

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
**Statement by John King**  
**Acting Secretary**  
**Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Request**  
**Committee on Education and the Workforce**  
**February 24, 2016**

Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Scott, and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to testify today on behalf of the President's 2017 budget request for the Department of Education. The overall discretionary request for the Department is \$69.4 billion, an increase of \$1.3 billion, or 2 percent, over 2016. The 2017 Budget builds on our progress and reflects key developments over the past year, most significantly, enactment of the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and I want to thank Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Scott, and other Members of this Committee for the leadership and hard work it took to reach a consensus on reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

**INTRODUCTION**

As this is my first appearance before this Committee, please allow me to introduce myself. I have dedicated my life to education largely because education saved my life. Both of my parents were career New York City public school educators. To this day, they inspire me to serve, but I lost them both by the time I was 12. As I have said before, my life could have easily taken a wrong turn at that point. Instead, New York City public school teachers gave me hope and purpose. They set me on the path to where I am today.

Prior to joining the Department in 2015, and becoming Acting Secretary this year, I served as Commissioner of the New York State Department of Education. Before that, I was a Managing Director of Uncommon Schools, which today manages public charter schools serving low-income students in Boston, Newark, Camden, Brooklyn, Rochester, New York City and Troy, New York. I also was a co-founder and principal of Roxbury Preparatory Charter School

in Boston, which became one of the highest-performing urban middle schools in Massachusetts. And, I began my career as a public school teacher in Boston.

### **PRESIDENT OBAMA’S 2017 BUDGET REQUEST**

This 2017 Budget Request focuses on three major priorities: (1) advancing equity and excellence for all students; (2) expanding support for teachers and school leaders; and (3) improving access, affordability, and student outcomes in postsecondary education. The Department also makes a commitment throughout the budget to promoting greater use of evidence and data to maximize results for students and taxpayers.

### **SUPPORT FOR THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT**

With the enactment of the ESSA in mid-December, the Administration worked hard to align the 2017 Budget with the reauthorized ESEA and to allocate resources to support the new law’s focus on education equity, support for teachers, and well-rounded instruction. We are pleased that the ESSA embraces many reforms the Administration has long supported, including State-defined college- and career-ready standards, accountability for the success of all students, innovation in education, and expansion of high-quality preschool. The Budget provides robust funding for core components of the reauthorized ESEA to advance equity and excellence and support great teachers and school leaders. At tomorrow’s hearing, I will discuss in more detail the Department’s plans for ESSA implementation.

### **ADVANCING EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE FOR ALL STUDENTS**

The first major priority in the 2017 request is to ensure all of our young people, and particularly students from low-income families and students of color and those in high-poverty schools who are the focus of the ESSA, have the chance to learn and achieve. While we have made significant progress in increasing overall graduation rates, gaps for students from low-

income families and students of color continue to persist. We must close these gaps, and one way to do so is to increase resources for key programs that support students who need the most help to meet challenging State academic standards. To help close our current resource and opportunity gaps, the 2017 request provides \$15.4 billion for Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs)—the cornerstone of the Federal effort to ensure that all students—including students from low-income students, students of color, students with disabilities, and English Learners—graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

The request provides \$12.8 billion for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Formula Grant Programs, to assist States in providing high-quality early intervention services to infants ages birth through 3 and their families, and help States cover the excess costs of providing special education and related services to children with disabilities ages 3 through 21. This includes a combined increase of \$80 million over 2016 enacted levels for IDEA Preschool Grants (Part B, Section 619) and Grants for Infants and Families (Part C).

The President's Budget also supports expanded access to high-quality preschool for all children from low- and middle-income families by providing \$1.3 billion in mandatory funding in 2017 and \$75 billion over 10 years for the President's landmark Preschool for All proposal, along with \$350 million for the reauthorized Preschool Development Grants program, an increase of \$100 million over the 2016 level, in the Department of Health and Human Services request and jointly administered with the Department of Education. We also would significantly increase support for State and local efforts to meet the educational needs of English Learners in public schools through an \$800 million request for English Language Acquisition formula grants.

I am proud that our 2017 budget also includes new resources for school districts ready to take bold action to address equity gaps in their schools and communities. First, we are asking for \$120 million to fund a new Stronger Together program that would support voluntary efforts by one or more school districts, guided by strong community input, to increase socioeconomic diversity in their schools. Research shows that States with more socioeconomic segregation in schools tend to have larger achievement gaps between low- and higher-income students, and socioeconomically diverse schools can lead to improved outcomes for students. Stronger Together would provide resources to communities that want to explore options for putting research into practice. Such plans could incorporate ongoing efforts of this Administration to invest in diverse, high-quality magnet and charter schools, as highlighted in the budget proposal. Several school districts and communities are already developing innovative diversity initiatives to improve student achievement, and with additional resources, these efforts could be scaled up and serve as models.

The Budget would include \$128 million—a \$55 million increase— for Promise Neighborhoods. This increase would support up to 15 new awards to local partnerships to implement comprehensive, neighborhood-based plans for meeting the cradle-to-career educational, health, and social service needs of children and families in high-poverty communities.

Another groundbreaking proposal is our Computer Science for All initiative. This proposal— \$2 billion in mandatory funding in FY 2017 and \$4 billion over three years—would support efforts in all 50 states to expand access for all students to computer science instruction and programs of study. The budget also includes \$100 million in discretionary grants for Computer Science for All Development Grants for school districts that recognize the power of

computer science to engage students in preschool through grade 12 in real-world computer programming and related skills in conjunction with other rigorous coursework, including STEM fields in which students from low-income families and students of color traditionally are underrepresented. Every year, increasing numbers of STEM-related jobs are created that require workers with backgrounds in computer science education, but too few school districts offer these courses, especially in high-poverty schools. The grants proposed in our Budget would focus on identifying and testing computer science instructional models that expand access to these opportunities for all students, but particularly for high school students in underserved communities, including in urban and rural areas.

In addition, the Budget includes a proposal for Next Generation High Schools, which would promote the whole-school transformation of the high school experience in order to provide students with challenging and relevant academic and career-related learning experiences that prepare them to transition to postsecondary education and careers. This program would provide students with the academic foundation and skills they need to be successful, ensuring that all students in redesigned high schools participate in project- or problem-based learning and have the opportunity to earn early college credit, and engage in experiences or postsecondary learning opportunities that build career-ready competencies. Accomplishing these goals will help improve longer-term outcomes for high school students, including increased high school graduation rates, higher rates of enrollment in postsecondary studies without the need to take remedial courses, higher postsecondary completion rates, and higher rates of completion of industry-recognized credentials and certifications.

The Budget also includes \$138 million, an increase of \$31 million over the 2016 enacted level, for more vigorous enforcement of our Nation's civil rights laws by the Department's

Office for Civil Rights, which ensures equal access to education. The Office of Civil Rights has been actively protecting the rights of all students through comprehensive strategies that include, among others, efforts to eliminate racial disparities in school disciplinary practices and procedures, and the enforcement of protections against bullying and harassment and sexual assault on college campuses.

Finally, the Budget includes \$500 million for the newly authorized Student Support and Academic Enrichment block grant, nearly twice the amount appropriated in 2016 for the antecedent programs. These funds can help expand course offerings across a range of areas, such as STEM and the arts, and bolster student achievement through such activities as mentoring or school counseling and expanding digital learning opportunities. Within the discretionary caps, we were unable to fund this new block grant at the fully authorized level, and thus have proposed that States have broader flexibility in how to target these funds to ensure that the funds provided to LEAs are robust enough to make a meaningful impact on students.

### **EXPANDING SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS**

A second area of focus in our 2017 request is to provide support for teachers and leaders who are doing the daily work of implementing new college- and career-ready standards and aligned assessments, and turning around our lowest-performing schools. If we want all students to succeed, we must provide teachers with the preparation, support, opportunities for leadership, and autonomy they need to be effective in the classroom and to want to remain in the field. And we need to prepare, attract, and keep school leaders of diverse backgrounds who can create school cultures that bring out the best of students and staff in a climate that supports growth and learning for all.

Our 2017 request proposes significant new resources to help ensure that all students have access to effective teachers and leaders and new opportunities for teachers to shape our

approaches to improving student outcomes. First, our \$1 billion mandatory RESPECT: Best Job in the World program would support the redesign of an estimated 200 high-need schools to create models that transform these schools into the best places to advance a career in education and thereby attract and retain talented and effective teachers and school leaders. For new and continuing competitive grant programs for teachers and leaders that span preparation, development, and retention, we request \$525 million, an increase of \$142 million over 2016. For example, the budget includes \$250 million for the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Grants program—the reauthorized version of the Teacher Incentive Fund—to support continued innovation in the area of robust human capital management systems that help school districts and schools recruit, develop, support, retain, and advance teachers through every phase of their careers. We also would strengthen the pipeline of effective teachers and principals through a new \$125 million Teacher and Principal Pathways program, which would make competitive grants to institutions of higher education and other nonprofit entities to support the creation and expansion of high-quality teacher and principal preparation programs. In addition we fund Title II-A at \$2.25 billion in formula funds. Finally, to attract the next generation of talented educators, we propose to streamline and expand the current postsecondary assistance available to teachers into one program that will provide up to \$25,000 in loan forgiveness for serving in a high-needs school.

## **IMPROVING ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, AND COMPLETION IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION**

Higher education is one of the clearest paths to the middle class. At a time when jobs can go anywhere in the world, skills and education will determine success for individuals and for nations. Yet, far too many students do not go to college, or never complete their degree; we used

to be first in the world in college completion, and now we are 13th. Our budget request builds on the Administration's efforts to make college more affordable and accessible while putting forward important new initiatives to promote college completion. We must shift incentives at every level to focus on student success, not just on access. Students who do not complete their degrees are less likely to succeed in the workforce and have student loan default rates that are, on average, three times higher than those who graduate. Further, we know that taking a full course load helps students finish on time, at a lower cost and likely with less student debt, saving them both time and money.

The request dedicates \$188 billion to Federal student aid in fiscal year 2017, including \$31 billion to Pell Grants and over \$155 billion to student loans, benefiting more than 12 million students. The request expands the Administration's signature initiative, America's College Promise, which would support 2 years of free community college for responsible students, who get good grades and stay on track to graduate, as well as up to providing 2 years of college at zero or significantly reduced tuition to first-time, low-income students at 4-year Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs). We are also proposing a new \$30 million HBCU/MSI Innovation for Completion Fund competitive grant program to foster innovative and evidence-based, student-centered strategies and interventions to increase the number of low-income students completing degree programs.

The Budget proposes two initiatives totaling \$2 billion in Pell Grants for the 2017-2018 award year to help students accelerate progress toward their degrees by attending school year-round and encouraging students to take more credits per term, increasing their likelihood of on-time completion. The first initiative, Pell for Accelerated Completion, would allow full-time students the opportunity to earn a third semester of Pell Grants in an academic year, enabling



them to finish faster by taking additional courses year-round and better meeting the diverse needs of today's students. The second initiative, On-Track Pell Bonus, would create an incentive for students to stay on track or accelerate their progress towards a degree through a \$300 bonus, effectively increasing the Pell Grant maximum award to \$6,235, for students who take 15 or more credits per semester in an academic year, which is the course load typically needed for on-time completion.

Research published in 2013 from the RAND Corporation suggests that inmates who participate in correctional education programs are not only 43 percent less likely to recidivate but also 13 percent more likely to obtain employment post-release. Accordingly, we propose expanding postsecondary opportunity to incarcerated individuals eligible for release through the Second Chance Pell proposal that would restore their Pell eligibility with the goals of helping them get jobs, support their families, turn their lives around, and strengthen their communities.

Finally, the Administration is re-proposing other key initiatives, including rewarding colleges that successfully enroll and graduate a significant number of low-income students on time; further simplifying the FAFSA; permanently extending inflationary increases of the maximum Pell grant award; redirecting campus-based programs to target institutions that offer affordable and quality education and training; reforming and streamlining income-driven repayment plans to simplify borrowers' experience and allow for easier selection of a repayment plan, while reducing program complexity and better targeting of benefits; strengthening teacher loan forgiveness; and protecting students and taxpayers from predatory colleges that are not delivering the high-quality education that students—and taxpayers—deserve.

## **PROMOTING GREATER USE OF EVIDENCE AND DATA**

Over the last seven years, we have pioneered efforts that encourage grantees and practitioners to use evidence of what works in education in ways that can improve student outcomes. Programs such as Education Innovation and Research and First in the World (FITW), which includes a 30 percent set-aside for HBCUs and MSIs, will continue to scale up the use of evidence-based grant-making. Further, a focus on evidence and data also can be a powerful tool to advance equity. For example, under our new Federal education law, the ESSA, States will establish new accountability systems that will include indicators of success that reflect a broad picture of how schools are serving all children, and not just in academics. States could decide to look at information about students' socioemotional growth, for instance, and whether schools are helping children develop skills like resilience and the ability to effectively collaborate with peers.

This Budget continues that commitment to improving student outcomes by increasing funding for programs that provide additional resources for interventions that either are based on evidence of success, or help build evidence of what works in education. The Budget strongly funds the infrastructure for evaluation within the Institute of Education Sciences, requesting \$209 million for the Research, Development, and Dissemination program, \$125 million for the Statistics program, and \$81 million for the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems program, with a particular focus on using data at the local level. These requests will enable the collection of critical information, and help us disseminate this evidence of what works to policymakers and practitioners to empower them to improve student learning and narrow achievement gaps.

Our request also includes \$15 million to support InformedED, which builds on the success of the new College Scorecard by making the Department's data and research across the education spectrum, including data and research on a wide range of issue areas for students at the

Pre-K through college levels, more available—and actionable—for internal users and for the public. The 2017 Budget will help build new infrastructure to manage the collection, quality, release, and analysis of these data in innovative and effective ways.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, our 2017 request reflects the President's determination to make the investments necessary to expand educational opportunity, position our children for success, and promote economic growth and global competitiveness. I look forward to working with the Committee to secure support for the President's 2017 Budget for education, and I look forward to your questions.