

On April 10, 2013, President Obama presented his \$3.77 trillion Fiscal Year 2014 budget request, outlining his spending priorities for the coming year. Undoing federal budget sequestration and reducing the deficit through an approach that balances targeted spending cuts with new revenue are centerpieces of the proposal. This nets an additional \$1.8 trillion in deficit reduction over the next 10 years through \$580 billion in new taxes on the wealthy, \$600 billion in mandatory program cuts, primarily from reductions in cost-of-living adjustments for federal entitlement programs, and \$230 billion in cuts to defense and nondefense discretionary programs.

The President's commitment to education is reflected in a large investment in education that is 4.5 percent higher than FY2012 pre-sequestration levels and 8.4 percent higher than FY2012 post-sequestration levels. This increase includes a \$75 billion investment in state-federal pre-K partnerships (more information about the administration's early childhood education plan is available [here](#)), as well as some K-12 program increases. However, the budget request also freezes funding for a number of key programs that would benefit specific student subgroups such as homeless students, English Learners and youth transitioning out of the justice system. Furthermore, major formula-grant programs aimed at supporting our most disadvantaged students would also see stagnant funding, such as Title I and special education. Lastly, this is the third year that the Obama administration has pushed for a consolidation plan that folds key programs for family literacy and parent engagement into larger, less targeted pots of money.

The proposals in the President's FY 2013 budget most significant for K-12 education programs are below:

NOTABLE FUNDING INCREASES AND NEW INITIATIVES

- **Promise Neighborhoods:** The President requests \$300 million, an increase of \$43 million or 400 percent from the 2012 appropriation. This would be a significant increase for competitive grants that support the development and implementation of comprehensive neighborhood-based projects that include a continuum of family and community services and ambitious education reforms designed to combat the adverse effects of poverty and improve education and life outcomes. The increase would target a portion of funds to Promise Zones, or communities with highly concentrated poverty. By continuing to help meet the needs of the whole child and focusing on communities with persistently high poverty, the president's commitment to invest in comprehensive supports for children, youth and families and their communities.
- **Successful, Safe and Healthy Students:** The President requests \$280 million, an increase of \$94.3 million or 50 percent from FY2012 appropriation for the programs consolidated to create this new initiative. This new competitive grant would be used to implement strategies designed to improve the physical and mental health of students; reduce or prevent drug use, alcohol use, bullying and harassment; and report more and better information on school climate and student safety. A significant portion of this funding would be set aside to make schools safer and decrease gun violence against children, including \$30 million to improve school emergency management plans, \$50 million for School Climate Transformation Grants to implement behavioral intervention strategies, and \$25 million to help school and communities break the cycle of violence. Funding for this new program is drawn from the consolidation of existing programs, such as elementary and school counseling, physical education program and alcohol abuse reduction program. First Focus strongly supports a school climate that ensures schools are safe, healthy, and engaging. However, we remain concerned that this is achieved at the cost of other critical social-emotional supports for students.

- **College Pathways and Accelerated Learning:** The President's budget requests \$102.2 million, an increase of \$27.4 million from FY2012 appropriation for the two programs consolidated under this new initiative. This is designed to increase graduation rates and preparation for college matriculation via Advanced Placement course and dual enrollment programs (earning college credit while in high school) in high-poverty middle and high schools. Funding for this initiative comes from a consolidation of the High School Graduation Initiative and Advanced Placement. This initiative would help students to earn college credits while they are in high school, reduce dropout rates, and keep students engaged.
- **High School Redesign:** The President requests \$300 million for new competitive grants for school districts that partner with institutions of higher education or employers to promote career-based learning; access to rigorous coursework to prepare students for college, including access to college-level coursework and the opportunity to earn college credit while in high school; learning job and technical skills; and the opportunity to explore college and career options, including advisory services. Priority would be given to partnerships in high-poverty, rural, and other districts with limited access to quality career and college opportunities. This initiative would better prepare students for postsecondary education or a career while keeping them engaged in school and reducing dropout rates.
- **Effective Teaching and Learning: Literacy:** The President's FY 2014 request combines FY2012 appropriations for Striving Readers and Ready-to-Learn Television for a \$187 million competitive grant to support state efforts to improve literacy instruction for students from preschool to grade 12 with a focus on high-need schools. These grants would also support the identification and expansion of successful initiatives and give states flexibility to target resources based on their needs. This is an important initiative that targets interventions to students reading below grade level. However, this new initiative is only possible by consolidating two other initiatives, and it replaces a formula grant with a competitive grant. Competitive grants often mean that certain states and school districts are left out, and replacing formula grants with competitive grants exacerbates this issue.

FROZEN FUNDED INITIATIVES

- **Title I, Part A, College and Career Ready Students Program:** The President requests \$14.5 billion, freezing the funding level from FY2012 appropriation. This would replace Title I Part A grants to school districts but would continue to help ensure that 21 million students in high-poverty schools meet state academic standards. The request also supports a reauthorization proposal that reframes state accountability systems to target interventions to the lowest performing schools while giving them the latitude on how to best improve student achievement. Given that child poverty has remained at a 20-year high of 22 percent, we expected the Administration to elevate funding for a foundation program created specifically to level the playing field for students living in poverty.
- **Neglected and Delinquent Children & Youth Education (ESEA I-D):** The President requests \$50 million, level funding from FY2012 appropriation. This initiative provides formula grants to states that support education services for neglected and delinquent children and youth in local and state-run institutions, community day programs, and in correctional facilities. While the request would assist an estimated 107,000 students to re-enter and complete school, we should prioritize neglected students to help them overcome many challenges that other students don't face.
- **Homeless Children & Youth Education:** The President requests \$65.2 million, freezing the funding level from FY2012 appropriation. This provides formula grants to states for services that help homeless students enroll, attend, and succeed in school. In addition to academic instruction, the program helps ensure access for these children to preschool programs, special education, and gifted and talented programs. According to The National Center on Family Homelessness, 1.6 million children are homeless each year, which contributes to a growing number of homeless students each year. President Obama's FY2014 budget request freezes funding for a third consecutive year, failing to meet this growing challenge within our schools.

- **English Learner Education:** The President requests \$732.1 million, freezing the funding level from FY2012 appropriation. Currently authorized under Title III of ESEA, this program awards formula grants to States based on each state's share of English Learners (ELs) and recent immigrant students. The funding helps states design and implement statewide activities (such as professional development of educators and improved accountability) to meet the educational needs of English Learners. Given that achievement gaps still persist between EL and non-EL students, flat funding for the third consecutive year fails to adequately meet the need of the rapidly growing EL population.

NOTABLE FUNDING DECREASES AND CONSOLIDATIONS

- **Race to the Top:** While funding for Race to the Top is nearly doubled over FY2012 appropriations in the President's request, to \$1 billion, the budget changes this grant to Race to the Top – College Affordability and Completion. Race to the Top supports comprehensive state and local reforms designed to close achievement gaps and produce significant improvements in student achievement and high school graduation rates and included funding for the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge, which did the same for early childhood education. The new grants would focus solely on college affordability and new initiatives in higher education to smooth the transition into college. While this new grant initiative would assist college-age students, it should not come at the expense of children and youth who are still in school, especially the most deserving students who currently benefit from Race to the Top.
- **Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) Grants:** This initiative's funding is entirely eliminated under the President's FY 2014 request (the 2012 appropriation was \$42.8 million). TQP Grants seek to improve the quality of new teachers by creating partnerships among Institutions of Higher Education (IHE), high-need school districts, and/or high-need early childhood education (ECE) programs. The TQP Grants Program also support school leadership programs to train superintendents, principals, ECE program directors, and other school leaders in high-need or rural school districts. Though the President's request furthers some policies to elevate the teaching profession, we need to continue creating comprehensive pathways to the teaching career where we can recruit, prepare, and retain highly qualified and effective teachers in high-need areas. Defunding TQP grants would strike a blow to these efforts.

Though there are some notable increases in education funding in the President's request, most significant being the unprecedented investment in pre-K, there are a number of consolidations and reformulation of grants that mean some of the children who would most benefit from additional assistance, such as homeless children and children living in poverty, lose out. Moving forward, First Focus will continue to advocate for the Administration and Congress to increase investments for children who face many challenges both inside and outside the classroom that affect their education.

Additionally, the Administration's proposed budget shows that deficit reduction need not be undertaken at the expense of our children. A balanced approach of funding cuts and increased revenue allows the country to fund important education initiatives while significantly reducing the deficit.