



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

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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**
 - **Funding**
 - **ED Opens School-Based Mental Health Support Grant Competition:** On Thursday, the Department of Education opened applications for the School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program and the Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant Program to help bolster the pipeline of mental health professionals serving in schools and expand student access to school-based mental health services and supports.
 - **ED Opens Award Application for Educational Technology, Media, and Materials for Individuals With Disabilities Program:** The Department of Education issued a notice inviting applications for new awards for fiscal year 2024 for Stepping-up Technology Implementation for students with disabilities.
2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
 - **Impact on State School Board Associations**
3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
 - **ED Releases Resources on Preschool Expansion, Early Success:** The Department of Education on Monday published resources for how states, local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools can use Title I funds to expand access

to high-quality preschool for three- and four-year olds in a range of quality settings including schools, Head Start, and community-based organizations.

- **ED Releases Resources for Student Voters:** The Department of Education on Monday released a "Toolkit for the Promotion of Voter Participation for Students" to provide resources for educational institutions to help them identify and implement actions to assist eligible students with voter registration and voting.
- **Principals Outline Strategies for Overcoming Chronic Absenteeism:** On Tuesday, the National Association of Secondary School Principals held a webinar titled, "Overcoming Chronic Absenteeism: Solutions for School Leaders." Delving into the growing problem of chronic absenteeism in schools, the speakers shared their experiences with student absenteeism and their strategies to address it.

4. **New Publications**

- **The Role of Executive Agencies in Budget Development: In Brief**
Congressional Research Service (February 2024)
This report briefly covers agencies' roles in budget development in the context of the executive budget process.

5. **In the News**

- **School Boards Face Their Most Difficult Budget Season Ever. Many Are Unprepared**
The 74 (February 27, 2024)
- **Where Do Trump and Haley Stand on Education?**
USA Today (February 27, 2023)
- **Is The End of Federal Relief Money Worsening a Child Care Crisis?**
K-12 Dive (February 27, 2024)
- **Nebraska Department of Education Announces Launch of Teacher Apprenticeship Program**
KNOP News 2 (February 28, 2024)
- **Public School Students Outperformed Tax Credit Scholarship Recipients at Private Schools, Report Says**
Chicago Tribune (February 28, 2024)

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

- **Building a Stable Child Care Workforce:** The Bipartisan Policy Center will hold a virtual discussion on "What Will It Take to Build a Competent, Stable Child Care Workforce?"
Monday at 1pm ET
- **House Education Subcommittee Hearing on Charter Schools:** The House Education and the Workforce Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee will hold a hearing on "Proven Results: Highlighting the Benefits of Charter Schools for Students and Families."
Tuesday at 10:15am ET

7. **Future Hearings & Events**

- **Agency Meeting: National Assessment Government Board:** The National Assessment Governing Board will hold a virtual meeting of the Committee on Standards, Design and Methodology for the National Center for Education Statistics to deliver a presentation regarding the use of rolling averages to report on subgroups with small sample sizes (Closed) and for the committee chair to provide updates on achievement levels activities and seek input on a report currently under development to synthesize National Assessment of Educational Progress achievement levels validity evidence and present the appropriate claims that can be made by them.

March 11 at 8am ET

- **Culturally Responsive Educator Prep:** The University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education will hold a webinar to highlight strategies and challenges faced to incorporate culturally responsive and sustaining practices in educator preparation programs.

March 12 at 1pm ET

8. **On The Floor of Congress This Week**

- **Senate floor:** Consideration of nominations and partial government funding package.
- **House floor:**
 - H.R. 4366 – Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024
 - **H.R. 2799** – Expanding Access to Capital Act of 2023
 - **H.R. 7511** – Laken Riley Act

9. **Important U.S. House and Senate Links**

10. **About BPAG**

1. **COSSBA Policy Priorities**

FUNDING

ED OPENS SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT GRANT COMPETITION

On Thursday, the Department of Education (ED) **opened** applications for the School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program (SBMH) and the Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant Program (MHSP) to help bolster the pipeline of mental health professionals serving in schools and expand student access to school-based mental health services and supports. These programs align with the Biden Administration's commitment to address the mental health crisis, particularly among youth, as outlined in the President's **National Mental Health Strategy**. ED anticipates allocating approximately \$38 million across both competitions in Fiscal Year 2024, and funding will play a key role in the training of school-based mental health service providers and expanding the number of these professionals available to address the shortages in schools across the country. Prioritizing increased partnership with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and other minority serving institutions, the grants additionally aim to promote inclusive practices and increase the number of mental health professionals from diverse backgrounds or districts they serve, and build upon the progress established by the **Bipartisan Safer Communities Act**.

Applications for SBMH are [here](#), and due on April 30, 2024 and applications for MHSP are [here](#), and due on May 15, 2024.

ED OPENS AWARD APPLICATION FOR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY, MEDIA, AND MATERIALS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES PROGRAM

The Department of Education issued a notice inviting applications for new awards for fiscal year (FY) 2024 for Stepping-up Technology Implementation. The purpose of the Educational Technology, Media, and Materials for Individuals with Disabilities Program (ETechM2 Program) is to improve results for children with disabilities by (1) promoting the development, demonstration, and use of technology; (2) supporting educational activities designed to be of educational value in the classroom for children with disabilities; (3) providing support for captioning and video description that is appropriate for use in the classroom; and (4) providing accessible educational materials to children with disabilities in a timely manner. This award opportunity is particularly focused on improved student outcomes using technology that integrates artificial intelligence (AI) and improved educator use and knowledge of technology-based tools or approaches using AI to deliver instruction, among other items.

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

Once again, Congress has managed to avert an appropriations crisis of its own making. Last week, the House and Senate passed another continuing resolution (CR) that avoids shutting down any federal agencies while lawmakers continue to work on Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 spending bills. [A Wednesday announcement from Speaker of the House Mike Johnson \(R-LA\)](#) shared details of the agreement that gives lawmakers until March 8 to pass a package of six spending bills—bills that were released late Sunday night and include the subcommittees of the Agriculture-Food & Drug Administration, Commerce-Justice and Science, Energy and Water Development, Interior, Military Construction-Veterans Affairs, and Transportation-Housing and Urban Development. The other six bills, including the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education spending bill, must be finished by March 22 to avoid any agency closures. On the floor of the Senate, Appropriations Committee Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) said, "We are genuinely close...And if bipartisan cooperation prevails, I am very confident we can, at long last — at long last — wrap up our FY 24 bills." Both chambers overwhelmingly passed the latest two-part stopgap funding patch on Thursday. The Senate passed the measure 77-13, after the House did so via a 320-99 vote. Consideration of the first six compromise FY 24 bills will begin this week under "suspension" in the House, which will require a two-thirds affirmative vote and then advance to the Senate. While advocates are still analyzing the full impact, overall these bills represent a small 0.3% increase in funding levels over the FY 23 enacted funding. The most important impact for children and families is the full funding of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infant, and Children also known as the WIC Program, which will ensure no families in the program lose critical support for food aid.

While the CR was mostly clean, it did adjust the amount of dollars appropriated for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). [FAFSA processing has been maligned with processing issues this year](#). In response, lawmakers want to give the program more money. FAFSA appropriations for FY 2023 and subsequent years are currently set at \$1.17 billion. The CR would make spending changes and set totals at \$1.17 billion for fiscal 2024, \$3.17 billion for fiscal 2025, \$2.17 billion for fiscal 2026 and \$1.24 billion for fiscal 2027 and subsequent years.

The Department of Education is experiencing delays in processing financial aid data, meaning colleges won't get the information they need to produce financial aid packages until early March, upending the financial aid process and timelines nationwide.

The fact that Speaker Johnson has had to rely on Democrats to avoid a shutdown and will likely need their support for passage of the first six spending bills, "becomes an opportunity for negotiations," according to House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT). She and her colleagues are hoping to rid bills of conservative policy riders and prevent some of the most troubling proposed cuts for Democrats—including those proposed to Title I by Republicans in the education spending bill they proposed last year. (Of course, those cuts would never clear the Democratically-controlled Senate.)

This week will also see President Joe Biden visit Capitol Hill for his March 7 State of the Union Address. Senator Katie Britt (R-AL) will be delivering the Republican response. In the days before the address, the White House will announce who will be sitting with First Lady Jill Biden in the galley. Those announcements will give some clues to the substance of the President's speech. Education will certainly be featured, given the Administration's emphasis on equity in K-12 education, afterschool and summer learning, addressing the learning loss resulting from the pandemic, the need to grow a workforce that can fulfill the promise of the much-touted CHIPS and Science Act, and many other Biden policy priorities. Hopefully lawmakers won't need the floor time Thursday night to avoid a partial shutdown on Friday.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

Looking ahead, the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education spending bill is among the largest and most politically fraught of the spending bills. It was reported this week that Subcommittee Chairman Robert Aderholt (R-AL) said appropriators are getting closer to an agreement on the programmatic funding details for his bill, but policy riders will certainly present challenges. Varied controversial issues such as critical race theory, transgender athletes, and gun policy are among those being negotiated in these final days.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

ED RELEASES RESOURCES ON PRESCHOOL EXPANSION, EARLY SUCCESS

The Department of Education (ED) on Monday published resources for how states, local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools can use Title I funds to expand access to high-quality preschool for three- and four-year olds in a range of quality settings including schools, Head Start, and community-based organizations. "This guidance will help ensure more children can experience early school success, and it encourages more schools across the nation to better set up kindergarten to be a sturdy bridge between the early years and the early grades," the [press release](#) states. The new resources include a revision of ED's [Non-Regulatory Guidance on Serving Preschool Children Through Title I, Part A \(Title I\) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act \(ESEA\)](#), which was last revised in 2012. The updated guidance comes after President Biden's Executive Order to Increase Access to High-Quality Care and Supporting Caregivers, and efforts are being coordinated with the Department of Health and Human Services. The guidance includes information on how local and state education agencies can partner with local preschool programs, Head Start, and other community-based organizations to expand access to preschool opportunities through layering and braiding federal, state, and

local funds. It additionally outlines how Title I funds can be used to support the professional development and growth of early educators and highlights ways to meet the developmental and linguistic needs of preschool students, especially children with disabilities and English learners. An [Early School Success Dear Colleague Letter](#) accompanies the updated guidance and provides further details.

ED RELEASES RESOURCES FOR STUDENT VOTERS

The Department of Education (ED) on Monday released a "[Toolkit for the Promotion of Voter Participation for Students](#)" to provide resources for educational institutions to help them identify and implement actions to assist eligible students with voter registration and voting. The new resource aims to help both K-12 and postsecondary students engage in the electoral process by reducing barriers they might face when participating in elections. The toolkit includes explanations of current legal requirements for schools, recommendations for non-partisan steps they can take to expand voter participation across their student bodies, federal resources they can utilize to support voters in their communities, and examples from the field with effective strategies from schools across the nation. Based on President Biden's executive order, "[Promoting Access to Voting](#)," which called on federal agencies to consider ways to expand opportunities for all Americans to register to vote and to obtain information about, and participate in, the electoral process ED has taken several steps to expand voting access for all students. These actions included adding a link to vote.gov on the Federal Student Aid website to make information about voting more accessible to college students; issuing a Dear Colleague Letter to remind institutions of higher education of the federal requirements regarding voting that are tied to participation in federal student aid programs; and clarifying when Federal Work Study dollars could be used for nonpartisan civic engagement work. The toolkit is available [here](#).

PRINCIPALS OUTLINE STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

On Tuesday, the National Association of Secondary School Principals held a webinar titled, "Overcoming Chronic Absenteeism: Solutions for School Leaders." The event featured a panel of educators and a team from [Attendance Works](#) - Lauran Waters-Cherry, executive vice president of the American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA); Adam Schott, deputy assistant secretary of the US Department of Education's (ED) Office of Elementary and Secondary Education; Cecelia Leong, vice president of programs at Attendance Works; Hedy Chang, executive director and president of Attendance Works; Victoria Simon, principal at Aberdeen Academy; and Ryan Broderick, assistant principal at Bristol Central High School. Delving into the growing problem of chronic absenteeism in schools, the speakers shared their experiences with student absenteeism and their [strategies](#) to address it. Waters-Cherry began by discussing the link between chronic absence and reduced levels of academic achievement. She emphasized the lasting impact this has on a child's life, as chronically absent students are more likely to drop out of high school. Leong stressed the importance of a tiered approach to address absenteeism: foundational support and school-wide prevention, targeted support, and intensive support. Emphasizing tier one universal strategies, Leong highlighted the role of positive learning conditions in fostering student engagement and regular attendance. Additionally, she underscored the shift towards a partnership-focused approach, advocating for leveraging student strengths and listening to families to overcome attendance barriers. Drawing from their schools' absentee data, educators Simon and Broderick identified mental health challenges and overall student/parent attitudes towards school as key factors contributing to absenteeism. As a result of these findings, they highlighted the need to develop individual relationships and foster

community building in schools, have robust, up-to-date data to identify students who may require more attention, and have consistent messaging on the importance of education in shaping a child's future. Both educators concluded by emphasizing the effectiveness of setting small, actionable goals each month and recognizing that addressing chronic absenteeism is a gradual process.

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4. New Publications

The Role of Executive Agencies in Budget Development: In Brief

Congressional Research Service (February 2024)

This report briefly covers agencies' roles in budget development in the context of the executive budget process.

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5. In the News

School Boards Face Their Most Difficult Budget Season Ever. Many Are Unprepared

The 74 (February 27, 2024)

Where Do Trump and Haley Stand on Education?

USA Today (February 27, 2024)

Is The End of Federal Relief Money Worsening a Child Care Crisis?

K-12 Dive (February 27, 2024)

Nebraska Department of Education Announces Launch of Teacher Apprenticeship Program

KNOP News 2 (February 28, 2024)

Public School Students Outperformed Tax Credit Scholarship Recipients at Private Schools, Report Says

Chicago Tribune (February 28, 2024)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Monday, March 4, 2024

Webinar: Building a Stable Child Care Workforce

Subject: The Bipartisan Policy Center will hold a virtual discussion on "What Will It Take to Build a Competent, Stable Child Care Workforce?"

Participants: Linda Smith, director, BPC Early Childhood Initiative; Caroline Osborn, project associate, BPC Early Childhood Initiative; Lauren Birchfield Kennedy, co-president, Neighborhood Villages; Calvin Moore Jr., CEO, Council for Professional Recognition; Walter

Gilliam, executive director, University of Nebraska's Early Childhood Institute; and Marcia Cox Mitchell, vice president of early childhood, Bainum Family Foundation.

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Registration: Register [here](#).

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Hearing: House Education Subcommittee on Charter Schools

Subject: The House Education and the Workforce Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee will hold a hearing on "Proven Results: Highlighting the Benefits of Charter Schools for Students and Families."

Time and Location: 10:15 a.m.; 2175 Rayburn HOB.

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

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7. Future Hearings and Events

Monday, March 11, 2024

Agency Meeting: National Assessment Governing Board

Subject: The National Assessment Governing Board will hold a virtual meeting of the Committee on Standards, Design and Methodology for the National Center for Education Statistics to deliver a presentation regarding the use of rolling averages to report on subgroups with small sample sizes (Closed) and for the committee chair to provide updates on achievement levels activities and seek input on a report currently under development to synthesize National Assessment of Educational Progress achievement levels validity evidence and present the appropriate claims that can be made by them. (Open)

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Registration: Full agenda and register [here](#).

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Webinar: Culturally Responsive Educator Prep

Subject: The University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education will hold a webinar to highlight strategies and challenges faced to incorporate culturally responsive and sustaining practices in educator preparation programs.

Participants: Nicole Carl, director, Urban Teaching Residency, University of Pennsylvania; Christopher Dean, director, Urban Apprenticeship Program, University of Pennsylvania; Charlotte Jacobs, director, Independent School Teaching Residency, University of Pennsylvania; Jessica Richard, associate director, School Leadership Program, University of Pennsylvania; and Patrick Sexton, executive director, Teacher Education Programs, University of Pennsylvania.

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Registration: Register [here](#).

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8. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor: Consideration of nominations and partial government funding package.

House Floor:

[H.R. 4366](#) – Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024

[H.R. 2799](#) – Expanding Access to Capital Act of 2023

[H.R. 7511](#) – Laken Riley Act

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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](#)

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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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