

## **Preparing Students for Success in College and the Workforce**

*“We will end what has become a race to the bottom in our schools and instead spur a race to the top by encouraging better standards and assessments... And I'm calling on our nation's governors and state education chiefs to develop standards and assessments that don't simply measure whether students can fill in a bubble on a test, but whether they possess 21st century skills like problem-solving and critical thinking and entrepreneurship and creativity. That is what we'll help them do later this year -- when we finally make No Child Left Behind live up to its name by ensuring not only that teachers and principals get the funding that they need, but that the money is tied to results.”*

President Barack Obama

Remarks to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
March 10, 2009

Last year, the President challenged states to develop standards and assessments that will help America's children rise to the challenge of graduating from high school prepared for college and the workplace.

Today, the President applauds Governors for their efforts to work together in a state-led consortium – managed by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) – to develop and implement new reading and math standards that build toward college- and career-readiness. With many states well positioned to adopt these standards, the Governors initiative is an essential first step in improving the rigor of teaching and learning in America's classrooms.

### **RAISING THE RIGOR OF ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

In today's global economy, a high-quality education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity and success – it is a prerequisite. Because economic progress and educational achievement go hand in hand, educating every American student to graduate prepared for college and for success in a new workforce is a national imperative.

Meeting this challenge requires that state standards reflect a level of teaching and learning needed for students to graduate ready for success in college and careers. In 1994, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) established a requirement that each state set standards for what America's students should know and be able to do in critical subjects. But the law did not ask states to consider whether those standards were aligned with what is needed for success in college and in the workplace.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 31 states set proficiency standards for fourth-grade reading that are lower than even the basic level as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Under the No Child Left Behind Act, between 2005 and 2007, various states have lowered their standards in reading and math. Because too many students are not learning the basic skills needed to succeed in college or work while they are in high school, the nation sacrifices more than \$3.7 billion a year in lost productivity and remedial education costs.

Over time, this race to the bottom threatens to place American students on a decline in relation to international peers. Results on international assessments reveal that, in math, American students

lag almost a full year behind students from the top performing countries. In response to their international comparison results, other countries have raised their standards while we have lowered ours.

President Obama has encouraged the state-led effort to end the practice of low-balling state reading and math standards, and will promote initiatives that support states in the adoption and implementation of college and career-ready standards. To spur reform and excellence in our schools, the President's *Race to the Top* competition rewards states that choose to adopt state-developed common standards that build toward college- and career-readiness. In the coming months, the Obama Administration will also commit \$350 million to a new competition supporting state-led partnerships to develop new, state-of-the-art assessments aligned to college and career-ready standards.

### **PROMOTING COLLEGE AND CAREER-READINESS**

The President's FY 2011 budget supports the Obama Administration's plan for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), including a comprehensive and new vision to help states successfully transition to and implement college- and career-ready standards by improving teacher preparation and development, upgrading classroom instruction, and supporting high-quality assessments.

In better aligning the law to support college- and career-ready standards, the Obama Administration will integrate new policies into a re-designed Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which will:

- Require all states to adopt and certify that they have college- and career-ready standards in reading and mathematics, which may include common standards developed by a state-led consortium, as a condition of qualifying for Title I funding.
- Include new funding priorities for states with college- and career-ready standards in place, as they compete for federal funds to improve teaching and learning and upgrade curriculum in reading and math. This priority applies to the President's FY2011 budget request for new *Effective Teaching and Learning* programs in literacy (\$450 million) and STEM (\$300 million).
- Encourage states, schools districts, and other institutions to better align teacher preparation practices and programs to teaching of college and career-ready standards. This priority supports the President's FY2011 budget request for a new *Teacher and Leaders Pathways* program (\$405 million).
- Assist states in implementing assessments aligned with college- and career-ready standards, under a new *Assessing Achievement* program. The President's FY2011 budget supports \$400 million in state grants under this program.

- Support the expansion of the *Race to the Top*, beyond funding in the Recovery Act, to dedicate \$1.35 billion in awards to states and school districts that have college- and career-ready standards in place as a condition of funding.
- Support professional development for teachers, leaders and other school instructional staff to better align instruction to college and career-ready standards. This supports the President's FY2011 budget request for the *Effective Teacher and Leaders* state grant program (\$2.5 billion).