**Sec Cardona This Is Our Moment to Improve Education- Here’s Our Plan**

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**Sec. Cardona: This Is Our Moment to Improve Education. Here’s Our Plan.**

The Education Secretary lays out his department's values and priorities for improving education in this next phase of recovery

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I once read a story about someone who studied photography for years and was thought of as an expert without ever taking a picture. When he was invited to photograph a friend's wedding, he panicked. It was easy to examine photography, analyze the great photographers of our time or critique other peoples’ photography. But when it came to capturing one of the most memorable days of a friend’s life, being a photographer took on new meaning.

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Today, as the nation shifts from school reopening to school recovery, and as we work to reimagine schools equitably, we must likewise move from dreamers to doers. Acknowledging inequities is insufficient. Analyzing inequities is insufficient. Maintaining the status quo and expecting different results is insufficient. The work being done across the country to address educational disparities before and during the pandemic has been nothing short of inspiring. But this next chapter in our country’s education history must dwarf those efforts. I’ve said before, and I will continue saying—this is our opportunity for a reset.

While there is no playbook for approaching this moment, there is also no space for complacency

We are in a remarkably challenging moment as we continue to battle the pandemic and begin to recover—but we have more resources than ever before to help address these challenges, including $130 billion for PreK-12 schools and $40 billion for institutions of higher education from the American Rescue Plan.

While there is no playbook for approaching this moment, there is also no space for complacency. As was the case with reopening schools, context matters—be it political context, capacity context, willpower context or disparity context. This is a time when it is better to try and fall short, than to protect the status quo.

There will be additional perils in this next phase of education in America. For some, the education system before the pandemic worked. It was comfortable. For others, change is only good when it does not come to their neighborhood or affect their loved ones. And for many others, their bandwidth for disruption is depleted after two years of constant disruption and change. Yet here we are. The challenging work of leadership will not get easier in this next chapter of American education, just different.

After consulting with thousands of stakeholders in over 100 school and college visits, we at the Department of Education released [our priorities](https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/secretary-cardona-lays-out-vision-education-america) for improving education in our country as we move into this next phase of recovery. Laying out our values and direction allows our families, educators, and other stakeholders to understand how we are using our time and money—two of the greatest resources we have. The historic resources in the American Rescue Plan—already being put to work in states and districts across the country—and the [funds requested](https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/statement-secretary-education-miguel-cardona-presidents-fiscal-year-2023-budget) for the Department of Education in the President’s Fiscal Year 2023 budget reflect these values.

The following is a deeper dive into these values and priorities. While each state or district may approach these goals differently, this roadmap provides examples of how states, districts and Congress can move our shared priorities from dreaming to doing immediately.

**Continue using American Rescue Plan funds to support students’ academic and mental health needs as we recover from the pandemic.**

* Increase students’ access to tutoring, after school activities and interventions to help address lost instructional time.
* Ensure students have daily access to the mental health and wellness supports and staff they need.
* Improve educator preparation in trauma-informed practices.
* Establish partnerships with community-based organizations to support the whole child.
* Authentically embed students’ voices in school decisions to increase engagement and quality programming.
* Connect each high school student to at least one co-curricular activity.
* Establish parent engagement teams with culturally competent family school liaisons to ensure families have a voice in their neighborhood schools.

**Boldly address opportunity and achievement gaps in PreK-12 schools.**

* Increase funding for Title I schools and [IDEA](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/) to close gaps in educational opportunity, as called for in the President’s budget.
* Ensure state and local funding decisions are made based on student need.
* States and districts should publish student outcomes and opportunities for learning disaggregated by gender, race and economic status to foster open and honest dialogue (i.e., access to honors and college-level courses, exclusionary discipline data, percent of students in co-curricular activity, or percent of students reading by grade 3).

**Use American Rescue Plan funds to support a diverse educator workforce and professional growth to strengthen student learning.**

* Invest in teacher, educator and board member professional development and support.
* Ensure competitive wages and supportive working conditions that includes intentional collaboration with educators when critical decisions are being considered.
* Increase time for educators to engage in professional growth during their workday.
* Establish partnerships between PreK-12 and higher education systems to create a diverse teacher pipeline for students and classified staff within each of our high schools.

**Prioritize making higher education more inclusive and affordable.**

* Continue providing targeted loan relief to student borrowers and increase efforts to assess the return on investment of colleges and universities.
* Boost funding for colleges and universities that promote inclusivity and support for underrepresented groups, such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Minority-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions.
* Continue raising the maximum Pell Grant award to allow more students to access higher education.
* Hold colleges accountable for taking advantage of borrowers.

**Ensure pathways through higher education lead to successful careers.**

* Ensure students have access to culturally relevant coursework that is rigorous and prepares them for their futures.
* Prioritize student supports and increase accountability for student outcomes including graduation rates.
* Create transition and college-completion supports for veterans, students who are service members, and their families.
* In each high school, establish robust career and college pathways with college and workforce partnerships. These pathways should include internships, career counseling and opportunities for students to earn college credit in high school. American Rescue Plan funds are available to support this work right now, and the President’s budget request for fiscal year 2023 includes additional funds for prioritizing this work.
* Create a strong Gainful Employment Rule so career programs aren’t leaving students with mountains of debt and without good job opportunities.

To be clear, the federal government can’t solve all of the country’s education challenges, and we shouldn’t try. States and local communities must lead the way. But the federal government can support our families, our educators and our students as they recover and reimagine education. That’s exactly what we’re doing. That’s why the American Rescue Plan delivered $170 billion for education, and why President Biden has asked Congress for a historic 20.9 percent increase in the Department of Education’s budget.

What’s more, this list is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive. What makes this country unique is that it is full of diverse innovators and creative thinkers who see crisis as an opportunity to grow stronger. In education, as Thomas Paine once wrote, “The time has found us.” As parents, educators, leaders, advocates for children, this is our moment to improve our education system. In America, we have dreamed of equality for so long. In the wake of the pandemic, the time for dreaming is over. We must act.

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