



The Graduation Promise Act

Nationally, more than seven thousand students become dropouts every school day, resulting in 1.3 million students leaving school without a degree each year. Approximately one-third of all students and nearly one-half of all students of color fail to graduate from high school on time. Nearly two thousand low-performing high schools—just 12 percent of all high schools—produce just under half of the nation’s dropouts. The United States’ dropout epidemic is a social, democratic, national security, and economic issue. Without significant and strategic investments in the U.S. education system, the nation’s economy will never reach its maximum potential:

- Reducing the number of dropouts from the Class of 2010 would have resulted in **650,000 “new graduates”** contributing to local economies.
- These new graduates are likely to earn **\$337 billion in additional lifetime earnings**.
- The additional spending and investment from this single class of new graduates would likely be enough to support **54,000 new jobs**.
- If the dropout rate were cut in half for students of color alone, these new graduates would collectively **earn more than \$4.2 billion annually** and would likely generate over **30,000 new jobs**.

Federal policy must do more to effectively improve the lowest-performing high schools; effective reform strategies can transform high schools with low student achievement and low graduation rates, while they simultaneously keep students who are at highest risk of dropping out on the path to graduation. Federal policy must support the use of research-backed interventions in these high schools to strengthen the nation’s graduation rate and lay a solid foundation for America’s economic future.

The Graduation Promise Act (GPA) establishes an appropriate federal role in secondary school reform by

- creating a federal-state-local school reform partnership focused on transforming the nation’s lowest-performing high schools;
- providing dedicated funds to build capacity at every level for secondary school improvement, while also providing 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;
- strengthening state improvement systems to identify, differentiate among, and target the level of reform and resources necessary to improve low-performing high schools based on their individual challenges, while ensuring transparency and accountability; and
- advancing research and development needed to ensure a robust supply of highly effective secondary school models for students most at risk of being left behind.

Title I of 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 target resources to the lowest-performing high schools to implement evidence-based interventions for reducing dropout rates and increasing student achievement. These systems would focus on building the capacity of school districts and states to support high school transformation.

Title II of GPA authorizes \$60 million in competitive grants to increase the supply of quality education options available to schools and districts through the development, implementation, and replication of effective secondary school models for the large number of off-track students in low-performing high schools and for youth who have dropped out of high school.