



The Consortium of State School Boards Associations Weekly Education Report

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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**
 - **The State of E-Rate and How to Make the Most of It:** A panel at the Future of Education Technology Conference in Orlando earlier this month offered tips on planning for the future of broadband, while cautioning attendees that aspects of the E-rate program are in political jeopardy.
2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
 - **Impact on State School Board Associations**
3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
 - **ED Invites Fiscal Year 2025 SEED Program Grant Applications:** Last week, before this week's Inauguration, the Department of Education (ED) announced the availability of applications for the fiscal year 2025 Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) program.
 - **GAO Report Highlights Head Start Oversight Failures:** A new report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released Tuesday asserts that the Office of Head Start (OHS), part of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), has failed to adequately monitor programs placed under temporary management, potentially endangering children.
 - **HELP Committee Sets Legislative Priorities for 119th Congress:** On Tuesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee convened for an organizing hearing to kick off the 119th Congress.

- **Former Education Secretaries Share Insights on ED's Future**: On Tuesday, the Brookings Institution's Brown Center on Education Policy hosted a webinar featuring former US Secretaries of Education Arne Duncan, John King, and Margaret Spellings.
- **ED Announces Incoming Trump-Vance Senior Appointees**: On Thursday, the Department of Education unveiled a senior team of political appointees tasked with implementing President Donald Trump's vision for education in the United States.
- **Potential Impacts of Trump's Early Executive Orders on Education**: On Thursday, POLITICO hosted a discussion with policy experts on the executive orders issued during the early days of Donald Trump's administration, focusing on their potential implications and challenges of implementation.
- **House Appropriations Committee Sets Tone for 119th Congress**: On Thursday, the House Appropriations Committee convened an organizational meeting to address committee rules and subcommittee jurisdictions.
- **Trump Disbands School Safety Advisory Board**: This week, the Trump administration disbanded the Federal School Safety Clearinghouse External Advisory Board, which was formed to advise federal agencies on best practices for protecting students.

4. **New Publications**

- **Testing Theories of Why: Four Keys to Interpreting US Student Achievement Trends**
American Enterprise Institute (January 2025)
This report examines recent trends in US student achievement, as measured by national and international assessments, and identifies four key trends to consider when evaluating recent US student performance.

5. **In the News**

- **'Budget Reconciliation' Sounds Like Wonspeak. But It Matters for Schools**
Education Week (January 21, 2025)
- **Schools No Longer Protected from Immigration Raids**
K-12 Dive (January 21, 2025)
- **Trump Names Acting Education Secretary Ahead of Linda McMahon's Confirmation**
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Tampa Bay Times (January 17, 2025)
- **9 Education Storylines to Watch as Trump Returns to the White House**
The 74 (January 17, 2025)
- **School Cellphone Bans Keep Bipartisan Momentum**
Axios (January 16, 2025)

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

- **Senate Judiciary Committee Confirmation Vote:** The Senate Judiciary Committee will hold a markup to vote on the nomination of Pamela Bondi, of Florida, to be Attorney General, Department of Justice.
Wednesday at 9am ET
- **Senate HELP Committee Hearing on HHS Nominee:** The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee will hold a hearing on the nomination of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to be secretary of Health and Human Services.
Wednesday at 10am ET
- **Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Secretary Nomination Hearing:** The Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee will hold a hearing on the nomination of Howard Lutnick to be Secretary of Commerce.
Wednesday at 10am ET

7. **Future Hearings & Events**

- **Creating a Blueprint for America's Workforce:** The Bipartisan Policy Center will hold a summit on "America's Workforce: Creating a Blueprint for the Future."
February 4 at 1pm ET
- **Future of College Admissions:** The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research will hold a discussion on "The Future of College Admissions."
February 5 at 4:30pm ET

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

- **Senate floor**
 - Consider the nomination of Scott Bessent, of South Carolina, to be Secretary of the Treasury
 - Consider the nomination of Sean Duffy, of Wisconsin, to be Secretary of Transportation
- **House floor:** In recess.

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

10. **About BPAG**

1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY AND E-RATE

THE STATE OF E-RATE AND HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF IT

Government Technology (January 23, 2025)

A panel at the Future of Education Technology Conference in Orlando earlier this month offered tips on planning for the future of broadband, while cautioning attendees that aspects of the E-rate program are in political jeopardy. [Read more.](#)

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

Last week kicked off with the Inauguration of Donald J. Trump as the 47th President of the United States. Washington, DC, hosted thousands of supporters for ceremonies that were moved indoors, at both the US Capitol and later at the Capital One Arena, due to frigid temperatures. President Trump wasted no time getting to work and began [signing Executive Orders](#) (EOs) on stage at the arena. He continued to do the same from the White House throughout the week, in addition to granting hundreds of pardons. (The White House has listed its Executive Orders chronologically [here.](#))

Advocates for every cause are reading the EOs and trying to decipher what they mean for the organizations and interests they support. As of week's end, there were far more questions than answers, but much anxiety. Of particular concern is the Order concerning DEI initiatives. While the Department of Education [announced](#) what it had done to comply, many educators, institutions and organizations are concerned about consequences across the federal government and [in the private sector](#) in coming weeks and months.

On Capitol Hill, the Senate continues to work through President Trump's [cabinet nominations](#). Secretary of State Marco Rubio was the first confirmation, and education advocates expect nominee Linda McMahon to have her hearing before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee in early February. This week, the panel [is hosting](#) Health and Human Services nominee Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. Secretary while Labor nominee and former Oregon Representative Lori Chavez-DeRemer should have her hearing in February as well.

In the House, Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) continues to develop a strategy for enacting Trump priorities via a reconciliation package. The Education and Workforce Committee is expected to be responsible for significant savings in that process; [the program considerations](#) have been reported by the press and focus mostly on higher education and student aid programs. While [House leadership told the press that they will pursue one bill](#) this week, that strategy is a complicated one and Senate colleagues and others question whether that aspiration is realistic. House Republicans will be at a three-day retreat this week to further develop their plans.

As for spending, there was news of progress on resolving FY 2025 spending last week. In fact, an agreement could be unveiled as soon as this week—weeks ahead of the mid-March expiration of the current continuing resolution. It was reported that Congressional Republican leadership is considering an FY 2025 spending package that would include government funding, California wildfire aid, an increase in the country's debt limit and border security money. Each of those elements could have detractors—on both sides of the aisle, so it remains to be seen what might be in an initial offer to Democrats as Congress continues to try to resolve FY 2025 spending.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

Potential cuts to funding, shifts in DEI priorities, and the evolving role of the Department of Education will require school boards to remain vigilant, advocate for their needs, and adapt to any policy changes that emerge in the coming months. Close collaboration with state and local governments, as well as education advocacy groups, will be crucial to navigating these challenges. The DEI-related EO, combined with potential changes to higher education funding and student aid, highlights the critical role State School Board Associations could play in navigating these federal shifts, as they will likely be at the forefront of interpreting and implementing policies while addressing local concerns.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

ED INVITES FISCAL YEAR 2025 SEED PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATIONS

Last week, before this week's Inauguration, the Department of Education (ED) **announced** the availability of applications for the fiscal year 2025 **Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) program**. The SEED program aims to enhance the number of highly effective educators by funding the implementation of evidence-based practices that prepare, develop, or enhance educators' skills. This initiative emphasizes comprehensive, high-quality pathways such as residency, Grow Your Own, and registered apprenticeship programs to build and retain a diverse educator workforce. Research indicates that teachers participating in such pathways are more likely to remain in the profession and demonstrate increased effectiveness compared to those with less comprehensive preparation. ED highlights the importance of a diverse educator workforce, noting that all students benefit from having teachers of color. Exposure to teachers sharing students' racial or ethnic backgrounds positively impacts academic and social achievement, attendance, graduation rates, and college enrollment. Despite these benefits, only about one in five teachers are people of color, while over half of K-12 public school students are from diverse backgrounds. To address these disparities, the SEED program encourages projects that promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity. Applicants are urged to prepare teachers to create inclusive, supportive, equitable, unbiased, and identity-safe learning environments that meet students' social, emotional, and academic needs. Additionally, the Department plans to conduct informational webinars to provide technical assistance to interested applicants approximately two weeks after the notice's publication. It should be noted that the announcement came just as the Biden Administration was leaving and before the Trump Administration began its anti-DEI efforts this week. While the official **Federal Register notice** details the program and timelines for applying, any reference to this open solicitation has disappeared from ED's website.

GAO REPORT HIGHLIGHTS HEAD START OVERSIGHT FAILURES

A **new report** from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released Tuesday asserts that the Office of Head Start (OHS), part of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), has failed to adequately monitor programs placed under temporary management, potentially endangering children. As of September 18, 2024, 18 out of the 1,300 Head Start programs nationwide were under interim management, a system used when programs lose their ability to operate. However, the GAO found that OHS has not effectively monitored these programs for at least five years, despite the interim manager receiving approximately \$50 million in contract funds

and \$487 million in grant funding between 2017 and 2022. The GAO has issued seven recommendations for HHS to improve its oversight procedures to meet federal obligations under the Head Start Act. House Education and Workforce Committee Chair Tim Walberg (R-MI) **criticized** what he considers to be the lack of accountability, stating, “Head Start programs are supposed to support our country’s neediest children — instead, we find these programs endanger the safety and wellbeing of those they are meant to help.” Walberg called for immediate action to address the oversight failures and ensure taxpayer funds are properly managed to protect vulnerable children.

HELP COMMITTEE SETS LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR 119TH CONGRESS

On Tuesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee **convened for an organizing hearing** to kick off the 119th Congress. The hearing focused on adopting committee rules and outlining the legislative priorities of Chairman Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and Ranking Member Bernie Sanders (I-VT). While both leaders highlighted shared concerns such as prescription drug pricing, education reform, and healthcare access, they presented differing approaches to addressing these issues. On education policy, Cassidy described the U.S. education crisis as a critical concern, citing that two-thirds of public-school students cannot read proficiently by 4th grade, a problem linked to lower graduation rates and higher incarceration rates. He highlighted the need to address dyslexia—a longtime cause of his, which affects 20% of the population, by fostering local and state partnerships to implement effective interventions. Additional priorities outlined by Cassidy included combating antisemitism on college campuses, protecting gig workers, and pursuing reforms in pension security and healthcare systems. Cassidy concluded by urging bipartisan collaboration to advance these objectives. Ranking Member Sanders highlighted the importance of reauthorizing key legislative measures, such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which failed to get passed in the final days of the 118th Congress. Emphasizing the need to build on the previous year’s progress, Sanders called for swift, decisive action to tackle these critical issues. The hearing set the stage for a robust legislative session, with both leaders emphasizing the urgency of addressing challenges in education, healthcare, and labor while expressing a willingness to work together to achieve meaningful reforms.

FORMER SECRETARIES OF EDUCATION SHARE INSIGHTS ON ED’S FUTURE

On Tuesday, the Brookings Institution's Brown Center on Education Policy **hosted a webinar** featuring former US Secretaries of Education Arne Duncan, John King, and Margaret Spellings. The discussion explored the future of the Department of Education (ED) under the Trump administration, which has proposed significant shifts in federal involvement in education. While the speakers expressed cautious optimism about some key appointments, they raised concerns about vulnerable student populations and potential rollbacks of federal protections. The panel emphasized ED’s responsibility to safeguard civil rights, particularly through its Office of Civil Rights (OCR). They stressed the importance of ensuring that Title I funding effectively supports disadvantaged communities. Additionally, concerns were raised about President Trump’s immigration policies, especially their impact on undocumented students, including those under DACA. The fear of deportation, they noted, could lead to increased absenteeism and disengagement in schools, potentially undermining these students’ educational outcomes. Addressing public confidence in ED, the panel attributed low trust to political influences and poor public service experiences. They proposed enhancing interagency collaboration, particularly

between the Education, Treasury, and Labor Departments, to improve efficiency and outcomes. The speakers also debated the potential of redistributing federal education programs across agencies, stressing that program quality must remain a priority. Looking forward, the speakers advocated for fostering interest among young people in public service, suggesting programs like loan forgiveness to attract nonpartisan civil servants. They highlighted the private sector's role in attracting global talent but acknowledged the potential challenges of public-private collaboration. The webinar framed education as a cornerstone of the civil rights agenda, emphasizing its role as both a tool for societal progress and a safeguard against future challenges. The speakers underscored the importance of a robust education system as a national priority, vital for ensuring equity, opportunity, and resilience in the years ahead.

ED ANNOUNCES INCOMING TRUMP-VANCE SENIOR APPOINTEES

On Thursday, the Department of Education unveiled a senior team of political appointees tasked with implementing President Donald Trump's vision for education in the United States. Key appointments include Rachel Oglesby as Chief of Staff, Jonathan Pidluzny as Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Programs, and Chase Forrester as Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations. The appointees have backgrounds in policy, law, education, and communications, with experience spanning federal, state, and academic institutions. The new leadership aims to prioritize initiatives such as promoting parental choice, addressing learning loss from the pandemic, and supporting classical education and school choice policies. Furthermore, Penny Schwinn, former Tennessee Education Commissioner, is under consideration for Deputy Secretary. She is recognized for her focus on literacy and evidence-based approaches, including launching statewide tutoring programs and revamping reading instruction. While her nomination has drawn support for her experience in advancing student achievement, she faces criticism over perceived government overreach during her time in Tennessee and opposition to progressive educational policies. The new senior ED team will focus on a broader agenda to challenge critical race theory, DEI initiatives, and "gender cultism" in schools while bolstering school choice and private sector engagement.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF TRUMP'S EARLY EXECUTIVE ORDERS ON EDUCATION

On Thursday, *POLITICO* hosted a discussion with policy experts on the executive orders issued during the early days of Donald Trump's administration, focusing on their potential implications and challenges of implementation. Among the wide-ranging topics, significant attention was given to the executive orders targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, particularly their impacts on federal departments and educational institutions. Trump's rollback of DEI policies in education has created uncertainty regarding funding and enforcement mechanisms. One major area of concern is the administration's efforts to redefine gender in education policy, which could significantly affect funding, student protections, and inclusivity initiatives in schools. While the immediate changes appear limited, the long-term implications for federal education programs and compliance requirements remain unclear. The panel also addressed other key executive orders, including national emergency declarations on energy and border security, immigration policies, and trade relations. Trump's declaration of a national energy emergency, which involves rolling back wind power projects, has sparked potential legal challenges from environmental groups. One panelist argued that the declaration lacks justification, citing record-high energy production. On immigration, the experts discussed Trump's national border emergency declaration aimed at redirecting resources and enhancing border enforcement. Plans to involve military personnel, reinstate Title 42, and propose changes to birthright citizenship

were highlighted as contentious. Legal hurdles, congressional opposition, and resource constraints are expected to complicate implementation. Trade policies were also examined, including the administration's evolving stance on China and potential new tariffs. Questions remain about the operational feasibility of mass deportation plans and labeling cartels as terrorist organizations. As Trump's administration advances its agenda, POLITICO's experts emphasized the need to monitor responses from educators, policymakers, and environmental groups. With tight deadlines, such as the February 1 Canada-Mexico trade negotiations, and pending cabinet appointments, rapid developments are anticipated in the coming weeks.

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE SETS TONE FOR 119TH CONGRESS

On Thursday, the House Appropriations Committee convened an organizational meeting to address committee rules and subcommittee jurisdictions. Chairman Tom Cole (R-OK) underscored the importance of a regular, organized order for the Appropriations Committee, emphasizing the need for all spending bills to be negotiated and voted on individually, with bipartisan cooperation as a cornerstone. Citing what he considers to be "the mandate" provided by President Trump's recent electoral victory, Cole assured Americans that the Committee would serve as "responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars." He praised Representative Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL), who will serve as Vice Chair for the 119th Congress, before yielding to Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), whom he described as a "force of nature." Ranking Member DeLauro focused on the need to avoid governing by continuing resolutions and reiterated her commitment to preventing government shutdowns. She also announced the new Democratic members of the Appropriations Committee. During the meeting, the Committee approved rules that remained largely unchanged from the 118th Congress. Additionally, the Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs was renamed to the Subcommittee on National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs to reflect its scope of work more accurately. The meeting set a collaborative tone for the 119th Congress, with both parties expressing shared goals of fiscal responsibility and adherence to a formalized appropriations process.

TRUMP DISBANDS SCHOOL SAFETY ADVISORY BOARD

This week, the Trump administration disbanded the Federal School Safety Clearinghouse External Advisory Board, which was formed to advise federal agencies on best practices for protecting students. Established after the 2018 Parkland school shooting and codified into law under the 2022 *Bipartisan Safer Communities Act*, the board included school safety experts, civil rights advocates, disability rights groups, and parents of shooting victims. Board members were informed of the decision through a memo from Acting Homeland Security Secretary Benjamin Huffman, citing a directive to dissolve all external advisory committees under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as part of a broader effort to refocus resources on national security priorities. Advocates, including Tony Montalto of Stand With Parkland, expressed disappointment, emphasizing that schools represent critical infrastructure requiring expert guidance on safety. The board had met just once, beginning to set priorities and form committees. Civil rights advocates, like Liz King of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, stressed the importance of diverse perspectives in crafting evidence-based safety strategies that avoid unintended consequences, such as profiling or the over-policing of students with disabilities. The future of the school safety board remains unclear, as DHS has not directly addressed whether

it will be reassembled. Advocates hope to see its reinstatement, calling school safety a nonpartisan issue requiring collaboration and expertise to protect every child in schools.

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4. New Publications

Testing Theories of Why: Four Keys to Interpreting US Student Achievement Trends

American Enterprise Institute (January 2025)

This report examines recent trends in US student achievement, as measured by national and international assessments, and identifies four key trends to consider when evaluating recent US student performance.

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5. In the News

'Budget Reconciliation' Sounds Like Wonspeak. But It Matters for Schools

Education Week (January 21, 2025)

Schools No Longer Protected from Immigration Raids

K-12 Dive (January 21, 2025)

Trump Names Acting Education Secretary Ahead of Linda McMahon's Confirmation

Education Week (January 20, 2025)

SCOTUS To Hear Case On LGBTQ+ Inclusive Curriculum Opt-Outs

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Florida Has A New U.S. Senator. She Says Schools Should Not Be 'Woke.'

Tampa Bay Times (January 17, 2025)

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The 74 (January 17, 2025)

School Cellphone Bans Keep Bipartisan Momentum

Axios (January 16, 2025)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Wednesday, January 29, 2025

Markup: Senate Judiciary Committee

Subject: The Senate Judiciary Committee will hold a markup to vote on the nomination of Pamela Bondi, of Florida, to be Attorney General, Department of Justice.

Time: 9:00 a.m.

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

Hearing: Senate HELP Committee on HHS Nominee

Subject: The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee will hold a hearing on the nomination of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to be secretary of Health and Human Services.

Time: 10:00 a.m.

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

Hearing: Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation on Commerce Secretary

Subject: The Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee will hold a hearing on the nomination of Howard Lutnick to be Secretary of Commerce.

Time: 10:00 a.m.

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

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7. Future Hearings and Events

Tuesday, February 4, 2025

Webinar: Creating a Blueprint for America's Workforce

Subject: The Bipartisan Policy Center will hold a summit on "America's Workforce: Creating a Blueprint for the Future."

Participants: Margret Spellings, president and CEO, Bipartisan Policy Center; Bill Haslem, governor of Tennessee; Deval Patrick, former governor of Massachusetts; Amna Nawaz, co-anchor, PBS NewsHour; Tim Walberg (R-MI), chair, House Committee on Education and Workforce; Katie Jenner, Indiana Secretary of Education; and others.

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

Wednesday, February 5, 2025

Webinar: Future of College Admissions

Subject: The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research will hold a discussion on "The Future of College Admissions."

Participants: Edward Blum, president, Students for Fair Admissions; and Frederick Hess, director of education policy studies, AEI.

Time: 4:30 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

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8. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor:

- Consider the nomination of Scott Bessent, of South Carolina, to be Secretary of the Treasury
- Consider the nomination of Sean Duffy, of Wisconsin, to be Secretary of Transportation

House Floor: In recess.

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

[U.S. House and Senate 2025 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](#)

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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

For more information, please visit our [website](#).

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