



FEDERAL EDUCATION POLICY TOOLKIT

A GUIDE FOR LOCAL AND STATE ADVOCATES ON THE KEY FEDERAL POLICY ISSUES AFFECTING GRADUATION RATES AND COLLEGE-READINESS

ABOUT FIRST FOCUS

First Focus is a bipartisan advocacy organization launched by the America's Promise Alliance that is committed to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions. Education, along with children's health, family economics, child welfare, and child safety, is one of five core issue areas in which First Focus is working to promote bipartisan policy solutions. In education, First Focus believes America can improve graduation rates and restore access to the American Dream by strengthening policies and programs to meet the needs of students inside and outside of the classroom.

OVERVIEW OF THIS TOOLKIT

Every year, more than a million young people drop out of school. On average, only 70 percent of all students graduate from high school. Among most students of color, graduation rates are even more concerning, averaging near 50 percent.

The dropout crisis is symptomatic of a number of missed opportunities along the educational pipeline. In this guide, however, six federal policy issues affecting American high schools are highlighted:

- ◆ **College-readiness and standards**
- ◆ **Strengthening accountability for graduation rates**
- ◆ **High school redesign**
- ◆ **High school immigrant youth**
- ◆ **Statewide data systems**
- ◆ **Community engagement**

In addition, **general information about America's dropout crisis** is included, and **special populations of students** are highlighted. The purpose of this guide is to provide local and state education advocates with more information regarding these policy issues, including key reports and briefs for those interested in exploring the issue in greater depth, as well as information regarding related federal legislation. In addition, federal policy experts for each area have been identified and can be contacted for further information or for invitations to participate in any local or state events related to high school graduation rates and college-readiness.

ABOUT AMERICA'S DROPOUT CRISIS

How big is America's dropout crisis? Who is affected? What is the impact of dropout rates on the economic future of our country? These questions and other general information regarding high school graduation rates can be answered by the resources and tools below.

Related Research and Publications

The High Cost of High School Dropouts: What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools (2007)

Alliance for Excellent Education

<http://all4ed.org/files/HighCost.pdf>

The High Cost of High School Dropouts examines the lost economic potential that states and the nation experience due to high dropout rates.

Locating the Dropout Crisis: Which High Schools Produce the Nation's Dropouts? Where are they Located? Who Attends Them? (2004)

Robert Balfanz and Nettie Legters, Johns Hopkins University

<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/techReports/Report70.pdf>

Locating the Dropout Crisis uses "promoting power" to identify the number, location, and characteristics of the nation's dropout factories, which produce the majority of the nation's dropouts.

High School Dropouts in America (2007)

Alliance for Excellent Education

http://www.all4ed.org/files/GraduationRates_FactSheet.pdf

High School Dropouts in America provides some basic facts and statistics regarding dropout rates, including data regarding which populations are most affected, where most dropouts are located, and the costs of young people dropping out of school.

Related Websites and Web Tools

School District- and State-specific Graduation Rate Data

Both Christopher Swanson of *Education Weekly* and the Alliance for Excellent Education offer interactive tools for local and state advocates to better determine graduation rates at the district and state level.

- ◆ Editorial Projects in Education, Education Weekly
<http://mapsg.edweek.org/edweekv2/default.jsp>
- ◆ The Alliance for Excellent Education
http://www.all4ed.org/about_the_crisis/schools/state_cards

The Silent Epidemic

www.silentepidemic.org

This website, launched at the National Summit on America's Silent Epidemic in May 2007, includes resources for policy-makers, parents, educators, and students. The 10-Point Plan, which documents 10 action steps to reduce the number of dropouts in America, can be found on this site.

California Dropout Research Project

<http://lmri.ucsb.edu/dropouts/index.htm>

The California Dropout Research Project synthesizes existing research and undertakes new research to inform policymakers and the larger public about the nature of California's dropout challenge. However, the site also serves as a repository for the latest research across the nation on the issue of high school dropouts and graduation rates.

COLLEGE-READINESS AND STANDARDS

Too many students graduate from high school without the skills necessary to succeed in college and the workforce. State standards and curricula must be anchored in the expectations of the real world to ensure that students leave school ready for success. Particularly in recent years, states have been leading the effort to raise graduation requirements and standards. However, federal education policy can help ensure that students in all states have the same opportunity to achieve at high standards by providing states resources and support to ensure that their standards are competitive both nationally and internationally. Comparability regarding academic achievement across states can also be strengthened with the support of federal resources.

Related Federal Legislation

Standards to Provide Educational Achievement for Kids (SPEAK) Act, H.R. 325 and S. 224. The SPEAK Act calls for the establishment of rigorous and voluntary core content standards in math and science for grades K-12. The proposal also establishes the American Standards Incentive Fund as a means to incentivize states to adopt the standards and provides a bonus grant to states that meet requirements of the incentive fund to support statewide longitudinal data systems.

States Using Collaboration and Coordination to Enhance Standards for Students (SUCCESS) Act of 2007, S. 164. The SUCCESS Act requires the biennial administration of the National Assessment for Educational Progress to measure student achievement in grades 4, 8, and 12 in reading, mathematics, and science. The proposal also establishes a competitive-based grant program for consortia of states to develop common, rigorous performance standards and assessments. The SUCCESS Act also establishes a competitive grants program to support state development of prekindergarten through grade 16 student preparedness councils to ensure that state standards and assessments are competitive and meet national and international benchmarks.

Related Research and Publications

Closing the Expectations Gap (2008)

American Diploma Project, Achieve, Inc.

<http://www.achieve.org/files/50-state-2008-final02-25-08.pdf>

This is Achieve's third annual 50-state progress report on the alignment of high school policies with the demands of college and the workforce. The report indicates that while more than a third of states have raised high school standards and graduation requirements, there is more work to be done to ensure that all students graduate college- and work-ready. The report details state progress in implementing the American Diploma Project policy agenda, which advocates for the alignment of standards, graduation requirements, assessments, data systems, and accountability with the expectations of college faculty and employers.

Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma that Counts (2004)
American Diploma Project, Achieve, Inc.
<http://www.achieve.org/node/552>

Ready or Not proposes an action agenda to reestablish the value of the high school diploma. In addition, it describes the English and mathematics benchmarks that high school graduates need to excel in higher education and the workplace.

Rigor at Risk: Reaffirming Quality in the High School Core Curriculum (2007)
ACT, Inc.
<http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/reports/rigor.html>

Rigor at Risk finds that high school core courses lack the rigor needed to sufficiently prepare students for higher education and the workforce. The report cites factors that contribute to inadequate college preparation in high schools, including the misalignment between state standards and course-level outcomes needed for success in college. *Rigor at Risk* offers recommendations for states and schools to improve the rigor of their high school curriculum.

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STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GRADUATION RATES

Strengthened accountability for graduation rates is critical. Currently, the No Child Left Behind Act includes provisions that are intended to hold schools accountable for improving academic achievement and graduation rates among all groups. However, states have wide latitude in how they calculate graduation rates; states are not mandated to meet any specific minimum graduation rate goal and are not required to make significant annual progress in improving these rates. Additionally, regulations issued by the U.S. Department of Education further relaxed accountability by not requiring states to disaggregate graduation rate data and failing to require meaningful increases in graduation rates.

Related Federal Legislation

Every Student Counts Act, H.R. 2955. The Every Student Counts Act improves accountability for graduation rates by establishing a common definition for the calculation of graduation rates across schools, districts, and states. In addition, high schools would be required to increase graduation rates to at least 90 percent across all students and within each major subgroup of students.

Related Research and Publications

Who's Counted? Who's Counting? Understanding High School Graduation Rates (2006)

Lyndsay Pinkus, Alliance for Excellent Education

<http://all4ed.org/files/WhosCounting.pdf>

Who's Counted? Who's Counting? Understanding High School Graduation Rates explains the reasons why so many different graduation rate formulas and statistics exist, addresses why states report them differently, and discusses the limitations and benefits of each method. In addition, the report defines the policy changes that are needed to ensure that educators, school officials, parents, and the public receive timely and accurate information about how many students are actually graduating so that they can assess their schools' current effectiveness and make improvements.

Closing the Expectations Gap (2008)

American Diploma Project Network, Achieve, Inc.

<http://www.achieve.org/files/50-state-2008-final02-25-08.pdf>

This is Achieve's third annual 50-state progress report on the alignment of high school policies with the demands of college and the workforce. The report indicates that while more than a third of states have raised high school standards and graduation requirements, there is more work to be done to ensure that all students graduate ready for college and work. The report details state progress in implementing the American Diploma Project policy agenda, which advocates for the alignment of standards, graduation requirements, assessments, data systems, and accountability with the expectations of college faculty and employers.

Graduation Matters: Improving Accountability for High School Graduation (2007)

Daria Hall, The Education Trust

<http://www2.edtrust.org/EdTrust/Press+Room/Graduation+Matters.htm>

Graduation Matters examines state-state goals for graduation rates under the No Child Left Behind Act. The brief demonstrates how graduation rate improvement targets are set low, undermining the goal of graduating all students and ensuring that they are college-ready.

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HIGH SCHOOL REDESIGN

Despite the enormous responsibility that high schools face in ensuring that every student that enters their doors graduates ready for college and the workforce, few federal dollars and resources are dedicated to high schools to ensure this goal. In addition, high schools that struggle the most to increase graduation and college-readiness rates lack the support and resources to adequately tackle the challenge and reverse the trend. Moreover, school improvement activities under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act have not been effective for turning around low-performing high schools. Research indicates that effective strategies in improving high schools are different from those used in the lower grades. Federal education law must recognize that the improvement needs, and therefore, actions are different for high schools depending on their level of academic progress and other indicators of performance. Finally, a federal investment in research-based models that serve the most at-risk high school students is critical, as is research on the most effective interventions and incentives for policy innovation. These are the keys to improving graduation and college-readiness rates.

Related Federal Legislation

Graduation Promise Act (GPA), H.R. 2928/S. 1185. The Graduation Promise Act authorizes a \$2.4 billion high school improvement and dropout reduction fund to support states in their efforts to turn around low performing high schools. Funds would be used by states to create systems for

identifying the challenges facing low-performing high schools and provide schools with the resources needed to improve their graduation rates. In addition, GPA authorizes \$60 million in competitive grants for the development and implementation of successful school models for struggling students and high school dropouts. It also authorizes \$40 million in competitive grants to states to design and align state policies toward improving outcomes for high school students.

Related Research and Publications

Addressing America's Dropout Challenge: State Efforts to Boost Graduation Rates Require Federal Support (2006)

Adria Steinberg, Cassius Johnson, Jobs for the Future, and Hilary Pennington, Center for American Progress

<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2006/11/graduation.html>

Addressing America's Dropout Challenge makes a call for a federal commitment in partnership with states, districts, and schools to raise graduation rates. The report recommends establishing a competitive federal grant program to help accelerate the development and implementation of systemic strategies, investing in the supply of proven school models, and federal support for states to develop the data capacity to accurately calculate graduation rates.

Whatever it Takes: How Twelve Communities are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth (2007)

Nancy Martin and Samuel Halperin, American Youth Policy Forum

<http://www.aypf.org/publications/WhateverItTakes.htm>

Whatever It Takes documents what committed educators, policy-makers, and community leaders across the country are doing to reconnect out-of-school youth to the social and economic mainstream. It provides background on the serious high school dropout problem and describes in-depth what 12 communities are doing to reconnect dropouts to education and employment training. It also includes descriptions of major national program models serving out-of-school youth.

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HIGH SCHOOL IMMIGRANT YOUTH

Immigrants make up a significant proportion of America's dropouts – nearly 30 percent. As a result, addressing the challenges that this population of children faces in graduating from high school and pursuing higher education can help make a dramatic impact in high school graduation rates overall. Unfortunately, current immigration law creates a disincentive for U.S.-raised immigrants to graduate from high school. Federal policy must ensure that the investment that states have made in the K-12 education of these young people is not wasted and that all students who graduate from our nation's schools have the opportunity to pursue higher education, regardless of immigration status.

Related Federal Legislation

Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, S. 774/S. 2205, and the American Dream Act, H.R. 1275. The DREAM Act and American Dream Act are bipartisan legislative proposals that would strengthen graduation rates among foreign-born students, who make up a quarter of America's dropouts. Specifically, the legislation would permit certain immigrant students who have grown up in the U.S. the opportunity to become eligible for citizenship if they graduate from high school and pursue higher education or military service. This would provide critical motivation for certain children of immigrants to graduate from high school, continue their education, and further contribute to America's economy.

Related Research and Publications

New Estimates of Unauthorized Youth Eligible for Legal Status under the DREAM Act (2006)

Jeanne Batalova and Michael Fix, Migration Policy Institute

http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Backgrounder1_Dream_Act.pdf

This backgrounder discusses the major features of the DREAM Act and provides estimates of the number of young undocumented immigrants who are likely to be eligible to earn a path citizenship if the DREAM Act were to become law.

Wasted Talent and Broken Dreams: The Lost Potential of Undocumented Students (2007)

Roberto G. Gonzalez, Immigration Policy Center, American Immigration Law Foundation

<http://immigration.server263.com/index.php?content=f071001>

Wasted Talent and Broken Dreams synthesizes the barriers facing certain undocumented children in their pursuit for higher education. The document highlights the overlooked potential of these children to the nation's economy. Finally, it makes the case for federal changes to support a path to citizenship for certain undocumented youth.

Recent Developments in Undocumented College Student Issues (2005-Present) (2007)

Michael A. Olivas, Institute for Higher Education Law and Governance, University of Houston Law Center

<http://www.law.uh.edu/ihehg/undocumented/homepage.html>

This article summarizes recent national and state-related developments affecting undocumented youth and DREAM Act-eligible students.

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STATEWIDE DATA SYSTEMS

Accurate, high-quality data is essential to improving graduation rates and college-readiness. Statewide longitudinal data systems that track individual student performance from the time students first enter the education system to the time they exit can help calculate accurate graduation rates, identify individual students who may be at risk of dropping out of school, and inform the implementation of interventions at the district, school, and student-level to retain students in school and ensure that they graduate from high school ready for college and the workforce. Federal policy solutions include supporting the development and implementation of data systems in all 50 states, ensuring that data systems are comparable across districts and states, and improving professional development and capacity to ensure that the data is used to effectively address student needs.

Related Federal Legislation

A bill to provide for statewide longitudinal data systems to improve elementary and secondary education, and for other purposes, S. 2014. The legislation establishes a \$100 million competitive grant program for states to build or improve statewide prekindergarten through high school longitudinal data systems. The data systems would include statewide student and teacher identifiers; track student participation and achievement over time; and, the capacity to link to data systems connected to higher education, workforce development, unemployment insurance, child welfare, juvenile justice, and the military. In addition, S. 2014 awards matching grants to states to enhance the capacity of educators and policy-makers at the district and school level to effectively use data and data systems.

Measuring and Evaluating Trends for Reliability, Integrity, and Continued Success (METRICS) Act, H.R. 3253. The METRICS Act requires states receiving Title I funding to develop and implement statewide prekindergarten through high school longitudinal data systems within four years of enactment. The legislation establishes a \$150 million formula grant program to support the development of these data systems. The legislation requires the inclusion of the data elements described in S. 2014 (above). The METRICS Act reserves up to \$2 million to create a state education data center to provide technical assistance to states developing data systems, to disseminate best practices on the

development, implementation, and use of such systems, and to serve as a central repository for education and school safety data.

Related Research and Publications

Every Student Counted (2007)

Data Quality Campaign

<http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/tools/>

Every Student Counted summarizes the National Governors Association (NGA) Graduation Counts Compact, including the commitment to using a common method to calculate high school graduation rates. The benefits of using a longitudinal graduation rate are described. The components needed for a state data system to calculate a longitudinal graduation rate are also summarized.

Identifying Potential Dropouts: Key Lessons for Building an Early Warning Data System (2006)

Achieve, Inc.

<http://achieve.org/dropouts>

Identifying Potential Dropouts summarizes the research on factors affecting students who drop out of school as well as the methods of predicting which students will not complete high school. The brief also provides recommendations for building an early warning data system that can signal which students and schools are most in need of interventions.

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Recognition is growing that schools cannot meet the challenge of educating our students on their own. Students bring a variety of needs into the classroom that must be met in order for them to succeed in school and graduate from high school ready for college. Schools are often ill-equipped to address these needs and must leverage every available resource in the community to do so. Specific policies are needed to provide school districts and communities with incentives for developing community involvement policies targeting the non-academic needs that affect student achievement as well as funding collaborations among schools, school districts, and community-based organizations (CBOs) that leverage support services into schools.

Related Federal Legislation

Working to Encourage Community Action and Responsibility in Education (WE CARE) ACT, H.R. 3762. The WE CARE Act would strengthen community engagement in federal education policy in order to meet the needs of students inside and outside the classroom. Specifically, it provides incentives for school districts, CBOs, and others to work together to develop and implement community involvement policies. These policies would leverage resources from the community to help meet students' non-academic needs and prepare them for success in the classroom. In addition, the proposal calls on states and districts to include an analysis of the non-academic needs of students in their plans, along with a strategy for partnering with CBOs and others to meet those needs. Finally, the WE CARE Act calls on districts and schools to engage community stakeholders in the development of school improvement plans in order to utilize every possible resource available to help students and schools make adequate yearly progress.

Full Service Community Schools Act, H.R. 2323/S. 1391. The Full Service Community Schools Act makes grants available to local partnerships between school districts and CBOs as well as state collaboratives for purposes of coordinating education and social service programs at a school site. These services may include early childhood education programs, literacy and reading programs for youth and families, parenting education activities, community service, job training and career counseling services, nutrition services, primary health and dental care, and mental health preventive and treatment services. The legislation authorizes \$200 million, with 75 percent of the funds allocated for local grants, 20 percent to state grants, and the remaining funds used for technical assistance and evaluation.

Keeping Parents and Communities Engaged (PACE) Act, S. 1302. The Keeping PACE Act, authorized at \$260 million per year for five years, strengthens parent and community engagement in schools to support student performance and increase graduation rates. Grants are awarded to states to support subgrants to: 1) schools and districts for parent and community outreach coordinators; 2) CBOs to link services to children, their families, and their schools; and 3) consortia of districts, mayors, and nonprofits to renovate school facilities for the community's use.

Related Research and Publications

Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools (2003)
Coalition for Community Schools
<http://www.communityschools.org/mtdhomepage.html>

This report synthesizes research from the fields of health, mental health, youth development, family and community engagement, and community-building and demonstrates the connection to student learning. Based on the research, *Making the Difference* presents five conditions for learning that need

to be in place for children to succeed at high levels. The report features evaluation data from 20 different community school initiatives and a synthesis of their combined results. By integrating existing community resources with the assets of the school, 15 community schools highlighted in the report produced remarkable improvements in efficiency and results. A lengthy bibliography, resource list, and community school networks contact information is included.

The Family: America's Smallest School (2007)

Paul E. Barton and Richard J. Coley, Educational Testing Service

http://www.ets.org/Media/Education_Topics/pdf/5678_PERCReport_School.pdf

The Family outlines the non-school conditions that have an impact on student achievement. The report calls on policy-makers to address home and family conditions in order for all students to succeed in school.

Community Programs to Promote Youth Development (2002)

The National Academy of Sciences and Institute of Medicine

http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=10022

This seminal report on youth development describes the elements of a youth's life that must be in place in order to ensure their healthy development, as well as the features of successful programs that help youth thrive.

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SPECIAL POPULATIONS

On average, approximately 70 percent of all students graduate from high school. However, graduation rates are significantly lower among Black, Latino, American Indian and Native American students, Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders, students with disabilities, and English language learners than they are for White and other Asian American students. In some instances, one policy solution can help increase graduation rates and college-readiness among several of these student groups. For example, the collection of accurate, disaggregated graduation rate data is a critical action step for all these students. In other cases, barriers to high school graduation, such as language access, are unique or pertain to a few student groups. In tackling the dropout crisis, policy-makers and advocates must consider both the common and unique barriers that face these students.

African American Students

The State of Black America: Annual Report on Socio-economic Conditions in Black America (2008)

National Urban League

<http://www.nul.org/thestateofblackamerica.html>

The State of Black America is an annual report that addresses the issues central to Black America in the current year. The publication is a barometer of the conditions, experiences, and opinions of Black America. It examines Black progress in education, homeownership, entrepreneurship, health, and other areas. The publication forecasts certain social and political trends and proposes solutions to the community's and America's most pressing challenges.

African-American Students and U.S. High Schools (2007)

Alliance for Excellent Education

http://www.all4ed.org/files/AfAm_FactSheet.pdf

The factsheet, *African-American Students and U.S. High Schools*, provides statistics related to high school graduation, segregation, teacher quality, and special, gifted, and college preparatory education for Black students.

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American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians

Native Education 101: Basic Facts about American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Education (2008)

National Indian Education Association

http://www.niea.org/history/research_detail.php?id=19

Native Education 101 offers basic facts and information regarding the American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian population. The document also lists local, state, and federal organizations that can be contacted for further information.

NIEA Briefing Papers (2008)

National Indian Education Association

<http://www.niea.org/sa/uploads/legislativesummit/15.25.NIEABriefingPapers2008.pdf>

This compilation of briefing papers includes updated information regarding the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, federal appropriations, and other federal legislation affecting Native American students.

American Indian and Alaska Native Students and U.S. High Schools (2007)

Alliance for Excellent Education

http://www.all4ed.org/files/AmerIndianAKNative_FactSheet.pdf

The factsheet, *American Indian and Alaska Native Students and U.S. High Schools*, provides statistics related to high school graduation, segregation, teacher quality, and special, gifted, and college preparatory education for American Indian and Alaska Native students.

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Asian American Students

A Dream Denied: Educational Experiences of Southeast Asian American Youth (2003)

Khatharya Um, University of California-Berkeley and Southeast Asia Resource Action Center

http://www.searac.org/ydfinal-2_03.pdf

A Dream Denied identifies key barriers to the educational achievement of Southeast Asian American students, including little or no access to information about higher education; little access to supportive services and resources; stereotyping and low expectations; racism; and, absence of language and history courses, active role models, and Southeast Asian teachers. Recommendations are highlighted.

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Asian Pacific Islander American Students and U.S. High Schools (2007)

Alliance for Excellent Education

http://www.all4ed.org/files/AsianPacific_FactSheet.pdf

The factsheet, *Asian Pacific Islander American Students and U.S. High Schools*, provides statistics related to high school graduation, segregation, teacher quality, English language learners, and special, gifted, and college preparatory education for Asian and Pacific Islander students.

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Latino/Hispanic Students

Hispanic Education in the United States (2007)

Melissa Lazarín and Adriana Kohler, National Council of La Raza

<http://www.nclr.org/content/publications/detail/43582/>

Latinos are a significant and growing proportion of the United States student population. This statistical brief provides a summary of the key data concerning Latinos in the educational pipeline.

Latino Students and U.S. High Schools (2007)

Alliance for Excellent Education

http://www.all4ed.org/files/Latino_FactSheet.pdf

The factsheet, *Latino Students and U.S. High Schools*, provides statistics related to high school graduation, segregation, teacher quality, English language learners, and special, gifted, and college preparatory education.

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English Language Learners

Double the Work: Challenges and Solutions to Acquiring Language and Academic Literacy for Adolescent English Language Learners (2007)

Deborah J. Short and Shannon Fitzsimmons, Center for Applied Linguistics and the Alliance for Excellent Education

<http://www.all4ed.org/files/DoubleWork.pdf>

Over the past several years, education leaders and policymakers have come to understand that the nation needs to dramatically improve the literacy levels of its adolescents. *Double the Work* makes a powerful case for particular teaching practices and educational policies designed to help adolescent English language learners (ELLs) master the reading and writing skills they need to succeed in high school, college, and the workforce.

Improving Assessment and Accountability for English Language Learners in the No Child Left Behind Act (2006)
Melissa Lazarín, National Council of La Raza

<http://www.nclr.org/content/publications/detail/37365/>

This report by the National Council of La Raza examines the impact of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act on ELLs. It concludes that while the law has not been implemented adequately, it holds considerable promise for closing the achievement gap between ELLs and other students. The issue brief also provides a road map for policy-makers and school administrators for improving the law's effectiveness for ELLs.

Southeast Asian Americans as English Language Learners (2008)

Phitsamay Uy, Southeast Asia Resource Action Center

<http://www.searac.org/tst-saveelluy2-28-08.pdf>

This written testimony was prepared for the briefing, "English Language Learners in NCLB: A Civil Rights Imperative," hosted by the Campaign for High School Equity. The testimony briefly describes the Southeast Asian American community in the U.S., the barriers that Southeast Asian American ELLs face, and recommendations to address these challenges.

Testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Education and Labor (2007)

Peter Zamora, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

<http://maldef.org/publications/pdf/Final%20Zamora%20ESEA%20Testimony.pdf>

This written testimony provides an overview of ELLs and NCLB. The document also highlights some of the modifications to NCLB that are being considered and their impact on ELLs.

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Students with Disabilities

Rewards & Roadblocks: How Special Education Students are Faring under No Child Left Behind (2007)
Candace Cortiella, National Center for Learning Disabilities and the Advocacy Institute
<http://www.nclد.org/images/stories/downloads/advocacy/nclدrewardsandroadblocks.pdf>

Rewards & Roadblocks examines the impact of NCLB on students who receive special education in our nation's schools – almost half of whom have learning disabilities.

Testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Education and Labor (2007)
Katy Beh Neas, Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities
<http://edlabor.house.gov/testimony/091007KatyNeasTestimony.pdf>

This testimony, delivered by the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, a coalition of nearly 100 national consumer, advocacy, provider and professional organizations headquartered in Washington, DC, provides an overview of changes to NCLB that are being considered by Congress and their impact on students with disabilities.

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Summary of the SPEAK Act, S. 224 and H.R. 325

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Alliance for Excellent Education

Graduation Promise Act

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First Focus

The Dodd-Ehlers Standards to Provide Educational Achievement for Kids (SPEAK) Act

PURPOSE: To create, adopt, and implement rigorous, voluntary American education content standards in math and science in grades K-12 and incentivize states to adopt them.

FINDINGS:

- America's leadership, economic competitiveness and national security rest on our commitment to educate and prepare our youth to succeed in a global economy. The key to succeeding educationally is to have high expectations for all students.
- Recent international comparisons make clear that American students have significant shortcomings in math and science and many lack the basic math or science skills required for college or the workplace.
- With more than 50 different sets of academic standards, 50 state assessments, and 50 definitions of proficiency under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), there is great variability in the measures, standards and benchmarks for academic achievement in math and science across states.
- As a result of varied standards, assessments and proficiency levels, America's highly mobile student-aged population moves through the nation's schools gaining widely varying levels of knowledge, skills and preparedness.
- In order for the United States to compete in a global economy, the country needs to strengthen its educational expectations for *all* American children.
- Grounded in a real world analysis and international comparisons of what students need to succeed in work and college, rigorous, voluntary, core American standards will keep the United States economically competitive and ensure that American children are given the same opportunity to learn to a high standard no matter where they reside.

WHY AMERICAN EDUCATION STANDARDS?

- To ensure that all American students are given the same opportunity to learn to a high standard no matter where they reside.
- To allow for meaningful comparisons of student academic achievement across states.
- To ensure American students are academically qualified to enter college, or training for the civilian or military workforce.
- To ensure that students are better prepared for the global marketplace and, consequently, maintain America's competitive edge.

WHAT DOES THE BILL DO?

- Tasks the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), in consultation with relevant constituencies and upon review of existing standards, with creating rigorous and voluntary core American education content standards in math and science for grades K-12.
- Ensures that such standards are internationally competitive and comparable to the best standards in the world.
- Requires the standards to be anchored in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) math and science frameworks and achievement levels.

- Ensures that special education students and English Language Learners are considered in development of the standards.
- Establishes the American Standards Incentive Fund as a means to incentivize states to adopt the standards.
- Provides an additional bonus grant to states that successfully meet the requirements of the incentive fund to enhance statewide student-level longitudinal data systems.
- Allows the Secretary to extend the NCLB timeline for participating states.

WHAT DOES THE BILL NOT DO?

- The bill does not establish a national test.
- The bill does not establish a national curriculum.
- The bill does not tell teachers how to teach their subject matter.
- The bill does not establish national standards - participation is voluntary.
- The bill does not limit states to the core standards when developing state academic standards.

AUTHORIZATION LEVELS

- The bill provides \$3 million for creation of the math/science standards and \$400 million for the American Standards Incentive Fund.



Every Student Counts Act Summary

In 2001, Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) with bipartisan support because of the consensus that the nation needed to close the achievement gaps that existed between students of differing racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds, and that schools should be held accountable for the success of all students. NCLB held the promise of ending what was coined “the soft bigotry of low expectations.”

Unfortunately, the soft bigotry of low expectations persists unabated in the nation’s high schools. Recent estimates demonstrate that, nationally, one-third of our students leave high school without a diploma; that’s about 1.23 million each year or 7,000 each school day. There are large “graduation gaps” between racial groups; about half of American Indian students and black students and 60 percent of Hispanic students graduate on time with a regular diploma, compared with more than three quarters of their white and Asian counterparts.

Graduation rates are a fundamental indicator of whether or not the nation’s public school system is doing what it is intended to do: enroll, engage, and educate youth to be productive members of society. In today’s increasingly competitive global economy, graduating from high school is more critical than ever to securing a good job and a promising future. Since an estimated 85 percent of current jobs and almost 90 percent of the fastest-growing and best-paying jobs now require some postsecondary education, a high school diploma and the skills to succeed in college and the workplace are essential. High school dropouts often have trouble finding stable, well-paying jobs. Individuals with less education are generally less healthy, die earlier, and are more likely to become parents when very young. Dropouts are also more at risk of becoming embroiled in the criminal justice system, or of needing social welfare assistance.

Schools, districts, and states have a responsibility to accurately measure and report graduation rates for all students, and an obligation to significantly progress towards the goal of having all students graduate high school prepared for college and work. Unfortunately, unacceptably low graduation rates have been obscured and accepted for far too long due to inaccurate data, misleading calculations and reporting, and flawed accountability systems.

In drafting NCLB, Congress recognized that holding schools accountable for their test scores could create perverse incentives to “push out” low-performing students and intended for high schools to also meet graduation goals to make AYP. Unfortunately, there are three significant flaws in NCLB (as written and implemented) that undermine the intention of the law and weaken the role of graduation rates in both accountability for student success and as a tool for identifying low-performing high schools and targeting support and interventions.

- NCLB has permitted the use of inconsistent and misleading graduation rate calculations that overestimate graduation rates.
- NCLB does not require meaningful increases of graduation rates over time.
- NCLB does not require the disaggregated graduation rates of student subgroups to increase as part of AYP determinations.

To remedy these significant problems, the *Every Student Counts Act (H.R. 2955)*

- Builds on the National Governors Association’s Graduation Rate Compact, originally signed in 2005 by all fifty of the nation’s governors, to ensure the use of accurate and consistent measurements for high school graduation for reporting and accountability purposes.
- Gives schools credit for graduating students who need extra time by allowing increases in both the four-year and five-year graduation rates to count towards achieving AYP.
- Ensures that schools are held accountable for increasing the graduation rates of all students by requiring graduation rates to be disaggregated for both reporting and accountability purposes.
- Mirrors the mounting support for “growth models” of accountability by setting annual benchmarks as a specified increase from current graduation rates.
- Reflects existing research by setting meaningful annual goals based on rates of improvement that have been achieved in successful high schools.



The Graduation Promise Act (GPA) Summary

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.



THE DREAM ACT: SECURING AMERICA'S FUTURE IN EDUCATION

After living in the U.S. since the age of four, Dan-el Padilla Peralta, Princeton University's 2006 salutatorian, left to study at Oxford University, risking a 10-year bar for re-entry into the U.S. due to his status as an undocumented immigrant. Unfortunately, experiences like Dan-el's are becoming more common due to lack of congressional action reforming America's immigration laws. The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act can help retain bright minds like Dan-el and strengthen America's future.

Impact of U.S. Immigration Policy on Education

In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states could not violate the equal protection clause of the U.S. Constitution and deny undocumented immigrant children access to a free public K-12 education (*Plyer v. Doe*). However, no such protections apply to undocumented students seeking higher education. Restrictions have, instead, been adopted to limit their access to higher education, including the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA), which includes a provision (Section 505) that prohibits undocumented immigrants from accessing "any postsecondary education benefit unless a citizen or national of the United States is eligible for such a benefit." As a result, many states have blocked access to in-state tuition for undocumented students in their state, fearing that federal law would require them to allow a U.S. citizen residing in another state to pay in-state tuition and, in turn, impose great costs on the state.

College-bound undocumented youth face other barriers in their pursuit of higher education, including lack of access to state and federal financial aid, including loans. In addition, they are not eligible for most private scholarships, which are typically limited to citizens and legal permanent residents, and are unable to work legally and pay for higher education on their own. Because of the limited opportunities that await these students beyond high school, many fail to pursue higher education. National estimates pertaining to the enrollment of undocumented students in colleges and universities vary, but generous estimates indicate that only 14 percent of U.S.-raised undocumented students who have graduated from high school are enrolled in college.¹

Some drop out of high school with limited hope of a better future without higher education. In fact, it is not surprising that immigrants make up a significant proportion of America's dropouts – nearly 30 percent.² Among non-Hispanic undocumented immigrants aged 18 to 24 who came to the U.S. before the age of 16, 84 percent of males and 89 percent of females graduate from high school. Completion rates, however, are significantly lower among undocumented Latino students (40 percent for males, 49 percent for females).³ If passed, the DREAM Act can increase high school graduation and college enrollment rates by providing an opportunity to earn citizenship to a population of youth lacking the means to obtain legal status.

¹ Batalova, Jeanne and Michael Fix, *New Estimates of Unauthorized Youth Eligible for Legal Status under the DREAM Act*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2006.

² Laird, Jennifer, Michael DeBell, Gregory Kienzl, and Chris Chapman, *Dropout Rates in the United States: 2005*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2007.

³ *New Estimates of Unauthorized Youth Eligible for Legal Status under the DREAM Act, op. cit.*

Key Features of the DREAM Act

The DREAM Act allows immigrant youth to earn legal status if they came to the U.S. before the age of 16, are of good character, and graduate from high school, providing motivation for many of these children to finish high school. Upon graduating from high school, DREAM-eligible youth would be granted conditional legal permanent status, safeguarding them from deportation and allowing them to work legally. The conditional status is made permanent if individuals pursue two years of higher education or military service within six years, providing further incentive for these youth to reach their full potential. Some versions of the DREAM Act also repeal Section 505 of IIRIRA, clarifying that states have the freedom to determine criteria for in-state tuition rates regardless of immigration status. A repeal of Section 505, however, would not mandate that states provide in-state tuition to undocumented students.

DREAM Students

Children make up approximately 16 percent of the undocumented immigrant population, numbering 1.8 million.⁴ An estimated 65,000 undocumented youth graduate from American high schools every year. Due to the eligibility criteria in the DREAM Act, 1.1 million individuals would have the opportunity to earn citizenship if the proposal was implemented. Affected students include class valedictorians, honor students, star athletes, and class presidents. Many have gained acceptance into some of the nation's most prestigious universities. Some are bilingual, while others speak only English. Others have been forced under deportation orders to return to their country of birth despite their unfamiliarity with the language and culture. Other young people, like Dan-el, have voluntarily left in search of opportunities and freedom elsewhere. All are students who, if given the chance, could become our much-needed teachers, nurses, and community and national leaders.

Status of the DREAM Act

Senators Richard Durbin (D-IL), Chuck Hagel (R-NE), Richard Lugar (R-IN) are championing the DREAM Act, S.774 and S.2205, in the U.S. Senate. Representatives Howard Berman (D-CA), Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), and Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL) are spearheading the companion bill, the American Dream Act, H.R. 1275, in the U.S. House of Representatives. The Senate considered the DREAM Act in October 2007, but in a procedural vote that needed 60 votes to advance, the bill stalled with a vote of 52-44. Nonetheless, the majority of the Senate supported the advancement of the DREAM Act, and because American high schools and institutions of higher education will continue to grapple with this unique cohort of graduating students every year, the issue will very likely to return for consideration.

Federal Inaction Leads to State Action

In spite of inaction at the federal, and likely due to it, 10 states have taken steps to remove barriers that immigrants residing in their state face in pursuing higher education. In 2001, Texas was the first state to pass a law that would allow individuals, regardless of immigration status, to qualify for in-state tuition if they have graduated from a Texas high school and have lived in the state for three years. Since then, California, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Utah, and Washington have followed Texas's lead. In addition, approximately 20 other states, including Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, and Minnesota, have debated similar legislation. It is clear from the representation of states that this is not a regional issue but a growing national issue requiring federal action.

⁴ Passel, Jeffrey S., *The Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the U.S.: Estimates Based on the March 2005 Current Population Survey*. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2006.



Statewide Longitudinal Data System Support (S. 2014) Summary

Our nation's schools must perform better at higher levels than ever before to prepare every student to graduate with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in postsecondary education and the modern workplace. Educators and policymakers increasingly recognize that better information is paramount in improving policy, practice, and student achievement.

Longitudinal data – data that shows how students and teachers perform over time – provides a depth of information that is crucial for collecting meaningful results and improving educational processes and outcomes. Establishing robust, longitudinal data systems to gather this type of data is integral to the success of many vital policy solutions currently on the table, including, but not limited to calculating accurate graduation rates, implanting growth models, measuring teacher effectiveness, and leveraging data-driven decision making. However, significant investment and support is needed to help policymakers at every level overcome the challenges of building and using such systems. In an effort to fulfill this need, the data bill seeks to:

Purposes:

- Support the design, implementation, and augmentation of aligned longitudinal statewide data systems in every state by 2012.
- Increase alignment, training, and capacity at the state and local levels for effective data use to enhance instruction and improve student achievement.
- Leverage the use of common definitions and compatible data systems to ensure data is comparable and transferable across districts and states and with higher education and other related systems.

Section I requires States to include, as part of the State plan required by No Child Left Behind, a description of state progress towards implementing a longitudinal data system and a plan to fully establish such a system by 2012 that includes the ten essential elements and key structures identified by the Data Quality Campaign.

Section II reauthorizes and expands the existing Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grants program by authorizing, as part of the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act, \$100 million in competitive 5-year grants to State educational agencies to build and upgrade statewide longitudinal data systems that include the elements and capabilities described in Section I. The grant requires a state match that increases over time to help build state and political will to invest in the building and maintenance of these systems.

Section III authorizes \$100 million in formula grants to State educational agencies to build capacity for educators and policymakers to effectively use data and data systems. This includes providing data integrity training to state and local education officials, aligning local systems to state systems, and providing professional development for teachers and administrators to effectively use data for improved instruction. There are number of allowable uses of funds, including awarding subgrants to districts or consortia of districts for local efforts to improve data-driven instruction. There is a required 25% state funding match.

Section IV authorizes such sums as may be necessary for contracts or grants as part of a jointly funded project to help support a state education data center and state educational data coordinator to improve data collection, reporting, and compliance processes.



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WORKING TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY ACTION AND RESPONSIBILITY IN EDUCATION (WE CARE) ACT – H.R. 3762

What is the purpose of the WE CARE Act?

We cannot let the challenge of educating our students fall to schools alone; the whole community must be engaged. The WE CARE Act will strengthen ties among schools, families and communities to improve student achievement.

Why is the WE CARE Act necessary?

Roughly 25 to 30 percent of ninth graders do not graduate with a regular diploma in four years, and for young people of color, high school graduation is a 50-50 proposition. It is easy to point fingers at the education system, but solutions will only be found if we remember to look outside of it as well.

Research demonstrates that students are more likely to be successful in school and in life if they receive academic and non-academic support to meet their needs. In addition to quality curricula and highly effective teachers, students need a variety of other supports – caring adults; access to health and mental health care; safe, constructive, and fun learning opportunities during non-school hours; and others – in order to be ready for school and meet challenging academic standards.

Efforts to support high standards, ensure strong accountability, and promote teacher quality should be complemented by efforts to meet the often complex needs that students bring to the classroom – ranging from poor access to health care to a need for extra support from mentors and tutors. By leveraging community resources more efficiently and effectively, students will come to school ready to excel and develop the knowledge and skills necessary for college and adulthood.

What will the WE CARE Act do?

This legislation amends Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act to more strategically engage the community in the education of our students. Specifically, it would:

- Provide incentives for school districts, community-based organizations and others to work together to develop and implement Community Involvement Policies. These policies would leverage resources from the community to help meet students' non-academic needs and prepare them for success in the classroom.
- Call on State educational agencies and local educational agencies to include an analysis of the non-academic needs of students in their plans, along with a strategy for partnering with community-based organizations and others to meet those needs.
- Call on local educational agencies and schools to engage community stakeholders in the development of school improvement plans in order to utilize every possible resource available to help our students and schools make adequate yearly progress.

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FULL-SERVICE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ACT H.R. 2323

What is the purpose of the Full-Service Community Schools Act?

The purpose of the legislation is to strengthen student success. It will do so by supporting public/private partnerships that integrate services – academic, developmental, health, and more – into schools to more effectively serve students and families.

What is a Full-Service Community School?

A Full-Service Community School is a public elementary, middle or high school that coordinates and provides students and families with comprehensive services through partnerships with community based organizations and other public and private partners.

What will the Full-Service Community Schools Act do?

The legislation provides competitive grants from the Department of Education to local programs and to State collaboratives. It also establishes a federal Advisory Committee.

- Local programs will support and expand Full-Service Community Schools through public/private partnerships including a local educational agency and one or more community-based organization.
- State collaboratives will coordinate the expansion and evaluation of full-service community schools and include the state education agency and at least two other state government agencies or non-profit agencies.
- The Federal Advisory Committee, composed of representatives from the Departments of Justice, Agriculture, Health and Human Services, and Labor, will consult with the Secretary of Education on the development and implementation of full-service community schools and report annually to Congress.

What services will students and families receive?

Full-Service Community Schools will coordinate or provide at least three services for students in families, including: early childhood programs; literacy/reading programs for youth and families; parenting education activities; community service/service-learning; mentoring and other youth development programs; child care services; job training/career counseling services; nutrition services; and primary health and dental care.

How will Full-Service Community Schools be held accountable?

To be eligible to receive a grant, local programs must establish a set of performance measures to ensure the availability and effectiveness of services. Additionally, the legislation directs the Department of Education to require grantees to conduct evaluations of their efforts, make the results of their evaluations public, and use the results of their evaluations to improve their performance. The Department of Education is also directed to conduct an evaluation of State and local grantees.

How much will the Full-Service Community Schools Act cost?

The Full-Service Community Schools Act authorizes \$200 million for FY 2009 and such sums for FY 2010 through 2013. Local grants would receive 75 percent of the appropriation, State

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collaboratives would receive 20 percent, and the remaining funds would support technical assistance and evaluation. The Department of Education may require a match of grantees up to an amount equal to the amount of the grant.



KEEPING PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES ENGAGED (PACE) ACT S. 1302

What is the purpose of the Keeping PACE Act?

The purpose of the Keeping PACE Act is to increase graduation rates and strengthen student performance in school. It will do so by improving parent involvement in education and leveraging community resources to support students' needs in and outside the classroom.

What will the Keeping PACE Act do?

The Keeping PACE Act provides competitive grants to states. States will use the funds to provide competitive subgrants to:

- LEAs receiving Title I funding so they can hire Parent and Community Outreach Coordinators
- Community based organizations so they can support students, their schools, and their families
- Consortia consisting of a school, school district, mayor, and one or more non-profit or for-profit community partners in order to renovate school facilities to more effectively use them as the center of community.

What will Parent and Community Outreach Coordinators do?

Parent and Community Outreach Coordinators will connect students who are struggling in school with resources available in the community to help them succeed in the classroom. They will also develop strategies to more intentionally engage parents in the education of their children, establish effective communication between schools and families, and help resolve issues between parents and school staff.

What will Community Based Organizations do?

Community based organizations will assess the needs of students and their families and then link them with support services available in the community. For example, students could be connected to mentors, after-school programs and health services available in the community, and parents could be connected to job training and classes in English as a Second Language.

What will Consortia do?

Consortia will work together to renovate school facilities to maximize their use by the community. Renovations could include refurbishing classrooms so they can be used for continuing education classes during evenings or adding health centers to existing school buildings. Funds used for renovations would require a match from non-Federal sources equal to 50 percent of the cost of the renovations.

Why will the Keeping PACE Act work?

Research shows that students are more likely to achieve in school when they are supported by parents and the community. The Keeping PACE Act recognizes the need to strengthen parent

engagement in education, as well as the need to build stronger connections between schools and communities. It isn't just about more programs. It's about leveraging existing resources to help students succeed in the classroom.

How much will the Keeping PACE Act cost?

The Keeping PACE Act authorizes \$260 million per year for five years. Half of the funds would support Parent and Community Outreach Coordinators. The other half would support the work of Community Based Organizations and Consortia to support student achievement.