

FACT SHEET: Congress Acts to Fix No Child Left Behind

"We are a place that believes every child, no matter where they come from, can grow up to be anything they want... And I'm confident that if we fix No Child Left Behind, if we continue to reform American education, continue to invest in our children's future, that's the America we will always be."

- Remarks by the President on the No Child Left Behind Act, March 14, 2011

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Today, the Obama Administration is praising action by the House of Representatives to pass the Every Student Succeeds Act, a bipartisan bill to fix No Child Left Behind, and is calling on the Senate to take swift action on the legislation so that it can be signed into law before the end of the year. The bill rejects the overuse of standardized tests and one-size-fits-all mandates on our schools, ensures that our education system will prepare every child to graduate from high school ready for college and careers, and provides more children access to high-quality state preschool programs.

The bipartisan bill passed by the House includes many of the key reforms the Administration has called on Congress to enact and encouraged states and districts to adopt in exchange for waivers offering relief from the more onerous provisions of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The bill helps ensure educational opportunity for all students by:

- Holding all students to high academic standards that prepare them for success in college and careers.
- Ensuring accountability by guaranteeing that when students fall behind, states redirect resources into what works to help them and their schools improve, with a particular focus on the very lowest-

performing schools, high schools with high dropout rates, and schools with achievement gaps.

- Empowering state and local decision-makers to develop their own strong systems for school improvement based upon evidence, rather than imposing cookie-cutter federal solutions like the No Child Left Behind Act did.
- Reducing the often onerous burden of testing on students and teachers, making sure that tests don't crowd out teaching and learning, without sacrificing clear, annual information parents and educators need to make sure our children are learning.
- Providing more children access to high-quality preschool.
- Establishing new resources for proven strategies that will spur reform and drive opportunity and better outcomes for America's students.

In recognition of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)'s legacy as a civil rights law, the bipartisan bill upholds critical protections for America's disadvantaged students. It ensures that states and school districts will hold schools to account for the progress of all students and prescribes meaningful reforms to remedy underperformance in those schools failing to serve all students. It excludes harmful "portability" provisions that would siphon funds away from the students and schools most in need, and maintains dedicated resources and supports for America's vulnerable children - including students with disabilities, English Learners, Native American students, homeless children, neglected and delinquent children, and migrant and seasonal farmworker children. It also ensures that states and districts continue the work they've begun this year to ensure that all students - including students from low-income families and students of color - have equitable access to excellent educators.

EMBRACING THE ADMINISTRATION'S PRINCIPLES FOR REFORM

College and Career-Ready Standards for America's Learners: The bill affirms the path taken by 48 states and the District of Columbia to hold all students to challenging academic content standards that will prepare them to graduate from high school prepared for success in college and the workforce. In 2008, America's governors and state education officials came together to develop a new set of college- and career-ready

standards for their schools. The Obama Administration supported those efforts through its [Race to the Top grant program](#) and the federal-state partnership established in its ESEA flexibility agreements.

Rigorous Accountability for All Students: Consistent with the Administration's legislative proposals and the policies in place under the Administration's ESEA flexibility agreements, the bill builds on the federal-state partnerships in place in over 40 states to require meaningful goals for the progress of all students, and to ensure that every student subgroup makes gains toward college and career-readiness. States must set ambitious targets to close student achievement and graduation rate gaps among subgroups of students in order to meet their goals. In schools where too many students consistently fail to reach the goals and other indicators set by the state, school districts will ensure they receive tailored interventions and supports proportionate to the needs of those schools and the students they serve.

Reform and Resources for America's Struggling Schools and Students: The bill will target resources, attention, and effort to make gains for our students attending schools most in need of help. Consistent with the policies in place under the Administration's ESEA flexibility agreements, the bill moves away from NCLB's one-size-fits-all accountability and ensures that states undertake reforms in their lowest performing schools, in high schools with high dropout rates, and in schools where subgroups are falling behind. It includes provisions that would require districts to use evidence-based models to support whole-school interventions in the lowest-performing 5 percent of schools and schools where more than a third of high school students do not graduate on time, and includes dedicated funding to support interventions in these schools. In schools where subgroups of students persistently underperform, school districts must mount targeted interventions and supports to narrow gaps and improve student achievement. If such schools are not showing improvement, the state will ensure more rigorous strategies are put in place. Moreover, the Department of Education has the authority it needs to ensure that states carry out their responsibilities.

New Incentives to Improve Opportunities and Outcomes for Students: The bill includes initiatives modeled after the Administration's programs to:

- Establish or expand access to high-quality, state-funded preschool for children from low- and moderate-income families, building from the Administration's Preschool Development Grants program.
- Develop, refine, and replicate innovative and ambitious reforms to close the achievement gap in America's schools, similar to the Administration's existing [Investing in Innovation \(i3\) program](#).
- Expand incentives to prepare, develop, and advance effective teachers and principals in America's schools.
- Leverage resources to address the significant challenges faced by students and families living in high-poverty communities through the [Promise Neighborhoods](#) effort, supporting a full continuum of services from early learning through college.
- Expand support for high-performing public charter schools for high-need students.

A Smart and Balanced Approach to Testing: The bill maintains important statewide assessments to ensure that teachers and parents can mark the progress and performance of their children every year, from third to eighth grade and once in high school. The bill encourages a smarter approach to testing by moving away from a sole focus on standardized tests to drive decisions around the quality of schools, and by allowing for the use of multiple measures of student learning and progress, along with other indicators of student success to make school accountability decisions. It also includes provisions consistent with the Administration's principles around reducing the amount of classroom time spent on standardized testing, including support for state efforts to audit and streamline their current assessment systems.

Promoting Equity in State and Local Funding: The Administration has called repeatedly for states and school districts to more equitably distribute state and local dollars to schools with the greatest need. The bill includes a pilot program – similar to a proposal put forward by the Administration this year in the FY16 budget – that provides for weighted student funding. Under the pilot, districts must demonstrate a commitment to equitable distribution of state and local dollars—based on actual per-pupil expenditures—to their highest poverty schools. In exchange, districts would be allowed to allocate and use Title I and other federal formula funds in a more flexible manner to support

comprehensive plans that improve achievement and outcomes for their neediest students. The bill also includes provisions that require reporting on actual school-level expenditures, allowing the public for the first time to see the amount of federal, state, and local funding distributed to each and every school. The bill rejects so-called “portability” provisions in the House-passed bill that would have allowed states to shift federal funds away from the schools that need them most.