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## Mission and Organizational Structure

### Our Mission

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

**Who We Are.** In 1867, the federal government formally 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. Today, the Department supports programs that address every area and level of education.

The [Department](#) engages in four major types of activities: establishing policies related to federal education funding, including the distribution of funds, collecting on student loans, and using data to monitor the use of funds; supporting 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.

**Our Public Benefit.** The Department is committed to helping to ensure that all students throughout the nation develop skills to succeed in school, college, and the workforce. While recognizing the primary role of states and school districts in providing a high-quality education, the Department supports efforts to employ highly qualified teachers and administrators, establish challenging content and achievement standards, and monitor students' progress against those standards.

The Department's largest asset is a portfolio of student loans. Grants to states are the second largest item on the balance sheet, mostly for elementary and secondary education, awarded based on legislated formulas. The third biggest item is student aid to help pay for college through Pell Grants, Work Study, and other campus-based programs. The Department also carries out competitive grant programs to promote innovation, performs research, collects education statistics, and enforces civil rights statutes.

**Offices by Function.** [Federal Student Aid \(FSA\)](#) administers need-based financial assistance programs for students pursuing postsecondary education and makes available federal grants, direct loans, and work-study funding to eligible undergraduate and graduate students.

The offices of [Elementary and Secondary Education \(OESE\)](#), [Special Education and Rehabilitative Services \(OSERS\)](#), [Innovation and Improvement \(OII\)](#), [English Language Acquisition \(OELA\)](#), [Postsecondary Education \(OPE\)](#), and [Career, Technical, and Adult Education \(OCTAE\)](#) provide leadership, technical assistance, and financial support to state and local educational agencies and institutions of higher education for reform, strategic investment, and innovation in education.

[Institute of Education Sciences \(IES\)](#) is the research and statistics arm of the Department. The Department's goal is to provide rigorous and relevant evidence on which to ground education practice and policy and share this information broadly. By identifying what works, what doesn't, and why, IES aims to improve educational outcomes for all students, particularly those at risk of failure. Its goal is to transform education into an evidence-based field in which decision makers

routinely seek out the best available research and data before adopting programs or practices that will affect significant numbers of students.

The [Office for Civil Rights \(OCR\)](#) works to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the nation through vigorous enforcement of civil rights. OCR serves student populations facing discrimination and the advocates and institutions promoting systemic solutions to civil rights issues.

The [Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development \(OPEPD\)](#) serves as the principal adviser to the Secretary on all matters relating to policy development, performance measurement and evaluation, and budget processes and proposals. Two major components, the Budget Service and the Policy and Program Studies Service (PPSS), are housed within OPEPD.

**Support Service Offices.** The Department's support services offices are major partners with the grant-making and other principal offices as they provide services to external customers. These offices include: Office of the Secretary; Office of the Deputy Secretary; Office of the Under Secretary; Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs; Office of the Chief Financial Officer; Office of the Chief Information Officer; Risk Management Services; and Office of Communications and Outreach.

**Regional Offices.** The [Department has 10 regional offices](#) that provide points of contact and assistance for schools, parents, and citizens. Regional offices offer support through communications, civil rights enforcement, and federal student aid services to promote efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity in the programs and operations of the Department.

Descriptions of the [principal offices](#) and [overviews of the activities of the Department](#) and its programs can be found on the Department's website.

## Our Organization in Fiscal Year 2014

This chart reflects the statutory organizational structure of the U.S. Department of Education. [Interactive](#) and [text versions](#) of the coordinating structure of the Department are available.

