

The First Six Months

The Trump Administration's Education-Related Priorities and Actions

The Trump Administration has made education a key focus of its first six months, taking numerous executive actions, from issuing executive orders (EOs) to advancing agency policies and enforcement to working with Congress on legislation. Compared to at least the last six Democratic and Republican administrations, **these actions represent a dramatic shift in the federal role in education.** These efforts are already having a significant impact across early childhood, K-12, higher education, and workforce development—with even greater impact likely to come as new policies and funding shifts go into effect.

This document includes brief, factual summaries of key actions organized across **ten overlapping Trump Administration priorities** that EducationCounsel has identified as core areas of focus thus far. We do not discuss here the immediate or long-term impacts of these actions. For more analysis and information regarding impact, please see the links to our related documents provided throughout the bulleted lists below. Those resources and others (collected [here](#)) also include information about additional related actions—especially agency enforcement and relevant litigation—that are not included in this six-month highlights document.

Notes:

- This document includes some references to the status of litigation challenging the Administration's actions, but it does not include all of the legal challenges pending or likely. Our [Executive Actions Chart](#), linked throughout, includes updates on relevant lawsuits.
- These federal developments are sometimes changing rapidly, and this document (like all our materials) may be overtaken by events and does not constitute specific legal advice.



1. Eliminate the Department of Education (USED) & Reduce Capacity of Other Agencies

- [EO on USED](#) instructed Secretary McMahon to “take all necessary steps to facilitate [USED’s] closure.”
- [Mass reduction in force \(RIF\) at USED](#) and other terminations (e.g., provisional employees) initiated by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) will reduce USED’s workforce by 50% (from about 4000 to 2000 staff), including eliminating 7 of 12 Office for Civil Rights (OCR) offices. (Note: The Supreme Court [allowed](#) the overall RIF to happen while lawsuits proceed; the OCR RIF is still enjoined.)
- [Mass RIFs at the Department of Health & Human Services \(HHS\)](#) targeting early childhood offices have moved forward at the Office of Child Care but are currently enjoined at the Office of Head Start.
- USED and Department of Labor (DOL) entered the [first agreement to transfer USED functions to other agencies](#), focused on \$2.6B in career and technical education (CTE) and workforce grants.



2. Minimize the Federal Role in Education & Transfer Power to States

- President Trump’s [Fiscal Year 2026 \(FY26\) budget request](#) proposes block granting 18 federal education programs (while cutting funding for those programs by 70%) and consolidating special education programs.
- States (IA, OK, IN) have begun [planning or submitting waiver requests](#) to remove some Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements and approximate a block grant of federal funds to states and/or districts.
- [Secretary McMahon’s proposed competitive grant priorities](#) include prioritizing proposals by state entities (or those they endorse) over other applicants to place more federal funding under state control.



3. Reduce Federal Education Funding & Programs for Public Schools and Safety Net

- [Withheld over \\$6.8B](#) in FY25 ESSA funds, including funds for before- and afterschool programs, technology and academic enrichment, educator professional development, English learners, and migrant students, as well as Adult Education and Family Literacy Act funds for adult literacy. (Note: The Administration [announced](#) it will release \$1.4B in afterschool funds, with new assurances required, but it has not released the remaining funds.)
- [Terminated grants](#) including, among others, mental health grants (~\$1B), grants and contracts supporting teacher preparation and technical assistance, AmeriCorps programs, and a wide range of education research and development (R&D) and data grants and contracts (see #9 below); in addition, USED disallowed the late liquidation of \$3B in ESSER funds for COVID recovery (since reversed in light of a court ruling).
- Signed the [One Big Beautiful Bill Act \(OBBBA\)](#) that includes significant cuts to, among many things, Medicaid, SNAP, and student financial aid; the law also restricts some of its benefits—such as the Child Tax Credit and Trump Accounts—to only those children with Social Security Numbers.
- President Trump’s [FY26 budget request](#) proposes a 15% cut to USED’s budget—eliminating multiple education programs—alongside deep cuts to other relevant agency budgets, such as a 56% cut to the National Science Foundation (NSF), which is the largest source of education R&D funding.



4. Expand Funding for Private Schools, Including for Religious Schools

- Signed OBBBA that [created a new 100% tax credit](#) of up to \$1,700 per year—with no national cap—for donations to scholarship-granting organizations that provide students with scholarships that can be used for private or religious school tuition as well as for other education expenses incurred by private or public school students including, but not limited to, tutoring, technology, and extended-day programming.
- Following an [EO on expanding school choice](#), USED has issued [multiple guidance documents](#) on using current federal funds to support school choice.
- [Added \\$60M](#) to the FY25 federal charter school grants program.
- Established school choice as one of the [Secretary’s priorities](#) for USED’s competitive grants.



5. Dismantle “DEIA” & Reverse Civil Rights Enforcement

- Issued multiple EOs to prohibit “illegal” diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) programs (without definition) within the [federal government](#), among [federal contractors and grantees](#), and in [K-12 education](#).
- Other EOs seek to eliminate use of the [disparate impact standard in civil rights enforcement](#) and specifically in [school discipline](#), as well as to [rescind multiple existing antidiscrimination EOs](#).
- Demanded all [states and districts certify](#), subject to liability under the False Claims Act, that they are complying with civil rights laws *and* the Administration’s view—set forth in a [Dear Colleague Letter](#) and [FAQ](#)—that DEI activities violate Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Supreme Court’s decision in *SFFA v. Harvard*. (Note: The certification and guidance documents are enjoined by multiple courts.)
- [Demanded compliance with anti-DEI principles for Head Start grantees](#), despite contrary requirements in the Head Start statute such as developing [plans that “meet the diverse needs of the population served.”](#)
- Initiated [numerous Title VI actions](#) against universities (see #7 below) and some K-12 systems (e.g., Chicago’s Black Student Success Plan, New York state’s effort to eliminate Native American high school mascots) while beginning to undo prior civil rights resolutions (e.g., Rapid City) and dismissing other complaints.



6. Reverse Gender Equity Rights

- Multiple EOs both establish a federal policy [recognizing only two sexes](#) and target transgender students' rights including in [K-12 education](#), [sports](#), and [healthcare](#).
- Through EOs and guidance, the Administration [re-elevated regulations](#) from the first Trump administration that loosened requirements for how schools address sexual harassment; excluded from USED's Title IX policies the [Biden-era regulations](#) that had expanded protections for students (based on sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy/family status, and more); and [issued Department of Justice \(DOJ\) guidance](#) that the Supreme Court's Title VII decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County* "does not mandate gender identity-based access to single-sex spaces or athletics" under Title IX.
- Initiated numerous Title IX enforcement actions—including referrals to DOJ for potential rescinding of education funds—against state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), and institutions of higher education (IHEs) focused on objecting to trans-inclusive policies (e.g., [California](#), [Maine](#), [Minnesota](#), [University of Pennsylvania](#)).
- [Launched investigations](#) into SEAs and LEAs for [potential violations of FERPA](#) with respect to parental access to information about their children's gender identity at school.



7. Disrupt Higher Education

- Launched numerous high-profile Title VI and Title IX investigations into IHEs over [DEI efforts](#), [trans-inclusive policies](#) (especially in sports), and [responses to anti-semitism](#); several have accelerated to massive cancellation of federal funds (especially research grants), accreditor referrals (e.g., Columbia and [Harvard](#)), and IHEs making [policy](#) and/or [personnel](#) changes.
- Created a cross-agency task force—USED, HHS, and the General Services Administration—to lead implementation of the [EO on combatting antisemitism](#) and several of the IHE investigations listed above.
- [EO on accreditation](#) focuses on approving new accreditors and holding accountable (including the threat of terminating accreditation recognition) those accrediting entities that advance what the Administration views as "unlawful discrimination" through diversity, equity, and inclusion standards.
- [EO on prioritizing enforcement of Section 117](#) of the Higher Education Act related to reporting foreign gifts led to several investigations into IHEs.
- Signed OBBBA that [makes significant changes and cuts to student loans](#), including, among many things, new limits on the maximum amounts of parent and graduate student loans, a new "Workforce Pell" program for short-term programs, and new program accountability regarding graduates' earnings.
- Increased [scrutiny](#) and [barriers](#) to enrollment of international students.
- Significantly cut IHEs' grants and contracts for R&D (see #9 below) from USED as well as billions in cuts to National Institutes of Health and NSF grants.



8. Increase Immigration Enforcement & Deny Benefits to Noncitizens

- [Multiple EOs](#) call for increased immigration enforcement, leading to DHS [rescinding](#) longstanding guidance that limited ICE activities in protected areas, including schools and IHEs. (Note: The Administration's immigration enforcement will soon be supported by unprecedented funding provided via OBBBA.)
- Issued guidance from multiple agencies to [exclude undocumented individuals and those under temporary protected status from additional federal benefits](#), including Perkins- (CTE) or WIOA- (adult literacy) funded

postsecondary programs including dual enrollment (via USED), Head Start (via HHS), and WIC and other food assistance programs supporting children and families (via Department of Agriculture).

- [Withheld over \\$1B](#) in FY25 funds for supporting English learners and migrant students for the upcoming school year and proposed zeroing out those funding streams in FY26 (see #3 above).
- [EO establishing English as the official national language](#) calls for limiting federal support for language access.
- DOJ sued [Texas](#), [Kentucky](#), and [Minnesota](#) to deny undocumented students access to in-state tuition rates.
- [EO ending birthright citizenship](#) is currently enjoined via a class action lawsuit.



9. Limit Education R&D and Data

- Worked with DOGE to [make massive cuts](#) to education R&D, including terminating almost all Institute of Education Sciences (IES) grants and contracts (~\$900 million), eliminating technical assistance via the Regional Educational Laboratories and Comprehensive Centers, and making massive cuts to NSF's education R&D grants.
- Stopped, interrupted, narrowed, or limited access to multiple federal data collections (including parts of the NAEP assessment), affecting ongoing research, other USED functions such as allocating formula funds, accountability systems, and transparency. (Note: Some of the initial R&D and data cuts have been fully or partially restored, including some as a result of ongoing litigation.)
- [EO on accreditation](#) mandates that accreditors require their IHEs to use program-level student outcomes data to drive improvement but “without reference to race, ethnicity, or sex” (i.e., disaggregated data).
- Launched effort to “[reenvision IES](#)” while simultaneously implementing a major RIF at IES (nearly 90%) and proposing a 67% cut to its budget for FY26.
- Multiple agencies capped the [indirect cost rate](#) for research grants at 15%, which would significantly impact research universities' budgets. (Note: Federal courts have enjoined all of these policies.)



10. Advance Select Education Priorities

- Additional education-related EOs not listed above include orders about [artificial intelligence](#), [workforce development](#), a [White House HBCUs Initiative](#), a [religious liberty commission](#), [anti-Christian bias](#), and [COVID vaccine mandates in schools](#).
- Secretary McMahon's proposed competitive grant priorities include an initial group focused on [evidence-based literacy, education choice, and returning education to the states](#), along with a newly-proposed one on [artificial intelligence](#).
- OBBBA enacted a wide-ranging set of education-related policy changes that the Administration supports, all of which are summarized [here](#).

DISCLAIMER: Consistent with our mission, EducationCounsel is working to update and support the field as federal actions consequential to education are unfolding. The information provided above does not serve as legal counsel and, given the pace of action, could be outdated quickly. The information in this document is current as of July 20, 2025.

If you have any suggestions or feedback, please send it to info@educationcounsel.com.