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ESEA SHOULD INCREASE PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS FOR ALL YOUTH



While the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) has been waiting for an overhaul, millions of teens and young adults have struggled in school, dropped out, or failed to transition to meaningful education and career pathways.

- Today, 5.6 million youth ages 16-24 are “disconnected” meaning they are not in school and are not working.
- We know that a child born into a family with low income in Canada and half a dozen European countries stands a better chance of improving his or her lot in life than a similar child born in the United States.
- The United States, which has been slipping on international tests, continues to lose its competitive edge globally as other nations aggressively strengthen their education systems.

As a result, Opportunity Nation believes that a reauthorized ESEA should: (1) ensure that the academic achievement of all students, including all subgroups of students, is a central part of state accountability systems; (2) support multiple pathways to success by focusing on both students who have dropped out of school and those at risk of leaving the system; and (3) incentivize pay-for-performance initiatives that can help target limited public dollars to support cost effective solutions that will drive better outcomes.



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MULTIPLE PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

Opportunity Nation believes that a reauthorized ESEA should support multiple pathways to success by focusing a comprehensive package of services that identify students at risk of dropping out, provide them with services designed to keep them in school and help ensure their continued progress. Specifically, we ask that you include provisions in reauthorization that would provide:

- Multiple pathways for students to complete a high school education, including pathways that offer students flexible schedules (such as schedules that include evening classes, year-round programs, and open enrollment);
- Access to accelerated learning programs, such as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses and programs, dual- and concurrent- enrollment programs, and other programs that provide a “bridge” between secondary and postsecondary education;
- “Early warning systems” that identify students at risk of dropping out and provide them with services designed to keep them in school and help ensure their continued progress;
- Work-based learning and related activities that align with and are part of a student’s academic program and help students prepare for fulfilling and productive careers;
- Activities specifically designed to enable students who have dropped out of school to re-enter and obtain a high school diploma;
- Wrap-around support services, such as academic and career planning, mentoring and tutoring, and other academic, career, and social supports demonstrated to be effective in assisting students in graduating or assisting dropouts in re-entering school and completing a high school education; and
- Assistance to students in obtaining student aid (including in completing the FAFSA and other college counseling and planning activities).



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PAY-FOR-PERFORMANCE

Opportunity Nation supports federal programming that is designed to increase efficiency and results without decreasing services. Therefore, we recommend that ESEA support pay-for-performance initiatives in a manner similar to provisions included under P.L. 113-125, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

- Historically, the federal government has supported programs regardless of whether the services delivered actually achieved results, as long as providers met federally-prescribed rules that generally focused on inputs.
- As a result, the federal government has funded programs that haven't necessarily worked, costing taxpayers and negatively impacting the very individuals that programs were intended to help.

Opportunity Nation believes pay for performance initiatives have the potential to change the status quo by ensuring that federal funding is actually linked to results and outcomes, not inputs and federal requirements.

- Under pay for performance models, government dollars are paid out when providers achieve intended results for the people they serve.
- Programs enjoy flexibility from bureaucratic requirements that often accompany the design of federal initiatives and in return, receive federal support based on the extent to which they meet performance measures.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Opportunity Nation supports federal programming that is designed to increase efficiency and results without decreasing services. Therefore, we recommend that ESEA support pay-for-performance initiatives in a manner similar to provisions included under P.L. 113-125, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

- In particular, we believe that ESEA must continue to ensure all student achievement data is disaggregated (i.e., measured and reported) by race and ethnicity, gender, disability status, migrant status, English proficiency, and economic status.



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