



Supporting Rural Schools



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Reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Rural schools have unique challenges and benefits, and we value the input of rural school leaders as we work together to improve education for all children.

—Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

Almost half of all school districts and one-third of all public schools are located in rural areas. These schools serve almost 20 percent of the nation's students. Rural schools have unique needs and face unique challenges. Many struggle to recruit and retain effective teachers, provide access to a well-rounded education, and offer a diverse array of courses. Our *Blueprint for Reform* considers the specific needs of rural schools and aims to support them in preparing students for success in college and careers.

Our proposal will ensure rural schools receive needed funding.

- ▶ **Dedicated formula funding.** We will continue the dedicated Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) to ensure that rural districts receive additional formula funds to support their schools, and we will maintain other critical formula programs serving disadvantaged children, students with disabilities, Native American students, and migrant children.



- ▶ ***Level playing field in competitions.*** Our proposal will ensure that rural communities can be successful in competitive programs by giving priorities to rural initiatives and improving technical assistance and support to rural areas. Grants are awarded based on the strength of the proposal.
- ▶ ***Greater flexibility with funds.*** We will expand the flexibility under the REAP program to include rural, low-income districts so that all REAP-eligible districts can use funds flexibly to meet their needs.

Our proposal will improve teaching in rural schools.

- ▶ ***Improve the teaching corps.*** We will provide \$3.9 billion in funding to help recruit, prepare, and retain effective educators, including in rural and other high-need schools. Rural schools may use these funds to address teacher shortages in mathematics, science, special education, and other subjects.
- ▶ ***Change teacher quality rules so they work better for rural schools.*** The proposal will make it easier for teachers to teach multiple subjects by defining teacher quality not exclusively on paper credentials but also on how well a teacher performs in the classroom. This will help rural schools keep effective teachers in the classrooms in which they're needed most.

Our proposal will offer flexibility and accountability.

- ▶ **Flexibility in interventions.** We will provide districts flexibility for designing interventions in schools that are not meeting their performance targets, giving rural communities the ability to decide what works best for their schools. The proposal eliminates federal mandates to provide supplemental educational services and public school choice—interventions that are difficult for many rural communities to provide.
- ▶ **Cuts red tape.** The proposal will consolidate federal competitive funding streams—while increasing overall funding levels—so that rural districts will have less red tape and fewer compliance requirements and more flexibility around applying for federal funds.
- ▶ **Turnaround options.** The “transformation” model for turning around chronically underperforming schools was developed with input from stakeholders from rural communities to make sure that these communities have the ability to turn around their struggling schools. It gives rural districts an option that works for them and will deliver the dramatic change students need in a small percentage of schools.

Our proposal will support the unique needs of rural schools and communities.

- ▶ **Technology.** We will promote the use of technology to improve instruction across our programs, including supporting states and districts in developing and delivering content through the proposed Effective Teaching and Learning for a Complete Education programs, and supporting districts in offering students online learning opportunities through the proposed Promoting Public School Choice program.
- ▶ **School and community collaboration.** The proposal provides \$1.8 billion for schools and communities to work together to support student success, recognizing that this is a shared responsibility. Under the new Successful, Safe and Healthy Students program and the strengthened 21st-Century Community Learning Centers program, districts will be given the flexibility to design a variety of programs for such resources as afterschool and community supports, based on their local needs.
- ▶ **Autonomous public schools.** Rural districts that feel that charter schools aren't the right approach for them but that still want to pursue innovative school models will be eligible for funding through the proposed Supporting Effective Charter Schools program. The proposal will allow innovative, autonomous public schools within districts to compete for funding from the program, creating high-quality educational options for students in rural areas.

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