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FY 2018 BUDGET

On May 23, President Trump submitted his [Fiscal Year 2018 budget request](#) to Congress, laying out a series of proposals and priorities designed to ensure every student has an equal opportunity to receive a high-quality education. For the Department of Education, the President is requesting \$59 billion in discretionary funding, a decrease of \$9 billion -- or 13% -- below the *Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2017* level (see [fact sheet](#)). (Note: As the President's budget was completed before a full-year FY 2017 appropriation was enacted, it was built off the FY 2017 continuing resolution level.) "President Trump is committed to ensuring the Department focuses on returning decision-making power back to the states, where it belongs, and on giving parents more control over their child's education," Secretary DeVos emphasized in a statement. "The budget also reflects a series of tough choices we have had to make when assessing the best use of taxpayer money. It ensures funding for programs with proven results for students while taking a hard look at programs that sound nice but simply haven't yielded the desired outcomes. By refocusing the Department's funding priorities on supporting students, we can usher in a new era of creativity and ingenuity and lay a new foundation for American greatness."

There are five major themes in the budget:

Creating New Education Options through School Choice ([blog post](#))

- \$1 billion increase for Title I for new Furthering Options for Children to Unlock Success (FOCUS) grants, which would provide supplemental awards to school districts that adopt student-centered weighted student funding formulas combined with open enrollment systems.
- \$250 million increase for the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) program for competitive awards for applicants to provide scholarships for students from low-income families to attend the private school of their parents' choice.
- \$167 million increase for the Charter Schools Grants program to strengthen state efforts to start new charter schools or expand and replicate existing high-performing charter schools, while providing up to \$100 million to meet growing demand for charter school facilities.

Maintaining Support for the Nation's Most Vulnerable Students ([blog post](#))

- \$14.9 billion in level funding for the core Title I grants to districts program.
- \$12.7 billion to maintain the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) formula grant programs.
- \$736 million in level funding for the English Language Acquisition program.

Simplifying Funding for Postsecondary Education ([blog post](#))

- Strengthens the Pell Grant program by level funding the discretionary appropriation and supporting year-round Pell Grants, increasing aid available to eligible students by \$16.3 billion over 10 years.

- Simplifies loan repayment for students by replacing five different income-driven repayment plans with a single plan aimed at prioritizing expedited loan repayment for undergraduate borrowers.
- Provides \$808 million for TRIO programs and \$219 million for GEAR UP, resulting in a savings of \$193 million. (Funding for these programs is reduced in areas that are either not supported by rigorous evidence of effectiveness or that can be supported through other resources.)
- Provides \$492 million for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) through the *Higher Education Act* (HEA) Title III and V programs.
- Reduces and reforms the Federal Work-Study program to ensure funds go to undergraduate students who would benefit the most.

Building Evidence around Educational Innovation

- \$617 million for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) for support of research, evaluation, and statistics that help educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders improve outcomes for all students.
- \$370 million for EIR to expand support for evidence-based initiatives to develop, validate, and scale-up effective education interventions that help states and districts meet *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) requirements.
- A total of \$42 million for Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) to provide evidence-based professional development activities and prepare educators from non-traditional preparation and certification routes to serve in high-need districts.

Streamlining Existing Programs

- Eliminates \$2.3 billion in funding for Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants (ESEA Title II), which evidence shows are poorly structured to support activities that have a measurable impact on improving student outcomes and duplicate other ESEA program funds that may be used for professional development.
- Eliminates \$1.2 billion in funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, which lacks strong evidence of meeting objectives.
- Eliminates \$190 million in funding for Striving Readers/Comprehensive Literacy Development Grants, which have limited impact and duplicate activities that may be supported with other federal, state, local, and private funds.

(Note: The budget eliminates or reduces more than 30 programs that duplicate other programs, are ineffective, or are more appropriately supported with state, local, or private funds.)

Want to dig deeper? Among the helpful resources online are a [press release](#), the [budget summary](#), and the [PowerPoint presentation](#) used in the [in-person stakeholder briefing](#). Meanwhile, on May 24, the Secretary testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education on the budget ([opening statement](#) and [video](#)).

SCHOOL CHOICE PLAN

A day before the budget release (May 22), Secretary DeVos delivered the [keynote address](#) at the American Federation for Children's National Policy Summit in Indianapolis. She introduced the principles of the Administration's school choice plan, urging state leaders to invest in individual students and empower parents, and outlined the Administration's intent to support state-based solutions. Following are some excerpts from her remarks.

"If you hear nothing else I say tonight, please hear this: education should not be a partisan issue. Sure, various approaches to education policy should be hotly debated, and they certainly are. But, making sure that all of our kids get a great education -- how could it be a partisan issue? Everyone -- in both parties -- should support equal opportunity in education, regardless of a child's income, zip code or family circumstances."

"The time has expired for 'reform.' We need a transformation -- a transformation that will open up America's

closed and antiquated education system. If we really want to help students, then we need to focus everything about education on *individual students* -- funding, supporting, and investing in them. Not in buildings; not in systems. It shouldn't matter where a student learns so long as they are *actually learning*."

"We shouldn't view this, however, as a chance to mandate a one-size-fits-all school choice proposal. We all fundamentally know one size *doesn't* fit all...and that we won't accomplish our goals by creating a new federal bureaucracy or bribing states with their own taxpayers' money. We should have *zero interest* in substituting the *current* big government approach *for our own* big government approach. When it comes to education, no solution, not even ones we like, should be dictated or run from Washington, D.C."

"Let me be clear: I firmly believe every state should provide choices and embrace equal opportunity in education. But those are decisions states must make. No two states are the same and no two states' approaches will be the same, and that's a good thing. States are the best laboratories of our democracy."

HIRING ED STAFF

This week, Secretary DeVos announced the hiring of three senior officials:

- Kathleen Smith, Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Postsecondary Education/Acting Assistant Secretary for the Office of Postsecondary Education
- Steven Menashi, Deputy General Counsel for Postsecondary Service/Acting General Counsel
- Nathan Bailey, Communications Director, delegated the authority to perform the duties of the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Outreach

Additional hiring announcements are expected to be made in the coming weeks.

IDEA WEB SITE

The Department recently launched a new [web site](#) dedicated to IDEA. The Secretary directed the agency to expedite the development of a new, updated, and more robust IDEA site after the [legacy site](#) experienced a prolonged outage in early February due to technical issues. The Department's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) spent more than two months [collecting feedback](#) from parents, educators, service providers, and advocates as to what they would like to see on a new site. The new site incorporates that input, with improved site navigation and design, expanded search options, audience specific-information, and expanded content with streamlined resources ([flyer](#)). Users are encouraged to continue to provide feedback on the IDEA site through the [OSERS Blog](#).

LOAN SERVICING SOLICITATION

Last month, the Department formally amended Phase II of the federal student loan servicing solicitation. The [amendment](#) maintains superior customer service and critical borrower protections while ensuring that the project stays on budget, saving taxpayers some \$130 million over the next five years. The amendment further clarifies the agency's expectations and lists all requirements in the solicitation (see [fact sheet](#)).

"With changes in the new amendment...borrowers can expect to see a more user-friendly loan servicing interface, shorter email and call response times, and an improved payment application method that will maximize the benefit of each payment the borrower makes. Our amendment makes no changes to repayment plan requirements," Secretary DeVos said in a statement. "I am committed to helping students meet their repayment obligations and reach their academic goals while making government more effective and efficient."

The Secretary elaborated on the rationale behind the action in an [op-ed](#) published in the *Wall Street Journal*.

ODDS AND ENDS

- The ESEA, as amended by the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), requires that each state that submits a consolidated state plan or individual program plan under the ESSA must have on file with the Secretary a single set of assurances. In order to receive timely federal allocations for a number of programs (including parts of Title I, II, III, IV, V, and VII), states must submit a signed [set of assurances](#) no later than today (June 2).
- The Department held a [webinar](#) on changes to the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (ESEA Title IV, Part A) under the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017*.
- The Secretary announced the Department will [read and score applications](#) for the Upward Bound grant program that were deemed ineligible under technical formatting rules issued by the previous Administration. The flexibility to consider these applications was made possible by the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017*.
- On May 24, James Runcie, Chief Operating Officer of the Department's Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA), [resigned](#), effective immediately. Matthew Sessa, FSA's Deputy Chief Operating Officer, has assumed his duties until further notice.
- On May 25, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released "[The Condition of Education 2017](#)," a congressionally mandated report to the country on education in America today. The report presents 46 indicators grouped under four areas: population characteristics, participation in education, elementary and secondary education, and postsecondary education. It also spotlights four issues of policy interest: risk factors and academic outcomes in kindergarten through third-grade; homeless children and youth in public schools; first-time postsecondary students' persistence after three years; and disability rates and employment status by educational attainment ([blog post](#)).
- Earlier, NCES released a "[Data Point](#)" on the financial literacy of 15-year-old students from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). In 2015, U.S. students scored 487 (on a scale of 0 to 1,000), which was not statistically different from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average (489), with six systems scoring significantly higher than and six systems scoring significantly lower than the U.S. Moreover, the U.S. score in 2015 was not statistically different from the U.S. score in 2012 (492) ([blog post](#)).
- A reminder to regularly check the Department's revived [Homeroom Blog](#). New this issue are posts on [Police Week](#) (appreciating the role of career and technical education), [National Teacher of the Year Sydney Chaffee](#), and [U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools](#).
- The Department's Family Ambassador, Family Engagement Team, and educators held a [forum on family engagement](#), underscoring innovative practices currently being implemented by teachers and administrators in schools.

QUOTE TO NOTE

"[I]t's not enough to promote choice simply for the sake of choice. That doesn't serve kids. If a menu is full of bad options, then do you really have a choice at all? The point is to provide quality options that serve students so each of them can grow. Every option should be held accountable, but they should be directly accountable to parents and communities, not to Washington, D.C., bureaucrats. In order to succeed, education must commit to excellence and innovation to meet the needs of individual students. Defenders of our current system have regularly been resistant to any meaningful change. In resisting, these 'flat-earthers' have chilled creativity and stopped American kids from competing at the highest levels. Our current framework is a closed system that relies on one-size-fits-all solutions. We need an open system that envelopes choices and embraces the future."

-- Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos (5/22/17), in [remarks](#) at the American Federation for Children's National Policy Summit in Indianapolis

UPCOMING EVENTS

Please join the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services for a special convening on family engagement, titled “[Engaging Fathers and Families](#),” on June 15 at the Department of Education’s headquarters building. The day will be a conversation with faith-based and community organizations, school leaders, and federal agencies about engaging families -- particularly fathers -- in improving education, wellness, and development for all children.

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