

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**Statement by**

**Arne Duncan  
U.S. Secretary of Education**

**on the**

**Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Request**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of President Obama's fiscal year 2010 budget for the Department of Education, and to talk with you about how together we can lay the foundation for a generation of reform that can restore American leadership in education.

President Obama is asking for \$46.7 billion in discretionary funding for the Department in fiscal year 2010, an increase of \$1.3 billion over the comparable 2009 level, that would build on the historic increases provided for education in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act).

The combined resources of the Recovery Act and the 2010 request demonstrate the President's strong belief that improving education is the best way to ensure our long-term economic prosperity and security. Moreover, education is the civil rights issue of our generation, and the only truly effective weapon in our nation's long war on poverty.

And it's not just more money that has created this unprecedented opportunity to dramatically improve the quality of our education system, but also broad, bipartisan agreement on what needs to be done to achieve this goal.

We need college-ready, career-ready, internationally benchmarked academic standards that reflect the fact that our kids today are not competing against children down the block or even across the country, but across the globe in countries like India and China. And to make sure all of our kids can meet those standards, especially those poor and minority children that currently suffer from the achievement gap, we need to invest more in quality early childhood education.

We also must do everything we can to get a great teacher in front of every classroom in the nation. Everyone knows the difference that a good teacher can make, but we have far too few good teachers in our most challenging, lowest-performing schools. We need to change the incentives to encourage our best teachers and principals to work in the toughest schools.

And we need to be much more thoughtful about supporting reform and innovation that have been proven to increase student achievement. We need to identify and scale up best

practices and promote effective strategies like expanding the number of charter schools and extending learning time to help turn around low-performing schools.

All of these priorities—higher standards, early childhood education, better teaching, and promoting effective innovation—will help more students enter and graduate from college. There is no question that one key to success in the global economy is a college education, and President Obama has set a national goal of ensuring that America is number one in graduating young people from college by 2020. Today roughly 40 percent of 25-34 year-old Americans hold college degrees, and we want to raise that to 60 percent.

The Recovery Act put significant resources—almost \$100 billion—behind each of these strategies for ensuring that every child has the opportunity to obtain a quality education. Our 2010 request was developed in the context of Recovery Act funding, much of which will continue to be available to States and school districts in fiscal year 2010, and reflects our effort to build on and make the most of that historic investment in education.

### **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

We know from decades of research that investment in high-quality early childhood education and services leads to better outcomes in both school and the working world. President Obama is drawing on this research for his comprehensive Zero-to-Five initiative to expand access to quality childcare and education. The 2010 request would jump-start this initiative by helping to improve readiness for school, particularly in the area of early literacy and reading skills. For example, the request includes \$500 million for Title I Early Childhood Grants, which would provide incentives for school districts to use a larger share of Title I Grants to LEAs funding—including the \$10 billion provided by the Recovery Act—to establish or expand Title I preschool programs. We also are asking for \$300 million to launch the Early Learning Challenge Fund, which would lay the groundwork for future investments in early childhood education by helping to build State capacity to measure and improve the quality of early childhood programs.

In addition, the 2010 request would strengthen early literacy through a \$335 million increase that would expand the Striving Readers program to support comprehensive approaches to reading instruction for children in the elementary grades that are grounded in scientifically based reading research. A portion of the Striving Readers funds would continue to support interventions and whole-school efforts in secondary schools to help students who read significantly below grade level.

### **NEW INCENTIVES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING**

President Obama believes strongly that “America’s future depends on its teachers.” We need more effective teachers, and we need them most in our lowest-performing schools. Our request supports both of these goals. For example, we are asking for a \$420 million increase for the Teacher Incentive Fund to significantly expand programs developed with local stakeholders to reward effective teachers and principals and to expand incentives for teachers, principals, and other school staff to work in our most challenging schools. The request also includes

\$29.2 million for the School Leadership program, an increase of \$10 million, or 52 percent, to encourage effective principals to work in high-need schools and to train effective teachers to become principals or assistant principals in those schools.

## **PROMOTING INNOVATION IN STRUGGLING SCHOOLS**

Creating new incentives for teachers and principals is part of a broader effort in our 2010 budget to promote innovation and reform in low-performing schools. If you look on our website, at [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov), you will see that as part of our Recovery Act guidance we have posted a list of almost 13,000 schools that are identified for improvement during the current school year. That number is up by more than 1,000 schools, or 9 percent, from the previous year. And more than one-third of these schools, or almost 5,000 schools, currently are in restructuring status—the final stage of improvement for chronically low-performing schools that demands fundamental changes in instruction and school governance to break the cycle of educational failure.

Congress recognized the challenges that these schools create for States and school districts and provided \$3 billion for Title I School Improvement Grants in the Recovery Act. The Department is working to maximize the impact of these funds on efforts to build State and local capacity to support school improvement, and the 2010 request would build on those efforts by seeking \$1.5 billion for School Improvement Grants, a \$1 billion increase over the regular 2009 level. The request would help intensify efforts to identify and adopt effective turn-around strategies. The request also would begin to help take on the dropout crisis by requiring States to ensure that 40 percent of School Improvement Grant allocations are spent in low-performing middle and high schools.

In addition to school improvement funding, we are launching a major push to identify and scale up best practices through our What Works and Innovation Fund, which received \$650 million under the Recovery Act. We would add \$100 million to this program in 2010, to support competitive grants to LEAs and partnerships between non-profit organizations and LEAs that have made significant gains in improving student outcomes to expand or evaluate their work and serve as models of best practices. In many ways, this program is the linchpin of everything we are working on at the Department, because there is a huge need for effective, scalable strategies that can improve student achievement in high-poverty, high-need schools. Further, we request \$72 million more for the Institute for Education Sciences, so we can identify what works based on rigorous research.

Our 2010 request also would begin to make good on President Obama's promise to increase support for one innovation that we know can improve student achievement—charter schools. We are seeking a \$52 million increase as part of a commitment to double funding for Charter Schools Grants over 4 years. Other activities in our 2010 budget to promote innovation include \$50 million for a High School Graduation Initiative to fund innovative and effective strategies designed to increase the high school graduation rate, and \$10 million for a Promise Neighborhoods initiative that would promote comprehensive programs that provide the support children need to achieve success from birth through college and beyond.

## **HELPING MORE KIDS GO TO COLLEGE**

We announced most of our 2010 proposals for postsecondary education in February as part of the 2010 President's Budget Overview, so I will just summarize them briefly here. I do think we have an extraordinary story to tell about the Federal student aid programs. Under the President's request, the Department of Education would administer over \$129 billion in new grants, loans, and work-study assistance in 2010—a 32 percent increase over the amount available in 2008—to help more than 14 million students and their families pay for college. Our proposals to make Pell Grants a mandatory, appropriated entitlement, raise the maximum Pell award from \$5,350 to \$5,550, and index the maximum award to inflation plus 1 percentage point, would result in a \$10.4 billion or 57 percent increase in Pell Grant assistance from the 2008-09 school year to the 2010-11 school year. And the number of Pell Grant recipients would rise nearly 1.5 million, or 24 percent, over the same period.

We would be able to provide these dramatic increases in student aid in part because our proposal to use Federal capital to make all new loans through the Direct Loan program, along with our proposed restructuring of the Perkins Loans program, would save an estimated \$24.3 billion over the next five years. This is an extraordinary opportunity to reform obsolete programs; increase aid available to students; and simplify the administration of student loans for students, families, schools, and the Department. In short, it is an opportunity that should not be missed.

Finally, our 2010 request would launch a 5-year \$2.5 billion Access and Completion Incentive Fund that would support innovative State efforts to improve college completion rates for low-income students. This Federal-State partnership builds on ideas Congress included in the Higher Education Opportunity Act, such as the State Grants for Access and Persistence program designed to complement LEAP. A key goal of this program is to learn more about what works, and what doesn't work, in improving student persistence to degree. The Administration also intends to reach out to the philanthropic community as potential partners, and expects to make use of the Experimental Sites authority that we already have, to issue regulatory waivers for the purpose of research on programs to improve persistence.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Recovery Act provided unprecedented levels of Federal support for our schools in return for a commitment to meaningful reform strategies. President Obama and I believe that the Recovery Act has created a historic opportunity to improve the quality of our education system, and we are determined to make the most of that opportunity. Our 2010 budget request would build on the resources and reforms in the Recovery Act to help create a public school system that prepares more students for the opportunities provided by a college education and helps ensure that they can afford to take advantage of those opportunities. As I said at the beginning of my testimony, I believe these are goals we all can agree on, and I urge you to support the President's fiscal year 2010 request for education.

I will be happy to take any questions you may have.