarked college- and career-ready standards.

***Supports Strategic Goal 2.***

**Overview:** The adoption of internationally-benchmarked college- and career-ready standards is the foundation to improving educational outcomes for all students and a fundamental step toward meeting the goal of once again having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020. The Department is working to increase the number of states approved for ESEA Flexibility, those that have adopted college- and career-ready standards, by working with states that submitted ESEA Flexibility requests to meet the high bar for approval. The Department is developing and targeting technical assistance activities that will, in part, increase state capacity to leverage limited resources and continue to identify promising practices across multiple states.

For example, the Department will build a bank of data to assist in full and effective transition to college- and career-ready standards developed or identified by other Department offices to leverage resources across the agency. Second, the Department is working internally to coordinate the provision of technical assistance across RTT, ESEA Flexibility, and other related programs. And, in the most recent Comprehensive Centers competition, the Department created a Center on Standards and Assessments Implementation that will help build the capacity of state educational agencies to implement college- and career-ready standards. The Department has met with stakeholders to provide information on state plans, as well as to enlist external support and technical assistance for states and districts as they move forward with implementing the new standards.

**Progress:** Forty-six (46) states and the District of Columbia (47 total) have adopted college- and career-ready standards through adoption of the Common Core State Standards.

Through their [ESEA Flexibility](#) requests, 47 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Bureau of Indian Education have, as of the 2nd quarter, submitted evidence of formal adoption of college- and career-ready standards and provided plans to transition to those standards by 2013–2014. In February 2013, three states (Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wyoming) submitted requests for flexibility. More states may yet request flexibility in the coming months. The total number of states that submitted and that have been approved (39 states and the District of Columbia) to date is significantly more than the Department initially anticipated as nearly all states have requested flexibility and states have been generally willing to make changes to their requests needed to meet ESEA Flexibility principles.

Because of the iterative approach to approval, and the high bar set for states, the Department has not set specific targets for approval but has worked with states individually to meet the high bar. Some states are unable to meet that bar at this time.

## Priority Goal: Improve outcomes for all children from birth through third grade

**Goal for FY 2012–2013:** By September 30, 2013, at least nine states will implement a high-quality plan to collect and report disaggregated data on the status of children at kindergarten entry.

### *Supports Strategic Goal 3.*

**Overview:** To enhance the quality of early learning programs and improve outcomes for children from birth through third grade, including children with disabilities and those who are English learners, the Department will promote initiatives that improve the early learning workforce, build the capacity of states and programs to develop and implement comprehensive early learning assessment systems, and improve systems for ensuring accountability of program effectiveness.

The nine Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) FY 2011 grantees all have high-quality plans as evidenced by their winning an RTT-ELC grant and addressing these criteria in their applications and will report disaggregated data on the status of children at kindergarten entry. With the addition of the RTT-ELC FY 2012, four states were added. RTT-ELC states are just beginning to develop or enhance these instruments and are limited to using funds other than those provided under the program. Because of sequestration and a slow economic recovery, there are few state resources to support development of appropriate instruments and the implementation of the assessments. Grantees report that they may not meet their proposed implementation date. In addition, the Department would like to have a national picture, but there are currently no organizations that collect data on state activities around Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) implementation.

**Progress:** The nine FY 2011 grantees' Annual Performance Reports (APRs), Summaries, and Response Letters have been posted on the RTT-ELC program page (<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/performance.html>).

The APRs asked states if they made progress in developing a KEA that is 1) aligned with standards, 2) valid for the target population and purpose, 3) administered by the 2014–15 school year, 4) reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and 5) significantly funded outside of the RTT-ELC grant. Six states reported progress in all 5 of the progress areas, while Massachusetts reported progress in 4 of the 5, noting that they have not been able to find funding for the project outside of the grant. Three states made it clear that they would not be able to implement the KEA by the 2014–15 school year.

On April 16, 2013, the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services announced they will invest the majority of the 2013 Race to the Top funds (\$370 million) for both a new competition and to provide supplemental awards for six state grantees—California, Colorado, Illinois, New Mexico, Oregon, and Wisconsin—who had only received 50 percent of their initial request.

Final Scopes of Work and Amendment Letters for the nine FY 2011 grantees have been posted on the RTT-ELC program page (<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/awards-phase-1.html>).

**Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge States on track to reach the goal:** California, Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Washington.

**Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge States not on track to reach the goal:** Wisconsin.

### **Priority Goal: Make informed decisions and improve instruction through the use of data**

**Goal for FY 2012–2013:** By September 30, 2013, all states will implement comprehensive statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS).

#### ***Supports Strategic Goal 5.***

**Overview:** The Department will facilitate the development of interoperable state data systems from early learning through the workforce and will provide support to the education community, including teachers and administrators, on how to understand and appropriately use data to inform policies, instructional practices, and leadership decisions.

Key barriers and challenges include districts' and states' limited resources; state procurement practices; lack of engagement with needed district and state stakeholders; difficulties with cross-agency governance and data sharing; ongoing leadership changes at state educational agencies (SEAs), partner agencies, and at the state level; misconceptions about data collection and the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA); state laws, and other regulations related to privacy and confidentiality; lack of training on how to use data to make policy and instructional decisions; and concerns from stakeholders about the long-term sustainability of data systems without long-term federal funding.

Cross-sector linkages between K-12, early childhood, postsecondary, and workforce require a champion outside the SEA (e.g., a governor's office) but political support for widespread data collection and linkage varies. Additionally, state education and labor agencies are relatively new partners so they are figuring out how to work together. The Department is implementing new, [targeted technical assistance to increase states' capacity](#) to support statewide longitudinal data systems after federal funding. Additionally, the Department meets with state leadership to affirm their support for and commitment to use SLDS data to make educational improvements, but there is a need for the Department and the Department of Labor (DOL) to provide guidance and resources to states to encourage secure linking of education and workforce records.

**Progress:** [SLDS grants](#) were awarded to 14 states in November 2005 (FY 2006 grantees), 12 additional states and the District of Columbia in June 2007 (FY 2007 grantees), 27 states—including 15 new states—in March 2009 (FY 2009 grantees), 20 states in May 2010 (FY 2009 *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* grantees), and 24 states and territories—including 6 new states and 2 new territories—in June 2012 (FY 2012 grantees). Based on the five rounds of funding, 47 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands have received at least one SLDS grant. By the end of FY 2013, we expect all states and DC to have a functioning K-12 SLDS, 12 states to link with early childhood systems, 21 states to link with postsecondary data from state institutions, and 10 to link with labor. Labor linkages have presented the largest challenges for states due to the lack of a common ID, multiple privacy laws, and multi-agency coordination. The Department has increased coordination with DOL and the Workforce Data Quality Initiative grants program, including joint sessions at an annual

grantee conference. Additionally, fewer states are ready to link to early childhood data, as evidenced in the low number of Priority 2 FY 2012 applications. The Department is creating a series of best practice materials in early childhood and held a privacy workshop for states on sharing early childhood data.

For more information on the Department's FY 2012–13 Priority Goals, please go to <http://goals.performance.gov/agency/ed>.

## Cross-Agency Priority Goals

In addition to the Agency Priority Goals, the Department contributes to several Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) Goals as required by the *GPR Modernization Act of 2010*:

**Broadband:** As part of expanding all [broadband](#) capabilities, ensure 4G wireless broadband coverage for 98 percent of Americans by 2016.

**Veteran Career Readiness:** Improve career readiness of veterans. By September 30, 2013, increase the percent of eligible service members who will be served by career readiness and preparedness programs from 50 percent to 90 percent in order to improve their competitiveness in the job market.

**Job Training:** Ensure our country has one of the most skilled workforces in the world by preparing 2 million workers with skills training by 2015 and improving the coordination and delivery of job training services.

**Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Education:** In support of the President's goal that the U.S. have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020, the federal government will work with education partners to improve the quality of STEM education at all levels to help increase the number of well-prepared graduates with STEM degrees by one-third over the next 10 years, resulting in an additional 1 million graduates with degrees in STEM subjects.

For additional information on the Cross-Agency Priority Goals, please go to [http://goals.performance.gov/goals\\_2013](http://goals.performance.gov/goals_2013).

## Looking Ahead and Addressing Challenges

Education is key to the nation's long-term economic prosperity and is an investment in its future. A highly educated workforce is necessary for American competitiveness in the global economy. The Department continues to maintain strong support for traditional state formula grant programs while continuing to fund competitive initiatives, including [Race to the Top](#), [Promise Neighborhoods](#), [Investing in Innovation](#) (i3) grants, and a redesigned [School Improvement Grants](#) program. Almost every state is supporting higher standards that ensure students will be college- and career-ready.

The United States is seeing the highest high school graduation rate in three decades, and over the past four years, postsecondary financial assistance available to students and families has increased significantly. Moreover, the Department has seen an increase of more than 50 percent in the number of students accessing higher education on Pell Grants.

Finally, the Department's efforts to support and strengthen the teaching profession through improved teacher evaluation and professional development are predicted to pay long-term dividends.