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ED Review

...a bi-weekly update on U.S. Department of Education activities relevant to the Intergovernmental and Corporate community and other stakeholders

December 21, 2018 (Happy Holidays!)

EDITOR'S NOTE

This is the final issue of *ED Review* for 2018. Publication will resume January 11, 2019. We wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season.

SCHOOL SAFETY REPORT

On December 18, after months of research, visiting successful programs around the nation, and receiving testimony from experts and concerned citizens, the [Federal Commission on School Safety](#) released a 177-page [final report](#) detailing 93 best practices and policy recommendations for improving safety at schools across the country. Utilizing the information gathered, the report offers a holistic approach to improving school safety, ranging from supporting the social and emotional well-being of students to enhancing physical building security. Acknowledging there can be no one-size-fits-all solution to this complex issue, the report serves as a resource guide for families, educators, law enforcement, health professionals, and elected officials to use as they consider the best ways to help prevent, mitigate, and recover from acts of violence in schools. The recommendations are based on efforts that are already working in states and local communities.

“Each of us has an important role to play in keeping our students safe while at school,” emphasized Secretary DeVos, who served as chair of the Commission. “Through the Commission’s work, it has become even clearer there is no single policy that will make our schools safer. What will work for schools in Montana will be different than what will work for schools in Manhattan. With that in mind, this report provides a wide-ranging menu of best practices and resources that all state, community, and school leaders should consider while developing school safety plans and procedures that will work for their students and teachers.”

The Commission report has 19 chapters divided into three sections -- Prevent, Protect and Mitigate, and Respond and Recover -- based on well-established phases of security planning, with recommendations for the federal government and states and local communities in each chapter ([press release](#) and [fact sheet](#)).

President Trump hosted a roundtable discussion on the report, joined by the Commission members, education and law enforcement stakeholders, and survivors and relatives of school shootings. “Today, we are reviewing the recommendations put forward by the School Safety Commission. These include fixing mental health laws so that families and law enforcement can get treatment immediately to those who need it; encouraging states to adopt extreme risk protection orders, which give law enforcement and family members more authority to keep firearms out of the hands of those who pose a danger to themselves and to others; launching a No Notoriety campaign, which would encourage the media not to use the names or, frankly, anything having to do with the shooters...[and] supporting local efforts to create a culture that cherishes life and fosters deep and meaningful human connections, allowing highly trained school personnel to have access to firearms.... [F]or any strategy to

succeed, there must be accountability at all levels of government, and we must ensure communities can respond quickly and decisively to warning signs, stopping tragedy before it strikes” ([President’s remarks/event transcript](#) and [video](#)).

During the roundtable, Acting Attorney General Matthew Whitaker announced that the Department of Justice had clarified that [bump stock-type devices](#) fall within the federal definition of “machinegun” and, thus, are prohibited under federal law. Individuals in possession of such a device must destroy it or turn it in to a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) office before the effective date of a final rule.

RETHINK CTE SUMMIT

Over 100 stakeholders gathered at the Department last week to collaborate on ways to rethink career and technical education (CTE). The [Rethink CTE Summit](#) expanded on Secretary DeVos’ Rethink Education initiative and served as an implementation launch of the *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*, commonly known as [Perkins V](#). The Secretary and Assistant Secretary for Career and Technical Education Scott Stump encouraged those in attendance to take advantage of the new law and collaborate with state and local education agencies on ways to rethink CTE through the development of each state’s Perkins V plan.

“Too many students are unprepared for successful careers today, and beyond,” the Secretary explained. “And too many are treated more like commodities instead of as the individuals they are, each with unique abilities and aspirations. As innovators in education and business, you are in a position to help students get ready -- for life and careers -- with out-of-the-box learning opportunities. You are in a position to rethink education.”

To learn more about the summit, see the [press release](#) and [blog post](#). Also, the event web page includes biographies of [speakers and panelists](#), a full [participant list](#), and a number of [presentations and handouts](#).

ENGLISH LEARNERS AND STEM

Several [federal reports and resources](#) on English Learner (EL) education related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) have recently been released. First, the Department’s Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) released its third [data story](#) about ELs in U.S. schools. This story, which builds upon two previously released stories about the [characteristics](#) and [educational experiences](#) of ELs, focuses on EL’s performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and high school graduation rates, showing some progress but also persistent challenges. Second, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine released “[English Learners in STEM Subjects: Transforming Classrooms, Schools, and Lives](#).” This report examines what is known about EL’s learning, teaching, and assessment in STEM fields and provides guidance on how to improve STEM outcomes for these students. Third, highlighted in an earlier issue, the Department’s Office of Educational Technology (OET) developed two new toolkits: [for educators](#) and [for educational technology developers](#). Each toolkit is organized around five guiding principles to help the targeted group approach educational technology with EL’s needs in mind.

AUTOMATIC CLOSED SCHOOL DISCHARGE

The Department’s Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) is using loan disbursement and enrollment information contained in the National Student Loan Data System to identify borrowers who are eligible for [automatic closed school discharge](#). To date, it has identified approximately 15,000 eligible borrowers (and parents who took out PLUS loans on behalf of students) who attended a school that closed between November 1, 2013, and December 4, 2015. The estimated total amount of loans that will be automatically discharged is \$150 million.

A borrower is eligible for an automatic closed school discharge if he or she:

- was enrolled when the school closed; or

- withdrew not more than 120 days before the school closed; or
- if approved by the Department, withdrew more than 120 days before the school closed; and
- did not enroll at another Title IV-eligible school within three years of the date the borrower's prior school closed.

FSA has emailed borrowers to inform them that the loan company that handles billing and other services related to their federal student loans will discharge some or all of their loans within the next 30-90 days. Some discharges may take longer than 90 days to complete. Borrowers were notified of the specific loans discharged and provided contact information for questions.

FSA's [Closed School web page](#) has more information for students, including state-specific fact sheets for precipitous closures and frequently asked questions.

In other news, FSA announced a [single, standardized date](#) -- October 31 annually -- for TEACH Grant recipients to certify they are meeting their service requirement. It also announced that a process for teachers to request [reconsideration of TEACH Grants](#) converted to Direct Loans will be available no later than January 31, 2019. This effort could cancel the student loan debt of thousands of teachers. Additionally, FSA launched the [Public Service Loan Forgiveness Help Tool](#) to assist borrowers in better understanding the program, assessing whether their employer and loans qualify, and determining which form to submit.

PREVENTING LEARNING LOSS

Winter break is a time of celebration and relaxation. While the days away from school provide a well-deserved break for students, it also provides the opportunity for significant learning loss. In response, a special Homeroom blog offers "[10 Fun Ways to Prevent Learning Loss this Winter Break](#)," ensuring students return to school revitalized and ready for a new year of learning. For example, are you giving gifts this holiday? Gift students educational toys/games. Science experiments and scrapbooking kits are great ways to make learning exciting and hands-on. Are you spending time with others during the break? Ask friends/family members to bring books to read with students during their visit. Moreover, if you are traveling, visit a museum or historical site to expose students to new concepts. Don't forget to ask about student and teacher discounts!

ODDS AND ENDS

- This month, President Trump and Cabinet members met with a bipartisan group of [Governors-elect at the White House](#).
- Earlier this week, Secretary DeVos shared her [vision for higher education](#) at the American Council on Education.
- The latest #RethinkSchool Homeroom blog spotlights an [Alaska magnet school](#) providing career readiness across a district the size of Indiana.
- A reminder to students and families to complete the 2019-20 [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA®\)](#). In direct support, a popular blog post outlines "[9 Myths About the FAFSA Form and Applying for Financial Aid](#)." Also, a National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) *Statistics in Brief* looks at [why students or their parents did not complete the FAFSA](#).
- NCES' "[Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 2018](#)" draws from an array of surveys and administrative datasets to present statistics about high school success.
- A new NCES *Data Point* examines [postsecondary students' three-year persistence and attainment rate](#).
- A [final Department of Agriculture rule](#) on school meals increases local flexibility in implementing school nutrition standards for milk, whole grains, and sodium. The rule delivers on USDA's promise in a May 2017 [proclamation](#) to develop strategies that ensure the standards are both healthful and practical.
- Congress passed the *Juvenile Justice Reform Act* ([fact sheet](#) and [blog post](#)), sending it to the President for his signature. More than one million children are currently involved in the juvenile justice system, and many more youth are at risk of entering the system because of difficult circumstances, such as poverty, broken

families, and homelessness.

QUOTE TO NOTE

“Today, we present our [final] report, and I want to thank my fellow commissioners and their staffs for all of the great work that was done on this report. The report addresses a holistic view of school safety, based on the insights, experiences, and expertise of many individuals. Our recommendations can assist states and local communities. Ultimately, governors and state legislators should work with school leaders, teachers, parents, and students to address their own unique challenges and develop...specific solutions. How schools and communities consider these recommendations will vary. Their approach should start by fostering a positive climate and a culture of connectedness. This report highlights social and emotional learning and a number of other recommendations that policymakers should explore. But let’s remember, local problems need local solutions. Ultimately, the recommendations do not and cannot supplant the incomparable role that families play in the lives of children and in our culture.”

-- Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos (12/18/18), in [remarks](#) at the President’s roundtable discussion about the Federal Commission on School Safety report

UPCOMING EVENTS

The January 7-8 [ED Games Expo](#) is an annual event open to the public at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Attendees can try out more than 100 new learning games and technologies while meeting with their developers. These items will be appropriate for students of all ages, covering areas in reading and writing, STEM, social studies, and social and behavioral development. Over half of the items were developed with the support of the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) programs at the Department’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and other federal agencies. Others were developed through research programs within IES and other Department offices.

[National School Choice Week](#) (NSCW) is January 20-26. The effort recognizes all K-12 options, including traditional public schools, charter schools, magnet schools, private schools, online academies, and homeschooling. Founded in 2011, NSCW has grown from 150 events in 2011 to 32,240 events last year in the U.S. and around the world.

Calling teacher leaders! Do you have an idea to address a perceived need in your school, district, or state? The [Teach to Lead](#) team is accepting [idea submissions](#) through January 28 for its 17th Teacher Leadership Summit, March 29-31 in Philadelphia, where teams will receive critical support to turn their ideas in action.

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