



Success in the Middle Act of 2009 (S. 1362 and H.R. 3006)

Background

Middle school students are optimistic about their future, with 92 percent expecting to attend college. Yet, only one-third of students who enter high school graduate with their peers, and another one-third graduate but are not prepared to succeed in college. Much of the disparity between students' hopes and reality stems from the decline in academic achievement that takes place during the middle school years. Assessments indicate that academic performance falls dramatically during this period, with the most severe losses among minority and low-income students. To rectify this problem, Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) and Representative Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) introduced the Success in the Middle Act of 2009 on June 26 in the Senate and June 23 in the House, respectively. This legislation seeks to ensure that middle school students are fully prepared for success in high school, higher education, and beyond.

Summary

The Success in the Middle Act of 2009:

- Directs the Secretary of Education to make matching grants to states, based on their proportion of poor children, to develop middle school improvement plans. These plans will be based on analyses of what students must master to successfully complete the middle grades, make a smooth transition to high school, and excel in academically rigorous high school coursework.
- Awards competitive matching subgrants to local education agencies (LEAs) or partnerships of LEAs and nonprofit organizations with demonstrated expertise in high quality middle grades reform, institutions of higher education, or education service agencies to implement a comprehensive middle school improvement plan for each eligible school. It favors LEAs with high proportions of low-income, at-risk students.
- Calls for LEAs receiving subgrants to align curricula among elementary, middle, and high schools to improve transitions between schools; create a more intimate learning environment by developing a personal academic plan for each student and assigning at least one adult to help monitor progress; and provide all students with information about requirements for high school graduation, college admission, and career success.
- Gives LEAs the opportunity to use funds for extended learning opportunities in core academic areas including more instructional time in literacy, mathematics, science, history, civics, and the arts.
- Provides grants to organizations that partner with states and LEAs to develop, adapt, or replicate effective models for turning around low-performing middle schools.
- Authorizes \$1,000,000,000 for fiscal year 2010 and sums as may be necessary for the following 5 years.

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Citizen Schools is a leading national education initiative that mobilizes thousands of adult volunteers to help improve student achievement by teaching skills-building apprenticeships after school. These programs blend real-world learning projects with rigorous academic and leadership development activities, preparing students in the middle grades for success in high school, college, the workforce, and civic life.

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