



EDUCATION

# **Educational Innovations to Reduce the Income-Based Achievement Gap**

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Heather Schwartz  
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# The problem and the approach

- **The problem**
  - Growing income-based achievement gap over past 60 years.
  - Achievement predicts attainment. Graduation from high school and higher education degrees important for earnings, health, civic participation.
  - But K-12 schooling hasn't substantially narrowed achievement gap.
- **The approach (from perspective of U.S. Dept. of Ed.)**
  - Invest in 3 policies to expand the reach of school.
  - Invest in 1 policy to improve performance of lowest-performing (high-poverty) schools.

# **1. Focus next round of *Early Learning Challenge* grants on measuring ECE quality .**

- Continue with successful competitively awarded grants, Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge
- Due to high quality evidence about preschool, continue to make major investment in pre-k.
- Improve Quality Rating & Improvement Systems by:
  - studying what aspects of pre-k matter,
  - how best to measure those aspects, and
  - how to incentivize highly disparate ECE providers.

## **2. Place priority within *Investing in Innovation* grants for school choice coaching.**

- Growth in forms of school choice weakens link between residence and school assignment.
- School choice process complex even for most motivated of parents.
- Expand small evidence base in this area via pilot funds for grantees who propose coaching programs.
  - Help parents make sense of their effective set of choices.
  - Focused at key time points: residential moves, structural switches.
  - Fund range of low- to high-intensity coaching and range of grantees.
  - Ideally, encourage parents to choose the best possible schools available to them.

### **3. Place priority within *Investing in Innovation* grants for educating parents about school.**

- To equalize children's opportunities, pilot programs to influence lower-income parents' involvement, expectations, and actions, especially during their children's earliest years.
- Given weak evidence base, test via lower-risk pilots:  
High- to low-intensity programs to educate parents about themes like how to promote children's readiness for school.  
  
Wide range of grantees to encourage different approaches and mediums.

## **4. Retool *School Improvement Grants* to turn around lowest performing schools.**

- Lowest performing schools are almost always high-poverty schools.
- Encourage stability in these schools via grants that:
  - Extend for 5-10 years rather than 1-3 years, tiering payments to incentivize continuity.

Drop mandate to choose 1 of 4 turnaround models.

With longer grant period, require evidence-based comprehensive school reform plan that narrows priorities and staggers augmentations and refinements over time.

Payments tied to interim benchmarks and mid-term refinements.