



The Education Report

APRIL 24, 2026

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

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1. Budget and Appropriations

This week, lawmakers were very focused on advancing the fiscal year (FY) 2027 appropriations process while simultaneously laying the groundwork for an ambitious, multi-step reconciliation strategy that Republican leaders hope will carry major policy priorities through a narrowly divided Congress. At the center of the week's activity was continued progress on a budget resolution—an essential procedural step that would unlock Republicans' ability to pursue an additional reconciliation package this year without Democratic support. (While budget resolutions do not carry the force of law, they set spending and revenue targets and, critically, provide reconciliation instructions that allow certain legislation to pass the Senate with a simple majority.)

Senate Republicans [advanced the budget plan this week](#)—passed narrowly 50–48—to provide roughly \$70 billion in funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Border Patrol.

The move is part of a broader strategy to reopen the Department of Homeland Security amid a prolonged funding standoff, but Democrats oppose the plan due to a lack of oversight reforms and concerns following fatal encounters involving federal agents. Republican lawmakers described the approach as necessary to create flexibility to address a range of fiscal priorities, while acknowledging the difficulty of executing such a plan on an accelerated timeline. The resolution now heads to the House, where its future remains uncertain as Republicans navigate internal divisions.

The timeline adds another layer of complexity. President Donald Trump has expressed a desire to see the package reach his desk by June 1, a goal that would require rapid movement on the budget resolution, committee markups, and floor consideration in both chambers. Given the procedural steps involved, and the likelihood of intra-party disagreements, many observers view that deadline as highly ambitious.

In the House, Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) faces the ongoing challenge of managing a razor-thin majority. Any reconciliation bill, as well as the underlying budget resolution, will require near-total Republican support to pass. That dynamic was evident in this week's discussions, as lawmakers weighed competing priorities within the conference. Some members are pushing for deeper spending reductions, while others are focused on preserving funding for key domestic programs. This margin constraint will shape not only the reconciliation packages but also the FY 2027 appropriations process, where similar divisions over spending levels and policy riders are expected to emerge.

The stakes are particularly high for federal education policy. Both the appropriations process and potential reconciliation bills could significantly influence funding levels and program structures for K-12 and higher education. Some Republicans have indicated interest in restructuring or consolidating certain education programs, while Democrats have emphasized the need to protect and, in some cases, increase funding.

Adding to the policy landscape is a recent decision by the Departments of Education and Labor to maintain existing financial systems used by the Education Department to disburse K-12 funds to states. This marks a shift as it had been reported that staff at both agencies were working diligently to make the change for weeks. The decision was welcomed by state education officials and program administrators, who had expressed concerns about potential disruptions. Maintaining the current system is expected to provide continuity in the distribution of funds, particularly as states finalize their budgets and program plans for the upcoming fiscal year.

Education Secretary Linda McMahon [is scheduled to testify](#) before the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee to defend the administration's FY 2027 budget request next week. Lawmakers are expected to press Secretary McMahon on proposed funding levels, the implementation of Interagency Agreements, program priorities, and the administration's broader vision for federal education policy.

Next week is likely to bring greater clarity—and potentially heightened tension—on several fronts. Movement on the budget resolution will be closely watched, as it will determine whether Republicans can proceed with their reconciliation strategy on the desired timeline. At the same time, appropriators will continue to grapple with FY 2027 funding decisions, with education programs remaining a focal point of debate.

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2. In Brief

SENATORS INTRODUCE MEASURE TO REPEAL FEDERAL VOUCHER TAX BENEFITS

On April 15, Senators Mark Kelly (D-AZ) and Mazie Hirono (D-HI), joined by 28 cosponsors, introduced the "[Keep Public Funds in Public Schools Act](#)". The bill seeks to repeal the federal private school voucher program created in last year's One Big Beautiful Bill. Specifically, the legislation would eliminate Section 25F of the Internal Revenue Code, removing tax credits and income exclusions tied to contributions to scholarship-granting organizations—501(c)(3) nonprofits that fund private school scholarships. The provision currently allows individuals to claim a nonrefundable tax credit of up to \$1,700 for donations to these organizations. Supporters argue the bill would keep taxpayer dollars out of private schools and strengthen public education, while opponents contend it would limit opportunities for low- and middle-income families to

choose schools that best meet their children's needs. "In Arizona, we've already seen how universal vouchers are leading to rampant fraud and benefiting people who already had the means to send their kids to private school, while decimating public education for everyone else," said Sen. Kelly in a press release. "If we want to keep improving education to build a better future for the next generation, we have to start with keeping public funds in public schools that serve all kids." The message bill is unlikely to move.

ED ANNOUNCES SEED GRANT COMPETITION

On Monday, the Department of Education, [in partnership with the Department of Labor](#), announced the [FY 2026 competition for the Supporting Effective Educator Development \(SEED\) grant program](#), a discretionary initiative aimed at increasing the number of highly effective educators nationwide. The program will provide approximately \$90 million in funding across an estimated 25–30 awards to support evidence-based efforts that prepare, develop, and enhance educator skills throughout their careers. Eligible applicants—including higher education institutions, nonprofits, and partnerships—can use funds to develop, expand, and evaluate scalable models that improve educator effectiveness and student outcomes, with an emphasis on rigorous evidence, innovation (including areas like AI and apprenticeships), and long-term sustainability. "These grant competitions mark our continued efforts to support our nation's teachers and empower families with education choice," said Assistant Secretary for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education Kirsten Baesler. Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training Dr. Henry Mack stated, "We are looking to cultivate not just competent professionals but individuals of reason, character, and skills, equipped to meaningfully contribute to the reindustrialization of America." Applications are due June 1, 2026.

WORKFORCE PANEL ADVANCES WIOA REAUTHORIZATION

On Tuesday, the House Education and Workforce Committee [marked up](#) the "Stronger Workforce for America Act of 2026" ([H.R. 8210](#)), a bill to reauthorize the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Republicans, led by Chairman Tim Walberg (R-MI), argued the bill would modernize workforce development by increasing state flexibility, strengthening employer alignment, expanding short-term and work-based training, and improving accountability and data transparency, particularly in response to emerging technologies like AI. Democrats, led by Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA), criticized the proposal for abandoning a previously negotiated bipartisan framework, raising concerns about shifting adult education programs from the Department of Education to the Department of Labor, reducing funding, and introducing untested policies such as AI-driven "talent marketplaces." Numerous Democratic amendments aimed at restoring bipartisan provisions and protecting education programs were rejected, while Republicans defended the bill as outcome-focused and necessary to address inefficiencies. The committee ultimately advanced the legislation on a 19–14 party-line vote after adopting the Republican substitute amendment and rejecting all Democratic amendments, highlighting significant challenges for bipartisan support and Senate passage. A comprehensive summary prepared by BPAG is [here](#).

E&C HHS FY27 BUDGET HEARING DISPLAYS SHARP PARTISAN DIVIDES

On Tuesday, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. appeared before the House Energy and Commerce Committee's Health Subcommittee to discuss the Administration's FY2027 budget request. The hearing covered a broad range of health policy priorities and was marked by sharp partisan

exchanges on vaccines, Medicaid funding, and the direction of federal public health policy. Kennedy touted commitments from more than 50 medical schools to expand nutrition education from an average of two hours to 40 hours and described efforts to phase out petroleum-based food dyes in partnership with the food industry. Kennedy framed these initiatives as part of a broader effort to shift federal health policy away from chronic disease management and toward prevention, saying the Administration had “flipped the food pyramid upside down.” Democratic members pushed back forcefully on several fronts, including proposed eliminations of the CDC’s Safe Motherhood program and Title X family planning funding, cuts to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) research grants, and reductions to SAMHSA behavioral health programs. Democrats also pressed Kennedy on vaccine policy, citing rising measles case counts and questioning his influence on declining vaccination rates. Kennedy maintained that he is not anti-vaccine, pointing to \$1 billion in new vaccine research. Kennedy also noted his nutrition curriculum initiative—securing commitments from medical schools to dramatically increase nutrition training—which was praised by Republican members. [Interagency agreements](#) as well as Head Start were not discussed at length. A recording of the hearing can be found [here](#).

HELP HEARING ON FY27 HHS BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS STUDENT HEALTH, NUTRITION

On Wednesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee [held a hearing](#) on the FY27 Health and Human Services (HHS) budget. The hearing focused on healthcare policy but included notable discussion related to schools, students, and education—particularly around child health, nutrition, and medical training. Lawmakers repeatedly linked student well-being to broader public health concerns, emphasizing that declining vaccination rates and misinformation have contributed to rising measles cases, with several senators warning that falling immunization rates are putting children at risk and leading to preventable illnesses and deaths. Education-related discussion centered heavily on nutrition and its impact on students. Senators highlighted that a significant portion—estimated between 30% and 60%—of children’s daily nutrition comes from school meals, raising concerns about the quality of food served in schools and its role in chronic disease and obesity. The hearing also addressed higher education and workforce preparation through medical training. Members noted that historically, medical students receive little to no nutrition education, but [recent HHS initiatives](#) aim to require comprehensive nutrition training across dozens of medical schools to better equip future healthcare providers to address diet-related illnesses. Wednesday’s hearing underscored the intersection of health and education, particularly how school environments, student nutrition, public health messaging, and medical education all play a role in shaping outcomes for children and students.

PPI WEBINAR EXPLORES TEACHING HISTORY AHEAD OF THE NATION’S 250TH

On Wednesday, the Progressive Policy Institute (PPI) [hosted a webinar](#) examining how educators at both the K–12 and higher education levels should approach teaching American history as the nation prepares to mark its 250th anniversary. The discussion focused on a [new report](#) by PPI’s Richard Kahlenberg and Lief Lin analyzing three years of publications in *American Quarterly*, the flagship journal of the American Studies field. Kahlenberg and Lin found that approximately 80% of articles published in the journal over the past three years focused on negative aspects of American history—such as racism and homophobia—while 20% were neutral, and none offered a uniformly positive framing of the country. Lin described their methodology as a three-step process involving keyword searches, representative quote analysis, and categorization of critiques. Kahlenberg noted that, despite *American Quarterly*’s limited readership, its academic influence

allows it to shape course syllabi. He also cited polling suggesting that one in four Gen Z individuals are more likely to view the Founding Fathers as villains rather than heroes, arguing that this aligns with the journal's more critical perspective. Caroline Levander (Rice University) offered a more sympathetic interpretation, emphasizing that graduate training prioritizes critical thinking and that each generation of scholars seeks to address perceived gaps in prior scholarship. She cautioned against drawing broad conclusions based on isolated quotes taken out of context. Kahlenberg largely agreed that critical scholarship can be valuable but argued that intellectual inquiry should also explore why American society has fostered innovation and why people continue to immigrate to the United States—questions he said are largely absent from the journal. Panelists broadly agreed that civic education should combine foundational knowledge of American ideals with experiential learning, noting that research supports the value of both approaches, particularly for underserved communities. Kahlenberg also observed that events following October 7 prompted significant introspection among university leaders regarding the application of academic values, and he expressed cautious optimism that the current political moment may encourage greater self-reflection within academia.

AEI EXAMINES FUTURE OF STUDENT LOANS, FEDERAL RESTRUCTURING EFFORTS

On Thursday, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) hosted an [event](#) titled “The Future of Student Loans: A Conversation with Under Secretary of Education Nicholas Kent,” featuring a discussion between AEI Senior Fellow Preston Cooper and Under Secretary of Education Nicholas Kent. The conversation centered on the Trump administration's broader effort to restructure the federal role in education, including its March 2026 [announcement](#) that parts of the federal student loan system would shift to the Department of the Treasury. Kent framed the move as consistent with the administration's push to return education responsibilities to the states and argued that new interagency partnerships could address longstanding weaknesses within the federal student loan portfolio. Throughout the discussion, Kent emphasized that current federal student aid programs are not adequately meeting student needs, citing rising student debt, weak accountability in higher education, and persistent challenges in aligning postsecondary programs with workforce demands. He also highlighted the importance of identifying high-value programs within institutions and suggested that the current higher education system lacks sufficient accountability for outcomes. More broadly, Kent argued that Treasury is well positioned to service defaulted student debt and that the partnership illustrates how interagency coordination may function more effectively than the United States Department of Education acting alone. Overall, the event showcased the Trump administration's effort to recast federal student loan management as part of a broader push for administrative downsizing, stronger institutional accountability, and closer alignment between higher education and workforce outcomes.

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3. New Publications

[Phone-Free Schools Annual Trend Report](#)
[YONDR \(2026\)](#)

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4. In the News

[As Deadline Looms, \\$289 Million In Federal Education Research Funding May Go Unspent](#)

The Hechinger Report (April 22, 2026)

Trump Taps Longtime Insider To Fix Labor Department Headache

Politico (April 21, 2026)

Los Angeles Becomes The First Major School District To Require Screen Time Limits

NBC News (April 21, 2026)

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5. About BPAG

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

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