

TITLE I – HIGH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND DROPOUT REDUCTION FUND

Title I authorizes a \$2.4 billion High School Improvement and Dropout Reduction Fund to improve America’s high schools and increase the graduation rate. It focuses efforts on turning around our lowest performing high schools, giving students attending those schools a chance to graduate ready for college and the workforce. The Improvement Fund will support comprehensive state accountability and improvement systems at the high school level. These state-developed, differentiated high school improvement systems will be designed to:

- (1) Identify high schools with low graduation rates and low student achievement;
- (2) Differentiate school improvement actions based on the amount and type of supports necessary to improve student achievement and graduation rates;
- (3) Provide resources to school districts to implement evidence-based school improvement activities chosen by local school improvement teams using school performance data;
- (4) Target resources and support first to high-priority high schools;
- (5) Ensure that high schools making progress on school performance indicators have the resources to continue to implement effective school improvement strategies;
- (6) Build the capacity of the state and local educational agencies to assist in improving student achievement and graduation rates in high-priority secondary schools.

Statewide system of multiple measures to improve high school quality:

Grants would be distributed to the states, based on poverty and graduation rates, to establish or expand statewide differentiated high school improvement systems guided by research and best practice. These systems would be approved by the Secretary as part of a rigorous peer-review process.

As part of this statewide system:

- States would develop a set of school performance indicators to analyze high school performance, determine the amount and type of support each school needs, and guide the school improvement process.
- States would define a minimum amount of expected growth on each school performance indicator that demonstrates continuous and substantial progress.
- High schools that do not make AYP for 2 consecutive years would be placed in one of the following high school improvement categories¹:
 - Schools needing targeted assistance – Such high schools have just missed making AYP and are performing well on most indicators, but a targeted intervention (such as a school-wide literacy plan) is likely to improve student outcomes.
 - Schools needing whole school reform – Such high schools have missed making AYP by a significant margin, and for multiple subgroups, and are struggling on most other indicators; they need a comprehensive school-wide strategy to improve student outcomes.
 - Schools needing replacement – Such high schools are struggling on most or all measures and likely have been for some time; in order to improve student

¹ States could also propose systems of differentiation aligned with their existing state accountability systems that include additional categories.

outcomes, their current models need to be replaced with more personalized, rigorous and well-designed school models.

- States would award subgrants to local school districts to implement school improvement plans in amounts based on the types of reforms and interventions needed, with priority to those districts serving high schools needing whole school reform or replacement.
- States would monitor and review implementation of local school improvement plans, and evaluate how the activities assisted with these funds have been successful in improving student outcomes.

State educational agencies could reserve up to 10% of funds for administration of the high school improvement system and technical assistance for school improvement.

States would provide a 25% match to receive the federal funds.

Local development and implementation of high school improvement strategies:

To be eligible to receive a subgrant from the state, the local school district would:

- Apply to the state, on behalf of its high schools, for funds to implement high school improvement plans and other district-wide secondary school reform strategies;
- Designate the category of high school improvement for each high school that does not make AYP for 2 consecutive years;
- Develop a set of student indicators to determine the number and percent of students who begin high school at high risk for not graduating high school to determine the type and intensity of supports each student needs;
- Convene local school improvement teams and develop high school improvement plans for each high school to be assisted, in accordance with the category of school improvement. The high school improvement plans would lay out the evidence-based academic and nonacademic interventions and resources necessary to improve student achievement, reduce dropout rates, meet annual benchmarks for improvement, and make AYP;
- Work with school improvement teams to assess the capacity of the school to implement the plan, as well as identify the existing resources available to the district and the school. These assessments would be used to determine the amount of resources and technical assistance needed to successfully implement the high school improvement plan;
- Provide a 15% match to receive federal funds.

Each local school district receiving a subgrant would:

- Work with school improvement teams to implement high school improvement plans, directing the funds first to implement the plans of schools in need of whole school reform or replacement;
- Use remaining funds to provide research-based targeted interventions to improve high schools or use such funds to improve feeder middle schools;
- Ensure high schools that meet annual benchmarks on school performance indicators (even if they make AYP) could continue to implement the high school improvement plan;
- Ensure high schools that do not meet annual benchmarks for 2 years would be:
 - redesignated into a higher intensity school improvement category; and

- required to develop a new school improvement plan, with state assistance or the participation of technical assistance providers with proven track records in similar schools.

Research, evaluation, and technical assistance

The Secretary would reserve funds under Title I of the GPA, as follows:

- 2% to provide technical assistance and ongoing regional training programs to state and local educational agencies;
- 2% for awards to technical assistance providers to develop and implement or replicate effective research-based comprehensive high school reform models;
- 4% to evaluate the program and for a rigorous study to determine the most effective interventions.

TITLE II - DEVELOPMENT OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL MODELS FOR STRUGGLING STUDENTS AND DROPOUTS

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

These models would be designed to serve students who face significant barriers to a college- and work-ready diploma and whose challenges cannot be easily addressed by the school system in conventional settings, such as students who are:

- significantly older than others in the same grade or lacking the credits needed to progress towards an on-time graduation;
- late entrant English language learners; or
- already dropped out of school.

As research and practice indicate, effective models combine personal attention and a positive peer culture with evidence-based practices to:

- help students catch-up;
- accelerate their learning; and
- connect them to postsecondary institutions and career possibilities.

Applicants include schools, districts, institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations or partnerships involving these entities.

To compete for federal funding, eligible applicants would describe in a comprehensive plan:

- how the effective school model employs research-based methods;
- strategies to improve the graduation rate; and
- how it would be replicated and sustained.

To contribute to the growth of evidence-based practice and policy, the selected grantees would:

- collect data and information on the models' effectiveness in improving academic achievement and outcomes for struggling students and dropouts, and

- disseminate such data and information to state educational agencies, local educational agencies, and schools.

The Secretary would reserve funds under Title II for an independent evaluation of the grant program and its impacts.

TITLE III - STRENGTHENING STATE POLICIES

Title III authorizes the Secretary to award \$40 million in competitive grants to states to identify and implement changes to state policies necessary to substantially and simultaneously raise both the achievement and graduation rates of every high school in the state.

The purpose of this Title is to provide momentum and resources to states to:

- revise and align current policies,
- enact new policies, and
- support and accelerate innovative actions to improve student achievement and graduation rates.

These states will become laboratories of innovation, offering model policies and practices to other states.

In order to determine how best to strengthen policies and substantially raise graduation rates in the state without compromising on high standards, each state would conduct a policy gap and impact analysis of the policies affecting:

- School funding;
- Data capacity;
- Accountability systems;
- Interventions in high priority secondary schools;
- New school development; and
- Dissemination and implementation of effective local school improvement activities throughout the state;

Based on the results and recommendations of the policy gap and impact analysis, states receiving grants would implement policies related to raising college and career-ready graduation rates, such as:

- using additional accountability measures to recognize efforts of districts and schools to keep youth on track to an on-time and college-ready graduation; and
- developing additional high school options, including small schools, early college high schools, and recovery models for struggling students and dropouts.

States receiving grants would be required to develop a system to evaluate the effectiveness of the changes and devote resources to ensure the sustainability of the activities and the long-term success of the secondary schools within the state.