



## **EDUCATION FACT SHEET**

*President Obama's education agenda will improve opportunities and outcomes for the nation's students, from cradle through career.*

### **REGAINING AMERICA'S STANDING IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

America once had one of the most educated workforces in the world, but it has now slipped to the middle of the pack. Only 40 percent of young adults have a college degree, a lower percentage than eleven other countries and no higher than a generation ago. President Obama has committed to regain America's leadership in the world with the highest proportion of college graduates by 2020.

In March, President Obama signed the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act (HCERA), delivering an unprecedented investment in expanding higher education access and opportunity.

- To make college more affordable, the HCERA shifts all new student lending to the Direct Loans program, putting an end to wasteful subsidies to banks. The Act uses these savings to stabilize funding for the Pell Grant program, investing more than \$40 billion to ensure all eligible students receive an award and that these awards keep pace with inflation and rising college costs. The Obama Administration has nearly doubled the total funding available for Pell Grants over the past 18 months.
- To ensure that Americans can better manage student loan payments, the HCERA gave student borrowers new choices in how they repay their loans, including options to cap monthly payments at no more than 10 percent of income for borrowers after 2014, and have their loans forgiven after 20 years. Public service workers – such as teachers, nurses, and those in military service, will see any remaining debt forgiven after 10 years.
- President Obama has proposed ushering in new innovations and reforms for the nation's community colleges to raise graduation rates, build industry partnerships, expand course offerings, and improve career and educational pathways. The HCERA includes a \$2 billion investment to help America's community colleges develop, improve, and expand education and career training to workers.
- The HCERA provided a \$2.55 billion investment to renew, reform and expand programs at the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). This assistance will help a greater proportion of African American, Latino, and other minority students obtain a higher education. Our nation's MSIs account for nearly one-third of all degree granting institutions and enroll nearly 60 percent of the 4.7 million minority undergraduates in our nation today.

### **RAISING THE BAR TO IMPROVE EARLY EDUCATION**

America's economic competitiveness depends on providing a high-quality learning environment for every child – from birth through age 5 – to get the early start needed to succeed in school and in life. The years before kindergarten are the most critical in shaping a child's foundation for learning. And yet, many states maintain an uneven patchwork of programs of early childhood education programs. Establishing a high bar for quality is the key to attaining powerful outcomes for our youngest children.

- President Obama's proposed Early Learning Challenge Fund would challenge states to develop effective, innovative models that promote high standards of quality and a focus on outcomes across early learning settings. The Fund would challenge Governors and other stakeholders in the state to compete

to establish model systems of early learning that fund and implement pathways to improve access to high-quality programs, and ensure that more children enter kindergarten prepared for success.

### **RACE TO THE TOP: PROMOTING EXCELLENCE AND DRIVING REFORM**

President Obama has presented states with an unprecedented challenge and the opportunity to compete in a “Race to the Top,” designed to spur systemic reform and embrace innovative approaches to teaching and learning in America’s schools. Backed by a historic investment included in the Recovery Act, the Race to the Top will help prepare America’s students to graduate ready for college and career and enable them to out-compete any worker, anywhere in the world.

- The Race to the Top dedicates over \$4 billion to states moving the furthest and fastest toward reform. The first two states – Tennessee and Delaware – were selected in March, 2010.
- An additional 10 states were selected as Race to the Top winners in the second round, in August, 2010, consisting of the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Rhode Island.
- A total of 46 states plus the District of Columbia applied for the Race to the Top. 32 states have made significant changes in laws or policies to promote education reforms that are consistent with the principles reflected under the Race to the Top.
- Accounting for this extraordinary interest from the States, President Obama proposes to continue the Race to the Top in his 2011 Budget, by requesting an additional \$1.35 billion.

### **RAISING EXPECTATIONS: COLLEGE AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS**

In today’s global economy, a high-quality education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity and success – it is a prerequisite. Because economic progress and educational achievement go hand in hand, educating every American student to graduate prepared for college and for success in a new workforce is a national imperative.

- The Race to the Top competition rewards states that adopt common standards that build toward college- and career-readiness. The adoption of these standards will enable states to align teacher development, curriculum, and other student supports to college and career readiness, and re-focusing expectations on what students should know and be able to do to stay on track toward high school graduation.
- The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort by Governors and Chief State School Officers to develop a common framework to prepare students for college and a career. The common core standards were developed with teachers, school administrators, and national experts.
- According to the Common Core State Standards Initiative, to date, 28 states have come together to embrace and adopt the common core standards.

### **SUPPORTING GREAT TEACHERS AND LEADERS**

Good teachers and principals are essential to school success and to student growth. Teachers are the most important resource for our nation’s schools. If minority and low-income students learn from an excellent teacher for three consecutive years, we would significantly narrow achievement gaps.

- The Obama Administration is dedicated to working in partnership with teachers and principals to improve teacher preparation and development, establish new and innovative models of evaluation and compensation, and ensure that teachers have the support and opportunity they need to improve their craft and advance in their profession.
- Teachers should have opportunities to advance as professionals, based on their knowledge and skills and the academic progress of their students. While test scores alone should never drive evaluation, student learning must be a key factor in reforming and strengthening the teaching profession.
- 17 states have changed their laws to better support and develop effective teachers and leaders, as a result of the Race to the Top.

## **BETTER ASSESSMENTS TO MEASURE STUDENT GROWTH**

- President Obama has dedicated \$350 million in Recovery Act funding to support the development of the next generation of assessments that will allow states to measure student and school growth and progress. The primary focus of the Race to the Top Assessment program will be supporting consortia of states in the development of comprehensive assessment systems.
- Many States are considering high school end-of-course assessments as part of an instructional improvement strategy. Race to the Top includes funds to support the development of high-quality, end-of-course assessments for high schools.

## **TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE IN LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS**

There are approximately 5,000 persistently low-performing schools across the nation – roughly 5 percent of all schools. We will not successfully close the achievement gap unless we improve teaching and learning in these underperforming schools.

- President Obama has committed to a goal of supporting states to turn around the 5,000 lowest-performing schools across the country. It takes more time, stronger interventions, and a bigger commitment of funds to help these schools turn around.
- The Obama Administration has committed over \$4 billion to support transformative reforms in America's persistently low-performing schools.
- States will identify and prioritize their schools to be improved. Educators and community members will choose from several options in a strong framework of interventions for school improvement.
- 14 states have changed their laws to prioritize and support bold interventions in their low-performing schools, as a result of the Race to the Top

## **SUPPORTING INNOVATIVE AND SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS**

- We must ensure that all students have access to a range of high-quality educational opportunities. These opportunities can take many different forms, including variations of school governance models, such as public charter schools.
- The Race to the Top supports successful, high-performing charter schools and other innovative school models, such as magnet schools and autonomous schools. Schools are effective because of the teachers, the principal, the common vision, the opportunities provided to students, and the expectations held for their success.
- 13 states have changed laws to better support successful charter schools and other innovative school models, as a result of the Race to the Top.