

FY26 Budget: Education on the Chopping Block

The President's FY26 budget proposal requests \$55.7 billion for the U.S. Department of Education – a \$12 billion (or 15.3%) reduction compared to FY25. This dramatic cut raises serious questions about ED's ability to fulfill its statutory responsibilities, and it will place immense pressure on states, which will be forced to choose between backfilling federal education cuts or protecting other essential services like healthcare. Furthermore, the administration has left approximately \$8 billion in FY25 funds "unallocated," raising serious concerns about impoundments, rescissions bills, and other attempts by the administration to withhold funding that has already been appropriated.

UNDERMINING CORE FEDERAL INVESTMENTS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

The FY26 budget flat-funds the main Title I program, effectively cutting it in real terms.

While grants to LEAs under Title I-A are technically level funded, this essentially serves as a cut when inflation is considered.

The budget flat-funds IDEA and consolidates the Preschool Grants and Special Education National Activities programs into the IDEA State Grants program. Congress must uphold the existing statutory requirements of these programs so that schools can serve and support students with disabilities, especially those served by states and districts through Part B preschool (ages 3-5) and all Part D National Activities.

The budget also eliminates all funding for migrant education and English language acquisition grants. These programs provide critical academic and language support to students who face significant barriers in the American education system. The cuts are completely antithetical to President Trump's stated commitment to the English language in EO14224; how can the administration be so deeply committed to all Americans speaking English while simultaneously defunding the programs that teach them the language?

SIMPLIFIED FUNDING PROGRAM: A \$4.5 BILLION DISINVESTMENT

The FY26 budget proposes a new "K-12 Simplified Funding Program" (SFP), which would consolidate 18 existing formula and competitive grants into a single block grant. The administration claims that this will reduce bureaucratic red tape, but **it masks an enormous \$4.5 billion funding cut – a 70% reduction compared to the combined funding for the programs being consolidated.**

The budget states that a minimum of 7.5% of SFP funds (\$150 million) will be reserved for literacy programs. However, **this is still a \$74 million (33%) cut from previous funding for Comprehensive Literacy Development and Innovative Approaches to Literacy Grants.** At a time when far too many students are struggling to read and states are making real progress by investing in evidence-based science-of-reading programs, now is not the time to pull back federal support.

The block grant structure risks burying the very students that these programs were designed to serve, turning targeted support into diluted flexibility. **SFP consolidates funding for: rural education; students experiencing homelessness; at-risk youth, delinquent, and neglected youth; Native Hawaiians; Alaska Native education; and Promise Neighborhoods.**

The budget is also silent on how these funds will be allocated. If discretion is left to states, it's very likely that the most needy and vulnerable - and the least politically powerful - students will be shortchanged.

EROSION OF DATA AND ASSESSMENTS

The budget eliminates all funding for state assessments. By failing to fund the state assessment grant program, the Administration triggers the non-compliance provisions of ESSA and effectively relieves states of their congressionally-mandated responsibility to assess student learning. This would eliminate vital data for parents, advocates, and policymakers to evaluate school and student performance and make decisions that are best for kids. Further, this is contradictory to the ED's own commitment to assessments, which was explicitly reasserted in the budget itself.

The budget slashes NAEP funding and virtually eliminates all other IES functions.

The budget slashes funding for the Nation's Report Card by nearly 40%, contributing to uncertainty that the 2026 assessment will produce valuable and reliable data. Nearly all other functions of the Institute for Education Sciences have been eliminated entirely. This would significantly reduce the nation's capacity to conduct independent research on what works for students, evaluate programs, and inform innovative and evidence-based policymaking.

HIGHER EDUCATION: DEEP CUTS TO ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY

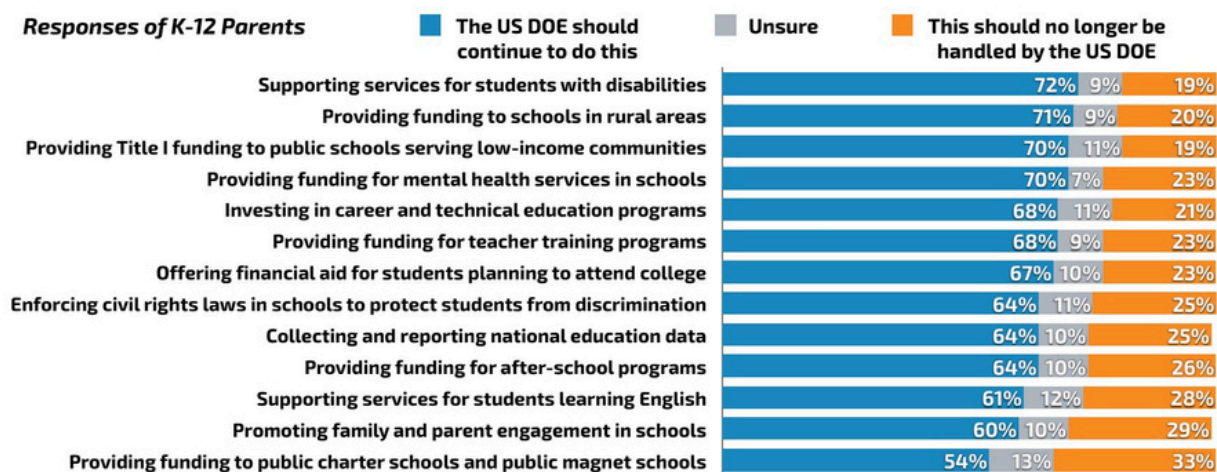
The budget significantly undermines federal support for higher education by: cutting the maximum Pell Grant amount from \$7,395 to \$5,710; eliminating the TRIO, GEAR UP, and SEOG programs; and slashing federal work-study funding by 80%. These programs are absolutely vital for low-income and first-generation families to access and complete college, particularly as costs continue to rise; cutting them means removing a critical lever for economic mobility for hard-working Americans.

DISMANTLING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The budget would cement staff cuts into law, reducing the total number of full-time employees from 4,099 in FY24 to 2,179 (nearly 50%). In particular, it reduces funding for the Office of Civil Rights by \$49 million, eliminating the majority of staff. The Office of Civil Rights plays an absolutely essential role in ensuring that all students have access to public education free from discrimination, and the proposed funding level is entirely insufficient to uphold that mandate.

PARENTS ARE CLEAR:

There is bipartisan support for continued investments in the Department of Education, including targeted funding for students with disabilities, rural communities, Title I, and mental health services.



Q. Here are some things that the US Department of Education (DOE) has been doing. For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is something the US DOE should continue to do, or if you think it should no longer be handled by the US DOE.
N=1,517 registered voters nationwide, with a base sample of 1,000 voters and an oversample achieving a total of 709 voters who are K-12 parents, conducted March 13-18, 2025

