



A Framework and Recommendations for Federal Action on Secondary School Reform

Every school day, approximately 7,000 students drop out of high school. Nationally, only about 70 percent of the students who enter America's high schools graduate on time with a regular diploma. In total, about six million secondary school students are at risk of dropping out of school.

About 90 percent of the fastest-growing jobs of the future will require at least some postsecondary training, yet only about a third of the students who enter ninth grade leave school four years later prepared for college. More than 40 percent of employers report that high school graduates lack basic skills, including reading and math, to be successful in the jobs for which they are being hired.

In international comparisons of developed nations, American fifteen-year-olds rank twenty-fourth in math and fifteenth in reading. America's graduation rate has slipped to nineteenth out of twenty-six countries.

Obviously, too many of America's secondary schools are failing their students.

In response to the need to dramatically change the way secondary schools operate and teach their students, the Alliance for Excellent Education has developed a Framework for Federal Action to Improve Secondary Schools. This systemic reform agenda reflects the growing consensus of researchers, practitioners, and advocates who are translating valuable lessons from research and practice into recommendations for policy.

The Alliance's framework is underscored by three guiding principles, upon which all aspects of high school reform, across the spectrum of practice and policy decisions, must be based:

- All students must be held to high expectations that will allow them to graduate ready for college and the modern workplace.
- The system must support and leverage an effective and individualized approach at the student and school levels.
- Educators and policymakers must be provided with the necessary data and research to make informed decisions to improve policy and practice.

The Alliance’s new framework consists of seven areas, which taken together, offer a comprehensive and systemic approach to secondary school reform. Although the appropriate level of involvement for the federal government will vary from one area to another, all are critical components to achieving national objectives and must be addressed as a whole.

From No Child Left Behind to Every Child a Graduate



- **Alignment and Rigor:** Demand high, common expectations for every student by ensuring that standards, curriculum, assessments, and accountability systems are aligned with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in college and the workplace and to become a productive citizen.
- **Accountability:** Support valid high school accountability systems designed to measure student and system performance; foster good practice and mitigate bad practice; and identify and direct resources and reforms to improve teaching, learning, and outcomes for all students.
- **Student Supports and Options:** Ensure that every student has access to an engaging, rigorous, options-based curriculum and the interventions necessary to succeed in that curriculum.
- **Highly Effective Teachers and Principals:** Ensure that every classroom and school is led by an effective teacher and principal.
- **Supportive Communities:** Leverage community-based services and opportunities to provide every student with the academic and nonacademic supports necessary for academic success.
- **College Access:** Guarantee that every high school student has the academic and financial tools necessary for access to and success in postsecondary education.
- **Investment:** Drive financial and human resources to where they are needed most by ensuring that those resources are allocated equitably and adequately and are used

efficiently and effectively.

The framework is built upon several Alliance core beliefs about the appropriate role of the federal government in the education policy process. First, federal policies must be informed by practice and must do no harm to effective policies and practices already in place at the state and local levels but should build on those successes by complementing, encouraging, and supporting them at the federal level. New and revised policies must build on the historic reasons for federal involvement in the educational process but must also expand to reflect the increasingly urgent national imperative to improve the educational outcomes of all students in a global world. Finally, federal policy must support a comprehensive approach to secondary school reform based on data, research, and best practices.

Specific recommendations within each of these policy areas have been developed for the 110th Congress to consider as members work on the reauthorizations of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), Higher Education Act (HEA), and other legislative opportunities to improve the academic outcomes for all of America's students.

Alignment and Rigor

Ensure college- and work-ready standards for all students.

To help ensure that every student receives an education fit for the twenty-first century, federal policymakers should consider the following recommendations:

- **The federal government should play a role in guaranteeing that American elementary and secondary education is based on a shared set of voluntary, nationally agreed-upon expectations for all students that will ensure that they are educated to high standards and will graduate prepared for success in postsecondary education and in today's workplace.**

There are many ways to set national standards that would be benchmarked against the demands of higher education, business, and the global marketplace; to build on the best state standards; and to reflect the knowledge of experts in the field. The federal government does not need to set the standards or impose them on the states. But Congress should play a role in advancing shared standards and, once they are agreed upon, in offering incentives to states to adopt them. These world-class standards should clearly define the knowledge and skills all students need to have mastered by the time they graduate and should reflect America's high expectations for every student. At a minimum, standards should be developed in math and reading in grades three through twelve; they should have embedded in them critical thinking, communication, contextual learning, and other twenty-first-century skills. Standards must be aligned vertically throughout the education system so that all learning takes place on a trajectory toward college- and work-readiness and ensures that teaching and learning are truly preparing students for future success.

- **Federal policy should support the development of voluntary, high-quality assessments to measure student performance against a shared set of standards.**

The federal government should invest in the development of high-quality assessments designed to allow students to demonstrate whether they have, or are on track to have, the skills and

knowledge necessary to succeed after high school. In addition to determining levels of proficiency in math and reading, measurement of student mastery of the critical skills for success in the twenty-first century should be embedded in such assessments. The assessments should be of the highest caliber, draw on the best state assessments, and be universally designed to meet the needs of all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities. These assessments should be able to fulfill the math and reading assessment requirements of NCLB for those states that choose to use them. By contracting this work once, rather than fifty times over, the federal government would save the states billions of dollars that could be better spent developing formative and diagnostic assessments and providing supports and tools that will help students master high-level work.

- **Federal policy should provide incentives to states to align their curricula, teacher preparation, assessment, and other systems to shared college- and work-ready standards.**

National expectations will only be met if the entire education system is designed to meet them. The federal government should offer support and strong incentives for states to adopt these shared college- and work-ready standards and to align their curricula, professional development, graduation requirements, professional development, and other important elements accordingly, so that teaching and learning are designed to ensure that every student can succeed.

- **Federal policy should ensure transparency and provide incentives to help states, districts, and schools ensure that every student receives a college- and work-ready education by increasing student access to and success in a rigorous and well-rounded curriculum.**

To help ensure that every student has access to a high-quality curriculum that leads to college and workplace readiness, federal policy should require states to report annually on student access to and success in college preparatory course work across the state. Low-performing secondary schools should institute a default college preparatory curriculum for all students, along with the supports and engaging classes that will help students succeed.

Accountability

Implement effective measures and improvement strategies that drive reform in low-performing schools.

To support systems of accountability that identify, prioritize, and drive improvement actions in low-performing high schools, federal policymakers should consider the following:

- **Federal policy should create a more balanced approach to secondary school accountability by requiring every state to develop a comprehensive system to ensure secondary school improvement. The statewide system should include multiple measures of student and school performance, as well as supports and interventions specifically tailored to school and student needs and rooted in best practice and research. It should be leveraged by a new federal investment (see section on Investment for recommendation on the High School Improvement Fund) to build capacity and provide supports and include the following:**

An improved definition of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) that holds high schools accountable for student proficiency and school completion through a high-quality assessment of college and work readiness and accurate graduation rates.

NCLB should require that the assessment used for high school accountability measures whether students' reading, math, and other twenty-first-century skills (determined by well-designed, performance-based assessments) are on track to be proficient at a college- and work-ready level by graduation. To help ensure that schools are keeping and educating as many students as possible, NCLB should require that this college- and work-ready assessment is given for accountability purposes no earlier than eleventh grade and is aligned with the NCLB-required assessment administered in eighth grade to measure high school readiness. This timing and alignment would create a trajectory for college- and work-ready graduation and allow time to better identify and address weak academic skills. (See recommendation in section on Alignment and Rigor for a description of how voluntary national assessments could meet these needs and reduce state burden.)

The goal of educating all students to proficient levels of college and work readiness must be accompanied by the equally important goal of ensuring that all students graduate from high school. Graduation rates should be calculated using statewide longitudinal data systems with individual student identifiers that can allow schools to accurately report which students have graduated. They should be calculated using a common rate in all states, such as the four-year adjusted cohort rate agreed to by all fifty governors in the National Governors Association's Graduation Rate Compact. Graduation rates for all students and disaggregated by student subgroups must be included in the determination of AYP on an equal footing with test scores and must have similar, annually increasing goals that provide a reasonable trajectory toward achieving the objective of graduating all students.

Additional adjustments must be made to the ways that states calculate AYP by requiring consistency on a variety of factors, such as cell size (the minimum number of students in a subgroup), the definition of the term "Limited English Proficient," and the way in which confidence intervals (what might, in a poll sample, be called the "margin of error") are used.

The use of multiple indicators of school performance (rather than tests scores alone) to categorize and prioritize secondary schools in need of improvement.

Rather than federally imposing school improvement categories and corresponding sanctions based solely on the number of years a school has failed to make AYP, secondary schools that fail to make AYP should be categorized based on a more detailed diagnosis of student and school performance data. NCLB should require states to develop a set of performance indicators (such as student attendance rates, on-time promotion and credit accumulation rates, percentage of students completing a college preparatory curriculum, and postsecondary enrollment and attainment) that would be used in conjunction with the assessment and graduation measures included in AYP to determine whether such schools need targeted intervention, whole school reform, or should be replaced. These state-developed and peer-reviewed tiered interim indicator systems should also include minimum goals for progress on

the indicators so that secondary schools demonstrating progress would be permitted to continue to implement effective school improvement plans for a reasonable period of time.

Locally driven, but federally supported, school and district improvement strategies based on student and school data, rather than on federally prescribed improvement strategies for every school.

After secondary schools in need of improvement have been appropriately differentiated based on the state system described above, local school improvement teams should develop and implement secondary school improvement strategies. These strategies should be based on a diagnosis of student and school performance data and on a state-designed capacity audit of each school's ability to undertake needed changes (including both the needs of incoming students and available resources). The interventions and improvement plans should be based on research and practices that have been shown to work to improve student achievement and turn around low-performing secondary schools (such as adolescent literacy programs, personal graduation plans, challenging and engaging course work, comprehensive school reform models, early college opportunity, or programs specially designed for dropout recovery or to serve overage and undercredited students). School improvement plans should be designed to improve both immediate student outcomes and long-term school performance and should be monitored and supported by district and state officials. Additional federal funds should be provided to address the needs of these schools, including whole school reform efforts in seriously low-performing secondary schools and replacing the absolutely lowest-performing secondary schools with smaller, more rigorous schools. (See recommendation in section on Investment for a new High School Improvement Fund that would leverage additional resources for this purpose.)

When a capacity audit demonstrates that a secondary school is unable to lead improvement efforts to dramatically bolster student achievement and outcomes, districts must be involved in the school improvement process. Furthermore, districts with low-performing secondary schools must review and address contributing systemic failures. For example, districts can develop plans for dropout outreach and reenrollment, provide more flexibility in hiring, identify feeder schools that are low performing and facilitate collaboration or develop early-warning data systems to identify students who are falling off track and provide the supports needed to get them back on track. States and districts must replace the lowest-performing secondary schools by creating alternatives such as new small schools, credit recovery programs, career academies, and charter schools.

Increased capacity for secondary schools, districts, states, and other technical assistance providers to provide targeted, comprehensive, and systemic supports and interventions to low-performing students and schools.

To ensure that local educators have the support and guidance necessary to succeed in turning around low-performing secondary schools and maintaining that improvement over time, state and district education officials must have the capacity to guide, support, and monitor school improvement efforts. States must also have the capacity to provide systemic supports (e.g., data systems, high-quality diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, aligned

curricula, professional development) and offer technical assistance to districts that do not have sufficient expertise. NCLB should specify the need for such actions, especially for districts and states that have chronically failing high schools, and a portion of the proposed High School Improvement Fund (see section on Investment) should be set aside for building such capacity within schools, districts, states, and other technical assistance providers.

- **Federal policy should require states to report information about the allocation of resources to secondary schools.**

NCLB currently places the majority of the burden for accountability and improvement on schools. Yet many schools are struggling to provide a high-quality education to students without adequate resources. While accountability for performance is essential, states and districts must also be accountable to communities for ensuring that schools have the resources needed to help all students succeed. States receiving Title I funds should report on the school-level allocation of resources annually as part of NCLB-required school and district report cards in a way that is accessible to students, parents, and the community. These reports should compare a school's resources to the state average. The Secretary of Education should provide guidance on what kinds of information must be reported to provide the full picture of educational opportunity for students, including the quality of facilities and materials, the qualifications and effectiveness of teachers, access to technology, student/teacher ratios, and dollars spent per student at each school. State proposals should be peer reviewed through a transparent process to ensure that their plans will provide a comprehensive and accurate understanding of resource allocation.

Student Supports and Options

Provide multiple pathways to a college- and work-ready diploma and the supports needed for students to reach that end.

To help ensure that students have the supports and options they need to graduate ready for college or the workplace, federal policymakers should consider the following:

- **Federal policy should help states, districts, and schools provide students with the academic and other supports they need to succeed in graduating with a college- and work-ready diploma.**

NCLB requirements for low-performing secondary schools should ensure that school improvement plans address the needs of students and are based on research and best practices. For example, these plans should include strategies that personalize the school experience (such as personal graduation plans and advisories); offer extended learning time; engage students in relevant, challenging, project-based learning; and improve services for English language learners (especially late-entry immigrants), including consistency in identification, more use of formative and diagnostic assessment, and appropriate instructional practices. To support the overwhelming need to improve adolescent literacy, the federal government should authorize and significantly expand the Striving Readers program so that it serves struggling middle and high school students in every state.

- **Federal policy should help states and districts create personalized learning environments within America’s secondary schools.**

Federal policy should encourage personalization by requiring districts with low-performing secondary schools to demonstrate in their school improvement plan how they will offer personalized learning environments through mechanisms such as creating smaller learning communities, developing student advisories, “looping” teachers to allow them to stay with the same group of students for multiple years, providing personal graduation plans, reducing pupil loads, and using other effective strategies to create supportive learning communities.

- **Federal policy should assist states and districts in meeting the needs of all students by offering multiple pathways for students to earn a college- and work-ready diploma.**

Districts with multiple secondary schools in need of improvement should be required to demonstrate, as part of their improvement plans, that students have access to multiple pathways to a college- and work-ready diploma (for example, Advanced Placement courses, International Baccalaureate programs, dual enrollment opportunities, early-college programs, alternative schools, career and technical education, special programs for overage and undercredited students, dropout recovery programs, or service learning models). The federal government should support the development and expansion of these and other options by creating both a High School Improvement Fund and a Secondary School Innovation Fund (see section on Investment for related recommendation) to stimulate innovation and demonstrate new ways to increase student achievement and attainment.

Highly Effective Teachers and Principals

Provide all students with highly effective teachers and school leaders who have the training, supports, and incentives needed to succeed.

To ensure that high-quality teachers and principals are distributed to and effective in every high school classroom and school building, federal policymakers should consider the following:

- **Federal policy should improve the distribution of good teachers to ensure that more of the best are serving the students who have the greatest need.**

NCLB should require states to ensure that *all* secondary schools, not just those receiving Title I funds, have comparable average teacher salaries and percentages of highly qualified teachers, and NCLB Title II funds should be used to help secondary schools meet the highly qualified, highly effective, and equitable distribution requirements. To do this, Title II funds should be targeted to schools with the greatest need, using a “need index.” The index could be developed by states using defined indicators, such as highly qualified status, measures of teacher effectiveness, teacher and principal turnover, teacher attendance, and working conditions. Funds should be further targeted in those schools for comprehensive recruitment and retention activities, such as financial incentives to work in struggling schools and induction and mentoring for new teachers. Furthermore, the Title I loophole that excludes teacher salaries from comparability requirements should be closed to promote the equitable distribution of experienced teachers by including the actual salaries of teachers in comparisons of school equity. States should consider initiatives to permit principals of low-performing secondary schools to have the

right to refuse assignment of a teacher who is not highly qualified or otherwise not able to meet the needs of students in his or her school. Combined, these steps will help build a critical mass of effective teachers and leaders in low-performing secondary schools.

- **Federal policy should help states and districts improve working conditions in low-performing secondary schools to attract and retain good teachers and enable them to succeed.**

The federal investment in educators (including Title II of NCLB) should be focused on low-performing secondary schools to improve working conditions, including smaller pupil loads, adequate materials, time for teacher planning, and data-driven professional development. Title II funds should also be used to help achieve the goals of NCLB by targeting professional development to secondary schools not making AYP. Within those schools, such funds should be used to help teachers address the needs of subgroups of students not making AYP or in subject areas for which schools fail to make AYP.

- **Federal policy should strengthen teacher quality by ensuring that more secondary school teachers are both qualified and effective.**

The provisions of NCLB requiring all teachers to be highly qualified should ensure that secondary school teachers demonstrate mastery of teaching skills in addition to knowledge of their subject area. Moreover, middle school teachers should obtain certification credentials that prepare them specifically for effective work in middle schools.

NCLB should include a pilot program to measure and advance what is known about secondary teacher effectiveness. States and districts should receive competitive grants to develop models that assess and advance highly effective secondary teaching in Title I secondary schools; the models should be required to include a measure of student learning, along with multiple indicators of expertise such as peer and principal reviews or certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. In addition to measuring effectiveness, the models should be used to encourage and target professional development, training, and support to *improve* effectiveness, including rewarding teachers who work with high-need students. Funds should be set aside for a rigorous evaluation so that outcomes can be used to inform policies in other states and districts.

In reauthorizing HEA, Congress should expand its investment in teacher education in order to produce more highly effective secondary school teachers. Stronger accountability provisions in HEA should be accompanied by a new competitive grant program that helps recruit superlative candidates into teaching by agreeing to fund part of their education in exchange for participating in rigorous, evidence-based training and for serving in low-performing secondary schools. These recruits should be provided with high-quality instruction and classroom-based experience to help them teach their subject matter effectively and meet the needs of diverse learners.

- **Federal policy should support the development of more high-quality secondary school principals and help them lead low-performing secondary schools to success.**

NCLB should expand the federal investment in school leadership to offer grants to states, districts, institutions of higher education, and nonprofit organizations that have a track record of success in producing high-quality principals to ensure that such programs are addressing the needs of Title I secondary schools. NCLB should also support states that develop systems to determine which principals are most effective (especially in turning around low-performing schools) and offer incentives (such as performance bonuses, professional development, and flexibility in hiring and budgeting) for those principals to serve in low-performing secondary schools.

Supportive Communities

Effectively leverage the resources of the community to ensure that students receive the academic and nonacademic supports they need to succeed.

To help leverage the support of communities to ensure successful outcomes for students, federal policymakers should consider the following:

- **Federal policies and funding should be aligned to ensure that students receive supports and services that contribute to academic success.**

Federal policy should help schools leverage community-based resources and services that support the nonacademic needs (for instance, health or mental health services, summer job placement assistance, nutritional services, and social services) of students. NCLB should require low-performing schools that are implementing whole school reforms to demonstrate in their school improvement plan a process by which they will identify and evaluate the nonacademic needs of students and, as appropriate, connect available community resources and services to meet those needs. Districts with low-performing secondary schools should assist in coordinating services to address the nonacademic needs of students in order to support, maximize, and build on the good work of student services personnel (i.e., school counselors, school social workers, school nurses, teachers, and administrators).

Correspondingly, federal agencies addressing the nonacademic needs of students should work together and encourage the coordination of grants and services at all levels.

- **Federal policy should leverage opportunities and reduce barriers for student learning to occur within the local community.**

NCLB should include a Secondary School Innovation Fund (see recommendation in Investment section for related recommendation) to support competitive grants to secondary schools or partnerships of secondary schools and community-based organizations to implement innovative strategies such as service learning or internships. Such activities would provide students with learning opportunities in the community and engage community members in the school. For example, community members (such as artists) could be brought into schools to enrich curricula and to expand students' views of the possibilities that exist after high school, or high-quality

mentoring programs could be used to connect students with caring adults in the community who can help them navigate the challenges of secondary school.

College Access

Every high school student should have the academic and financial tools necessary to be prepared for and have access to postsecondary education.

To help ensure that students have the academic and financial tools necessary for postsecondary access and success, federal policymakers should consider the following:

- **The federal government must help ensure that students have academic preparation aligned with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in postsecondary education and in the workforce.**

The federal government should provide incentives to states to make a college preparatory curriculum the default curriculum for all students and produce data on student access to and success in such courses. Furthermore, states that receive federal funds should ensure that all students have access to the courses required for admission to the state's university system. Students and families need clear information about how their schools are performing, what their choices are for the future, and what the requirements are to take advantage of those choices. To that end, federal policy should require states to report college enrollment, persistence, and graduation data for each high school, so that families know whether schools are successful in preparing students for higher education. Finally, given the billions of federal dollars spent on unaligned K–12 and higher education systems, federal policy should require states to form P–16 councils to coordinate and promote clear alignment between the standards for high school learning and the expectations of higher education.

- **Federal policy should require increased transparency and information for students and their families about the transition from high school to college, including preparation and planning.**

NCLB should provide incentives for the development of personal graduation plans in low-performing schools to ensure that students and families have the tools and information necessary to plan for high school graduation and success in college or other postsecondary education or training. The federal government should also increase funding for programs like GEAR UP and TRIO that provide at-risk students with access to information about college and help them to prepare for it. In addition, postsecondary institutions that qualify for HEA Title IV funds should be required to provide clear, accessible information about their requirements for admission and for placement into credit-bearing courses to help parents and students understand and plan for college.

- **Federal policy should make college more affordable.**

To help lower financial barriers that keep students from going to and completing college, the federal government must increase financial aid, make student loans more affordable, and support policies that lower college costs. Pell grants and other need-based aid must be increased significantly to catch up with rising college costs. The federal government should also increase

funding for other grant aid that provides students with incentives to take a college-ready curriculum; it should ensure that all students have access to such a curriculum and to financial aid. In addition, policies that control the skyrocketing cost of college must be explored and implemented. Finally, Congress should help greater numbers of high-achieving immigrant students who have been in the United States since childhood and are likely to stay in the country to attain a college education by passing the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act to permit states to determine residency for higher education purposes.

Investment

Drive investment to the secondary schools and students who need it most.

To help provide the necessary resources for secondary school improvement, federal policymakers should consider the following:

- **The federal government should make a significant new investment to improve or replace America’s lowest-performing secondary schools and to foster innovation to help all students graduate prepared for college and the workforce by creating a High School Improvement Fund and a Middle School Improvement Fund.**

NCLB reauthorization must prioritize the turnaround of low-performing secondary schools. A new High School Improvement Fund should support statewide systems of high school improvement, target funding to the high schools with the lowest graduation and achievement rates, and support strategies and practices proven to improve low-performing high schools. To ensure that the lowest-performing middle schools also receive necessary support, NCLB reauthorization should also include a Middle Schools Improvement Fund.

- **The federal government should make a significant new investment in fostering innovation to help all students graduate prepared for college and the workforce by creating a Secondary School Innovation Fund.**

Secondary schools must be redesigned to prepare every student for college and work, with rigorous and relevant coursework and with supportive relationships for all students. NCLB should also include a Secondary School Innovation Fund for competitive grants to support the development of innovative approaches to achieving success, especially for disadvantaged students. The federal government should provide grants for partnerships – between state or local education agencies and institutes of higher education, community based organizations, other nonprofits, or businesses – to create innovative models of reform in the nation’s secondary schools. Such grants should be evaluated and “best practices” disseminated for replication.

- **The federal government should invest in an adolescent literacy program to ensure that all students have the reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills they need to succeed.**

The federal Striving Readers grant program must be included in the NCLB reauthorization in order to grow over time into a \$1 billion formula grant program to states to support both professional development and targeted interventions to improve adolescent reading, writing, critical thinking, and communications skills. This funding would leverage state, district, and schoolwide literacy plans to ensure that students attain this cornerstone skill set.

- **The federal government should invest in teachers who can help all secondary school students achieve at high levels.**

When reauthorized, NCLB should include a Highly Effective Teacher Fund to direct a significant funding stream to states and districts to implement innovative programs that would ensure that teachers are not only highly qualified, but also are effective. This funding would support state or district proposals to develop systems to define, measure, and improve teacher effectiveness. Furthermore, Title II funding should be increased and focused on key needs of high school teachers, such as incentives to teach in low-performing schools, preparation to teach diverse student populations, time for collaboration, training in the use of data to improve student achievement, and teacher induction programs.

Finally, in reauthorizing HEA, Congress should create a new competitive grant program to help states and institutions of higher education recruit superlative candidates into teaching, agreeing to fund part of their education in exchange for participating in rigorous, evidence-based training and for serving in low-performing high schools. These recruits should be provided with high-quality instruction and practical experience to help them meet the needs of diverse learners, use data to improve teaching and learning, and incorporate adolescent literacy strategies in content area classes, among other critical skills.

- **The federal government should invest in statewide longitudinal data systems to improve policy and practice.**

NCLB should include a major investment in grants to states to help build statewide longitudinal data systems in accordance with the recommendations of the Data Quality Campaign, as well as grants to build the capacity to use data to improve teaching and learning through professional development, effective data management, and other key functions. The state data systems grant program currently authorized in the Institute for Education Sciences should be moved to Title I of NCLB and closely tied to the use of data to close achievement gaps and ensure that all students graduate prepared to succeed in college and work. Funding for this competitive grant program should be increased and complemented with additional funds in formula grants to states to ensure that data systems are aligned with those at the district level and to foster the use of data to improve teaching and learning at the state and local levels.

- **The federal government should invest in rigorous, high-quality secondary school research to improve policy and practice.**

The federal government must help increase the knowledge base about what is known and has been proven to work in turning around low-performing secondary schools and in educating every child. The federal government must double its investment in research to identify supports and interventions that are effective in improving student achievement, with a special focus on helping secondary school students graduate prepared for success. Additional research should be conducted to discern the best practices for recovering dropouts, increasing rigor, and differentiating instruction.