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DISASTER RELIEF AID

On November 8, Secretary DeVos traveled to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, to see recovery and rebuilding efforts first-hand and discuss with local officials their plans to help students resume learning ([Secretary's readout](#)). In Puerto Rico, she met with Governor Ricardo Rosselló, Secretary of Education Julia Keleher, and other officials, including higher education leaders. In the Virgin Islands, she met with Governor Kenneth Mapp and representatives from the Virgin Islands Department of Education and St. Thomas School District. She also toured the University of the Virgin Islands and met with university President Dr. David Hall.

“My heart goes out to those in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands who have had their lives upended by the recent hurricanes,” the Secretary said. “There is certainly a long road to recovery ahead, but seeing the rebuilding efforts in person today was truly inspiring. The dedication shown by educators, administrators, and local leaders to getting students back in the classroom, and their lives back to normal, was evident at each stop. The Department will continue to assist them in every way we can.”

Concerning assistance, the Department has awarded \$2 million Project School Emergency Response to Violence (SERV) grants to the Texas Education Agency and Virgin Islands Department of Education and plans to award \$2 million Project SERV grants to the Florida and Puerto Rico Departments of Education ([press release](#)). These grants can be used by school districts and institutions of higher education to recover from violent or traumatic events in which the learning environment has been disrupted. Services allowable under Project SERV include targeted mental health assessments, referrals, and services related to the event with the goal of restoring victims/survivors to their pre-incident levels of functioning; overtime for teachers, counselors, law enforcement, and security officers and other staff; substitute teachers and other staff as necessary; emergency transportation; technical assistance on developing an appropriate response to crisis; transportation and other costs to operate school at an alternative site; and temporary security measures.

“The victims of these hurricanes remain in our constant thoughts and prayers, but as I continue to visit the many impacted schools, I am heartened and in awe of those who are working around the clock to ensure our nation’s children are able to get back to class as quickly as possible,” Secretary DeVos noted. “While Project SERV grants are but a small part of this Administration’s overall recovery and rebuilding efforts, they provide much-needed funds to help schools become operational again. As these funds are distributed, the Department will remain a partner in the long road to recovery ahead.”

The Department’s Office of Safe and Healthy Students has awarded \$49.7 million to 148 grantees since [Project SERV](#) began in 2001.

SUPPORTING STUDENT OPTIONS

Secretary DeVos [addressed](#) thousands of students gathered for the [Future Farmers of America \(FFA\) National Convention](#) late last month in Indianapolis. “In this room, I know we have not only the rising generation of our nation’s agricultural leaders, but of our nation’s biologists, chemists, lawyers, energy entrepreneurs, and maybe even lawmakers -- if you dare!,” she said. “That’s because FFA is not only for tillers of land -- you also cultivate ideas that could change the world.... Who better to rise to the occasion than all of you? Your human ingenuity is what brings life to the land -- and to our country.”

“President Trump and I share your vision and mission,” the Secretary explained. “This Administration believes students need to know about and understand the many options that are possible to pursue because more and more students are seeking something other than a traditional four-year college degree. Many -- I suspect many of you -- are choosing to pursue a rigorous technical education program leading to a well-compensated job in a high-demand field.... Student-led organizations [like FFA] provide unparalleled opportunities to learn other important skills -- such as teamwork, problem-solving, and communications. If every student had the opportunity to pursue...personal development in the context of an organization aligned with their unique interests, our nation would be stronger as a result.”

After her remarks, the Secretary participated in a roundtable discussion with students and visited FFA’s massive exposition, featuring hundreds of booths.

BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS

This week, Secretary DeVos [addressed](#) nearly 900 teachers, principals, administrators, and guests gathered for the [National Blue Ribbon Schools Award Ceremony](#) in Washington, D.C. A total of 342 public and private schools were recognized for overall academic excellence or progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. The award affirms the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where all students master challenging content. (Note: School profiles and applications are posted [here](#).)

“America’s students are more diverse than ever, and we all know that no child is the same as another,” the Secretary said. “National Blue Ribbon Schools recognize different students in different places have different needs. We recognize a wide array of schools for this award precisely because of this reality. The unique needs of each and every student aren’t met by a one-size-fits-all approach. This is why I continue to urge everyone involved in education to ‘rethink school’ -- to thoughtfully question and challenge everything through one clarifying lens: how does this improve individual student achievement?”

“Each National Blue Ribbon School embodies...excellence,” the Secretary continued. “You are helping others to rethink school. Your vision for meeting students’ needs and guiding them toward achievement is inspiring. For all the representatives of schools here celebrating...today, you have invested wisely and carefully in your students. With support from dedicated leaders, teachers, and parents, that means improved educational outcomes for students across America. Your graduates will impact their families and their communities in positive ways.”

REGULATORY RESET

As part of the ongoing Administration-wide effort to reduce the regulatory burden on Americans, the Department announced it will withdraw over 600 out-of-date pieces of [sub-regulatory guidance](#) on its books. Each item has either been superseded by current law or is no longer in effect. Removing materials will make it easier for schools, educators, parents, and the public to understand what guidance is still in effect.

The Department’s Regulatory Reform Task Force, comprised of both political appointees and career civil servants at the agency, analyzed Department regulations and policy guidance for possible repeal, modification,

or replacement over the last six months. As part of its review, the task force also directed agency offices to solicit input on regulations and guidance. Additionally, the Department sought public input through a request for comments in the *Federal Register* and received 16,391 comments.

The task force's latest [status report](#) identifies out-of-date sub-regulatory guidance by agency offices, including the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education -- 97 documents; Office of Innovation and Improvement -- two documents; Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services -- 72 documents; Office of Postsecondary Education -- 398 documents; Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education -- 34 documents; and Office of the Chief Financial Officer -- five documents.

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

President Trump recently delivered an [address](#) on combating drug demand and the opioid crisis, declaring the drug epidemic a nationwide public health emergency ([video](#)). Furthermore, the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis submitted its [final report](#), recommending ways the federal government can tackle the issues ([fact sheet](#)). Drug overdoses are the leading cause of injury death in the U.S., outnumbering both traffic crashes and gun-related deaths.

ODDS AND ENDS

- The President announced his [intent to nominate](#) Douglas Webster to be Chief Financial Officer at the Department. Webster is currently Director of Risk Management at the U.S. Agency for International Development. He previously served for 21 years in the U.S. Air Force, then spent 24 years in federal financial management, including serving as Chief Financial Officer for the Department of Labor.
- In a remarkable blog post, Scott Crisp, principal at Jackson Hole High School in Wyoming and a 2017-18 School Ambassador Fellow at the agency, outlines "[A Day in the Life of a Principal](#)."
- November is [Military Family Appreciation Month](#), recognizing the sacrifices and contributions of military families to the nation. To kick-start the month, Secretary DeVos met with veterans to discuss the needs of military-impacted children in schools at home and abroad.
- On November 9, the Department held a [Veterans Day program](#) with Kenneth Preston, who retired as the longest-serving Sergeant Major of the U.S. Army. This year's theme: "Military members serve with their hearts -- We honor them with our thanks."
- The National Assessment of Educational Progress' (NAEP) [transition from paper to digital exams](#) represents the culmination of extensive work by psychometricians, statisticians, assessment developers, content experts, researchers, scientists, National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) members, and National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) staff who researched, piloted, and checked aspects of NAEP to help ensure minimal hitches and glitches.

QUOTE TO NOTE

"529 [education savings plans] are a strong and proven tool to help make education more affordable for middle-class families. This is a good step forward, reflecting that education should be an investment in individual students, not systems. I look forward to continuing to work with Congressional leaders to ensure all families have equal access to the education that meets their child's unique needs."

-- Secretary Betsy DeVos (11/2/17), in a statement on the House Republicans' [tax reform legislation](#), which would allow families to use up to \$10,000 in 529 savings per year for K-12 education expenses

UPCOMING EVENTS

[International Education Week](#) (November 13-17) celebrates the benefits of international education and

exchange worldwide. Secretary DeVos recorded a [video message](#).

On November 13, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time, the Department invites elementary and secondary educators to a virtual workshop on incorporating a global dimension into schools and classrooms. Experts from centers for international and foreign language education at George Washington University, Georgetown University, and Howard University will share information and resources aimed at developing the global and cultural competencies critical for success in the 21st century. Register [here](#).

Also, on November 15 at 11:00 a.m. ET, the Department will host the opening of an art exhibit from the Department of VSA and Accessibility of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Titled “UBUNTU: Yo soy ... Je suis ... I am ... because you are,” the exhibit will feature works by people with disabilities from five countries -- Argentina, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and the United States. A panel discussion with the artists, parents, and teachers, led by Kennedy Center Senior Vice President of Education Mario Rossero, will focus on dependence on each other and the life-changing power of arts education. 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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