



## 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:**

### **COSSBA LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY ITEMS** – Actions and items COSSBA has taken to advance our policy goals:

- **COSSBA Letter to Senate Appropriators, July 30** – Advocating for full and adequate funding in Senate Appropriations.
- **COSSBA Letter to House Appropriators, September 8** – Sharing concerns over House appropriations bill and urging a bipartisan process following the Senate's decision to fund public schools.

#### **1. News, Publications, & Updates on COSSBA Policy Priorities**

- **Funding**

- **House Appropriators Advance FY 2026 LHHS-ED Bill, Major Education Cuts**: On Tuesday evening, the House Appropriations Committee approved the fiscal year 2026 Labor-Health and Human Services Appropriations bill by a party-line vote of 35–28.
- **Education Department Publishes Final Supplemental Grant Priorities**: On Tuesday, the Department of Education published final supplemental priorities that will take effect October 9 and are designed for use in current or future discretionary grant programs.
- **Education Department Announces FY25 Grant Applications**: On Friday, The Department of Education announced two Fiscal Year 2025

competitions under the Education Innovation and Research (EIR)  
Program: Expansion Grants and Mid-Phase Grants.

2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**

- **Impact on State School Board Associations**

3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**

- **Pres. Trump Launches New Commission, Pledges School Prayer Protections:** On Monday, President Donald Trump delivered remarks at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., focusing on education and what he called “grave threats” to religious liberty in U.S. schools.
- **ED, DOL Announce Steps to Integrate Workforce Portfolio:** On Monday, the Departments of Education (ED) and Labor (DOL) announced steps to integrate the federal government’s workforce portfolio under their recently established partnership.
- **AEI Examines Leveled Reading in U.S. Classrooms:** On Monday, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) hosted a web event with Dr. Timothy Shanahan, Professor Emeritus at the University of Illinois at Chicago.
- **NCES Releases New Math, Reading, Science Scores:** On Tuesday, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) showing historic declines in math, reading, and science scores among the nation’s eighth and twelfth graders.
- **MAHA Commission Unveils Sweeping Childhood Health Strategy:** On Tuesday, the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) Commission released the *Make Our Children Healthy Again Strategy*, a comprehensive plan with more than 120 initiatives to reverse policies that the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) believes have fueled America’s childhood chronic disease epidemic.
- **Attorney General Bondi Issues Memo on Parental Rights:** On Tuesday, U.S. Attorney General Pamela Bondi issued a memo to FBI Director Kash Patel, the Civil Rights Division, and all 93 U.S. Attorneys entitled “Upholding Constitutional Rights and Parental Authority in America’s Education System.”
- **Partisan Divide Marks House Hearing on Antisemitism in K-12 Schools:** On Wednesday, the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education held a hearing titled, “From Playground to Classroom: The Spread of Antisemitism in K-12 Schools.”
- **Senate Probes AI Education and Workforce Readiness:** On Wednesday, the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Science, Manufacturing, and Competitiveness held a hearing titled, “*America’s AI Action Plan*” with Michael Kratsios, Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, as the sole witness.
- **Brookings Examines Active Playful Learning in U.S. Classrooms:** On Wednesday, the Brookings Institution hosted a webinar highlighting Active Playful Learning (APL)—a five-year research framework supported by the LEGO Foundation.

- **Fordham Institute Showcases New Study on Equitable Grading:** On Wednesday, The Fordham Institute held a webinar to explore the findings from their new study: “*Equitable*” *grading through the eyes of teachers*.

#### 4. **New Publications**

- **The MAHA Report**  
*The White House (September 2025)*  
This report is an effort to better understand the scope of the childhood chronic disease crisis, its underlying causes, and the systems that contribute to it. The assessment provides a shared scientific basis for identifying key drivers of childhood chronic disease and highlights where meaningful progress can be made.

#### 5. **In the News**

- **U.S. Department of Education Makes Historic Grant Investments in Programs that Bolster Educational Outcomes**  
*US Department of Education (September 15, 2025)*
- **Educators Join Lawsuit Challenging Trump Policy After ‘Violent ICE Enforcement’**  
*K-12 Dive (September 11, 2025)*
- **Judges Block Trump Policy Requiring Immigration Status Verification For Head Start**  
*K-12 Dive (September 11, 2025)*
- **Apprenticeships Aimed at Boosting Child Care Careers Have Been Flourishing**  
*The 74 Million (September 8, 2025)*
- **Why I’m Visiting Every State as Secretary of Education**  
*US Department of Education (September 8, 2025)*
- **FCC Proposal Would Disconnect School Bus Wi-Fi, Hotspots From E-Rate Coverage**  
*K-12 Dive (September 5, 2025)*
- **OpenAI Launches \$50 Million Fund To Support Nonprofits, Community Organizations**  
*Reuters (July 18, 2025)*

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

- **How Congressional and Administration Actions Are Affecting Education:** The Committee for Education Funding will hold a webinar on “How Congressional and Administration Actions Are Affecting Education.”  
*Tuesday at 2pm ET*
- **CDC Oversight and Implications for Children’s Health:** The Senate Committee on Health, Education Labor & Pensions will hold a hearing on “Restoring Trust through radical transparency: Reviewing Recent Events at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Implications for Children’s Health.”  
*Wednesday at 10am ET*
- **Expanded School Choice and Higher Education Alternatives:** The House Oversight and Government Reform Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and

Regulatory Affairs Subcommittee will hold a hearing on “Opening Doors to Opportunity: The Promise of Expanded School Choice and Alternatives to Four-Year College Degrees.”

*Wednesday at 10am ET*

- **The Future of Artificial Intelligence:** The House Oversight and Government Reform Oversight and Accountability Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation will hold a hearing on “Shaping Tomorrow: The Future of Artificial Intelligence.”

*Wednesday 10am ET*

- **2025 Reagan Institute Summit on Education:** The Regan Institute will hold their 2025 Summit on Education.

*Thursday at 8am ET*

- **Examining the State of K-12 Education:** The Senate Committee on Health, Education Labor & Pensions (HELP) will hold a hearing on The State of K-12 Education.

*Thursday at 10am ET*

## 7. **Future Hearings & Events**

- **The New Federal Education Tax Credit: Policy and Politics:** FutureEd will hold a webinar on the newly passed federal tax credit scholarship program.

*September 30 at 1pm ET*

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

### • **Senate floor**

- **S.Res.377** authorizing the en bloc consideration in Executive Session of certain nominations on the Executive Calendar
- **Consideration of nominations**

### • **House floor**

- **H.R. 1047** – Guaranteeing Reliability through the Interconnection of Dispatchable Power Act (Sponsored by Rep. Balderson / Energy & Commerce Committee)
- **H.R. 3062** – Promoting Cross-border Energy Infrastructure Act (Sponsored by Rep. Fedorchak / Energy & Commerce Committee)
- **H.R. 3015** – National Coal Council Reestablishment Act (Sponsored by Rep. Rulli / Energy & Commerce Committee)
- **H.R. 4922** – DC CRIMES Act of 2025 (Sponsored by Rep. Donalds / Oversight & Government Reform Committee)
- **H.R. 5143** – District of Columbia Policing Protection Act of 2025 (Sponsored by Rep. Higgins / Oversight & Government Reform Committee)
- **H.R. 5140** – To lower the age at which a minor may be tried as an adult for certain criminal offenses in the District of Columbia to 14 years of age. (Sponsored by Rep. Gill / Oversight & Government Reform Committee)
- **H.R. 5125** – District of Columbia Judicial Nominations Reform Act of 2025 (Sponsored by Rep. Sessions / Oversight & Government Reform Committee)

- Additional items are possible.

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

10. **About BPAG**

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1. **COSSBA Policy Priorities**

**FUNDING**

**HOUSE APPROPRIATORS ADVANCE FY 2026 LHHS-ED BILL, MAJOR EDUCATION CUTS**

On Tuesday evening, the House Appropriations Committee **approved the fiscal year 2026 Labor-Health and Human Services Appropriations bill** by a party-line vote of 35–28. The bill allocates \$66.7 billion for the Department of Education, a 15% reduction from FY25 funding levels. In K–12 education, Title I faces a \$5 billion (27%) cut—exceeding the President’s proposed reductions. The legislation also eliminates \$890 million for the Office of English Language Acquisition, aligning with the President’s recommendation to end support for English learner programs. For higher education, the maximum Pell Grant award of \$7,395 is maintained, but the bill eliminates SEOG and reduces Federal Work-Study by 37%. The Institute for Education Sciences is cut by 6% (\$52 million), while Departmental Management—including the Inspector General, Office for Civil Rights, and Program Administration—receives a 28% (\$180 million) cut. Programs receiving modest increases include Vocational Rehabilitation state grants (2%) and Career and Technical Education (2%). The bill also renames Workforce Pell Grants—recently created under the One Big Beautiful Bill—as “Trump Grants,” and rebrands AmeriCorps as the “America First Corps.” Three Democratic education-related amendments were adopted by voice vote: allowing parents of students under 16 to opt out of active shooter drills (Gluesenkamp-Perez); requiring timely funding for Hispanic-Serving Institutions and GEAR-UP (Cuellar); and preventing Job Corps closures without Department of Labor certification of no harm to youth or public safety (Underwood). However, all Democratic attempts to restore major funding cuts failed, despite some limited Republican crossover support. House Appropriations Chair Tom Cole R-OK) stated that the bill advances the “America First” agenda by eliminating or reducing more than 100 programs. Ranking Democrat Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) warned the cuts would remove 72,000 teachers from classrooms. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees have now passed very different proposals for investing in Education Department programs in FY26. The two bills will need to be negotiated before a final bill reaches President Trump’s desk. Congress is navigating the approaching end of FY25 and how to fund federal agencies after September 30<sup>th</sup>. It is assumed that leadership will try to pass a continuing resolution to keep federal programs running, but such an effort requires collaboration between Democrats and Republicans. The feasibility of such collaboration remains unclear.

**EDUCATION DEPARTMENT PUBLISHES FINAL SUPPLEMENTAL GRANT PRIORITIES**

On Tuesday, the Department of Education **published final supplemental priorities** that will take effect October 9 and are designed for use in current or future discretionary grant programs. They replace the Department’s **supplemental priorities published December 2021** and all other agency-wide priorities issued before January 20, 2025. The three priorities include: (1) Promoting Evidence-Based Literacy, (2) Expanding Education Choice, and (3) Returning Education to the States. Priority 1 emphasizes literacy instruction grounded in strong or moderate evidence, including elements such as phonological awareness, decoding, vocabulary, fluency,

comprehension, writing, and oral/sign language. Priority 2 supports expanding parents' and families' options—including school choice, charter schools, dual enrollment, educational savings accounts, and flexible instructional models. Lastly, priority 3 aims to grant states greater flexibility and decision-making power over education programs and reduce perceived federal overreach. The final rule reflects feedback from over 1,500 public comments, where many commenters supported focus areas like literacy and choice, while others expressed concern about removing priorities related to social and emotional learning (SEL), diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and that some student groups might be marginalized. The Department's announcement clarified that these priorities *do not* require use of particular curricula, that federal civil rights laws remain in force, and that applicants may still propose innovative or supplementary strategies (e.g., tutoring, early learning, materials beyond core literacy pillars) where permitted by the statute.

## **EDUCATION DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES FY25 EIR GRANT APPLICATIONS**

On Friday, The Department of Education announced two Fiscal Year 2025 competitions under the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) Program: [Expansion Grants](#) and [Mid-Phase Grants](#). Both programs support evidence-based innovations designed to improve educational outcomes for high-need students, with a central priority on promoting evidence-based literacy aligned with the science of reading. The Mid-Phase Grants are intended for practices that have already shown positive results in earlier-phase efforts or pilots, while the Expansion Grants are designed to scale proven interventions with strong evidence of effectiveness. The absolute and competitive priorities in the announcements reflect Secretary of Education Linda McMahon's competitive grant priorities, announced earlier this year. Across both competitions, approximately \$253 million is available in Fiscal Year 2025. Applications are due October 14, 2025, and intergovernmental review is due December 11, 2025. More information on these grants can be found [here](#).

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## **2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up**

Last week, the House Appropriations Committee approved its version of the Fiscal Year 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (LHHS) spending bill on a partisan vote. The package would provide about \$184.5 billion in discretionary funding for the agencies it funds, a level that reflects deep reductions and program eliminations across major education accounts. By contrast, the Senate Appropriations Committee advanced its own bipartisan LHHS bill earlier in the summer, which set funding levels closer to \$197–200 billion and generally sustained or modestly increased core federal education programs.

The differences between the two chambers' bills are stark. In the Senate, Title I grants for disadvantaged students receive a small increase of roughly \$50 million above the prior year, bringing the total to about \$18.46 billion. In the House bill, Title I funding is cut by an estimated \$4.7 billion, a reduction of roughly one-quarter. The Senate also maintains funding for Title II, which supports teacher professional development, while the House eliminates the program entirely. On Title IV, Part A—the Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants—both the Senate and House keep funding near the current level of \$1.4 billion; the House bill proposes a modest \$5 million increase for the program. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers—a program dedicated to afterschool and summer learning, would see level funding of about \$1.3 billion in both bills.



Career and technical education programs are treated a bit differently in the two bills. The Senate flat-funds the Perkins state grant program at about \$1.4 billion, whereas the House provides a modest increase of around \$25 million. In higher education, both chambers preserve the maximum Pell Grant award at \$7,395, continuing the same discretionary-mandatory funding mix as last year. Federal Work-Study and related campus aid programs, however, show sharper contrasts. The Senate maintains Work-Study at roughly \$1.2 billion and continues Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG). The House cuts Work-Study by about a third, to around \$779 million, and eliminates FSEOG altogether.

Lawmakers themselves highlighted the political and policy divides the two bills reveal. Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), the senior Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, argued, “Once again, this bill decimates support for public schools, students, and K-12 school teachers, and it abandons college students and lower income workers trying to gain an education or advance their career for their chance at the American Dream.” Committee Chair Tom Cole (R-OK) countered that “The legislation maintains funding for important education programs, such as TRIO and GEAR UP and Pell Grants. It supports rural hospitals, public health programs, and robust funding for biomedical research.”

Both chambers are in session this week but will be in recess the week of September 22<sup>nd</sup> to accommodate the Jewish holidays. When they return the following week, they will have very little time to act before midnight of September 30<sup>th</sup> is upon them. Leadership needs a plan—one that can win over Senate Democrats—before then.

### **How does this impact State School Board Associations?**

The FY 2026 process remains unsettled. None of the 12 annual spending bills have been enacted, and the House and Senate LHHS proposals illustrate just how far apart the chambers are on priorities. With the new fiscal year beginning October 1, a stopgap measure will almost certainly be needed to avoid a lapse in funding. The most likely path is a short-term continuing resolution that extends FY 2025 funding levels into the fall while negotiations continue. Another option under discussion is a longer stopgap through January 2026, which would give negotiators more time to strike deals. Lawmakers could also adopt a “minibus” or omnibus later in the year to resolve some or all the outstanding bills. Without agreement on any of these approaches, the federal government would face a partial shutdown when current funding expires, but recent history suggests a continuing resolution is the most probable near-term outcome.

For state school board associations, the uncertainty around FY 2026 appropriations might affect planning for federal education programs and grant funding. A short-term continuing resolution would maintain current FY 2025 funding levels for now, but delays in setting new priorities or potential program changes could create challenges for schools that rely on clear, stable federal support.

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### **3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington**

#### **PRESIDENT LAUNCHES NEW COMMISSION, PLEDGES SCHOOL PRAYER**

**PROTECTIONS** On Monday, President Donald Trump delivered remarks at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., focusing on education and what he called “grave threats” to religious liberty in U.S. schools. He formally introduced members of the newly established Religious Liberty

**Commission**—including Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick (R), former Housing Secretary Dr. Ben Carson, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, and Pastor Franklin Graham—to combat what he described as anti-Christian bias. “To have a great nation, you have to have religion. I believe that so strongly,” Trump said. The president announced that the Department of Education will soon issue new guidance protecting prayer in public schools. He also noted that more than 60 universities and colleges are under investigation for possible violations of civil rights and Title IX, which prohibits sex-based discrimination in federally funded education programs. Since the start of his second term, President Trump has advanced multiple initiatives targeting perceived bias against Christians in schools and workplaces, including a February task force and a May executive order creating the commission. In June, the IRS allowed churches and other houses of worship to endorse political candidates without losing their tax-exempt status. These actions have prompted constitutional questions about the separation of church and state. The event concluded with Housing Secretary Scott Turner leading a prayer “on behalf of President Trump and ultimately the Lord God Almighty,” and announcing a new initiative to gather Americans to pray for the nation.

### **ED, DOL ANNOUNCE STEPS TO INTEGRATE WORKFORCE PORTFOLIO**

On Monday, the Departments of Education (ED) and Labor (DOL) **announced** steps to integrate the federal government’s workforce portfolio under their recently established partnership. The agencies are launching a new, integrated state plan portal to streamline federal workforce development programs and jointly administer core Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs, including adult education and family literacy. To support this effort, ED will transfer program funds and detail staff to DOL, which will position DOL as the centralized hub for federal workforce programs. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon emphasized the Trump Administration’s commitment to expanding career opportunities, noting that the partnership will allow states to administer programs more efficiently. Secretary of Labor Lori Chavez-DeRemer highlighted the Administration’s focus on eliminating unnecessary bureaucracy and preparing Americans for high-paying jobs. The partnership builds on an **Interagency Agreement signed on May 21**, authorizing DOL to perform day-to-day administrative services for ED’s career and technical education (CTE) and WIOA Title II programs while ED retains policymaking and oversight responsibilities. These coordinated efforts are in response to **President Trump’s Executive Order on Preparing Americans for High-Paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future**. According to the press release, ED and DOL will continue to issue guidance as implementation moves forward.

### **AEI EVENT EXAMINES LEVELED READING IN U.S. CLASSROOMS**

On Monday, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) **hosted a web event** with Dr. Timothy Shanahan, Professor Emeritus at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The discussion, moderated by AEI’s Robert Pondiscio, focused on Dr. Shanahan’s new book, *Leveled Reading, Leveled Lives*, which critiques the widespread use of “leveled reading” in K–12 education. Dr. Shanahan outlined a research-based case against the practice, arguing it has contributed to stagnant literacy rates and declining international rankings. He presented evidence showing that most students are routinely assigned books below their actual reading level. While this approach may appear harmless, Shanahan contended it is inefficient and often harmful to literacy development, especially for struggling students. He emphasized that students make the greatest gains when challenged with complex texts and provided appropriate instructional support. The event also featured panelists Colleen Driggs and Kristen McQuillan, who reinforced the importance of moving away from the



idea that students should only read at their “instructional level.” Instead, they encouraged educators to adopt research-backed strategies—such as contextual instruction and repeated reading of complex texts—that foster fluency, automaticity, and deeper comprehension. A recording of the event is [here](#).

### **NCES RELEASES NEW MATH, READING, SCIENCE SCORES**

On Tuesday, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) [released data](#) from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) showing historic declines in math, reading, and science scores among the nation’s eighth and twelfth graders. The results mark some of the worst performance recorded in decades and extend a downward trend in academic achievement that began before the COVID-19 pandemic. For twelfth graders, the 2024 scores were especially troubling. Forty-five percent of high school seniors performed below the basic achievement level in math—the highest percentage since the test began in 2005—indicating difficulty with solving simple equations and calculating basic probabilities. On average, last year’s seniors scored lower in math than their peers in 2005 and lower in reading than seniors in 1992. Eighth-grade science scores also dropped significantly compared to 2019. Education Secretary Linda McMahon said the results demonstrate the need to change how the government funds education and reiterated her call to dismantle her agency. Acting NCES Commissioner Matthew Soldner expressed concern over the “trajectory” and “scope” of the declines. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics released [a statement on the results](#) pointing to a crisis in mathematics education, saying, in part, “With only 22% of seniors at or above NAEP Proficient and 45% below Basic, the nation must pivot from a singular focus on the top quartile to engaging all students in meaningful, real-world mathematics-backed by teacher support and system-level change.” Accompanying survey data provided context: 31% of twelfth graders reported missing three or more days of school in the previous month, up from 26% in 2019. Experts warned the findings suggest students are entering adulthood and the workforce with weaker academic foundations at a time when technological advancements demand stronger skills. A summary of the results can be found [here](#).

### **MAHA COMMISSION UNVEILS SWEEPING CHILDHOOD HEALTH STRATEGY**

On Tuesday, the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) Commission [released](#) the *Make Our Children Healthy Again Strategy*, a [comprehensive plan](#) with more than 120 initiatives to reverse policies that the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) believes have fueled America’s childhood chronic disease epidemic. Chaired by HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the Commission is tasked with investigating the root causes of the nation’s escalating health crisis, with a focus on childhood chronic disease. “The Trump Administration is mobilizing every part of government to confront the epidemic,” Kennedy said. “This strategy represents the most sweeping reform agenda in modern history—realigning our food and health systems, driving education, and unleashing science to protect America’s children and families.” Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins called the strategy “a historic milestone” and highlighted efforts such as removing artificial dyes from major brands, assisting states in restricting junk food and soda from SNAP, and piloting regenerative agriculture practices. EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin emphasized environmental health protections, while FDA Commissioner Dr. Marty Makary underscored a shift toward tackling root causes rather than reacting to chronic disease. NIH Director Dr. Jay Bhattacharya praised the blueprint as essential to ensuring future generations live healthier, longer lives. Following the announcement, Secretary Kennedy and Secretary of Education Linda McMahon [co-authored an opinion piece](#) in The Washington Post highlighting

the Trump administration's Make Our Children Healthy Again initiative, saying that it "seeks to eliminate threats to students' health and restore good habits and health-focused policies. Instead of therapy and diagnosis, our schools must return to the natural sources of mental well-being: strong families, nutrition and fitness, and hope for the future." On the newly announced strategy, Kennedy and McMahon highlight its intention to revive "the presidential fitness test for physical education, ensure school lunches are nutritious and contribute to students' mental health, and form a Health and Human Services working group to scrutinize overprescription of pharmaceuticals for child mental health. More on the comprehensive plan is here.

### **ATTORNEY GENERAL BONDI ISSUES MEMO ON PARENTAL RIGHTS**

On Tuesday, U.S. Attorney General Pamela Bondi issued a memo to FBI Director Kash Patel, the Civil Rights Division, and all 93 U.S. Attorneys entitled "Upholding Constitutional Rights and Parental Authority in America's Education System." The memo underscores the Justice Department's focus on parents' First Amendment rights and their authority to guide the moral and religious education of their children. Bondi highlighted what she described as a troubling trend in recent years, where government officials and school authorities not only introduced radical gender and racial ideologies into public education but also ignored, dismissed, or retaliated against parents who voiced objections. She referenced prior actions by the previous administration, which used a counterterrorism "threat tag" against parents at school board meetings, as an example of unlawful weaponization against dissent. The memo affirms that schools must maintain order but cannot use that authority as a pretext to silence opposition. The memo points to a parents' right to exempt their children from instruction conflicting with their sincerely held religious beliefs, warning that compelled exposure to certain content may violate federal protections. Bondi instructed the Civil Rights Division to monitor violations closely and directed U.S. Attorneys to work with federal, state, and local partners to identify and respond to credible threats or infringements on parents' rights. The memo can be viewed here.

### **PARTISAN DIVIDE MARKS HOUSE HEARING ON ANTISEMITISM IN K-12 SCHOOLS**

On Wednesday, the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education held a hearing titled, "From Playground to Classroom: The Spread of Antisemitism in K-12 Schools." Lawmakers clashed over the causes of antisemitism and the government's role in addressing it. Chairman Kevin Kiley (R-CA) argued antisemitism in schools is fueled by teacher training programs framing education through an "oppressor-oppressed" lens, teachers' unions promoting anti-Israel activism, and outside groups providing biased curricula. He faulted administrative inaction for forcing Jewish students to leave schools. Ranking Member Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) agreed antisemitism must be addressed but criticized the hearing as a partisan attack on public education. She cited white nationalism and extremist ties to the Trump Administration as the real threats, moving to subpoena White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller. Witnesses Nicole Neily (Parents Defending Education), Dr. Brandy Shufutinsky (Foundation for Defense of Democracies), and Rachel Lerman (Louis D. Brandeis Center) described partnerships between groups like the Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC) and school districts to promote antisemitic tropes, raising concerns over foreign funding and union actions such as the National Education Association's vote to cut ties with the Anti-Defamation League. In contrast, Rabbi Jill Jacobs (T'ruah) argued the administration was exploiting Jewish students' safety to advance an agenda against public education, urging investment in civil rights enforcement and DEI programs. Republicans emphasized ideological activism in schools, while

Democrats defended unions and blamed the weakening of the Office for Civil Rights. The hearing ended with a party-line vote (9-5) to table Bonamici's motion to subpoena Miller.

### **SENATE PROBES AI EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE READINESS**

On Wednesday, the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Science, Manufacturing, and Competitiveness held a hearing titled, "*America's AI Action Plan*" with Michael Kratsios, Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, as the sole witness. The discussion largely focused on how artificial intelligence intersects with education, workforce development, and U.S. competitiveness. Ranking Member Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) cautioned that attacks on scientists, educators, and students could weaken America's global position, questioning whether AI promises matter if federal research and education funding is reduced. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) highlighted bipartisan bills on AI education and training, stressing the need to "move in a very fast way" to maintain U.S. leadership. Kratsios noted the Administration's AI Education Task Force, chaired by the First Lady, and emphasized ongoing efforts in retraining, reskilling, and K-12 AI education. Senator Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE) pressed on aligning the AI Action Plan with Manufacturing USA programs, and Kratsios pointed to the plan's second pillar, which funds retraining and trades preparation to support infrastructure expansion. Senator Bernie Moreno (R-OH) underscored that "the last piece is people," asking how the U.S. would secure top researchers. Kratsios responded that the Departments of Labor, Education, and Commerce are coordinating on training and reskilling programs to build a pipeline across trades and STEM fields. Overall, senators examined how AI investments must strengthen education pipelines, STEM readiness, and reskilling efforts, while Kratsios reaffirmed the Administration's commitment to equipping Americans for the AI era.

### **BROOKINGS EXAMINES ACTIVE PLAYFUL LEARNING IN U.S. CLASSROOMS**

On Wednesday, the Brookings Institution hosted a webinar highlighting Active Playful Learning (APL)—a five-year research framework supported by the LEGO Foundation. APL seeks to move beyond traditional teacher-centered instruction toward student-centered, play-based experiences that complement, rather than compete with, academics. It is not a curriculum, but a framework that integrates six core competencies: Collaboration, Communication, Confidence, Creative Innovation, Critical Thinking, and Content. The initiative emphasizes joyful teaching, deeper learning, and authentic assessment through real-world projects and demonstrations. Multilingual students, for example, benefit from accelerated language acquisition by using body language and universal forms of play to communicate. Policymakers from Kansas, Massachusetts, and Connecticut shared strategies for statewide implementation: Kansas's *Kinders Can!* conference, Massachusetts's PreK–3 Playful Learning Institute requiring 25 hours of weekly lessons plus expert mentoring, and Connecticut's framework pairing PreK–K5 classrooms with administrator leadership cohorts. Educators from Texas, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Virginia reported APL's classroom impact, including greater engagement, inclusivity for English learners and students with disabilities, and maintained academic rigor. Key success factors include strong district and school leadership, active educator and student input, clear messaging that APL enhances academic excellence, and comprehensive coaching systems. Coaching emerged as especially critical, providing validation, collaboration, and reduced planning burdens for teachers. The webinar concluded by underscoring the historical role of play and relationships in education, while affirming APL's potential to transform classrooms by elevating both teacher and student voices in shaping learning.

## **FORDHAM INSTITUTE SHOWCASES NEW STUDY ON EQUITABLE GRADING**

On Wednesday, The Fordham Institute held a webinar to explore the findings from their new study: *“Equitable” grading through the eyes of teachers*. Recent shifts toward equitable grading—such as eliminating zeros, removing late penalties, and excluding homework from grade calculations—have sparked concern among educators and policy experts. While these practices are intended to promote fairness, critics argue they may obscure whether students are truly meeting academic standards. The study found that many students earning Bs or higher are not demonstrating grade-level mastery, creating a false sense of achievement for both students and parents. Bibb Hubbard of Learning Heroes noted that parents often rely on report cards as the primary signal of progress, yet only one-third of teachers feel supported in providing honest feedback. District and school leaders reportedly avoid confronting these issues directly, leaving principals to handle difficult conversations. Hubbard suggested parents ask students to explain what they are learning at grade level, though limited access to comparative data makes this challenging. On the policy side, Adam Tyner of the Fordham Institute highlighted that grades serve multiple purposes, from informing families to guiding college admissions. However, the rise of AI tools has undermined the reliability of homework, raising questions about traditional grading systems. Others, such as Adam Maier of TNTP, contended that grades should reflect actual academic achievement and serve as a catalyst for family discussions about learning. As schools continue to adjust in the post-pandemic era, the challenge remains clear: to ensure grading practices foster transparent communication, maintain high expectations, and promote equitable outcomes—without confusing parents or lowering academic standards. The webinar recording and the report can be found [here](#).

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### **4. New Publications**

#### **The MAHA Report**

*The White House* (September 2025)

This report is an effort to better understand the scope of the childhood chronic disease crisis, its underlying causes, and the systems that contribute to it. The assessment provides a shared scientific basis for identifying key drivers of childhood chronic disease and highlights where meaningful progress can be made.

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### **5. In the News**

#### **U.S. Department of Education Makes Historic Grant Investments in Programs that Bolster Educational Outcomes**

*US Department of Education* (September 15, 2025)

#### **Educators Join Lawsuit Challenging Trump Policy After ‘Violent ICE Enforcement’ K-12 Dive** (September 11, 2025)

#### **Judges Block Trump Policy Requiring Immigration Status Verification For Head Start K-12 Dive** (September 11, 2025)

#### **Apprenticeships Aimed at Boosting Child Care Careers Have Been Flourishing**

*The 74 Million (September 8, 2025)*

**Why I'm Visiting Every State as Secretary of Education**

*US Department of Education (September 8, 2025)*

**FCC Proposal Would Disconnect School Bus Wi-Fi, Hotspots From E-Rate Coverage**

*K-12 Dive (September 5, 2025)*

**OpenAI Launches \$50 Million Fund To Support Nonprofits, Community Organizations**

*Reuters (July 18, 2025)*

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## **THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON**

### **6. Weekly Calendar**

#### **Tuesday, September 16, 2025**

**Webinar: Education Funding**

**Subject:** The Committee for Education Funding will hold a webinar on “How Congressional and Administration Actions Are Affecting Education.”

**Participants:** Jared Bass, senior vice president for education, Center for American Progress; Bill Chapman, superintendent, London ISD, TX; Alex Delonis, assistant vice president of student financial services, Saint Louis University; and Horace Turner, owner, Horace Turner Child Care.

**Time:** 2:00 p.m. – 4:30p.m.

**Contact:** Register [here](#).

#### **Wednesday, September 17, 2025**

**Hearing: CDC Oversight and Implications for Children's Health**

**Subject:** The Senate Committee on Health, Education Labor & Pensions will hold a hearing on “Restoring Trust through radical transparency: Reviewing Recent Events at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Implications for Children's Health.”

**Time and Location:** 10:00 a.m.; 430 Dirksen Senate Office Building

**Contact:** Livestream [here](#).

**Hearing: Expanded School Choice and Higher Education Alternatives**

**Subject:** The House Oversight and Government Reform Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs Subcommittee will hold a hearing on “Opening Doors to Opportunity: The Promise of Expanded School Choice and Alternatives to Four-Year College Degrees.”

**Time and Location:** 10:00 a.m.; 2247 Rayburn House Office Building

**Contact:** Livestream [here](#).

**Hearing: The Future of Artificial Intelligence**

**Subject:** The House Oversight and Government Reform Oversight and Accountability Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation will hold a hearing on “Shaping Tomorrow: The Future of Artificial Intelligence.”

**Witnesses:** Kinsey Fabrizio, president, Consumer Technology Association; Samuel Hammond, chief economist, Foundation for American Innovation; and others.

**Time and Location:** 10:00 a.m.; 2247 Rayburn House Office Building

**Contact:** Livestream [here](#).

## **Thursday, September 18, 2025**

### **Event: 2025 Reagan Institute Summit on Education**

**Subject:** The Regan Institute will hold their 2025 Summit on Education.

**Participants:** Governor Mike Dunleavy (R-AK); Katie Jenner, Indiana Secretary of Education; Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA); Governor Kevin Stitt (R-OK); and others.

**Time:** 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

**Contact:** Register [here](#).

### **Hearing: Examining the State of K-12 Education**

**Subject:** The Senate Committee on Health, Education Labor & Pensions (HELP) will hold a hearing on The State of K-12 Education.

**Time and Location:** 10:00 a.m.; 430 Dirksen Senate Office Building

**Contact:** Livestream available [here](#).

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## **7. Future Hearings and Events**

### **Tuesday, September 30, 2025**

#### **Event: The New Federal Education Tax Credit: Policy and Politics**

**Subject:** FutureEd will hold a webinar on the newly passed federal tax credit scholarship program.

**Participants:** Thomas Toch, director, FutureEd; and others.

**Time:** 1:00 p.m.

**Contact:** Register [here](#).

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

### **Senate Floor:**

**S.Res.377** authorizing the en bloc consideration in Executive Session of certain nominations on the Executive Calendar  
Consideration of nominations

### **House Floor:**

**H.R. 1047** – Guaranteeing Reliability through the Interconnection of Dispatchable Power Act (*Sponsored by Rep. Balderson / Energy & Commerce Committee*)

**H.R. 3062** – Promoting Cross-border Energy Infrastructure Act (*Sponsored by Rep. Fedorchak / Energy & Commerce Committee*)

**H.R. 3015** – National Coal Council Reestablishment Act (*Sponsored by Rep. Rulli / Energy & Commerce Committee*)



**H.R. 4922** – DC CRIMES Act of 2025 (*Sponsored by Rep. Donalds / Oversight & Government Reform Committee*)

**H.R. 5143** – District of Columbia Policing Protection Act of 2025 (*Sponsored by Rep. Higgins / Oversight & Government Reform Committee*)

**H.R. 5140** – To lower the age at which a minor may be tried as an adult for certain criminal offenses in the District of Columbia to 14 years of age. (*Sponsored by Rep. Gill / Oversight & Government Reform Committee*)

**H.R. 5125** – District of Columbia Judicial Nominations Reform Act of 2025 (*Sponsored by Rep. Sessions / Oversight & Government Reform Committee*)  
*Additional items are possible.*

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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](#)

[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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