

**House Committee on Education and Workforce**  
**Hearing: *Examining the Policies and Priorities of the Department of Education***  
**June 4, 2025**  
**Questions for the Record**

**Representative Elise Stefanik (R-NY)**

Rural students graduate from high school at a higher rate than their peers but are less likely than other demographic groups to attend training, two- or four-year colleges after graduation. If they do enroll in postsecondary opportunities, they are more likely to drop out without completing their course of training or study. The Rural Postsecondary and Economic Development grants, funded in FIPSE, were created by myself, former Chairman Blunt, and current Chairwoman Collins to help even out that gap and support rural students in achieving the training and education that allows them to achieve their dreams and contribute to rural economies. In my Congressional district in Upstate New York and the North Country, CFES Brilliant Pathways used an RPED award to train college students from rural communities in Upstate New York as mentors, then sent them back to their hometown high schools to talk with their peers about job opportunities and continuing their education after high school graduation. They trained high school teachers in rural schools to be able to walk students through college and career options, since many rural schools don't have a dedicated college and career advisor. They also created industry partnerships through the North Country to serve as college and career readiness advisors and mentors. These activities are creating new options for students - and potential new employees for businesses - across rural Upstate New York. I was disappointed to see that the President's Budget Request did not include funding for the RPED grants.

1. Congress provided funding in the FY 2025 appropriations bill for another round of RPED grants. Can you tell me when the RFP for those funds will be released? Prior administrations only gave thinly staffed rural organizations 30 days from issuing the RFP to the grant application deadline.

The Department released a Notice Inviting [Applications](#) for the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education - Special Projects (FIPSE) which included a priority for proposals that deliver AI and computer science credentials in rural communities within the AI and computer science priority. Awards were made on 12/31/2025. Please see [FIPSE Special Projects](#) for information about successful grantees and abstracts by priority.

**Representative Julia Letlow (R-LA)**

1. The Education Innovation and Research (EIR) grant program is a longstanding, bipartisan initiative aimed at supporting innovative approaches to improving student outcomes,

particularly for high-need populations. The program emphasizes the development, implementation, and scaling of evidence-based strategies to address persistent challenges in education. For instance, the Louisiana Department of Education is currently engaged in an EIR project focused on micro-credentialing in pre-engineering and computer science, while LSU is contributing to a project exploring the integration of programming and mathematics.

Secretary McMahon, could you share any information on how the Department plans to approach the EIR program this year, including any anticipated priorities or areas of focus? Additionally, how does the Department intend to balance setting programmatic priorities with maintaining flexibility for the field to propose innovative ideas?

The Administration's request for fiscal year (FY) 2026 does not include funds for Education Innovation and Research (EIR). The proposed elimination of this program is part of the Administration's overall effort to minimize duplication in federal programs, restore fiscal discipline, and reduce the federal role in education. The Department awarded EIR grants for FY 2025 on December 15, 2025.

2. Secretary McMahon, how much Congressionally appropriated funding remains available for the Mental Health Service Professionals (MHSP) Demonstration Grant Program and the School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program? Does the Department plan to announce new application opportunities for either or both programs using FY25 funding, and are there any anticipated priorities or areas of focus the Department expects to emphasize in upcoming competitions?

The Department offered a Notice of Proposed Priorities (NPPs) related to the Mental Health Service Professionals (MHSP) Demonstration Grant Program and the School-Based Mental Health Services (SBMH) Grant Program on July 16, 2025, and Final Priorities on September 29, 2025, re-envisioning the focus of these grants. The NPPs shift the programs' focus to school psychologists, early intervention, and intensive mental health services, while reasserting parental rights and prohibiting the misuse of funds for the promotion of gender ideology, political activism, racial stereotyping and hostile environments for students of particular races.

The Department posted Notices Inviting Applications for the MHSP and SBMH programs on September 29, 2025. The Department awarded grants for these programs on December 11, 2025.

### **Representative Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)**

1. **Institute of Education Sciences:** The Trump Administration has canceled more than \$900 million in Institute of Education Sciences (IES) grant funding and reduced IES staff from 175 to fewer than 20 employees.
  - a. How will IES meet its statutory obligations under the Education Sciences Reform Act without sufficient funding or staff capacity?

The Administration is currently re-envisioning a more efficient, effective, and useful IES to improve support for evidence-based accountability, data-driven decision making, and education research for use in the classroom. The Department will continue to meet its statutory obligations.

- b. How will IES meet its statutory obligations under the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Authorization Act to administer the NAEP without sufficient funding or staff capacity?

The Department continues to support the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and recognizes that NAEP serves as the benchmark by which we measure academic achievement and progress for K-12 students. Efforts to re-scope existing contracts focused on identifying efficiencies within the NAEP program while still ensuring the reliability, validity, and quality of the 2026 assessments and future data collections. The Department is conducting a full review of the work of IES to ensure it delivers high quality and actionable research and relevant and useful data for researchers, educators and education leaders. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in consultation with the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) and IES leadership, will seek to ensure that review includes an ongoing conversation about improving the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of NAEP.

2. **K-12 Simplified Funding Program:** You have repeatedly stated that students and schools will not lose any federal funding in the process of dismantling the Department of Education and streamlining funding streams; however, the proposed K-12 Simplified Funding Program would consolidate 18 grants totaling \$6.5 billion in current funding into one funding stream totaling \$2 billion.
  - a. What is the justification for cutting these grant programs by a collective \$4.5 billion?

The Administration seeks to reform elementary and secondary education, wherein the federal government does not interfere with the prerogatives of states and school districts. As the Department steps back, states will have a greater ability to influence the programs and distribution of funds operating therein, with reduced red-tape from Washington, D.C., enabling them to focus on school districts in the greatest need. The request is consistent with the Administration's efforts to return education to the states and local communities, which are better poised to determine what their needs are and how to best address them. The proposed K-12 Simplified Funding Program provides the discretion to support any activity that was previously allowable under the consolidated programs.

How will these funds be distributed to states? Which states will lose the most federal funding under the new grant program?

The proposed K–12 Simplified Funding Program would be awarded by formula to states which could then, when sub-granting, direct funds to local educational agencies facing unique challenges. The Administration looks forward to working with Congress on the details of the proposed program, including the possibility of safeguards to ensure that states provide funding to under-resourced school districts and support them in improving student achievement.

3. **School Choice and Private School Accountability:** You have indicated that “school choice” is going to be one of your priorities during your tenure as Secretary of Education.
  - a. Are private schools required under federal law to abide by the Individuals with Disabilities Act?
  - b. If federal funding were to be re-directed toward private school vouchers, how would the Department protect students with disabilities against discrimination by private schools? What enforcement mechanism, if any, would the Department use to make sure these students have the right to a free appropriate public education?
  - c. What would be the repercussions in rural districts that stand to lose funding but have no options other than public schools?

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students whose parents have enrolled them in private schools are not entitled to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). However, school districts are required to provide equitable services to parentally placed private school students with disabilities. This means that even though these students attend private schools, they may be able to receive special education and related services funded by the district's IDEA funds. The services are provided based on a proportionate share of the district's IDEA grant, and the district must consult with private school representatives and parents to determine the specific services and how they will be delivered.

4. **TRIO:** The FY2026 budget request proposes eliminating TRIO and GEAR UP programs, which provide critical supports for students from underrepresented and low-income backgrounds to attend and succeed in higher education, claiming that both programs have “[not met \[their\] performance measures for a number of years.](#)” TRIO currently serves more than 880,000 students, while GEAR UP serves approximately 560,000.
  - a. Which performance measures have TRIO and GEAR UP failed to meet?

TRIO has failed to meet the vast majority of its performance measures, and studies of program effectiveness have shown that it has not increased college enrollment. GEAR UP is not meeting any of its performance measures in high school graduation, college enrollment, or enrollment in college preparation math classes.

- b. How will the Department support schools and students who will be affected by this loss of funding?

Elimination of this program is part of the Administration's overall effort to restore fiscal discipline and reduce the federal role in education. Schools can create their own similar programs should they choose.

- c. Will the Department continue administering TRIO and GEAR UP funding while awaiting congressional authorizations for FY26?

Yes. Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 TRIO Student Support Services grant awards were made on July 3, 2025. GEAR UP grants as well as all other TRIO program grants were awarded by September 30, 2025.

- d. Grant Award Notifications for TRIO and GEAR UP still have not been released for the 2025-2026 academic year. When will the Department release these notifications?

FY 2025 TRIO Student Support Services grant awards were made on July 3, 2025. GEAR UP grants as well as all other TRIO program grants were awarded by September 30, 2025.

- 5. **Student Mental Health Grants:** In April, the Department cut approximately \$1 billion in federal mental health grants appropriated by Congress in the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, including both the Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant Program (MHSP) and the School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program (SBMH). One recipient of the SBMH grants was Portland Public Schools (PPS), which used these funds to provide more than 6,000 students in the district with access to school-based mental health services, resulting in significant declines in student anxiety and depression.
  - a. What was the rationale for terminating these two grant programs? What if any actions of PPS warranted the rescission of the district's grant funds?
  - b. Please explain the policy and procedure for offering grantees the opportunity to request reconsideration of the Department's decision to not continue these grants. When will reconsideration be reviewed, and when will grantees receive a decision on their reconsideration?
  - c. Madi Biedermann, a spokesperson for the department, defended the decision to discontinue funding, saying in a [statement](#) that "under the deeply flawed priorities of the Biden Administration, grant recipients used the funding to implement race-based actions like recruiting quotas in ways that have nothing to do with mental health and could hurt the very students the grants are supposed to help." What evidence does the Department have to support this accusation?
  - d. Will these grants be re-bid? If so, when? Will applicants who had their grants discontinued mid-cycle be given priority?
  - e. What efforts will the Department make to address the disruption that has occurred as a result of these grants being revoked without warning?

The Department conducted an individualized review of the projects supported by the School Based Mental Health and Mental Health Services Professional Demonstration

Programs and uncovered a great many that intimately incorporated programmatic elements that violate the letter or purpose of federal civil rights law. This was undoubtedly the result of the programs having been competed under priorities that encouraged applicants to treat participants, both mental health practitioners and students, according to crude stereotypes.

The Department offered a Notice of Proposed Priorities (NPPs) related to the Mental Health Service Professionals (MHSP) Demonstration Grant Program and the School-Based Mental Health Services (SBMH) Grant Program on July 16, 2025, and Final Priorities on September 29, 2025, re-envisioning the focus of these grants. The NPPs shift the programs' focus to school psychologists, early intervention, and intensive mental health services, while reasserting parental rights and prohibiting the misuse of funds for the promotion of gender ideology, political activism, racial stereotyping and hostile environments for students of particular races.

The Department posted Notices Inviting Applications for the MHSP and SBMH programs on September 29, 2025. The Department awarded grants for these programs on December 11, 2025.

6. **Literacy Instruction:** You have indicated that evidence-based literacy instruction is a funding priority for the Department; however, as a result of the mass contract cancellations and grant terminations at the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Northwest is no longer able to fulfill its Literacy Initiative Partnership with the Oregon Department of Education. This project was designed to identify best practices in early literacy so our state's young students can achieve grade-level reading proficiency. The Department cited "[wasteful and ideologically driven spending](#)" as a reason for cancelling \$350 million in funding for RELs.
  - a. Why did the Department terminate REL Northwest's contracts and grants? What evidence does the Department have that REL Northwest's research and evaluation work was "wasteful and ideologically driven"? Will these grants and contracts be re-instated, and if so, when?

As noted at the time, the Department terminated contracts associated with the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) after determining such spending was not in the interest of students and taxpayers. The Administration is currently re-envisioning a more efficient, effective, and useful IES to improve support for evidence-based accountability, data-driven decision making, and education research for use in the classroom. The Department appreciated the opportunity to brief the Committee and will continue to provide updates as progress continues.

- b. How will you work to support high-quality programs to develop and improve literacy skills, especially for children with learning disabilities?

The FY 2026 request advances the Administration's policy to support evidence-based literacy instruction through the K-12 Simplified Funding Program (K-12

SFP). Under the K-12 SFP, at least 7.5 percent of grant funds would be required to support literacy instruction backed by high or moderate evidence. Through the K-12 SFP and simplified funding for IDEA, states will be encouraged to use evidence-based reading interventions for students with disabilities that focus on explicit, systematic instruction in foundational reading skills like phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The request is consistent with the Administration's efforts to return education to the states and local communities, which are better poised to determine what their needs are and how to best address them.

### **Representative Summer Lee (D-PA)**

1. On February 14<sup>th</sup>, the Department of Education released a Dear Colleague letter that undermines equal opportunity in education and threatens to terminate federal funding to schools and educational institutions that engage in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility policies and programming. On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, after you were confirmed, the Department demanded that states sign a certification of compliance with this guidance. I led over 40 of my colleagues in sending a letter to the acting secretary on February 27<sup>th</sup> and sending a letter to you on April 23<sup>rd</sup> urging you to rescind these threats to schools, districts, and states. We did not receive a response to either letter. Since then, three separate federal judges have placed temporary injunctions or stays on the Department's threats regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts after finding them likely unconstitutional.

The Department provided a response to your February 27, 2025, letter to your office as well as those of your cosignatories on March 17, 2025. The Department provided a response to your April 23, 2025, letter to your office as well as those of your cosignatories on May 20, 2025. A copy of each is enclosed.

Pursuant to a handful of federal district court orders, the Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is enjoined from implementing or enforcing the *Reminder of Legal Obligations Undertaken in Exchange for Receiving Federal Financial Assistance and Request for Certification Under Title VI*, the February 14, 2025 [Dear Colleague Letter](#), and the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document.

The Department has full authority under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to target impermissible DEI initiatives that discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Title VI has always prohibited schools from racial preferencing and stereotyping, and OCR will continue to vigorously enforce Title VI to protect all students and hold violators accountable.

- a. Will you rescind the unconstitutional guidance documents that chill schools' lawful efforts to create safe and welcoming learning environments?

Please see response to question 1 above.

2. The Department's February 14<sup>th</sup> guidance and April 3<sup>rd</sup> certification request cite the *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* case, but as I'm sure you are aware, the Supreme Court's ruling in that case stated that "knowledge based on diverse outlooks" and "enhancing appreciation, respect, and empathy, cross-racial understanding, and breaking down stereotypes" are "commendable goals." The ruling is also clear that students can discuss race in admissions materials as long as they tie it to their potential contribution to the university.
  - a. Why didn't the Department acknowledge these parts of the *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* ruling in its guidance?

Please see response to question 1 above.

3. What steps is the Department taking to ensure its interpretation of civil rights complies with the legal precedents from the First and Fourth Circuit decisions in *Boston Parent Coalition for Academic Excellence v. School Committee of the City of Boston* and *Coalition for TJ v. Fairfax County School Board*?

Please see response to question 1 above.

4. You mentioned that the Office for Civil Rights inherited a backlog of cases from the Biden Administration, so I want to ask about your decision to manage this backlog by closing seven out of twelve regional Offices for Civil Rights, including the Office in my state of Pennsylvania, despite the fact that Congress appropriated funds for these Offices.
  - a. Can you explain specifically what you are doing that enables you to meet your statutory requirement of investigating such a high volume of cases, and how attorneys can possibly manage caseloads as high as 300, with substantially fewer resources?

OCR's current staff is composed of dedicated, high-performing personnel with years of experience enforcing federal civil rights laws. In December 2025, OCR rescinded Reduction In Force (RIF) notices issued to OCR employees in March 2025. OCR employees continue to return to active duty. OCR continues to utilize mediation and Rapid Resolution to resolve complaints in all of OCR's statutory areas of practice.

5. Your testimony stated you "revised OCR's case processing manual to ensure the timely evaluation of civil rights complaints."
  - a. Do these revisions make it easier to dismiss cases without investigation?

The Office for Civil Rights is the law enforcement agency responsible for investigating allegations of discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age. OCR evaluates each complaint to determine whether OCR has jurisdiction and whether there is a factual basis for investigation. This examination is determined by the laws that

Congress authorized OCR to enforce, each laws implementing regulations, and the discretion that OCR possesses to make determinations based on complaint facts and the laws.

6. The Office for Civil Rights dismissed at least seventeen complaints and investigations related to book bans and is dedicating remaining limited resources to investigating things like: schools trying to use more holistic admissions processes instead of only relying on biased test scores, schools with policies that affirm the rights of their transgender students, and states moving away from Indigenous mascots and logos that perpetuate harmful stereotypes. These investigations all seem grounded in an interpretation of Title VI that three separate federal judges have preliminary enjoined after finding they are likely unconstitutional.
  - a. Can you speak to what steps the Office for Civil Rights has taken to ensure it is not violating the orders from multiple federal courts and illegally enforcing the flawed interpretation of Title VI outlined in the February 14<sup>th</sup> Dear Colleague Letter?

Please see response to question 1 above.

7. Your Department recently announced that it was overturning the New York State Board of Regents' decision to move away from Indigenous mascots and logos.
  - a. What would you say to members of Indigenous communities who think these mascots reinforce outdated and offensive stereotypes?

Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin. In its investigation, OCR found that New York's Board of Regents implemented a statewide prohibition on names and mascots based on Native American race and national origin, but simultaneously allowed names and mascots derived from other racial or ethnic groups, such as the "Dutchmen" and "Huguenots." This is blatantly discriminatory. The Trump Administration will not tolerate the New York Board of Regent's attempt to erase the history and culture of Native American Tribes.

- b. Do you think overriding New York's decision about its state's mascots aligns with your commitment to education decisions being made at the local level, or does your commitment to honoring policy decisions at the local level only apply when local policies align with your political viewpoint?

Discrimination on the basis of race and national origin violates federal law. Any school district that receives federal financial assistance from the Department must comply with federal civil rights laws. Decisions made by state and local leaders must comply with federal law. The Administration's commitment to following the law, as enacted by Congress, is unwavering.

8. You have consistently repeated that school choice is a priority for the Department.
  - a. Can you explain the decision to expand federal funding for charter schools while proposing to cut all federal funding for the Magnet Schools Assistance Program?

The Department did not propose to cut Magnet School Assistance Program funding, but to consolidate it into a simplified funding program. States can then use those funds for any allowable use of the consolidated programs — including expanding magnet schools. This allows states to expand school choice through magnet schools without all the bureaucratic red tape of a competitive grant program. The Department proposed to maintain funding for the Charter Schools Program because most charter schools, unlike magnet schools, are founded and operated by education leaders outside the state education agency or local education agency and therefore need the opportunity to receive funding directly.

9. The Magnet Schools Assistance Program provides support for districts that are under federal desegregation mandates.
  - a. Without funding the Magnet Schools Assistance Program, how does your Department plan to support desegregation efforts in unlawfully segregated school districts?

OCR has been vigorously enforcing Title VI's prohibition on discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin. OCR is dedicated to eradicating racially exclusionary practices and programs in all education programs receiving federal financial assistance. It has opened several investigations into programs which allegedly have racially exclusionary practices or eligibility requirements. Under the Trump administration, this enforcement will continue.

10. Given states' Massive Resistance to desegregation following *Brown v. Board of Education*, do you believe "leaving it up to the states" and having other agencies administer federal education policy—before the modern Department of Education was established in 1980—were successful and effective strategies for expanding Black and brown student's educational opportunities?

The Department's Office for Civil Rights vigilantly enforces federal civil rights laws, including by aggressively investigating allegations of discrimination in K-12 schools and on college campuses, and will continue to do so. The Trump Administration is committing to upholding individuals' anti-discrimination and equal opportunity protections under the law.

11. Trump's budget proposal cuts the maximum Pell grant award by \$1,685 at a time when the cost of living and college tuition prices have increased. 57% of all Black undergraduate students receive Pell grant funding compared to 31% of white undergrads. Cuts to Pell eligibility will disproportionately harm Black students.

- a. What is the Department of Education doing to ensure that the proposed budget cuts will not disproportionately harm Black students?

The President's FY 2026 Budget Request provides level-funding, compared to the FY 2024 and FY 2025 appropriated level provided by Congress. The Department looks forward to working with Congress to put the program on a more sustainable path for students and families.

12. 25% of students attending post-secondary institutions are first generation, or have parents with no post-secondary education, and over 50% of students attending post-secondary institutions have parents without a bachelor's degree. If you move forward with cutting the programs that support these students, states have already made it clear they cannot pick up the tab amidst all the other impending shortfalls they are facing from federal cuts to Medicaid, SNAP, etc. Post-secondary institutions cannot pick up the tab because they are also facing immense funding cuts from your Department.

- a. If you dismantle the Department of Education and cut programs for first-generation postsecondary students, do you acknowledge that fewer first-generation students will have the opportunity to pursue higher education?

The FY 2026 President's Budget Request seeks to shrink the federal bureaucracy, save taxpayer money, and empower states, who best know their local needs, to manage their education in this country. We have reviewed our programs and identified spending that does not fulfill the mandate of trust the American people have placed with President Trump. However, we note that need based Pell Grants have been preserved in the budget.

13. There is currently a backlog of nearly two million income driven repayment (IDR) applications, leaving borrowers struggling to access repayment options and at risk for default and wage garnishment.

- a. What specific steps is the Department taking to resolve this backlog?

Federal Student Aid (FSA) is tackling the Biden Administration's IDR application backlog which began in July 2024, while complying with court orders, including injunctions issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eight Circuit that ordered the Department to cease implementation of the illegal Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE) Plan and parts of other IDR plans.

In February 2025, the IDR application was temporarily unavailable because the online application incorporated provisions subject to the injunction. During that time, paper loan consolidation applications were available to borrowers. The Trump Administration was able to reopen the application within weeks of the application.

As of December 2, 2025, there were approximately 804,000 IDR applications awaiting processing. The majority of the remaining applications are from borrowers who applied to enroll in the illegal SAVE Plan, which is subject to ongoing litigation. The Department is working closely with its loan servicers to ensure non-SAVE IDR applications are being processed in a timely manner and has alerted borrowers that they can speed up processing time by updating their tax information.

- b. What would you say to my constituents who can't afford the standard payment, still have not had their IDR applications processed, and will face financial ruin if their wages are garnished?

Servicers are working to process applications as quickly as possible. If servicers need time to process a borrower's IDR application, the borrower will be placed into forbearance. While in forbearance, the borrower would not be required to make a payment, and their wages would not be garnished. Additionally, the Department [announced](#) on January 16, 2026, that involuntary collections are being delayed including both administrative wage garnishment and treasury offset program.

- 14. There have been issues with borrowers who are making regular payments not seeing those payments reflected in their servicer records. These are folks who are relying on their loans being eliminated after a certain number of payments to their IDR plans.
  - a. How are you working to ensure the accuracy of payment counts on student loans?

The Department recognizes that there have been some system inconsistencies that have caused some qualifying payments to not be counted accurately for some borrowers. As such, rest assured that the Department has and will continue to be diligent in working closely with our loan servicers to ensure borrowers' payment counts are accurate and up to date as quickly as possible when alerted to such issues

- b. How are you working to ensure that borrowers receive the relief they were promised?

Because of the injunction issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, FSA has temporarily halted processing loan discharges for borrowers enrolled in SAVE, PAYE, and ICR Plans. Currently, IBR discharges are also paused while our systems are updated to accurately count months not affected by the court's injunction. IBR discharges will resume once those updates are completed.

**Representative Lucy McBath (D-GA)**

As you know, the Secretary of Education has direct authority over the cancellation of research contracts at the Department. On February 10th, the Institute for Education Sciences cancelled research contracts that directly impact students with disabilities including:

**91990019C0078:** This contract is to design and evaluate the effectiveness of transition supports for youth with disabilities served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This contract was also known as the Charting My Path For Future Success Program.

**91990018C0046:** This contract is for An Impact Evaluation of Training in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Reading in Early Elementary School (MTSS-R)

**ED-IES-15-C-0046:** Post High School Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities. This contract will collect administrative records and describe the secondary school, postsecondary education, and employment and earning outcomes of a sample of high school youth with disabilities.

Please provide the answers to the following questions **without** providing any personally identifiable information of the participants of these programs.

1. Why were these three contracts for disabled students identified by the Secretary for cancellation?
  - a. What is the specific reasoning given by the Department for the immediate cancellation of the three contracts identified above?
2. You stated in the hearing that “students with disabilities are not impacted.” Can you please explain how the cancellation of these three contracts will not or have not already negatively impacted students with disabilities?
3. Could you please provide any next steps that this Administration is taking to reinstate or rebid any of the projects listed above?

Under President Trump’s leadership, we have consistently highlighted inefficiencies and waste within the Department, which have hindered its core mission: supporting states and localities in delivering education, including services for students with disabilities. In response, we have worked to right-size the Department through contract cancellations and programmatic adjustments. I remain firmly committed to supporting students with disabilities.

The Department is currently in discussions with firms associated with two of the projects listed above (*An Impact Evaluation of Training in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Reading in Early Elementary School* and *Post-High School Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities*) to evaluate potential for reinstatement.

### **91990019C0078 – Charting My Path for Future Success**

The Charting My Path for Student Success Program served over 1,600 high school juniors and seniors with IEPs across 62 high schools in 13 school districts and 11 states. This project began in 2019 and spent a significant portion of its \$45,450,138 dollar allocation to recruit Local Education Agencies (LEAs) as well as teachers, students and their families to participate in transition support

services intended to improve post-high school outcomes for students with disabilities. These services included year-round tutoring, mentoring, and weekly 1 on 1 and small group sessions for students with IEP's – running the full range of disabilities from physical, mental, and various levels of severity.

1. Can the Department please identify all 13 LEAs that were participating in this program at the time of cancellation?

As part of their agreement to participate in this study, IES provided LEAs an assurance of confidentiality. While LEAs may opt to share their participation status voluntarily, we are unable to do so on their behalf.

2. How many students were being served by this program at the time of cancellation?

1,076 students were being served by the program at the time of cancellation.

3. How much of the \$45,450,138 dollar allocation was already spent setting up and conducting this research/program<sup>1</sup>?

As of August 20, 2025, the Department paid a total of \$19,722,931.37 in support of contract 91990019C0078.

- a. Did the Department consider that cancelling this program after spending millions of taxpayer dollars would result in those dollars being spent with no usable outcome, research, or benefit to the participants?

There will be usable products from this research. As part of the early work of this project, the research team developed evidence-based materials that were to be used to guide the school-level programming for participating students. IES anticipates making those materials available via *ies.ed.gov* for others to use or study.

4. Was there any warning given to the students and families participating in this program that immediate cancellation was being considered?

No. Following notification by the Department that the contract had been terminated (see Question 5 below), the evaluation contractor—American Institutes for Research (AIR)—provided districts a template they could adapt to inform families and students about the termination.

5. Was there any warning to the LEAs participating that immediate cancellation was being considered?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ies.ed.gov/use-work/evaluations/evaluation-transition-supports-youth-disabilities>

No. The Department notified AIR that the associated contract was being terminated on February 10, 2025. That same day, AIR notified school districts that work associated with the evaluation would cease. Subsequently, AIR staff had follow-up communications with districts to identify district-specific steps for ending the evaluation.

6. Has the Department done any outreach or offered any sort of support for the families that may need assistance in adjusting to unexpected immediate changes to their students' Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or their plans for the upcoming summer?

No. However, both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 include protections for students with disabilities and their families to ensure children with disabilities have annual learning goals, services and supports they need, and access to pre-employment transition services. These are legal requirements unimpacted by the status of the Chartering My Path for Student Success Program. Additionally, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services funds the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative, which offers information, tools, supports to assist multiple providers to deliver effective services and instruction for students and out-of-school youth with disabilities to increase postsecondary education enrollment, graduation, credential attainment, competitive integrated employment, and community engagement.

7. Were any educators participating in this program dismissed from their position, re-assigned to a different school, or subjected to a decrease in compensation due to the cancellation of this program? If so, please provide further details as to how many educators were impacted and whether they were dismissed, reassigned, or subjected to a decrease in compensation.

Sixty-one instructors were hired as part of the evaluation. Based on information received from AIR, we believe that while in most cases instructors were reassigned for the 2024-25 school year, at least 5 were dismissed. We do not have information about instructors' compensation after the contract was terminated.

### **Additional Questions from Rep. McBath**

1. Secretary McMahan, you have often talked about the importance of getting Americans into the workforce, a goal shared by this Committee.
  - a. Do you recognize the value of adult education in ensuring that every adult have access to a General Educational Development (GED) program or high school equivalency and the skills that will lift them out of poverty, off government assistance, and into family-sustaining jobs that support our economy?
    - i. How does the President's budget proposal aim to accomplish those goals when it proposes to eliminate funding for adult education?
  - b. If not through adult education, how does the Administration propose that adults without high school credentials and sufficient literacy skills acquire them?

- i. What is the Administration’s plan for upskilling the 130 million adults who have a literacy level of 6th grade or lower?

Adult education programs can be a useful strategy for helping adults get a high school equivalency degree or skills necessary for employment. The President’s FY 2026 Budget Request supports the Administration’s goal to return education to the states while maintaining support for families and their students. States and localities, not the federal government, are best suited to determine whether to support these activities or similar activities within their own budgets and without unnecessary administrative burden imposed by the federal government.

2. One of the proposed priorities for the Department of Education is literacy, where you state, “Federal education spending must now prioritize a vital and foundational goal: ensuring that every student in America becomes proficient in reading.<sup>2</sup>” That goal must apply to both adult as well as traditional learners.

The President’s Executive Order designating English as the Official Language states, “In welcoming new Americans, a policy of encouraging the learning and adoption of our national language will make the United States a shared home and empower new citizens to achieve the American dream.<sup>3</sup>”

What would the Department propose to support these individuals in learning English if adult education programs are no longer funded?

States and localities, not the federal government, are best suited to determine whether and how to support individuals who are trying to learn English within their own budgets and without unnecessary administrative burden imposed by the federal government.

3. ED recently released estimated allocations for the Adult Education State Grants, but this year’s letter to State directors omitted the estimated allocations for the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) program, which have historically been included in these allocation letters and are required by law to be reserved under Section 243 of WIOA.

As you may know, this program provides integrated English literacy and civics education, in combination with integrated education and training activities, for English language learners to gain literacy and fluency in English. Again, this is in line with the goals of this Administration outlined in President Trump’s Executive Order designating English as the Official Language, which states, “Speaking English not only opens doors economically,

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/05/21/2025-09093/proposed-priorities-and-definitions-secretarys-supplemental-priorities-and-definitions-on>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/designating-english-as-the-official-language-of-the-united-states/>

but it helps newcomers engage in their communities, participate in national traditions, and give back to our society<sup>3</sup>.”

- a. As you know IELCE was funded for FY 2025 per the "FY2025 Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act". Does the Department plan on sending these funds to the states for Fiscal Year 2025, as required under 29 USC 3291(a)(2)?
- b. If ED does plan to fund this program, when will the Department release the funding allocations for IELCE, at the FY24 level, as per Congressional intent?

**IECLE was added to the final state allocation tables that were released to the field on July 30, 2025.**

[NOTE on the cites listed: WIOA Sec. 211(a) RESERVATION OF FUNDS.—From the sum appropriated under section 206 [authorization of appropriations] for a fiscal year, the Secretary— (1) shall reserve 2 percent to carry out section 242, except that the amount so reserved shall not exceed \$15,000,000; and (2) shall reserve 12 percent of the amount that remains after reserving funds under paragraph (1) to carry out section 243.]