

May 2018 PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

Pictures from Public Policy Day 2018



NAPE's Public Policy Day had a "full house"!



Opening remarks on Perkins & the PROSPER Act by Congresswoman Alma Adams (D-NC)



Congresswoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC) takes questions from the floor



A conversation with OCTAE's Dr. Michael Wooten, moderated by Dr. Norman Fortenberry



NAPE 2018 Public Policy Leadership Award recipient: Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi



NAPE's 2018 Public Policy Leadership Award recipient Senator Orrin G. Hatch

Administration

ED Announces 2018 Perkins State Allocations

(Courtesy of ACTE)

As ACTE [reported](#) in March, Congress approved an omnibus appropriations bill to fund federal programs for the remainder of Fiscal Year (FY) 2018. The funding bill included a \$75 million increase for the Perkins Basic State Grant! The U.S. Department of Education has released estimated state allocations based on the increased FY 2018 funding for Perkins. All 50 states and the U.S. territories receive both current year funding through an allocation that is made available on July 1, as well as advance funding that is released on October 1. The estimated FY 2018 state allocations table is available [here](#).

The Nation's Top Teachers Met with Betsy DeVos, and Not All of Them Were Thrilled with What She Had to Say

(Courtesy of Moriah Balingit for the Washington Post w/Photo by SAUL LOEB via Getty Images May 2018)

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos met privately with the nation's top teachers Monday and asked them to talk about the obstacles they face in doing their jobs. At least one of those teachers told DeVos that some of her policies are hurting public education.

"We have a problem where public money is siphoned off from the public schools and given to children who are going to charter and private schools," Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Jon Hazell said.

DeVos's response shocked him, he said. "She immediately answered that it was her goal to redefine what education is and that she wants to call all of it public education," said Hazell, a high school science teacher. Hazell was among 50 teachers who were in Washington representing their states as teachers of the year. The visit from DeVos was a surprise. Hazell said he told DeVos how funding for charter schools and private school vouchers had further strained his state's education budget—which has seen some of the nation's most dramatic cuts over the past decade.

He said he has watched those budgets shrink from year to year, and though his community has been shielded from the cuts thanks to a wealthy local tax base, his colleagues in virtually every other part of the state face incredible challenges. One friend, a superintendent, lamented that he could no longer afford art or music teachers. Oklahoma teachers are among the lowest-paid in the country, and some schools have taken extreme measures—moving to four-day weeks, for example—to make ends meet.

Hazell said DeVos defended her position on school choice, saying children need a way to leave a failing school. "My point to her was you're creating these bad schools when you're taking money out of the public schools system," he said. Hazell said the exchange was "passionate" but respectful.

But other teachers reacted with similar shock and concern on hearing the nation's top education official describe private schools as part of the public school system. "One of the things that was so stark and memorable in that exchange was.... Secretary DeVos trying to redefine what the word 'public' is," said Michael Soskil Sr., Pennsylvania's teacher of the year. "It was almost like Orwellian doublespeak to me."

Soskil shares Hazell's concern about the expansion of charter schools and voucher programs, coming from a state where a robust charter school operation preceded a school district's

bankruptcy. Asked to comment on the exchange, DeVos spokeswoman Elizabeth Hill reiterated the secretary's position on school choice. "Secretary DeVos has always said education is an investment in students, not in schools or school systems, and public education is any education that serves the public," Hill said in an email. "We should stop defining education by the word that comes before school and instead focus on the students the school serves. The secretary is focused on making sure that every child gets an education that meets his or her needs, no matter the setting."

DeVos later repeated her criticism of teachers who walked out in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Colorado. Hazell said she told Arizona Teacher of the Year Josh Meibos, whose colleagues had shut down schools for a third day to protest for more education funding: "I hope the teachers would not work out our grievances at the expense of the kids."

DeVos, a billionaire who spent much of the past two decades campaigning to expand school choice in Michigan and other parts of the country, has faced criticism from teachers that she is out of touch with their day-to-day jobs, having never worked in or attended a public school. Teachers unions have panned her work, and she has accused unions and the teachers they represent of simply defending what she sees as a broken school system.

"They've made it clear that they care more about a system, one created in the 1800s, than they do about individual students," DeVos said last year.

While Hazell said he walked out of the meeting disappointed, several other teachers gave the secretary credit for agreeing to speak with a crowd that might not give her the warmest reception. The teachers approached the experience much as they would advise their students to: with respect, an open mind and valuing all participants. It was very encouraging that she wanted to hear our voices," Soskil said. "I hope that she can see our value as well as we can see hers and that we can use that to continue."

Civil Rights Data Collection

(Courtesy of ED Review, U.S. Department of Education)

On April 24, the Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) released the [2015-16 Civil Rights Data Collection](#) (CRDC). This data, self-reported by 17,300 public school districts and 96,400 public schools and educational programs, is collected and published annually by OCR. The CRDC includes, for the first time, comprehensive data regarding incidents of criminal offenses in schools, as well as several new categories of data on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) course taking.

"Protecting all students' civil rights is at the core of the Department's mission, noted Secretary DeVos. "We are pleased to produce the CRDC in a way that it can be reviewed, analyzed, and utilized by local, state, and federal education leaders. I want to commend the many educators, school leaders, and OCR staff who put in countless hours to produce this data and who work tirelessly to ensure all students are able to learn in a safe and nurturing environment free from discrimination.

The Department used CRDC data to produce specific data briefs on two major topics: [School Climate and Safety](#) and [STEM Course Taking](#). To evaluate how safe students are at school, the CRDC collects data on serious offenses, law enforcement referrals and school-related arrests, harassment or bullying, restraint and seclusion, and school discipline. For STEM, the CRDC collects data on course availability and enrollment for middle school and high school courses, as well as student passing data on Algebra I. Users can find selected facts about a district or school, as well as tables and graphics of reported data, [here](#).

For the [2017-18 CRDC](#), OCR will collect data on computer science classes and school Internet access but no longer collect data on high school equivalency course exam results, Advanced Placement (AP) course exam results, and student chronic absenteeism.

Could New Federal Data Prevent DeVos From Rolling Back Obama-Era Rules

(Courtesy of the Federal Flash, Alliance for Excellent Education)

New federal data on bullying, discipline, and school safety should prompt tough questions about why certain groups of students are unfairly singled out. Could it also prevent Education Secretary Betsy DeVos from rescinding Obama-era guidance on school discipline? Today's Federal Flash addresses that question, highlights new people taking over top positions at the U.S. Department of Education, and covers interesting comments on education coming from top Republicans on Capitol Hill.

On Tuesday the U.S. Department of Education released the [2015-2016 Civil Right Data Collection](#) or CRDC, a biennial snap shot of data on bullying, discipline, and school safety among other items.

The data shows that black students and students with disabilities are suspended and arrested far more often than their peers. Given the information, many are hoping this will prevent the department from rescinding Obama-era guidance on school discipline that was designed to address those problems.

The data also confirms racial disparities across students when it comes to success in science, technology, engineering and math courses. For example, 85 percent of white eighth graders who were enrolled in Algebra I passed the course, compared to only 72 percent of Latino students and 65 percent of black students. Among Native American students and students of two or more races, fewer than 50 percent passed the course.

The data also show that high schools with high percentages of black and Latino students are less likely to offer advanced math and science courses like calculus, physics, chemistry and advanced math.

25 Organizations Write to Oppose OCTAE Consolidation

(Courtesy of ACTE)

Last week, ACTE and Advance CTE circulated a sign-on letter for organizations to oppose the Department of Education's (ED) proposed consolidation of the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) into a new Office of Postsecondary and Lifelong Learning. ACTE has [previously reported](#) on the proposed consolidation.

The letter was sent to the chairs and ranking members of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees; Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee; and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. The contents of the letters sent to each committee were identical; as an example, the one sent to the House Appropriations Committee can be [found here](#). Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos was cc'ed on the letters. The letters outlined the groups' collective concern that CTE requires a dedicated office and leader to thrive.

The organizational sign-on letters come after ED itself acknowledged that the consolidation would require congressional authorization. Last month, Representatives Jim Langevin (D-RI) and Glenn Thompson (R-PA) wrote a [joint letter](#) to Sec. DeVos concerned about reports on the consolidation. The Department's acknowledgement came in [response](#) to that letter.

ACTE firmly believes that OCTAE should remain as a standalone office, and we oppose any efforts to consolidate it. ACTE staff recently met with ED staff and we will continue to work closely with congressional leaders to thwart OCTAE's consolidation. The following groups, organized alphabetically, signed on to the letter:

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
 Advance CTE
 AESA
 Alliance for Excellent Education
 American Association of University Women
 American Federation of Teachers
 Association for Career and Technical Education
 Center for Law and Social Policy
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity
 National Association for College Admission Counseling
 National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Association of State Directors of Special Education
 National Coalition for Literacy
 National Council for Workforce Education
 National Education Association
 National Immigration Forum
 National Rural Education Association
 National School Boards Association
 National Skills Coalition
 SkillsUSA
 Society of Women Engineers
 The Society for Maintenance and Reliability Professionals
 UnidosUS
 Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
 World Education Services

Congress

Norton to Introduce Bill to Create Implicit Bias Training Program for School Personnel to Reduce Disparities Based on Race, Sex and Disability

(Courtesy of the Office of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton)

Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) today announced she will introduce a bill to create a \$25 million grant program for schools to train teachers, principals and other school personnel on implicit bias, including with respect to race, sex and disability. The bill aims to reduce the effect of implicit bias on school discipline, academic achievement and academic attainment. Norton's bill comes as the Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection for the 2015-2016 school year, released yesterday, found that students of color, males and those with disabilities received far more severe and frequent punishment than white, female and non-disabled students.

"As we have seen in recent high-profile cases, people of color, males and those with disabilities in our country continue to experience the negative effects of implicit bias and even outright discrimination, and perhaps most troubling, we see it in our schools in the form of the student achievement gap and disproportionate discipline rates," Norton said. "Yet, ironically, as the Department of Education report is published showing considerably harsher discipline for minorities, males and students with disabilities, the Trump administration and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos are considering eliminating the Obama administration's guidance seeking to curb suspensions and expulsions. Education in America must be the great equalizer. Instead, students of color, males and students with disabilities face far greater expulsion and suspension rates, fueling the school-to-prison pipeline and widening the student achievement gap. Providing teachers and school officials with training could help close the achievement gap and reduce school suspensions and expulsions by finding alternative ways to address student behavior."

Events

The Learning Policy Institute Webinar: Leading the Way: How States Are Using Deeper Learning Assessments

May 17

More and more schools, school districts and states are finding that deeper learning assessments are providing important insight into what and how well students are learning. The third webinar in LPI's series, *Achieving Equity Through Deeper Learning*, will explore how several states are using and sharing information on these important and valuable assessments, which can also be levers to achieve equity in our education system. [Registration required](#)

Advance CTE Webinar: CTE on the Frontier: Lessons and Strategies for Reaching Rural Learners

May 17

To help states unpack the challenges and potential approaches to expanding access to quality Career Technical Education (CTE) programs in rural communities, Advance CTE - in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers and Education Strategy Group, through the New Skills for Youth initiative - released a series of briefs titled CTE on the Frontier. The series explores some of the most pressing challenges facing rural CTE, including program quality, access to the world of work, program diversity and the CTE teacher pipeline. This webinar will unpack key lessons and strategies from the series and provide a framework for state leaders to develop a comprehensive rural career readiness strategy. Participants will also hear how Idaho is working to address access gaps in rural communities. [Learn more](#)

Other News

How Our Education System Undermines Gender Equity - And Why Culture Change—Not Policy—May Be the Solution

(Courtesy of Joseph Cimpian, Brookings)

There are well-documented achievement and opportunity gaps by income and race/ethnicity. K-12 accountability policies often have a stated goal of reducing or eliminating those gaps, though with questionable effectiveness. Those same accountability policies require reporting academic proficiency by gender, but there are no explicit goals of reducing gender gaps and no “hard accountability” sanctions tied to gender-subgroup performance. We could ask, “Should gender be included more strongly in accountability policies?”

In this post, I'll explain why I don't think accountability policy interventions would produce real gender equity in the current system—a system that largely relies on existing state standardized tests of math and English language arts to gauge equity. I'll argue that although much of the recent research on gender equity from kindergarten through postgraduate education uses math or STEM parity as a measure of equity, the overall picture related to gender equity is of an education system that devalues young women's contributions and underestimates young women's intellectual abilities more broadly.

In a sense, math and STEM outcomes simply afford insights into a deeper, more systemic problem. In order to improve access and equity across gender lines from kindergarten through the workforce, we need considerably more social-questioning and self-assessment of biases about women's abilities.

As soon as girls enter school, they are underestimated

For over a decade now, I have studied gender achievement with my colleague Sarah Lubienski, a professor of math education at Indiana University-Bloomington. In a series of studies using data from both the 1998-99 and 2010-11 kindergarten cohorts of the nationally representative Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, we found that no average gender gap in math test scores existed when boys and girls entered kindergarten, but a gap of nearly 0.25 standard deviations developed in favor of the boys by around second or third grade.

For comparison purposes, the growth of the black-white math test score gap was virtually identical to the growth in the gender gap. Unlike levels and growth in race-based gaps, though, which have been largely attributed to a combination of differences in the schools attended by black and white students and to socio-economic differences, boys and girls for the most part attend the same schools and come from families of similar socio-economic status. This suggests that something may be occurring within schools that contributes to an advantage for boys in math.

Exploring deeper, we found that the beliefs that teachers have about student ability might contribute significantly to the gap. When faced with a boy and a girl of the same race and socio-economic status who performed equally well on math tests and whom the teacher rated equally well in behaving and engaging with school, the teacher rated the boy as more mathematically able—an alarming pattern that replicated in a separate data set collected over a decade later.

Another way of thinking of this is that in order for a girl to be rated as mathematically capable as her male classmate, she not only needed to perform as well as him on a psychometrically rigorous external test, but also be seen as working harder than him. Subsequent matching and instrumental variables analyses suggested that teachers' underrating of girls from kindergarten through third grade accounts for about half of the gender achievement gap growth in math. In other words, if teachers didn't think their female students were less capable, the gender gap in math might be substantially smaller.

An interaction that Sarah and I had with a teacher drove home the importance and real-world relevance of these results. About five years ago, while Sarah and I were faculty at the University of Illinois, we gathered a small group of elementary teachers together to help us think through these findings and how we could intervene on the notion that girls were innately less capable than boys. One of the teachers pulled a stack of papers out of her tote bag, and spreading them on the conference table, said, "Now, I don't even understand why you're looking at girls' math achievement. These are my students' standardized test scores, and there are absolutely no gender differences. See, the girls can do just as well as the boys if they work hard enough." Then, without anyone reacting, it was as if a light bulb went on. She gasped and continued, "Oh my gosh, I just did exactly what you said teachers are doing," which is attributing girls' success in math to hard work while attributing boys' success to innate ability. She concluded, "I see now why you're studying this."

Although this teacher did ultimately recognize her gender-based attribution, there are (at least) three important points worth noting. First, her default assumption was that girls needed to work harder in order to achieve comparably to boys in math, and this reflects an all-too-common pattern among elementary school teachers, across at least the past couple decades and in other cultural contexts. Second, it is not obvious how to get teachers to change that default assumption. Third, the evidence that she brought to the table was state standardized test scores, and these types of tests can reveal different (often null or smaller) gender achievement gaps than other measures.

On this last point, state standardized tests consistently show small or no differences between boys and girls in math achievement, which contrasts with somewhat larger gaps on NAEP and PISA, as well as with gaps at the top of the distribution on the ECLS, SAT Mathematics

assessment, and the American Mathematics Competition. The reasons for these discrepancies are not entirely clear, but what is clear is that there is no reason to expect that “hardening” the role of gender in accountability policies that use existing state tests and current benchmarks will change the current state of gender gaps. Policymakers might consider implementing test measures similar to those where gaps have been noted and placing more emphasis on gains throughout the achievement distribution. However, I doubt that a more nuanced policy for assessing math gains would address the underlying problem of the year-after-year underestimation of girls’ abilities and various signals and beliefs that buttress boys’ confidence and devalue girls, all of which cumulatively contributes to any measured gaps.

More obstacles await women in higher education and beyond

Looking beyond K-12 education, there is mounting evidence at the college and postgraduate levels that cultural differences between academic disciplines may be driving women away from STEM fields, as well as away from some non-STEM fields (e.g., criminal justice, philosophy, and economics). In fact, although research and policy discussions often dichotomize academic fields and occupations as “STEM” and “non-STEM,” the emerging research on gender discrimination in higher education finds that the factors that drive women away from some fields cut across the STEM/non-STEM divide. Thus, while gender representation disparities between STEM and non-STEM fields may help draw attention to gender representation more broadly, reifying the STEM/non-STEM distinction and focusing on math may be counterproductive to understanding the underlying reasons for gender representation gaps across academic disciplines.

In a recent study, my colleagues and I examined how perceptions on college majors relate to who is entering those majors. We found that the dominant factor predicting the gender of college-major entrants is the degree of perceived discrimination against women. To reach this conclusion, we used two sources of data. First, we created and administered surveys to gather perceptions on how much math is required for a major, how much science is required, how creative a field is, how lucrative careers are in a field, how helpful the field is to society, and how difficult it is for a woman to succeed in the field. After creating factor scales on each of the six dimensions for each major, we mapped those ratings onto the second data source, the Education Longitudinal Study, which contains several prior achievement, demographic, and attitudinal measures on which we matched young men and women attending four-year colleges.

Among this nationally representative sample, we found that the degree to which a field was perceived to be math- or science-intensive had very little relation to student gender. However, fields that were perceived to discriminate against women were strongly predictive of the gender of the students in the field, whether or not we accounted for the other five traits of the college majors. In short, women are less likely to enter fields where they expect to encounter discrimination.

And what happens if a woman perseveres in obtaining a college degree in a field where she encounters discrimination and underestimation and wants to pursue a postgraduate degree in that field, and maybe eventually work in academia? The literature suggests additional obstacles await her. These obstacles may take the form of those in the field thinking she’s not brilliant like her male peers in graduate school, having her looks discussed on online job boards when she’s job-hunting, performing more service work if she becomes university faculty, and getting less credit for co-authored publications in some disciplines when she goes up for tenure.

Each of the examples here and throughout this post reflects a similar problem—education systems (and society) unjustifiably and systematically view women as less intellectually capable.

Societal changes are necessary

My argument that policy probably isn't the solution is not intended to undercut the importance of affirmative action and grievance policies that have helped many individuals take appropriate legal recourse. Rather, I am arguing that those policies are certainly not enough, and that the typical K-12 policy mechanisms will likely have no real effect in improving equity for girls.

The obstacles that women face are largely societal and cultural. They act against women from the time they enter kindergarten—instilling in very young girls a belief they are less innately talented than their male peers—and persist into their work lives. Educational institutions—with undoubtedly many well-intentioned educators—are themselves complicit in reinforcing the hurdles. In order to dismantle these barriers, we likely need educators at all levels of education to examine their own biases and stereotypes.

School Funding: Deep Disparities Persist 50 Years After Kerner

(Courtesy of Learning Policy Institute)

Fifty years after the Kerner Commission warned of a nation divided, school funding remains profoundly unfair and inequitable in most states, shortchanging students across the country. Those most disadvantaged by this enduring failure are millions of children from low-income families and children of color, especially those in high-poverty, racially isolated communities, writes David Sciarra, Executive Director of the Education Law Center in the latest installment of the Education and the Path to Equity blog series. [Read more >>](#)