This Week in Education: 5 Things to Know

1. Secretary Designate Betsy DeVos approved by Senate HELP Committee

The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) on Tuesday morning approved Betsy DeVos's nomination to lead the US Department of Education. DeVos was confirmed 12-11 along party lines. Her nomination will now go to the Senate floor, where she'll need only need a simple majority to be confirmed.

The mission of the US Department of Education is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

The Department was created in 1980 by combining offices from several federal agencies. The Department’s 4,400 employees and $68 billion budget are dedicated to:

- Establishing policies on federal financial aid for education, and distributing as well as monitoring those funds.
- Collecting data on America's schools and disseminating research.
- Focusing national attention on key educational issues.
- Prohibiting discrimination and ensuring equal access to education.

2. Funding Opportunities

Be sure to review the US Department of Education’s Fiscal Year 2017 Grants Forecast (as of January 2017), which lists virtually all programs and competitions under which the agency has invited or expects to invite applications for awards and provides actual or estimated dates for the transmittal of applications under these programs.

Note: This document is advisory only and not an official application notice of the Department of Education.

Also, the Apply for a Grant web page lists all open grant competitions.

As an example, the agency just invited applications for FY 2017 Charter Schools Program grants for charter management organizations.

3. The US Department of Education hosts ESSA Weekly Webinars

A great resource for state leaders to learn about The Every Student Succeeds Act and implementation of the new law is found in the Department’s weekly webinar series.

When: Wednesdays from 2:00-3:30pm EST
February Schedule:

Please note that the schedule is subject to change. The Department will provide a detailed agenda prior to each session. Note that you must register for each webinar.

February 1, 2017
Consolidated State Plan: Supporting Excellent Educators and All Students

February 8, 2017
Consolidated State Plan: Accountability Systems: Long-term Goals and Indicators

February 15, 2017
Consolidated State Plan: Accountability Systems: Annual Meaningful Differentiation and School Identification

February 22, 2017
No webinar

4. President Trump signed a proclamation proclaiming January 22 through January 28, 2017, as National School Choice Week.

U.S. President Donald J. Trump issued an official proclamation recognizing January 22-28, 2017 as National School Choice Week. The proclamation was the second official proclamation of the Trump presidency.

In his proclamation, President Trump said, "With a renewed commitment to expanding school choice for our children, we can truly make a great education possible for every child in America."

Secretary Designate Betsy DeVos celebrated National School Choice Week as well today, by attending a celebration of school choice at Thurgood Marshall Academy, a high-performing charter school in Washington, DC.

This is a signal in the education policy views of the Trump administration around the intention to provide greater flexibility and opportunities for school choice.

5. CSG Midwest Highlights State Education Funding Models.

More money, more evidence being used to revamp school aid in some Midwest states article analyzes school funding state by state for Midwest region.

“In fiscal year 2015, more than $260 billion went to elementary and secondary education. Although no two states distribute education dollars exactly the same way, the vast majority of funding formulas are built around a “foundation” or “base” amount of funding that is the minimum each student receives.

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