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**
     - **Federal Funding Distributions for Schools Are Far from Over**: Warning signs are piling up that schools could experience more funding turbulence in the coming months, even though Congress recently approved a federal budget with no major education cuts.
   - **Teacher Recruitment and Retention**
     - **In Rural America, a Teacher Pipeline from Abroad Starts to Dry Up:** Many rural U.S. school districts rely heavily on international teachers to fill chronic staffing shortages, yet new immigration policies under the current administration are making it far more expensive and uncertain for districts to sponsor foreign teachers.

2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
   - **Impact on State School Board Associations**

3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
   - **Senators Request GAO Investigation into Education Grant Transfers**: Last month, a group of Senate Democrats asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to investigate the Department of Education's decision to transfer management of several education grant programs to the Department of Labor as part of the Trump administration's effort to restructure the agency.

- **National Skills Coalition Launches "A New Promise of Work" Initiative:** Last week, the National Skills Coalition (NSC) launched "A New Promise of Work," a national initiative aimed at developing a forward-looking workforce policy agenda that expands access to skills training, quality jobs, and economic opportunity.
- **ED Proposes Rules to Launch Workforce Pell Grant Program:** On March 6, The Department of Education issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to implement the new Workforce Pell Grant program authorized under the *Working Families Tax Cuts Act*.
- **City Leaders Reimagine Public Spaces Through Playful Learning:** On Thursday, the Brookings Institution's Center for Universal Education hosted a webinar titled "From Evidence to Action: How Cities Are Investing in Playful Learning Landscapes."

4. New Publications

- **Annual Trends in K-12 Education**
  Hanover Research (March 2026)
  Drawn from Hanover's work with hundreds of public school districts, charter and private schools, regional educational agencies, state departments of education, and professional associations, the report highlights five trends Hanover's experts believe encapsulate the critical challenges confronting K-12 leaders in the year to come.

5. In the News

- **Rep. Kevin Kiley Leaves Republican Party to Run as an Independent**
  USA Today (March 10, 2026)
- **This 'No-Brainer' Tax Credit is Splitting Governors Down Party Line**
  The Washington Post (March 10, 2026)
- **Ed Tech Industry Scrambles to Fight a Wave of Bills to Limit Screen Time in Schools**
  K-12 Dive (December 8, 2025)

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

- **Markup: House Education and Workforce Committee**: The House Education and the Workforce Committee holds a markup of H.R. 7894, the "Truman Scholarship Clean House Act"; H.R. 7661, the "Stop the Sexualization of Children Act"; H.R. 7890, the "Science of Reading Act of 2026"; H.R. 7892, the "No Aid for Ghost Students Act of 2026"; H.R. 7891, the "Student Aid Fraud Oversight and Accountability Act of 2026"; H.R. 7893, the "Free Application for Federal Student Aid Verification Efficiency Act"; and H.R. 6084, the "Employee Retirement Income Security Act Litigation Reform Act."
  Tuesday at 10:15am ET
- **Digital Wellbeing for Kids and Teenagers**: Punchbowl News will hold a discussion on digital wellbeing for kids and teenagers.
  Wednesday at 8:30am ET
- **Senate HELP Committee Member Day**: The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee will hold a hearing on "Member Day."

Thursday at 10am ET

- **Beyond Test Scores: What the World's Best Systems Get Right**: The National Center on Education and the Economy will hold a virtual discussion on "Beyond Test Scores: What the World's Best Systems Get Right."
  Thursday at 11am ET
- **Education Budgeting 101: Status of Funding and Programs**: The Committee for Education Funding (CEF) will hold a webinar to provide a brief overview of education funding for FY 2025 and 2026 and the likely process and challenges for FY 2027, followed by discussion of two areas where the Administration has withdrawn funding or staffing: Minority-Serving Institutions and the Institute of Education Sciences
  Thursday at 2pm ET

7. On The Floor of Congress This Week
   - **Senate floor**
     - Consideration of nominations
     - Potential DHS appropriations
   - **House floor**
     - **H.R. 1958** – Deporting Fraudsters Act of 2026
     - **H.R. 4638** – Federal Working Animal Protection Act
     - **H.R. 556** – Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act

8. Important U.S. House and Senate Links

9. About BPAG

1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

FUNDING

FEDERAL FUNDING DISRUPTIONS FOR SCHOOLS ARE FAR FROM OVER

Warning signs are piling up that schools could experience more funding turbulence in the coming months, even though Congress recently approved a federal budget with no major education cuts. The Trump administration is pushing to rewrite grant rules across the federal government to more explicitly restrict efforts to prioritize racial equity and support undocumented immigrants. Several anticipated education grant competitions have not yet begun soliciting applications. And the Department of Education is testing rarely deployed mechanisms for doling out funds with fewer strings attached. On top of all that, ongoing efforts to shift Education Department program responsibilities to other agencies are raising fears that the routine process of accessing funding could soon become even more difficult for school districts and other grantees. Read more from *Education Week* here.

TEACHER RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

IN RURAL AMERICA, A TEACHER PIPELINE FROM ABROAD STARTS TO DRY UP

Many rural U.S. school districts rely heavily on international teachers to fill chronic staffing shortages, particularly in subjects such as math, science, and special education. New immigration policies under the Trump administration are making it far more expensive and uncertain for districts to sponsor foreign teachers, causing some schools to stop recruiting internationally or lose

teachers whose visas expire. Because rural districts already struggle to attract U.S. educators due to lower salaries and geographic isolation, the policy could worsen shortages and force schools to consider alternatives such as online instruction, hiring uncertified teachers, combining classes, or cutting course offerings. Some districts are trying to recruit locally or rely more on short-term J-1 cultural exchange visas, but school leaders say the changes threaten a key pipeline that many rural communities depend on to staff their classrooms. Read more on *ABC News* here.

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

Appropriators on Capitol Hill spent last week grappling with unfinished business from the current fiscal year even as they began to pivot toward the next budget cycle, underscoring how the appropriations process is increasingly overlapping across fiscal years.

The most immediate issue remains unresolved funding for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The House earlier passed legislation to fund the department through the end of the fiscal year in a largely party-line vote of 221–209, but the measure has stalled in the Senate, where it has repeatedly failed to reach the 60 votes required to advance. That impasse has extended a partial shutdown at DHS that began in mid-February and has now stretched for weeks, leaving some employees—particularly Transportation Security Administration workers—working without pay. House Majority Leader Steve Scalise (R-LA) said it is "dangerous" to continue the shutdown given the current threat environment, arguing that lawmakers should ensure DHS has "all the capabilities" it needs to operate. Democrats, meanwhile, say the dispute reflects deeper policy disagreements over immigration enforcement and oversight of DHS agencies. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) said negotiators remain engaged but acknowledged that the two sides are "still far apart" on a path forward.

Starting this week, both the House and Senate are scheduled to remain in session through the end of March before departing Washington for a two-week recess tied to Easter and Jewish holidays. In the meantime, the situation reflects a familiar dynamic on Capitol Hill: lawmakers juggling unfinished spending bills from the current fiscal year while simultaneously launching the next round of appropriations negotiations.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

Against this backdrop, lawmakers are beginning work on the next budget cycle. House appropriators have begun holding hearings on fiscal year (FY) 2027 spending requests and will continue that process this week as they gather testimony from agencies and outside witnesses. Those hearings are taking place ahead of the White House's expected release of its FY 2027 budget request during the week of March 30. Early signals from Capitol Hill suggest that the submission will likely take the form of a "skinny budget"—an abbreviated request outlining top-line priorities rather than detailed programmatic funding levels. Such a move would give the administration

additional time to reconcile competing priorities within the government, but could delay clarity on federal education funding levels that school districts rely on for planning.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

SENATORS REQUEST GAO INVESTIGATION INTO EDUCATION GRANT TRANSFERS

Last month, a group of Senate Democrats led by Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), along with Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Patty Murray (D-WA), and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to investigate the Department of Education's decision to transfer management of several education grant programs to the Department of Labor as part of the Trump administration's effort to restructure the agency. The transfer includes major programs such as Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V) and Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), which together provide more than $2 billion annually to support career and technical education and adult learning. Lawmakers argue the shift has delayed funding, increased administrative costs, and reduced the quality of technical assistance for schools and grantees. The senators asked GAO to examine the broader impact of these interagency agreements, including additional transfers announced in 2025, on program costs, funding access, and services for students and institutions. "We are deeply concerned that the administration's decisions to [transfer] grant programs in this manner delayed crucial funding that millions of students and schools rely on, created administrative inefficiencies, increased the cost of program administration, and compromised the quality of technical assistance provided to states and grantees," wrote the senators. The letter can be viewed here.

NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION LAUNCHES "A NEW PROMISE OF WORK" INITIATIVE

Last week, the National Skills Coalition (NSC) launched "A New Promise of Work," a national initiative aimed at developing a forward-looking workforce policy agenda that expands access to skills training, quality jobs, and economic opportunity. The effort will bring together workers, students, employers, and policymakers to reshape how the United States invests in workforce development, positioning it as a primary economic strategy rather than a fallback system. Throughout 2026, NSC will conduct listening sessions and engage local leaders across the country to identify challenges and opportunities in the workforce system, with the goal of releasing a comprehensive national policy agenda in 2027. The initiative is guided by a 34-member cross-sector advisory council and focuses on addressing issues such as affordability, equity, job quality, and adapting to economic changes driven by technology and demographic shifts. The members of the Advisory Council can be found here.

ED PROPOSES RULES TO LAUNCH WORKFORCE PELL GRANT PROGRAM

On March 6, The Department of Education issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to implement the new Workforce Pell Grant program authorized under the *Working Families Tax Cuts Act*. Beginning in July 2026, the program would allow students to use Pell Grants to enroll in short-term workforce training programs lasting as little as eight weeks (150–599 clock hours) that prepare participants for high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations. Eligible programs must be approved by a state governor in consultation with the state workforce board and meet accountability standards such as completion rates, job placement outcomes, and earnings gains. The proposal is the second of three rulemakings implementing the law's higher-education provisions and is open for public comment through April 8, 2026. "With this proposed rule, we

take an important step toward building a stronger postsecondary education system – one where the Federal government invests in short-term, high-quality programs aligned with a State's workforce needs, creating new affordable pathways to upward mobility for America's students and their families" said Under Secretary of Education Nicholas Kent. Deputy Secretary of Labor Keith Sonderling added, "President Trump's historic Working Families Tax Cuts are igniting incredible opportunities for Americans to gain hands-on skills that lead to good-paying jobs."

CITY LEADERS REIMAGINE PUBLIC SPACES THROUGH PLAYFUL LEARNING

On Thursday, the Brookings Institution's Center for Universal Education hosted a webinar titled "From Evidence to Action: How Cities Are Investing in Playful Learning Landscapes." The event brought together researchers and city leaders to discuss how local governments can integrate early childhood learning into everyday public spaces. Moderated by Sweta Shah, the discussion focused on the Playful Learning Landscapes initiative, which reimagines common community spaces, such as bus stops, parks, libraries, grocery stores, and laundromats, as opportunities for educational engagement. Speakers explained that cities are home to more than half of the world's population and are uniquely positioned to shape the environments where children and families spend most of their time, particularly since much learning occurs outside formal classrooms. Sarah Lytle (Playful Learning Landscapes) noted that playful learning landscapes combine community input, developmental science, and flexible design to create environments that support the skills children need to thrive. Andrés Bustamante (University of California, Irvine) highlighted research showing that these projects can improve educational outcomes, strengthen community connections, and promote intergenerational learning, citing examples where cultural knowledge from local families informed the design of math and language activities. Philadelphia Councilmember Anthony Phillips and Santa Ana City Manager Alvaro Nuñez discussed implementation challenges, including funding, partnerships, and bureaucratic barriers, but emphasized that many projects can be adapted and incorporated into existing development plans at minimal cost. Panelists concluded that successful programs depend on strong community engagement, cross-sector partnerships, and local champions willing to integrate child-focused design into broader city planning efforts.

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4. New Publications

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5. In the News

Rep. Kevin Kiley leaves Republican Party to run as an independent
USA Today (March 10, 2026)

This 'No-Brainer' Tax Credit Is Splitting Governors Down Party Lines
The Washington Post (March 10, 2026)

Ed Tech Industry Scrambles To Fight A Wave Of Bills To Limit Screen Time In Schools
NBC News (March 10, 2026)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

Markup: House Education and Workforce Committee
Subject: The House Education and the Workforce Committee holds a markup of H.R. 7894, the "Truman Scholarship Clean House Act"; H.R. 7661, the "Stop the Sexualization of Children Act"; H.R. 7890, the "Science of Reading Act of 2026"; H.R. 7892, the "No Aid for Ghost Students Act of 2026"; H.R. 7891, the "Student Aid Fraud Oversight and Accountability Act of 2026"; H.R. 7893, the "Free Application for Federal Student Aid Verification Efficiency Act"; and H.R. 6084, the "Employee Retirement Income Security Act Litigation Reform Act.".
Time: 10:15 a.m.
Contact: Live stream available **here.**

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Webinar: Digital Wellbeing for Kids and Teenagers
Subject: Punchbowl News will hold a discussion on digital wellbeing for kids and teenagers.
Participant: Rep. Erin Houchin (R-IN).
Time: 8:30 a.m.
Contact: Register **here.**

Thursday, March 19, 2026

Hearing: Senate HELP Committee Member Day
Subject: The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee will hold a hearing on "Member Day."
Time: 10:00 a.m.
Contact: Live stream available **here.**

Webinar: Beyond Test Scores: What the World's Best Systems Get Right
Subject: The National Center on Education and the Economy will hold a virtual discussion on "Beyond Test Scores: What the World's Best Systems Get Right."
Participants: Tracey Burns, chief global strategy and research officer, NCEE; Vicki Phillips, CEO, NCEE; Siew Hoong Wong, adviser, Singapore Ministry of Education; Sten Hapten, former senior leader, Estonian Ministry of Education; and Olli-Pekka Heinonen, former Finnish Minister of Education and Science.
Time: 11:00 a.m.
Contact: Register **here.**

Webinar: Education Budgeting 101: Status of Funding and Programs
Subject: The Committee for Education Funding (CEF) will hold a webinar to provide a brief overview of education funding for FY 2025 and 2026 and the likely process and challenges for

FY 2027, followed by discussion of two areas where the Administration has withdrawn funding or staffing: Minority-Serving Institutions and the Institute of Education Sciences
Participants: Sarah Abernathy, CEF; Rachel Dinkes, Knowledge Alliance; and Ximara Santos, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.
Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.
Contact: Register **here.**

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7. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor:
Consideration of nominations
Potential DHS appropriations

House Floor:
H.R. 1958 – Deporting Fraudsters Act of 2026 *(Sponsored by Rep. Taylor / Judiciary Committee)*

H.R. 4638 – Federal Working Animal Protection Act *(Sponsored by Rep. Calvert / Judiciary Committee)*

H.R. 556 – Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act *(Sponsored by Rep. Wittman / Natural Resources Committee)*

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

U.S. House and Senate 2026 Schedule
U.S. Department of Education
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U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. Senate Budget Committee
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Federal legislative information

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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

For more information, please visit our **website**.

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