

EDUCATION WEEK

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Gates Gives \$22 Million in Grants

By [Erik W. Robelen](#)

As part of its recently revamped education agenda, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation today rolled out \$22 million in grants to build and strengthen student-data systems at the high school and postsecondary levels and to support new research on teacher effectiveness.

The largest single grant—\$7.3 million over four years to the Princeton, N.J.-based Educational Testing Service—will back a research project to help inform the development of “robust teaching-evaluation systems,” the Seattle-based foundation said in a Jan. 22 press release.

Another grant will provide \$2.9 million to the Herndon, Va.-based National Student Clearinghouse over two years to devise a national research and data system that will offer participating high schools in all 50 states access to “reliable information” on their graduates’ college access and success rates.

“Useful data and solid research about what works will help empower teachers, schools, and districts to more effectively keep students on the path to success in college and beyond,” Vicki L. Phillips, the director of the philanthropy’s education division, said in the press release.

In November, the Gates Foundation unveiled a new high school grantmaking strategy focused on three priorities: identifying and promoting higher standards for college readiness, improving teacher quality, and fostering innovations to aid struggling students. It also announced a major new effort to double college-completion rates for low-income students.

Focus on Data

In all, the foundation announced 10 grants today for the data-gathering and research undertakings.

The grant to the ETS will launch work in collaboration with the University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research and the RAND Corp. to evaluate a range of measures currently in use to assess teaching effectiveness. Gates will also provide nearly \$600,000 over two years to the Iowa City, Iowa-based ACT Inc. to explore the relationship between high school teacher characteristics and student learning outcomes.

And the foundation will provide \$1.9 million over two years to Teach For America to evaluate

the New York City-based nonprofit group's teacher-training framework.

The foundation issued a range of grants on data collection, both for national endeavors and work specifically in Texas. The grant to the National Student Clearinghouse is expected to help the organization expand its secondary education research service to provide data collection and reporting to all 50 states.

The National School Boards Association, based in Alexandria, Va., will receive \$756,000 over two years to promote the effective use of data by school board members, an effort to be piloted in six districts in three states over a 15-month period before being expanded to a broader network.

Gates is also providing \$8 million in grants to directly support data systems in Texas. For instance, it will provide \$3.8 million over three years to the 157,000-student Dallas Independent School District to strengthen its work to track student performance and improve college readiness. A \$1.2 million grant to the College for All Texans Foundation will support the development of what Gates calls a "next-generation P-20 data system."

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