



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

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

1. **News, Publications, & Updates on COSSBA Policy Priorities**
 - **Teacher-Principal Training and Recruitment**
 - **Reps. Wilson, Bowman Announce Reintroduction of American Teacher Act**
 - **Child Nutrition**
 - **Agriculture Secretary Announces New Standards for School Meals:** U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack participated in a Healthy School Meals Roundtable, where he **announced** major initiatives at the Department of Agriculture (USDA) that will support and enhance the health of America's children through nutritious school meals.
 - **Senate Ag Committee to Hold Farm Bill Nutrition Hearing:** The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry will **hold a hearing** on Thursday to examine nutrition provisions in the 2023 Farm Bill. There are several child nutrition-related policies that can be included in the Farm Bill.
2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
 - **Impact on State School Board Associations**
3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
 - **Local School District Leaders Look at Increased Political Polarization:** The RAND Corporation hosted a webinar titled, “How School Districts are responding

to Political Polarization.” The panelists highlighted how political polarization impacts educators.

- **President Biden Address the Nation:** President Joe Biden delivered his annual State of the Union address to Congress. On education, Biden addressed access to high-speed internet, the Child Tax Credit, and teacher salary increases.
- **Universal Design for Learning and Supporting Individual Learning Needs:** The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) and the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading hosted a webinar titled, “Learning to Read: Applying Universal Design for Learning.” Panelists highlighted how implementing UDL models in schools can support the learning needs of every child.
- **Chairwoman Foxx Holds Hearing on State of Education in America:** The House Education and the Workforce Committee held its first hearing in the 118th Congress. The four-hour hearing titled, “American Education in Crisis,” examined American education in a broad context. Topics included student loans, mental health, critical race theory, and workforce development.
- **Senate HELP Committee Holds Organizing Hearing:** The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee held an organizing hearing to adopt a rules plan for the 118th Congress.

4. **New Publications**

- **Five Ways to Support Effective Data and Research Use in Early Learning**
American Enterprise Institute (January, 2023)
This AEI report finds that as states and the federal government try to maximize the impact of their investment in pre-K, data and research can help them leverage their dollars most effectively.

5. **In the News**

- **Biden Makes Case for ‘Best-Educated Workforce with Universal Pre-K, Teacher Raises in SOTU**
The Hill (February 7, 2023)
- **HHS Creates Research, Technical Assistance Center for Early Ed Workforce**
K-12 Dive (February 6, 2023)
- **Department of Education Releases New Data Showing ARP and Other Pandemic Relief Funds Kept Millions of College Students Enrolled in School**
U.S. Department of Education (February 1, 2023)

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

- **Congressional Town Hall: Teacher Pay Crisis:** Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Chairman Bernie Sanders, (I-VT) will hold a discussion on "Respecting Our Teachers: A Town Hall on the Teacher Pay Crisis in America."
Monday, February 13 at 7:15pm ET
- **Hearing: Senate Judiciary on Protecting Children Online:** The Senate Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing on "Protecting Our Children Online."
Tuesday, February 14 at 10am ET
- **Webinar: Creating Conditions and Environments for Thriving Kindergarteners:** The New America Foundation will hold a webinar on the key conditions to help young children thrive.

Tuesday, February 14 at 3pm ET

- **Webinar: Education Budgeting 101**: The Committee for Education Funding (CEF) will hold a webinar on “Education Budgeting 101.”

Wednesday, February 15 at 2pm ET

- **Webinar: Opportunities to Expand Computer Science Education**: The Education Commission of the States will hold a webinar to explore opportunities to expand computer science education.

Thursday, February 16 at 1pm

- **Event: Education Systems Transformation Symposium**: The Brookings Institution will hold its Education Systems Transformation Symposium.

Friday, February 17 at 9am – 6pm ET

7. **Future Hearings & Events**

- **Webinar: Parents’ Child Care Choice**: The Bipartisan Policy Center will hold a virtual discussion on "Parents' Child Care Choices: What We've Learned."

Tuesday, February 21 at 3pm ET

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

- **Senate: Consideration of nominations**
- **House: In recess until Monday, February 27**

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

1. **COSSBA Policy Priorities**

TEACHER-PRINCIPAL TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT

On Wednesday, February 8, Representatives Frederica Wilson (D-FL) and Jamaal Bowman (D-NY) announced the reintroduction of the American Teacher Act. They were joined by American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten; National Education Association President Becky Pringle; and Teacher Salary Project Board President Ellen Sherratt. The bill was previously introduced in December of 2022, prior to the new Congress taking over. The American Teacher Act, if passed, would provide grants to states to support increased teacher salaries. More specifically, the legislation intends to combat the national teacher shortage by raising the minimum teacher salary to \$60,000 nationwide. “It’s time for Congress to send the President a bill – a bill that raises teacher salaries nationwide,” Congresswoman Wilson said. She continued, “Today we’re taking the first step towards doing just that. I stand here with my colleagues and education leaders on the front lines to fight for a livable wage for our teachers.” Wednesday’s press event can be viewed [here](#).

CHILD NUTRITION

On Friday, February 3, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack participated in a Healthy School Meals Roundtable, where he **announced** major initiatives at the Department of Agriculture (USDA) that will support and enhance the health of America's children through nutritious school meals. Last year, USDA issued **transitional nutrition standards for School Years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024** to give schools clear guidance after requirements were temporarily loosened during the Covid-19 pandemic. This gave the Food and Nutrition Service

(FNS) time to develop the updated standards from the latest dietary guidelines. These updated standards include limiting added sugars in certain high-sugar products; allowing flavored milk in certain circumstances and with reasonable limits on added sugars; reducing weekly sodium limits over several school years; and prioritizing products that are primarily whole grain, with the option for occasional non-whole grain products. “Our commitment to the school meal programs comes from a common goal we all share – keeping kids healthy and helping them reach their full potential,” Vilsack said. “Many children aren’t getting the nutrition they need, and diet-related diseases are on the rise.” Read more on USDA’s efforts [here](#).

In other nutrition-related news, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry will hold a hearing on Thursday to examine nutrition provisions in the 2023 Farm Bill. There are several child nutrition-related policies that can be included in the Farm Bill, such as the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), which was amended in the 2008 and 2014 farm bills. In addition, farm bills sometimes include provisions related to food purchasing and distribution in child nutrition programs. The 2018 farm bill, the most recent farm bill, extended funding for USDA’s purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables for child nutrition programs and required USDA to enforce “Buy American” (domestic purchasing) rules for schools participating in the National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program.

Even so, Child nutrition is mostly addressed via the Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) outside of farm bills. CNR refers to Congress’s process of making changes to the permanent statutes that authorize the child nutrition programs, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and related activities.

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

There was a time that the sitting president’s State of the Union Address signaled the start of the annual budget and appropriations process. The president laid out a vision in January, followed by a budget request that supported that vision in February, and Congress reacted to that request and devised their own annual spending plans in the following months, with the House and Senate ultimately negotiating on their respective approaches to federal funding and passing final legislation before the first day of the new fiscal year—October 1. It’s unlikely the process will play out like that this year, but the State of the Union has been delivered. The next step—the FY2024 budget release—is expected in early March.

It’s a challenge for any president to say all he wants in one speech about the state of the country, so often the references are brief. President Biden did address education, making the case for universal preschool and teacher raises to help create the “best-educated workforce” in the world. The forthcoming budget request is expected to build on his previous requests for more Title I funding as well as efforts to support the teaching workforce.

As for others in Washington, key to the annual appropriations process, the House Budget Committee met for the first time last week for a brief organizational meeting. Ranking Member Brendan Doyle (D-PA) stressed the need for a positive tone and collegiality as lawmakers get to work on budget-related issues, including a debt ceiling standoff and looming default this

summer. The Budget Committee should aim to “raise the bar to the highest level possible,” he said.

The House Education and the Workforce Committee held its first hearing last week as well. The hearing, titled, “American Education in Crisis,” addressed policies across K-12 and higher education, and the connection between education and workforce needs. Gender identity, parents’ rights, school choice, and the expenditure of COVID relief funds came up often during the four-hour hearing. The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee will hold its first hearing this week; the focus will be healthcare workforce shortages.

The Senate will be in town this week while the House begins a two-week district work period. The Senate will join them the week of the 20th and both chambers will be in session the week of the 27th.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

“Federal budgets are an expression of values,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona when referencing the Education Department’s FY2023 Budget Request last year. Biden-Harris budget requests have made significant investments in federal education programs, reversing years of underinvestment. Last year’s budget request included \$36.5 billion for Title I (federal funding for public schools), which more than doubled the program’s funding compared to the 2021 enacted level. It is likely that we will see increases in education funding requested by the President again this year, although with Republicans in charge of the House pushing for steep budget cuts, coupled with delays in the budget process, it is unlikely that those requests will be fulfilled. Republicans currently plan to pass FY2024 appropriations at FY2022 levels, which would be far below the President’s request and Democrat hopes; and a goal that already has some predicting a possible government shutdown later this year.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT LEADERS LOOK AT INCREASED POLITICAL POLARIZATION

On Monday, February 6, the RAND Corporation hosted a webinar titled, “How School Districts are Responding to Political Polarization.” The event featured Ashley Jochim, principal at the Center for Reinventing Public Education; RAND assistant policy researchers Ashley Wood and Melissa Diliberti; and Heather Schwatz, director of pre-k-12 educational systems programs at RAND. The panelists highlighted how political polarization impacts educators. Woo noted how teachers and school districts are dealing with heightened Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests; requests to remove books; and threats against educators and school board members. Woo and Schwatz also highlighted that many teachers do not know whether their states have enacted restrictions and implied that teachers feel that they are lacking support from district leaders. The panelists asserted that this political conflict is unlikely to go away, but districts may be able to reduce its impacts by increasing engagement with their community; providing more information about the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of teaching related to controversial topics; establishing clear processes for complaints and opt-out requests so that school staff aren’t navigating these issues on their own; and, supporting teachers with resources and professional development related to the teaching on sensitive subjects. More information on the webinar can be found [here](#).

PRESIDENT BIDEN ADDRESSES THE NATION

On Tuesday, February 7, President Joe Biden delivered his annual State of the Union address to Congress. He used the address as a launching pad for a likely reelection announcement, even though current polls show he still needs to convince voters that he deserves a second term. He also argued that the economy and Americans' day-to-day lives are better than when he took office. As was evident by the [list of invited guests](#) of the First Lady and Second Gentleman, the speech touched on varied topics, including implementation of several legislative achievements since President Biden took office, such as bipartisan infrastructure legislation, the CHIPS and Science Act and the Inflation Reduction Act, as well as plans for addressing cancer research, violent crime, economic opportunity, child care, and various education issues. Regarding education issues, President Biden noted efforts to ensure that every community has access to affordable, high-speed internet, saying, "No parent should have to drive to a McDonald's parking lot so their kid can do their homework online." He urged his audience to restore the full Child Tax Credit and provide access to pre-school for 3- and 4-year olds. He also said, "Let's give public school teachers a raise." In the higher education arena, he pointed to progress in reducing student debt and increasing Pell Grants, but, said, "Let's finish the job," by connecting students to career opportunities starting in high school, providing two years of community college and pathways to four-year degrees. A memo from Bose Public Affairs Group on the President's address can be found [here](#).

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING AND SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL LEARNING NEEDS

On Tuesday, February 7, The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) and the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading hosted a webinar titled, "Learning to Read: Applying Universal Design for Learning." The event featured Lindsay Jones, chief executive officer of CAST; Becky Canham, an implementation specialist for the California Coalition for Inclusive Literacy; Jennifer Levine, PreK-12 chief academic officer for CAST; and Benjamin Powers, director of the Global Literacy Hub at the Yale Child Study Center. Powers and Jones commented on the latest developments in neurobiology research, with Jones explaining that "over the last ten to fifteen years, we have seen so much progress in neuroscience – the science of how we learn. And yet, we are struggling to implement this quickly and easily into our classrooms, resulting from our brains being more different than alike." Panelists explained that the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) guidelines offer a set of concrete suggestions that can be applied to any discipline to ensure universal accessibility and participation and highlighted how implementing UDL models in schools can support the learning needs of every child. Jones stated that America's current education system can severely limit the success of marginalized students, noting that while we continue examining how children learn to read, we must recognize the diversity that exists within the system and cater to the individual needs of children. Lastly, Levine discussed equality and equity in UDL, suggesting that professionals consider "the areas where there may be variability [when] designing a system around the student and their needs." A question and answer session also touched on teacher shortages, the importance of individual differences, and the validity of UDL. An archived recording of the event can be found [here](#).

CHAIRWOMAN FOXX HOLDS HEARING ON STATE OF EDUCATION IN AMERICA

On Wednesday, February 8, the House Education and the Workforce Committee held its first hearing in the 118th Congress. The four-hour hearing titled, "American Education in Crisis," examined American education in a broad context. Topics included student loans, mental health, critical race theory, and workforce development. The broad nature of the hearing led to some

contentious exchanges between members. Republicans on the committee focused primarily on issues pertaining to critical race theory, gender, and school shutdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Democrats directed their questions primarily towards Governor Jared Polis (D-CO), and he focused primarily on education policies and accomplishments in the state of Colorado. The hearing gave observers glimpses into what issues are resonating with members of the panel—new and old. It also showed that there are many issues of interest across the panel. While so-called “parents’ rights” dominated comments and questions from the Republicans on the panel, they were also interested in career and technical education, competency-based education, and meeting the needs of the country’s workforce. There was concern on both sides of the aisle regarding disappointing achievement among the country’s K-12 students and how to remedy it; there was also broad support for innovation in education, apprenticeships, and appropriate accountability. There will be reintroduction of many bills familiar to the education advocacy community in coming weeks and months, but it remains to be seen what might make any progress in a Congress controlled by Republicans by the thinnest of margins and a Senate being led by Democrats. A recording the hearing is available [here](#).

SENATE HELP COMMITTEE HOLDS ORGANIZING HEARING

On Thursday, February 9, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee held an organizing hearing to adopt a rules plan for the 118th Congress. Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) opened the hearing by touting the committee’s historic ability to work in a bipartisan fashion. Sanders also outlined his priorities for the coming Congress. On education, Sanders expressed support for lowering the costs of childcare. He also used his time to talk about teacher pay, endorsing the idea that there should be legislation raising their salaries. On postsecondary education, Sanders said that apprenticeship programs should be expanded. Ranking Member Bill Cassidy (R-LA) used his time to talk about the need to reauthorize certain pieces of legislation; he specifically mentioned the need reauthorize the Higher Education Act, which hasn’t been reauthorized since 2014. A recording of the hearing can be found [here](#).

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4. New Publications

Five Ways to Support Effective Data and Research Use in Early Learning

American Enterprise Institute (January, 2023)

This AEI report finds that as states and the federal government try to maximize the impact of their investment in pre-K, data and research can help them leverage their dollars most effectively.

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5. In the News

Biden makes case for ‘best-educated workforce’ with universal pre-K, teacher raises in SOTU

The Hill (February 7, 2023)

HHS Creates Research, Technical Assistance Center for Early Ed Workforce

K-12 Dive (February 6, 2023)

Department of Education Releases New Data Showing the American Rescue Plan and Other Pandemic Relief Funds Kept Millions of College Students Enrolled in School
U.S. Department of Education (February 1, 2023)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Monday, February 13, 2023

Congressional Town Hall: Teacher Pay Crisis

Subject: Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Chairman Bernie Sanders, (I-VT) will hold a discussion on "Respecting Our Teachers: A Town Hall on the Teacher Pay Crisis in America."

Presenters: Rebecca Pringle, president, National Education Association; and Randi Weingarten, president, American Federation of Teachers.

Time: 7:15 p.m. ET

Registration: Live stream available [here](#).

Tuesday, February 14, 2023

Hearing: Senate Judiciary on Protecting Children Online

Subject: The Senate Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing on "Protecting Our Children Online."

Time: 10:00 a.m. ET

Registration: Live stream available [here](#).

Webinar: Creating Conditions and Environments for Thriving Kindergarteners

Subject: The New America Foundation will hold a webinar on the key conditions to help young children thrive.

Presenters: Laura Bornfreund (moderator), New America; Hedy Chang, Attendance Works; Rebecca Colbert, National Wildlife Federation; Ann Kay, The Rock 'n' Read Project; and Natalie Walrond, Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety, WestEd.

Time: 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. ET

Registration: Register [here](#).

Wednesday, February 15, 2023

Webinar: Education Budgeting 101

Subject: The Committee for Education Funding (CEF) will hold a webinar on "Education Budgeting 101."

Presenters: Emily Goff, professional staff member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education (Majority); and Alex Keenan, staff director, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education (Majority).

Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. ET

Registration: Register [here](#).

Thursday, February 16, 2023

Webinar: Opportunities to Expand Computer Science Education

Subject: The Education Commission of the States will hold a webinar to explore opportunities to expand computer science education.

Time: 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. ET

Registration: Register [here](#).

Friday, February 17, 2023

Event: Education Systems Transformation Symposium

Subject: The Brookings Institution will hold its Education Systems Transformation Symposium.

Time and Location: 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. ET; Brookings 1775 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C.

Registration: Register and full agenda [here](#).

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7. Future Hearings and Events

Tuesday, February 21, 2023

Webinar: Parents' Child Care Choices

Subject: The Bipartisan Policy Center will hold a virtual discussion on "Parents' Child Care Choices: What We've Learned."

Time: 3:00 p.m. ET

Registration: Register [here](#).

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8. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor: Consideration of nominations

House Floor: In recess until Monday, February 27

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

[U.S. House and Senate 2022 Schedule](#)

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

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

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

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- 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
- Policy Events

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