



The Consortium of State School Boards Associations
Weekly Education Report
LAST WEEK IN WASHINGTON

JUNE 26, 2023

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The COSSBA Education Report, a weekly publication, provides an executive summary of public policy issues affecting American K-12 education and employment. **Please use the bookmarks below to navigate to your area of interest:**

1. **News, Publications, & Updates on COSSBA Policy Priorities**
 - **Broadband Connectivity and E-Rate**
 - **Biden to Announce State Breakdown of 2021 Law’s Broadband Funding**: The Biden administration will announce today (June 26) how much money each state will receive from a \$42.5 billion fund established by 2021 legislation to expand high-speed internet access, most of it over the next two years.
 - **House Ag Committee Holds Hearing on Closing the Digital Divide**: The House Committee on Agriculture held a hearing titled, “Closing the Digital Divide in Rural America.”
 - **Child Nutrition – USDA Looks to Make Final Call on Free Meal Expansion, School Nutrition in April 2024**: The U.S. Department of Agriculture expects to release final rules in April 2024 on two important school meal proposals, one to expand free meals served to all students at high-poverty schools and the other to heighten nutrition guidance.
2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
 - **Impact on State School Board Associations**
3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
 - **New America Hosts Conversation on Strengthening Kindergarten**: On Tuesday, June 20, New America and the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

hosted a webinar entitled “Strengthening Kindergarten to Improve Children’s PreK-3rd Grade Experiences.” The webinar discussed a variety of classroom and statewide strategies early childhood educators, policymakers, and researchers have adopted to create Kindergarten classrooms with well-aligned, enjoyable curricula for developing students.

- **NAEP Scores Decline Again for 13-Year-Olds in Reading, Mathematics:** On Wednesday, June 21, The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released the NAEP long-term trend (LTT) reading and mathematics assessment scores for 13-year-old students from the 2022–23 school year, commonly referred to as the Nation’s Report Card. The average scores for 13-year-olds declined four points in reading and nine points in mathematics compared to the previous assessment administered during the 2019–20 school year.
- **Committee for Education Funding Examines Investment in STEM Talent:** On Wednesday, June 21, the Committee for Education Funding (CEF) and the Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF) hosted a webinar on “The National Imperative to Develop STEM Talent: Why the Investment in Education Matters.”
- **Education Experts Look at Strategies to Support Advanced Learners:** On Thursday, June 22, the National Working Group on Advanced Education (the Working Group) at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute (Fordham Institute) held a webinar titled, “How to Build a Wider, More Diverse Pipeline of Advanced Learners.” The event highlighted the Working Group’s new report based off a year’s work to develop a robust research agenda and a policy and practice guide on how to better advance the often untapped potential of marginalized students.

4. **New Publications**

- **The Reading Revolution: How States Are Scaling Literacy Reform**
FutureED (June, 2023)

This new report tells the story of how Mississippi, Tennessee and other states have redesigned reading instruction and raised student achievement in thousands of public schools through bold, state-level leadership—demonstrating that with the right ingredients, change can happen in public education on a large scale, smart policy can drive higher performance, and bipartisan school reform is possible even in today’s fraught political climate.

5. **In the News**

- **Senate Bill Proposes Improved Workforce Data Collection to Curb Teacher Shortages**
K-12 Dive (June 23, 2023)
- **More Bad News for Test Schools: 13-Year-Olds See Major Drop in Reading and Math**
The Hill (June 21, 2023)

6. **Weekly Calendar - What’s coming up this week?**

- **Brookings Event Launching the Childhood Costs Calculator:** The Brookings Institution will host an online event to launch the Childhood Cost Data initiative and accompanying Childhood Cost Calculator (C3) based on a decade of research.

Thursday at 9am ET

7. **Future Hearings & Events**
 - **Engage Every Student Summit**: The Department of Education will hold a summit on engaging students.
Thursday, July 13 at 9am ET
8. **On The Floor of Congress This Week**
 - The House and Senate are in recess until Monday, July 10.
9. **Important U.S. House and Senate Links**
10. **About BPAG**

1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY AND E-RATE

BIDEN TO ANNOUNCE STATE BREAKDOWN OF 2021 LAW'S BROADBAND FUNDING

The Biden administration is expected to announce today, June 26, how much money each state will receive from the \$42.5 billion of Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program funding established by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to expand high-speed internet access, most of it over the next two years. The money is meant to deliver internet access to remote and rural areas. This is the largest portion of internet funding provided by IIJA, and it comes as the House Republicans are seeking to use fiscal year 2024 spending bills to rescind unspent money appropriated when Democrats controlled both chambers of Congress. Each state, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, will receive a minimum of \$100 million. 10 percent of the \$42.5 billion will be set aside for remote or topographically challenging areas where the cost of broadband access is above the average. The rest of the funding will be doled out proportionally based on the number of unserved communities in a state, based on a **Federal Communications Commission map** released in May, which shows about 8.5 million unserved broadband serviceable locations across the United States. Read more [here](#).

HOUSE AG COMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

On Wednesday, June 21, the House Committee on Agriculture held a **hearing** titled, "Closing the Digital Divide in Rural America." The witness panel featured several broadband trade association executives and advocacy groups. Committee Chair G.T. Thompson (R-PA) noted that while there are other federal agencies working on this issue, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) "is the only federal agency that has offices and devoted staff in all 50 states, enabling constituents to have direct access to those who are reviewing, implementing and managing connectivity programs to meet the needs of rural communities." Chair Thompson referenced the **Broadband Internet Connections for Rural America (BICRA) Act**, which the Committee passed unanimously last Congress. Thompson stated that the bill would reauthorize and make other changes to various programs of the USDA that supports broadband internet expansion in rural areas. The bill also would have codified the **Reconnect Program**. Thompson further stated that this legislation "will be the foundation for the broadband subtitle in the 2023 Farm Bill." Committee Ranking Member David Scott noted in his remarks how Broadband access addresses other "long standing inequities, through expanding access to health care,

educational and workforce development opportunities.” “Broadband is now an integral part of our daily lives. But most areas in rural America go without broadband, and that must change,” he added. Throughout the hearing, education services were repeatedly pointed to as an example of why increasing broadband equity and access around rural America is crucial. “Connectivity is everything, whether it is healthcare, business education, you can't, you can't do without it,” said Congressman David Rouzer (R-NC). Congresswoman Alma Adams (D-NC) similarly stated, “The pandemic showed our communities how crucial dependable Internet access is for education, for medicine and for finding employment.” A recording of the hearing and written witness testimony can be viewed [here](#).

CHILD NUTRITION

USDA LOOKS TO MAKE FINAL CALL ON FREE MEAL EXPANSION, SCHOOL NUTRITION IN APRIL 2024

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) expects to release final rules in April 2024 on two important school meal proposals, one to [expand free meals](#) served to all students at high-poverty schools and the other to [heighten nutrition guidance](#). The first change, initially proposed in March, would expand access to the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which allows schools with high concentrations of low-income families to serve free breakfast and lunch without requiring an application for the benefit. USDA’s proposal aims to lower the minimum threshold for a school or district’s CEP eligibility from 40 percent of enrolled students to 25 percent. USDA’s February proposed rule to gradually implement more stringent school nutrition standards received over 136,000 public comments. The proposal proposed to revise standards on whole grains, sugar and sodium, requiring schools to offer primarily whole grain products starting in fall 2024 and incrementally minimize sugar and sodium content through 2029.

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

Lawmakers left Washington, D.C. on Friday for a 17-day recess. The break comes on the heels of some significant progress in both chambers on FY 2024 spending bills. After setting allocations for the 12 spending subcommittees at amounts lower than included in the debt limit deal, House Appropriations Committee Chair Kay Granger (R-TX) saw the approval of six spending bills, including Energy and Water, Defense, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, Legislative Branch, Agriculture and Homeland Security.

As was expected, the House and Senate are working from different allocations as they develop FY 2024 spending bills. (A comparison of House and Senate allocations is available [here](#).) Before leaving town, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) pulled together the leaders from the various sectors of the Republican Caucus—referred to as the “five families”—to discuss plans for July. House leadership is focused on trying to pass all of the spending bills before the August recess, even though it has been reported that some of the more conservative factions are still unhappy with FY 2024 spending levels. GOP Leadership will need to control their members more than they did in June to complete this arguably ambitious task.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

As for FY 2024 education funding, House appropriators are working with \$147 billion for the Labor, Health, and Human Services and Education spending bill; their Senate counterparts are

developing a bill that will come in at \$195 billion. The Senate figure is almost 33 percent higher than the House level, setting the stage for difficult negotiations later this year, assuming each chamber passes a bill. The LHHS-ED bill is notoriously difficult to pass—at the subcommittee, full committee levels, as well as on the chamber floors.

Furthermore, in unsurprising bad news this week, the education community heard once again how badly U.S. students are performing in math and science. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) **released** the NAEP long-term trend (LTT) reading and mathematics assessment scores for 13-year-old students from the 2022–23 school year. Average scores for 13-year-olds declined four points in reading and nine points in mathematics, when compared to the previous assessment administered during the 2019–20 school year. To put the results into perspective, the average 13-year-old’s understanding of math has fallen back to levels last seen in the 1990s, and readers scored lower than they did in 1971, when the test was first administered. In addition, gaps in performance between children of different backgrounds have only worsened. Education advocates will argue that cuts to education spending will only drive achievement down in the coming weeks, when appropriators make crucial decisions about FY 2024 investments.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

NEW AMERICA HOSTS CONVERSATION ON STRENGTHENING KINDERGARTEN

On Tuesday, June 20, New America and the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading hosted a webinar entitled “**Strengthening Kindergarten to Improve Children’s PreK-3rd Grade Experiences**” with featured comments from Connie Hall, 2023 Nevada State Teacher of the Year, and Laura Bornfreund, moderating from New America. The webinar discussed a variety of classroom and statewide strategies early childhood educators, policymakers, and researchers have adopted to create Kindergarten classrooms with well-aligned, enjoyable curricula for developing students. Panelists included President and CEO of the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE), Gloria Corral; Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) Executive Director Anya Hurwitz; and Dr. Shantel Meek with the Children’s Equity Project at Arizona State University. Particular attention was paid to how educators can help develop classroom curricula starting in Kindergarten that best prepare students for academic and emotional success in later years. Not only did panelists highlight strategies that align grade-level curricula from PreK through third grade across schools, but they also provided compelling local examples for how to fully support the linguistic backgrounds of young students learning multiple languages in the classroom. In addition to Hurwitz emphasizing the importance of authentic relationships between schools, families and communities, Dr. Meek repeatedly spoke to the strong need for policymakers to “operationalize equity” – that is, institute equitable structures of access and opportunity that ensure multilingual students, students of color, and students with disabilities receive the services actually guaranteed to them by law. While providing intriguing statewide policies, multiple panelists referenced local policies effective at boosting family engagement and student wellbeing during the early years of a child’s education. These include strategic home visits, hands-on and inquiry-based play, comprehensive literacy and language development curricula, removal of harsh discipline policies, and strengthening Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), all of which were designed, as noted by Corral, to recognize that “family is an integral part of the learning that happens at school *and* the hours spent outside of school.” Implementing

research-based strategies during Kindergarten is critical to preparing students for the rest of their educational journeys, and there are a number of innovative policies available to educators through New America's "[Transforming Kindergarten](#)" site. A full recording of the webinar is available [here](#).

NAEP SCORES DECLINE AGAIN FOR 13-YEAR-OLDS IN READING, MATHEMATICS

On Wednesday, June 21, The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) [released](#) the NAEP long-term trend (LTT) reading and mathematics assessment scores for 13-year-old students from the 2022–23 school year, commonly referred to as the Nation's Report Card. The average scores for 13-year-olds declined four points in reading and nine points in mathematics compared to the previous assessment administered during the 2019–20 school year. Compared to 10 years ago, the average scores declined 7 points in reading and 14 points in mathematics. To put the results into perspective, the average 13-year-old's understanding of math has fallen back to levels last seen in the 1990s, and readers scored lower than they did in 1971, when the test was first administered. In addition, gaps in performance between children of different backgrounds have only worsened. U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona issued a [statement](#) on the results, saying, "The latest data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress is further evidence of what the Biden-Harris administration recognized from Day One: that the pandemic would have a devastating impact on students' learning across the country and that it would take years of effort and investment to reverse the damage as well as address the 11-year decline that preceded it." He went on to note that the Education Department is continuing to offer "technical assistance, issue guidance, and hold convenings focused on the specific strategies included in our Raise the Bar: Lead the World Plan for improving academic performance and tackling disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes." NCES Commissioner Peggy Carr in a [press release](#) stated, "The 'green shoots' of academic recovery that we had hoped to see have not materialized, as we continue to see worrisome signs about student achievement and well-being more than two years after most students returned for in-person learning." She further expressed concern about the "signs of risk for a generation of learners" given the results from Wednesday and over the past year. More on the LTT assessments and how they differ from main NAEP assessments can be found [here](#).

COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION FUNDING EXAMINES INVESTMENT IN STEM TALENT

On Wednesday, June 21, the Committee for Education Funding (CEF) and the Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF) hosted a webinar on "The National Imperative to Develop STEM Talent: Why the Investment in Education Matters." Sarah Abernathy, Executive Director of CEF, began the webinar by highlighting the overall scope of federal education funding, noting that current education funding levels are still below 2011 inflation-adjusted spending levels. She further explained that there's broad public support for increasing federal investments in education, particularly in STEM areas. Amy Burke, Program Director for Science, Technology, and Innovation Analysis at the National Science Foundation's National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, then provided data on the overall U.S. STEM workforce. As it relates to education levels, there is a broad mix of STEM occupations between workers with a bachelor's degree and those without, but those without a four-year degree are far more likely to work in a middle-skill field that falls outside the science and engineering enterprise. In terms of populations, Burke outlined that women's share of science and engineering degrees has increased over time at the associate's level, but remained stable at other degree levels; Hispanics

or Latinos, African Americans, and American Indian or Alaska Natives remain far underrepresented among science and engineering degree recipients at the bachelor's level and above. Andre Green, Professor and Associate Vice President, Academic Affairs, University of South Alabama, then described his experience making his way through the education system and his inspiration to pursue a STEM career thanks to support from federal education funding through the National Science Foundation. Green asserted that federal programs like the Robert F. Noyce program at NSF are vital for inspiring the next generation of STEM talent; the Noyce program, in particular, supports STEM educators in K-12 classrooms and strengthening the overall STEM educator pipeline, which Green believes is the most important focus for investment at the federal level. Billy Mawhiney, Executive Director, South Dakota Afterschool Network, dove into the importance of federal investments from an after school perspective, where a sizable amount of STEM education programming takes place in grades K-8. He detailed how the South Dakota Afterschool Network has been deliberate in leveraging federal education funds through Title IV-A and ESSER to support STEM programming. Through a U.S. Department of Education award of \$2.5 million, the network was able to provide 13 local programs with average awards of \$192,308 to support STEM programming. At the event's conclusion, panelists shared the view that the federal government should sustain consistent increased investments dedicated to STEM education at all levels and support flexibility for schools and localities to leverage federal funding to best support their local education and workforce needs. For more information, click [here](#).

EDUCATION EXPERTS LOOK AT STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT ADVANCED LEARNERS

On Thursday, June 22, the National Working Group on Advanced Education (the Working Group) at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute (Fordham Institute) held a webinar titled, "How to Build a Wider, More Diverse Pipeline of Advanced Learners." [The Working Group](#) was formed in spring 2022 to promote research, policies, and practices to develop the full abilities of students with high academic potential, especially minority and economically disadvantaged students. The event featured members of the Working Group, which is comprised of a [diverse group](#) of education research scientists and directors of advanced education. Participants included Scott Peters, senior research scientist for the Northwest Evaluation Association; Homero Chavez, director of Gadsden Elementary School District 32's Early College Program; and Sneha Shah-Coltrane, director of advanced learning and gifted education at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The event also highlighted the Working Group's [new report](#), "Building a Wider, More Diverse Pipeline of Advanced Learners," a product of the Group's work over the past year to develop a robust research agenda and a policy and practice agenda on how to better advance the often untapped potential of marginalized students. The panel opened with remarks from Fordham Institute President Michael Petrilli who initiated a discussion on [36 concrete strategies](#) that school districts, charter networks and states can implement to help advanced learners meet their full potential. The reimagining of "gifted" eligibility assessments was examined, and participants analyzed several alternative measures that utilize local, school-based norms or adopt a more universal screening practice to help close America's "excellence gaps," which refers to "gaps between various racial and socioeconomic groups at the highest level of achievement." This would subsequently increase access to more advancement and enrichment programs among underrepresented learners; it would additionally personalize the K-12 experience depending on the advanced level of each student, as well as deliver "greater economic security and personal fulfillment." An additional strategy that the panel honed in on

was the idea of “accessible front-loading.” In other words, schools should provide accessible front-loading programming—either to all students or to those from historically underrepresented groups—starting in pre-K or Kindergarten. The group also recommended that schools offer accessible after-school, weekend, and/or summer enrichment opportunities. “We want to see these as children at potential, not at risk,” said Shah-Coltrane. Lastly, the panel touched solutions to teacher shortages that encompasses advanced learning. The group suggested establishing effective online learning programs that allow advanced learners to participate in college or university-based advancement and enrichment programs across the nation.

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4. New Publications

The Reading Revolution: How States Are Scaling Literacy Reform

FutureED (June, 2023)

This new report tells the story of how Mississippi, Tennessee and other states have redesigned reading instruction and raised student achievement in thousands of public schools through bold, state-level leadership—demonstrating that with the right ingredients, change can happen in public education on a large scale, smart policy can drive higher performance, and bipartisan school reform is possible even in today’s fraught political climate.

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5. In the News

Senate Bill Proposes Improved Workforce Data Collection to Curb Teacher Shortages

K-12 Dive (June 23, 2023)

More Bad News for Test Schools: 13-Year-Olds See Major Drop in Reading and Math

The Hill (June 21, 2023)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Thursday, June 29, 2023

Webinar: Brookings—The Childhood Cost Calculator

Subject: The Brookings Institution will host an online event to launch the Childhood Cost Data initiative and accompanying Childhood Cost Calculator (C3) based on a decade of research.

Participants: Emily Gustafsson-Wright, senior fellow, Center for Universal Education, Brookings Institution; Wendy Smith, director of education programs, Worldreader; Soranchana Seng, advisor, Save the Children Cambodia; Erick Nehring, consultant, SUMMA; Tamar Manuelyan Atinc (moderator), non-resident fellow, Brookings Institution; Rachel Hinton, head of research, U.K. Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office; and Alana Lipcan, impact and innovation director, Global Schools Forum.

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Registration: Live stream available [here.](#)

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7. Future Hearings and Events

Thursday, July 13, 2023

Webinar: Engage Every Student Summit

Subject: The Department of Education will hold a summit on engaging students

Time and Location: 9:00 a.m.

Registration: Live stream available [here](#).

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8. On The Floor of Congress This Week

The House and Senate are in recess until June 10, 2023.

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9. Links for Up-to-Date Information on Hearings, Legislation, and Events

[U.S. House and Senate 2023 Schedule](#)

[U.S. Department of Education](#)

[U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions](#)

[U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor](#)

[U.S. Senate Budget Committee](#)

[U.S. House Budget Committee](#)

[Congressional Budget Office](#)

[Federal legislative information](#)

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10. About BPAG

[Bose Public Affairs Group](#) is a full-service government affairs and public relations consulting firm that has built a reputation for producing results. We partner with clients committed to excellence in education and other social services to achieve policy and advocacy success by:

- leveraging our expertise and passion;
- strategizing intelligent solutions; and,
- Creating meaningful impact.

Our team includes long-term insiders in education policy from Pre-K through higher education, innovative thinkers and savvy strategists that provide a comprehensive array of customized client services. We have the knowledge, skills, and relationships that are necessary for successful advocacy at all levels. From grassroots to grass tops and everything in between, our broad-based legislative practice approaches every project with the same degree of determination and professionalism. BPAG provides expertise in a variety of services:

- Government Relations
- Research and Analysis
- Advocacy Training
- Association Management
- Strategic Communications
- Policy Events

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