



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

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

1. **News, Publications, & Updates on COSSBA Policy Priorities**
 - **Broadband Connectivity and E-Rate**
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2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
 - **Impact on State School Board Associations**

3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
 - **Child Care Need Reflected in Actions from White House and the Hill:** The White House and senior Capitol Hill Democrats rolled out child care initiatives recently, exhibiting the party’s ongoing desire to provide more support for families.
 - **Aspen Institute Marks 40 Years of “A Nation At Risk”:** On Tuesday, April 25, the Aspen Institute hosted an event titled, “40 years of a Nation at Risk: Where Are We and What’s Next for Public Education.” The event marked the 40th Anniversary of the 1983 National Commission on Excellence in Education **report** titled, “A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform.”

- **Learning Assessments of the Future Examined:** On Tuesday, April 25, Whiteboard Advisors hosted a webinar titled, “Reimagining How We Assess Learning to Unlock Student Potential.”
- **Education Officials Discuss Legislative Role in School Leadership:** On Tuesday, April 25, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) hosted an event titled, “State Partnerships Advancing School Leadership,” to examine key insights and lessons on the pivotal role state policymakers can play in advancing effective school leadership.
- **House Oversight Committee Holds 2nd Hearing on School Closures:** On Wednesday, April 26, the House Oversight Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic held its second hearing on the consequences of school closures, which included testimony from American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weingarten.
- **LPI, CASEL Look at Evidence-Based Advancements in SEL:** On Thursday, April 27, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) hosted a webinar titled, “The Evidence is Clear: An Update on Research Examining Social and Emotional Learning.”

4. **New Publications**

- **Voices from the Classroom 2023: A Survey of America’s Educators**
Educators for Excellence (April, 2023)
Voices from the Classroom 2023 explores teachers’ perceptions, 40 years later, about the goals of K-12 education and how we should go about measuring its success; the content they are required to teach and the materials and guidance they are provided to deliver it; and their own profession, the union contracts that generally guide it, and what change is needed to make their job more viable.

5. **In the News**

- **Weingarten: AFT Had No Undue Influence on CDC School Reopening Guidance**
K-12 Dive (April 27, 2023)
- **National Education Association Endorses Biden Reelection Bid**
The Hill (April 27, 2023)
- **Ed Dept Revives Systemic Racial Discrimination Reviews of School Districts**
K-12 Dive (April 26, 2023)
- **Alabama Governor Ousts a Top Education Official over a Book’s ‘Woke Concepts’ on Race**
NPR (April 22, 2023)

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

- **None.**

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

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- **House Floor:** In recess until Tuesday, May 9

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1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY AND E-RATE

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)

TEACHER-PRINCIPAL TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT

FUNDING

CHILD NUTRITION

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

The House passed the [Limit, Save and Grow Act](#) last week by a razor-thin margin of 217-215, after leadership altered the bill to appease a number of Republicans opposed to the elimination of some tax subsidies as included in the original bill. The victory for Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) was arguably a much-needed one that exhibited his ability to bring together the disparate factions of the House Republican Caucus.

The bill, which will not be considered by the Senate, would cut discretionary spending for FY 2024 and then cap discretionary growth at 1% per year for the following nine years. It would also make other changes that cut mandatory spending and end some of the Administration's key initiatives, including the student debt relief plan. Even though it will never become law, it will serve as a marker for what Republicans want in any upcoming negotiations to increase the debt limit, as well as set guidelines for the House Appropriations Committee and the subcommittees. They are set to begin marking up annual spending bills this month. In the meantime, according to reports, Congress needs to increase the debt limit sometime in the next two months or the country will start defaulting on its financial obligations—obligations that include paying government benefits like Social Security and Medicaid, and interest payments on the debt. Nothing seems to motivate Congress like a crisis, so advocates are expecting a busy May and June.

In other education news last week, Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), appeared as the sole witness before the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic at [a hearing](#) about the role of unions in school closures during the public health crisis. She was accused of conspiring with the CDC to keep schools closed longer than necessary by Republican members of the panel. The AFT had submitted suggestions for guidance to schools and educators in the pandemic's early days—some of which the CDC adopted. "Your organization has demonstrated that what you actually care about is gaining and exerting political influence and lining your pockets with taxpayer money, even if that is at the expense of our own children," said Representative Ronny Jackson (R-TX). Weingarten and Democrats argued that including the AFT in the development of reopening guidance was

appropriate because it affected its members, and had differences of opinion about what drove the extended school closures that resulted in academic losses, as exhibited by results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

The House is in recess this week while the Senate remains in session. The Congressional calendar is a full one through the end of June. The next time both chambers will be out of town is the week of June 26th, when there's a two-week break that includes the July 4th holiday. Advocates, staff and members have much work ahead.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

We have previously reported on the debt limit bill's intended budget cuts and a provision rescinding any unspent COVID-relief funds. It is possible that this move would have a significant impact on state education agencies and local school districts, as it was reported that school systems throughout the country had spent less than 15 percent of their ESSER III funds during the 2021-2022 school year. Additionally, we have previously discussed how proposed Republican FY24 budget cuts and could impact public education and pointed to Education Secretary Miguel Cardona's [letter](#) describing the possible effects of such cuts to education funding.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

CHILD CARE NEEDS REFLECTED IN ACTIONS FROM WHITE HOUSE AND THE HILL

The White House and senior Capitol Hill Democrats rolled out child care initiatives recently, exhibiting the party's ongoing desire to provide more support for families. On Tuesday, April 18, President Joe Biden signed an [Executive Order](#) containing a comprehensive set of more than 50 directives to nearly every cabinet-level agency to support childcare, home-based care, family caregivers, and long-term care. Specifically, the Executive Order aims to address several agenda items. First, to make childcare and long-term care more accessible and affordable for families, including military families, building on the [child care requirement](#) for semiconductor production employers seeking funding under the [CHIPS and Science Act of 2022](#) to submit a plan for how they will help employees access affordable childcare. Additionally, the Executive Order attempts to boost job quality for early educators and long-term care workers – seen in the support for tribal communities through a streamlined process for grantees of federal childcare assistance. Then, on Tuesday, Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA) and Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) reintroduced the [Child Care for Working Families Act](#). According to Scott and Murray, the bill would tackle the childcare crisis head-on, ensuring that families can afford the childcare they need, expanding access to more high-quality options, stabilizing the childcare sector, and helping ensure childcare workers are paid appropriately. The legislation would also expand access to pre-K and support full-day, full-year Head Start programs and increased wages for Head Start workers. Moreover, the sponsors argue the bill encompasses four primary areas of needed improvements: making childcare affordable for working families, providing quality childcare and expanding childcare options, increasing childcare options for children who receive care during non-traditional hours, and supporting childcare for children who are dual-language learners, experiencing homelessness, or in foster care. The partisan proposal has been introduced in previous Congresses, and never made much progress. It's unlikely it will in the divided 118th Congress, either, but its supporters will continue to assert that the federal government can better

support child care access in other debates. A fact sheet on the Executive Order can be found [here](#); a summary of the bill can be found [here](#).

ASPEN INSTITUTE MARKS 40 YEARS OF “A NATION AT RISK”

On Tuesday, April 25, the Aspen Institute hosted an event titled, “40 years of a Nation at Risk: Where Are We and What’s Next for Public Education.” The event marked the 40th Anniversary of the 1983 National Commission on Excellence in Education [report](#) titled, “A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform.” The event featured Ross Weiner, executive director of the Aspen Institute Education & Society Program; Gerard Robinson, Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture fellow at the University of Virginia; Penny Schwinn, commissioner of Tennessee Department of Education; Roberto Rodriguez, assistant secretary for planning, evaluation, and policy development at the U.S. Department of Education; and Loren Cox, policy director of the Aspen Institute Education & Society Program. The panel celebrated the report’s contributions to American education, highlighted lessons learned over the years, and pointed to challenges that still exist today. Robinson, a former Education Secretary of Virginia, outlined differences in American education today versus 1983 when *A Nation At Risk* was published and commended the country’s progress toward educational equity and diversity. Following Secretary Robinson, Assistant Secretary Rodriguez remarked on creating education policy “that centers on global competitiveness in the here and now and... on a more equitable society today.” Rodriguez also highlighted the importance of shaping education policy to the economic needs of the country and learners. The economic landscape of 2023 is vastly different than that of 1983, and the education system should reflect and prepare students for that, Rodriguez stated. Following remarks from former Secretary Robinson and Assistant Secretary Rodriguez, Aspen Institute’s Loren Cox moderated a panel discussion. Robinson touched on the importance of civil leadership in conjunction with school leadership, saying, “Schools need their civic leaders to be involved and actively supportive.” In closing, Rodriguez commented on curriculum content in schools and how to best achieve education success. “The answer to that is to significantly disrupt what we think of as traditional school cultures and how we deliver core content. Core content doesn’t have to be delivered the exact same way for every school. We need to be thinking about how we integrate core content in more engaging hands-on experiences for our students.” More information is available [here](#).

LEARNING ASSESSMENTS OF THE FUTURE EXAMINED

On Tuesday, April 25, Whiteboard Advisors hosted a webinar titled, “Reimagining How We Assess Learning to Unlock Student Potential.” Participants included Yigal Rosen, chief academic officer of BrainPOP; Bo Stjerne Thomsen, vice president of LEGO Foundation; Elizabeth Horner, senior program officer for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Chris Purifoy, CEO and chairman of the Learning Economy Foundation; and Thomas Rodgers, vice president of Whiteboard Advisors. The panel discussed new methods for developing and assessing essential skills that students need to thrive, shared thoughts on current assessment methods, and agreed that student assessments should be holistic and individualized. “We can shift to unlocking the potential of students by... having more variant and diverse assessments that will promote student growth,” Stjerne Thomsen stated. Rosen, elaborating on his own academic research, outlined unique methods that measure creative thinking, a key assessment skill for students. Rosen asserted that establishing fun and playful methods in the classroom to measure creative thinking will modify current pragmatic concepts for standardized testing. The panel also addressed technology’s role in education assessments. Purifoy encouraged artificial

intelligence (AI) usage in the classroom and maintained that it would assist in the personalization of education. “We do not know how to use it yet, but we are on that track. It offers us the ability to get a large amount of information we might never have been able to access before,” Purifoy stated. Horner was hopeful that AI will “amplify a teacher’s impact” by increasing access to more information that will help educators tailor classroom experiences to the individual needs of students and remove unnecessary burdens. The panel discussion closed by highlighting the importance of technology advancement in assessments and education, but emphasized the necessity of data security and the human factor in education. A recording of the webinar can be found [here](#).

EDUCATION OFFICIALS DISCUSS LEGISLATIVE ROLE IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

On Tuesday, April 25, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) hosted an event titled, “State Partnerships Advancing School Leadership,” to examine key insights and lessons on the pivotal role state policymakers can play in advancing effective school leadership. The event featured Paolo DeMaria, president of NASBE; Dr. Paul Manna, distinguished university professor of government and director of the public policy program at William & Mary; Alonna Berry, education advisor for Governor John Carney of Delaware; Matt Blomstedt, former Nebraska Commissioner of Education; and Francisco Escobedo, member of the California State Board of Education. Dr. Manna opened by reflecting on his recent report, [States as Leaders, Followers, and Partners](#) – a synthesis of two Wallace Foundation initiatives: the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Leadership Learning Community (EELC) and the Universal Principal Preparation Initiative (UPPI). Throughout the presentation, Manna highlighted the value of fostering fruitful partnerships among a range of institutions with a stake in improving public schools, as “state policymakers have invaluable roles to play in advancing the principalship.” Escobedo and Blomstedt elaborated on the ESSA and UPPI programs in their respective communities, mentioning the critical nature of effective leadership in supporting schools. DeMaria added that regarding these networks, “the policymaking individuals need to be at the table,” in conjunction with increased diversification of these voices. On the state level, Berry addressed how Delaware is utilizing school leadership toward effectively maintaining student achievement by prioritizing the “retention of school leaders and educators” as an indicator of internal health of the system. When considering what the implementation of ESSA and UPPI programs look like, Escobedo asserted that there needs to be a stronger local teacher-to-admin pipeline, “ensuring that future leaders are well prepared and reflective of the communities they serve.” Additional conversation addressed expanding administration efforts and how high-quality work cultivates high-quality leaders. An archived recording of the event can be found [here](#).

HOUSE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE HOLDS 2ND HEARING ON SCHOOL CLOSURES

On Wednesday, April 26, the House Oversight Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic held its second hearing on the consequences of school closures, which included [testimony](#) from American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weingarten. During the hearing, Republicans on the Committee accused Weingarten of conspiring with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to keep schools closed longer than necessary, accusations that are a focal point of the Oversight Committee’s ongoing [investigation](#) into the role teachers unions played in decisions to close schools. “Americans are curious to know if the AFT access [to the CDC] was in line with CDC past practice and if their influence had a positive

or detrimental impact on America's children,” said Select Subcommittee Chairman Brad Wenstrup (R-OH) during his opening remarks. Even so, Wenstrup added that the Committee was not there “to attack teachers, the teaching profession, or suggest pandemic era teaching was easy, because it was not.” Ranking Member Raul Ruiz (D-CA) pointed to the pandemic’s heavy toll on the nation’s students both inside and outside the classroom, but commended progress that has been made under President Joe Biden’s leadership. “We doubled the number of schools open for full time in person learning [and made] bold investments in education and school infrastructure,” Ruiz stated. Weingarten, during her testimony, pleaded with the panel to “help us help students recover from the effects of the pandemic” and called for an end to the “unrelenting attacks on teachers over pandemic-era school closings.” In her written statement, Weingarten asserted that the CDC spoke with more than 50 organizations while considering how best to reopen schools before finalizing guidelines. “The failure of the CDC to share its thinking with—and solicit comments from—the largest unions representing teachers and school staff would have been governmental malpractice of the highest order,” she wrote. Following opening remarks and Weingarten’s testimony, Select Subcommittee members asked about the process for providing input on CDC guidance, questioned Weingarten about AFT’s scientific understanding of COVID-19, and pushed for further testimony from union officials. During questioning, Weingarten confirmed that the CDC did accept two recommendations provided by AFT and acknowledged that political advocacy is a critical part of AFT’s work. A recording of the hearing can be found [here](#).

LPI, CASEL LOOK AT EVIDENCE-BASED ADVANCEMENTS IN SEL

On Thursday, April 27, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) hosted a webinar titled, “The Evidence is Clear: An Update on Research Examining Social and Emotional Learning.” Participants included Linda Darling-Hammond, president and CEO of the Learning Policy Institute (LPI); Mark Greenberg, emeritus professor at Penn State University and founding board member of CASEL; Aaliyah Samuel, president and CEO of CASEL; and Timothy Shriver, UNITE founder, CASEL and Special Olympics Chair. Dr. Greenberg expounded on research around Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), particularly a [2011 meta-analysis](#) of existing SEL research that further established a strong evidence base for SEL. Dr. Greenberg then provided an overview of findings from a [new report](#) commissioned by LPI and authored by Greenberg that reviews twelve separate meta-analyses covering hundreds of independent studies. Greenberg explained how these distinct studies show that the impact of SEL on learners is similar across the board; that it positively impacts students of all ages, genders, socio-economic status, urban and rural. Greenberg then identified six criterion for an effective SEL program: delivery by classroom teachers, focus on skills and school climate, use of a multicomponent approach, teaching of intrapersonal skills, integrated SEL into academic content, and high-quality implementation. Following Greenberg, Dr. Darling-Hammond elaborated on the specifics of SEL in practice. She talked about the importance of explicit instruction from teachers; the value of mindfulness; the effectiveness of community circles, where students can share feelings and work through conflict; and the impact of intentional literature. Lastly, Dr. Samuel touched on the political dimension of SEL. She discussed recent parental rights legislation and recognized the vitality of teacher-parent relationships. She stated, “We can’t move from transactional relationships with parents. We must move to transformational relationships with parents.” She also urged the de-politicization of education and the importance of keeping students at the center of conversations.

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4. New Publications

Voices from the Classroom 2023: A Survey of America's Educators

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Voices from the Classroom 2023 explores teachers' perceptions, 40 years later, about the goals of K-12 education and how we should go about measuring its success; the content they are required to teach and the materials and guidance they are provided to deliver it; and their own profession, the union contracts that generally guide it, and what change is needed to make their job more viable.

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NPR (April 22, 2023)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

None.

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7. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor: Consideration of nominees

House Floor: In recess until Tuesday, May 9

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

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

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

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

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

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

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9. 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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