

Don't cut them short...

# let's insist on a brighter future for our children as generations of Americans have always done.

## Protect education from further funding cuts.

Unless Congress acts, close to \$5 billion will be cut from almost every federal education-related program starting next year. These cuts have consequences as the accompanying profiles attest. Our country cannot afford to write-off many of our students today and somehow expect to maintain a strong economy and retain global leadership tomorrow. All of us

*are accountable -- teachers, school leaders, elected officials, business and community leaders, parents, and students -- and responsible for ensuring that each child has a chance to succeed; and it starts with investing in the classroom priorities that build the foundation for student learning. If we remain committed to public education, we will uphold the American tradition of passing on a better future to our children.*



Meet Adilene. Adilene attends an elementary school where 72 percent of its 770 students come from homes in which English isn't the primary language. The school body is 90 percent Hispanic. Loss of federal funding would lead to the elimination of English language learner (ELL) specialists, which oversee a school's ELL teachers, and coach and mentor other teachers who deal with ELLs. Specialists also serve as liaisons between the school and parents. They educate parents about school requirements and help teachers and parents communicate. They are often the first people ELL students have contact with; and losing ELL specialists means students who need extra support, such as Adilene, will not be identified. District and school leaders are worried about what the fewer resources will mean for their students' futures. "They could be lost, just fall through the cracks and fail." The ability of students to read English well by the third grade is a strong indicator of their likelihood to graduate and be successful.

Future Chief Financial Officer?



Meet Marie. Marie will be attending a small high school in a rural district that has been forced to absorb cuts in state aid, the end of federal stimulus funds, tax cap legislation, and the expending of remaining fund balances. The district has been unable to make up for these revenue losses. As a result, over the past three years the district has abolished nearly all non-mandated programs including Advanced Placement math and science classes, career and technical education, kindergarten, and all interscholastic and extra-curriculum programs. The state has offered to make up for part of the aid cuts through competitive grants. "Replacing fairness and equity in school aid with competitive grants is like using a roulette wheel to determine which students have kindergarten, Advance Placement courses, and arts and music; and which simply lose out." Further cuts in federal aid would abolish the remaining non-mandated programs, including the AP courses that Marie needs to attend college.

Future Mechanical Engineer?



Meet Ben. Ben's parents hope he will be attending a full-day kindergarten program in the fall. Reductions in state aid coupled with the threat of losing federal Title I funds means a decision to move to a half-day program is possible. To retain a full-day program, school officials are considering cuts to "anything that is nonacademic. It is all on the table." A typical day in full-day kindergarten includes reading, phonics, computer lab, math, and then one of several special classes, which include art, gym, music, library, and classroom projects. The students have time to work cooperatively in groups, in individual settings, and independently. "It gives them the structure of a school day. It provides the foundation for their whole school career." To cut it "just doesn't make sense. Research strongly shows the effectiveness of full-day kindergarten. Everybody knows that." Ben's parents would agree.

Future Journalist?



Meet Tanya. Tanya attends what is widely viewed as a model after-school program, but with potentially fewer federal dollars available, her program may be closed. Tanya's mother appreciates the daily homework help and the 30 minutes of independent reading. Tanya does, too. Other activities include theater, art, music, robotics, sports, and a peer mediation program. The program includes an education specialist to coordinate with the day curriculum; plenty of science, math, and literacy lessons; and lots of parent involvement. Tanya's school serves the very children that the federal program is intended to reach — 95 percent of the 240 qualify for subsidized lunches. English is the second language for about half. The program is in such high demand that selection is now based on a lottery system. But that matters little if no action is taken in Congress to prevent arbitrary funding cuts from closing a program such as this.

Future University President?



Meet Matt. Matt attends a middle school that was considered among the worst academic performers in the state. That was before the school shared in a federal school improvement grant intended to dramatically raise the school's effectiveness. The school resides in a district with one of the state's highest unemployment rates. Bus routes have been cut, as have supplies. Custodians, secretaries, and cafeteria workers took pay cuts to prevent more job losses. Yet, the school is undergoing change, with the use of new technology, a reading laboratory, summer and Saturday classes, and access to an education consulting firm -- all supported with federal dollars. "The grant has been a stop-gap lifesaver to us in many ways, enabling us to continue moving forward when everything else is being cut. If we didn't have the grant, there are so many things for kids we couldn't even begin to contemplate doing on our own general money." Those federal dollars are now at risk.

Future Musician?



Meet Daryl. He is part of Talent Search, which is one of several federal programs called TRIO that seek to increase enrollment, retention, and graduation rates for first-generation and low-income students as they prepare for and transition into college and proceed through graduation. Talent Search runs early-intervention programs that target students in grades 6 through 12 who otherwise would be unlikely to attend college. Students served by Talent Search, such as Daryl, have an 8 percent chance of earning a bachelor's degree by the time they are 25 years old unless they take advantage of TRIO's help. "It gives you hope." Potential cuts to federal support could mean the end for many of these programs. "It's like dropping someone in a foreign country without an interpreter," according to one program director when describing the difficulty these students have in navigating the pitfalls of financial aid and college life. "We teach them how to get a college education ... how to stay in school."

Future Architect?



Meet Sandra. Because the state has reduced funding for scholarships, Sandra has had to rely on a subsidized campus job to help pay for her tuition. Her part-time job is funded under the Federal Work-Study program which pays up to 75 percent of the wages of needy students hired to help the college or local nonprofits. Her college already lost funding for 12 work-study positions when federal stimulus funds lapsed. The school will have part-time work for just 72 students for the coming school year. Last year, more than 2,200 students asked for work-study jobs. Cuts to Federal Work-Study would reduce the number of jobs further despite the high demand. Should Sandra's job be eliminated, she would face a perfect financial storm that may blow her off course. She is already anticipating less aid through her federal grant, since this program would be cut also; tuition is rising; and, now her part-time job would disappear. Her only choice may be to drop out of school temporarily and find a full-time job until she can earn enough to enroll again, thereby disrupting her plan to graduate in four years.

Future Governor?



Meet Elizabeth. Entering high school, Elizabeth admits that she was a disinterested student; but all that changed when a counselor recommended she consider a career-education program in culinary arts. She spent the ninth grade exploring the subject and realized this was something she wanted to do. Three years later she is set to graduate and attend a community college on scholarship to continue her studies. State budget cuts in combination with more federal budget cuts means incoming students won't have the same opportunity as Elizabeth as funding for career and technical programs for ninth graders would be eliminated. Students would lose a year to explore whether a career- and technical-education track is right for them. "These students are getting engaged with these programs as freshmen. We need this funding to build a program. It will also hinder our ability to expand programs in engineering and biotechnology or other forward-thinking projects."

Future Chef?



Meet William. William attends a Head Start program with 17 other children. He and his classmates follow a daily routine. They eat a healthy meal. They brush their teeth. Then they get to their letters and numbers. William is also learning social skills. He is learning how to get along with his friends. The research proves the benefits of early childhood education. And the experts all agree. "If you don't start kids off on the right foot, you end up paying for that years later." But these programs face cuts anyway. The loss of federal dollars would mean the loss of seven classrooms in the county where William lives, including his class, along with the elimination of 34 staff. Advocates of Head Start say cutting these programs now will cost the government more money later. "And for some of those kids it may mean school failure."

Future Business Owner?



Meet Julie. Julie, her sister, and mom lost their home last year. Initially, they stayed in a hotel for a few weeks, but then they doubled up by moving in with relatives in a neighboring district. Julie has been able to attend the same school where her home used to be, despite her temporary living arrangement, thanks to federal funds provided under a grant for helping homeless students which covers the transportation costs. This was a big relief to her mom, which worried about the effects on Julie of both losing their home and going to a new school. The district's liaison to students in Julie's situation makes sure Julie has the supplies and tutoring she needs to stay on pace with her classmates. "If the mom is stressed, the kids will be stressed. Going to school tired, stressed, and worried, and then having to pay attention -- it's very hard. With the right help, kids can be resilient." The right help will be harder to come by with cuts to federal funding.

Future Judge?