



Supporting Teachers



Reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

We know that from the moment students enter a school, the most important factor in their success is not the color of their skin or the income of their parents— it is the teacher standing at the front of the classroom.

—PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

Of all the work that occurs at every level of our education system, the interaction between teacher and student is the primary determinant of student success. A great teacher can make the difference between a student who achieves at high levels and a student who slips through the cracks, and a great principal can help teachers succeed as part of a strong, well-supported instructional team. Research shows that top-performing teachers can make a dramatic difference in the achievement of their students and suggests that the impact of being assigned to top-performing teachers year after year is enough to significantly narrow achievement gaps.

Yet our education system doesn't give teachers the respect and support that professionals deserve. Many prospective teachers attend preparation programs that aren't relevant to the work they'll be doing in the classroom. Once they start teaching, they don't receive meaningful feedback or professional development that allows them to grow as professionals. When they succeed, they aren't given adequate recognition or respect. Schools often aren't structured or led in a way that allows teachers to share their expertise and learn from each other. Across the education system the contributions that teachers make to their students' learning and to their school communities too often isn't properly recognized.



The Obama administration's plan for reauthorizing the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* addresses these critical issues that affect America's students by attending to three areas of teaching in particular: treating teachers as professionals, rewarding excellence in teaching, and giving teachers adequate time and support to develop themselves and their lessons.

Our Plan Treats Teachers as Professionals by:

- ▶ **Increasing funding.** Our proposal contains the largest request for ESEA funding ever—both overall and for funds targeted towards teachers and leaders. It requests historic funding for teachers and principals—a 10-percent increase over the 2009–10 budget, to \$3.9 billion.
- ▶ **Responding to teachers' voices.** We'll require annual surveys of teachers and require districts to report the results. Teachers will collaborate in the design of new evaluation systems.
- ▶ **Sharing responsibility.** The responsibility for improving student outcomes won't fall on the teachers alone. States, districts, and school leaders will share that responsibility. Districts that are not supporting their schools, principals, and teachers will face interventions.

- ▶ **Improving evaluations.** Working with teachers, principals, and other stakeholders, districts will improve evaluation systems for teachers and principals. These systems will consider student learning and other measures and will provide educators with better information to improve their practice.

Our Plan Rewards Excellence by:

- ▶ **Rewarding success.** Great teachers will have advancement opportunities and additional compensation.
- ▶ **Focusing on growth.** Teachers will get credit for accelerating the learning of students of all abilities. They won't be judged simply by their students' meeting absolute benchmarks.
- ▶ **Supporting teachers in closing gaps.** Schools and their teachers will not be labeled as failing if one group of students is not meeting targets. Instead, we will put in place supports to help them focus on closing achievement gaps, giving local officials the flexibility to choose how to do so.
- ▶ **Improving achievement through flexibility.** In the vast majority of schools, districts, school leaders, and teachers will have the flexibility to decide how best to improve their schools and raise student achievement. They won't be required to offer tutoring or school choice.

Our Plan Gives Teachers Time and Support by:

- ▶ **Increasing collaboration time.** There will be more support for time for teachers to collaborate, mentor, and work together to improve their practice.
- ▶ **Holding preparation programs accountable.** We will make sure teacher and leader preparation programs are accountable for preparing their graduates to be successful in classrooms. We will increase the investment in preparation.
- ▶ **Funding relevant professional development.** We will provide districts with support to implement professional development that is proven to give teachers knowledge and skills that help them improve their classroom practice.
- ▶ **Improving principal leadership.** More focus will be put on principal development and improving the quality of school leadership, including holding principals to the same effectiveness standards as teachers.

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