

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.

Recommended Federal Policy Experts

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