

Strengthening High Schools For The 21st Century

"We must make our high schools more rigorous and encourage students to take more advanced math and science classes. Employers today need workers with "pocket protector" skills-creative problem-solvers with strong math and science backgrounds. Whether children want to be auto mechanics or cancer researchers, they must have these skills."

-- U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

From principals to parents, from business leaders to governors, the consensus for strengthening our nation's high schools has never been stronger. Test scores have slipped relative to other nations, while remedial college costs have soared. It is unacceptable that almost a third of incoming high school students—and about half of African-American and Hispanic students—do not make it to graduation day on time.

Students and their schools must be challenged to succeed. We must work to guarantee a meaningful diploma to every high school graduate, one that signifies the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in college and the competitive marketplace.

Building On Results: Strengthening the *No Child Left Behind Act* will help accomplish these goals by increasing the number of high schools offering rigorous and advanced coursework; strengthening math and science instruction and teacher training; substantially increasing federal Title I funds for schools serving low-income high school students; collecting data on student achievement through regular and reliable assessments; insisting on accountability for high school graduation rates; and tapping the expertise of a new Adjunct Teacher Corps.

- ❖ **High School Students**—Federal Title I funds will be substantially increased to serve low-income high school students. Funding for low-income elementary and middle schools will be protected.
- ❖ **Rigorous Coursework**—By 2010-11, states must develop course-level academic standards for English and mathematics that prepare high school students to succeed in college and the global workplace. By 2012-13, states will administer assessments aligned to these standards for two years of English and mathematics and publicly report the extent to which all students are on track to enter college or the workplace fully prepared.
- ❖ **Graduation Rates**—All 50 Governors have agreed to use a more accurate graduation rate. By 2011-12, this school-level data must be disaggregated and reported in state accountability calculations.
- ❖ **Reading Achievement**—The Striving Readers program, which provides intensive intervention to students in grades 6-12 who are struggling to reach grade level in reading / language arts, will be expanded to reach more students. We will continue to invest in Reading First, the largest, most successful early reading initiative ever undertaken in this country.
- ❖ **Adjunct Teacher Corps**—Talented and qualified professionals from math, science, and technology fields will be encouraged to teach middle and high school courses, especially in low-income schools.
- ❖ **Advanced Classes**—More teachers will be trained to lead Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes. In addition, Academic Competitiveness Grants will continue to provide financial incentives for students to take a rigorous course of study in high school and college.