

A Blueprint for Preparing America's Future

The Secondary and Technical Education Excellence Act of 2003: Overview for FY 2004 Budget Release

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U.S. Department of Education
Office of Vocational and Adult Education
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Secondary and Technical Education Excellence Act Fact Sheet

Office of Vocational and Adult Education
U.S. Department of Education

Key Messages

- High schools are short-changing students with watered-down classes and low expectations that limit individual choices and personal potential.
- Every high school student deserves to graduate possessing the core academic skills needed for postsecondary education and high skilled employment.
- Every student should be allowed to choose from a range of good educational options, including high quality technical Programs of Study.
- Community and technical colleges need to play a stronger role, in collaboration with high schools, to make technical Programs of Study widely available to students.

The Need for Change

- Since 1917, the federal government has made a major investment to prepare students for the workforce. For decades, the investment paid off.
- During the last 30 years, the workforce has changed dramatically, demanding that all students complete high school possessing a core set of academic skills needed for postsecondary education and high-wage jobs.
- In fact, Job growth is occurring mostly in careers that require postsecondary education or training.
- High schools have not changed enough to meet

these new economic realities. High schools continue to track students, holding them back with the "soft bigotry of low expectations," and student achievement rates are at the same level as 30 years ago.

- 90% of students want to pursue college after graduation, and 67% actually do enroll in college. But there is a major disconnect between student aspirations and their high school preparation.
- Only one-third of high school students take a high school curriculum that prepares them for college level work; almost 50% of those that do enroll in college need remediation; and only about half of college enrollees complete a college program.
- Traditional vocational programs do not offer the academic or technical rigor to adequately prepare students for the demands of postsecondary education or the high-skilled workplace.
- A completely new approach is necessary – one that improves high school academic preparation for all students, AND that draws upon the strength of community colleges collaborating with high schools to create high-quality technical options.

Secondary and Technical Education Excellence Program Overview

- To address this need, the Department of Education proposes a new Secondary and Technical Education Excellence Program.

- The Administration is requesting \$1 billion in start-up funding for the new State grant program. States will use formula allocations to make competitive grants to secondary schools and community and technical colleges.

Program Goals

- Increase the number of students taking a rigorous academic curriculum so they are fully prepared for college without needing remediation and high-skilled entry-level employment.
- Increase the high school graduation rate.
- Increase student choice among rigorous high school programs, accelerated transitions to college, and technical Programs of Study offered by community colleges and high schools.
- Reduce the need for postsecondary remediation among recent high school graduates.

Program Overview

The proposed new Secondary and Technical Education program would shift from providing traditional vocational education to an entirely new focus on supporting academic achievement at the high school level and on providing high-quality technical education at the community college level that is coordinated with local high schools. It would also promote stronger accountability for results by linking grantee funding to success in achieving student outcomes. Funding would provide States, local educational agencies, community colleges, and schools with the resources to strengthen academic and technical education at the secondary and postsecondary levels.

The \$1 billion request for this new program would support and extend the achievement and accountability goals of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) by requiring States and school districts to focus more intensively on improving student outcomes, such as academic achievement, and ensuring that students are being taught the necessary skills to make successful transitions from high school to college and college to the workforce. States would use formula allocations to make competitive grants to local educational agencies

and community and technical colleges and to carry out State-level activities. In addition, to help facilitate coordination with ESEA Title I and enhance flexibility in how Federal funds are used to achieve positive student outcomes, States would have the option to transfer funds to support education-related activities under the Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies program.

Among the key strategies that the Secondary and Technical Education Excellence program will encourage are:

- **Flexibility to Support Intensive Interventions for Struggling Students:** The program would support and extend the achievement and accountability goals of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) by giving greater flexibility in using funds to support intensive interventions and supportive services in reading, math and English fluency for struggling students. Priority in funding would go to districts serving large numbers of economically disadvantaged students.
- **Technical Programs of Study.** The State will identify technical Programs of Study linked to high-wage, high-skill careers that can be adopted by community colleges in cooperation with local high schools. The Programs of Study must include the rigorous academic courses and technical courses leading to a postsecondary certificate, degree or registered apprenticeship, centered on an occupational area that is in-demand and provides self-supporting income.

Summary

The simple and challenging vision of the proposed Secondary and Technical Education Excellence program is that every youth will complete high school with the academic knowledge and skills needed to make a successful transition to postsecondary education or training without needing remediation.