

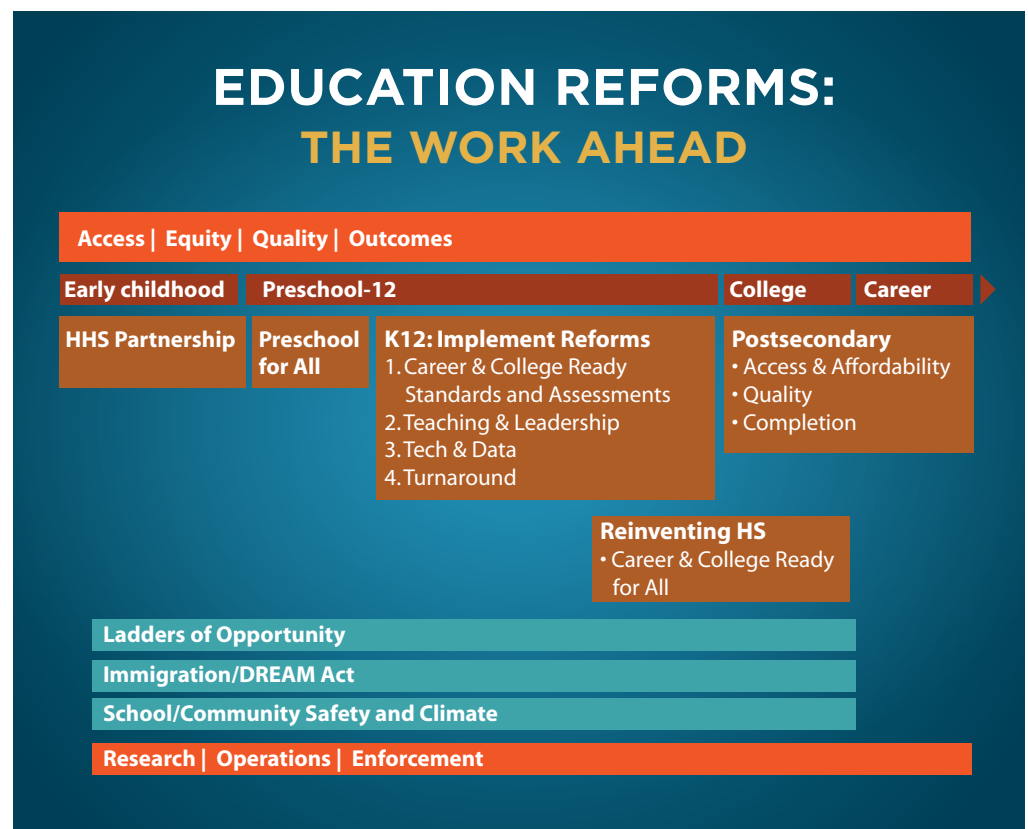
K-12 REFORMS: STRATEGIC INITIATIVES TO FOSTER REAL CHANGE

It is clear what it means to be prepared for tomorrow's economy. Already, three-quarters of the fastest-growing occupations require education beyond a high school diploma, with science, technology, and engineering careers prominent on the list. However, our K-12 schools aren't preparing enough of our students for that reality. Today, the United States has one of the highest high school dropout rates in the world. Among students who do complete high school and go on to college, half require remedial courses, and nearly half never graduate. Yet in today's world, a college degree or advanced certificate increasingly represents the entry ticket to rewarding careers. In today's world, our graduates will compete against the smartest young people from across the globe. But in today's world, the United States ranks 14th in college attainment. As President Obama said in his 2013 state of the union address, "It is our generation's task ... to reignite the true engine of America's economic growth—a rising, thriving middle class." Reigniting that engine depends on K-12 schools strong enough to prepare all students for college, careers, and the innovation-based economy in which they will make their living.

THE CORE REFORMS

To meet that challenge, the Obama administration set out in 2009—amid the greatest financial crisis in generations—to

put in place a set of reforms to ensure that every child in this country receives the education he or she deserves. President Obama set two ambitious goals: that the United States would once again lead the world in college completion, and that every student would receive at least one year of college or specialized training after high school. At the K-12 level, the Obama administration put in place a coordinated set of initiatives that unleashed a wave of innovation and reform at the state level, while continuing to ensure quality services for the most vulnerable students. The reforms sought to make improvements in the most pivotal elements of education systems: excellence in teaching and school leadership; high standards for what every student should know and be able to do; and assessments and data systems to drive improvement.



The key initiative in this K-12 reform effort has been the Race to the Top program, which has provided more than \$4 billion to help 18 states and the District of Columbia to implement comprehensive reform strategies based on college- and career-ready academic standards and assessments, increased use of data to improve instruction, great teachers and principals in every school, and an intense focus on turning around the lowest-performing schools. Race to the Top reform strategies also provided the foundation for the President's 2010 proposal for reauthorizing the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), which re-envisioned the federal role in education as supporting more flexible, innovative, locally driven approaches to teaching and learning that would allow states, school districts, principals and teachers to make more productive use of existing resources. However, in September 2011, with reauthorization five years overdue and the outdated provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act* increasingly hindering state-led efforts to create next-generation education accountability and improvement systems, President Obama announced an initiative called ESEA flexibility. Thirty-four states and the District of Columbia are now taking advantage of ESEA flexibility to implement state-developed plans to ensure access to higher quality standards and assessments for all students, including students with disabilities and English learners; differentiated accountability systems that target intensive interventions in the lowest-performing schools while ensuring strong, continued subgroup accountability in all schools; and rigorous systems for the evaluation and support of teachers and principals.

K-12 REFORM IN THE PRESIDENT'S 2014 BUDGET

Building on this momentum, President Obama has proposed to deepen reforms through significant new investments in strategic areas where states and school districts face key implementation challenges, and to continue substantial investments in critical formula programs that support state and local reform efforts. The President's budget includes the following investments:

HIGH SCHOOL REDESIGN AND CAREER READINESS

To compete in a global economy, young people increasingly need postsecondary education—whether that's a 4-year degree, 2-year degree, or postsecondary certificate. That's why President Obama has called on all Americans

to commit to at least one year of education after high school. Yet, 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. The Obama administration has laid out plans to redesign high schools and career and technical education (CTE). **Learn more about high school redesign and career readiness.**

STRENGTHENING SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS (STEM) EDUCATION

Economists project strong growth in careers related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Today, however, only 16 percent of American high school seniors are proficient in mathematics and interested in a STEM career. The nation also faces a skills gap: the United States ranks 25th in mathematics and 17th in science among industrialized nations. To address these challenges, the Obama administration proposes an aggressive STEM push, with new and repurposed funds, that will reorganize or eliminate 114 STEM education programs in 11 agencies, improving the delivery and impact of STEM education. **Learn more about STEM.**

SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STRENGTHENING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Many of the brightest college graduates in this country never consider entering the field of education and nearly half of all individuals who do begin a career in teaching leave the profession within the first five years. This turnover rate costs the nation more than \$7 billion each year, and costs schools, families and communities in ways that cannot be counted. The Obama administration has laid out a plan to strengthen teaching and school leadership, building on significant investments and proposals in the first term, including through the RESPECT (Recognizing Educational Success, Professional Excellence, and Collaborative Teaching) initiative, which would award grants to states and consortia of districts with the most ambitious plans and policies for reforming all aspects of the teaching profession. In addition to the RESPECT competition, the administration would refocus and improve the effectiveness of the Title II program through a \$2.5 billion investment, and would set aside 25 percent of Title II funds to improve pathways into teaching and school leadership and to enhance the teaching profession. **Learn more about the teachers and leaders plan.**

SCHOOL SAFETY

Schools are, generally, the safest places in America, but the nation's conscience has been shocked by recent acts of horrific violence in schools. While these acts have changed their communities forever, less dramatic moments of violence each day decrease students' sense of security, which is essential to their healthy growth and learning. In response, the President's plan to increase school safety and to decrease gun violence includes investments not only to prepare schools for emergencies, but also to create nurturing school climates. **Learn more about school safety.**

TURNING AROUND THE LOWEST-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

Since 2009, the administration has invested \$5.5 billion in School Improvement Grants aimed at turning around some 1,500 of the nation's persistently lowest-achieving schools that produce a disproportionate number of the more than 500,000 students who drop out of high school each year. Already, there has been major progress; a million fewer students attend such "dropout factories" today than did a decade ago—but there is much further to go. The 2014 budget request includes \$125 million for a proposed School Turnaround Grants District Capacity-Building competitive grant program that would strengthen the capacity of school districts to reform their lowest-performing schools and sustain the progress of low-performing schools that improve. These funds are in addition to \$534 million that would continue to be used by districts to implement rigorous interventions to turn around their lowest-performing schools. **Learn more about school turnaround.**

INVESTING IN DATA TO DRIVE IMPROVEMENT

Strong data systems are at the heart of the effort to improve schools. The Department's State Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) program has funded data systems that improve the ability of schools to provide regular feedback to educators, offer teachers data they can use to

improve instruction, allow state and local educational agencies to devise methods for identifying effective teachers and teaching practices, and provide accurate information about student and school progress. The 2014 request includes \$85 million for SLDS to expand the ways that states are currently using data from their SLDS systems and to support broader education reforms, including kindergarten readiness, secondary and postsecondary transitions, data-driven teacher and principal evaluation and support, and linking labor market outcomes to educational inputs. In addition, the request includes a focus on postsecondary data initiatives.

MAINTAINING CRITICAL INVESTMENTS

While competitive grant programs like Race to the Top help spur innovation and reform, investments in formula funding provide the resources necessary to support all states and districts in moving forward with their efforts to improve education. The 2014 budget maintains the administration's commitment to equity and excellence with \$14.5 billion for the College- and Career-Ready Students program, which will continue to help districts ensure that students in high-poverty schools are able to meet high academic standards and that low-performing schools receive targeted interventions and supports. To support states and districts in their transition to high-quality assessments that measure student progress toward college- and career-ready standards, the 2014 budget includes \$389 million for the Assessing Achievement program. President Obama's budget also continues to ensure students with disabilities receive the special education and related services that they need to meet college- and career-ready standards by investing \$11.6 billion in grants to states under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, so that students with disabilities receive the special education and related services they need. In addition, the budget invests \$732 million in English Learner Education and protects funding for programs serving migrant students, homeless children and youth, Native-American students and rural schools.

