

Graduation Promise Act of 2011 – S. 1177

The Graduation Promise Act (GPA) authorizes a federally-funded High School Improvement and Dropout Reduction Fund to turn around America's lowest-performing high schools and ensure that students graduate from high school college- and career-ready. The Improvement Fund would support states and school districts in developing comprehensive high school improvement systems and reducing school dropout rates.

Grants would be distributed to states by formula to establish and/or expand statewide high school improvement systems guided by research and best practice. Each state receiving a grant would develop a system for improving low-performing schools through sub-grants to local educational agencies. These systems would:

- Identify high schools with low graduation rates and low student achievement;
- Differentiate school improvement actions based on need;
- Provide resources to support evidence-based school improvement activities;
- Target resources and support to high schools based on needs and capacity; and
- Ensure high schools are making progress on school performance indicators.

GPA would also direct funding to local school districts to perform a number of important functions, such as:

- Differentiate high schools in need of improvement using school performance indicators;
- Convene a school improvement team for each identified high school;
- Develop and implement a multi-year improvement plan for each school;
- Establish and implement an early warning indicator system that identifies students at risk for high school dropout; and
- Provide education options that are consistent with college and career readiness.

GPA also authorizes the Secretary to award peer-reviewed competitive grants for the development, implementation, and replication of effective school models for struggling students at risk of dropping out of school. Effective evidence-based models combine personal attention and a positive peer culture with evidence-based practices to help students catch up, accelerate their learning, and connect to postsecondary institutions and career pathways.