

**March 1, 2017**

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## **Confirmation of Elisabeth Dee (Betsy) DeVos as Secretary of Education**

Elisabeth (Betsy) DeVos was confirmed by the United States Senate on Feb. 7, 2017, as the 11th secretary of education and sworn into office later that day by Vice President Michael R. Pence. Prior to becoming secretary, DeVos was a businesswoman, philanthropist, and an advocate for education. In addition, she served as Republican National Committeewoman for Michigan and chairwoman of the Michigan Republican Party.

DeVos is married to Richard Marvin (Dick) DeVos, Jr., a businessman with Amway, who ran Amway's parent company, Alticor, from 1993 to 2002. Mr. and Mrs. DeVos have four adult children, two daughters and two sons.

In her testimony before Congress during the confirmation process and her initial remarks at the Department of Education, DeVos was definitive about her commitment to education. She has long championed the right of parents to "choose the best educational option for their children." Preventing parents from exercising this choice, as DeVos remarked, is "not just an issue of public policy, but of national injustice." DeVos pointed out that her commitment to addressing this injustice has "become my life's work." As she explained, "Parents no longer believe that a one-size-fits-all model of learning meets the needs of every child ... Yet too many parents are denied access to the full range of options ... I am a firm believer that parents should be empowered to choose the learning environment that's best for their individual children."

Elsewhere in her remarks, DeVos emphasized her commitment to public schools, which the "vast majority of students in this country will continue to attend," by saying, "I am a strong advocate for public schools."

Of particular interest to *OCTAE Connection* readers, DeVos commented favorably on career and technical education and on the roles of community and technical colleges in her opening remarks at her confirmation hearing:

- "Students ... face new challenges today. ... [W]e need to embrace new pathways of learning. For too long a college degree has been pushed as the only avenue for a better life. The old and expensive brick-mortar-and-ivy model is not the only one that will lead to a prosperous future. Craftsmanship is not a fallback—but a noble pursuit.
- "Students should make informed choices about what type of education they want to pursue post high school and have access to high-quality options. [President] Trump

and I agree we need to support all postsecondary avenues, including trade and vocational schools and community colleges.”

DeVos also emphasized the importance of lifelong learning for all adults—those who need to augment their knowledge and skills and those who need to master more basic literacy and numeracy skills.

DeVos is the first and highest ranking of the presidential appointees, who will be nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate, to lead the U.S. Department of Education. In the coming weeks and months, other senior officials and political appointees will be joining the Department. In the interim, DeVos is assisted by a team of advisors the Trump Administration has assigned to assist with the development and implementation of its priorities and policies and to carry out ongoing Department responsibilities.

We congratulate DeVos on her confirmation as secretary of education and wish her success during her tenure.

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## New Digital Promise Report on Digital Learning Opportunities for Underserved Adults

Nonprofit education innovation organization [Digital Promise](#) released a new report, [Accelerating Change: A Guide to the Adult Learning Ed-Tech Market](#). The report focuses on digital learning opportunities for underserved adults in the United States to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in a changing economy. Digital Promise “connects entrepreneurs, educators, and researchers to support and advance the development and use of educational technology that expands career pathways and improves the quality of life for these learners.” Stakeholders across the spectrum of adult learning service providers should find the report useful and instructive.

The new guide underscores the fact that the redesigned *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)* legislation “positions entrepreneurs to capitalize on the new federally mandated focus on integrating technology into adult education.” *WIOA* requires the integration of technology and digital skills into *WIOA*-funded programs. Specifically, as detailed in the report, states are now required to create state plans with technology integration, allowing them to more easily work with the private sector and key economic partners. With this, states and local workforce investment boards are better able to “leverage their purchasing power and improve the ways they organize and invest in the best technology-based solutions and services.”

*Accelerating Change*, according to Digital Promise, is designed to “clarify the landscape, uncover the major market entry points, identify the needs of adult learners, and present strategies for developing value propositions that are most desired by learning providers and adult learners.” It opens by reviewing previous adult learning market research, framing the market opportunity, and providing a successful business model. It also discusses the major customer segments in the adult learning community, including community colleges, community-based organizations, workforce development centers, libraries, and correctional institutions. Helping these high-need learners find employment has a substantial social impact, including breaking the cycles of poverty and crime. The guide’s final section provides

a list of next steps—10 action items to aid entrepreneurs as they prepare ventures in the adult learning market.

Interested parties are encouraged to read the full report and to visit Digital Promise's website to access previous reports in this series as well as other resources.

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## Education and Workforce Cross-System Partnership Opportunity for Youths

As a result of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)*, a heightened emphasis has been placed on the alignment of programs serving youths to ensure that they obtain the skills necessary to prepare them for successful workforce participation and continued education achievement.

The U.S. departments of Labor and Education released technical assistance (TA) [documents](#) to facilitate these efforts. These documents provide strategies and examples of state and local partnerships that facilitate the reengagement of out-of-school youths, support communities working with in-school youths in accordance with *WIOA*, and address strategies for serving English learners, current and former foster youths, and justice-involved youths.

Technical assistance included in these documents detail a variety of ways that partners can work together to build career pathways that align with local skill needs to prepare youths and young adults for success in secondary or postsecondary education programs and the labor market.

We encourage all stakeholders to distribute the TA documents (linked below) to all potential partners serving youths and young adults.

- Out-of-school youths: <https://youth.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/01/18/13/28/EKFA-OSY>
- In-school youths: [https://youth.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/01/18/13/58/EKFA\\_isy](https://youth.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/01/18/13/58/EKFA_isy)
- English language learners: [https://youth.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/01/18/14/30/EKFA\\_English](https://youth.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/01/18/14/30/EKFA_English)
- Justice-involved youths: [https://youth.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/01/18/14/11/EKFA\\_Justice](https://youth.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/01/18/14/11/EKFA_Justice)
- Foster-care youths: [https://youth.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/01/18/14/52/EKFA\\_Fostercare](https://youth.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/01/18/14/52/EKFA_Fostercare)

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## National Conference of State Legislatures Creates Searchable Database for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Legislation

The National Conference of State Legislatures recently launched a searchable database, a result of activity across legislatures in all states following the 2014 passage of the Workforce

Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The database contains legislation enacted in state legislatures during the 2015 session. Included are issues related to WIOA implementation, such as sector strategies, career pathways, adult education, career and job training, work-based learning, pay-for-performance initiatives, state plan and/or governance issues, and general workforce legislation. Interested individuals are encouraged to visit NCSL database <http://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/workforce-innovation-and-opportunity-act-2015-legislative-scan/> website to conduct a detailed or state-by-state search.

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