

Questions and Answers
A-PLUS: Academic Partnerships Lead Us to Success Act

Q. What is the A-PLUS Proposal?

- A. A-PLUS would allow states to consolidate federal education programs and funding and use those resources for state-directed education reform initiatives. States would ensure accountability to parents and other taxpayers by maintaining transparency for results.

Q. What is the benefit of A-PLUS?

- A. A-PLUS would allow decision-makers closer to students to direct education policy in ways that are most appropriate for those students' needs, rather than having to comply with cumbersome federal program requirements. Today, the Department of Education delivers education funding through dozens of programs. These programs have not delivered on their promise to improve education in America. What they have done is foster bureaucracy and a compliance mentality among some state education officials. Moreover, the current system of federal education programs wastes resources on bureaucracy, regulations, and paperwork. No Child Left Behind has increased the paperwork burden of federal education policy by 6.6 million hours (2006).

Q. Would participating in A-PLUS be optional?

- A. Yes. States could choose to participate in A-PLUS or they could continue to administer their education programs the old way. States that have well-developed accountability systems and innovative policymakers would be in the best position to exercise this option.

Q. How does the A-PLUS Act relate to the No Child Left Behind Act?

- A. A-PLUS would provide an alternative to the status quo of No Child Left Behind, which has left many states and localities upset about the degree of federal intervention in their education policymaking. This could lead to a broad coalition in support of the A-PLUS plan.

Q. How do you ensure that money continues to reach poor students?

- A. A 40-year track record has shown that Washington's involvement in local education has not narrowed the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers. Since Washington hasn't been able to change things, it should allow states and localities to take the lead in helping low-income students achieve greater success. States electing the A-PLUS option would provide assurance that they will continue to pursue the purpose of improving educational opportunities

for disadvantaged children. Under A-PLUS, states would have greater flexibility to accomplish this important goal outside the red tape of federal programs. Those closest to students are better equipped to determine how best to improve educational opportunities for their neediest children.

Q. How does the A-PLUS Act operate in practice?

- A. State elected officials would make the decision for a state to participate in the A-PLUS option. The state would indicate which federal education programs it would like to include in the A-PLUS option. The state would then determine which education priorities it would fund, among any of the lawful education activities under state law. Finally, a state would provide transparency for results on its state testing system.

Q. How would states demonstrate accountability under A-PLUS?

- A. States selecting the A-PLUS option would maintain their state assessment systems, providing direct accountability to parents and other taxpayers for the results. This transparency would empower those who need the information to make decisions on behalf of individual students, empowering education consumers, not distant bureaucrats. Now that states have implemented their own testing and accountability systems, there will be greater pressure to focus on the most successful reforms to improve student learning.