



The Education Report

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The Education Report, a weekly publication of WPLLC, 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, the news from Capitol Hill has been focused on Trump cabinet nominees (although not would-be Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos), “fake” news, an odd Trump Tower “press conference” and Republican efforts to repeal and/or replace Obamacare. As for this week’s education news, seventeen states and the District of Columbia told the Department of Education that they will file their ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) plans by April 3. Those states are Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, and Vermont (plus the District of Columbia). The remaining states are presumably opting for the September 18 deadline. Of course, the incoming Trump Administration might not be ready to review those plans by April, or might push back all manner of ESSA deadlines. Regardless, it’s clear some states are eager to get going with new accountability plans.

As for Betsy DeVos’s confirmation hearing—it’s scheduled for Tuesday, January 17 at 5:00 pm. The lateness is odd, but would accommodate travel schedules of senators returning to Washington, DC, after the three-day weekend. Senate Democrats are seeking further delay, but Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, wants to dispense with the hearing quickly and get Trump’s pick confirmed. This week, more and more groups publicly voiced concerns about Betsy DeVos’s views on public education, her business background, her political contributions and her overall expertise in education policy outside of “school choice” issues. The hearing will be a lively one, as the other confirmation hearings have been, and Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) will certainly have stern questions for her.

The education community continues to watch the conversation around budget reconciliation and the intention to repeal Obamacare for any would-be effects or signals regarding overall spending. So far, there haven't been many, but the broader discussion around discretionary spending suggests that that non-defense discretionary spending and discretionary defense spending will be treated differently on Capitol Hill in the near future. Both the Secretary of Defense nominee and Representative Tom Cole (R-OK), who chairs the Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee, suggested that defense needs should be funded without regard to what is going on in other federal investments. Representative Cole even suggested that there might be a move to alleviate the restrictions that sequestration could place on defense spending, but did not suggest the same for non-defense spending. This is concerning for education and other domestic programs, and has their Democratic champions on Capitol Hill on high alert.

Next week will be a short one in Washington, DC, but will be packed with action. After Monday's Martin Luther King, Jr. Day holiday, the city will prepare for Friday's Inauguration and the subsequent marches and protests. That means the city will pretty much be shut down for business on Friday (or maybe even starting on Thursday, given the sweeping street closures and security measures). Tuesday evening is circled in red (for now—assuming no more delays) on education calendars across the city. That's the day that more will be learned about the person who will likely hold the fate of federal education policy in her hands.

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2. In Brief

BROOKINGS INSTITUTE DISCUSSES ROLE OF PUBLIC INVESTMENT

On Monday, the Brookings Institute held an event titled, "From Bridges to Education: Best Bets for Public Investment." Keynote speaker Larry Summers, former President of Harvard University, kicked off the daylong event. While his speech, and most of the morning's speakers, focused mostly on general ways to move forward with public private partnerships for infrastructure investment, Summers did make clear that it is hard to reassure students that school and education equity matters when there are over 10,000 schools with chipped paint or when 20% of school chemistry labs have dysfunctional HVAC systems. He argued that as long as various incentives result in subpar maintenance, it will be hard to convince public systems to invest in it. Later in the program, researcher Kristin Butcher discussed investment in human capital and stressed that consistent evidence has shown that access to the social safety net (CHIP, Medicaid, SNAP, Head Start) has changed long run adult outcomes for the better. Researchers Sarah Turner (University of Virginia) and Richard Mundane (Harvard University) discussed their paper on education markets and school policy options in K-12 and higher education. Turner and Mundane argued for a reduced federal role that focuses on financing education, limited regulation, and leveraging its competitive advantage in research. In higher education, they argued that transparent grant aid has had a proven positive impact on college attainment and, as a result, policymakers should eliminate tuition tax credits and restructure Pell grants. They also noted that as long as quality choices are limited in K-12 and higher education, the market will not be sufficient to support demand. For more on the daylong event, go [here](#).

AFT GIVES RECOMMENDATIONS TO ED SECRETARY NOMINEE BESTY DEVOS

On Monday, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) held an event that featured a speech by AFT president Randi Weingarten entitled, "Four Pillars to Achieve Powerful, Purposeful Public Education, or, Reigniting the Education Wars," in advance of Education Secretary nominee Betsy DeVos' confirmation hearing before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee. Weingarten was clear in her assessment of DeVos as unqualified with an

adverse record on public education, but called on nominee DeVos to embrace the bipartisanship of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) and to show strong support for public education. To achieve “powerful, purposeful public education,” Weingarten said, DeVos must embrace the following four pillars: 1) Promote Children’s Wellbeing, 2) Support Powerful Learning, 3) Build Capacity and 4) Foster Collaboration. Weingarten called the privatization of public education an egregious disruption and offered her vision of equitably funded public schools in which teachers are supported, parents are engaged, and faculty and administration engage in collaborative, innovative work to improve student outcomes. Weingarten invited DeVos to visit public schools and engage directly with the work of America’s educators. For more information, go [here](#).

CCRSC OUTLINES INTERSECTION OF WELL-ROUNDED AND WORK-BASED LEARNING

On Tuesday, the College and Career Readiness and Success Center (CCRSC) held a webinar to discuss “Work-Based Learning: Promoting a Well-Rounded Education for All Students.” GeMar Neloms, consultant with CCRSC, began by highlighting opportunities within the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) and the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act* (WIOA) for expanding well-rounded learning programs, like work-based learning. For example, ESSA strives to improve access to well-rounded programs through competitive grants, pipeline services, and Title II funds that support professional development around work-based learning strategies. Additionally, WIOA supports expansion through Title I youth formula funds, greater collaboration between K-12 and postsecondary education systems, and availability of pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities. Next, Charlotte Cahill, Associate Director at Pathways to Prosperity and Jobs for the Future, signaled the need for equity in work-based learning (WBL) programs. Currently, of the 70 percent of employers that offer WBL, spending an approximate total of \$177 billion annually, only 17 percent of funds are used for training and development for employees that only hold a high-school diploma or less. Comparatively, 58 percent of those funds are spent on employees with at least a bachelor’s degree. Offering policy solutions, Cahill suggested that federal, state, and local lawmakers do more by: offering more financial incentives for businesses and organizations that expand equitable WBL programs, include WBL in career development education, and offer more externships to educators and professionals that teach WBL. Finally, Kama Staton, Career Guidance & Work-Based Learning Associate for the South Carolina Department of Education, and Kathy D’Antoni, Chief Officer of the Division of Career Technical Education at the West Virginia Department of Education, both pointed out the importance of adequately developing students’ social and emotional skills throughout their K-12 learning and reinforcing stimulated work environments that promote increased student leadership and engagement. For more information, click [here](#).

HOUSE DEMOCRATS FORM NEW PUBLIC EDUCATION CAUCUS

On Tuesday, Representative Mark Pocan (D-WI) and Representative Mark Takano (D-CA) announced the formation of a new caucus to support the goals of public education. Although the caucus has been in the works for over a year, the election of Donald Trump and his nomination of Betsy DeVos as education secretary has increased the urgency for organizers. The National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the two largest teacher unions in the country, along with many Democratic members joined the press conference announcing the caucus. Members expressed fear that public education will be under attack if DeVos is confirmed. DeVos did not attend public schools as a child and did not send her children to public schools and has never been employed by a public school. Critics of DeVos say her strong advocacy for school voucher programs and other alternatives to traditional public schools threaten the public education system. Congressman Takano (D-CA), who spent over two decades

as a public school teacher, said at the press conference that DeVos' lack of experience gives her an "incredibly narrow view of public education in America." In addition to Pocan and Takano, the caucus includes Representatives Alma Adams (D-NC); Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR); Rosa DeLauro (D-CT); Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA); Raul Grijalva (D-AZ); Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX); Jared Polis (D-CO); Jamie Raskin (D-MD); and Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ). The group hopes to attract more members in the upcoming days. For more information, please go [here](#).

NEW AMERICA REFLECTS ON THE NEXT GENERATION UNIVERSITIES INITIATIVE

On Thursday, the New America Foundation hosted an event, "Where Are They Now: A Look at America's Next Generation Universities." The event discussed the University Innovation Alliance (UIA), a group of universities (dubbed "Next Generation Universities") committed to coming together to improve outcomes for all students. The "innovation cluster" of member institutions includes Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Michigan and Oregon State Universities, The Ohio State University, Purdue University and the Universities of California, Riverside, Central Florida, Kansas and Texas at Austin. The UIA works to pursue and share innovative ideas such as predictive analytics, proactive advising, strategic financial interventions and technology-enhanced adaptive learning. When innovative strategies are successful, these institutions look to scale programs across the UIA. Launched in 2014, the UIA has committed to the goal of graduating an additional 68,000 students collectively by 2025, and of those new graduates, has committed to ensuring that at least half are low-income. Panelist Tina Gridiron, strategic director at the Lumina Foundation remarked, "Increasing attainment for low-income, first generation and students of color is an 'all hands on deck,' effort" and applauded the UIA for their commitment and collaboration. For more information about the event and effort, go [here](#).

AEE DISCUSSES BRINGING MIND, BRAIN, AND EDUCATION SCIENCE TO TEACHERS

On Thursday, the Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE) held a webinar titled, "The Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning (CTTL): Bringing Mind, Brain, and Education Science to Teachers and the Classroom." Throughout the webinar, Glenn Whitman, director of CTTL, focused on quality examples of how educators are informing the teaching and learning process through research-based practice. Overall, Whitman stated, "When teachers know about Mind, Brain, and Education Science they are more likely to redesign learning spaces, implement more experimental learning, and differentiate instruction and assessment methods. Additionally, Whitman highlighted the importance of "plasticity" as a mindset for the future of education. Specifically, he refers to plasticity in the manner that teachers and school leaders have the ability to strengthen its organization as a result of experiences examined by researchers. Under this mindset, Whitman concludes with a two-level process that teachers and school leaders can use in developing a better understanding of Mind, Brain, and Education Science and how they can implement it in their classrooms. First, teachers and school leaders can examine the latest research to have a foundational understanding of emotion and cognitive neuroanatomy as it relates to learning. With that, teachers can implement targeted academic and social lessons and school leaders can do more to develop a research-driven culture around professional development. For more information, click [here](#).

MCGRAW HILL EDUCATION HOSTS WEBINAR ON COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY PLANS

On Thursday, *Education Week* hosted a webinar in conjunction with McGraw-Hill Education entitled, "Strategies for Aligning PreK-12 Literacy Action Plans and Rigorous Expectations." The webinar was geared for an audience of classroom instructors and focused on sharing proven methods and solutions to enhance and augment school and district literacy strategy and action plans. Douglas Fischer, Professor of Educational Leadership at San Diego State University,

kicked things off by discussing what “rigor” means. Fischer noted that the term is often used, but not defined, by districts, and suggested it means a balance of tasks that are both difficult (high-level, long) and complex (multi-step, abstract) so that students are building a variety of skills supporting literacy skills and comprehension. In particular, he noted that stamina and fluency in reading comes through assigning less complex text with varying degrees of difficulty. Once this initial foundation is built, Fisher advocates teaching more complex text and having students complete annotations of that text (digitally or in print) through highlighting key points, circling phrases, and restating author points in the margins. He asserts that this approach builds strength in reading comprehension – ultimately increasing strategic thinking and proficiency in literacy. Fisher also touted the idea of collaboration – having students talk about what they took away from the text with other students – to increase engagement and have students attain better inferential skills. Shawn Maloney, Chief Academic Officer at McGraw-Hill Education, echoed Fisher’s remarks in saying that having common definitions for what literacy means across the entire school ecosystem is critical for improving literacy in all disciplines – not simply language arts. Her proposed definition was that literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context. She touted the sharing of successful case studies so teachers and school leaders could see how literacy plans are administered. For more information and resources about literacy strategies, please go [here](#).

SOURCES SAY ALLAN B. HUBBARD TOP CONTENDER FOR DEPUTY ED SECRETARY

Various education trade publications and listservs were abuzz this week with reports that Allan B. Hubbard, who served as an economic adviser during both Bush administrations, is a top contender for deputy secretary, the second-in-command job at the U.S. Department of Education (ED). During the Obama administration, the deputy job has been a key management position, overseeing implementation of major K-12 policy initiatives. But given Hubbard's background, the job could take on more of the ED’s postsecondary portfolio. Hubbard served as the director of the National Economic Council under President George W. Bush. Under President George H.W. Bush, he was executive director of the President's Council on Competitiveness and deputy chief of staff to Vice President Dan Quayle. Hubbard is a board member of the Lumina Foundation, which seeks to increase access to postsecondary opportunities, and he is a co-founder of E&A Industries Inc., a private equity firm. Hubbard has a lot in common with his would-be boss, Betsy DeVos, the nominee for Education Secretary. Like DeVos, Hubbard is a school choice supporter, his background is in business, he's a former state party chair (Indiana), and he is a wealthy GOP donor. For more information, please go [here](#).

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3. New Publications

[Learning to Teach: Practice-Based Preparation in Teacher Education](#)

Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (January 2017)

[What’s Hot in Literacy: 2017 Report](#)

International Literacy Association (January 2017)

[Five Key Trends in U.S. Student Performance](#)

Economic Policy Institute (January 2017)

[Charter Schools: The Landscape and the Horizon](#)

National Association of State Boards of Education (January 2017)

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4. In the News

Ten Questions Senators Could Ask Education Secretary Nominee Betsy DeVos
Politics K-12 (Jan. 10, 2017)

U.S. Supreme Court Considers Level of Special Education Benefits
The Denver Post (Jan. 11, 2017)

Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus Raises Concerns About DeVos' Record on LGBT Issues
The Wisconsin Gazette (Jan. 12, 2017)

Native American Students Sue U.S. Government Over Dismal Education
The Huffington Post (Jan. 12, 2017)

The Return of the MOOC
The Economist (Jan. 13, 2017)

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5. About WPLLC

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