



## Supporting Families and Communities

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## Reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

*There is no program and no policy that can substitute for a parent who is involved in their child's education from day one.*

—President Barack Obama

Engaging families and communities in education is critical to improving outcomes for all students, particularly for students in high-need schools. Under current law, family engagement is too often focused on a checklist of activities rather than on driving results, funding isn't always targeted to the most effective practices, and family engagement is treated as a discrete activity rather than as an integrated strategy that should have a place across multiple programs.

The proposal to reauthorize the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* reflects the importance of strengthening and supporting family engagement both through specific programs designed to involve families and communities and through policies that will empower and engage families. It will ensure that families have the information they need about their children's schools and enhance the ability of teachers and leaders to include families in the education process.



*Our proposal supports state, district, and school efforts to engage families by:*

**Supporting comprehensive district approaches to family engagement.** Our Title I proposal will require that districts and schools develop comprehensive, systemic plans for sustained family engagement, and fund those plans with at least 2 percent of their funds from the Title I, Part A, program in *ESEA*. Districts will spend a minimum of \$270 million nationally on parent and family engagement. Rather than implementing a checklist of activities, districts and schools will use family engagement strategies that increase student achievement and create a welcoming environment, open communication, and strong collaboration between families and their children's teachers, schools, and districts.

**Enhancing district capacity around family engagement.** Our proposal will support districts' efforts to build and enhance their capacity in several areas, including family and community engagement.

**Providing for a new Family Engagement and Responsibility Fund.** Our proposal will enable states to set aside 1 percent of their Title I, Part A, funding to create significant resources for improving family engagement. Grants will fund districts and nonprofits (such as community-based organizations and Parental Information and Resource Centers) to operate programs that promote family engagement, empowerment, and responsibility.

**Identifying and supporting best practices.** Our proposal will allow states to support, identify, and disseminate best practices from activities funded by the Family Engagement and Responsibility Fund.

*Our proposal invests in family and community engagement and safe and supportive schools through:*

**Successful, Safe, and Healthy Students Program.** Our proposal includes \$410 million for the Successful, Safe, and Healthy Students program, under which states and districts would assess families' experiences with and attitudes on school engagement, school safety, and the overall school environment. This school-level information would be made publicly available and would help direct funds to identify local needs, which could include improving family engagement.

**Promise Neighborhoods Program.** Our proposal would provide \$210 million for the Promise Neighborhoods program, which would create a cradle-through-college-and-career continuum of supports in high-poverty communities, including supports for effective schools, comprehensive services, and strengthening families. Programs will be encouraged to take a comprehensive approach to meeting student needs, drawing on the contributions of community-based organizations, local agencies, and family and community members.

**21st Century Community Learning Centers.** Our proposal includes \$1.2 billion for a reformed and strengthened 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, which will provide additional time and comprehensive supports to students and families.

*Our proposal calls for transparency and accountability through:*

**Better information for families about their children's schools.** States will provide parents with a clear, easily understandable report card with key information about their child's school, including student achievement levels, graduation rates, school climate, and school funding. They will show parents how their child's school measures up against other schools in the area, allowing parents to make more informed decisions about their child's education.

**Better information for families on teacher and principal effectiveness.** States and districts will publish annual report cards on teacher and leader effectiveness, giving families meaningful aggregate information about the quality of educators working in their schools.

**Family notification.** Our proposal maintains the current Title I requirement that families be notified of the accountability status of their district and school.

*Our proposal supports teachers and principals in engaging families more effectively.*

**Effective teachers engaging families.** Our proposal encourages professional development programs to improve teachers' and leaders' skills in working with families. It also allows districts to include "engaging families and parents" as one of the multiple measures of success in teacher evaluations.

**Effective leaders engaging families.** The Transformational Leaders program would require that schools offer leadership programs to provide school leaders with the skills necessary to lead school turnaround efforts, including effectively engaging families and community members in the process.

**Family literacy.** Our proposal recognizes the importance of family literacy by allowing funds from the Effective Teaching and Learning Literacy program to be spent to support family literacy activities; such activities also could be funded under the new Family Engagement and Responsibility Fund.

*Our proposal provides options to families.*

**Meaningful, high-quality choices.** Our proposal would provide \$490 million for the Supporting Effective Charter Schools and Promoting Public School Choice programs. They would provide students and families with expanded educational options within the public school system, including charter schools, other autonomous public schools, magnet schools, inter- and intradistrict choice programs, and online learning programs. This support would also ensure families have the information they need about these options to make informed choices for their children.

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