

## Obama Administration Blueprint for ESEA Reauthorization Overview

This Blueprint aims to keep what was positive about No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – the requirements to disaggregate assessment data to measure achievement gaps – while addressing the major criticisms of the existing law. The proposal intends to eliminate the ‘perverse incentives’ in NCLB, which encouraged states to lower standards and focus on test preparation.

### **Blueprint Elements:**

- Replace the goal of ‘all students proficient by 2014’ with a focus on career and college ready students with a soft 2010 deadline. States would adopt new standards and set performance targets against the standards. The focus would be on improvement and growth, not just overall performance.
- States would adopt **career- and college- ready standards**, such as the Common Core Standards Initiative. Receipt of competitive grant funds would be contingent upon adopting new standards.
- Retain requirements to **test annually** in reading and math, but allow states to assess academic performance in additional subjects and measure additional factors such as school climate. Disaggregated data would transparent and public, as under NCLB.
- **Intervention in struggling schools:** The bottom five percent of schools must choose one of four turnaround models (Transformational, Turnaround, Restart, and Closure). The next five percent would be on a warning list and the state would have flexibility in determining research-based interventions. States would take aggressive action with schools that have the highest achievement gaps. States would take over Title I spending in schools that do not turn around within three years.
- Allow states **flexibility in intervening** with schools that do not meet achievement targets. States would provide different support for schools that, under old AYP rules, missed AYP in one area versus schools that did not meet the bar in multiple areas.
- Eliminate the NCLB mandate that struggling schools offer **school choice** and **supplemental educational services**, draining resources from already struggling schools.
- High-poverty schools, districts, and states that show success in **closing achievement gaps** would be recognized and rewarded with additional funding (“Reward” schools). Schools, districts, and states would be subject to consequences for lack of improvement (“Challenge” schools).
- States would ensure that effective teachers are equitably distributed among schools with high concentrations of high- and low- income students.
- Eliminate current “**highly qualified**” teacher requirements. States would create their own definitions for “effective teachers,” “highly effective teachers,” “effective principals” and “highly effective principals” using student performance as a major factor. Teacher and principal evaluation would be based on student performance. Formula funding (such as Title II) would continue as long as states are improving teacher and leader effectiveness.
- States would monitor the effectiveness of **teacher preparation programs** and invest more in programs with strong outcomes for students.
- Expanding high performing **charter schools** and autonomous public schools.
- **English Language Learners (ELL):** states would create new criteria for identification of

students as ELL, determining eligibility, placement, and duration of support. States would create a system for evaluating the effectiveness of ELL instructional programs and provide information on achievement of ELL subgroups.

- Additional funds would be available through competitive grants to states. Multiple smaller programs would be rolled into these projects or eliminated (e.g. Reading is Fundamental, Mathematics and Science Program).
  - **Literacy**: States would be required to develop a statewide pre-K–12 literacy plan (Washington currently has a K–12 literacy plan, one of only a few states). States could compete for funds to sub-grant to districts to implement comprehensive literacy programs.
  - Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (**STEM**): States would be required to develop statewide STEM plans and improve STEM instruction statewide.
  - **Well-rounded Education**: states, high need districts, and non-profit partners could compete for competitive grants to strengthen instruction in the arts, world languages, history, civics, financial literacy, and environmental education.
  - **College Pathways and Accelerated Learning**: states could compete for competitive grants to increase access to college and accelerated learning opportunities.

#### **Support is widespread:**

Overall, the blueprint has been received positively by Council of Chief State School Officers, National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), National School Boards Association (NSBA), the Alliance for Excellent Education, and other policy groups. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has issued a set of legislative recommendations, many of which are aligned to the blueprint themes. Congress is generally supportive of the themes of reauthorization and attempts to remedy long-standing problems with NCLB. Specifically, these stakeholders are generally supportive of the move toward common core standards to ensure that students are college and career ready, elimination of school choice and tutoring, elimination of the requirement that all students are proficiency by 2014, and the use of growth models to look at student performance from year to year.

#### **Some concerns expressed:**

The National Education Association (NEA) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT) do not want to see teacher evaluation or pay linked to student achievement. They argue that teachers have too much responsibility and no enough authority.

Only teachers' unions have expressed overall opposition to the blueprint:

- **NASBE, NSBA, Senator Patty Murray, and others** are concerned about linking Title I funding to adoption of common core standards.
- **Senator Murray** wants to ensure Title II funding levels are not reduced or replaced by competitive grants.
- Multiple stakeholders have expressed concern about the move to making more funds available on a **competitive** basis rather than formulas.
- **Rural** schools and districts may not have the staff capacity to compete for funds. Evaluating teachers and principals based on a very small number of students is problematic.
- **Charter schools** have been criticized as a 'siphoning' of declining public funds away from public schools with little research to back them up.
- Questions have been raised about the effectiveness of the four **turnaround school models** and the research (or lack thereof) behind them.

**Budget Highlights:**

Under President Obama's FY 2011 budget request, the Department of Education would receive \$49.7 billion, an increase of 7.5%. Many programs would be consolidated or eliminated. More funding streams would be competitive than in past years (additional \$3 billion). Overall, an additional \$1 billion would go to K-12 programs:

- Title I would be renamed "College-and-Career Ready Students" and would be flat funded.
- IDEA would receive \$11.8 billion, a 2.2% increase.
- Title II would receive a cut of \$500 million.
- Race to the Top would receive an additional \$1.35 billion and competition would open up to districts.
- SIG grants would be renamed "School Turnaround Grants Program" and increased to \$900 million, a 65% increase.

New programs include:

- \$405 million for pathways to teaching program, adding alternative routes to teaching.
- \$490 million for charter schools.
- \$950 million for Teacher and Leader Innovation Fund to promote 'bold' ways of rewarding and advancing teachers and leaders.
- \$2.5 billion for Effective Teachers and Leaders Grants to recruit, prepare, reward, retain effective teachers.
- \$450 million for states to work with nonprofits and higher education to improve reading and writing instruction.

Eliminated programs:

- \$3 billion for Improving Teacher Quality State Grants program and \$950 million for Teacher Incentive Fund (both rolled into new Teachers and Leaders Innovation Fund).
- \$250 million for Striving Readers program, \$66.5 million for Even Start Family-literacy program, and \$25.6 million for National Writing Project (all collapsed into reading and writing instruction program, above).

**Sources:**

- A Blueprint for Reform: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/index.html>
- EdWeek Articles: Obama Budget a Blueprint for Ed. Dept. Overhauls (2/5/2010) [http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/02/05/21budgetweb\\_ep.h29.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/02/05/21budgetweb_ep.h29.html)
- Budget Summary on Ed.Gov <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/statetables/11stbyprogram.pdf>
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