

Through i3, educators have been empowered to realize their innovative ideas and adopt practices that are grounded in rigorous research. Under ESSA, the Department of Education will continue leveraging innovation and evidence-based approaches to help schools and educators achieve better outcomes for their students.

### **Race to the Top—District-Level Competition**

The Race to the Top model also included a program that invested a half billion dollars in 21 organizations representing 68 districts, 30,000 educators, and 440,000 students across the country. Race to the Top-District grants helped districts personalize students' learning experiences, create new roles for teacher leaders, provide students with an array of opportunities to access rigorous academic content, positively change the culture within schools, and scale practices that had previously lived with individual teachers.

For instance, in Middletown, New York, which won a Race to the Top-District grant in 2012, the district has implemented a blended learning model, integrating technology into the classroom using a digital platform for the delivery of academic content and relying on teachers to use performance data to guide instruction and learning. Middletown has seen real progress—students in blended classrooms out-performed those in non-blended classrooms by as much as 45 percent in reading and 56 percent in math, and surpassed their growth targets by 18 percent in math and 36 percent in reading. In addition, using Race to the Top-District funds, Middletown provided free college tuition for all students to the Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA). Prior to Race to the Top, 7 percent or fewer Middletown high school students were taking college courses during high school; in 2015, more than 25 percent of the graduating class did.

Race to the Top programs catalyzed a wave of reforms and the impact of the program will be felt in improved systems across the country well beyond the end of the Obama administration. Across the various Race to the Top programs, education leaders have made enduring changes to public education systems that are improving the ability of schools and educators to better focus on enhancing student learning.

### **Next Generation High Schools**

Since 2008, we have cut the rate of dropout factory high schools nearly in half. However, President Obama recognizes that we must do more to engage, prepare, and inspire college- and career-ready students, and align high school learning to the experiences and opportunities that matter in young people's lives, as they enter postsecondary education and the workforce. Preparing young adults for success requires

## **Dropout rate fell by 17% from 2009 to 2014**

That equates to more than 500,000 people staying in school.



a new educational experience that looks different than it did a generation ago. That is why the Obama administration supports redesigning and rethinking America's high schools and has taken steps throughout the administration to expose more students to learning that links their studies in school to future college and career pathways—especially in the critically important STEM fields.

Next Generation High Schools not only provide students with the academic foundation and skills they need to be successful, but also ensure students have the opportunity to participate in project- or problem-based learning, earn early college credit, and engage in experiences or postsecondary learning opportunities that build career-ready competencies. Accomplishing these goals will help improve longer term outcomes for high school students, including increased high school graduation rates, higher rates of enrollment in postsecondary studies without the need to take remedial courses, higher postsecondary completion rates, and higher rates of completion of industry-recognized credentials and certifications. These models have been shown through rigorous evaluations to produce long-term economic benefits. An MDRC evaluation using random assignment in nine high schools across the U.S. found that Career Academies produced sustained earnings gains that averaged 11 percent (or \$2,088) more per year for Academy group members than for individuals in the non-Academy group, which equated to a \$16,704 boost in total earnings over the eight years of follow-up (in 2006 dollars).

That is why in the President's 2013 State of the Union address, the President laid out a new vision for America's high schools,