



## 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**

- **Funding**

- **CEF Hosts Panel Highlighting Impact of Federal Education**

- Investments:** The Committee for Education Funding (CEF) hosted a briefing on Wednesday titled, “The Value and Importance of Federal Investments in Education.”

- **School Nutrition**

- **USDA Cancels \$1B In Local Food Purchasing for Schools:** The Agriculture Department has cut two programs that gave schools and food banks money to buy food from local farms and ranchers, halting more than \$1 billion in federal spending.

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

- **Impact on State School Board Associations**

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

- **Judge Orders Rehiring of Federal ED Employees Amid Layoff Battle:** On Tuesday, Department of Education (ED) Secretary Linda McMahon announced that the ED would move forward with laying off nearly half of its federal workforce as part of a sweeping “reduction in force.” However, in a significant legal reversal, a federal judge ordered the mass reinstatement of fired federal workers across multiple agencies, including the ED.

- **House K-12 Panel Examines Choice Benefits, Challenges:** On Tuesday, the House Education and Workforce Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee held a hearing titled, “Education Without Limits: Exploring the Benefits of School Choice.”
- **Senate Judiciary Holds Hearing on Child Online Safety, Role of Big Tech:** On Tuesday, the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Counterterrorism held a hearing on the STOP CSAM Act, focusing on child online safety and the role of tech companies in combating child sexual abuse material (CSAM).
- **Education Week Shares Insights on Future of AI in Education:** On Wednesday, *Education Week’s* hosted an event titled, "Shaping the Future of AI in Education: A Panel for K-12 Leaders," which explored the current and future role of AI in education, professional development for educators, and the ethical considerations surrounding AI usage.
- **Google, ISTE Hold Webinar Framing AI as Foundational Literacy:** On Wednesday, Google, and the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) hosted a webinar titled, "AI Literacy as a Foundational Literacy," discussing the increasing importance of AI literacy in K-12 education.

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

- **Instruction About Social and Political Topics in K-12 Public Schools**  
*RAND (March 2025)*  
The report presents findings from a survey administered in January and February 2024 to teachers across the United States that asked teachers about their instruction on social and political topics, including those that are and are not subject to state restrictions.

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

- **Trump Admin. Backs Catholic Charter, LGBTQ+ Lesson Opt-Outs in Supreme Court**  
*Education Week (March 13, 2025)*
- **Teacher Training Grants Temporarily Reinstated In 8 States**  
*K-12 Dive (March 13, 2025)*
- **Democrats Unveil School Lunch Debt Cancellation Measure**  
*The Hill (March 13, 2025)*
- **With Half of its Staff Cut, Many Wonder How Ed Dept. Will Function**  
*The 74 (March 12, 2025)*
- **Trump Takes Aim at the Department of Education**  
*The New York Times (March 10, 2025)*

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

- **Learning From Louisiana’s Progress in K-12 Education:** The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI) will hold a virtual discussion on "What Can We Learn from Louisiana's Progress in K-12 Education?"  
*Wednesday at 4pm ET*
- **Employer-Sponsored Work-based STEM Learning Programs:** STEMConnector will hold a webinar on “Employer-Sponsored Work-Based Learning Programs—Driving STEM Outcomes.”

*Thursday at 2pm ET*

7. **Future Hearings & Events**

- **Role of Education in Quest for America's AI Dominance:** Washington Post Live will hold a virtual discussion on "America's Quest for AI Dominance," including the role of education in America's competitiveness.  
*March 24 at 10am ET*
- **Child Welfare Priorities of the Trump Administration:** The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI) will hold a virtual discussion on "Putting Children First: Child Welfare Priorities for the New Administration."  
*March 31 at 4pm ET*
- **Revamping Classroom Instruction:** The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI) will hold a virtual discussion on "School Rethink 2.0: Revamping Classroom Instruction."  
*April 1 at 4pm ET*

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

- The House and Senate are in recess.

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

10. **About BPAG**

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1. **COSSBA Policy Priorities**

**FUNDING**

**CEF HOSTS PANEL HIGHLIGHTING IMPACT OF FEDERAL EDUCATION INVESTMENTS**

The **Committee for Education Funding** (CEF) hosted a briefing on Wednesday titled, "The Value and Importance of Federal Investments in Education." The panel included three speakers from state and local school districts who testified to the impact of federal dollars in helping their respective communities' students succeed. Sarah Abernathy, Executive Director of CEF, opened the session by acknowledging the rapid changes happening across the federal education space, highlighting **recent decisions** by the Department of Education (ED) to lay off 50% of its federal workforce. Abernathy provided surveys and research showing overwhelming public opinion against eliminating the Department and how higher educational attainment leads to higher wages and employment rates for students. After overviewing CEF's "**Don't Flunk the Future**" campaign, Abernathy opened the floor to the speakers which included: Jonathan Moody, the Superintendent of Maine School Administrative District 54; Richard Kincaid, the Senior Executive Director of College and Career Pathways at Maryland's State Department of Education; and Jeff Cullen, the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Federal Relations of California State University. Moody spoke at length about the challenges faced by rural school districts, like the one he leads, which rely on federal funding to meet critical student needs. He highlighted summer school programs, part-time teacher assistants, and special education classrooms, which all receive federal funding to support their operations. Kincaid emphasized the unparalleled return on investment seen by federal dollars when specifically devoted to CTE and career planning programs. He spoke about the need to tie federal funding to "career-connected learning opportunities" where students have access to apprenticeships, flexible schedules, and technical majors in secondary education. Cullen

ended the session by turning to the impact of federal investments on higher education. The featured panelists overwhelmingly agreed that, despite recent rhetoric, federal dollars from the ED are critical to both student and teacher success.

## **SCHOOL NUTRITION**

### **USDA CANCELS \$1B IN LOCAL FOOD PURCHASING FOR SCHOOLS**

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has eliminated two programs that provided over \$1 billion in federal funding for schools and food banks to purchase food from local farms, citing a shift in agency priorities. The [Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program](#), which was set to distribute \$660 million in 2025, has been canceled, impacting agreements in more than 40 states. Similarly, the [Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program](#), which supports food banks, will not receive additional funding for fiscal year 2025. The Biden administration had expanded these initiatives to create a more resilient food supply chain, but the Trump administration has now reversed course. USDA stated that previously allocated funds under earlier agreements would remain available but that new agreements would be terminated. The cuts come as schools struggle with rising food costs, and critics, including Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey, argue that the decision will harm families and farmers nationwide. [Read more here.](#)

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

As of mid-day Friday, the country was once again facing a potential federal government shutdown. Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 began October 1, 2024, but neither the 118<sup>th</sup> nor the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress have passed legislation to fund the federal government for the year, but that changed over the weekend.

Earlier last week, the House passed a continuing resolution (CR) that would fund the government through the end of the fiscal year and promptly left Washington, DC. The CR basically keeps all government funding – with a few exceptions – at FY 2024 levels through the end of FY 2025. The government has been operating at that level since the start of FY 2025. [According to House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro \(D-CT\)](#), the bill provides \$15 billion less for non-defense programs and \$3 billion less for defense programs than the levels set by the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023.

House lawmakers left town after passing the bill, increasing pressure on the Senate to pass their plan or force a shutdown. While a number of Senate Democrats voiced strong opposition to the bill, on Thursday, Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) signaled that when facing the prospect of opposing the bill to fight for changes or letting it pass to avoid a shutdown, he begrudgingly favored the latter. Minority Leader Schumer's stance on the matter ultimately led to enough Democrats supporting the House-passed CR and sending it to President Trump's desk for signature Saturday, preventing a partial government shutdown that would have taken effect Monday. [President Donald Trump took to social media](#) to praise Senator Schumer for "doing the right thing." Schumer's decision drew criticism from figures like Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) and former Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA).

The House and Senate are in recess this week. It's the Senate's first recess of the year, as it has been working to confirm cabinet leadership for the White House. When Congress returns the week

of March 24<sup>th</sup>, each chamber will turn to FY 2026 spending and budget reconciliation legislation that will support President Trump's campaign promises.

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

All but one House Democrat voted against the Continuing Resolution, objecting to the way the bill gives more flexibility to the Administration about program funding levels. The legislation lacks the congressional guidance that has historically accompanied other full-year funding bills. While it looks like Title I will be level funded in the bill, Title II doesn't have a specified level. That lack of specificity makes teacher groups nervous, since the House Republican spending package for the year gutted Title II and all programs that support teachers. It looks like investments in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program will remain level, but higher education advocates are anxious about their programs, which don't have specified levels. Advocates will be following the implementation of the law closely, although Secretary of Education Linda McMahon's move to eliminate almost half of the staff at the Department of Education doesn't soothe any nerves on that front.

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

#### **JUDGE ORDERS REHIRING OF FEDERAL ED EMPLOYEES AMID LAYOFF BATTLE**

On Tuesday, Department of Education (ED) Secretary Linda McMahon **announced** that the ED would move forward with laying off nearly half of its federal workforce as part of a sweeping "reduction in force." The move placed 1,950 civil servants—47.1% of the Department's 4,133 staff—on administrative leave starting March 21. An organization chart showing the office and staff cuts obtained by several reporters **is here**. Secretary McMahon framed the decision as an effort to improve efficiency and accountability, ensuring that resources were "directed where they matter most." The layoffs **affected nearly every office within the ED**, with the Institute of Education Sciences, Federal Student Aid, and the Office for Civil Rights experiencing the most significant cuts. ED noted that 600 employees had accepted voluntary resignation opportunities. In response, demonstrators protested outside the ED as dismissal letters were delivered late Tuesday night. However, in a significant legal reversal, a federal judge **ordered** the mass reinstatement of fired federal workers across multiple agencies, including the Department of Education. U.S. District Judge James Breder ruled that the Trump administration's large-scale terminations violated federal law and regulations, particularly for failing to provide the required 60-day notice to state governments. The ruling, issued on Thursday night, followed an earlier decision from a separate federal judge that similarly blocked terminations in six Cabinet departments. Judge Breder criticized the administration for falsely attributing the terminations to "performance" issues, instead concluding they were unauthorized reductions in force. While the order mandates the reinstatement of probationary employees across 18 federal agencies, it does not apply to the Department of Defense, the Office of Personnel Management, or the National Archives due to insufficient evidence presented in the case. This legal challenge marks a major setback for the Trump administration's federal workforce reduction plan, with additional legal battles expected as the administration pushes back against efforts to overturn the firings.

## **HOUSE K-12 PANEL EXAMINES SCHOOL CHOICE BENEFITS, CHALLENGES**

On Tuesday, the House Education and Workforce Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee held a hearing titled, “Education Without Limits: Exploring the Benefits of School Choice.” The discussion focused on school choice policies, including charter schools, vouchers, and education savings accounts (ESAs), examining their impact on educational outcomes, funding, and regulatory oversight. Chairman Kevin Kiley (R-CA) and Republican members presented school choice as a solution to declining academic performance nationwide, arguing that increased competition improves public schools. Witnesses, such as Walter Blanks Jr. from the American Federation for Children and Jenny Clark of Love Your School, testified that school choice expands opportunities, particularly benefiting students with disabilities. They cited studies demonstrating improved educational outcomes and greater parental satisfaction in choice programs. Democrats, led by Ranking Member Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), countered that diverting public funds to private schools through vouchers and ESAs undermines public education. Jessica Levin of the Education Law Center argued that these programs often lack oversight, disproportionately benefit wealthier families, and fail to equitably serve students with disabilities. Democrats emphasized that public education funding should be prioritized over expanding privatization efforts. Key topics included the effectiveness of charter schools, concerns over for-profit school operators, the impact of school choice on rural communities, and federal oversight of voucher programs. While Republicans advocated for expanding ESAs and charter school grants, Democrats warned of potential negative consequences for public school funding and accountability. The hearing concluded with continued partisan disagreement over the long-term role of school choice in the U.S. education system.

## **SENATE JUDICIARY HOLDS HEARING ON CHILD ONLINE SAFETY, ROLE OF BIG TECH**

On Tuesday, the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Counterterrorism held a hearing on the STOP CSAM Act, focusing on child online safety and the role of tech companies in combating child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Lawmakers and witnesses emphasized the alarming rise in online child exploitation, with reports increasing from 1.1 million in 2014 to 36.2 million in 2023. Witnesses highlighted the growing use of AI-generated CSAM and the role of live-streaming platforms in facilitating abuse. A major point of discussion was the failure of tech companies, including Meta, Google, and Snapchat, to adequately detect, report, and remove harmful content, despite their substantial financial resources. Witnesses, such as Michelle DeLaune of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and John Tanagho of the International Justice Mission, criticized these platforms for prioritizing profits over child safety. The hearing also addressed policy solutions, with the STOP CSAM Act proposing a report-and-remove system, requiring tech companies to take down CSAM immediately and increase transparency. A key provision of the bill would allow victims to sue platforms hosting CSAM by removing Section 230 protections, a measure aimed at holding companies accountable. Witnesses argued that civil lawsuits would be a stronger deterrent than government fines. The discussion also covered challenges in law enforcement, noting that officers lack adequate data from tech companies to track offenders and rescue victims. The bill seeks to enhance victim restitution, provide legal guardians to manage compensation for minors, and increase law enforcement training. The hearing underscored the bipartisan urgency of addressing child safety online, with the STOP CSAM Act aiming to strengthen industry accountability, improve reporting mechanisms, empower victims, and bolster law enforcement efforts.

## **EDUCATION WEEK SHARES INSIGHTS ON FUTURE OF AI IN EDUCATION**

On Wednesday, *Education Week's* hosted an event titled, "Shaping the Future of AI in Education: A Panel for K-12 Leaders," which explored the current and future role of AI in education, professional development for educators, and the ethical considerations surrounding AI usage. The discussion featured Neil Wetherbee, Superintendent of Northport Public Schools; Dr. Michael Lubelfeld, Superintendent of North Shore School District 112; Dr. Adrienne Usher, Assistant Superintendent of Bullitt County Public Schools; and Caitlin Wlezien, Instructional Technology Coordinator at Wood Dale School District. Panelists emphasized that AI should support—not replace—existing teaching methods. They highlighted AI as a tool to enhance education rather than a substitute for critical thinking. Additionally, they acknowledged that educators may need to "unlearn" outdated instructional approaches to effectively integrate AI into the classroom. The discussion also focused on AI's role in personalized learning, noting its potential to free up teachers' time and better engage students by aligning lessons with their interests. Panelists stressed that both teachers and students are learning together, adapting to AI's evolving role in education. To ensure effective AI implementation, panelists underscored the importance of investing in professional learning opportunities, such as AI training and staff surveys to assess needs. They encouraged educators to model responsible AI use and align it with instructional goals. Additionally, collaboration with external organizations for AI certification and training was suggested to reduce the burden on educators. The panel also addressed concerns about data privacy and ethical AI use, sharing examples of their own schools' AI policies and safeguards—such as prohibiting student data from being used for AI training. The event concluded with a Q&A session, during which panelists discussed how AI can enhance learning by making subject matter more accessible to multilingual learners, students with different reading abilities, and those with diverse interests.

## **GOOGLE, ISTE HOLD WEBINAR FRAMING AI AS FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY**

On Wednesday, Google and the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) hosted a webinar titled, "AI Literacy as a Foundational Literacy," discussing the increasing importance of AI literacy in K-12 education. Moderated by Erin Mote, CEO of InnovateEDU, the panel featured experts from Google, ISTE, and school districts working on AI integration in education. The conversation emphasized AI literacy as a necessary skill, akin to reading and math, that prepares students for future careers and responsible digital citizenship. Panelists highlighted AI's role in shaping industries, from education to healthcare, stressing that all students—not just those in STEM—must understand how AI functions. Discussions touched on how AI literacy intersects with other critical literacies such as digital, media, and data literacy, making it essential for evaluating information in an era of misinformation. Google's AI education team outlined their principles for AI in schools, emphasizing safety, accountability, and ethical use. Educators shared insights on how AI can support learning by personalizing instruction, improving efficiency, and enhancing accessibility for multilingual learners. The importance of professional development for teachers was a key topic, with experts advocating for integrating AI training into existing teacher development structures rather than treating it as an additional burden. The panel also underscored the need for school leadership to set clear guidelines for AI use to ensure equitable student experiences across classrooms. To further promote AI literacy, participants were encouraged to join National AI Literacy Day on March 28, an initiative offering professional development and classroom activities to help educators implement AI literacy. The webinar concluded by reiterating the necessity of AI education for all individuals, from students to lifelong learners, to ensure they can navigate an AI-driven world responsibly.

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## 4. New Publications

### Instruction About Social and Political Topics in K–12 Public Schools

*RAND (March 2025)*

The report presents findings from a survey administered in January and February 2024 to teachers across the United States that asked teachers about their instruction on social and political topics, including those that are and are not subject to state restrictions. The authors explore teachers' responses by school grade level, subject taught, and state policy context.

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## 5. In the News

### Trump Admin. Backs Catholic Charter, LGBTQ+ Lesson Opt-Outs in Supreme Court

*Education Week (March 13, 2025)*

### Teacher Training Grants Temporarily Reinstated In 8 States

*K-12 Dive (March 13, 2025)*

### Democrats Unveil School Lunch Debt Cancellation Measure

*The Hill (March 13, 2025)*

### With Half of its Staff Cut, Many Wonder How Ed Dept. Will Function

*The 74 (March 12, 2025)*

### If Trump Closes The Education Department, What Happens To Student Loans?

*USA Today (March 10, 2025)*

### Trump Takes Aim at the Department of Education

*The New York Times (March 10, 2025)*

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## THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

## 6. Weekly Calendar

### Wednesday, March 19, 2025

#### **Webinar: Learning from Louisiana's Progress in K-12 Education**

**Subject:** The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI) will hold a virtual discussion on "What Can We Learn from Louisiana's Progress in K-12 Education?"

**Participants:** Anne Bowles, senior director of programs, Council of Chief State School Officers; Cade Brumley, state superintendent, Louisiana Department of Education; and Robert Pondisco, senior fellow, AEI.

**Time:** 4:00 p.m.

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

### Thursday, March 20, 2025

**Webinar: Employer-Sponsored Work-Based STEM Learning Programs**

**Subject:** STEMConnector will hold a webinar on “Employer-Sponsored Work-Based Learning Programs—Driving STEM Outcomes.”

**Participants:** Brian Quick, director of talent acquisition, Abbott; Glade Montgomery, senior vice president of strategic partnerships, Project Lead the Way; and Michael McCoy, associate director, non-traditional talent programs, Verizon.

**Time:** 2:00 p.m.

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

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## 7. Future Hearings and Events

### Tuesday, March 25, 2025

**Webinar: Role of Education in Quest for America’s AI Dominance**

**Subject:** Washington Post Live will hold a virtual discussion on "America's Quest for AI Dominance," including the role of education in America's competitiveness.

**Participants:** Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY); Martin Schmidt, president, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; and Jeff Cardenas, CEO, Apptronik.

**Time:** 9:00 a.m.

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

### Monday, March 31, 2025

**Webinar: Child Welfare Priorities of Trump Administration**

**Subject:** The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI) will hold a virtual discussion on "Putting Children First: Child Welfare Priorities for the New Administration."

**Participants:** Jedd Medefind, president, Christian Alliance for Orphans; Tom Rawlings, CEO, Child Warfare & Justice Transformation; Eachel Morrison, fellow, Ethics & Public Policy Center; Darcy Olsen, founder, Center for the Rights of Abused Children; and Naomi Schaefer Riley, senior fellow, AEI.

**Time:** 4:00 p.m.

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

### Tuesday, April 1, 2025

**Webinar: Revamping Classroom Instruction**

**Subject:** The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI) will hold a virtual discussion on "School Rethink 2.0: Revamping Classroom Instruction."

**Participants:** Brent Maddin, executive director, Next Education Workforce; Arthur VanderVeen, CEO, New Meridian; Joel Rose, CEO, New Classrooms; Larry Berger, CEO, Amplify; and Frederick Hess, director of education policy studies, AEI

**Time:** 4:00 p.m.

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

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## 8. On The Floor of Congress This Week

The House and Senate are 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](#)

[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

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

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