

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE REPORT

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 17, 2025

Trump Administration's Education Priorities

Recent executive orders have signaled shifts in federal education policy, with key actions including:

- **Rescinding the ban on immigration enforcement in schools:** While there have been no reports of enforcement on school grounds, concerns remain about the impact on students whose parents may be detained. School leaders are encouraged to ensure families have multiple emergency contacts.
- **Executive Order on School Choice:** The Department of Education will provide guidance to states on using federal funds for K-12 scholarship programs and prioritize discretionary grant programs that promote school choice. The Department of Defense and the Department of the Interior will explore expanding school choice for students in their educational programs.
- **Executive Order on K-12 Curriculum:** Directs the Secretary of Education to eliminate federal funding for programs deemed to support “gender ideology” or “discriminatory equity ideology” in K-12 education. A review of federal funding tied to these issues is underway, and further policy actions are expected in the coming months.
- **Reinstatement of First-Term Title IX Guidance:** The Department of Education has returned to previous guidance on Title IX, though additional clarifications may be forthcoming.
- **Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memos on Federal Funding:** Initial memos paused certain federal education funds for review, creating uncertainty among state and district leaders. A subsequent memo clarified that funding directed to individuals remains unaffected, and a final memo rescinded the pause entirely.

Education Funding & Policy Developments

- **Concerns Over Federal Funding Levels:** While no immediate funding cuts have been enacted, state and district leaders have expressed uncertainty regarding future allocations.

- **NAEP Scores:** Recent results indicate that while higher-achieving students (90th and 75th percentiles) have remained steady or improved in reading and math, lower-performing students (10th and 25th percentiles) have seen declines.
- **Supreme Court Cases Impacting K-12 Education:** Two key cases will be heard this spring:
 - One concerns whether parents have the right to opt their children out of curriculum that conflicts with their religious beliefs.
 - The other questions the constitutionality of a religious-based charter school.
- **Private School Vouchers:** Several states are advancing initiatives to expand voucher programs, including statewide and pilot programs that are gaining legislative traction.

Leadership Appointments & Hearings

- **Linda McMahon's Confirmation Hearing for Secretary of Education** was held February 13, following earlier delays. The Senate HELP Committee is expected to vote on her confirmation in the coming days.
- **Penny Schwinn, Former Tennessee Education Commissioner**, has been nominated as Deputy Secretary of Education, with additional staff appointments underway.