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January 17, 2014 ED Review Newsletter
A bi-weekly update on U.S. Department of Education Activities relevant to the
Intergovernmental & Corporate Community and Other Stakeholders

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE GUIDANCE

On January 8, the Departments of Education and Justice released a [school discipline guidance package](#) that will assist states, school districts, and schools in developing strategies to enhance school climate and ensure discipline policies and practices comply with federal law and are effective. Although incidents of school violence have decreased overall, many schools are struggling to create positive, safe environments. Every year, significant numbers of students miss class due to suspensions and expulsions -- even for minor infractions of school rules -- and both students of color and students with disabilities are disproportionately impacted. Schools can improve safety by making sure climates are welcoming and that responses to misbehavior are fair, non-discriminatory, and effective. The package provides resources for creating positive, safe environments, which are essential for boosting student academic success and closing achievement gaps.

The package consists of four components:

- A [Dear Colleague letter](#), describing how schools can meet their legal obligation under federal law to administer student discipline without discriminating against students on the basis of race, color, or national origin.
- A [Guiding Principles document](#), describing three key principles and related action steps that can help guide state and local efforts to improve school climate and school discipline.
- A [Directory of Federal School Climate and Discipline Resources](#), indexing technical assistance and other resources related to school climate and discipline.
- A [Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations](#), cataloguing the laws and regulations related to school discipline in each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

Among additional resources are:

- Remarks by [Secretary Duncan](#) and [Attorney General Eric Holder](#) at the release of the package.
- A [Frequently Asked Questions document](#), including what the package means for policymakers, district and school leaders, teachers, students, families, and community members.
- A [Post Card](#), providing a brief overview of the contents of the package and how they can be used.
- A blog entry, "[Ensuring Discipline that is Fair and Effective](#)," by Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Catherine Lhamon.

(Note: Several of these items are also available [in Spanish](#) online.)

PROMISE ZONES

Also last week, reflecting on the [50th anniversary of the War on Poverty](#), President Obama announced the first "[Promise Zones](#)," where the federal government will partner with local communities and businesses as they work to create jobs, increase economic security, expand educational opportunities, increase quality, affordable housing, and improve public safety. These first five zones -- Los Angeles, Philadelphia, San Antonio, southeastern Kentucky, and the Choctaw

Nation of Oklahoma -- put forward plans that demonstrated a strong local commitment -- an evidence-based strategy for revitalization and high need. In three of the zones, the Department's [Promise Neighborhoods](#) will play an important role in the revitalization efforts. For example, in Los Angeles, the Promise Neighborhoods initiative will be instrumental in expanding a full-service community model from seven school to all 45 Promise Zone schools by 2019. The other Promise Neighborhoods are in San Antonio and southeastern Kentucky. (Note: Over the next three years, the President will announce 15 more Promise Zones.)

FOCUS: HIGHER EDUCATION

This week, a series of events promoted higher education access, affordability, and completion. First, on January 13, Secretary Duncan moderated a one-hour [#StuVoice Twitter chat](#) to obtain feedback from students on keeping college affordable and how the Administration's proposed college rating system can be useful for students and families. Just a few of the great responses are posted [here](#). Next, on January 15, the White House, the Departments of Education and the Treasury, and the General Services Administration hosted an "[Education Datapalooza](#)" to highlight the role that private sector apps, tools, and services can play in helping students get into and complete college. More than 500 of America's entrepreneurs, software developers, and education experts explored products for choosing and applying for college, online teaching and learning, and new pathways for acquiring 21st century skills (see [fact sheet](#) and [blog post](#)). Then, on January 16, the President and First Lady Michelle Obama convened a summit with more than 100 college and university presidents, as well as over 40 organizational leaders, on expanding postsecondary opportunity. Those attending the summit made [voluntary pledges](#) to do more to help low-income students enroll in and complete college (see [fact sheet](#), [remarks](#), and [White House report](#)).

Also, on January 1, the 2014-15 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) became available. For those who need financial aid to help pay for college, it is important to complete the FAFSA. Anyone can fill out the FAFSA -- for free -- on the official government web site at www.fafsa.gov. Today's FAFSA is simpler than ever! On average, it takes less than 30 minutes to complete.

To speed up the process, the Department's Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) has penned a number of blog posts:

- ["7 Things You Need Before You Fill Out the FAFSA"](#)
- ["6 Steps for Filling Out the FAFSA"](#)
- ["5 Reasons You Should Complete the FAFSA"](#)
- ["7 Myths About the FAFSA and Applying for Financial Aid"](#)
- ["7 Common FAFSA Mistakes"](#)
- ["Parents: Tips to Help Your Child Complete the FAFSA"](#)

PARENT LEADERSHIP

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) hosted an [Education Summit for Parent Leaders](#) on January 13, presenting on the urgent need to improve student achievement and close persistent achievement gaps. "Parents have the power to challenge educational complacency here at home," Secretary Duncan said in his [keynote address](#). "Parents have the power to ask more of their leaders -- and to ask more of their kids and themselves. And all of those will be vital in a time when we are losing ground [on national and international assessments]." The summit's web site offers a

variety of materials, such as [speaker slidedecks and videos](#), [videos of students](#) discussing pressing issues in education, and an extensive [resources page](#).

SCHOOL VISITS

In December 2013, Secretary Duncan traveled to his 49th state (Utah), and he looks forward to traveling to his 50th state (Hawaii) soon. On most trips, he visits schools. While each classroom left him with meaningful and memorable lessons, he reflects on five particular schools that made a lasting impression in a new “[Looking Back at 5 Memorable School Visits of 2013](#)” blog entry. First on the list is Columbus Elementary School in New Mexico, situated just a few miles from the Mexico border. Of the approximately 700 kindergarten-through-fifth-grade students, some 400 wake up, before the sun rises, to cross the border for school each day.

ODDS AND ENDS

- The *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014*, approved yesterday by Congress and awaiting the President’s signature, provides [critical funding](#) for investments in education (in particular, [early learning](#)), infrastructure, and innovation.
 - On January 6, the Department announced an additional \$1.9 million [Project School Emergency Response to Violence \(SERV\) grant](#) to the Newtown Public School District in Connecticut to help with ongoing recovery efforts following the tragic shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012.
 - On January 13, both the Department and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) marked the successful completion of a pilot program designed to engage more students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The attendees at the half-day event, including senior officials from the agencies and invited guests, reviewed the pilot activity and associated evaluation approach, identified best practices, and discussed potential follow-up efforts. The highlight of the event was the presentation of [successful student entries](#) from the design competition.
 - Between May and December 2013 the Department’s Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) conducted monitoring for the 35 states approved in the first two rounds of *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) flexibility. The agency is now providing monitoring reports to states. Final monitoring reports are also being posted on the [ESEA flexibility web site](#).
 - A “First Look” report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of [2002 high school sophomores 10 years later](#) examines students’ educational attainment, financial aid received and subsequent debt, income and financial indicators, workforce experiences, and civic engagement.
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QUOTE TO NOTE

“For 40 years, George Miller has served his constituents in California and the American people through his dedication to improving America’s education system. His passionate work on behalf of our nation’s children has been unwavering in its commitment to excellence for all students. As Education Secretary, I have valued his counsel, wisdom, and friendship, and it has been an absolute privilege to work with him. Though his leadership will be sorely missed, I know that the influence of his work will be felt for generations. I congratulate George on a lifetime of public service, and I look forward to working with him during his remaining time in Congress.”

-- Secretary Arne Duncan (1/13/14), in a [statement](#) on Congressman George Miller's retirement

UPCOMING EVENTS

The President is scheduled to deliver his State of the Union address on January 28.

The Corporation for National and Community Service is asking Americans to appropriately honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy on January 20 by making the holiday a day ON -- versus a day off. King Day became a national day of service in 1994, when Congress passed legislation to give the holiday even greater significance. A dedicated [web site](#) enables organizers to register projects nationwide.

[Digital Learning Day](#) (February 5) is a national celebration of teachers, shining a spotlight on successful instructional practice and effective use of technology in classrooms.

Roughly 15 free sessions are already scheduled for the Department's [Green Strides Webinar Series](#) through the spring.

Please feel free to contact the Office of Communications and Outreach with any questions:

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