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Date: 8/17/2018 9:18:42 AM
Subject: [ED_REVIEW] ED Review (08/17/18)



August 17, 2018

SCHOOL SAFETY COMMISSION

On August 7, the [Federal Commission on School Safety](#) held its third [listening session](#) in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The session was an opportunity for members of the public, as well as state and local officials, to share with Deputy Secretary of Education Mitchell Zais and other representatives from the Commission their views on how schools, school districts, institutions of higher education, and local and state government agencies may improve school safety. The session was divided into three parts: two roundtable discussions and a public comment period ([video](#)).

Then, on August 16, the Commission held its fourth meeting at the White House. The meeting was titled “Creating a Citadel of Learning: New Tools to Secure our Schools, Inside and Out.” Secretary DeVos (chairwoman), Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen (host), Attorney General Jeff Sessions, and Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar heard from three different panels of experts on best practices for school building security, active shooter training for schools, and practitioner experience with school-based threat assessments ([media advisory](#) and [video](#)).

That same day, Commission members briefed the President and his Cabinet on their work ([transcript](#) and [video](#)).

Meanwhile, following the Commission’s July 24 [field visit](#) to Adams County, Wisconsin, to learn how a middle school incorporates a statewide behavioral health framework, Secretary Azar penned an [op-ed](#) calling for mental health services in all schools. “Over 7 million American children suffer from serious emotional disturbance, which can impede key life activities like being able to learn in school,” he noted. “We need to be identifying signs of these conditions not only to help these children, but also because early identification and treatment can make these conditions much less severe down the road. Given the amount of time children spend in school, as many teachers and [other] school personnel as possible should be trained in identifying warning signs and symptoms.”

In related news, Secretary DeVos awarded a [Project School Emergency Response to Violence \(SERV\) grant](#) to the [Marshall County School District](#) in Kentucky to support ongoing recovery efforts following the January 23, 2018, shooting at Marshall County High School that took the lives of two students and injured 15 others. A Project SERV Immediate Services grant provides emergency, short-term assistance. According to district officials, the funds will be used to hire additional alternative school instructors, a homebound instructor, and an aide to assist counseling staff and compensate bus and custodial staff for extra services.

DISASTER RELIEF AID

This week, Secretary DeVos announced a total of \$359.8 million in new federal assistance for [20 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands](#) under the [Temporary Emergency Impact Aid for Displaced Students program](#). These awards provide funding to eligible state educational agencies (SEAs) to make payments to eligible local educational agencies (LEAs), charter schools, and Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools for the cost of educating elementary and secondary students displaced by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria or the 2017 California wildfires during the 2017-18 school year.

The awards are based on the quarterly counts of displaced students included in the SEA applications for Emergency Impact Aid. The statute specifies that the annual per-student amounts shall be the sum of \$10,000 for each displaced student who is a child with a disability, \$9,000 for each displaced student who is an English Learner, and \$8,500 for each displaced student who is neither a child with a disability nor an English Learner.

Congress appropriated a combined amount of \$2.5 billion for both the [Immediate Aid to Restart School Operations](#) and Emergency Impact Aid programs. The amounts awarded under each program will be based on demand and specific data received from eligible applicants, with multiple opportunities to apply.

Earlier, the Department announced Restart awards to four states (California, Florida, Georgia, and Texas), Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. It anticipates granting a second round of Emergency Impact Aid awards in the coming weeks, including awards for California and Puerto Rico.

For further information on all five disaster assistance programs, visit the agency's [Disaster Relief web page](#).

GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT RULES

The Department recently issued a [proposal to rescind the Gainful Employment regulations](#) and provide helpful, transparent higher education data to students, thereby treating all institutions of higher education fairly. “Students deserve useful and relevant data when making important decisions about their education post-high school,” the Secretary said. “That’s why, instead of targeting schools simply by their tax status, this Administration is working to ensure students have transparent, meaningful information about all colleges and all programs. Our new approach will aid students across all sectors of higher education and improve accountability.”

The agency believes that data, such as accreditation, program cost, completion rates, expected earnings after graduation, debt levels, and consistency with licensure requirements, are important to consumers -- and not just those students who are considering enrolling in a gainful employment program. Therefore, in a notice [published in the Federal Register](#) on August 14, it also invites public comment concerning whether the Department should require institutions to disclose, on their program web page, information about program size, accreditation, cost, completion rate, and licensure in the state in which it is located. (Note: The notice is open for public comment through September 13.)

In addition, to provide prospective students with important, actionable, and accurate information that could be used in college enrollment and borrowing decisions, the agency plans to revise the College Scorecard or a similar web-based tool to offer program-level outcomes, including median earnings and debt, for all programs at all institutions participating in federal student aid. The Department believes this step will improve transparency and accountability by providing comparable information for all programs and help students understand the earnings they might expect based on those of prior graduates.

ESSA UPDATE: HOMELESS SET-ASIDE

In a [letter to Elementary and Secondary Education Act \(ESEA\) and McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act state coordinators](#), the Department outlines key changes the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) made regarding the Title I homeless set-aside. In particular, the ESSA requires LEAs to reserve Title I funds

necessary to provide educationally related support services to homeless children and youth regardless of whether they attend a Title I school. The ESSA does not require an LEA to reserve a specific amount -- only that the amount be sufficient to serve homeless children and youth in shelters and other locations. Also, as authorized by Congress prior to the ESSA, an LEA may continue to use a portion of the reservation to fund a local homeless liaison's salary and expenses and defray the excess cost of school of origin transportation.

FBI'S ANTI-HOAX THREAT CAMPAIGN

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is promoting a [#ThinkBeforeYouPost campaign](#) to educate the public on the consequences of posting hoax threats to schools and other public places and remind communities that these threats are not a joke. The FBI and its partners follow up on every tip received from the public and analyze and investigate all threats to determine their credibility. Federal, state, and local law enforcement then employ a full range of tools to mitigate threats deemed credible. Making hoax threats drains law enforcement resources and costs taxpayers a significant amount of money. When an investigation concludes there was a false threat, a federal charge could be considered, which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison. Even if a federal charge is not warranted, state charges can be considered.

Here are a few [examples of serious threats](#) that the FBI and its partners have investigated:

- A young man in Texas used social media and a phone to issue threats against schools in Minnesota. He also called in fake hostage situations, known as "swatting." He was arrested, pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to more than three years in federal prison.
- A South Carolina man was sentenced to one year in federal prison after he sent text messages claiming there was a bomb in the parking lot of a Veterans Affairs Medical Center.
- A young man in North Carolina was sentenced to 22 months in federal prison and ordered to pay restitution after he broadcast himself on the Internet calling in bomb threats to various public places, including schools, colleges, and FBI offices.

Public assistance is crucial to efforts to curb hoax threats. The FBI asks the public to continue to contact law enforcement to report any potential threats or suspicious activity. If there is any reason to believe the safety of others is at risk, the public may reach out to their local police department by calling 911 or contact the FBI at tips.fbi.gov.

ODDS AND ENDS

- The beta version of the [myStudentAid mobile application](#) is now available to download from Apple's App Store and Google Play. The app features the myFAFSA component, which can be used to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form. The app currently has the 2018-19 FAFSA form; on October 1, it is scheduled to offer the 2019-20 FAFSA form.
- SchoolPreparedness.gov, the nation's new virtual hub to access federal resources, interactive tools, training, and funding to support school safety and emergency preparedness efforts, will launch this fall. To learn about this site, join the Department's [Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools \(REMS\) Technical Assistance \(TA\) Center](#) and its partners every Monday and Friday in August and September for a **Twitter fest on school safety and emergency preparedness**. Follow [#SchoolSafetyTopicoftheDay](#) on Mondays and [#SchoolSafetyResources](#) on Fridays to join the conversation.
- [#RethinkSchool](#) Homeroom blogs highlight how a [K-8 school on the edge of the Navajo Nation](#) near Flagstaff, Arizona, uses cultural values with science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) projects to overcome challenges and a [teacher's embrace of student-centered education](#).
- Another Homeroom blog recaps the opening of the East Syracuse Minoa Central School District in New York's ["Educate Comprehensively" student art exhibit](#) at the Department, featuring visual arts works and a film on career and technical education courses.
- Every year, the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders invites Asian Americans and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students and interns to an [event aimed to educate, connect, and inspire](#) the next

generation of AAPI leaders. This year's theme, "Going for Gold," featured trailblazer AAPIs across different industries and throughout the federal government.

QUOTE TO NOTE

"In March, I established the Federal Commission on School Safety to address the tragedy of violence in our classrooms. Since that time, the Commission has held nearly a dozen public meetings and listening sessions with educators, administrators, law enforcement, state and local leaders, survivors, and families generally.... We want to harden our schools against attack -- improving communications between law enforcement, school officials, mental health professionals, and counselors [and] training school personnel so they better protect our students, including allowing qualified personnel to be armed. As you know, in Florida, they went in with a bill that didn't have that, and they came out with a bill where the legislature wanted it. So that's up to the community, not up to the federal government.... Improving our early warning system to make sure schools, families, and law enforcement can identify red flags and respond quickly. We want a very rapid response.... We want to strengthen our mental health laws and procedures. So important. I think it's probably the most under-rated element of what we're doing, but it might be the most important.... Keeping guns -- we want to keep them out of the hands of those who pose a threat to themselves and to, more importantly, frankly, others. And we want to foster a culture that celebrates life and forms real and meaningful human connection so that we can see...if something is going wrong with somebody, we can do something about it."

-- President Donald Trump (8/16/18), in [remarks](#) during a White House Cabinet Meeting

UPCOMING EVENTS

The [U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools](#) has conducted a [Green Strides Tour](#) since 2013, allowing schools, districts, and postsecondary institutions to celebrate their achievements and share their work with community leaders and policymakers. This year, on October 24 and 25, the tour will spotlight honorees in Missouri. All are welcome to join the tour and see how schools use their grounds, with gardens, habitats, nature trails, and wetlands, to engage with students in STEM, nutrition, and agriculture, as well as art, literature, and social studies.

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