

HIGH SCHOOLS AND CAREER READINESS: STRENGTHENING THE PIPELINE TO THE MIDDLE CLASS

"...I'm announcing a new challenge to redesign America's high schools so they better equip graduates for the demands of a high-tech economy... We'll reward schools that develop new partnerships with colleges and employers, and create classes that focus on science, technology, engineering and math."

– President Barack Obama, February 12, 2013

For too many American students, high school is a time of disengagement that fails to put them on a path to college and career success. That's why the Obama administration has laid out plans to redesign high schools and career and technical education (CTE), to ensure that young people graduate with the skills and abilities that are aligned with the needs of a global economy.

THE NEED

Preparing young adults for success requires a different educational experience than it did even a generation ago. Yet far too many of America's students are not meaningfully engaged or motivated in their academic experience while in high school. Many high school graduates lack exposure to learning that links their work in school to college and careers—especially in the critically important fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Moreover, many of America's international competitors offer students a more rigorous and relevant education in their middle and high school years. Our schools must do more to engage, prepare, and inspire college- and career-ready students, and our CTE programs must be better aligned to employer and postsecondary needs.

THE GOAL

President Obama has set two ambitious goals: that all adult Americans pursue at least one year of higher education or career training, and that America regain its role as the world leader in the college completion. The President's plan to reinvent high schools and strengthen federal CTE programs will support this goal.

THE PLAN

The President's plan would invest in programs that would bring major changes to the American high school experience and significantly strengthen CTE. The key elements of the plan include:

HIGH SCHOOL DISENGAGEMENT

The 2012 Gallup Student Poll asked students how involved and enthusiastic they feel about school. Nearly eight in 10 elementary students reported high engagement. **By high school, only half that many did.**

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

76%

MIDDLE SCHOOL

61%

HIGH SCHOOL

44%

- **High School Redesign (\$300 million):** This new competitive grant program would support partnerships between school districts, institutions of higher education, and business, industry, nonprofits, and community-based organizations to redesign high schools. Special consideration will be given to partnerships that focus on areas with limited access to quality career and college opportunities, such as high-poverty and rural districts, as well as to partnerships with employers that can provide students with career-related experience or career-related credentials. Learn more about investments to improve the education of high school students by viewing the Department's crosscut document.

Redesigned high schools will put in place learning models that allow students to graduate from high school with college credit and career-related experience. Districts and partners may draw on successful existing models, including career academies, dual enrollment, and early college programs.

Common features of redesigned high schools will include a strong academic foundation, career-related learning opportunities, and intensive advisement. This effort is informed by strong models such as Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) in Brooklyn, New York; Reynoldsburg High School in Reynoldsburg, Ohio; and Loving High School in Loving, New Mexico.

- **Reauthorized Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) program (\$1.1 billion):** The administration's proposal would make dollars from the Perkins program go farther by incentivizing states to better align programs with the needs of employers and with the demands of higher education through articulation agreements for college credit and identification of high-growth, in-demand industry sectors. Students would experience a more seamless journey from high school to postsecondary education, and enter the workforce with the skills to work in high-demand sectors. The

reauthorized CTE bill also will drive innovation, in part through competitive grants to consortia of districts, higher education institutions, and employers. Improved accountability will provide students and states with better information on program quality and outcomes.



- **Getting Students Through Middle School and Into College:** This investment will provide \$1.1 billion to support GEAR UP and TRIO programs, which include early college preparation and awareness, intensive support, and summer learning in the Upward Bound and Talent Search programs. The effort to improve high schools will be supported by the Department of Education's \$658 million School Turnaround Grant program, which will provide funds to states and districts to implement rigorous interventions in low-performing schools. Additionally, the \$215 million Investing in Innovation program has made grants in areas that include turnaround efforts at schools with high dropout rates. The proposed \$42 million Dual Enrollment Program will offer more high school students the opportunity to earn college credit, while the \$102 million College Pathways and Accelerated Learning Program will provide college-level and accelerated instruction in low-income schools.



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