

How are/will schools be affected by the current actions of the federal government?

On 2/16/25, we shared an analysis from a colleague who has had extensive experience working at a state department of education (see <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/21625.pdf>). Our intent was that this would be a stimulus for engaging stakeholders in analyzing and discussing implications. The following is a compilation of the initial responses received. As we receive additional analyses, we will compile and share them as appropriate.

While many analyses have pointed to areas that need reform related to the federal involvement in education, most have not called for ending such involvement. To appreciate the scope of concern about the current call for dismantling the U.S. Department of Education, browse the internet for the pro and con reactions being written and published in some form everyday.

Here are responses we have received so far:

Only one respondent noted organizations that have taken positions. As someone who is against dismantling the U.S. Department of Education and shifting the responsibility to the states, he provided the following list of those that have offered detailed statements expressing such opposition.

National Education Association (NEA), American Association of University Professors, The Education Trust, National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education, National Women's Law Center, The Century Foundation, American Educational Research Association, Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics, Student Borrower Protection Center, American Association of School Administrators (AASA), The Institute for College Access & Success, National School Boards Association (NSBA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

And he stressed as very important -- the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). "CCSSO's opposition means the states' educational leaders do not want US Dept. of Education dismantled and underfunded programs shifted to states - even the state educational commissioners don't want that to happen."

With respect to favoring the shift to the states, 4 individuals responded to the 2/16 stimulus (i.e., a staff member of a state organization in GA, a school board member in a small MI town, a respondent from a small NC town, a science teacher in a small AR school district).

Here are their comments:

>It could give states more dollars and more flexibility and lower class size- US ED department has grown to 4500 employees. Too large. As my Governor stated a few years back—. Want a better prison- give me a better prisoner- Want a better school give me a better parent ! They are the first educators!

>For the same people stating that the right is fascist, you want to keep power for yourselves and not give it to the state where it belongs. We are to be unbiased and to support our children. Teaching our children to pay their bills, teach them about the federal government and educating our children how republic is supposed to work is our job. Our job is not to go around spreading lies via emails. Your biggest concern is how will the money continue to come in? It has nothing to do with the children. You get paid to write these emails? Maybe you're just upset because one day your position will be scrutinized and defunded. Have a blessed day.

>Educating America's youth is something reserved to the state via the 10th amendment . The Federal government should never have been involved. What we are bogged down

with at the local level is all the administrative positions we have to create to keep up with the bureaucratic requirements DOE puts on local school systems. Since the Department of Education was founded, the United States has fallen from #1 in the world to #24 in student assessment results. The Dept of Ed. is an embarrassment and needs to be dismantled. I hope the administration follows through on their call to end the DOE and returns funding and governance to the states where it belongs as a 10th amendment right and something that was never enumerated to the Federal government. Your email speaks of students in crisis and panicking parents? Only those that listen to these types of arguments. Looking forward to education returning to the local and state level where it belongs.

>This is a ridiculous email. I can't believe all of the what if's you placed in this email. I am astounded by the fact that this has been sent to try and strike fear in schools. Please do not send this type of political nonsense any longer.

In contrast to the above comments, 11 respondents agreed with the analysis shared on 2/16/25 and wanted more details so they could mitigate any problems (again see <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/2-16-25.pdf>). Here's what they had to say:

>Thanks for sharing these important points with us. Here in Maine our senior senator has been a disappointment in many ways. I will continue to fight the most important fight with information sharing such as this.

(From a superintendent of a middle sized ME district)

>There are lots of "nuanced" services that sit in the Federal Department of Ed. This includes a historically underfunded Federal mandate under Title 1 for the McKinney-Vento Assistance Act. This codified Federal legislature passed in 1987 holds school districts and publicly funded charter schools to comply with ensuring children and youth who are homeless have the same ability to attend schools as their peers. This legislation was passed in 1987 and has been included in Federal Education Code because schools across the country were denying homeless children and youth a public education. Sadly, this population has been growing and will continue to grow as inflation continues to climb. More and more families will be pushed to the brink and be unable to even access basic supports and basic needs. Schools have long been a hub for struggling families with school aged children and without this funding the most vulnerable of our students will struggle and contribute to systems we have been trying to break for years - homeless systems, juvenile justice systems, and foster care systems. This is a massive step backwards and, in the end, will cost the taxpayer more, rather than less.

(From a director of Homeless programs at a large urban county of education)

>Three school board members (from small districts in KS, MA, and CA weighed in positively. One had this specific concern:

All of that is true. What concerns me most? Who will feed the students once free-and-reduced lunches are no longer provided? There's an economy of scale in Special Education. Bring the needs of children together in a district and one teacher can help many. The proposed model of giving parents a lump sum of money to find services and a teacher could mean a return to a time where students with special needs are warehoused. And, say this administration just pares down DOE. Dovetail the madness RFK wants to unleash, and watch the destabilization of so many children who will receive no medications; see the echo of Mao and his re-education initiatives.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/establishing-the-presidents-make-america-healthy-again-commission/>

(From a school board member in a small CA district)

>As for upcoming changes, I'm at a loss for words and have trouble trying to isolate the most important things schools can do to minimize the impending changes. Without federal standards and supports, states will be left to restructure and fund their own systems. Some may think that's a good thing but I anticipate that systems will vary dramatically from state to state. For example, in Iowa there is currently a debate in the legislature about the level of funding appropriated to schools. The difference is split down party lines with more and more public money earmarked for private schools. Without federal funding (beyond IDEA, etc.) schools systems will struggle to meet students' needs - period. Luxuries such as small class size, low graduation rates, research-based practices and safe environments will be gone. Down the road, lower educational levels will impact the economy and society as a whole as well as compromise individuals' quality of life.

My only hope is that educators, at all levels, speak up for the children they serve. Get beyond the politics of the day and stand up for the true victims here - the kids. The government and education can't be run like a business - it exists to serve the people. There can be no benefit in taking from the people to simply balance a budget and save tax dollars.

On a personal note, I know of several Iowa DE staff who are retiring early and leaving education all together because the department has become so politicized. I'm not sure how to think about all this. Just overwhelmed.....

(From a former director of student supports at the IA state department)

>Our state is messaging that we are here to support the kids. Part of the messaging is that our state has funded many programs in the past and will continue to do so and that we are compiling resources for those fearful of deportation knowing their rights..., and we are gathering info for those fearful of losing SPED support...reminding many that a lot of funding is already State funded.

It would be really helpful to have something that explains how for the most part the State funds public education. It would be helpful to have a brief of what the feds actually do for the states and what they fund and monitor, and if the Feds are likely to send the money back to the states. The irony is that Federal funds are supplementary, always have been and the sensationalism about private school vouchers etc is a misnomer. I honestly am not sure we really even know the reality of what the government funds? From my recent research, it looks like the gov funds mostly programs for those in need of support... and there has always been "maintenance of effort" states have to fund 80% in order to get 20%. And don't get me started on Student loans... that has to be a plus for the Gov because of interest rates...

Sorry more questions than advise... but we need help on how to navigate these time and not let sensationalism send folks into a panic. Leaders need talking points, I certainly do.

(From a student support leader in HI)

>Four responses came from faculty members at universities across the country.

>>These edicts seem to be having its intended effect of creating chaos and uncertainty. You can also add to your list the effect of the immigration crackdown on families and schools which is felt acutely here in Chicago. Adding a link to a recent article in The New Yorker describing the sense of dread among families which has extended to schools as well. I am interested in see what you are able to collect from others. Thanks for reaching out.

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-lede/immigration-enforcement-and-the-fears-of-the-undocumented-in-chicago>

>>I think the prevailing mode here is confusion. NJ is decentralized with over 600 school districts. Some, particularly the urban districts, get more federal funds than others. Some are more diligent and creative about encumbering their funds than others. All schools are harmed by anything impeding the health, nutrition, and well-being of families. Those involved with advocacy are not sure what to advocate for because there is no political leadership to respond to. If we start recommending where the USDOE functions should be reallocated we are tacitly supporting its dissolution. McMahon, though, will not have to dissolve it to impede its effectiveness if there is no one minding the store and calling out every illegal/questionable action. The goal is paralysis or chaos through confusion and I think it's being achieved. Sorry to not have more specific for you! It all seems day by day, moment by moment..

>>At our university we have several Teacher Preparation grants and 2 doctoral leadership grants. As of yesterday, there's been no news from Washington DC but that can change. I'll let you know when/if they get word to stop serving students. What a nightmare!!!

>>Thanks for raising the issues and helping to mobilize all of us for collective action. Our state department of education (NY) and our school districts have been remarkably and disturbingly "silent" so far. Others "in the know" may disagree and can offer examples. John King, the Chancellor of the SUNY System has issued a strong statement. A companion one from our Ed. Department head would be terrific and much-needed. Unfortunately nothing announced and expected. Meanwhile the attention has been on her salary—something close to 500,000 dollars.

Finally, we were asked: "Are you aware of any coalitions happening among public school boards or other K-12 public school leaders regarding impacts of federal executive orders and other actions?"

In this connection, we note that three respondents urged the following:

>Teachers who are concerned can join NEA and AFT, as well as their state teacher organizations. Administrators/educational leaders can join CCSSO, NSBA, and/or AASA's efforts to push back against this administration's so-called and nefarious efforts to put education 'back with the states.'"

>These details are powerful and need to be made widely public. It would seem there is no time to waste in organizing an emergency meeting with major parent and educator orgs across the board, and get this info out there as widely as possible to affected parties and the media, Is it already being handled? And if not, how would that best be made to happen given the resources and contacts you each have, assuming it is possible? Would we raise alarms as part of the SEL Day offerings? South By Southwest Education event starts March 3. 10,000 educators expected. How best to share the info there?"

>Is there something you would like to ask of NPSC in this regard? As you know, we translate and disseminate information to legislators, agency officials, educators, practitioners and many others. We recently organized a letter-writing campaign in support of NIH and I have an op-ed out in The Hill today on the subject with a personal story. We are also promoting an initiative, the Decade of the Child, with congress, NIH, and the public. It's all an uphill battle but we all must actively resist using whatever tools we have in our respective toolboxes. If there is something we can disseminate in the form of a letter or, better yet, a website where the narrative below is posted, we can broadly share to many thousands. Just let me know."

*As more responses arrive, we will include them in the weekly Practitioner and ENEWS -- see, for example, 4 more responses at <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/enews.htm>