

The Graduation Promise Act (GPA)

Forty years ago, the United States was number one in the world in high school graduation rates; today, it ranks 17th.

- About 1/3 of the students who enter 9th grade each fall will not graduate from high school within four years, if at all;
- High school students living in low-income families drop out of school at six times the rate of their peers from high-income families;
- Only about 55% of African American students and 52% of Hispanic students graduate on time from high school with a regular diploma, compared to 78% of white students.

In this country, there are about 2,000 high schools that produce the majority of dropouts.

The good news is that effective reforms exist which can transform high schools with low student achievement and low graduation rates, and keep students at the greatest risk of dropping out on the path to graduation. We know that we can improve our high schools and our graduation rates; we just need the commitment and the resources to get it done.

The GPA is designed to establish an appropriate federal role in secondary school reform by:

- 1) creating a federal-state-local school reform partnership, focused on transforming the nation's lowest performing high schools;
- 2) providing \$2.5 billion to build capacity for secondary school improvement, and at the same time provide states and local school districts with the resources to ensure that high schools with the greatest challenges receive the support they need to implement research-based interventions;
- 3) strengthening state improvement systems to identify, differentiate among, and target the level of reform and resources necessary to improve low-performing high schools, while ensuring transparency and accountability;
- 4) advancing the research and development needed to ensure a robust supply of highly effective secondary school models for students most at risk of being left behind; and
- 5) supporting states' efforts to align state policies and systems to meet the goal of college and career-ready graduation for all students.

Title I of the GPA authorizes a \$2.4 billion High School Improvement and Dropout Reduction Fund to support the development in every state of statewide systems of differentiated high school improvement. Such systems would focus on building the capacity of secondary schools to reduce dropout rates and increase student achievement, and would target resources to help the lowest performing high schools implement evidence-based interventions.

Title II authorizes \$60 million in competitive grants for the development, implementation, and replication of effective secondary school models for struggling students and dropouts.

Title III authorizes \$40 million in competitive grants to states to remove barriers and create innovative incentives to improve student outcomes for every young person in the state.