BUILDING BLOCKS for EDUCATION: Whole System Reform

EDUCATION SYSTEM OVERVIEWS
BUILDING BLOCKS FOR EDUCATION:
AUSTRALIA SUMMARY

CONTEXT: SETTING THE STAGE

Australia is a federation which includes six states, two territories and a national government (known as the Australian Government). States and territories are responsible under the Constitution for school education. During 2009, 3.48 million students (including part-time students) attended school in Australia.

The Australian Government plays a major role in policy setting and program development for schooling and provides supplementary funding for schooling.

THEORY OF ACTION

While the provision of schooling is the constitutional responsibility of the states and territories delivered through the government schools system and in partnership with non-government education authorities - the Australian Government has worked with all sectors and governments to articulate a national platform that clearly outlines future directions for Australian schooling.

While evidence suggests that most Australian students perform well by international standards, there is still a long ‘tail’ of underperformance linked to disadvantage. That is why the Australian Government has placed educational equity at the centre of its reform agenda. Through its National Education Agreement, the Australian Government has articulated a national platform that clearly outlines future directions for Australian schooling, including the division of roles and responsibilities between the respective layers of government.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has set ambitious targets for schools to achieve. These are:

• lift the Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate to 90 per cent by 2015
• halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade
• at least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.

By undertaking the reform agenda and progressing towards these targets, all Australian governments are striving to ensure that Australian children are able to reach their individual potential.

IMPLEMENTATION

Although the states and territories have primary responsibility for delivering schooling, education is a key priority for the Australian Government as improving educational outcomes for all young Australians is central to the nation’s social and economic prosperity.

To achieve this, the Australian Government has set a policy agenda with the following priority areas:

• developing a national framework for schooling, including a new financial arrangement between the Australian Government and the states and territories that links Australian Government funding to state and territory outcomes for schooling
• increasing school-level transparency and accountability in order to improve student and school performance
• closing the gap in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students
• developing and implementing a national curriculum across all learning areas from Kindergarten to Year

AREAS OF FOCUS

Standards and ambitious targets for school education are central to the reform agenda in Australia as shown through the following COAG schooling targets:

• Lift the Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate to 90 per cent by 2020
• Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade (2018)
• At least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.

To monitor progress towards meeting these targets, COAG will publish annual independent reports that review the achievements of the Australian Government, states and territories against the objectives, outcomes and targets specified in the National Education Agreement.

These goals are supported by reforms to strengthen the accountability and transparency of school education. Governments have agreed to the development of a national data repository to support education ministers and systems in their evaluations of system and school performance. This will assist in identifying what is working in schools across the country and help direct resources to where they are most needed. The creation of this data repository will enable education ministers and systems to make informed decisions, based not only on the performance of their own schools and systems but in comparison to other schools and systems across the country. Best practices can also be identified and shared.

The capabilities and capacities of teachers and school leaders are immensely important. Evidence has established that they are the two strongest school-based factors influencing student outcomes. At a national level, the Australian, state and territory governments have committed to a range of reforms to improve the quality of teaching and school leadership, including:

• new professional standards to underpin national reforms
• recognition and reward for quality teaching
• a framework to guide professional learning for principals, teachers and school leaders
• national accreditation of pre-service teacher education courses
• national consistency in teacher registration
• national consistency in accreditation/certification of Accomplished and Leading Teachers
• improved mobility of the Australian teaching workforce
• joint engagement with higher education to provide improved pre-service teacher education; new pathways into teaching; and data collection to inform continuing reform action and workforce planning
• improved performance management in schools for teachers and school leaders
• enhanced school-based teacher quality reforms.

OUTCOMES

The systemic reform agenda for Australian schooling is still emerging. For example, 2010 will provide the first literacy and numeracy growth data for the cohort of students who sat the first national literacy and numeracy tests in 2008. As such, the data that currently exist are best interpreted as a sound baseline from which progress can be measured, with outcomes from the reform agenda being reported in forthcoming years.
BUILDING BLOCKS FOR EDUCATION: FINLAND SUMMARY

CONTEXT: SETTING THE STAGE

Finland (Finnish: Suomi) is a Nordic country situated in the Scandinavian region of Northern Europe. Finland currently numbers 5,359,538 inhabitants (2010). The political situation in Finland is very stable and consensus-oriented.

The Finnish Parliament is responsible for the legislation and setting general principles of education policy. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) are responsible for preparing education policy. FNBE decides on the national core curriculum for pre-primary, basic, general upper secondary and vocational upper secondary education and training. At the regional level, Centres for Economic Development Transport and the Environment (AVI) and regional State Administrative Agencies (ELY) play a role in the follow-up of educational services and deal with complaints with general education. The education and training providers (mostly municipalities and joint municipal authorities) themselves decide on how to apply the general goals and guidelines set at national level. At the moment there are 342 municipalities in Finland.

Pre-primary and basic education are regulated by the Basic Education Act (1998) and Decree (1998), Government Decree on the General National Objectives and Distribution of Lesson Hours in Basic Education (2001, will be renewed in 2011) and National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2004, will be renewed in 2014). The basic right to education is recorded in the Constitution. Public authorities must secure equal opportunities for every resident in Finland for study and self-development according to their abilities, irrespective of their place of residence, language or financial status.

The Finnish education system is composed of nine-year basic education, preceded by one year of voluntary pre-primary education; upper secondary education, comprising vocational and general education; and higher education, provided by universities and polytechnics. Adult education is available at all levels. Basic education is available at all levels. Basic education is provided in comprehensive schools in the same form for each age group as a whole. Virtually the entire age group completes basic education (currently about 60,000 children). In 2008, there were 3,170 comprehensive schools in Finland, with a total of 561,000 pupils. The total number of general upper secondary school students was 109,000 and vocational education and training students 157,100 in 2007. At the same time, the total number of university students was 164,000 and 133,300 in polytechnics.

PROPOSAL CONCERNING THE RENEWAL OF BASIC EDUCATION IN FINLAND

The Ministry of Education set the parliamentary committee in spring 2009 to formulate a proposal for the distribution of lesson hours and the general national objectives for the new Basic Education Act. The committee announced its proposal in June 2010. The aim of the proposal is to develop basic education and its objectives in a consistent way by taking into consideration the present strengths of basic education and the development needs for the future. The committee examined how the world is changing and the effects this will have on the learning process, what children should learn and how should they work at school. It also examined what are the most important competences people should master to be able to lead a good life, study further and manage in working life and in society.

A wide range of research-based information was collected and much co-operation with researchers and other specialists was done while preparing the proposal. Overall 120 written statements were received from different interest groups. Individual citizens could participate in an open discussion on the website. A special web-interview
was prepared for pupils and students over 13 years of age in basic education, vocational and in general upper secondary education. In total, 65,000 students responded to the interview called “Basic Education of the Future”.

The committee set future objectives for the reform of basic education as a whole: to clarify and enhance the mission and integrity of basic education; to ensure the high level of knowledge and skills; to strengthen the provision of individual support and guidance; and to clarify the principles of providing basic education.

The mission and integrity of basic education involve citizen skills needed in society and individual futures. They highlight deeper learning goals and high-order skills. Citizen skills are tools which support deeper learning and applied knowledge. The skills are described as multi-disciplinary as well as tools for using the learned material in a creative way. The proposal citizen skills are classified into five groups: thinking skills, ways of working and interaction, crafts and expressive skills, participation and initiative and self-awareness and personal responsibility.

The committee proposed that the national core curriculum for basic education should consist of compulsory and optional subjects. These would be defined as multi-disciplinary subject groups with different subjects as their components. There would be seven different multi-disciplinary subject groups (language and interaction; mathematics; environment; science and technology; individual enterprise and society; arts and crafts; health and personal functionality). The proposal includes two new school subjects: ethics and drama. Citizen skills will be defined by a decree pertaining to the general national objectives for basic education. They will be combined with the objectives set for each multi-disciplinary subject group as well as subjects as their components. The assessment criteria will also be defined.

The high level of skills and knowledge provided by basic education should also be ensured in the future. This requires that the goals of knowledge and skills be defined at a high level, that citizens’ knowledge and skills are strengthened, that the welfare and functionality of the pupils and school communities are taken care of and that their resources are ensured. The implementation of the mission of basic education in a changing operational environment requires bringing together the core contents and focusing on the important issues so there is space for practising knowledge and skills (citizen skills).

The committee emphasized that in order to gain a good educational base, to provide opportunities for individual growth in a versatile way, develop knowledge-based skills and be successful as a learner, the pupils’ competences must be taken into account. Each pupil must further be provided with the guidance and support they require. The Committee underlined that the implementation of objectives for basic education requires a national and comprehensive agreement of the aims of the reform.

IMPLEMENTATION

At the moment, the Ministry of Education and Culture is collecting advisory opinions about the proposal. The circulation of the proposal for comments will include almost 300 interest groups. They were asked to give their opinions by the end of August 2010. Based on these comments, the proposal for the new legislation will be finalized. The impact of the committee’s proposals will be implemented in the new curriculum process after the legislation has entered into force, during the first half of 2011.

The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) is in charge of the renewal of the core curricula, in cooperation with broad networks of municipalities and schools, teacher educators, representatives of teacher education departments, publishers of learning materials, researchers, municipal education authorities, principals and teachers, and representatives of the social services and national healthcare systems. Each municipality will later draw up a municipal curriculum based on the new national core curriculum, also considering the needs of local children and families. Every school has its own curriculum, which it uses to develop its annual work plans for the school and
each teacher, and individual study plans for students when needed. Students and their parents are also involved in school curriculum processes and their needs and opinions do influence school practices.

**AREAS OF FOCUS**

The government adopts a plan for development of education and university research every five years. The plan is a comprehensive strategy for the education sector. The plan is based on the objectives set for education and science policy in the government program. Based on these aims and their formulation, a number of national development projects have been set up.

The large-scale project called “Better Basic Education” (POP) program (2007–2011) is linked to the government objectives to improve the quality of education. As part of the POP program, quality criteria for basic education have been approved in 2009. The purpose of these quality criteria is to secure the quality and a diverse supply of education and to guarantee the basic educational rights of children irrespective of their place of residence, native language and economic standing.

Evaluation plays an important role in the educational management system in Finland. The Ministry of Education and Culture has decided on the National Evaluation Plan of Education 2009–2011. Evaluations serve the educational needs related to evidence-based planning and development work, policy-making and performance-based steering at a local, regional, national and global level. Education and training providers in Finland have a statutory duty to evaluate their own activities and participate in external evaluations.

An example of the integration and continuous evaluation of operations is the quality assurance process of the previous renewal of the national core curriculum. That evaluation is an important part of the future national core curriculum preparation. Based on the collected information, it is possible to make deeper conclusions for future educational reforms.

**National monitoring and evaluation of learning outcomes** plays an important role in preparing the national core curriculum and in developing the whole educational system. The Finnish National Board of Education is responsible for national assessments of learning outcomes in education from pre-primary to adult education. The Finnish Education Evaluation Council acts as an independent expert organization under the Ministry of Education and Culture and is responsible for external evaluations. The information for the evaluation of learning outcomes is mainly collected by using stratified random sample-based surveys, tests and/or national statistical sources. The assessments of learning outcomes are mostly conducted in the 6th and 9th grades, on a regular basis in mathematics, mother tongue and literature. The only standardized high-stake assessment of students in Finland is the Matriculation Examination at the end of general upper secondary education. Prior to this, no external national tests or exams are required.

The evaluation of learning outcomes is holistic in nature, designed to investigate how well the goals have been reached and how successfully available resources have been used. The evaluation of outcomes is broad-based and seeks to utilize various sources of information as diversely and objectively as possible. When evaluating outcomes, attention is paid to the effectiveness, economy, and efficiency of the activities being studied.

**Teaching profession** is in Finland highly valued and a popular field of study. In Finnish society, teachers are seen as change agents in the development of the curriculum and the whole education system. Teachers have plenty of independence in planning their work, and in implementing the national core curriculum, shaping their lessons and choosing their teaching methods and materials. The proposal for the renewal of basic education also provides recommendations for teacher education. The recommendation is that the knowledge, skills and competences that form the basis for teaching all subjects should be clearly defined. Versatile skills and the competences to apply ICT, social media and new learning environments will be necessary for every teacher.
In Finland there is a political understanding that *leadership* matters. The development plan for education and research stresses the importance of knowledge of leadership and development of educational institutions as part of teacher education and capacity building. In view of educational reform and development, the role of principals is crucial. At the same time, a situation where leadership positions are not attractive enough is highly worrying. A further challenge is that Finnish principals are aging. The challenge is to attract younger professionals to enter a leadership career.

The Finnish *consensus* policy and the general agreement on the importance of education and training ensure the *continuity and sustainability* in educational policy and its implementation. Consequently, processes such as the described curriculum renewal process do not remain single instances of development but form a basis for continuous work on improving education and training.

**OUTCOMES**

Outcomes of the renewal of basic education will be seen after years. In order to be successful, the renewal process requires a shared vision of the development and objectives for basic education. The implementation and provision requires focused and persistent leadership at every level. Leading the process of change and development of teaching should be based on strong understanding of the substance. In order to reach the set objectives, it is a requirement for the educational system that all the actors at a national and local level commit themselves to the renewal.
BUILDING BLOCKS FOR EDUCATION: ONTARIO SUMMARY

CONTEXT: SETTING THE STAGE

Ontario is Canada’s largest and most diverse province, serving just under two million students in 5000 schools within four different publicly funded school systems (English public, English Catholic, French public and French Catholic). In 2003, the government introduced a large-scale reform, the Ontario Education Strategy, in response to limited improvement in elementary and secondary schools.

THEORY OF ACTION

Ontario has identified three system-wide goals for the education sector: 1) improved levels of student achievement, 2) reduced gaps in student achievement and 3) increased public confidence in publicly funded education. The Ontario Education Strategy follows a theory of action that is anchored in three interrelated key areas of organizational improvement. The strategy builds partnerships and collaborative relationships across the education sector. These partnerships support educators at all levels of the system in sharing successful practices, addressing persistent challenges and building the capacity of their school or district to improve student learning. The emphasis on data and transparency provides pressure for improvement without judging or evaluating performance through pejorative measures or practices.

IMPLEMENTATION AND FOCUS

Although the reform is comprehensive with many supporting initiatives, eight core areas of focus and implementation run across the entire strategy.

1. **A small number of ambitious goals**

The initial focus of the Ontario reform was to improve students’ acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills (deeply defined to include higher-order thinking and comprehension) and increase the secondary school graduation rate (including innovations to make programs more relevant to the life interests of students). These priorities have remained intact since the outset.

2. **A guiding coalition at the top**

From the beginning, central leadership was seen as essential. An “Education Results Team,” including the Premier, Chief Student Achievement Officer and other key stakeholders, monitors progress, brainstorms programs and helps the system stay the course.

3. **High standards and expectations**

High standards and expectations are implicit in the ambitious targets that were set for students, sometimes referred to as “stretch targets” for student achievement and graduation rates.

4. **Investment in leadership and capacity building related to instruction**

If there is one concept that captures the centerpiece of the Ontario strategy, it is capacity building supported by major investments in personnel, resources and finely tuned intervention strategies.
5. **Mobilizing data and effective practices as a strategy for improvement**

A number of new data management and assessment tools have been introduced to enable system-wide collection of student-level data that can be integrated, tracked over time and used to inform policy and practice.

6. **Intervention in a non-punitive manner**

A key feature of the strategy is to encourage risk-taking, learning and sharing of successful practices, while intervening in a non-punitive manner.

7. **Being vigilant about distracters**

From the very beginning, leaders of the Ontario strategy committed to a proactive mindset that “distracters” would be inevitable but that they would work to minimize their interference with the main priorities. A distracter is anything that takes away energy and focus from the core agenda.

8. **Being transparent, relentless and increasingly challenging**

Although the strategy is light on judgment, there are a number of aspects that increase pressure for accountability, including transparency about results and practices, peer interaction and sharing across schools, and negotiation of targets and implementation plans.

**OUTCOMES**

The Ontario Education Strategy is making a difference, resulting in overall increases in numbers of students meeting the elementary school provincial standard for reading, writing and mathematics and graduating from secondary school. The strategy’s success as a dynamic partnership between the Ministry of Education, the district schools boards and the schools suggests that large diverse education systems can improve through collaboration and collective work that focuses on students and honours diversity of culture and community.
BUILDING BLOCKS FOR EDUCATION:
SINGAPORE SUMMARY

CONTEXT: SETTING THE STAGE

Singapore is a multi-racial, independent city state with a population of about five million. There are four official languages – English, which is the language of administration, Malay, Chinese and Tamil. We have about half a million students enrolled in 356 national schools which are operated by the Ministry of Education, Singapore (MOE). Education is compulsory for the six years of primary education, but completion of 10 or 11 years of general education is virtually universal. Students progress to post-secondary education of two to three years along an academic, applied-oriented or vocational pathway, before one-quarter of the cohort proceed to university education. There is also a growing continuing education system catering to lifelong learning needs of the population.

THEORY OF ACTION: THINKING SCHOOLS, LEARNING NATION

In 1997, then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong unveiled the vision of “Thinking Schools Learning Nation” (TSLN). TSLN describes a nation of thinking and committed citizens capable of meeting the challenges of the future, and an education system geared to the needs of the 21st century. It remains the over-arching descriptor of the transformation in the education system, comprising changes in all aspects of education.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our priority is to help every child achieve his/her potential by providing diverse educational pathways and helping each child to develop his/her talents and abilities. Going forward, a key challenge is to rebalance the emphasis on knowledge acquisition with development of skills and inculcation of values.

In line with the TSLN vision, MOE has focused on developing a spirit of Innovation and enterprise, with schools being given autonomy and resources to develop their own school-based curricular innovations. We have adopted a systems-based approach, by investing heavily in developing quality teachers and school leaders, enhancing school infrastructure, leveraging on ICT to achieve more customized teaching and learning, and strengthening school management systems to drive continuous improvements.

AREAS OF FOCUS

Standards and targets. MOE’s goal is to put the child at the centre of all we do. Our desired student outcomes at key stages of education guide educators in equipping students with 21st century skills and values. Singapore’s national curriculum and national examinations play critical roles in safeguarding the foundations of learning and the standard of attainment across the entire system.

Assessments and use of data. MOE has invested in building comprehensive databases to enable evidence-based policy-making and to facilitate data analysis within and across schools. School management structures were progressively strengthened and a quality assessment framework introduced about a decade ago to provide schools with a holistic approach towards self-assessment.
Developing Quality Teachers. Our approach is to attract good teachers, give them the right training and provide career opportunities and support so that we retain good people within the profession.

Leadership development. Emphasis is placed on the identification and professional development of potential leaders in education. Middle managers (heads of departments) can benefit from a four-month Management and Leadership in Schools program, while officers with Principalship potential undergo a six-month Leaders in Education Program.

Sustainability. School appraisal creates a feedback loop that helps drive school improvements and ensures sustainability in good practices. Successful reforms must also be seen in the broader societal context of a strong culture of respect for learning and hard work, which provides strong support for what we seek to do in schools.

Investing in resources and infrastructure. School facilities are continually being enhanced to support a learner-centred school environment. Purposeful investments in Information and Communications Technology have also helped us achieve more customised teaching and learning.

OUTCOMES AND LESSONS LEARNT

Singapore has achieved a system of high averages, with 93% of a Grade 1 cohort progressing to post-secondary education today. We have more pathways to cater to students of different abilities and talents. Our students have also performed well in international benchmarking studies (e.g. Trends in Mathematics and Science Study, Progress in International Reading Literacy Skills).

The critical success factor for our education system is a quality teaching force, supported by strong school leaders and administrators, working within an integrated MOE family. Some key lessons that we have drawn from Singapore’s experience include the following:

• Policy reforms must be accompanied by clarity of purpose and capacity for execution. Execution capacity must extend across the system and into all the schools;

• Openness to new ideas, and constant adaptation is essential as education is always a work in progress;

• Quality teachers are the sine qua non for any education system. To sustain excellence, emphasis has to be placed on building capacity among teachers and school leaders, to engender a teacher-driven culture of professionalism; and

• Structures for engendering school-based improvements, and to systematise the sharing of good practices are crucial in moving an entire school system forward.
BUILDING BLOCKS FOR EDUCATION:
UNITED STATES SUMMARY

CONTEXT: SETTING THE STAGE

The United States elementary and secondary education system is vast and multi-layered, with a strong tradition of local control and a diversity of local needs and policies. Until the middle of the last century, the federal role in education was minimal, with funding and policymaking in this area left almost entirely to states and local school districts. Starting in the 1950s and 1960s, the federal government took on a greater role in ensuring that poor, minority and disabled students had access to a high-quality education, and in ensuring global competitiveness in priority areas like science, technology, engineering and math. Even as the federal government has come to play a greater role around these priorities, however, the major decisions around how and what students are taught and how schools and districts operate have remained in state and local hands.

In January 2009, this Administration came into office amidst a confluence of events that created a rare set of opportunities to lay the foundation for a new vision of how the federal government can support and incentivize states and districts. These opportunities included a new President whose party was in the majority in Congress, a fiscal crisis that led to the passage of a $787 billion economic stimulus package (ARRA), and the overdue reauthorization of the major federal education law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). Further, a number of promising approaches to the main challenges in education had been pioneered by states, districts, nonprofits, and universities but the limited federal role in funding and drawing attention to these policies and practices had often prevented them from being taken to scale.

Though our work is far from complete, through several of our ARRA-funded programs we have piloted a new vision for the federal role in our education system, and we are in the midst of working with Congress to reauthorize ESEA in a manner that will lead to continued progress. All of these efforts drive towards one unifying goal set by President Obama: by 2020, the United States will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. Accomplishing this goal will take enormous work from the federal government in concert with state and local actors, as well as the education stakeholder community.

THEORY OF ACTION

While challenges like closing the achievement gap and ensuring continued global competitiveness are of national concern, tackling this challenge requires that every school district and every state improve their education systems. Traditionally, the federal Department of Education’s budget has gone predominantly to formula programs that give funds to states and districts based on factors such as their counts of students in poverty and their per-pupil expenditures. But the persistent challenges in our education system demand that the federal government take on a greater role in spurring reform by supporting innovation in states and districts through additional competitive grant funding and improved technical assistance and support, while still maintaining the core federal role of providing foundational funding support for serving high-need populations.

Early on in this Administration, we identified four key areas in which we would support states in building their capacity, which lay the foundation on top of which other work must proceed:

• **Standards and assessments:** Supporting states in developing high-quality standards that meaningfully signify readiness for college and a career and rigorous assessments that fully reflect student learning and progress.
• **Data systems:** Supporting states and districts in building data system that can inform teachers, principals, families, and policymakers in making decisions that will promote student achievement, while protecting student privacy.

• **Teachers and leaders:** Better preparing, supporting, evaluating, and developing teachers and school leaders, so that all students have access to effective teachers and leaders.

• **School turnaround:** Identifying and ensuring dramatic change in the persistently lowest-performing schools, ending the cycle of failure in these schools by offering districts a set of choices from four rigorous models of intervention.

Of course, these assurances are where our vision begins, not where it ends. Any successful reform initiative must address these core areas, but also tackle important challenges like supporting effective teaching and learning through instructional supports and an accountability system that recognizes growth and rewards success; ensuring equity through civil rights enforcement, providing comprehensive support for student needs, and providing equitable resources to low-income and minority students; and building capacity throughout the system to drive reform, at all levels of government, in all regions of the country, and among families and teachers.

**IMPLEMENTATION & POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

Over the last year and a half, the significant policy pieces in our elementary and secondary reform agenda have proceeded along two tracks: (1) the design and implementation of ARRA programs, funded with nearly $100 billion out of the $787 billion ARRA, and (2) the development of and work with Congress on our proposals for the reauthorization of ESEA.

**ARRA.** The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) presented an extraordinary set of legislative, policy, and implementation challenges, all of which have offered invaluable lessons for how the federal government can adapt and take on new challenges. In the wake of the global financial crisis, the law's mandate was to save and create jobs in the short term – and, given the critical role education plays in our long-term economic success, to at the same time advance reforms. ARRA funded $98.2 billion in education programs, a significant increase for a Department whose FY09 discretionary budget was $45.4 billion. This offered a unique opportunity to pilot a new federal role, providing a combination of (i) significant formula funding to shore up state budgets and lay the foundation for continued reform and (ii) significant competitive funding to support states and districts ready to develop and implement ambitious plans for reform, such as the $4.35 billion Race to the Top.

**ESEA.** As we worked to implement these ARRA programs, we have also been developing proposals for and working with Congress on the reauthorization of ESEA, applying many of the same lessons and principles to each. From the first months of the Administration, we heard significant concerns with the most recent incarnation of the law, No Child Left Behind, from a wide variety of education stakeholders, and a strong appetite for pursuing a significant overhaul of the law through reauthorization. The Secretary and senior staff conducted extensive outreach and consultation with teachers, parents, the leaders and members of education associations, union leadership, state and local government leaders, and members of Congress, and developed a set of principles and a broad framework for a reauthorized ESEA.

These principles focused on high standards for all students and closing the achievement gap, giving greater flexibility on means while creating clearer expectations around goals, fostering innovation and rewarding success, and supporting a well-rounded education. These principles apply to all aspects of our proposal, especially our proposals around accountability, where we would current federal accountability system with a new approach that emphasizes growth, progress, and better supports, and our proposals around teachers and leaders, where we would complement this new accountability system with a school- and classroom-level culture of continuous improvement by creating a new framework for how we support and develop teachers and leaders.