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. **COSSBA Advocacy Actions**
   - **COSSBA Signs Coalition Letter Urging Continued Federal Investment in School Cybersecurity**: COSSBA joined a coalition of national education and library organizations in submitting a letter to the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Protection ahead of its hearing on state and local cybersecurity threats.

2. **News, Publications, & Updates on COSSBA Policy Priorities**
   - **School Cybersecurity**
     - **House Cybersecurity Panel Examines Education Vulnerabilities**: At a hearing on Thursday, the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Protection examined the growing cybersecurity threats facing state and local governments and the extent to which federal support should continue or expand.

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

4. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
   - **ED Advances State Flexibility Through Waiver, Ed-Flex Authority**: The Department of Education (ED) announced two actions aimed at shifting more education decision-making authority from Washington to states and local education agencies.

- **ED Finalizes Workforce Pell Grant Program for Short-Term Training:** The Department of Education announced a final rule implementing the Workforce Pell Grant program established under President Trump's Working Families Tax Cuts Act (also referred to as H.R. 1), which expands Federal Pell Grant eligibility beginning July 1, 2026.
- **Senate Appropriators Host Labor Department Leadership:** On Tuesday, the Senate Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee held a hearing on the Department of Labor's Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Request.
- **AEI Hosts Discussion of OBBBA's Federal Scholarship Tax Credit:** On Tuesday, the American Enterprise Institute hosted a panel discussion titled, "The Big, Beautiful Federal Scholarship Tax Credit: Delivering on Its Promise," which focused on the implementation of a new federal scholarship tax credit established under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA).
- **HELP Committee Examines School Choice for Students with Disabilities:** On Wednesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a hearing on charter schools and educational opportunities for students with disabilities and other underserved populations.
- **AEI Webinar Highlights Instructional "Illusions" in K-12 Education:** On Wednesday, the American Enterprise Institute hosted a webinar featuring education psychologists Paul A. Kirschner, Carl Hendrick, and Jim Heal in conversation with Robert Pondiscio to discuss their book, *Instructional Illusions*.

5. New Publications

- **Learning From the Teacher's Desk: A Science of Reading Progress Report**
  Thomas Fordham Institute (April 2026)
  Fordham researchers analyzed results from a nationally representative survey of K–3 teachers that examined their knowledge of reading science and its relationship to the policies that shape instruction.
- **Beyond the 'One-and-Done': Professional Development That Sticks**
  Education Week (May 2026)
  This report explores the state of professional development, highlighting examples of best practices for teachers and principals, how school districts make the space for professional learning on their calendars and in their budgets, and exclusive data on what educators have to say about the professional development they're receiving—or not.

6. In the News

- **Supreme Cassidy, HELP Committee Chair, Loses Re-Election Bid in Louisiana Primary**
  Inside Higher Ed (May 18, 2026)
- **HHS Seeks To Undo Biden-Era Head Start Reforms**
  K-12 Dive (May 19, 2026)
- **25 States Sue ED Over Grad Student Loan Limits**
  Inside Higher Ed (May 19, 2026)
- **U.S. Department of Education Announces Additional Measures to Reduce Federal Burden on States**

U.S. Department of Education (May 19, 2026)

- **National Assessment Governing Board to restore previously cut NAEP exams**
  K-12 Dive (May 21, 2026)

7. **Weekly Calendar - What's coming up this week?**
   - **AI and Adolescent Mental Health**: The RAND Corporation will hold a virtual discussion on "AI and Adolescent Mental Health."
     Wednesday at 12pm ET
   - **Understanding NAEP and NAGP:** COSSBA is hosting a webinar titled "Inside the Nation's Report Card: Understanding NAEP and NAGB.
     Wednesday at 1pm ET
   - **Incident Response and Vetting Educational Technology**: The US Department of Education will hold a webinar that leads participants through a simulated data breach and explores how to assess online educational technology for privacy protections and FERPA compliance.
     Wednesday at 2pm ET

8. **Weekly Calendar – Future Events**
   - **Camp Safety, Preparedness, and Protecting America's Youth**: The House Camp Caucus will hold a briefing on camp safety preparedness, lessons learned following the 2025 Texas flooding tragedy, and the importance of implementing the bipartisan Child Protection Improvements Act (CPIA).
     June 2 at 12:30pm
   - **Putting Students First in the Age of AI**: LEGO® Education will hold a webinar exploring how educators can preserve student agency and embrace creative learning in an era of increasing AI use in classrooms.
     June 3 at 3pm ET

9. **On The Floor of Congress This Week**
   - The House and Senate are in recess.

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

11. **About BPAG**

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1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

COSSBA ADVOCACY ACTIONS

COSSBA SIGNS COALITION LETTER ON SCHOOL CYBERSECURITY INVESTMENT

COSSBA joined a coalition of national education and library organizations in submitting a letter to the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Protection ahead of its hearing on state and local cybersecurity threats. The letter emphasized that K–12 schools and libraries continue to face growing risks from ransomware, phishing, and data breaches that can disrupt instruction, compromise sensitive information, and impact essential operations and student services. The coalition urged Congress to maintain and strengthen federal support for cybersecurity programs serving schools and libraries, including continued funding for the State

and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP), sustained investment in the FCC's Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program, and ongoing technical assistance and guidance from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). The letter highlighted findings that cybersecurity remains the top technology priority for school district leaders while many districts continue to lack dedicated funding and staffing capacity to address these threats. COSSBA and fellow signatories stressed that protecting school and library networks is essential not only for safeguarding student and employee data but also for ensuring educational continuity, community resilience, and reliable access to learning and support services. Read the letter here.

2. COSSBA Policy Priorities

SCHOOL CYBERSECURITY

HOUSE CYBERSECURITY PANEL EXAMINES EDUCATION VULNERABILITIES

At a hearing on Thursday, the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Protection examined the growing cybersecurity threats facing state and local governments and the extent to which federal support should continue or expand. Witnesses and members repeatedly warned that ransomware groups, nation-state actors, and AI-enabled cyber capabilities are increasing the speed and sophistication of attacks while many state and local entities remain understaffed and under-resourced. Particular attention was given to education-related vulnerabilities. Members cited the recent cyberattack on the Canvas learning management platform, which disrupted classes during final exams and, according to testimony, exposed sensitive information affecting schools and more than 275 million users, including students, teachers, and staff. Witnesses emphasized that schools and school districts are increasingly treated as part of critical public infrastructure because they maintain significant volumes of personally identifiable information and provide essential services. State officials highlighted efforts to extend cybersecurity protections directly to local schools through statewide shared services, workforce training, endpoint protection, and grant-supported security tools. New York specifically referenced providing cybersecurity resources and multifactor authentication capabilities to local governments and school districts, while Tennessee described outreach and training efforts across local governments and school systems. Members also raised concerns that reductions in federal support mechanisms, including grant programs and information-sharing networks, could leave schools and other education entities more exposed to future attacks.

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3. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

Last week, Congress continued laying the groundwork for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 appropriations process while simultaneously devoting significant attention to Republican efforts to advance a reconciliation package containing major White House and GOP policy priorities. On May 19, Acting Labor Secretary Keith Sonderling testified before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS) regarding the administration's proposed FY 2027 budget request for the Department of Labor, which seeks approximately $10.7 billion in discretionary funding and emphasizes workforce development, deregulation, and agency restructuring. During the hearing, Subcommittee Chair Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) and Ranking Member Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) signaled their intention to continue the committee's longstanding bipartisan approach to crafting the annual LHHS appropriations bill. Capito pointed to the subcommittee's history of bipartisan collaboration on investments in biomedical research, workforce development, education, childcare, and opioid response programs,

while Baldwin emphasized Congress's role in shaping final funding decisions and protecting programs supported by both parties.

Congressional Republicans spent much of last week attempting to resolve internal disagreements over a sweeping budget reconciliation package intended to advance major White House and GOP priorities on taxes, border security, energy, defense, and federal spending reductions. Negotiations became increasingly complicated as House leadership struggled to balance demands from fiscal conservatives, moderates, and the White House itself, ultimately contributing to the cancellation of a planned House floor vote on Thursday after leaders concluded they lacked sufficient support to proceed. In addition to longstanding disputes, new White House requests added further tension to the talks, including President Trump's push to include approximately $1 billion for construction of a new White House ballroom and a proposed compensation fund for individuals whom the administration says were harmed by alleged "weaponization" of the Justice Department. Some Republicans privately expressed concern that the additions could complicate efforts to maintain caucus unity and expose vulnerable members to criticism that the legislation is becoming overloaded with politically sensitive or unrelated provisions. Democrats sharply criticized the proposals, arguing they distract from broader fiscal and economic concerns surrounding the package.

The collapse of the planned House vote underscored the difficult path ahead for reconciliation legislation, particularly given the narrow Republican margins in both chambers and the need to satisfy competing factions while remaining compliant with Senate budget reconciliation rules. The emerging disputes are likely to delay committee work, complicate negotiations between House and Senate Republicans, and increase pressure on leadership to scale back or restructure portions of the package. President Trump's stated goal of signing reconciliation legislation by June 1 now appears highly unlikely, with lawmakers increasingly signaling that negotiations could extend well into the summer before a final package capable of passing both chambers emerges.

The House and Senate are observing the Memorial Day recess this week. Looking ahead, the House Appropriations Committee has indicated it plans to begin marking up its FY 2027 LHHS appropriations bill in early June, formally launching the next phase of negotiations over one of Congress's largest and most closely watched annual spending measures.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

The early appropriations discussions suggest continued pressure to balance investments in education and workforce development against broader efforts to reduce federal spending and restructure agencies. At the same time, delays and uncertainty surrounding reconciliation negotiations could compress the timeline for final budget decisions and increase the likelihood of shifting funding priorities later this year. For school boards, this means paying close attention to upcoming appropriations negotiations because they could affect federal support for K–12 education, career and technical education (CTE), workforce pipeline programs, childcare supports

that impact school communities, and other grant programs districts rely on for staffing, student services, and long-term planning.

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4. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

ED ADVANCES STATE FLEXIBILITY THROUGH WAIVER, ED-FLEX AUTHORITY

The Department of Education (ED) announced two actions aimed at shifting more education decision-making authority from Washington to states and local education agencies. First, ED approved Louisiana's "Returning Education to the States" waiver, allowing the state to consolidate more than $18 million in federal state activity funding through FY2029 and giving state leaders greater flexibility to align federal education dollars with state priorities rather than separate federal program administration requirements. According to ED, Louisiana will still track funding streams separately but will have additional discretion over how those resources are deployed to support students and schools. Separately, ED announced additional steps to reduce federal administrative burden by expanding Education Flexibility (Ed-Flex) authority, approving applications from Florida and Illinois and bringing the total number of participating states to 18. Ed-Flex allows state education agencies to waive certain federal statutory and regulatory requirements for districts and schools without first seeking case-by-case approval from the Department, which ED argues will streamline implementation and increase local control over education policy and spending decisions.

ED FINALIZES WORKFORCE PELL GRANT PROGRAM FOR SHORT-TERM TRAINING

The Department of Education announced a final rule implementing the Workforce Pell Grant program established under President Trump's Working Families Tax Cuts Act (also referred to as the H.R. 1), which expands Federal Pell Grant eligibility beginning July 1, 2026, to students enrolled in qualifying short-term workforce training programs. The program is intended to support access to educational pathways that lead to employment in high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand fields, including certain career and technical education, certificate, and apprenticeship-related programs that may be completed in as little as eight weeks. Under the rule, governors, in consultation with state workforce boards, will identify eligible industries and programs, which must meet specified requirements related to duration, completion outcomes, employment results, and return on investment. The rule also permits interstate collaboration through bilateral agreements to support distance education offerings across state lines. As part of the announcement, Secretary of Education Linda McMahon stated, "The Trump Administration's postsecondary education agenda is straightforward: we should shift away from high-cost, low-value programs to low-cost, high-value programs." The Department noted that the final rule follows negotiated rulemaking and consideration of more than 500 public comments received after publication of the proposed rule.

SENATE APPROPRIATORS HOST LABOR DEPARTMENT LEADERSHIP

On Tuesday, the Senate Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee held a hearing on the Department of Labor's Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Budget Request. Acting Labor Secretary Keith Sonderling was the sole witness. Acting Secretary Sonderling presented the Administration's proposal as a restructuring effort focused on reducing federal spending, consolidating workforce programs, expanding apprenticeships, streamlining immigration-related labor functions, and shifting enforcement agencies toward compliance

assistance and efficiency measures. The proposal's centerpiece is the new "Make America Skilled Again" (MASA) initiative, which would consolidate workforce development funding and require states to dedicate a portion to registered apprenticeships. Republican members generally emphasized workforce participation, apprenticeship expansion, deregulation, immigration processing improvements, and outcome-based accountability, while Democratic members raised concerns that proposed cuts would weaken workforce training, Job Corps, OSHA enforcement, and education-related services. Job Corps emerged as s contentious issue, with senators from both parties defending local program successes and arguing that eliminating the program could undermine workforce pipelines, particularly in shipbuilding and defense sectors. Additional discussion focused on H-2A and H-2B visa backlogs, interagency agreements shifting education-related administration to Labor, WIOA performance reforms, labor data modernization, and broader questions about whether the Administration's proposed budget can achieve workforce goals with significantly reduced federal funding. A comprehensive summary prepared by BPAG is here.

AEI HOSTS DISCUSSION OF OBBBA'S FEDERAL SCHOLARSHIP TAX CREDIT

On Tuesday, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) hosted a panel discussion titled, "The Big, Beautiful Federal Scholarship Tax Credit: Delivering on Its Promise," which focused on the implementation of a new federal scholarship tax credit established under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA). The panel, hosted by AEI's Director of Education Policy Studies, Frederick Hess, included a number of experts on federal scholarship credits and school choice, including Jim Blew, Adviser with the Federal Scholarship Tax Credit Coalition; Robert Enlow, President of EdChoice; Lesley Searcy, Vice President of the Children's Scholarship Fund; and Rob Kremer, Founder of the National Scholarship Granting Organization. The newly established program would allow individual taxpayers to receive a federal tax credit of up to $1,700 for donations to approved scholarship granting organizations (SGOs) to support low- and middle-income students pursuing private or alternative educational options. Much of the conversation centered on the practical and regulatory challenges associated with launching the program ahead of its planned January 2027 implementation date and the steps Congress and ED will need to take in order to ensure the program's success. Several panelists discussed the recommendations outlined in AEI's recent report, "Making the Federal Scholarship Tax Credit a Success," which argues Treasury guidance should prioritize state flexibility, minimize compliance burdens on private schools, and provide clear definitions for participating SGOs and eligible educational expenses. Speakers also highlighted the broader national implications of the program for school choice efforts, as the program represents the first federally authorized tax credit scholarship initiative supporting K-12 educational choice.

HELP COMMITTEE EXAMINES SCHOOL CHOICE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

On Wednesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a hearing on charter schools and educational opportunities for students with disabilities and other underserved populations. Chairman Bill Cassidy (R-LA) framed the discussion around parental choice, arguing that charter schools can provide flexible educational options tailored to individual student needs, particularly for students with dyslexia and other disabilities. Republican members emphasized school choice, innovation, and the role of charter schools in providing alternatives when traditional public schools are unable to adequately serve certain students. Witness testimony focused heavily on specialized charter schools serving students with disabilities. Debbie Vaughn, founder of Lakes and Bridges Charter School in South Carolina, described how inadequate

dyslexia support in traditional public schools led her family to establish a charter school centered on evidence-based reading interventions and individualized instruction. Moranda Jackson, a parent and employee at GEO Next Generation High School in Louisiana, testified that the charter school environment helped her daughters succeed academically, earning college credits and graduating as valedictorians. Democratic members, including Senators Andy Kim (D-NJ) and Tim Kaine (D-VA), focused on federal funding and accountability for special education services. Jennifer Coco of the Center for Learner Equity testified that Congress currently funds only about 10% of its obligations under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), despite the original commitment to fund up to 40%, creating financial strain for both charter and traditional public schools serving students with disabilities. Members also raised concerns about Department of Education staffing reductions and the potential impact on civil rights enforcement. Despite differing views on charter schools, witnesses and senators broadly agreed that students with disabilities need stronger support systems and improved educational outcomes. Watch the full recording of the hearing here.

AEI WEBINAR HIGHLIGHTS INSTRUCTIONAL "ILLUSIONS" IN K–12 EDUCATION

On Wednesday, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) hosted a webinar featuring education psychologists Paul A. Kirschner, Carl Hendrick, and Jim Heal in conversation with Robert Pondiscio to discuss their book, *Instructional Illusions*. The discussion focused on persistent misconceptions in K–12 teaching practices and how findings from cognitive science can better inform classroom instruction. Dr. Kirschner opened the event by outlining the book's central argument: that "instructional illusions" differ from outright teaching myths because they contain an element of truth, making them especially persuasive and persistent in education settings. The panel explored several widely accepted instructional assumptions, including the belief that emotional or social engagement necessarily reflects meaningful learning, the expectation that students learn best through independent discovery, the oversimplified distinction between student-centered and teacher-led instruction, and the frequent overreliance on group work in classroom environments. Panelists argued that many popular educational practices continue despite limited empirical support and discussed evidence-based approaches—including retrieval practice, worked examples, and explicit guided instruction—that align more closely with research on how students learn. During the audience Q&A, participants raised questions about the reliability and replication of psychology research in education, concerns about the perception that "teacher talk" negatively affects learning outcomes, and how research on effective pedagogy should inform the development and integration of AI tutoring technologies in schools. The panel concluded by emphasizing the importance of grounding instructional decisions in evidence while remaining thoughtful about emerging educational technologies.

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5. New Publications

From the Teacher's Desk: A Science of Reading Progress Report
Thomas Fordham Institute (April 2026)
Fordham researchers analyzed results from a nationally representative survey of K–3 teachers that examined their knowledge of reading science and its relationship to the policies that shape instruction.

Beyond the 'One-and-Done': Professional Development That Sticks
Education Week (May 2026)
This report explores the state of professional development, highlighting examples of best practices for teachers and principals, how school districts make the space for professional learning on their calendars and in their budgets, and exclusive data on what educators have to say about the professional development they're receiving—or not.

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6. In the News

Cassidy, HELP Committee Chair, Loses Re-Election Bid in Louisiana Primary
Inside Higher Ed (May 18, 2026)

HHS Seeks To Undo Biden-Era Head Start Reforms
K-12 Dive (May 19, 2026)

25 States Sue ED Over Grad Student Loan Limits
Inside Higher Ed (May 19, 2026)

U.S. Department of Education Announces Additional Measures to Reduce Federal Burden on States
U.S. Department of Education (May 19, 2026)

National Assessment Governing Board to restore previously cut NAEP exams
K-12 Dive (May 21, 2026)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

7. Weekly Calendar

Wednesday, May 27, 2026

Webinar: AI and Adolescent Mental Health
Subject: The RAND Corporation will hold a virtual discussion on "AI and Adolescent Mental Health."
Participants: Ryan McBain, senior policy researcher, RAND; and Peter Hussey, vice president and director, RAND Health.
Time: 12:00 p.m.
Contact: Register **here.**

Webinar: Understanding NAEP and NAGB
Subject: Join COSSBA for an informative webinar exploring the role of the National Assessment Governing Board and the nation's report card, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Contact: Register **here.**

Webinar: Incident Response and Vetting Educational Technology
Subject: The Department of Education will hold a webinar that leads participants through a simulated data breach and explores how to assess online educational technology for privacy protections and FERPA compliance.
Time: 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Contact: Register **here.**

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8. Future Hearings and Events

Tuesday, June 2, 2026

Briefing: Camp Safety, Preparedness, and Protecting America's Youth
Subject: The House Camp Caucus will hold a briefing on camp safety preparedness, lessons learned following the 2025 Texas flooding tragedy, and the importance of implementing the bipartisan Child Protection Improvements Act (CPIA).
Time: 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Location: 2075 Rayburn House Office Building
Contact: RSVP **here.**

Wednesday, June 3, 2026

Webinar: Putting Students First in the Age of AI
Subject: LEGO® Education will hold a webinar exploring how educators can preserve student agency and embrace creative learning in an era of increasing AI use in classrooms.
Participants: Dr. Mitch Resnick, LEGO Papert professor of learning research, MIT Media Lab, founder, Scratch; Dr. Sabba Quidwai, CEO, Designing Schools, director, Innovative Learning, University of Southern California; and Andrew Sliwinski, head of product, LEGO® Education, trustee, Raspberry Pi Foundation.
Time: 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Contact: Register **here.**

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9. On The Floor of Congress This Week

The House and Senate are in recess.

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

U.S. House and Senate 2026 Schedule
U.S. Department of Education
U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. Senate Budget Committee
U.S. House Budget Committee
Congressional Budget Office
Federal legislative information

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10. **About BPAG**

Bose Public Affairs Group is a full-service government affairs and public relations consulting firm that has built a reputation for producing results. We partner with clients committed to excellence in education and other social services to achieve policy and advocacy success by:

- leveraging our expertise and passion;
- strategizing intelligent solutions; and,
- Creating meaningful impact.

Our team includes long-term insiders in education policy from Pre-K through higher education, innovative thinkers and savvy strategists that provide a comprehensive array of customized client services. We have the knowledge, skills, and relationships that are necessary for successful advocacy at all levels. From grassroots to grass tops and everything in between, our broad-based legislative practice approaches every project with the same degree of determination and professionalism. BPAG provides expertise in a variety of services:

- Government Relations
- Research and Analysis
- Advocacy Training
- Association Management
- Strategic Communications
- Policy Events

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

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