

The latest news, views, & tools in federal education policy

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Tessa Rampersad, Unsplash

## What's Happening in Washington

*\*Please note: This update may not include all the changes currently happening in the federal government.*

### Here's what's been happening in federal education policy for the month of March, and what lies ahead.

The U.S. Department of Education: On March 20, 2025, President Trump signed Executive Order (EO), Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities. Aimed at significantly reducing the U.S. Department of Education (ED), this action keeps in line with President Trump's campaign promise of dismantling the ED. This EO came just a few days after the ED laid off 1,300 employees, thus reducing the Department's workforce by 50%.

The Executive Order requires Secretary McMahon, who was confirmed on March 3, to diminish the capacity of the Department as quickly as possible, which may be accomplished by reducing staff, eliminating offices or moving programs to different departments. The EO actions align with the Secretary's memo to the ED staff, Our Department's Final Mission. This EO has already been challenged by the American Federation of Teachers, and 21 states and the District of Columbia have joined an injunction to stop the actions of the Administration.

For more on this EO and the impact on our nation's education system, read IEL's statement.

## Washington, Continued

The Department of Education (cont): On March 21, President Trump announced that the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Federal Student Aid and the student loan portfolio will be moved to the Small Business Administration (SBA), who itself is facing a 43% Reduction in Force (RIF). The role of the FSA as administrator of student loans is protected by law in the Higher Education Act.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) program, housed in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, was announced to be moving to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). It is the Secretary of Education's responsibility, by law, to administer these funds.

The ED Initiates Reduction in Force: On March 11, 2025, the ED announced a reduction in force that will affect nearly 50% of its workforce, with impacted staff placed on administrative leave starting March 21. This includes most of the staff of NCES and IES, who collect, analyze, and publish critical data in education.

Government Shutdown Averted: On March 14, 2025, the Senate passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) to fund the government until September 30, 2025. The Senate passed the House Republican-led bill that increased defense funding by \$6 billion and cut nondefense spending by \$13 billion. Most education programs will continue to receive funding at the FY 2024 levels. The U.S. Congress is back in session and is focusing on budget reconciliation. For more on the CR, find IEL's statement here.

## IEL Policy Updates

119<sup>th</sup> Congressional Policy Agenda: Co-design IEL's 119th Congress Policy by the People Agenda with members of our network! This policy agenda will reflect the experiences and ideas of the hundreds of leaders we work with across our networks, including you, to address the most significant issues in education and workforce development. To provide your thoughts on what should be a part of IEL's 119th Congress Policy Agenda, complete this survey.

Washington Policy Seminar: From March 17-19, IEL held the 61st Washington Policy Seminar. Joined by members of IEL's Education Policy Fellowship Program and Community School Network members, attendees engaged in timely discussions, workshops, and plenaries on federal education policy.

## Events & Resources

### Register NOW for our Policy by the People™ Synchronous Modules!

- Participants can dig deeper into the root causes of systemic inequities, learn about policy and coalition building, and receive peer-to-peer learning on developing and strengthening their advocacy strategy.
- Apply by midnight on Wednesday, April 2nd to participate in the synchronous modules, which launch April 9th.

### Webinars & Capacity Building Events

- Research Practice Partnerships: Working with K-12 faculty, staff, and students to improve Community Schools on April 2nd at 3:00 pm ET. This is a joint town hall by IEL's Coalition for Community Schools Research Practice Network and the Netter Center for Community Partnerships.
- Breaking the Cycle: Future-Proofing Schools Against Chronic Absenteeism School-Community Connections for Student Success on April 15 at 2:00pm ET. Hosted by Education Week and featuring IEL's Kwesi Rollins.
- Valuing Nondegree Credentials in State Policy on April 8 at 3:00pm ET. Hosted by the Education Commission of the States.
- 2025 Hot Topics in Education: A Virtual Meeting Series running every Friday afternoon through May 2025 at 3:00pm ET. Hosted by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).

### New Research, Reports, & Analysis

- Student Well-Being, School Choice, Higher Ed Top Governors' Priorities for 2025 by The 74
- Moving the Needle by 50Can
- New Survey Finds Medicaid Cuts Would Devastate School Staffing and Services by The 74
- Chronic Student Absenteeism Varies Sharply by Grade Level by FutureEd

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- [Federal Funding for Libraries and Museums on the Chopping Block](#) by New America