



The Consortium of State School Boards Associations Weekly Education Report

SEPTEMBER 22, 2025

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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**
 - **School Nutrition**
 - **What Does The MAHA Strategy Mean for School Meals?** K-12 nutrition experts say schools will need more financial support to achieve the Trump administration's plan to serve more whole foods.
2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
 - **Impact on State School Board Associations**
3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
 - **Lawmakers Introduce Bills to Advance AI Education, US Competitiveness:** Congressional leaders in both chambers introduced bipartisan legislation aimed at strengthening America's leadership in artificial intelligence (AI) by expanding education, research, and workforce training.
 - **ED Announces Reprogramming of Funding into Investments in Charter Schools:** The U.S. Department of Education announced new investments in Fiscal Year 2025 aimed at expanding support for charter schools, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs), and American history and civics programs.
 - **Education Department Proposes Grant Priority on Patriotic Education:** On the 238th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution, Secretary of Education Linda McMahon announced a proposed fifth supplemental priority for the Department of Education's discretionary grant programs: the promotion of patriotic education.

- **America 250 Coalition Launches to Renew Patriotism, Civic Knowledge:** On Wednesday, the Department of Education, in partnership with the America First Policy Institute (AFPI), Turning Point USA, Hillsdale College, and over 40 national and state-based organizations, launched the America 250 Civics Education Coalition.
- **Partisanship Defines House Hearing on Education, Workforce Pathways:** On Wednesday, the House Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs **held a hearing** addressing America’s educational crisis, as National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores revealed historic lows in reading, math, and science.
- **Senate HELP Warns CDC Turmoil Could Undermine School Vaccine Trust:** On Wednesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a contentious hearing to examine turmoil at the Centers for Disease Control following the firing of Director Dr. Susan Monarez and the resignation of Chief Medical Officer Dr. Debra Houry.
- **Senate HELP Probes Declining K-12 Achievement, Reforms on AI:** On Thursday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a hearing on the state of K-12 education, highlighting deep challenges facing American schools.
- **Reagan Institute Summit Urges Bold Action to Revitalize U.S. Education:** On Thursday, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute held its eighth annual Reagan Institute Summit on Education (RISE) at the Reagan Institute’s Washington, D.C. headquarters.

4. **New Publications**

- **AI for Education: Keys to a Connected, Secure Future**
Project Unicorn (September 2025)
This brief offers a strategic and high-level overview for developing safer, more intelligent, and more connected educational tools, grounded in nationally recognized principles for the responsible implementation and use of AI.
- **2025 State EdTech Trends Report**
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Drawing on responses from state chiefs, CIOs, edtech directors, and other state education agency leaders, this report provides insight into how states are planning for and adapting to a K-12 system where technology is both foundational and fast-evolving.
- **State of the Student 2025**
Center on Reinventing Public Education | Arizona State University (September 2025)
Drawing on national assessment data, student voices, practitioner interviews, and a review of recent reforms, this report identifies both the system-level breakdowns and the bright spots that show what’s possible when it comes to improving math education in the United States.

5. **In the News**

- **Education Dept. Opens Up FAFSA Beta Test to All**
Inside Higher Ed (September 19, 2025)
- **Poor NAEP Showing Prompts Calls for Cell Phone Bans**

The 74 Million (September 15, 2025)

- **Hayes Leads House Education and Workforce Democrats Urging Hearing on School Shootings**

U.S. Congresswoman Jahana Hayes (September 12, 2025)

- **Administration Axes Federal Blue Ribbon Program That Recognized High-Achieving Schools**

Chalkbeat (September 4, 2025)

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

- **Inside the 2025 State EdTech Trends Report**: The State Educational Technology Directors Association, in conjunction with Whiteboard Advisors, will hold a briefing on the Trends 2025 State EdTech Trends Report.
Thursday at 2pm 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**

- The House and Senate are in recess

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

10. **About BPAG**

1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

SCHOOL NUTRITION

WHAT DOES THE MAHA STRATEGY MEAN FOR SCHOOL MEALS?

School nutrition policies are among the initiatives taking center stage in the Trump administration's "[Make Our Children Healthy Again](#)" strategy report released last week, as it pointed toward the need to serve healthier meals to the nation's schoolchildren. While school nutrition advocates generally back the Make America Healthy Again Commission's intentions to address childhood chronic disease, they say time will tell as to whether the needed federal financial support will materialize to carry out those priorities. The report calls for barring or limiting artificial dyes in food products and improving access to whole, healthy foods in school meals. What does this mean for school meals? Read more from *K-12 Dive* [here](#).

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

Friday afternoon, the House passed [H.R. 5371](#), a continuing resolution (CR) that would extend government funding through November 21 at largely the same levels as FY 2025. The measure passed narrowly, 217–212, with only one Democrat joining Republicans in support, and two Republicans breaking ranks. Supporters argued the CR is “clean” and free of policy riders, intended only to buy time for negotiating the twelve FY 2026 full appropriations bills. In backing

the CR, Rep. Mike Kelly (R-PA) stated, “Congress has a responsibility to keep the government funded and open, and this legislation does just that.”

The House CR was then considered in the Senate alongside a dueling version lead by Senate Democrats. In the Senate, Republicans hold 53 seats, so they would have needed to convince at least seven Democrats to vote to pass the House CR and overcome the legislative filibuster. The alternative CR that the Democrats offered included protections for health care, such as extending Affordable Care Act (ACA) premium tax credits and restoring cuts to Medicaid, among other priorities. As Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) put it, Republicans “so far have refused to have any conversations about the issues we’ve clearly outlined – healthcare most of all.” Senate Republicans, for their part, pushed back, insisting the House CR already met the criteria of being clean and nonpartisan.

Both CR measures considered in the Senate Friday failed, inching the government closer to a potential shutdown. The Republicans’ proposal received fewer votes, failing 44–48, even with support from Sen. John Fetterman (D-Pa.). Democrats’ broader stopgap measure received a vote of 47–45. Both needed at least 60 votes to surpass the filibuster.

Congress is out this week, and Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) said he intends to bring the measure back up when the Senate returns from recess. Unless leaders call senators back earlier during the Rosh Hashanah break, something they did not rule out Friday, lawmakers will have just two scheduled days left to approve a stopgap funding bill before the September 30 deadline. Meanwhile, the House extended their recess through September 30 but could be called back to DC if necessary.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

If Congress fails to enact a CR by midnight September 30, a partial federal government shutdown could ensue. In such a shutdown scenario, federal agencies would suspend non-essential discretionary functions and furlough non-essential staff, while “essential” services (such as national security, border protection, air traffic control, and others) would continue operating without immediate pay under the authority of contingency shutdown plans. The Trump Administration would have discretion (via OMB and agency heads) to classify and direct which functions and employees are considered essential and allowed to continue working during the lapse. That said, a shutdown would likely have minimal direct impact on most federal education programs, many of which are mandatory or have multi-year funding mechanisms and thus would generally continue unaffected. A few education related programs could be impacted including Head Start, Impact Aid, and some nutrition programs depending on the duration of a shutdown.

Regardless of what happens on September 30th, education advocates will continue to tell Members of Congress that they prefer the bipartisan Senate FY 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education spending bill to the partisan House plan, which proposes a 15% cut to the agency, including a \$4.7 billion reduction in Title I spending. The Senate plan generally level funds

education investments, with minor pluses and minuses spread around the agency. There are weeks, if not months, of this advocacy work ahead—regardless of whether a shutdown occurs.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

LAWMAKERS INTRODUCE BILLS TO ADVANCE AI EDUCATION, US COMPETITIVENESS

Congressional leaders in both chambers introduced bipartisan legislation aimed at strengthening America’s leadership in artificial intelligence (AI) by expanding education, research, and workforce training. In the Senate, Senators Jon Husted (R-OH) and Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE), joined by HELP Committee Chair Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA), introduced the “Recommending Artificial Intelligence Standards in Education (RAISE) Act.” The bill would add AI and technology literacy to subjects states may establish standards for under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. By positioning AI alongside math, reading, and science, the measure underscores the importance of preparing K-12 students to use AI responsibly while ensuring the United States maintains its economic and security advantage over global competitors. In the House, Congressman Vince Fong (R-CA), along with Representatives Andrea Salinas (D-OR) and Brittany Pettersen (D-CO), introduced H.R. 5351, the “National Science Foundation Artificial Intelligence Education Act of 2025” (NSF AI Education Act). This legislation authorizes scholarships and fellowships for students and faculty in AI studies, establishes up to eight regional Centers of AI Excellence at community colleges and career and technical institutions, and funds competitive grants for AI teaching resources across K-12 and higher education. The bill prioritizes access for rural and underserved communities to build inclusive, future-ready talent pipelines. Together, the RAISE Act and NSF AI Education Act demonstrate a growing bipartisan commitment to embedding AI literacy into education at all levels, from early learning standards to advanced workforce training.

ED ANNOUNCES REPROGRAMMING OF FUNDING INTO INVESTMENTS IN CHARTER SCHOOLS

On Monday, the Department of Education (ED) announced new investments in fiscal year 2025 aimed at expanding support for charter schools, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs), and American history and civics programs. ED stated that these funds will be redirected from programs determined to be less effective, using existing discretionary grant flexibilities, which has created frustration among Congressional appropriators and other grant recipients from across the nation. ED will award \$500 million in grants for charter schools—the largest investment in the program’s history. The funding is intended to expand school choice options and improve educational outcomes nationwide. HBCUs and TCCUs will also receive significant funding increases. ED announced an additional \$495 million in one-time funding, on top of the regular Fiscal Year 2025 allocation. This results in a total of more than \$1.34 billion for HBCUs and over \$108 million for TCCUs, representing increases of 48.4% and 109.3%, respectively. Officials said these investments reflect recognition of the historic and ongoing contributions of these institutions. Additionally, the Department will provide more than \$160 million in new grants under the American History and Civics Education

National Activities program. The investment coincides with preparations for the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding and is expected to support a record number of civics education initiatives.

ED DEPARTMENT PROPOSES GRANT PRIORITY ON PATRIOTIC EDUCATION

On the 238th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution, Secretary of Education Linda McMahon announced a proposed fifth supplemental priority for the Department of Education's discretionary grant programs: the promotion of patriotic education. This new priority, published in the Federal Register for a 30-day public comment period, would guide future grant competitions toward supporting civic education that emphasizes American history, values, and geography. According to the Department, the goal is to provide students with a clear understanding of the nation's founding principles, political institutions, and historical progress. The approach is intended to highlight both the ideals set forth at the country's founding and the efforts over time—such as the civil rights movement—to extend constitutional protections more broadly. The Department described this framework as a way to foster informed citizenship and a sense of unity. Once the comment period concludes, the Department will issue a Notice of Final Priorities, formally establishing how the new priority will shape grantmaking.

Patriotic education joins four other supplemental priorities already introduced under Secretary McMahon:

- **Evidence-Based Literacy:** promoting instruction rooted in the science of reading.
- **Expanding Education Choice:** broadening access to school choice through grant programs.
- **Returning Education to the States:** giving priority to state applicants or those endorsed by states.
- **Advancing Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Education:** supporting AI to improve classroom efficiency, reduce administrative burdens, and strengthen teacher training and evaluation.

AMERICA 250 COALITION LAUNCHES TO RENEW PATRIOTISM, CIVIC KNOWLEDGE

On Wednesday, the Department of Education, in partnership with the America First Policy Institute (AFPI), Turning Point USA, Hillsdale College, and over 40 national and state-based organizations, launched the America 250 Civics Education Coalition. Announced on Constitution Day, the initiative is designed to mark America's upcoming 250th anniversary by strengthening civics education, renewing patriotism, and fostering a deeper understanding of the nation's founding principles among students. Led by Secretary of Education Linda McMahon with AFPI coordination, the coalition will develop programs that emphasize liberty, citizenship, and America's enduring values. The coalition brings together an alliance of organizations—ranging from policy institutes and legal advocacy groups to educational foundations and civic organizations. These include the Heritage Foundation, Claremont Institute, American Principles Project, Moms for Liberty, PragerU, and the Woodson Center, among many others. By mobilizing educators, policymakers, and community leaders, the America 250 Civics Education Coalition intends to reestablish civic pride. More details on the coalition's mission, programming, and full membership list are available [here](#).

PARTISANSHIP DEFINES HOUSE HEARING ON EDUCATION, WORKFORCE PATHWAYS

On Wednesday, the House Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs held a hearing addressing America's educational crisis, as National Assessment of

Educational Progress (NAEP) scores revealed historic lows in reading, math, and science. The hearing highlighted deep partisan divisions. Republicans praised H.R. 1 the reconciliation package, for expanding educational freedom through school choice scholarships, pointing to workforce challenges such as half of 2023 college graduates working in jobs that do not require degrees. Witness testimony included evidence from Ohio's EdChoice program, showing participants were 32% more likely to enroll in college and 60% more likely to earn bachelor's degrees, with the largest gains among low-income students, who were 175% more likely to graduate. Democrats emphasized strengthening public education, investing in apprenticeships, and expanding access to trade schools through public institutions. They criticized voucher programs as disproportionately benefiting wealthier families, citing examples such as Arizona's voucher program, which was described as a failure that created a \$1 billion budget deficit, and Florida's \$3.9 billion program, which they say diverted funds from public schools serving 90% of students amid teacher shortages and infrastructure strains. The hearing also highlighted successful workforce initiatives. Caliber Collision's Technician Apprentice Program has graduated more than 2,300 debt-free apprentices since 2023, addressing shortages that will require nearly 100,000 new automotive technicians by 2028. Similarly, Missouri's Reeds Spring School District increased annual Industry-Recognized Credentials from 28 to 226 through its Table Rock Career Center. Fundamentally, the debate centered on whether school choice or public investment offers the best path to educational and economic mobility. A comprehensive summary prepared by BPAG is [here](#).

SENATE HELP WARNS CDC TURMOIL COULD UNDERMINE SCHOOL VACCINE TRUST

On Wednesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee [held a contentious hearing](#) to examine turmoil at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) following the [firing of Director Dr. Susan Monarez](#) and the [resignation of Chief Medical Officer Dr. Debra Houry](#). Senators focused heavily on implications for children's health, schools, and vaccine trust. Dr. Monarez testified that she was removed after refusing to preapprove vaccine recommendations and dismiss career scientists without cause, warning that these political directives threatened the integrity of childhood vaccine schedules. She stressed that weakening evidence-based protections could lead to the return of preventable diseases like measles, polio, and whooping cough, with serious consequences for schools and families. Dr. Houry echoed these concerns, highlighting halted flu campaigns, rising measles cases, and pediatric deaths linked to declining vaccination rates. Both argued that politically motivated changes jeopardize the health of children and the credibility of the CDC. Lawmakers raised concerns that altered CDC vaccine guidance was leaving parents, schools, and health providers confused. Senators noted that vaccine skepticism and misinformation could disrupt school readiness, overwhelm pediatric care systems, and spark new outbreaks. Members from both parties questioned how the dismissal of experts and replacement of the CDC's vaccine advisory committee with skeptics would impact school safety and public trust. Despite partisan divides, witnesses and several senators agreed that children's wellbeing depends on scientific integrity, transparent decision-making, and stable vaccination policies. The hearing underscored how school communities could face heightened risks if public confidence in childhood vaccines continues to falter.

SENATE HELP PROBES DECLINING K-12 ACHIEVEMENT, REFORMS ON AI

On Thursday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee [held a hearing](#) on the state of K-12 education, highlighting deep challenges facing American schools. Witnesses and senators pointed to long-term declines in student achievement, widening inequality, chronic absenteeism, and adolescent mental health struggles, trends that predate the pandemic but were worsened by it. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores are at historic

lows, raising concerns about workforce readiness and future economic competitiveness. Opening statements reflected partisan priorities: Chairman Bill Cassidy (R-LA) emphasized literacy reform, parental empowerment, and school choice, citing Louisiana's success with the Science of Reading, while Ranking Member Bernie Sanders (I-VT) stressed poverty, childcare, and teacher pay as root issues undermining education. Witnesses echoed systemic concerns, with proposals including incentive-based teacher evaluations, stronger educator pipelines, accountability systems that balance growth and proficiency, and expanded use of high-quality tutoring and STEM programs. A recurring theme was the role of technology: particularly AI. Senators and experts agreed AI has potential to support personalized learning but warned of risks without strong safeguards, oversight, and teacher involvement. Concerns over smartphone use, social media's impact, and unregulated AI platforms also drew bipartisan attention. Members debated the balance between innovation and equity, school funding disparities, and the need to better engage students by connecting classroom learning to real-world opportunities. Despite ideological divides, there was consensus that reforms must empower teachers, modernize accountability, and ensure students are engaged and prepared to succeed in a rapidly changing economy. A comprehensive summary prepared by BPAG is [here](#).

REAGAN INSTITUTE SUMMIT URGES BOLD ACTION TO REVITALIZE U.S. EDUCATION

On Thursday, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute held its [eighth annual Reagan Institute Summit on Education \(RISE\)](#) at the Reagan Institute's Washington, D.C. headquarters. Held under the theme "Igniting the Flickering Spark," the summit brought together policymakers, education leaders, and researchers to confront systemic challenges facing U.S. education. Key issues included declining National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, diminishing public confidence in higher education, worsening student mental health, teacher shortages, chronic absenteeism, and inadequate preparation of graduates for postsecondary success. Dr. Katie Jenner, Indiana Secretary of Education, opened the summit in a conversation with U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon, who stressed the importance of renewed civil discourse and stronger state-level leadership. McMahon argued that despite significant federal investments, student outcomes remain stagnant, noting that the pandemic amplified parental awareness of curricula and fueled greater demands for transparency and engagement. A panel moderated by Maya Sulkin of *The Free Press* featured Carrie McDonald (Foundation for Economic Education), Ian Dave (American Federation for Children), and Richard Whitmire (author of *Why Boys Fail*). Panelists highlighted disengagement among Gen Z students, youth desensitization to social and global crises, and persistent gender disparities disadvantaging boys. Recommendations included reengagement strategies, cultivating future leaders, and expanding school choice, with McDonald urging support for micro-schools and faith-based programs to align learning with family values. Overall, summit discussions emphasized targeted policy reforms to reverse declining outcomes, strengthen state governance, broaden educational options, and restore purpose and opportunity for the next generation of learners.

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4. New Publications

AI for Education: Keys to a Connected, Secure Future

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5. In the News

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Trump Administration Axes Federal Blue Ribbon Program That Recognized High-Achieving Schools

Chalkbeat (September 4, 2025)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Thursday, September 25, 2025

Event: Inside the 2025 State EdTech Trends Report

Subject: The State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA), in conjunction with Whiteboard Advisors, will hold a briefing on the Trends 2025 State EdTech Trends Report.

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [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

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](#)

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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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