



The Consortium of State School Boards Associations Weekly Education Report

DECEMBER 9, 2024

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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 Recruitment and Retention**
 - **LPI Provides Insight on Building, Retaining High-Quality Teacher Workforce**: On Tuesday, the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) hosted a webinar on "Building and Retaining the Teacher Workforce" as part of its "Education Challenges and Solutions" series.
2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
 - **Impact on State School Board Associations**
3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
 - **Agreement Reached on WIOA Reauthorization; Future Uncertain**: After months of negotiations, a bipartisan and bicameral deal was struck on updating the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA).
 - **White House Releases STEM Education Federal Strategic Plan**: On November 26, The White House unveiled the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) Committee on STEM (CoSTEM)'s Federal Strategic Plan for Advancing STEM Education and Cultivating STEM Talent.
 - **Heritage Foundation Examines Parental Rights in Education**: On Tuesday, the Heritage Foundation hosted an event addressing the current state and future of parental rights in US public schools, focusing on curriculum content, gender ideology, and opt-out rights for school surveys.

- **ED Releases Policy Guide on Student Cell Phone Use in Schools:** On Tuesday, the Department of Education (ED) released *Planning Together: A Playbook for Student Personal Device Policies*, a resource designed to help schools, districts, and states create clear, research-informed policies for managing student use of cell phones and personal devices.
- **COVID School Closure Debate Intensifies with New Reports in Congress:** House Oversight Committee Republicans and Democrats release their respective reports on causes of and occurrences during COVID-19 pandemic with discussion focused on education.
- **House Ed Committee Debates Civics Education in K-12 Schools:** On Wednesday, the House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education held a hearing titled, "Back to Basics: America's Founding, Civics, and Self-Government in K-12 Curricula."
- **Hunt Institute Examines AI in Classrooms, Future of Education:** On Thursday, the Hunt Institute hosted a webinar titled, "Homeroom with Education Leaders - 2024 Lookback: AI in Classrooms, Funding, and the Future of Education."

4. **New Publications**

- **After Action Review of the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Lessons Learned and a Path Forward**

House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic | Republicans (December 2024)

The report summarizes Committee Republicans' two-year effort to create a "road map for Congress, the Executive Branch, and the private sector to prepare for and respond to future pandemics."

- **Partisan Probes Over Pandemic Prevention and Preparedness: Select Subcommittee Republicans Spent the 118th Congress Putting Politics Over People and Public Health**

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The report provides Subcommittee Democrats' findings from two dozen hearings, over one hundred hours of closed-door testimony, and more than one million pages of documents provided to the Select Subcommittee during the 118th Congress.

- **The Select Subcommittee's Revisionist History of School Closures During the Coronavirus Pandemic**

American Federation of Teachers (December 2024)

The report was prepared on behalf of the American Federation of Teachers ("AFT") in response to the investigation conducted by the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic and its final report.

- **Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study: 2023**

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The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is an international comparative study that measures mathematics and science achievement at the 4th and 8th grades every 4 years.

5. **In the News**

- **U.S. Secretary Of Education Miguel Cardona Touts Utah’s Students, Educators During Visit**
Deseret News (December 4, 2024)
 - **US Math Scores Drop on Major International Test**
Chalkbeat (December 4, 2024)
 - **Where Does Linda McMahon, Trump’s Education Secretary Nominee, Stand on Key Issues?**
USA Today (December 2, 2024)
 - **Education Department Promotes Expanded Use of Behavior Assessments**
K-12 Dive (December 2, 2024)
 - **Survey: For Most Parents, Grades Have Lost Ground as Measure of Student Progress**
The 74 (November 25, 2024)
 - **Video: Approps 101 – LHHS Subcommittee Chairman Aderholt & Interior Subcommittee Chairman Simpson**
US House Appropriations Committee (October 31, 2024)
6. **Weekly Calendar - What’s coming up this week?**
- **State Policies to Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism:** The Learning Policy Institute will hold a webinar as part of the state legislative prep series on “Eliminating Chronic Absence.”
Tuesday at 1pm ET
 - **Supporting Students to and through college: What Does the Evidence Say:** The Center for Economic Security and Opportunity will host a webinar to highlight a new report that provides an in-depth and critical review of the evidence from two-plus decades of research on what the evidence says about how best to support students to and through college.
Wednesday at 10:30am ET
 - **How Should Congress Keep Children Safe Online:** ITIF will hold a webinar on children's online safety legislation and the roles that parents, corporations, and regulators must play in shaping the future of children’s digital experiences.
Wednesday at 12pm ET
 - **Promoting Equity Through Data: Resources and Insights for Education Leaders:** The U.S. Department of Education will hold a webinar on “Promoting Equity through Data: Resources and Insights for Education Leaders.”
Thursday at 3pm ET
7. **Future Hearings & Events**
- **Equitable Grading: A Competency-Based Education Entry Point and Core Practices:** The Aurora Institute will hold a webinar on equitable grading, and two learning communities that are changing how they communicate student learning.
December 17 at 3pm ET
8. **On The Floor of Congress This Week**
- **Senate Floor:** Consideration of nominations
 - **House Floor:**

- **H.R. 7673** – Liberty in Laundry Act (Sponsored by Rep. Ogles / Energy and Commerce Committee)
- **S. 4199** – JUDGES Act of 2024 (Sponsored by Sen. Young / Judiciary Committee)
- Legislation related to the National Defense Authorization Act is expected.

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

10. **About BPAG**

1. **COSSBA Policy Priorities**

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

LPI PROVIDES INSIGHT ON BUILDING, RETAINING QUALITY TEACHER WORKFORCE

On Tuesday, the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) hosted a webinar on "Building and Retaining the Teacher Workforce" as part of its "Education Challenges and Solutions" series. Featuring education policy experts alongside Mississippi Representative Kent McCarty (R), the session explored strategies to address teacher shortages and strengthen workforce retention. LPI researcher Melanie Leung-Gagne highlighted the high teacher turnover rates in the United States, particularly in resource-strapped schools where students often experience lower achievement. She introduced LPI's "State of the Teacher Workforce" tool, designed to help policymakers analyze workforce trends and identify solutions. LPI Senior Researcher Susan Kemper Patrick detailed how states like Mississippi and New York are implementing evidence-based initiatives to retain educators. New York State Education Department Deputy Commissioner for Higher Education Alexander Trikalinos shared details about New York's "Grow Your Own" initiatives, which recruit future teachers from within communities, while State Representative McCarty outlined Mississippi's Teacher Residency Program. The webinar emphasized the importance of innovative, localized approaches to recruit and retain a high-quality teacher workforce, with additional resources available on LPI's website for those seeking to address teacher shortages and enhance education systems. A recording of the webinar will be posted here.

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2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up**

The House and Senate returned to Washington, DC last week and are back in session for the final two weeks of the 118th Congress. Their "to-do" list includes deciding how to address government funding after the current stopgap spending measure expiring on December 20, how to support parts of the country affected by various disasters, whether and how to approve a number of authorization bills, confirming the last of President Joe Biden's judicial nominations in the Senate, and deciding on various leadership posts in both chambers.

While House and Senate leadership have yet to officially announce their strategy for addressing FY 2025 spending, they haven't agreed to topline numbers, let alone committee allocations, and negotiating any appropriations packages would take significant time and effort that is running out. No decision is effectively forcing Congress to pass another continuing resolution to fund the government – for how long, no is certain.

Looking ahead to next year, the House has set its schedule for 2025; the **Republican version** and the **Democratic one** differ only in color scheme. The Senate has yet to determine its calendar but given both chambers will be led by the same party, they will likely try to coordinate so they can cooperate in passing legislation. In particular, the early months of 2025 will be busy and require much work from legislators and staff as they tackle a reconciliation package, FY 2025 spending and the start of the FY 2026 spending cycle, which will include a second reconciliation package. The first 100 days will be frenetic.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

Congress is likely to simply extend current funding – possibly as part of a disaster relief funding bill, that could include education funds – until March and let the Republican-led 119th Congress make the decisions for the fiscal year that will be half over by then. That could be bad news for education, assuming the FY 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education bill approved by the House Appropriations Committee is where Republicans will start. That bill proposes significant cuts to education programs, while the bipartisan Senate bill essentially level funds most education investments. (See the Committee for Education Funding’s **funding table here**.) Regardless of Republican plans, any spending bills will need 60 votes to pass the Senate, so Senate Democrats will still have a say in final investments.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

AGREEMENT REACHED ON WIOA REAUTHORIZATION; FUTURE UNCERTAIN

After months of negotiations, a bipartisan and bicameral deal was struck on updating the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)*. A **summary** of the deal, titled, *A Stronger Workforce for America Act*, proposes updates to the WIOA to modernize the nation’s workforce development system. The bill emphasizes upskilling through initiatives like individual training accounts (ITAs), on-the-job training, and apprenticeships, with specific assistance for displaced workers, youth, and critical industries. It seeks to improve program accountability by refining performance metrics and promoting high-quality training providers. Key updates include an emphasis on industry partnerships, enhancing digital literacy in adult education, and strengthening services for justice-involved individuals. The bill also emphasizes innovation through skills-based hiring, advanced workforce data systems, and competency-based assessments. Additionally, it addresses equity by redefining "opportunity youth" to replace “out-of-school youth,” supporting pre-apprenticeships, and funding programs that align community college education with in-demand industries. While the agreement represents significant progress in an otherwise stalled Congress, its future remains uncertain. The bill was “hotlined” in the Senate this week, and a number of Senators placed holds on the proposal. Staff are reportedly working to resolve the issues that are the reasons for those holds, but with limited time remaining on the legislative calendar, passing the bill in both chambers poses a challenge. The final days of a lame duck often see surprising deals, so the proposal’s supporters will be working toward passage until Congress adjourns for the year and will explore the different ways it might reach President Joe Biden’s desk, including attaching it to the must-pass *National Defense Authorization Act*.

WHITE HOUSE RELEASES STEM EDUCATION FEDERAL STRATEGIC PLAN

On November 26, The White House **unveiled** the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) Committee on STEM (CoSTEM)’s **Federal Strategic Plan** for Advancing STEM

Education and Cultivating STEM Talent. This five-year strategy aims to inspire, teach, recruit, and retain diverse STEM talent across the nation by fostering inclusive and innovative practices. The plan emphasizes three guiding principles—access and opportunity, partnerships and ecosystem development, and transparency and accountability—which support its five pillars: STEM engagement, teaching and learning, workforce development, research and innovation capacity, and environments. Informed by input from over 1,300 individuals through public engagement, the plan outlines the need for collaborative efforts across federal agencies, sectors, and communities to achieve its objectives. It calls for initiatives that ensure STEM opportunities reach every community, enabling individuals to achieve their aspirations in STEM fields. The full plan and release notice are available [here](#); a comparative analysis of this plan and the 2018 Trump-era plan is [here](#).

HERITAGE FOUNDATION EXAMINES PARENTAL RIGHTS IN EDUCATION

On Tuesday, the Heritage Foundation hosted an [event](#) addressing the current state and future of parental rights in US public schools, focusing on curriculum content, gender ideology, and opt-out rights for school surveys. The panel featured educational experts and parental rights advocates from across the country, highlighting increasing concerns among parents about what is being taught in schools and the unclear boundaries surrounding their involvement in their children's well-being. Notre Dame Law Professor Melissa Moschella argued that the ongoing conflict between parents and public schools stems from what she considers to be the Supreme Court's "failure" to definitively address parental rights within the education system. She described parental rights as a "zombie issue" due to the Court's decades-long reluctance to apply strict scrutiny in favor of or against these rights. Professor Moschella referenced two key Supreme Court cases—*Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923) and *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925)—which have left unresolved questions about the extent of parents' rights to access information and influence decisions regarding their children's education. Panelists also discussed legislative efforts like the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which grant parents limited rights over their children's education records and student surveys. However, these measures have not fully resolved parental concerns. While anticipating potential policy changes under the incoming Trump Administration, the panel emphasized empowering parents to directly engage with their local educational agencies to address hesitations and advocate for their children's education and privacy rights. A recording of the webinar will be posted [here](#).

ED RELEASES POLICY GUIDE ON STUDENT CELL PHONE USE IN SCHOOLS

On Tuesday, the Department of Education (ED) [released](#) *Planning Together: A Playbook for Student Personal Device Policies*, a resource designed to help schools, districts, and states create clear, research-informed policies for managing student use of cell phones and personal devices. The playbook outlines a step-by-step process for engaging educators, students, parents, and caregivers in developing policies tailored to their community's unique needs. Recognizing the dual nature of cell phones as both a communication tool and a potential distraction, the guide emphasizes balancing learning priorities and student safety while fostering digital citizenship. It includes sample policies, additional resources, and considerations for implementation. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona emphasized the importance of locally informed policies, acknowledging that different schools face varying challenges and concerns. "The evidence makes clear: there is no one-size-fits-all policy. Different school communities have different needs, and the nuances of this issue demand that local voices – parents, educators, and students – inform local decisions around the use of personal devices in school," Cardona said. The resource responds to

evidence on the negative impacts of unchecked cell phone use in schools, such as diminished focus, mental health risks, and exposure to cyberbullying. Developed as part of the Biden-Harris Administration's broader efforts to address youth mental health, the playbook aims to empower school communities to create policies that are practical, effective, and supported by all stakeholders.

COVID SCHOOL CLOSURE DEBATE INTENSIFIES WITH NEW REPORTS IN CONGRESS

House Oversight Committee Republicans and Democrats released separate reports of their observations of the causes of and circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic. On Wednesday, Republicans on the House Oversight Committee released a 500-page report arguing that students were harmed through the required use of masks, lockdowns impeded youth development, long term school closures were not supported by science and produced more health concerns, and it further accused the AFT and President Randi Weingarten of inappropriate interference. Oversight Democrats have also released a report disputing the GOP's findings, countering there was no undue influence exerted by the AFT or Ms. Weingarten and arguing that Biden-Harris Administration policies pursued a quick and safe reopening of schools, unlike during the Trump Administration. The debate underscores lingering tensions over pandemic-era decisions and their consequences.

HOUSE ED COMMITTEE DEBATES CIVICS EDUCATION IN K-12 SCHOOLS

On Wednesday, the House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education held a hearing titled, "Back to Basics: America's Founding, Civics, and Self-Government in K-12 Curricula." The discussion addressed the state of civics education, controversies surrounding curriculum content, and the role of federal involvement in local education. Witnesses, including scholars and advocates, debated the impact of critical race theory (CRT) and ideological frameworks in classrooms, highlighting concerns about divisiveness and academic underperformance. Republican members asserted that there is a prevalence of CRT-related curriculum in K-12 schools and its potential to overshadow foundational subjects like reading and math. The witness panel shared alternative curriculum models focused on civic virtues, historical accuracy, and balanced narratives, such as those by the Woodson Center. Democrats, however, pointed out the federal government's limited role in directing curriculum, advocating instead for addressing structural issues like school infrastructure and equitable access to education. The hearing showcased a polarized yet urgent dialogue about how best to prepare students for informed citizenship while respecting local decision-making in education. A full summary on Wednesday's hearing prepared by BPAG is here.

HUNT INSTITUTE EXAMINES AI IN CLASSROOMS, FUTURE OF EDUCATION

On Thursday, the Hunt Institute hosted a webinar titled, "Homeroom with Education Leaders - 2024 Lookback: AI in Classrooms, Funding, and the Future of Education." The discussion reflected on the past year's educational investments, emphasizing strategies for leveraging opportunities in 2025. Maggie Cicco, an Edunomics Lab research fellow, highlighted disparities in how school districts utilized COVID-19 relief funds, stressing the importance of proactive budgeting to address enrollment declines, rising labor costs, and tighter state revenues. Sue Ellen Gilliland, Education Technology Coordinator for the Alabama Department of Education, detailed Alabama's efforts to bridge the technology gap by expanding device access and implementing a comprehensive needs assessment for school districts to develop sustainability plans. She also

emphasized equipping educators with the skills to teach AI effectively. Srinivas Javangula, Director of Data and Research for the Alabama Department of Education, explored the role of student data and research in addressing learning loss and integrating AI in classrooms. He discussed using AI to aid students in understanding complex concepts, support teachers in lesson planning, and foster critical thinking. Sunil Gunderia, Age of Learning Chief Innovation Officer, turned the focus to early education, illustrating how state-funded pre-k programs can help close opportunity gaps. He shared success stories from Palm Beach County, Florida, where Age of Learning's [My Reading Academy](#) significantly enhanced learning gains and kindergarten readiness. The session concluded with Hunt Institute Director of K-12 Education Policy Dr. Jaalil Hart sharing additional resources to support academic recovery in the post-relief funding era. A recording of the event will be posted [here](#).

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4. New Publications

[After Action Review of the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Lessons Learned and a Path Forward](#)

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5. In the News

[U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona touts Utah's students, educators during visit](#)

Deseret News (December 4, 2024)

US Math Scores Drop on Major International Test

Chalkbeat (December 4, 2024)

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Education Department Promotes Expanded Use of Behavior Assessments

K-12 Dive (December 2, 2024)

Survey: For Most Parents, Grades Have Lost Ground as Measure of Student Progress

The 74 (November 25, 2024)

Video: Approps 101 – LHHS Subcommittee Chairman Aderholt & Interior Subcommittee Chairman Simpson

US House Appropriations Committee (October 31, 2024)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Tuesday, December 10, 2024

Webinar: State Policies to Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Subject: The Learning Policy Institute will hold a webinar as part of the state legislative prep series on “Eliminating Chronic Absence.”

Participants: Hedy Chang, Attendance Works; Emily Germain, Learning Policy Institute; Laura Hernandez, Learning Policy Institute; and Anna Maier, Learning Policy Institute.

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

Wednesday, December 11, 2024

Webinar: Supporting students to and through college: What does the evidence say?

Subject: The Center for Economic Security and Opportunity will host a webinar to highlight a new report that provides an in-depth and critical review of the evidence from two-plus decades of research on what the evidence says about how best to support students to and through college.

Participants: Ben Castleman, professor in the economics of education, University of Virginia; Michelle Dimino, Director of education, Third Way; Sarah Reber, fellow, Center for Economic Security and Opportunity; and Shun Robertson, senior vice president, University of North Carolina System.

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

Webinar: How Should Congress Keep Children Safe Online?

Subject: ITIF will hold a webinar on children's online safety legislation and the roles that parents, corporations, and regulators must play in shaping the future of children's digital experiences.

Participants: Shae Gardner, policy director, LGBT Tech; John Mootz, senior policy and research manager, Children and Screens; Bailey Sanchez, senior counsel for u.s. legislation, Future of Privacy Forum; and Andrew Zach, policy manager, Family Online Safety Institute.

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Webinar: Promoting Equity through Data: Resources and Insights for Education Leaders

Subject: The U.S. Department of Education will hold a webinar on "Promoting Equity through Data: Resources and Insights for Education Leaders."

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

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7. Future Hearings and Events

Tuesday, December 17, 2024

Webinar: Equitable Grading: A Competency-Based Education Entry Point and Core Practice

Subject: The Aurora Institute will hold a webinar on equitable grading, and two learning communities that are changing how they communicate student learning.

Participants: Joe Feldman, CEO, Crescendo Education Group; Sonal Patel, assistant superintendent of educational services, San Leandro Unified, CA; Jill Gurtner, principal, Clark Street Community School, WI; and Laurie Gagnon, competency works director, Aurora Institute.

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

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8. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor:

Consideration of nominations

House Floor:

H.R. 7673 – Liberty in Laundry Act (*Sponsored by Rep. Ogles / Energy and Commerce Committee*)

S. 4199 – JUDGES Act of 2024 (*Sponsored by Sen. Young / Judiciary Committee*)

Legislation related to the National Defense Authorization Act is expected.

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

[U.S. House and Senate 2024 Schedule](#)

[U.S. House and Senate 2023 Schedule](#)

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

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

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

[U.S. Senate Budget Committee](#)

[U.S. House Budget Committee](#)

[Congressional Budget Office](#)

[Federal legislative information](#)

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10. 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:

- Government Relations
- Research and Analysis
- Advocacy Training
- Association Management
- Strategic Communications
- Policy Events

For more information, please visit our [website](#).

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