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Date: 2/16/2018 10:40:25 AM
Subject: [ED_REVIEW] ED Review (02/16/18)



February 16, 2018

PARKLAND SCHOOL SHOOTING

Both President Trump and Secretary DeVos addressed the tragic shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida

“Today I speak to a nation in grief,” the President said in a [statement](#). “Yesterday, a school filled with innocent children and caring teachers became the scene of terrible violence, hatred, and evil.... There, a shooter, who is now in custody, opened fire on defenseless students and teachers. He murdered 17 people and badly wounded at least 14 others. Our entire nation, with one heavy heart, is praying for the victims and their families. To every parent, teacher, and child who is hurting so badly, we are here for you -- whatever you need, whatever we can do, to ease your pain. We are all joined together as one American family, and your suffering is our burden also.

“No child, no teacher, should ever be in danger in an American school. No parent should ever have to fear for their sons and daughters when they kiss them goodbye in the morning. Each person who was stolen from us yesterday had a full life ahead of them -- a life filled with wondrous beauty and unlimited potential and promise. Each one had dreams to pursue, love to give, and talents to share with the world. And, each one had a family to whom they meant everything in the world.

“I want to speak now directly to America’s children, especially those who feel lost, alone, confused, or even scared: I want you to know that you are never alone, and you never will be. You have people who care about you, who love you, and who will do anything at all to protect you. If you need help, turn to a teacher, a family member, a local police officer, or a faith leader. Answer hate with love; answer cruelty with kindness. We must also work together to create a culture in our country that embraces the dignity of life, that creates deep and meaningful human connections, and that turns classmates and colleagues into friends and neighbors.

“Our Administration is working closely with local authorities to investigate the shooting and learn everything we can. We are committed to working with state and local leaders to help secure our schools and tackle the difficult issue of mental health. Later this month, I will be meeting with the nation’s governors and attorney generals, where making our schools and our children safer will be our top priority. It is not enough to simply take actions that make us feel like we are making a difference. We must actually make that difference.”

The President also issued a [proclamation](#) honoring the victims.

“Let me first say that I am just heartbroken for all of the families that have been impacted by this,” the Secretary said on the “The Hugh Hewitt Show” ([transcript](#)). “It is a devastating moment and situation. There have been far too many of these situations. My heart just goes out to all of the teachers, the educators, the parents.... I think it’s critically important we have a much more robust conversation around tracking and

tackling mental health issues, and really bringing this all together, because it seems to be clear that this young man put up lots and lots of signals and warning signs.

“Congress needs to be holding hearings on these issues. We’ve seen discussion about this every time we’ve had another incident. We’ve seen lots of finger pointing back and forth. But we need to have a conversation at the level where lawmakers can actually impact the future, because going back to and putting myself in the seat of one of those families impacted -- one of these shootings is one too many. We have got to have an honest conversation, and Congress has to lead on this. It’s their job.”

BUDGET AGREEMENT

On February 9, the President Trump [signed into law](#) the *Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018*. The bill provides funding at approximately the Fiscal Year 2017 level through March 23 for the ongoing activities and projects of the federal government, including education. It also appropriates \$2.7 million to the Department to provide assistance in the recovery from the 2017 hurricanes and wildfires; authorizes the Secretary to forgive any outstanding balances of certain loans made to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) following Hurricane Katrina in 2005; and extends funding for the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) through FY 2027. (Note: Division C of the bill increases the discretionary defense and non-defense category caps in FY 2018 and FY 2019, freeing federal appropriators to prepare final FY 2018 appropriations bills, and temporarily suspends the statutory debt limit through March 1, 2019.)

FY 2019 BUDGET

On February 12, President Trump submitted his [Fiscal Year 2019 budget request to Congress](#). For the Department, the President is requesting \$63.2 billion in discretionary funding, a decrease of \$3.6 billion (5%) below the FY 2017 enacted level (see [fact sheet](#)). (Note: As the President’s request was completed before the Congressional budget agreement, see [addendum](#) with additional funding for a limited set of Administration priorities under the new, higher cap levels.) “The President’s budget request expands education freedom for America’s families while protecting our nation’s most vulnerable students,” noted Secretary DeVos. “The budget also reflects our commitment to spending taxpayer dollars wisely and efficiently by consolidating and eliminating duplicative and ineffective federal programs that are better handled at the state or local level. I look forward to working with Congress to pass a budget that puts students first and returns power in education to where it belongs: with states, [school] districts, and families.”

There are six major themes in the FY 2019 budget request:

More Choices for More Families

- *Expands both public and private school choice, particularly for students from low-income families or attending schools identified for improvement under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), through a new \$1 billion Opportunity Grants program.*
- *Provides \$500 million, an increase of \$160 million (nearly 50%), to strengthen state and local efforts to start new charter schools or expand and replicate existing high-performing charter schools, including up to \$100 million to meet the growing demand for charter school facilities.*
- *Expands the Direct Student Services set-aside in Title I from 3% to 5% to encourage states to leverage more Title I funds to support public school choice options.*

High-Quality Special Education Services to Children with Disabilities

- *Maintains the federal investment of \$12.8 billion for *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) formula grants to states, to help offset the cost of providing special education and related services to 6.9 million children with disabilities in 2019, and provides \$222 million in IDEA competitive grants.*

More Pathways to Successful Careers (see also the [President’s Infrastructure Plan](#) -- Workforce Development)

- *Protects the Pell Grant program by level funding the discretionary appropriation, which makes college more affordable for 7.6 million students by maintaining the maximum award of \$5,920.*
- *Expands Pell Grant recipients' eligibility to include high-quality short-term programs that provide students with a credential, certification, or license in an in-demand field, with sufficient guardrails to balance students' needs with protecting taxpayers' interests.*
- *Strengthens career and technical education (CTE) programs through a \$1.1 billion request for a reauthorized Perkins CTE State Grants program that would increase support for high school programs, promote and expand apprenticeships, prioritize science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs, and target services to disadvantaged students.*
- *Provides \$501 million for HBCUs, Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) through Higher Education Act (HEA) programs, to help close gaps among racial and socioeconomic groups in college enrollment and degree attainment by improving these institutions' academic programs, institutional capacity, and student support services.*
- *Reforms the poorly targeted Federal Work-Study program to support workforce and career-oriented training opportunities for low-income undergraduate students.*

Promoting Innovation and Reform in STEM Education

- Consistent with the [Presidential Memorandum](#) on STEM education, the budget provides \$200 million in new grants: \$180 million for competitive Education Innovation and Research grants to support evidence-based strategies and interventions to improve student achievement in STEM fields, including computer science, and \$20 million for awards to consortia of secondary and postsecondary providers that would work with employers and local workforce agencies to create CTE programs in STEM fields that are aligned with regional workforce and labor market needs.

Implementation of School-Based Opioid Abuse Prevention Strategies

- Provides \$43 million for School Climate Transformation Grants and related technical assistance that help build state and local capacity to implement evidence-based strategies to mitigate the impacts of the opioid epidemic on students and schools.

Making the Department More Efficient, while Reducing the Federal Role in Education

- *Eliminates, streamlines, or reduces funding for 39 discretionary grant programs that duplicate other programs, are ineffective, or are more appropriately supported with state, local, or private funds.*
- *Streamlines and consolidates programs to achieve management efficiencies, focuses federal investments on activities supported by evidence, and reduces the federal role in education (two examples: transitioning TRIO to a single state formula and merging six HEA competitive grant authorities into a single institutional formula).*
- *Supports the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) in undertaking a monumental student loan servicing upgrade.*

Want to dig deeper? Among the helpful resources online are a [press release](#), the [budget summary](#), and the [PowerPoint presentation](#) used in the [in-person stakeholder briefing](#).

PRESIDENT'S EDUCATION AWARDS

Since 1983, the [President's Education Awards Program](#) (PEAP) has bestowed 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. Last year, nearly three million elementary, middle, and high school students from over 30,000 schools were recognized under PEAP. (Note: A list of 2017 [PEAP participating schools by state](#) is posted online.)

IDEA WEB SITE

Starting April 30, the Department will automatically direct users from the [Building the Legacy: IDEA 2004 web site](#) to the [new IDEA web site](#). The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) launched the new IDEA web site in June 2017 in order to provide updated information regarding the IDEA to students, parents and families, educators, service providers, and advocates. OSERS has made updates to the site based on the feedback it received from stakeholders since the initial launch and will continue to gather feedback on the [OSERS blog](#). Meanwhile, it will continue to add and enhance content to ensure the new site remains current. (Note: Content from the legacy site remains available for reference on the new site on the [historical reference page](#).)

ODDS AND ENDS

- This week, the Department released its [Strategic Plan for FY 2018-22](#) and [FY 2017 Annual Performance Report and FY 2019 Annual Performance Plan](#). These documents describe policy and operational priorities for the agency and detail the Department's strategic goals and objectives, including FY 2018-19 agency priority goals.
- Also this week, Secretary DeVos hosted a group of [principals and school counselors](#) for a discussion on research, best practices, and examples of innovative programs that create a college- and career-readiness atmosphere for students.
- In related posts, 2017-18 School Ambassador Fellow Patrick O'Connor explains "[Why You Should Celebrate National School Counseling Week](#)," and 2016 Washington State School Counselor of the Year Christy Lynn Anana emphasizes "[Educator Self-Care is Social Emotional Learning](#)."
- Don't miss this [recap](#) of the opening of the National PTA Reflections Student Arts Showcase, titled "What Is Your Story?"
- To help reduce barriers for applicants seeking funding under discretionary grant competitions, the Department issued a [common set of instructions](#). They will be referenced in individual notices inviting applications.
- A "[First Look](#)" report of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) examines an array of outcomes among fall 2009 ninth-grade students, including delayed high school completion, postsecondary enrollment, early postsecondary persistence and attainment, labor market experiences, and family formation. For example, among those who had not enrolled in postsecondary education by February 2016, three-fifths worried about having enough money for expenses during 2015 ([blog post](#)).
- An NCES "[Statistics in Brief](#)" report focuses on students whose parents have not attended college, examining these students' high school success and postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and degree completion once they enrolled in college and graduate school enrollment and employment outcomes after they attained a bachelor's degree. For example, three years after enrolling, comparatively more first-generation students who began postsecondary education in 2003-04 had left without earning a postsecondary credential (33%) than had their peers whose parents attended some college (26%) and whose parents earned a bachelor's degree (14%).
- Secretary DeVos [donated her annual salary](#) evenly between four groups: Dreams Soar, that supports girls in aviation and STEM fields; Kids Hope USA, a faith-based mentorship program; Special Olympics, the world's largest sports organization for children and adults with intellectual disabilities; and Vision to Learn, which provides eye care for low-income students.

QUOTES TO NOTE

"I don't know what can't be done. I come in with fresh eyes around all of these issues, and I think that questioning the way things have been done, and being able to look at things from a different perspective, is a good thing."

"Some of the most important work we've done in this first year has been around the area of overreach and rolling back the extended footprint of this department to a significant extent."

-- Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos (2/7/18), in a far-reaching interview on her first year in office

UPCOMING EVENTS

[#LoveTeaching Week](#) is underway (February 14-21). Share your love to inspire the next generation of educators!

The Department will host identical webinars -- [February 21 from 2:00 to 3:30 PM Eastern Time](#) and [February 22 from 12:30 to 2:00 PM Eastern Time](#) -- regarding new flexibility for school districts to create equitable, student-centered funding systems under a pilot program authorized by the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). Pre-registration is not required. The webinars will be recorded and posted -- with slides -- on the [pilot web page](#). (Note: The [official application](#) is available; the application deadline is March 12 for districts intending to implement in school year 2018-19 and July 15 for districts intending to implement in school year 2019-20.)

[#AskFAFSA Office Hours](#) are the last Wednesday of each month at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. This live session on Twitter is an opportunity to get Free Application for Federal Student Aid® (FAFSA) questions answered by the experts. Every month, a different topic related to federal student aid is featured. (Note: The [next session](#) is February 28, and the topic is FAFSA deadlines.)

***ED Review* is a product of the U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach, State and Local Engagement**

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