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HURRICANE HARVEY

In response to the devastating impacts of Hurricane Harvey, the Department activated its emergency response contact center. Education stakeholders seeking informational resources, as well as those seeking relief from agency-based administrative requirements, may contact the Department at 1-844-348-4082 or HarveyRelief@ed.gov.

Meanwhile, the Department is posting relevant information on a new [Hurricane Harvey web page](#).

The Department's primary role in natural disasters is to assist local school districts and institutions of higher education in recovery efforts. In addition to internal briefings, the agency is participating in interagency briefings being led by the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in order to understand the extent of the damage to educational infrastructure and the needs of educational stakeholders in the wake of Harvey.

Beyond its many federal partners, the Department has reached out to the Texas Education Agency, the Louisiana Department of Education, and institutions of higher education in the impacted areas and is coordinating recovery activities through these entities. The full extent of Harvey's impact will not be known for some time, but the agency will stay in close contact with its state and local partners.

Last week, the Department began contacting more than 200 colleges and universities located in areas likely to be impacted by Harvey and will provide administrative flexibilities related to federal student aid rules. The agency has also directed federal student loan servicers to provide impacted borrowers flexibility in managing their loan payments during this time ([information for students, borrowers, and schools](#)).

BACK TO SCHOOL

On August 30, a day after [vising schools in Tallahassee](#), Secretary DeVos [met with a broad spectrum of education leaders in Florida](#). The meeting was divided into two equal sessions: "Saving, Sustaining, and Strengthening Public Education and Schools of Choice" and "Saving, Sustaining, and Strengthening Higher Education and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)." In each session, they discussed policies and procedures and challenges and concerns. "As we confront the many challenges facing our education system today, it is paramount we hear from those on the front lines: local leaders who confront these issues head on each and every day," the Secretary emphasized. "Today's discussions were great examples of how local leaders -- whether they are administrators, educators, elected officials, or religious leaders -- can come together to share best practices and work to find innovative solutions that help their students and communities succeed."

Then, on August 31, U.S. Representative Bradley Byrne hosted Secretary DeVos in southwest Alabama. During her [time in Mobile](#), the Secretary visited ACCEL Day and Evening Academy, the state's first tuition-free public charter school; the AIDT Maritime Training Center, which helps train workers for shipbuilding jobs; and Council Traditional School, an elementary magnet school in the county system.

Over the past few weeks, the Department's Digital Team highlighted the nation going Back to School, sharing [#BacktoSchoolTips](#).

Moreover, the agency has updated its [Back to School web portal](#) with resources for students, parents, and educators.

Separately, the Department's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) provided [Back to School Fast Facts](#).

ESSA UPDATE

The Secretary recently announced the approval of more consolidated state plans under the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). [Illinois](#), [Oregon](#), [Tennessee](#), and the [District of Columbia](#) (August 30 [release](#)) and [Maine](#) and [Vermont](#) (August 31 [release](#)) were among the 16 states and the District of Columbia to submit their plans by the early deadline of April 3. "As more and more state plans come under the Department's review, I am heartened to see how states have embraced the spirit of flexibility under ESSA to improve education for individual students," the Secretary said. "I want to thank the Chief State School Officers, governors, and all other stakeholders who helped craft these plans that will help their students succeed." State plans from the remaining 34 states and Puerto Rico are due by the final deadline of September 18.

The following are some of the unique elements from each state's approved plan:

- Illinois creates a college-/career-ready indicator for high schools that measures the readiness of students for college based on multiple indicators, including grade point average, performance on postsecondary readiness exams, and attendance, in addition to considering community service hours, summer employment, participation in Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), and/or earning industry credentials.
- Maine establishes a three-tiered system of support for schools based on performance, with the highest level of support offering coaching and mentoring to teach effective strategies for school turnaround.
- Oregon implements a new "Freshmen On-Track" measure to confirm that students have completed at least six credits within the first semester of their freshman year, understanding the importance of credit attainment in early high school in order to graduate on time.
- Tennessee supports teacher and principal residencies to create more quality pipeline opportunities for prospective candidates to move into those roles and establishes new grant initiatives focused on increasing innovation and diversity in the educator workforce.
- Vermont creates a postsecondary outcomes indicator measuring the percentage of former high school students enrolled in college or trade school, employed in the workforce, and/or enlisted in the military approximately 16 months after high school.
- The District of Columbia measures the quality of pre-kindergarten by including a Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), which specifically looks into pre-K teachers' classroom organization, emotional support, and instructional support as it relates to their pre-K students.

And, to help remaining states avoid common completion issues and build upon the lessons learned from early submissions, the agency posted the [slidedeck](#) from its Consolidated State Plans Reminders Webinar.

PROTECTING STUDENT BORROWERS

Also this week, the Secretary announced a [stronger approach](#) to how the Department's Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) enforces compliance by institutions participating in federal student aid programs by creating

more robust consumer protections for students, parents, and borrowers against “bad actors.” FSA Chief Operating Officer Dr. Wayne Johnson has begun transforming FSA’s oversight function -- broadening its scope, increasing its capacity, and adopting a more sophisticated strategy -- while adding several senior executives to help lead and implement a more comprehensive approach to the oversight of federal student aid programs.

FSA has established an integrated system of complementary oversight functions to ensure compliance by all parties. Under this approach, oversight begins with proactive risk management to identify and mitigate risks before they pose a threat. These efforts are bolstered by comprehensive communications and executive outreach to ensure parties and their leadership understand their responsibilities, consequences of non-compliance, and appropriate remedies.

FSA will continue to offer in-person and web-based technical assistance to schools and will continue to provide information, training, and early intervention support directly to financial aid professionals to help schools meet their compliance obligations. FSA’s proactive work will continue to be informed by customer input -- including complaints and allegations of suspicious activity through a feedback system, available at [StudentAid.gov/feedback](#) -- and supported by coordination with other stakeholders, including accrediting bodies, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Department of Justice.

In other news, the Department is seeking [nominations for negotiators](#) from a range of constituencies for [rulemaking committees](#) on Borrower Defense to Repayment (BDR) and Gainful Employment (GE) regulations. Nominations must be received by September 27. Negotiations for both rules will occur over three four-day sessions: the BDR committee will meet November 13-15, January 8-11, and February 12-15, with its financial responsibility subcommittee meeting November 16-17, January 4-5, and January 29-30, and the GE committee will meet December 4-7, February 5-8, and March 12-15. (Note: Key information regarding the agency’s negotiated rulemaking effort is posted [here](#).)

CONSTITUTION DAY

September 17 is [Constitution Day/Citizenship Day](#), commemorating the September 17, 1787, signing of the U. S. Constitution. In recognition, Congress has mandated that every educational institution receiving federal funding hold an educational program about this seminal document. (This year, the day falls on a Sunday. Institutions may observe the day the week before or the week after.) To assist students and educators in their studies, the [National Archives and Records Administration](#) offers key resources, such as “[The Constitution at Work](#),” a match game connecting primary resources to constitutional articles, and “[Exploring the U.S. Constitution](#),” an eBook that explores the roots of the three branches of government. Likewise, free online resources are available from the [Library of Congress](#), the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#), and the [U.S. Senate](#).

FAREWELL ED FELLOWS

The Department said goodbye last month to its latest cohort of School Ambassador Fellows, recognizing their outstanding contributions at [#FarewellEDFellows](#). Among the spotlights: 12 [#TeachersatED](#) chats; three Principals at ED events; calls to more than 2,600 teachers around the country during Teacher Appreciation Week, and direct outreach to over 12,000 educators nationwide. Fellows were also critical in organizing many [@TeachtoLead](#) events, such as July’s [Convening on School Supports](#), which resulted in a framework for educator supports reflecting research and feedback from the field to be used as a tool for improvement at all levels.

SECRETARY’S TOP TWEETS

Our prayers are with all those in the path of [#HurricaneHarvey](#). [@USEDGOV](#) stands ready to assist impacted

schools. (8/26/17)

Thinking of all the students & educators who had eagerly awaited heading back to school today. Stay safe! (8/28/17)

@USEDGOV is coordinating with local school officials to provide support as needed. You can help as well -- volunteer, donate, lend a hand. (8/28/17)

@USEDGOV & @FAFSA will adjust deadlines & provide flexibility wherever we're able for those impacted by #Harvey. (8/28/17)

UPCOMING EVENTS

On [September 11 National Day of Service and Remembrance](#), volunteers will spruce up schools, paint and refurbish homes, run food drives, and support veterans, soldiers, military families, and first responders.

On September 15, at 11:00 a.m. Eastern Time, the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, a 95-year-old national competition for middle and high school students, will open its student art exhibits at the Department. Featured will be 66 works of 2- and 3-D art by students from around the country, and 28 works by students from Harris County, Texas. Also featured will be 2016 National Student Poet Joey Reisberg, a student at George Washington Carter Center for Arts and Technology in Baltimore County, Maryland, who will read from his winning work. To RSVP to attend or learn more about the Department's year-round exhibit program, please contact Jacquelyn.Zimmermann@ed.gov.

To receive input on Department regulations related to postsecondary education, the agency announced two [public hearings](#): September 26 at Salt Lake Community College-Miller Campus in Sandy, Utah, and October 4 at the Department's headquarters building in Washington, D.C. Both of these hearings will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. local time. Individuals who would like to present comments must register by sending their name, general topics, and general timeframe to operegreformhearings@ed.gov. (Note: Key information regarding the agency's postsecondary education regulatory reform effort is posted [here](#).)

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