



The Consortium of State School Boards Associations Weekly Education Report

SEPTEMBER 29, 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**

- **HHS Announces \$61 Million for Head Start Nutrition Services:** It was announced on Tuesday that the Trump administration is directing more than \$61 million in one-time funding to Head Start programs nationwide to expand nutrition services and education as part of the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) "Make America Healthy Again" initiative.

• **Funding**

- **ED Proposes New Grant Priorities on Learning, Workforce Readiness:** On Thursday, Secretary of Education Linda McMahon announced two new supplemental priorities for the Department of Education's discretionary grants: Meaningful Learning and Career Pathways and Workforce Readiness.

• **Broadband Connectivity and E-Rate**

- **E-Rate Advocates Urge FCC to Preserve School Bus Wi-Fi and Hotspot Lending Programs:** The letter, submitted by SHLB, ALA,

EdLiNC, and the Homework Gap Coalition, urges the FCC not to overturn E-Rate eligibility for school bus Wi-Fi and hotspot lending programs.

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

- **Impact on State School Board Associations**

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

- **ED Makes Record Federal Investment in Charter Schools**: The Department of Education has announced what it considers to be the largest investment to date in the Charter Schools Program (CSP), highlighting the Trump Administration's broader push for school choice.
- **Education Department Launches 2026-27 FAFSA Early**: On Thursday, the Department of Education announced the launch of the 2026-27 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, marking the earliest availability in the program's history.

4. **New Publications**

- **Community Schools Impact on Student Outcomes: Evidence from California**
Learning Policy Institute (September 2025)
This study assesses the extent to which the California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP) grants effectively reached high-need schools and evaluates the impact of community school practices induced and supported by the CCSPP implementation grants on student outcomes, including attendance, suspensions, and academic achievement.
- **Education at a Glance 2025**
OECD (September 2025)
The OECD report recommends a comprehensive approach to ensuring equality of opportunity across all levels of education, as we increase both enrolment and quality to meet pressing skills needs.

5. **In the News**

- **A Shutdown Would Give Trump More Power Over Federal Spending**
The Washington Post (September 23, 2025)
- **A School In Kentucky Banned Phones. Remarkable Things Started Happening.**
The Washington Post (September 26, 2025)
- **As CTE Transfers To Labor Department, Here's What Schools Need To Know**
K-12 Dive (September 25, 2025)
- **AI 'Companions' Pose Risks To Student Mental Health. What Can Schools Do?**
K-12 Dive (September 25, 2025)
- **Ryan Walters Steps Down As Oklahoma Schools Chief, Plans 'To Destroy' Teachers Unions**
The Hill (September 25, 2025)
- **Trump Administration To Hold Back Grants From NYC, Chicago, Fairfax Schools Over Trans Bathroom Policies**

NBC News (September 25, 2025)

- **Schools Confront a New Reality: They Can't Count on Federal Money**
The Hechinger Report (September 18, 2025)

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

- **Religious Liberty Commission in Schools**: The Justice Department will hold a meeting of the Religious Liberty Commission to discuss religious liberty issues in education from the perspectives of teachers and coaches, as well as religious liberty issues related to school funding, educational choice and the autonomy of faith-based schools.
Monday at 9am ET
- **Innovating the Future of High School**: The Bipartisan Policy Center will hold a virtual discussion on "America's Workforce: Plato or Pathways? Innovating the Future of High School."
Monday at 2pm ET
- **The New Federal Education Tax Credit: Policy and Politics**: FutureEd will hold a webinar on the newly passed federal tax credit scholarship program.
Tuesday at 1pm ET
- **English as an Academic Discipline**: The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research will hold a discussion on "Literature in Limbo: The state of English as an Academic Discipline."
Tuesday at 5pm ET

7. **Future Hearings & Events**

- **Collecting Data to Support Student Parent Success**: The Urban Institute will hold a discussion on "Lessons on Collecting Data and Driving Change to Support Student Parent Success."
October 9 at 12:30pm

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

- **Senate floor**
 - **S.2296**, National Defense Authorization Act
 - **S.2806**, to provide for automatic continuing appropriations
 - Consideration of nominations
- **House floor**
 - Potential consideration of continuing appropriations bill

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

10. **About BPAG**

1. **COSSBA Policy Priorities**

SCHOOL NUTRITION

HHS ANNOUNCES \$61 MILLION FOR HEAD START NUTRITION SERVICES

It was **announced** on Tuesday that the Trump administration is directing more than \$61 million in one-time funding to Head Start programs nationwide to expand nutrition services and education

as part of the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) "Make America Healthy Again" initiative. HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced that over 290 Head Start programs will receive supplemental grants, supporting more than 100,000 children and families enrolled in the early learning program. Head Start, a federally funded initiative, provides free education, nutrition, and health services to children from birth to age five, as well as pregnant women. The additional resources aim to enhance both the quality and reach of nutrition programs within these centers. "When children have access to fresh, nutritious food, we don't just feed them for a day — we set them on a path to lifelong health," Kennedy said. According to HHS, half of the supplemental funding will go toward materials and equipment such as gardening tools and commercial-grade kitchen appliances. A quarter of the funds will support facility improvements, including modern kitchens and designated breastfeeding spaces, while the remaining 25 percent will fund nutrition education. This includes family-centered community events, partnerships with nutritionists, and other educational activities designed to foster healthy eating habits. The funding follows a July directive from HHS inviting Head Start programs to apply for one-time nutrition support grants. With this investment, the administration underscores its focus on early childhood development, linking improved nutrition with long-term educational and health outcomes.

FUNDING

ED PROPOSES NEW GRANT PRIORITIES ON LEARNING, WORKFORCE READINESS

On Thursday, Secretary of Education Linda McMahon announced two new supplemental priorities for the Department of Education's discretionary grants: Meaningful Learning and Career Pathways and Workforce Readiness. These priorities are designed to improve student outcomes by strengthening instruction, promoting personalized learning, and aligning education with workforce needs. The Department will apply these priorities in future grant competitions to support evidence-based instructional models, expand access to high-quality materials, and create competency-based learning environments. The new priorities also emphasize career and technical education, work-based learning, and partnerships that prepare students for high-demand fields. "Amid declining academic outcomes, the Department is committed to revitalizing American education to prepare every student for success in school, work, and life," said McMahon. "We will prioritize programs that close achievement gaps and align education with the evolving needs of the workforce." The Notice of Proposed Priority (NPP) has been published in the Federal Register and is open for a 30-day public comment period before the Department issues a final notice guiding future grant competitions. The Meaningful Learning priority focuses on strengthening core instruction in mathematics, expanding tutoring and interventions, supporting innovative assessments, and developing flexible staffing and scheduling models. The Career Pathways and Workforce Readiness priority encourages states to identify industry-recognized credentials, expand pre-apprenticeships, foster sector partnerships, and build talent pipelines in skilled trades. These are the sixth and seventh supplemental priorities released under Secretary McMahon. Previous priorities include Evidence-Based Literacy, Expanding Education Choice, Returning Education to the States, Advancing AI in Education, and Prioritizing Patriotic Education. Together, they reflect the Administration's broader goal to raise academic achievement and prepare students for future careers.

BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY & E-RATE

E-RATE ADVOCATES URGE FCC TO PRESERVE SCHOOL BUS WI-FI PROGRAM

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is slated to vote Tuesday on a proposal that would end the extension of Wi-Fi in school buses, among other locations. Ahead of this vote a

letter was submitted by SHLB, ALA, EdLiNC, and the Homework Gap Coalition, urging the FCC not to overturn E-Rate eligibility for school bus Wi-Fi and hotspot lending programs. The groups argue these services are vital for students, library patrons, and communities lacking reliable broadband, citing real-world examples from New Mexico schools and Ohio libraries. They warn that abruptly ending the programs would disrupt budgets, contracts, and planning for FY 2024–2025 applicants who relied on prior FCC commitments. Instead, they recommend any rule changes take effect starting in FY 2026, aligning with statutory requirements for predictability and transparency in the E-Rate program. COSSBA is a member of both EdLiNC and the Homework Gap Coalition. The letter can be viewed [here](#).

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

As the September 30, 2025 midnight funding deadline nears, the FY 2026 appropriations process remains deadlocked. House Republicans passed a “clean” continuing resolution (CR) to extend funding at existing levels, but Senate Democrats insisted on enhanced health care subsidies and other offsets in any stopgap measure they would support. Without a compromise, analysts and congressional observers increasingly warn of at least a partial government shutdown starting October 1.

Negotiations took a sharp turn last week when President Donald Trump canceled a planned White House meeting with Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY). In a social post, the president said he had “decided that no meeting with their Congressional Leaders could possibly be productive.” Schumer responded by accusing the president of “running away from the negotiating table,” while Jeffries posted: “Trump Always Chickens Out.” Despite Trump’s cancellation of last week’s meeting, it was announced yesterday that congressional leaders are again set to meet this afternoon with the President, less than two days before federal funding expires.

From Republican quarters, Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) said a shutdown “can still be avoided if Democrats ‘dial back’ their demands” on health care. Meanwhile, Speaker of the House Mike Johnson’s (R-LA) team contends that Democrats are holding funding “hostage” to health care policy changes.

Complicating the brewing crisis is [a memorandum from the Office of Management and Budget](#) circulated to federal agencies instructing them to prepare reduction-in-force (RIF) plans in the event of a shutdown, rather than rely solely on traditional furloughs. The memo directs agencies to identify programs whose funding would lapse, are not otherwise funded, and are “not consistent with the President’s priorities,” and to propose elimination of positions. Once the shutdown ends, agencies must revise these RIF plans “as needed to retain the minimal number of employees necessary to carry out statutory functions.” Some Democrats have condemned the memo as an intimidation tactic. Republicans, by contrast, frame the RIF planning as prudent contingency preparation.

The Senate is set to take another vote tomorrow on the GOP-backed stopgap bill, but it’s widely expected to fail again since the chamber already rejected it earlier this month. Meanwhile, the House is out subject to the call of the Chair this week, but expected to return next week. Although originally slated to be in session today and tomorrow, Speaker Johnson changed the status of those days in an effort to pressure Senate Democrats. House Democrats, however, remain in Washington

and plan to meet tonight to discuss the funding showdown. With the deadline quickly approaching, time is slipping away. Tick tock.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

How agencies will operate under a shutdown is unclear. In general, agencies must continue “excepted” functions related to the protection of life and property, debt, and other mandatory funding. But many routine programs would be suspended or curtailed. For the Department of Education, its most recent public contingency plan (dating to 2024) suggests that in week one of a shutdown, roughly 90 percent of staff would be furloughed, while limited excepted work would continue to protect life and property and maintain critical operations such as processing FAFSA, Pell Grants, and student loans. Beyond that, while most K-12 funding wouldn’t be affected right away, the department warns that protracted lapse could disrupt cash flow to school districts, colleges, and grantee institutions.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

ED MAKES RECORD FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN CHARTER SCHOOLS

The Department of Education has announced what it considers to be the largest investment to date in the Charter Schools Program (CSP), highlighting the Trump Administration’s broader push for school choice. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon described charter schools as “innovative educational models” that expand learning opportunities for students regardless of income or zip code. Grants were awarded across all six CSP categories: State Entity, Charter School Management Organization, Developer, State Facilities, Credit Enhancement, and Model Development and Dissemination. In addition, \$51.7 million in supplemental funding was provided to existing State Entity grantees to meet rising demand for charter schools, with a focus on civics, STEM, literacy, and career and technical education. Highlights of the announcement include \$293.7 million for six states through State Entity Grants to replicate and expand high-quality charter schools, \$263 million for 22 new charter management organizations—the largest amount in program history—to expand 147 schools, and \$126 million in State Facilities Incentive Grants to support per-pupil facilities aid programs. The Department also awarded \$95.4 million in Credit Enhancement Grants, the highest level in a decade, and \$27.6 million in Model Development and Dissemination Grants to 12 grantees to create toolkits, templates, and resources for charter operators. Seven Developer Grants totaling \$10.7 million were also issued, tripling the amount awarded last year. This announcement follows **\$60 million in additional funding unveiled during National Charter School Week in May** and marks an expansion of federal support aimed at expanding school choice.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT LAUNCHES 2026-27 FAFSA EARLY

On Thursday, the Department of Education announced the launch of the 2026-27 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, marking the earliest availability in the program’s history. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon emphasized that the Trump Administration prioritized accessibility and technical expertise to deliver the form ahead of schedule, contrasting it with the prior administration’s delayed rollout two years earlier that caused confusion for millions of students. The streamlined process now enables students to complete the form more quickly, with the Department highlighting improvements in user experience and system performance. Key

modernized features include a redesigned contributor invite system that allows students to invite parents or other contributors using secure codes, instant verification for new StudentAid.gov accounts to reduce processing delays, and enhanced security measures to provide colleges with more accurate data and stronger fraud protection. The form underwent beta testing beginning August 3, 2025. By September 23, data showed 43,531 applications started, 27,246 submitted, and 23,840 processed without rejection. User feedback reflected a 97% satisfaction rate, with 90% reporting that completion time was reasonable. Secretary McMahon certified the launch to Congress on August 27, meeting requirements under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended by the FAFSA Deadline Act, which mandates certification by September 1 and launch by October 1. Building on bipartisan measures such as the *FAFSA Simplification Act* and *FUTURE Act*, the Department also introduced enhancements including extended beta testing, an upgraded virtual assistant named Aidan, and a centralized digital portal, FAFSA Central, at fafsa.gov/fafsacentral. These updates are designed to give students, families, and institutions more reliable tools for planning higher education financing

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4. New Publications

Community Schools Impact on Student Outcomes: Evidence From California

Learning Policy Institute (September 2025)

This study assesses the extent to which the California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP) grants effectively reached high-need schools and evaluates the impact of community school practices induced and supported by the CCSPP implementation grants on student outcomes, including attendance, suspensions, and academic achievement.

Education at a Glance 2025

OECD (September 2025)

The OECD report recommends a comprehensive approach to ensuring equality of opportunity across all levels of education, as we increase both enrolment and quality to meet pressing skills needs. This begins with strong early childhood education systems, which are associated with better academic performance, and better outcomes for people, our societies and our economies.

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5. In the News

A Shutdown Would Give Trump More Power Over Federal Spending

The Washington Post (September 23, 2025)

A School In Kentucky Banned Phones. Remarkable Things Started Happening.

The Washington Post (September 26, 2025)

As CTE Transfers To Labor Department, Here's What Schools Need To Know

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AI 'Companions' Pose Risks To Student Mental Health. What Can Schools Do?

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Trump Administration To Hold Back Grants From NYC, Chicago, Fairfax Schools Over Trans Bathroom Policies

NBC News (September 25, 2025)

Schools Confront a New Reality: They Can’t Count on Federal Money

The Hechinger Report (September 18, 2025)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Monday, September 29, 2025

Agency Meeting: Religious Liberty Commission in Schools

Subject: The Justice Department will hold a meeting of the Religious Liberty Commission to discuss religious liberty issues in education from the perspectives of teachers and coaches, as well as religious liberty issues related to school funding, educational choice and the autonomy of faith-based schools.

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

Event: Innovating the Future of High School

Subject: The Bipartisan Policy Center will hold a virtual discussion on "America's Workforce: Plato or Pathways? Innovating the Future of High School."

Participants: Jay Heiler, CEO, Great Hearts Charter Schools; Erin Mote, CEO and founder, InnovateEDU; and others.

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

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.

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

Event: English as an Academic Discipline

Subject: The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research will hold a discussion on "Literature in Limbo: The state of English as an Academic Discipline."

Participants: Amanda Anderson, professor of English and humanities, Brown University; Michael Clune, professor, Ohio State University's Center for Civics, Culture and Society;

Christopher Scalia, senior fellow, AEI; Daniel Gibbons, associate professor, Catholic University of America; and Josh Katz, senior fellow, AEI.

Time: 5:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

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7. Future Hearings and Events

Thursday, October 9, 2025

Event: Collecting Data to Support Student Parent Success

Subject: The Urban Institute will hold a discussion on "Lessons on Collecting Data and Driving Change to Support Student Parent Success."

Participants: Nathan Sick, senior research associate, Urban Institute; Katonja Webb Walker, president, Kennedy-King College; Kevin Reif, student, Lane Community College; Veronica Herrero, executive vice chancellor, chief institutional advancement officer and chief of staff, City Colleges of Chicago; Gail Schull, vice president of student affairs, Klamath Community College; Tina Cheuk, associate professor of education, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo; and Johanna Aleman, basic needs coordinator, San Diego Mesa College.

Time: 12:30 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

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8. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor:

[S.2296](#), National Defense Authorization Act

[S.2806](#), to provide for automatic continuing appropriations

Consideration of nominations

House Floor:

Potential consideration of continuing appropriations bill.

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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](#)

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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