

Educational Equity Challenge Grant Act

The Problem

Even prior to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, elementary and secondary public schools lacked sufficient funding and resources to provide all students with a high-quality public education. This challenge has been exacerbated by the pandemic and is likely to [significantly worsen achievement gaps](#) for students in low-income communities and communities of color. Among other challenges, students are experiencing significant [instructional loss](#) and increased [mental health](#) needs.

Researchers have estimated that school closures in the spring resulted in several [months](#) of lost instruction in [math and reading](#), and [one study](#) estimated that between 10 and 25 percent of high-risk students, including homeless students and students with disabilities, have been completely disconnected from school since the pandemic began. The traumatic effects of the pandemic on students' mental health are not yet well understood, but are expected to have [long-term consequences](#) for social and emotional well-being.

Data [show](#) that more school funding significantly improves student achievement. This is especially crucial for low-income communities and communities of color, which have been [disproportionately](#) affected by COVID-19. The consequences of the pandemic for children's academic and social development are likely to be long-term: children in first grade this year may need additional support throughout their academic careers.

The Educational Equity Challenge Grant Act

The Educational Equity Challenge Grant Act creates a **\$100 billion** application-based grant program administered by the Department of Education over the next **ten years** to accelerate academic progress and address social, emotional, mental, behavioral, and physical health needs related to COVID-19. This long-term program complements crucial short-term relief funds for schools and will encourage high-quality, evidence-based programs to support students throughout their academic careers.

States, school districts, nonprofits in partnership with school districts, and the Bureau of Indian Education can apply for grants for one of two purposes:

- 1. Implement Evidence-based Strategies:** 75% of funds are reserved for grantees to adopt programs that meet a high bar of evidence, which may include supporting social-emotional learning, implementing culturally and linguistically responsive practices, extending instructional time, and implementing high-quality individual or small-group tutoring.
- 2. Support Field- and Educator-Initiated Innovations:** 25% of funds are reserved for grantees to develop or replicate new ideas and strategies designed by educators in the field to accelerate academic progress and address social, emotional, mental, behavioral, and physical health needs associated with COVID-19. Grantees must include an independent evaluation for efficacy.

The Educational Equity Challenge Grant Act reserves funds for the Bureau of Indian Education, rural areas, and applicants serving low-income students. The Department must also give priority to applicants serving disproportionately higher percentages of high-need students, including low-income students, students of color and Native American students, homeless students, migrant students, students in foster care, English learners, students with disabilities, and students most affected by COVID-19.