



The Education Report

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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

There was hope that the U.S. Congress might return from the Thanksgiving break and promptly plan for the debate of the FY 2026 spending bills as the January 30, 2026, expiration of the continuing resolution (CR) that ended the government shutdown approaches. With the CR in place, leadership in both chambers is negotiating topline discretionary numbers and a path to finish the twelve bills—either as an omnibus or in smaller “minibus” packages—rather than rushing individual measures to the floor in December.

As for the FY 2026 Labor-HHS-Education (LHHS) bill specifically, both committees have done their work but neither chamber has moved it to floor consideration. The House Appropriations Committee reported its partisan LHHS measure (H.R. 5304) in September, while the Senate Appropriations Committee advanced its counterpart (S. 2587) on July 31 by a bipartisan 26–3 vote. House Republicans describe their bill as a bid to refocus spending: Subcommittee Chair Robert Aderholt (R-AL) said the bill, which would reduce funding for the Education Department programs significantly, is meant to “reexamine spending priorities... while cutting waste,” calling it “a strong foundation for... smarter investments.” Senate Democrats, for their part, emphasize bipartisan investment and reject deep cuts, level funding education investments. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), the Ranking Member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said their product reflects “serious bipartisan work” to make “critical investments in families and our country’s future.”

As for when LHHS might hit the floors, the short answer is that it is unlikely to be debated as a standalone bill before the CR deadline. In the House, H.R. 5304 is “available” for floor action, but leadership has not scheduled it, and the late-year calendar is dominated by post-shutdown cleanup and appropriations and NDAA talks. That points to either (a) a House LHHS floor debate in early January 2026 if leaders try to move a minibus, or (b) no separate debate at all if LHHS is folded into a larger omnibus negotiated near the January 30 deadline. The Senate’s posture is similar: S.

2587 is cleared for floor action, but with no agreed overall FY 2026 topline yet and other priorities crowding the schedule, Senate leaders are more likely to take up LHHS only once a broader package is ready—potentially late January alongside other bills. In short, both chambers have written LHHS, but floor debate timing hinges on the post-CR endgame rather than a near-term standalone vote.

The spending debate is complicated by the Administration’s announcement of interagency agreements that would move administration of major education programs to the Labor Department and other agencies. A large [lawsuit](#) filed by the American Federation of Teachers and others seeks to prevent the Department from firing staff and taking other actions to transfer programs; it has been amended to include the interagency agreements. It asserts, “the IAAs are unlawful and poised to upend the affected programs” and will keep the Education Department “from providing critical and statutorily required support for students, parents, teachers, and schools.” Regardless, the Administration will proceed with their plans as the spending debate plays out.

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2. In Brief

IRS SOLICITS COMMENTS ON FEDERAL SCHOOL CHOICE TAX CREDIT

On November 25, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the U.S. Department of the Treasury [issued](#) Notice 2025-70, initiating a public comment period on how to implement the new federal tax credit under the law often referred to as the *One, Big, Beautiful Bill Act*. Starting January 1, 2027, individual taxpayers will be eligible to claim a nonrefundable federal tax credit—up to \$1,700 per year—for cash contributions to qualified Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs) that provide scholarships for K–12 students from low- and middle-income families. For the credit to apply, a state (or the District of Columbia) must first opt in by submitting to the IRS a list of SGOs that meet statutory requirements. The IRS and Treasury are seeking feedback by December 26, 2025, on a range of issues including how states should certify SGOs, criteria for qualifying SGOs (especially those operating across multiple states), and SGOs’ reporting and recordkeeping obligations. The comments will help shape proposed regulations that implement the credit.

COMMERCE PANEL LOOKS AT SOLUTIONS TO PROTECT CHILDREN, TEENS ONLINE

On Tuesday, the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade [held a hearing](#) on legislative solutions to protect children and teens online. The hearing examined a wide slate of [proposed online safety bills](#), focusing on issues such as data minimization, AI chatbot risks, targeted advertising, and what meaningful penalties for major companies should look like. Lawmakers discussed key proposals including the COPPA update ([H.R. 6291](#)), the [Kids Online Safety Act](#) (KOSA), the [App Store Accountability Act](#), the [SCREEN Act](#), and [Sammy’s Law](#)—named for a teen who died after purchasing fentanyl-laced drugs via Snapchat—as members highlighted growing concerns about mental-health harms, exploitation, and access to dangerous substances through online platforms. Some representatives also argued that gaming platforms should be included, given their social-network features. Much of the debate centered on KOSA, which advocates say was weakened after its “duty of care” requirement was removed, while Republicans raised free-speech concerns and parents argued their perspectives have been sidelined. Opponents of the broader legislative package, including digital-rights groups, warned that several proposals could expand surveillance or jeopardize privacy and lawful expression. Supporters countered that the severity of online harms and platforms’ resistance

to accountability demand stronger federal action, leaving the fate of these bills to be determined as regulatory efforts continue to evolve. Links to the 19 bills, witness testimony, and a recording of the hearing are [here](#).

BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER EXAMINES WORKFORCE PELL IMPLEMENTATION

On Tuesday, the Bipartisan Policy Center [hosted a panel discussion](#) on workforce Pell Grants, featuring Rebecca Howard from Senator Tim Kaine’s (D-VA) office and Amy Jones from the House Education and Workforce Committee (majority). The speakers traced the program’s 11-year evolution—from its 2014 origins under former Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) to its enactment in the 2025 reconciliation bill. As the Department of Education prepares for rulemaking, panelists identified key areas requiring regulatory clarity, including definitions of eligible programs, appropriate data sources for evaluating performance outcomes, and standards for demonstrating labor-market alignment. Julie Roberts of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission highlighted Tennessee’s investment of more than \$100 million in technical pathways and its state-codified definitions for high-quality non-degree credentials. Colby Cesaro from Michigan Independent Colleges and Universities underscored the urgency of expanded pathways, noting that only half of Michigan’s high-school graduates enroll in postsecondary education, even as an estimated 70% of jobs will require education or training beyond high school by 2031. Panelists outlined three major implementation challenges: wide variation in state data infrastructure, particularly regarding unemployment-insurance wage records needed to demonstrate program outcomes; uncertainty around the eligibility of non-credit workforce programs pending final regulations; and low learner awareness, which will require coordinated outreach and FAFSA assistance from institutions, employers, workforce agencies, and American Job Centers. The discussion concluded by emphasizing that effective implementation will depend on preserving program flexibility while ensuring quality, building strong state-level partnerships across education and workforce systems, and maintaining broad eligibility across sectors such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, nuclear energy, business, and IT.

PANEL HIGHLIGHTS CHALLENGES, BEST PRACTICES FOR HIGH-DOSAGE TUTORING

On Tuesday, the Whiteboard Advisory Group [hosted a panel](#) on the state of tutoring in K–12 schools. Panelists emphasized that the central challenge facing tutoring programs is the steep drop in funding following the expiration of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) investments. Districts saw budget increases of up to 40% through ESSER—much of which supported tutoring and staffing—and high-poverty districts experienced the largest gains. With those funds now gone, schools are struggling to sustain effective tutoring models. Experts including John Failla (Pearl), Monica Bhatt (University of Chicago), Shaunté Duggins (University of Florida’s Lastinger Center), and Kara Hamilton (Guilford County Schools) discussed the evolution of tutoring from a supplemental service to a core instructional strategy embedded within Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). They highlighted a significant shift from virtual tutoring back to in-person delivery, reversing pandemic-era patterns as new data shows that in-person tutoring is more effective. The conversation underscored evidence-based practices, particularly high-dosage tutoring models featuring consistent tutor-student pairings, groups of no more than four students, and instruction aligned with core curriculum. [Research from the University of Chicago](#) shows that structured, daily tutoring sessions during the school day led to substantial learning gains for students across achievement levels. Panelists also stressed that strong data infrastructure is essential for sustaining tutoring programs. Districts must be able to track who

should receive tutoring, who receives services, and how much tutoring each student gets. Effective data systems allow districts to demonstrate impact and secure continued funding. Florida's statewide strategy was highlighted as a model for building data systems early rather than retrofitting them later. The state is also moving toward outcomes-based contracting that ties vendor payments to student results, though panelists noted this approach requires districts to first build robust data collection capacity.

HOUSE EDUCATION PANEL HOLDS HEARING ON STUDENT PRIVACY, PARENT RIGHTS

On Wednesday, the House Education and Workforce Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee held a hearing on student privacy, parental rights, and school district policies related to disclosures and notifications to parents/guardians. Members expressed overarching concern that the current Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) statutes are outdated, poorly understood, and inconsistently applied—particularly in a modern education environment defined by digital platforms, interoperable data systems, AI-enabled learning tools, and third-party vendors. Witnesses acknowledged widespread confusion among educators about their obligations under FERPA, especially around directory information, law enforcement requests, and disclosures to contracted vendors. Members raised concerns about student-data monetization, surveillance technology in schools, AI-driven behavioral analytics, and inconsistent enforcement capacity at the Department of Education. Though the discussion was largely framed through parental-rights politics, a bipartisan theme emerged: Congress will be increasingly focused on modernizing student privacy law for a digital and AI-driven school ecosystem, potentially opening the door to new compliance standards, vendor oversight requirements, and restrictions on data use by EdTech companies. A comprehensive summary on the hearing is [linked here](#).

HOUSE PASSES THREE K-12 FOREIGN TRANSPARENCY BILLS

On Wednesday, the House of Representatives passed three bills aimed at increasing transparency around foreign involvement in K–12 education. The CLASS Act ([H.R. 1005](#)) would require school districts to publicly disclose any funding or contracts originating from foreign sources within 30 days; the TRACE Act ([H.R. 1049](#)) would give parents the right to know about foreign donations, financial relationships, and classroom materials provided by foreign governments or entities of concern, and require schools to answer parent inquiries about whether faculty are paid by such entities; and the PROTECT Our Kids Act ([H.R. 1069](#)) prohibits federal education funding for any elementary or secondary school that directly or indirectly receives support from the Chinese government. On the House floor Wednesday, Education and Workforce Committee Chair Tim Walberg (R-MI) argued that authoritarian governments, particularly China's, have sought to influence American classrooms through funding and programs connected to entities aligned with the Chinese Communist Party, and said the legislation would help prevent the spread of foreign propaganda in schools. The Education and Workforce Committee approved the bills in February – they now await consideration in the Senate where passage is unlikely.

HOUSE HIGHER ED PANEL HOLDS HEARING ON TRUMAN SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

On Wednesday, the House Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development convened a hearing on the Truman Scholarship program, titled, “Public Funds, Private Politics: Examining Bias in the Truman Scholarship Program,” where several Republican lawmakers and conservative-leaning witnesses accused the program of exhibiting a

strong liberal bias. They argued that recent recipients disproportionately champion causes like racial justice and climate change and subsequently take jobs with Democratic or left-leaning organizations, while few express conservative viewpoints. Critics suggested that this ideological tilt raises concerns about taxpayer-funded influence in shaping future civic leaders. Jennifer Kabbany, editor in chief of *The College Fix*, said her outlet has been researching liberal bias in the Truman Scholarship for 10 years and argued that its recipients hold a lot of sway. Meanwhile, Ashley Harrington, Senior Policy Counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, countered that the award affects only a small number of students (50–60 annually) and contended the hearing diverted attention from broader issues such as college affordability. Several Republicans, including Congressman Burgess Owens (R-UT), claimed the program is “anti-conservative” and suggested eliminating it altogether. Others, such as Congressman Mark Harris (R-NC), questioned the federal government’s role in funding postgraduate scholarships, calling it inappropriate for taxpayers. Two additional GOP members—Representatives Elise Stefanik (R-NY) and Randy Fine (R-FL)—went further, accusing the program of enabling antisemitism, with Fine alleging that taxpayer dollars were supporting individuals sympathetic to “Muslim terror.” Witness testimony and a recording of the hearing is [here](#).

ED PREP LAB CONVENES NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON TEACHER PREPARATION

On Wednesday, EdPrepLab [hosted a World Café–style event](#) titled, “Transforming Teacher Education for a Changing World,” bringing together leaders from educator-preparation programs to discuss how teacher education must evolve to meet shifting instructional, technological, and workforce demands. The event provided a collaborative forum for institutions to share strategies, surface common challenges, and generate ideas for strengthening teacher preparation nationally. EdPrepLab organizers opened the program by underscoring the urgent need for preparation programs to adapt to changing student needs, rapid advances in educational technology, and rising expectations for a well-prepared, well-supported teacher workforce. Participants then engaged in rotating small-group discussions focused on clinical partnerships, equity-centered preparation, data use, program redesign, and sustainable mentoring and induction models. Across groups, attendees highlighted the importance of deeper, more consistent clinical experiences, noting that teacher candidates benefit most when universities and P–12 schools develop long-term, collaborative partnerships. Many emphasized the need to embed culturally responsive practices throughout preparation programs to ensure candidates are equipped to support diverse learners, including multilingual students and students with disabilities. Others stressed the importance of preparing candidates to navigate emerging instructional technologies such as AI-assisted tools, while maintaining a strong commitment to human-centered pedagogy. Participants also discussed ongoing challenges facing educator-preparation programs, including limited resources, inconsistent state policy environments, and the difficulty of scaling innovations across institutions. Several institutions shared promising practices, such as co-teaching models, year-long residencies, and district partnerships that provide paid roles for candidates while they complete their preparation. The event concluded with a call for continued cross-institution collaboration in the year ahead.

SENATORS SLAM EDUCATION DEPARTMENT’S “ILLEGAL” OUTSOURCING PLAN

On Thursday, Senators Patty Murray (D-WA), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), and Chuck Schumer (D-NY)—joined by dozens of their colleagues—sent a [sharply worded letter](#) to Education Secretary Linda McMahon condemning the Department of Education’s recent move

to outsource major education programs through interagency agreements, calling the actions illegal, harmful, and an intentional effort to dismantle the agency. The lawmakers argue that transferring core responsibilities and billions in federal education funding to agencies like the Department of Labor violates appropriations law, creates needless bureaucracy, and risks delaying or undermining crucial support for students, schools, and families. They emphasize that only Congress can restructure the Education Department, note that the affected agencies lack the expertise and authority to run these education programs, and point to early evidence of delays and failures in a previous transfer as proof the approach is already harming states and students. The Senators urge Secretary McMahon to reverse course immediately and work with Congress as required by law to strengthen—"not hollow out"—federal support for public education.

SEN. KELLY CALLS FOR STRONGER AI, SCIENCE, WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

On Thursday, the Center for American Progress hosted Senator Mark Kelly (D-AZ) for a discussion on American leadership in AI, science, and innovation. Kelly sharply criticized the administration's proposed 25% cut to NASA's budget—as well as reductions to the National Science Foundation and university research programs—arguing that the nation's economic strength and global leadership stem directly from sustained investments in scientific research. He emphasized that such investments typically yield full returns within five to ten years and cautioned that reducing university research funding risks driving scientists and researchers abroad, weakening the innovation ecosystem that has long distinguished the United States. A major focus of Kelly's remarks was workforce development. He argued that AI must benefit workers, not just large companies, and highlighted the mismatch between high-quality job openings in fields such as electrical work, cybersecurity, and semiconductor manufacturing and the persistent unemployment faced by jobseekers, including recent college graduates. Kelly cited Estrella Mountain Community College's Quick Start program—sharing the story of a single mother who completed the two-week training and now earns roughly \$85,000 at Intel—to illustrate how short-term, targeted training can transform lives, while also noting that such opportunities remain difficult for many to find. Kelly advocated for greater support of union apprenticeship programs and proposed the AI Horizon Fund to strengthen community colleges and training institutions nationwide. He concluded by stressing Congress's constitutional authority under Article I to set federal spending priorities and argued that protecting research funding is essential both for near-term economic returns and for preserving the country's long-term technological leadership.

FUTURE ED ON NAVIGATING GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT REGULATIONS

On Thursday, FutureEd hosted a webinar titled, "Navigating Gainful Employment in Higher Education," bringing together experts in workforce development, student success, and employer engagement to discuss how colleges can better align academic programs with labor-market expectations. The conversation underscored the growing importance of strong industry partnerships and the need for institutions to demonstrate that their programs deliver meaningful economic outcomes for students. Panelists noted that as states adopt new workforce and accountability policies, institutions must show clearer connections between course content, employability skill development, and regional economic demand. Employers increasingly prioritize durable skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving over narrow occupational training. The speakers emphasized that these competencies are most often cultivated through work-based learning, including internships, apprenticeships, and industry-sponsored projects. Participants also highlighted the expanding use of labor-market data tools that help

colleges evaluate program return on investment, redesign curricula, and respond to evolving industry needs. However, they cautioned that greater transparency must be paired with equitable access to work-based learning opportunities, noting that unpaid internships, transportation barriers, and inconsistent employer engagement can limit students' ability to pursue high-demand career pathways. Throughout the discussion, panelists stressed that colleges, employers, and states must collaborate to create pathways that are both high-quality and accessible. They urged institutions to engage industry partners in curriculum design, embed work-based learning throughout degree programs, and provide students with clear guidance on career opportunities tied to their field of study. The webinar concluded with a shared message: achieving gainful employment requires sustained commitment to student readiness, economic mobility, and equitable opportunity.

EXPERT PANEL EXAMINES ADVANCING SCIENCE OF READING REFORMS

On Thursday, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute hosted a webinar titled, "Implementation Is Where It's At: What's Next for the Science of Reading?" examining the challenges states and school systems face as they move from passing reading legislation to achieving real improvements in classroom instruction. Panelists noted that although more than 40 states have enacted laws related to the science of reading, student outcomes will not improve unless implementation centers on teacher knowledge, high-quality curriculum, and sustained support for educators. Speakers emphasized that while ambitious literacy policies represent major progress, the next phase must focus on strengthening the systems that turn those policies into effective practice. Successful implementation, they stressed, requires more than meeting curriculum mandates or completing training checklists. States must take responsibility for guiding districts through clear expectations, robust training infrastructure, and data systems that support continuous improvement. Panelists also pointed out that state laws are often vague or include optional provisions that dilute enforcement, making it essential for state agencies to build capacity and provide consistent direction. The discussion further highlighted persistent gaps between teacher preparation programs and the instructional expectations now embedded in state policy. Universities continue to produce educators without sufficient grounding in foundational literacy, language development, vocabulary instruction, and strategies for supporting students with reading difficulties—leaving districts to fill those gaps through intensive professional learning. Panelists urged greater collaboration among teacher preparation programs, state departments, and districts to ensure educators are trained to use the curricula and assessments they will encounter in the classroom. The event concluded with broad agreement that improving reading achievement will require aligning legislation, curriculum, teacher training, and accountability systems around student learning—rather than compliance alone.

FARM FOUNDATION EXPLORES EVOLVING MISSION OF LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITIES

On Thursday, the Farm Foundation hosted a webinar titled, "Recasting Morrill, Reclaiming Relevance: The Future of Land-Grant Universities," convening university leaders and agricultural experts to discuss how land-grant institutions can modernize their mission while staying true to their historic mandate to advance education, research, and public service. The conversation focused on how the goals of the Morrill Act, which established land-grant universities, can be adapted to meet today's economic, technological, and demographic challenges. Speakers emphasized that land-grant universities remain vital to food systems, rural development, agricultural innovation, and workforce preparation, but face mounting pressures—including declining public trust, inconsistent state funding, rapid technological shifts, and evolving student

expectations. Participants argued that institutions must strengthen their value proposition, deepen engagement with local communities, and renew their commitment to applied research and accessible, high-quality education. Several panelists highlighted the importance of expanding partnerships with industry, Tribal nations, and historically underserved communities to ensure land-grant work remains relevant and equitable. Others underscored the need to modernize extension services—long a hallmark of the land-grant system—by integrating digital tools, reaching new audiences, and helping producers navigate climate change, market volatility, and emerging technologies such as AI and precision agriculture. Speakers also raised governance and leadership considerations, noting the need to preserve academic independence while adapting to external pressures. The discussion concluded with the recognition that the future of land-grant universities will depend on their ability to collaborate across sectors, demonstrate measurable public impact, and effectively communicate the national importance of their education and research missions.

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3. New Publications

K-12 Education Spending Spotlight 2025: Annual Public School Spending Nears \$1 Trillion
Reason Foundation (November 20, 2025)

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4. In the News

House Subcommittee Debates Best Way to Protect Children Online
K-12 Dive (December 3, 2025)

50 Years After the Birth of Special Education, Some Fear for Its Future Under Trump
NPR (December 3, 2025)

How Trump 2.0 Upended Education Research And Statistics In One Year
Heckinger Report (December 1, 2025)

What to Know About Trump’s Definition of Professional Degrees
Inside Higher Ed (November 26, 2025)

Breaking Down McMahon’s Latest Effort to Diminish the Education Dept.
Inside Higher Ed (November 25, 2025)

Chair Walberg Launches Nationwide Investigation Into Antisemitism In K-12 Schools
House Committee on Education and Workforce (November 24, 2025)

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5. 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:

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