



STEM Education Updates from the U.S. Department of Education

We hope this finds you all healthy and well. This newsletter is focused on resources developed to address teaching and learning STEM at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The U.S. Department of Education (ED or the Department) hopes this STEM newsletter will serve as constant source of opportunity, inspiration, and resources. The Department also maintains resources on its [STEM landing page](#), including funding opportunities and archives of monthly STEM briefings. You can [manage your subscription](#) and are encouraged to invite your colleagues and friends to sign up as well! The Department welcomes your feedback and questions. Please feel free to share them at STEM@ed.gov.

ED Updates

COVID-19 Efforts and Resources

Over the last several weeks, the White House, the Department of Education, and other federal agencies have released a significant amount of guidance to support schools, educators, and families regarding COVID-19 (Coronavirus). For updated information, please visit [Coronavirus.gov](#), [CDC.gov/coronavirus](#), and [USA.gov/coronavirus](#) and see the [President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America – 30 Days to Slow the Spread of COVID-19](#).

For education-related information, the Department has established a dedicated Coronavirus webpage ([ed.gov/coronavirus](#)), which includes information for families and communities that is continually being added to and updated, including:

- At-home activities for students and parents to continue learning while not in school;
- CARES Act Information: [Emergency Relief for Higher Education Students](#);
- [Coronavirus Information for Students, Borrowers, and Parents](#) from Federal Student Aid (FSA) ([Updated](#));

- Broad flexibilities provided to states to bypass [ESSA mandated testing](#) for the 2019-2020 school year due to COVID-19 national emergency, including the [waiver application for states](#);
- A [fact sheet \(Español\)](#) addressing [serving children with disabilities](#) during COVID-19 national emergency;
- Informational [resources](#), a [presentation](#), and a [webinar recording](#) on virtual learning and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

The Department's Coronavirus webpage also contains resources for institutions of higher education and for K-12.

- The Centers for Disease Control provides [Guidance for Schools and Child Care Programs](#) as well as [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations for U.S. Community Facilities with Suspected/Confirmed Coronavirus Disease](#).
- The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education posted an [Invitation to Waiver of Fiscal Requirements Due to COVID-19 for the 2019-2020 School Year](#).
- The Office of Postsecondary Education has issued [updated Guidance for interruptions of study related to Coronavirus](#), including [FAQ](#).

The Department will continue to update its website, ed.gov/coronavirus. Please direct education related questions to COVID-19@ed.gov.

Secretary DeVos Delivers Remarks at White House Coronavirus Task Force Press Briefing



On Friday, March 27, U.S. Education [Secretary Betsy DeVos attended the White House Task Force press briefing](#) to update the nation on the steps the Department is taking on behalf of students, parents, and teachers, and to thank the President and Vice President for their leadership during this pandemic national emergency. The Secretary explained that the Department is in constant contact with governors and education leaders at the state, local, and building levels and the Department is “using every tool possible to extend flexibility to states and communities.”

Recognizing that not all students and communities have the same technology resources and access to the internet, the Secretary lauded leaders who are employing innovative and creative solutions to help students continue learning.

“Distance learning is happening,” she stated. “States like New Hampshire and Florida have implemented phased and tiered approaches to meet the needs of students in their states. ... In remote Colorado mountain towns without internet connectivity, teachers are putting weekly learning packets together and ... holding office hours by phone to help their students when they’re stuck. South Carolina is deploying 3,000 buses with mobile Wi-Fi hotspots to help kids in remote areas access learning that way.

“Ultimately, we know everyone is grappling with the challenge of keeping students safe and healthy while also building capacity for remote learning,” the Secretary continued. “It’s an important moment to realize that learning can—and does—happen anywhere and everywhere.

“These are tough times, but ‘We the People’ are tougher.”

New Education Funding Flexibility under CARES Act

Secretary DeVos announced recently a [new streamlined process](#) for providing states funding flexibilities to best meet the needs of students and educators during the COVID-19 national

emergency. The new flexibilities, authorized under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, allow schools to repurpose existing K-12 education funds for technology infrastructure and teacher training on distance learning, among other flexibilities, to move resources to areas of highest need during the national emergency.

Testing Waivers Issued Nationwide

As of March 31, the Department granted [waivers to all 50 states](#), the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Bureau of Indian Education to allow those jurisdictions to bypass federal requirement to test all of their students, in grades 3-8 and once in high school. Schools are typically required to administer tests to students in those grades annually in math and English/language arts, and periodically in science.

CTE Waivers

Secretary DeVos announced recently new flexibilities for career and technical education (CTE) leaders who are required to submit their local CTE plan for FY 2020-2023 under the Strengthening Career and Technical Education Act for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) by April 15, 2020. Following up on feedback she received from town hall meetings between the Department and state CTE directors, the Secretary has decided to use transition authority to provide an extension for states that need additional time to submit their Perkins V state plans, allow states and local Perkins recipients to receive their first installment of Perkins V funds on time—even if they need an extension, and allow states to provide funding recipients additional time to complete their applications. Information on the new flexibilities was provided to local leaders through a [new Q&A document](#).

Department Guidance on Distance Learning and IDEA

The Secretary released [new information](#) clarifying that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) should not be used to prevent schools from offering distance learning opportunities to all students, including students with disabilities. This new [resource](#) from the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) explains that as a school district takes necessary steps to address the health, safety, and well-being of all its students and staff, educators can use distance learning opportunities to serve all students. The [Secretary also spoke about this](#) during her appearance at the White House Coronavirus Task Force briefing on March 27. The Department-funded STEM Innovation for Inclusion in Early Education Center, [STEMI2E2](#), can be another helpful resource.

Open ED Grants

Migrant Education Program (MEP) Consortium Incentive Grant (CIG)

Program – applications due 4/27/20 (contains a STEM competitive preference priority)

Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) – applications due 5/26/20 (a majority of current MSAP grantees include STEM in their programming)

Call for Peer Reviewers

The Department is seeking peer reviewers for our Fiscal Year 2020 competitive/discretionary grant season, including in the STEM/CS areas (among others). You can read our [Federal Register notice](#) which spotlights the specific needs of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE), and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). [Learn how to be considered as a peer reviewer.](#)

New ED Grant Priorities

In a recent *Federal Register* notice, the Secretary announced [six priorities for discretionary grant programs](#) that she may use in Fiscal Year 2020 and later years to expand the Department's flexibility to give priority to: (1) applicants with varying experience in administering federal education funds; (2) applicants proposing to serve rural communities; (3) applicants that demonstrate a rationale for their proposed projects; and (4) applicants proposing to collect data after the grant's project period.

STEM Briefings

The live broadcast STEM Briefings held at the Department's LBJ headquarters building have been postponed until further notice. However, we have on demand archives that you can view remotely:

- [What Do We Know about Computer Science Education?](#)
- [The Grand Challenges in STEM Education: Recruiting and Retaining 100K STEM Teachers in 10 Years](#)
- [Early Engineering Education and State Efforts](#)
- [The STEM Opportunity Index](#)
- [Family Engagement in STEM](#)
- [STEAM: Arts Supporting STEM](#)
- [STEM After School](#)

News from Other Federal Agencies

FBI Warns of Increased Online Exploitation during COVID-19

Due to school closings as a result of COVID-19, children will potentially have an increased online presence and/or be in a position that puts them at an inadvertent risk. Due to this newly developing environment, the [FBI is seeking to warn parents, educators, caregivers, and children](#) about the dangers of online sexual exploitation and signs of child abuse.

Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching

[Applications](#) for teachers of grades K-6 are now open. Deadline extended to October 26, 2020.

DOD Issues Call for STEM Outreach Proposals

The Department of Defense (DOD) U.S. Army Contracting Command released on April 2 a funding opportunity announcement for K-12 and beyond STEM Educational Outreach Programs. DOD anticipates issuing one award of \$25 million for a performance period of 5 years. Only institutions of higher education and U.S. non-profit organizations are eligible to apply. Applications are due May 18, 2020 at 4:00pm ET and should be submitted through www.grants.gov. The solicitation number is [W15QKN-20-R-0ANX](#).

New National Science Foundation Acting Director

The President has named Dr. Kelvin Droegemeier, Director of The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and Presidential Science Advisor, to serve as Acting Director of the National Science Foundation (NSF), effective March 31, 2020. Droegemeier has been involved with NSF for more than three decades and served on the National Science Board for 12 years, the last four as Vice Chair. Dr. Droegemeier, who will continue his duties as OSTP Director, will serve as Acting Director as the U.S. Senate considers the nomination of [Dr. Sethuraman Panchanathan](#), who was nominated to lead NSF by the President on December 19, 2019.

STEM Education Advisory Panel Meeting

The STEM Education Advisory Panel, established by Congress in 2017, will conduct its next meeting virtually, on April 15, 2020. Members of the public may listen to the meeting by following the [instructions to register](#).

NSF INCLUDES Planning Grants Due July 13

These [planning grants](#) support planning efforts necessary to build capacity to establish future centers, alliances, or other large-scale networks endeavoring to address a broadening participation challenge in STEM at scale. A pre-recorded [informational webinar](#) provides greater detail.

NSF ADVANCE grant: Organizational Change for Gender Equity in STEM Academic Professions

The [NSF ADVANCE program](#) contributes to the National Science Foundation's goal of a more diverse and capable science and engineering workforce. In this solicitation, NSF seeks to build on prior NSF ADVANCE work and other research and literature concerning gender, racial, and ethnic equity. Required Letter of Intent to apply due August 3, 2020.

NASA & NSF INCLUDES Partnership

NASA's Minority University Research and Education Project (MUREP) is excited to partner

with the NSF INCLUDES initiative to support broadening participation in engineering through the development of coalitions led by minority serving institutions (MSIs). [Learn more](#) about NASA's partnership with NSF INCLUDES.

K-12 Teacher Summer Institute on Innovation, STEM, and Intellectual Property

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is hosting its National Summer Teacher Institute (NSTI) on Innovation, STEM, and Intellectual Property in St. Louis, MO, July 12-17, 2020. The deadline to submit applications is Thursday, April 30, 2020. Visit www.uspto.gov/teacherinstitute for tips on completing the [application](#). Space is limited and the selection process is competitive. Have questions, contact education@uspto.gov.

ED Games Expo Supports Distance Learning

An IES blog post, "[The ED Games Expo 'Goes Viral' to Support Distance Learning](#)," details the 82 learning games and technologies developed with funding across the federal government that are available online at no cost until the end of the school year.

SBIR Grantees Hold Math Unconference

A group of ED Small Business Innovation and Research (SBIR) grantees and other government supported ed-tech developers have arranged a Math Unconference on April 23 to showcase their innovative approaches to teaching and learning in math. All resources are available at no cost to teachers until the end of the year. [Register online](#).

U.S. Department of Labor Issues Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Program (IRAP) Rule

This new rule offers employers, community colleges, and others a flexible, innovative way to quickly expand apprenticeship in telecommunications, health care, cybersecurity, and other sectors where apprenticeships currently are not widely available. This effort will help expand apprenticeships by establishing a system for advancing the development of high-quality, [Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs](#) (IRAPs).

New Free Federal Online Resources

U.S. Department of Education

[Blog Post: Activities for Students and Families Stuck at Home](#)
[COVID-19\("Coronavirus"\) Information and Resources for Schools and School Personnel](#)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

[NASA STEM @ Home for Students Grades K-4](#)
[NASA STEM @ Home for Students Grades 5-8](#)

National Science Foundation (NSF)

[Blog post: Seven NSF-supported STEM resources that are perfect for at-home learning](#)

STEM for All Multiplex

The Multiplex is an online, free, interactive platform featuring over 800 short videos that showcase federally funded projects aimed at transforming STEM/CS learning. [Check out the monthly themes and playlists](#). The [2020 STEM for All Video Showcase](#) runs May 5-12 and you are invited to view, discuss, and vote for your favorites.

United States Geological Survey (USGS)

[USGS Learn from Home](#) – Updated weekly

[PLANETS: Planetary Learning that Advances the Nexus of Engineering, Technology, and Science](#)

United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

[Building a Greenway: Case Study](#)

[Connecting Ecosystems and Human Health](#)

[Introduction to Ecosystem Services](#)

[Explore Your Watershed](#)

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

[NOAA's Resource Collections](#)

[Data in the Classroom](#)

Smithsonian Institute

[Smithsonian Learning Lab](#)

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)

[Blog Post: The Expanding Innovation Hub](#)