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DISASTER RELIEF AID

Last week, as part of its ongoing work to aid hurricane relief efforts, the Department released [non-regulatory guidance](#) to help federal grantees and program participants remove barriers to restoring teaching and learning environments and expedite the recovery process for those impacted by Hurricane Michael. “For children of affected families, returning to school can provide stability in a time of upheaval,” Secretary DeVos emphasized in a [letter to Chief State School Officers](#) in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama on the guidance. “The Department stands ready to provide whatever flexibility and support it can to help ensure all children, particularly those in the hurricane-impacted areas, receive a quality education.” The guidance provides support to state and local education agencies, charter schools, non-public schools, Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools, postsecondary institutions, and other entities in a variety of ways, while also covering program-specific topics. Examples of such support include flexibility on reporting deadlines, timelines for grant-funded activities, and maintenance of fiscal effort or matching requirements; potential alternatives and strategies for supplying program services after disruption; and suggested methods for ensuring continuity of services and communication.

REIMAGINING HIGHER EDUCATION

Also last week, the Department announced the winners of the [Reimagining the Higher Education Ecosystem Challenge](#). Under this challenge, the agency called upon students, educators, policymakers, industry leaders, technology developers, and others to develop bold ideas to reimagine what higher education will look like in 2030 and concrete actions that can be taken today to move the country in that direction. Specifically, the agency focused on three opportunity areas ripe for innovation: (1) curating lifelong learning pathways that support students in obtaining rewarding work; (2) creating a marketplace for learning that enables students to effectively track and share the skills they acquire; and (3) leveraging emerging technology to improve individual learning.

The response from the public was tremendous, and the competition was tough. Eighteen judges reviewed 160 proposals, identifying 25 finalists. The agency then asked the public to vote for which of the finalists’ visions resonated most by “investing” in their proposals using edu2030-coin -- a fictitious virtual currency.

The [10 winners](#) will receive a customized set of supports from the Department and its partners in the public and private sectors to enable them to further develop their visions and launch pilot programs. Furthermore, two of the teams -- FutureFit AI and Inspire! -- have the added distinction of raising the most capital and winning the public vote. They win complimentary admission to the 2019 ASU+GSV Summit. (Note: Watch this [video](#) of winner #GrowWithGoogle’s IT Support Professional Certificate.)

HIGHER EDUCATION REGULATIONS

Speaking of reimagining higher education, after considering information received at public hearings and via written comments, the Department announced in a [Federal Register notice](#) that it will establish a single Accreditation and Innovation negotiated rulemaking committee to address the Secretary's recognition of accrediting agencies and related institutional eligibility issues, as well as various technical corrections. The agency also announced it will establish three topic-based subcommittees, addressing distance learning, faith-based entities, and TEACH Grants. The agency intends to select negotiators who represent interests significantly affected by the topics proposed for negotiations. Nominations for negotiators are due by November 15. The committee will meet January 14-16, February 19-22, and March 25-28, while the subcommittees will meet January 17-18, February 12-13, and March 11-12 -- all in the Washington, D.C., area.

BACK TO SCHOOL TOUR

The Department's Homeroom blog continued to run daily recaps of senior agency officials' visits throughout last month's "Rethink School" back to school tour:

- [#RethinkSchool: Bringing Hopes and Dreams to Those Most in Need](#) (by Confidential Assistant Denisha Merriweather)
- [#RethinkSchool: Highlighting STEM Research and Education Programs in Delaware and Maryland](#) (about Acting Under Secretary of Education Diane Jones)
- [#RethinkSchool: From Language Skills to STEM and Industrial Training, Preparing AAPI Students for the Next Step](#) (by White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islands Executive Director Holly Ham)
- [#RethinkSchool: Excelling in the Classroom, Leading the Charge to Stop Bullying](#) (about Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education Frank Brogan)
- [#RethinkSchool: Minding the Gap](#) (by Deputy Secretary of Education Mitchell Zais)
- [#RethinkSchool: Rethinking Education in the Wake of Devastation](#) (by White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics Executive Director Aimee Viana)
- [#RethinkSchool: New Approaches That Are Meeting the Needs of Students](#) (by Secretary DeVos)

Meanwhile, on October 18, Secretary DeVos traveled to [Harper College](#) in Palatine, Illinois, to observe its unique apprenticeship program and hear directly from students and financial aid administrators about their experiences using the new Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) mobile application, [myStudentAid](#).

SUPPORTING ALL STUDENTS

To help professionals [approach educational technology with English Learners' needs in mind](#), the Department developed two toolkits. The [toolkit for educators](#) offers five guiding principles to apply in exploring new ways of working with and supporting English Learners through technology. The [toolkit for educational technology developers](#) provides guidance on the needs of English Learners and their educators; ways to communicate about products with schools and educators of English Learners to facilitate adoption of products; and the different types of professional development and training activities that educators find most valuable.

The Department's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) has been running a number of posts from the field on its [blog](#) in recognition of October being Learning Disabilities/Dyslexia/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Awareness Month, Blind Awareness Month, Down Syndrome Awareness Month, and National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Also, OSERS announced the appointment of [Laurie VanderPloeg](#) as Director of its Office of Special Education Programs.

The "Section 5005 [Final Report on Rural Education](#)," mandated by Congress as part of the *Every Student*

Succeeds Act (ESSA), outlines the actions the agency will take to meaningfully increase the involvement of rural schools and school districts in helping develop Department policy and regulations.

ODDS AND ENDS

- On October 24, President Trump [signed into law](#) sweeping legislation to address the nation's opioid crisis. The bill authorizes \$50 million in grants per year for the next five years to help states and districts support students who have experienced trauma, which can include some schoolwide behavioral interventions. It also authorizes \$10 million in grants per year for five years to help districts and non-profit organizations prevent and treat substance abuse disorders in children and young adults (see [round-up of supportive statements](#)).
- For [National Bullying Prevention Month](#), First Lady Melania Trump and Secretary DeVos welcomed students from local [Digital Pioneers Academy](#) for a viewing at the White House of the movie *Wonder*, which tells the inspiring story of a boy with facial differences who is attending a mainstream school for the first time.
- The Trump Administration's [Unified Agenda of Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions](#) details the actions administrative agencies plan to issue in the near and long term.
- Secretary DeVos announced 11 principals from 2018 [National Blue Ribbon Schools](#) as this year's recipients of the [Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding School Leadership](#).
- Also, the Department hosted the National Association of Elementary School Principals' (NAESP) 2018 [National Distinguished Principals](#) ([tweet](#)), the Secretary called into the surprise ceremony for the National Association of Secondary School Principals' (NASSP) 2019 [National Principal of the Year](#), and agency staff shadowed principals nationwide in recognition of [National Principals Month](#).
- The Department's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) has been [developing research quality standards](#) inspired by the LEED building standards.
- IES is partnering with the [Jefferson Education Exchange](#) to hear directly from educators through a series of events designed to gain insights on how academic research can inform teaching activities.
- Both [ACT](#) and the College Board ([SAT](#)) issued new reports on their college admissions assessments.

QUOTE TO NOTE

"Since I first took office, my Administration has made it a priority to invite county commissioners from across the United States to the White House.... I am pleased to say that more than 3,700 local officials from all 50 states have now participated in a White House State Leadership Conference. In recent weeks, we have seen the crucial importance of state, local, and federal partnerships. Natural disasters have struck states across the nation.... In every instance, our joint response and recovery efforts have been critical to saving lives and rebuilding communities. The White House State Leadership Conference is a perfect venue for us to share priorities and to forge partnerships."

-- President Donald Trump (10/23/18), in [remarks](#) at the White House State Leadership Conference for California, Alaska, and Hawaii local officials (see [round-up of supportive statements](#))

UPCOMING EVENTS

Later today, Secretary DeVos will address the [National FFA Convention and Exposition](#) in Indianapolis.

On October 29, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) will host a webinar titled "[New Research on the Arts and Early Childhood: A Symposium](#)," showcasing articles from a special section of [Early Childhood Research Quarterly](#).

On November 14, during [International Education Week](#), the Department will be hosting a "[Global Competencies for Career Success](#)" workshop aimed at helping educators incorporate global competencies into their career, technical, and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education programs. This "mini

summit,” powered by [Teach to Lead](#), invites teams comprised of teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders interested in adding or further developing global competencies. Teams will network with and receive feedback from teacher leaders and experts, partner with critical friends from the field of international education, and participate in targeted skills development sessions to improve project success. (Note: The deadline to register is November 1.)

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