

From: Honeysett, Adam <Adam.Honeysett@ED.GOV>  
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**July 6, 2018**

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## SCHOOL SAFETY COMMISSION

On June 26, the [Federal Commission on School Safety](#) held its second [listening session](#) at the Council of State Governments' headquarters building in Lexington, Kentucky. 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](#)).

In the coming months, the commission -- composed of Secretary DeVos (chairwoman), Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar, and Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen -- will continue to host formal meetings, field visits, and listening sessions.

In related news, the Justice Department is inviting applications for another grant program authorized by the *STOP School Violence Act*. Up to \$25 million is available to states, local governments, or Indian tribes through this year's [Community Oriented Policing Service \(COPS\) School Violence Prevention Program](#), or SVPP. SVPP funding will provide up to 75% funding for the following school safety measures: coordination with law enforcement; training for local law enforcement officers to prevent student violence against self and others; metal detectors, locks, lighting, and other deterrent measures; technology for expedited notification of local law enforcement during an emergency; and any other key measure that the COPS Office determines may provide a significant improvement in security. Grant recipients may contract with or make sub-awards to school districts or non-profit organizations -- excluding schools. The application deadline is July 30.

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## SKILLS CONFERENCE

Secretary DeVos was also in Kentucky last week, attending the [SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference](#) in Louisville. Over the course of two days (June 27 and 28), she spoke at the Models of Excellence awards dinner and toured the exposition hall. Below are excerpts from her [prepared remarks](#) at the awards dinner.

“Organizations like this one are integral to a student’s educational experience. SkillsUSA offers students remarkable opportunities to acquire technical skills and also essential -- but often underappreciated -- competencies like critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, and cultural intelligence. These are broadly transferrable abilities for our constantly iterating world.

“Careers are like highways -- not one-way or dead-end streets. Highways have many on- and off-ramps. Students should be able to exit easily for a time to learn a new skill, then re-enter the highway at an on-ramp of

their choosing and change lanes as needed.

“We are fundamentally re-evaluating what we do and how we do it. Washington’s bloated bureaucracies do not meet the needs of our global economy and labor market, and they create artificial barriers between education and workforce programs. Last week, this administration announced a bold [reform proposal](#) to combine the Departments of Education and Labor.... Ultimately, our children and their futures demand that we fundamentally reorient our approach to education. We need a paradigm shift -- a rethink.”

Striking a similar tone, the Secretary reflected on lessons learned from her trip to Europe in commentary published in *Education Week*, titled “[How We Can Catch Up to Other Countries in Education](#).” “Now, simply copying European approaches will not be sufficient -- American communities have their own unique challenges and needs,” she said. “But the Netherlands and the United Kingdom show that high student achievement is possible with robust parental choice and flexibility for educators. Switzerland shows the benefit of giving students a wide variety of career options through apprenticeships. Most importantly, these countries show that a commitment to freedom in education can produce student success.”

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## ESSA UPDATE

The Secretary recently announced the approval of another consolidated state plan under the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). [Oklahoma \(press release\)](#) was among the 34 states and Puerto Rico to submit its state plan by the final deadline of September 18, 2017. “I am pleased to approve Oklahoma’s plan, which complies with the requirements of the law,” she stated. “I encourage states 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 47 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. All remaining states have received [feedback](#) and are working on revisions.

Meanwhile, the Secretary announced the [Puerto Rico Department of Education](#) will be the first to pilot new flexibility under the ESSA to create a [student-centered funding system](#). The model is designed to equitably allocate local, state, and federal resources to schools based on quantifiable student need, directing the most resources to support students who need them most. The result is a more predictable, transparent, and fair method of allocating resources that puts students first. The ESSA specifically requires that pilot districts allocate substantially more funding to support students from low-income families, English learners, and any other educationally disadvantaged group, as chosen by the district. Puerto Rico designed its system to allocate additional funds to support students from low-income families, language learners, and students in rural schools. (Note: Interested districts can still apply to participate in the pilot program by July 15, 2018, for implementation in the 2019-20 school year.)

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## IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER

At the elementary and secondary education level, the Department postponed by two years the date for states to comply with the “Equity in IDEA” or [significant disproportionality regulations](#), from July 1, 2018, to July 1, 2020. The Department also postponed the date for including children ages three through five in the analysis of significant disproportionality, with respect to the identification of children as “children with disabilities” and as “children with a particular impairment,” from July 1, 2020, to July 1, 2022. The agency took these steps in order to thoroughly review the regulations.

At the postsecondary education level, the Secretary delayed, until July 1, 2020, the effective date of [regulations for state authorization of distance education](#), based on concerns raised by regulated parties and to help ensure time to conduct negotiated rulemaking to reconsider the regulations.

Also, the Department is [inviting applications](#) for the [Statewide Family Engagement Centers](#) program. This

program provides financial support to organizations that provide technical assistance and training to states and districts in the implementation and enhancement of effective family engagement policies, programs, and activities that lead to improvements in student development and academic achievement. The application deadline is July 30.

Separately, Attorney General Sessions announced he was [rescinding 24 guidance documents](#) that were “unnecessary, outdated, inconsistent with existing law, or otherwise improper,” including several relating to the use of race to achieve diversity in higher education. This action was consistent with his [directive](#) prohibiting the Department of Justice from using guidance to circumvent the rulemaking process required by Congress.

Responding in a statement, Secretary DeVos noted, “The [U.S.] Supreme Court has determined what affirmative action policies are constitutional, and the court’s written decisions are the best guide for navigating this complex issue. Schools should continue to offer equal opportunities for all students while abiding by the law.”

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## OUT OF THE WHITE HOUSE

On June 24, First Lady Melania Trump attended the Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) National Conference. This conference is a training program where middle and high school students learn how to become leaders in encouraging their peers and those in their communities to live drug-free. As part of her “Be Best” campaign, the First Lady spoke about the importance of kindness, compassion, and positivity ([readout](#)).

On June 25 and 26, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) hosted a first-of-its-kind State-Federal Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Education Summit, convening state STEM leaders to inform the development of a federal five-year STEM Education Strategic Plan required by the *America COMPETES Act of 2010* ([summary](#)).

Moreover, the White House launched a powerful new [ad campaign](#) to address the opioid crisis in youth by showing real life dangers of misusing and addiction.

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## ODDS AND ENDS

- Secretary DeVos [congratulated](#) Frank Brogan on being confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve as Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education.
- Under the [Reimagining the Higher Education Ecosystem Challenge](#), the Department’s Office of Educational Technology (OET) is seeking ideas for how the postsecondary education system could be transformed to foster equity and encourage learner agency and resilience.
- As required by law, the Department issued annual determinations regarding states’ implementation of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) ([fact sheet](#)). Each state was evaluated on indicators under Part B (ages 3 through 21) and Part C (infants through age 2) and placed into one of four categories: meets requirements, needs assistance, needs intervention, and needs substantial intervention.
- A new Homeroom blog, in recognition of June as [National Safety Month](#), outlines “[Tips for a Fun-Filled Summer](#).”
- The Department’s Youth Engagement Team hosted several [students affected by homelessness](#) and their peer leaders to discuss key obstacles in pursuing education and the practices and policies that may help them succeed.
- The Department’s “[Total Tolerance](#)” student art exhibit, featuring 2018 YoungArts winners in design, photography, visual arts, and writing, reflected the artists’ personal views on inequality and justice and, in several cases, were directly rooted in their lived experiences.
- “Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent’s Guide to Prevention,” jointly produced by the Departments of Education and Justice, received a 2018 [Blue Pencil & Gold Screen Award](#) from the National Association of Government Communicators.

- A National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) [report](#) describes the percentage of teachers who earned income from working outside their school system, whether the job was related to teaching or not, and earnings from those jobs by region ([blog post](#)).

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## QUOTE TO NOTE

“Kindness, compassion, and positivity are very important traits in life. It is far easier to say nothing than it is to speak words of kindness. It is easier to judge quickly than to take time to understand. It is often easier to see a glass half-empty rather than half-full. Nevertheless, you have the power to be the positive force in so many people’s lives. Show respect to each other. Treat your community like your family, and look out for one another.”

-- First Lady Melania Trump (6/24/18), from [remarks](#) at the Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) National Conference

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Starting next week, the Department will host a student art exhibit of both visual arts works and career and technical education from the East Syracuse Minoa Central School District in New York. The opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony will be on Monday, July 9, at 11 a.m. Eastern Time. The district takes great pride in being a comprehensive district for the 21st century, combining academics, including the arts, and CTE throughout its schooling. As such, this exhibit will feature auto mechanics, carpentry, cosmetology, culinary arts, and television and film production. To RSVP to attend or learn more about the agency’s year-round exhibit program, please contact [Jacquelyn.Zimmermann@ed.gov](mailto:Jacquelyn.Zimmermann@ed.gov).

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