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STEM EDUCATION

Yesterday, on National STEM Day, the Department announced that it had surpassed President Trump's [directive](#) to invest \$200 million in high-quality science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. In total, the agency obligated \$279 million in [STEM discretionary funds](#) in Fiscal Year 2018.

"It's important that all students have access to a high-quality STEM education," Secretary DeVos noted. "These discretionary grant programs and this Administration's increased focus on STEM will help ensure our nation's students are exposed to STEM early in their lifelong education journeys and...have the tools needed for success in the 21st century economy."

While these investments mark a significant step toward advancing STEM education in the U.S., there is still more work to be done. According to the Department's newly released [data story on STEM](#), 80% of all eighth-grade students attend a school that offers Algebra I, but only 24% of these students are actually enrolled in the course. This "leak" in the STEM pipeline can have long-term effects on students' education, since Algebra I is considered the gatekeeper course to advanced math and science coursework.

The [2015-16 Civil Rights Data Collection](#), the data story's primary data source, reveals students' access to algebra in eighth-grade is inconsistent across the country, and access to STEM education can be impacted by a number of factors, such as the location of the school or the type of school a student attends. Students enrolled in traditional or magnet public schools were more likely to have access to Algebra I than those in other types of schools. Similarly, students attending suburban schools were more likely to have access than students in other areas.

Enrollment is as important as access, but the data shows not all students with access were enrolled at the same rate. Asian students were more likely to be enrolled (34%), versus black students (12%). Additionally, a higher percentage of female students were enrolled (25%), versus male students (22%).

ESSA UPDATE

Building on her commitment to empower parents with relevant, transparent information on local schools, Secretary DeVos released a [resource guide to understanding report cards](#) required by the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). The ESSA directs states and school districts to publish report cards showing key indicators of state, district, and school performance and progress. Specifically, states and districts will report on student achievement, graduation rates, state accountability, school climate, teacher qualifications, and other measures. For the first time, states will also be required to report funding from federal, state, and local sources, as well as how much money is spent per student. Parents may utilize this information to make informed

decisions about their child's current education and future learning pathways.

"Parents deserve to know what is happening in their child's school," the Secretary emphasized. "They should not have to parse through a 500-page legal document to understand how a law or policy affects their children's education. This guide demonstrates our ongoing commitment to providing parents with user-friendly tools and the information necessary to make informed decisions. Informed parents become empowered and engaged parents who are able to better advocate on behalf of their children."

Also, the Department's Office of Educational Technology (OET) hosted a [Report Card Design Challenge](#) this week, challenging web content creators to design user-friendly, easy-to-understand landing pages and per-pupil expenditure pages.

CTE STATE PLAN GUIDE

On October 24, the Department issued a draft [state plan guide](#) for the *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*, reauthorizing and modifying the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act*. The agency is accepting input on the guide until December 24 (comment [here](#)). Once finalized, states will be able to use the guide to prepare their plans under the law ([all documents](#)).

Key provisions in the new law include:

- requiring extensive collaboration among state- and local-level secondary, postsecondary, and business and industry partners to develop and implement high-quality career and technical education (CTE) programming and programs of study;
- introducing a needs assessment to align CTE programming to locally identified in-demand, high-growth, and high-wage career fields;
- strengthening the CTE teacher and faculty pipeline, especially in hard-to-fill program areas, including STEM;
- promoting innovative practices to reshape where, how, and to whom CTE is delivered;
- expanding the reach and scope of career guidance and academic counseling; and
- shifting responsibility to the states to determine performance measures, including new program quality measures and related levels of performance, to fully optimize outcomes for students.

The draft guide outlines two options for states. States may either submit a transition plan that would apply to the 2019-20 school year and then submit a full plan the following year or submit a full, five-year plan that would apply through the 2023-24 school year. Regardless of which option a state so chooses, it will not have to submit performance goals -- known as "state determined levels of performance" -- until 2020.

NAGB CHAIR

Secretary DeVos recently appointed former North Carolina Governor Beverly Perdue to serve as [chair of the National Assessment Governing Board](#) (NAGB). Perdue is the first female chairperson in the 30-year history of NAGB, which she joined as a member in October 2017. During her time, she has served on NAGB's Committee on Standards, Design, and Methodology.

During her early career, Perdue was a public school teacher. Her political service began in 1986, when she was elected to the state's House of Representatives for two terms and the state's Senate for five terms. She also served as the state's lieutenant governor for two terms before being elected governor in 2008. She has continued to initiate many education efforts and support teachers, including founding and chairing digiLEARN, a non-profit institution that accelerates personal learning options for students and instructional opportunities for teachers. She has also served as Resident Fellow at the Harvard Institute of Politics and Distinguished Visiting Fellow at Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy.

NAGB is the 26-member non-partisan, independent governing board that sets policy for the National

Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report Card. NAEP provides the public and national, state, and local education policymakers with objective data on student performance in nearly a dozen subjects. NAEP information helps education stakeholders evaluate the progress of American education.

THE BIG READ

The National Endowment for the Arts' (NEA) [The Big Read](#), now in its twelfth year, supports Americans reading and discussing a single book within their communities. Local governments, libraries, school districts, colleges and universities, and non-profit organizations are encouraged to [apply](#) for one of an estimated 75 grants that will be awarded for programming occurring between September 2019 and June 2020. The application deadline is January 24, 2019. Besides the grant, communities will receive resources, including reader's and teacher's guides and audio guides with commentary from artists, educators, and public figures. Communities will also receive publicity materials.

For this cycle, communities will choose from [32 selections](#) (novels, short stories, memoirs, poetry, and books in translation), including six new titles.

Interested in learning more? The NEA will host a [public webinar](#) about The Big Read on November 14 at 2 p. m. Eastern Time, featuring a discussion about the selections in the Big Read library. Participants are encouraged to inquire about the selections and authors, as well as the application process.

ODDS AND ENDS

- Companies and associations continue to sign President Trump's [Pledge to America's Workers](#) and have now committed to provide more than [six million educational and training opportunities](#).
- A Homeroom blog post, [#RethinkSchool: Back to School Tour Observes Innovation Across the Nation](#), is a convenient summary of Secretary DeVos' and senior agency officials' visits throughout the "Rethink School" back to school tour.
- Other Homeroom blog posts address [principal shadowing by Department staff](#) as part of National Principals Month and the [Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention Summit on Cyberbullying](#) as part of National Bullying Prevention Awareness Month.
- On October 31, during a special Heritage Foundation event, Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education Frank Brogan praised [new education opportunities for Puerto Rican children](#).
- On November 5, Secretary DeVos delivered remarks at the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) [Education Forum and Leadership Summit](#).
- Later that same day, the Secretary met with [teachers from Educators for Excellence](#) to get feedback on how the Department can elevate, support, and honor teachers and the teaching profession.
- The Department's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) released a guide for those who develop and distribute school directories, choice web sites, and report cards. "[Presenting School Choice Information to Parents: An Evidence-Based Guide](#)" shares findings from an online experiment conducted with 3,500 low-income parents, randomly assigned to see one of 72 different web pages displaying information for a hypothetical district. The study tested how differences in visual representation, amount, and organization of the information presented affected parents' understanding, preferences, and choices.
- The Department's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of IES, released a trove of data on: [postsecondary tuition, fees, and degrees](#); [postsecondary enrollment, employees, finance, and libraries](#); and [what high school students and their parents know](#) about postsecondary tuition and fees in their state.

QUOTE TO NOTE

"Students need learning environments that are agile, relevant, exciting. Students need customized, self-paced,

and challenging lifelong learning journeys. Ultimately, what students need is freedom! Freedom to learn differently. Freedom to explore. Freedom to fail, to learn from failing, and to get back up and try again. Students need freedom to find the best way to learn and grow...to find the exciting and engaging combination that unlocks individual potential. Education -- and the freedom to pursue it -- is for everyone, everywhere. It's not just an American 'thing.' Such freedom is a human thing."

-- Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos (10/30/18), in [remarks](#) at the Fourth U.S.-China State and Provincial Education Leaders Dialogue

UPCOMING EVENTS

Among other education-related observations, November is National Homeless Youth Awareness Month, [National Native American Heritage Month](#), and [National Veterans and Military Families Month](#).

Schools are encouraged to invite U.S. military veterans into their classrooms around [Veterans Day](#) (November 11). Veterans can share their experiences and teach students lessons about the history and significance of the federal holiday, helping students reflect upon the importance of the ideals of liberty, freedom, and democracy.

[International Education Week](#) (November 12-16) celebrates the benefits of international education and exchange worldwide. In recognition, Secretary DeVos recorded a [video message](#).

[National Apprenticeship Week](#) (November 12-18) celebrates the opportunities apprenticeships provide in preparing a highly skilled workforce that meets the needs of employers for the 21st century economy.

On November 15 at 11 a.m. ET, the Department will host the joint opening of two student art exhibits, one of works by winners of 2018 Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, featuring 68 works in all mediums from schools around the country, and another of works from arts education programs at 11 member museums of the Association of Art Museum Directors. To RSVP to attend or learn more about the Department's year-round exhibit program, please contact Jacquelyn.Zimmermann@ed.gov.

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