



# Invest in innovation

---

## Introduction

American schools consistently produce students unready for the rigors of college or the workplace. Only about one third of all eighth graders are proficient in reading. Most high schools graduate little more than two-thirds of their students on time. And 33 percent of first-year college students require remediation in either math or English. Clearly our current approach to education needs to be reinvented.

But ingenuity does not mean embracing every novel reform. Innovation is the process of leveraging new tools, talent, and management strategies to craft solutions that were not possible or necessary in an earlier era. Educators should have the opportunity to assess challenges, to devise smarter, more effective solutions—and then to be held accountable for the results they deliver.

---

## Recommendation #1

Incentivize states and districts to spur innovation

### Authorize the Race to the Top and Investing in Innovation funds

The Race to the Top, or RTT, and Investing in Innovation Fund, or i3, programs have spurred significant education reforms. At least 10 states changed their laws to make themselves more competitive for RTT before money was awarded, and 34 states in total reformed their education laws or policies to prepare for the first two rounds of the competition. We encourage Congress to authorize both of these competitive programs as a permanent part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or ESEA.

### Expand and authorize the Teacher Incentive Fund

We urge Congress to authorize and expand the Teacher Incentive Fund into a new Teacher and Leader Innovation Fund, or TLIF. TLIF would award grants to states and school districts to support innovative strategies that attract and support effective teachers and principals in high-need schools. TLIF would consolidate existing programs that serve similar purposes, and states or districts could use the funds to develop more aggressive recruitment strategies, strengthen pay and tenure processes, and institute career ladders for teachers, among other reforms. Under TLIF, states or districts should be required to demonstrate that the activities are increasing educator effectiveness.

---

## Recommendation #2

Incentivize states and districts to provide flexibility in staffing and funding

### Empower schools to play a greater role in staffing

Staffing decisions are usually made at the district level. The result is that principals have little, if any, freedom to recruit, hire, or retain staff, particularly in low-performing schools that teachers tend to avoid. Congress should empower school-level leaders, including teacher leaders, in chronically failing schools to make human capital decisions, such as having a jumpstart on hiring, flexibility to recruit and retain effective teachers, and resources to pay effective teachers more for working in high-need schools.

### Provide districts more flexible funding options

Most districts do not allocate or report funds based on actual school-level expenditures, obscuring what resources are available for each school. Congress should require districts to report actual expenditures for each school and encourage them to move toward student-weighted funding. Both moves would give administrators greater *clarity* about the resources they have and greater *flexibility* to use them to meet student needs. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 required districts to report school-level data for that year, and we believe that should be required permanently in ESEA.

---

### Recommendation #3

Incentivize states and districts to provide more choices in schools, programs, and access to educators

#### Support the planning and development of *effective* charter schools

The federal Charter Schools Program provides grants to states to support the planning and development of new charter schools. This funding is critical because charter schools usually receive less public funding than traditional public schools. High-flying charter models have achieved unprecedented outcomes for low-income students, and their existence has spurred innovation. By supporting the Charter Schools Program, the federal government can send a strong signal to states and districts that reinventing school models is critical to meeting the needs of all students.

#### Break down the barrier between high school and college

The distinction between 12th grade and the first year of college is artificial, the product of historic norms that are no longer relevant to today's learners. This divide leaves some students unchallenged in high school, unready for college, or both. There is growing evidence that early college and dual-enrollment programs can strengthen the educational pipeline at a crucial junction by bridging this gap. The Fast Track to College Act of 2011 (S. 154 and H.R. 925) provides support for such programs and is worth consideration.

#### Broaden the pool of potential teachers and leaders

Teachers and principals are the most important school-based factors in student learning, which is why it is important to cast a wide net and allow the best candidates to enter the profession, whether or not they have conventional credentials. Congress should authorize a Teacher and Leader Pathways program that would consolidate a number of existing recruitment and preparation programs into a larger program focused on preparing educators for high-needs schools. The program would provide competitive grants to districts as well as non-profit and university partners. Programs would be designed to meet the specific needs of districts and must either have a record of preparing effective educators or commit to tracking and measuring the effectiveness of their graduates in the classroom.

---

What our recommendations are based on

- [Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Innovation](#)
- [Advancing Teacher and Principal Effectiveness: Four Recommendations for Reforming the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#)
- [Walking the Talk: Closing the Comparability Requirement in Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#)
- [Fast Track to College: Increasing Post-secondary Success for All Students](#)



## CAP's Body of Work on ESEA Topics

---

### Increasing Teacher and Principal Effectiveness

- [Advancing Teacher and Principal Effectiveness: Four Recommendations for Reforming the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#)
- [Essential Elements of Teacher Policy in ESEA: Effectiveness, Fairness, and Evaluation](#)
- [Measuring What Matters: A Stronger Accountability Model for Teacher Education](#)
- [So Long Lake Wobegon?: Using Teacher Evaluation to Raise Teacher Quality](#)
- [Treating Different Teachers Differently: How State Policy Should Act on Differences in Teacher Performance to Improve Teacher Effectiveness and Equity](#)
- [Increasing Principal Effectiveness: A Strategic Investment for ESEA](#)
- [Principals' Approaches to Developing Teacher Quality](#)

---

### Closing the Comparability Loophole

- [Walking the Talk: Closing the Comparability Requirement Loophole in Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#)
- [Comparable, Schmocomparable: Evidence of Inequity in the Allocation of Funds for Teacher Salary Within California's Public School Districts](#)
- [Pulling Back the Curtain: Promoting Fiscal Equity and Providing All Students with Access to Effective Teachers Will Not Require Forcible Re-assignment](#)

---

### Simplifying the Title I Formula

- [Bitter Pill, Better Formula: Toward a Single, Fair, and Equitable Formula for ESEA Title I, Part A](#)
- [Spoonful of Sugar: An Equity Fund to Facilitate a Single, Fair, and Equitable Formula for ESEA Title I, Part A](#)
- [Secret Recipes Revealed: Demystifying the Title I, Part A Formulas](#)

---

### Extending Learning Time

- [Transforming Schools to Meet the Needs of Students: Improving School Quality and Increasing Learning Time in ESEA](#)
- [Expanded Time, Enriching Experiences: Expanded Learning Time Schools and Community Organization Partnerships](#)
- [Union and District Partnerships to Expand Learning Time](#)

---

### Innovation

- [Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Innovation](#)
  - [Advancing Teacher and Principal Effectiveness: Four Recommendations for Reforming the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#)
  - [Walking the Talk: Closing the Comparability Requirement in Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#)
  - [Fast Track to College: Increasing Post-secondary Success for All Students](#)
-

---

## Turning Around Low-Performing Schools

- [Incentivizing School Turnaround: A Proposal for Reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#)
- [Turning Around the Nation's Lowest-Performing Schools](#)
- [Levers for Change: Pathways for State-to-District Assistance in Underperforming School Districts](#)

---

## Providing Wraparound Services

- [Maximizing the Promise of Community Schools: Streamlining Wraparound Services for ESEA](#)
- [Breaking the Mold: Combining Community Schools with Expanded Learning Time to Help Educationally Disadvantaged Students](#)
- [Promise Neighborhoods Shows Real Potential but Needs the Right Funding](#)
- [A Look at Community Schools](#)