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SCHOOL SAFETY COMMISSION

The last two weeks featured significant events by the Federal Commission on School Safety.

First, on May 31, Secretary DeVos and representatives from the commission traveled to Hebron-Harman Elementary School in Maryland, for a [field visit](#) to learn more about Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). PBIS is a framework for assisting school personnel in organizing evidence-based interventions to help improve academic performance and social behavior outcomes for students. While onsite, in addition to observing several first-grade classrooms, the representatives heard from nationally renowned PBIS expert Dr. George Sugai, as well as Anne Arundel County Public Schools students, teachers, and administrators about the school district's PBIS program ([readout](#) and [video](#)).

“Today’s field visit was a useful look at how schools can take deliberate steps to make sure students feel included and valued,” the Secretary said. “Tools like PBIS can help improve school climate and, in turn, safety. We also benefitted greatly from the presentations of the experts, educators, and students. As the commission’s work proceeds, we will continue to visit places where concrete steps have been taken to help keep our students safe.”

The Secretary further discussed the field visit in an [op-ed](#) published in the *Baltimore Sun*, noting, “Creating a positive school climate is crucial to combatting the social and emotional isolation that can drive students to violent behavior.... PBIS is currently implemented in over 25,000 schools, but it is not a cure-all, and it may not be the right fit for every school.... Naturally, primary responsibility for the physical security of schools rests with states and local communities. But, our commission will continue the important work of identifying the root causes of violence in our schools and communities, and to disseminate solutions that educators and families can confidentially implement to make their schools safe and secure places of learning.”

Second, on June 6, the commission held a public [listening session](#) at the Department’s headquarters building. The session was an opportunity for members of the public to share with Deputy Secretary of Education Mitchell Zais and representatives from the commission their views on how schools, districts, institutions of higher education, and local and state government agencies may improve school safety. Those who wanted to provide feedback registered for speaking slots ([Federal Register notice](#) and [video](#)).

The *Federal Register* notice explains that the commission will hold three additional listening sessions in other regions of the country, with dates and locations to be determined.

The commission also unveiled a [web site](#) with biographies of the commission members, a schedule/timeline, and resources.

In related news, the Secretary awarded [Project School Emergency Response to Violence \(SERV\)](#) grants to the [Santa Fe Independent School District](#) in Texas and [St. Mary's County Public Schools](#) in Maryland to help recovery efforts following tragic shootings.

TRAVEL LOG

Last week, Secretary DeVos traveled to Michigan for a tour of the [Grand Rapids Public Museum School](#). The visit was intended to address one of several “why” questions the Secretary poses when talking about innovation in American education: “Why do students have to go to a school building in the first place?” The Museum School uses the existing public infrastructure to provide enhanced educational opportunities to students ([press conference video](#)).

This week, the Secretary testified before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies on President Trump's Fiscal Year 2019 budget request. After delivering [prepared remarks](#), emphasizing improving educational opportunities and outcomes for all students while also returning power to the people closest to students, she fielded questions on a wide range of topics ([video](#)). Responding to a question about undocumented students, she declared, “I think a school is a sacrosanct place for students to be able to learn, and they should be protected there.”

Also this week, the Secretary kicked off a [10-day learning tour](#) through Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. The trip began in Winterthur, Switzerland, where she delivered the keynote address at the third [International Congress on Vocational and Professional Education and Training](#). Subsequently, she will visit schools and meet with students, educators, administrators, and government officials.

“There is much to learn from our European counterparts as they continue to advance education options centered on the needs of individual students and focused on their ability to succeed in the modern economy,” she said. “The proof is in the results as [these three countries] continue to out-perform American students on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). I look forward to this important opportunity to learn from European education leaders and to exchange ideas on how to ensure America's students have access to the lifelong learning journey that will put them on the path to success.”

In Switzerland, vocational education and training is an integral part of the education system with close ties to the labor market, frequently combining apprenticeships and classroom instruction. In the Netherlands, the majority of schools are publicly supported private schools. The United Kingdom government has initiated reforms, including greater autonomy for schools and increased parental choice, that allow for a more diverse school system that serves the individual needs of students.

ESSA UPDATE

The Secretary recently announced the approval of several consolidated state plans under the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). [Nebraska](#) and [North Carolina](#) ([press release](#)) were among the states to request more time to finalize their plans. “I am pleased to approve these plans which comply with the requirements of the law,” she stated. “I encourage education leaders...to continue to embrace the flexibility afforded them in ESSA and to use their plans as a starting point, rather than a finish line, to improve outcomes for all students.”

To date, the Secretary has approved plans for 46 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. All remaining states have received [feedback](#) and are working on revisions.

Meanwhile, the Department is hosting webinars on new flexibility for school districts to create equitable, student-centered funding systems under a pilot program authorized by ESSA. The first webinars -- held last month -- focused on describing how student-centered funding systems function and how to complete the pilot

application. The second webinars -- [June 20, 2-3:30 p.m. Eastern Time](#) and [June 21, 12-1:30 p.m. ET](#) -- will detail the requirements of the program and address lessons learned during the spring 2018 submission cycle. All these webinars are being recorded, and the recordings, as well as the slides, are being posted on the [program web page](#). (Note: Applications are due by July 15 for districts intending to use the flexibility during the 2019-20 school year.)

PRESIDENT'S EDUCATION AWARDS

Since 1983, the [President's Education Awards Program](#) (PEAP) has bestowed individual recognition from the President to students whose outstanding efforts have enabled them to meet challenging standards of excellence. School principals determine the number of qualifying students based on [selection criteria](#) and verify [orders for awards](#). There is no limit on the number of awards, as long as students meet the criteria. Students receive a certificate and congratulatory letter signed by the President and the Secretary of Education. This year, nearly three million elementary, middle, and high school students from over 30,000 schools were recognized under PEAP ([press release](#)). (Note: A list of [PEAP participating schools by state and year](#) is posted online.)

COMPREHENSIVE CENTER NETWORK

The new [Comprehensive Center Network web site](#) brings together more than 700 resources developed by the Department's 23 Comprehensive Centers and over 200 projects currently underway in states across the country and makes searching -- by state or topic -- easier. The site also helps the centers collaborate, bolstering their ability to meet the needs of their clients. Check out the network's collections, including "[Access ESSA Resources](#)," "[Improving Rural Education](#)," and "[Resources for Parents](#)."

ODDS AND ENDS

- Secretary DeVos [congratulated](#) Kenneth Marcus on being confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve as Assistant Secretary of Education for Civil Rights.
- The Secretary has [proposed to delay](#) until July 1, 2020, the effective date of the final regulations for state authorization of distance education and foreign locations of domestic institutions, based on concerns raised by regulated parties and to ensure there is adequate time to conduct negotiated rulemaking to reconsider the regulations.
- The Department is inviting applications for [Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs](#) (GEAR UP) [state grants](#) and [partnership grants](#), designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.
- Back-to-back Homeroom blog posts raise the phenomenon of "summer melt," where up to a third of students who graduate high school with plans to go to college never make it to campus. There is plenty a [student](#) and the [student's support team](#) can do to make sure college plans do not get derailed.
- Another blog post showcases two [2017 National Blue Ribbon School honorees](#) that prove -- by setting high expectations, offering a rich curriculum with high academic standards, and providing the right student supports -- students from all backgrounds can excel.
- As May came to a close, so did [Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month's many festivities](#).
- The White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) launched a recognition program, "[HBCU Competitiveness Scholars](#)," to honor current students for successfully preparing to compete for top opportunities that improve standards of living in their communities. Nominations must be received by July 31.
- Since 2003, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has compared states' standards for proficient performance in reading and math by placing each standard onto a common scale of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). This process of "[state mapping](#)" shows where standards fall on the NAEP scale and in relation to NAEP's achievement levels.
- The Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) released a [report](#) outlining how children's lives may be positively

affected by participation in youth sports.

- The Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) released a [document](#) discussing the administration of college admissions examinations by states and districts.

QUOTE TO NOTE

“The Swiss approach is one from which we can all learn a great deal. It is so interesting that more than two-thirds of current students pursue their education through apprenticeships. Of course, apprenticeships include those for welders and carpenters -- which, in my country, is more common. But, apprenticeships here include many options in every sector of the economy, including healthcare, finance, and law. I was so intrigued to learn from Switzerland’s Ambassador to the U.S. Martin Dahinden that the CEO of UBS, Sergio Ermotti, started his career as an apprentice. And the Chairman of UBS, Lukas Gähwiler, also started out his career as an apprentice. That’s not commonplace in America, but perhaps it should be!.... Proper credentials send important signals to employers. The question is whether those credentials match what employers need and what employers think those signals mean.... The Swiss approach addresses that. Employers and educators work hand-in-hand to line up the skills required with those actually learned. It’s a bottom-up, self-defined solution. And, it’s a solution we must better emulate in my country.”

-- Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos (6/7/18), in [prepared remarks](#) at the International Congress on Vocational and Professional Education and Training

UPCOMING EVENTS

On June 11, high school culinary students will create healthy, great-tasting meals that meet the real life requirements of the national school meal program, as part of the [Cooking Up Change national finals](#).

The Department’s Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) will host a learning session on June 18, titled “Disabilities Among Children Who Are English Learners.” The event, from 1 to 3 p.m. ET at the agency’s Potomac Center Plaza building in Washington, D.C., will feature Dr. Alfredo Artiles, who will give a brief description of five of the major disability categories, discuss the myths associated with dual language and English learners with disabilities, and provide an overview about identification and evaluation practices, assessment, and instruction. A panel of practitioners will provide teachers’ perspectives in response to the research findings. To RSVP to attend, please contact Anthony.Sepulveda@ed.gov. The session will be [live-streamed](#).

The 2018 [Federal Student Aid \(FSA\) Training Conference](#) in Atlanta (November 27-30) will provide up-to-date information on *Higher Education Act* (HEA) Title IV programs and federal policies and procedures.

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