



# StraightA's

Public Education Policy And Progress



## **MODERNIZING LIFELINE: FCC to Consider Proposal to Expand Broadband Access to Low-Income Families**

On March 8, **Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Tom Wheeler** and **FCC Commissioner Mignon Clyburn** unveiled a proposal to modernize the FCC's Lifeline program to include access to broadband for low-income families. Currently, Lifeline provides a discount on monthly telephone service to eligible low-income households, but it does not support broadband access. The FCC will vote on the proposal during its March 31 meeting.

"Internet access has become a prerequisite for full participation in our economy and our society, but nearly one in five Americans is still not benefitting from the opportunities made possible by the most powerful and pervasive platform in history," [wrote Wheeler and Clyburn in an FCC blog post](#).

Lifeline reduces the rate for landline or wireless telephone service for eligible subscribers by \$9.25 per month. Wheeler and Clyburn's proposal would add broadband to that list and set minimum service standards for voice and broadband. It would also make it easier for broadband providers to participate in the program and create an independent third party to verify eligibility.

Wheeler and Clyburn write that their proposal will allow Lifeline subscribers to "take full advantage of the many benefits reliable internet access can bring—from jobs to education to healthcare," while ensuring that individuals participating in the program "won't be paying for second-rate service."

The Alliance for Excellent Education strongly supports the FCC's efforts to modernize Lifeline because of its potential to expand learning opportunities for students. According to a [recent survey from the Pew Research Center](#), more than 5 million American households with school-age children between the ages of six and seventeen do not have access to high-speed internet at home. A disproportionate share of those 5 million households are comprised of low-income African American and Latino families.

To show your support for providing students with internet access at home, sign the Alliance's petition to the FCC at <http://all4ed.org/lifeline/>.

More information on Wheeler and Clyburn's proposal is available at [http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily\\_Releases/Daily\\_Business/2016/db0314/DOC-338113A1.pdf](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2016/db0314/DOC-338113A1.pdf).



## CTE ON THE FOREFRONT: Obama Administration and Congress Push for Career and Technical Education Act Rewrite

Career and technical education (CTE) is enjoying time in the spotlight, with [newly confirmed U.S. Secretary of Education John King](#), the White House, and members of the U.S. Congress pushing it to the forefront.

On March 9, King called on Congress to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, which provides more than \$1.1 billion in funding for CTE programs in middle school, high school, and postsecondary education institutions. “It’s time for Congress to reauthorize the Perkins Act so that every student in every community has access to rigorous, relevant, and results-driven CTE programs,” [said King during an appearance](#) in Baltimore at the Digital Harbor Foundation Tech Center.

“We’ve come a long way from what we used to refer to as vocational education,” King said. “Today, every job that leads to a secure future requires critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity, as well as some postsecondary education or training. The best career and technical education programs help students prepare for this future once they graduate from high school. Career and technical education is not just about preparing some students for successful lives and careers, it’s about giving *all* students the tools to shape our future.”

A [U.S. Department of Education \(ED\) press release](#) on King’s appearance outlines several of the Obama administration’s priorities for Perkins reauthorization, including effective alignment with today’s job market, stronger collaboration between education institutions and industry partners, meaningful accountability for better student academic and employment outcomes, and innovation in CTE models on both the state and local levels.

Perkins was last reauthorized in 2006, and lawmakers began the process of renewing and reworking the law several years ago to no avail, notes [Education Week](#). Currently, in the Senate, there is a strong bipartisan effort to reauthorize Perkins, led by **Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN)** and **Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA)**, as well as **Senators Mike Enzi (R-WY) and Bob Casey (D-PA)**. Now that reauthorization is on the table, legislators are beginning to bring forward bills that may eventually be wrapped into a Perkins rewrite.

Just last week, **Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA), Rob Portman (R-OH), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), and Kelly Ayotte (R-NH)** introduced the Career and Technical Education Excellence and Equity Act. The bill would support innovation in CTE and redesign the high school experience for historically underserved students by creating a grant program to fund partnerships between school districts, employers, and institutions of higher education, with the goal of preparing more students for postsecondary education and the workforce.

“To grow the most talented workforce in the world, we need to equip students with the skills to succeed in the twenty-first-century economy,” [said Kaine](#). “A high school education should prepare students for any pathway they choose, whether that’s attending a four-year university,

earning credentials from a community college program or getting a high-skilled job after graduation. Our bill would provide federal funding to support schools as they redesign curriculum to incorporate impressive CTE programs like the ones I've visited at schools across Virginia."

Participating students would graduate from high school with an industry recognized credential or credit toward a postsecondary education degree or certificate, as well as be better prepared to enroll in a postsecondary education program aligned with their career path without the need for remediation.

**Alliance for Excellent Education President Bob Wise** offered his support for the legislation, saying in a [press release](#), "There is a mismatch between the traditional high school experience and the expectations of higher education and employers. This bipartisan legislation casts a wide net, bringing in employers, school districts, colleges, and others with a stake in the quality of the nation's high school graduates to make the high school experience more engaging for students and more relevant to today's job market."

ED emphasized the importance of high-quality CTE programs that are academically rigorous and aligned with workforce demands in a recent [blog post](#), noting, "Most professions and careers in the 2016 and future economies require strong academic foundation skills, considerable technical knowledge and skills, and well-developed employability skills and attributes." CTE programs can deliver these skills, with research showing that secondary CTE students are more likely to graduate from high school than non-CTE students, the post says.

The demand for high-quality CTE opportunities is evident in the large numbers of applicants for very few spots at CTE programs, and waiting lists at schools that serve communities with large populations of traditionally underserved students, the blog post notes. "The take away is that in communities where the need is greatest, access to good programs is a real problem. No access, no skills, no good jobs." While the demand is growing, there is not a comparable supply, creating many missed opportunities to put students on paths toward college and a career, the post says.

ED also announced a Career and Technical Education Makeover Challenge, offering \$200,000 to be divided among schools that submit designs for an innovative CTE makerspace. "Makerspaces provide students the materials and environment they need to create, invent, tinker, and explore," explains the [challenge website](#), "helping them build vital career skills, including critical thinking, planning, communication, and problem solving." Eligible schools will have the opportunity to participate in a six-week CTE Makeover Bootcamp and selected honorees will receive \$20,000 to build their makerspace.



### **INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS: Literacy Skills of U.S. Adults Match International Averages, While Math and Technology Skills Lag Behind**

On average, the literacy skills of U.S. adults compare favorably to those of their international peers. But when it comes to math and technology skills, U.S. adults are not keeping up with their contemporaries in other countries.

Those findings come from the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), an international study that measures the literacy, numeracy, and digital problem-solving skills adults need to complete everyday tasks. The study, coordinated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), includes data collected in 2012 from a representative sample of adults aged sixteen to sixty-five years in twenty-four countries, including the United States. Additionally, the United States conducted a second data collection in 2014 to gather supplemental information specifically about the skills of the nation's unemployed adults, young adults (those aged sixteen to thirty-four), and older adults (those aged sixty-six to seventy-four).

In literacy, the average score for U.S. adults (272) did not differ measurably from the PIAAC international average score (273). The United States ranked in a tie for thirteenth out of the twenty-two countries that administered the literacy assessment. On the numeracy and digital problem-solving assessments, however, the United States ranked eighteenth out of twenty-two countries and below the PIAAC international averages in numeracy and last out of seventeen countries for digital problem solving, as shown in the table below.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Average Literacy Score (Rank)</b>	<b>Average Numeracy Score (Rank)</b>	<b>Average Problem Solving Score (Rank)</b>
Japan	296 (1 <sup>st</sup> )	288 (1 <sup>st</sup> )	294 (1 <sup>st</sup> )
Finland	288 (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	282 (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	289 (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
Netherlands	284 (3 <sup>rd</sup> )	280 (3 <sup>rd</sup> )	286 (4 <sup>th</sup> )
Sweden	279 (4 <sup>th</sup> )	279 (5 <sup>th</sup> )	288 (3 <sup>rd</sup> )
Norway	278 (5 <sup>th</sup> )	278 (6 <sup>th</sup> )	286 (4 <sup>th</sup> )
Estonia	276 (6 <sup>th</sup> )	273 (11 <sup>th</sup> )	278 (14 <sup>th</sup> )
Belgium	275 (7 <sup>th</sup> )	280 (3 <sup>rd</sup> )	281 (12 <sup>th</sup> )
Czech Republic	274 (8 <sup>th</sup> )	276 (8 <sup>th</sup> )	283 (7 <sup>th</sup> )
Slovak Republic	274 (8 <sup>th</sup> )	276 (8 <sup>th</sup> )	281 (12 <sup>th</sup> )
Canada	273 (10 <sup>th</sup> )	265 (13 <sup>th</sup> )	282 (11 <sup>th</sup> )
<b>International Average</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>283</b>
Republic of Korea	273 (10 <sup>th</sup> )	263 (15 <sup>th</sup> )	283 (7 <sup>th</sup> )
England & No. Ireland	272 (12 <sup>th</sup> )	262 (16 <sup>th</sup> )	280 (13 <sup>th</sup> )
<b>United States</b>	<b>272 (12<sup>th</sup>)</b>	<b>257 (18<sup>th</sup>)</b>	<b>274 (17<sup>th</sup>)</b>
Denmark	271 (14 <sup>th</sup> )	278 (6 <sup>th</sup> )	283 (7 <sup>th</sup> )
Germany	270 (15 <sup>th</sup> )	272 (12 <sup>th</sup> )	283 (7 <sup>th</sup> )
Austria	269 (16 <sup>th</sup> )	275 (10 <sup>th</sup> )	284 (6 <sup>th</sup> )
Cyprus	269 (16 <sup>th</sup> )	265 (13 <sup>th</sup> )	N/A
Poland	267 (18 <sup>th</sup> )	260 (17 <sup>th</sup> )	275 (16 <sup>th</sup> )
Ireland	267 (18 <sup>th</sup> )	256 (18 <sup>th</sup> )	277 (15 <sup>th</sup> )
France	262 (20 <sup>th</sup> )	254 (20 <sup>th</sup> )	N/A
Spain	252 (21 <sup>st</sup> )	246 (21 <sup>st</sup> )	N/A
Italy	250 (22 <sup>nd</sup> )	247 (22 <sup>nd</sup> )	N/A

Additionally, on all three assessments the United States had a higher percentage of adults who scored in the two lowest proficiency levels than the international average.

The additional data collection conducted by the United States offers detailed information about the performance of specific groups of American adults. This supplemental data, contained in the report *Skills of U.S. Unemployed, Young, and Older Adults in Sharper Focus: Results from the*

*Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) 2012/2014*, reveals national disparities in performance along educational and racial lines.

Across all three areas assessed—literacy, numeracy, and digital problem solving—the percentage of young adults in the United States who scored at the highest level increased as the level of educational attainment increased. Furthermore, in literacy specifically, American young adults with college degrees outscored their international counterparts. Among young adults, 44 percent of graduate degree holders and 32 percent of bachelor’s degree holders in the United States reached the highest proficiency level on the PIAAC literacy assessment compared to 38 percent of graduate degree holders and 29 percent of bachelor’s degree holders internationally.

But the results are not as favorable among young adults with a high school diploma or less education. “Comparing internationally, among young adults ages 16–34 whose highest level of education was high school or less, larger percentages in the United States performed at the bottom of the proficiency distribution (Level 1 or below) in all three domains than is the case, on average, across the participating PIAAC countries,” according to the PIAAC report. The report offers the following comparisons:

- In literacy, 14 percent of U.S. high school graduates and 30 percent of U.S. high school dropouts scored at Level 1 or below compared to 9 percent of high school graduates and 22 percent of high school dropouts internationally.
- In math, 27 percent of U.S. high school graduates and 48 percent of U.S. high school dropouts scored at Level 1 or below compared to 13 percent of high school graduates and 28 percent of high school dropouts internationally.
- In digital problem-solving, 64 percent of U.S. high school graduates and 74 percent of U.S. high school dropouts scored at Level 1 or below compared to 46 percent of high school graduates and 57 percent of high school dropouts internationally.

“Postsecondary institutions should be happy,” says **Peggy Carr, acting commissioner of the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)**, on [NPR](#). “But on the other end of the continuum, we have young people coming out of high school—or not graduating from high school—who are struggling with everyday competencies.” NCES prepared the PIAAC report in conjunction with OECD.

Furthermore, the PIAAC report reveals striking disparities in the performance of young adults of color in the United States. Across all three assessments, smaller percentages of African American and Latino young adults scored at the highest proficiency level while larger percentages of the same subgroups scored in the lowest two proficiency levels than white young adults.

*Skills of U.S. Unemployed, Young, and Older Adults in Sharper Focus: Results from the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) 2012/2014* is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2016039>. Additional PIAAC results also are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/>.



## **STARTING STRONG: Early-Career Teachers and Principals Need More Support, Says Report from New Teacher Center**

Approximately one in five U.S. teachers is in the first three years of teaching; and yet most states still provide insufficient mentoring and induction support for beginning educators, according to a new report from New Teacher Center (NTC), a national nonprofit organization committed to new teacher induction.

“No single U.S. state has perfected its policies to ensure the provision of high-impact, multi-year induction support for all beginning educators,” says the NTC report. “Some states have prioritized the needs of new teachers and principals in recent years ... [b]ut more than twenty states still don’t require all early-career teachers to receive support and assistance, and thirty states have no such requirement for beginning school principals.”

The report, *Support from the Start: A 50-State Review of Policies on New Educator Induction and Mentoring*, examines state educator induction policies against nine criteria that address issues such as mentor quality; time available for mentors and new teachers to interact; funding for induction; and overall program quality, standards, and accountability.

“While a majority of states address many of our nine policy criteria, many of their policies are weak, and often serve purely as guidance and sometimes only apply to programs in districts that choose to offer them,” the report says.

Only three states—Connecticut, Delaware, and Iowa—meet NTC’s top three criteria for quality induction programs:

- requiring schools and districts to provide multi-year support for new teachers;
- requiring new teachers to complete an induction program for a professional license; and
- providing dedicated induction program funding.

Although twenty-nine states require some form of support or induction for new teachers, only fifteen require such support during a teacher’s first *and* second years, the report says. A few states, though, support teachers beyond their second year. Delaware, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina, and Utah require three years of new teacher support, while Ohio requires four years.

Few states require such support for new principals, though. Twenty states require mentoring support during a principal’s first year, while only six states require support for two years or more, the report says.

Most states do not connect their induction programs to teacher licensure requirements either. Twenty-four states require new teachers to complete or participate in a mentoring or induction program to receive a teaching certificate. Only fourteen states require principals to participate in such a program as part of the licensure process.

Moreover, most states do not provide sufficient funding to sustain their educator induction programs. Sixteen states allocate dedicated funding for teacher induction, but only nine of those states provide funding to all of their school districts, the report says. California, Maryland, Minnesota, and Ohio do not have funding streams dedicated solely to teacher induction; but these states do allow school districts to use allocations from other funding areas to support teacher induction programs.

“Policy alone won’t address all of the challenges new educators face, but it does guide this area of educator quality that deserves far greater attention,” says **Liam Goldrick, NTC director of policy and author of the report**. “Strengthening state policies will contribute to the ultimate goal of improving student achievement.”

Bolstering state teacher induction plans also contributes to greater educational equity. High-poverty schools typically have higher concentrations of new and beginning educators, who “are, on average, less effective than more experienced ones,” the NTC report notes.

“Too many beginning educators in one place can impact student achievement and unfairly put students in these schools at a disadvantage compared to their more advantaged peers,” the report says. “While all schools and students can benefit from more effective teachers, the power of high-quality induction has special significance for schools that serve a disproportionate number of low-income and minority students. ... High-quality induction programs can help provide the specialized support that new teachers need and transform these schools into strong professional communities where educators want to stay and work—and be more successful in working with students.”

As a 2014 Alliance for Excellent Education [report](#) notes, high-poverty schools typically have higher teacher turnover rates than other schools, a fact that compromises the nation’s capacity to ensure that all students have access to skilled teaching. Comprehensive induction programs that include multiple types of support—such as high-quality mentoring, common planning times, and ongoing support from school leaders—can curb that turnover, especially among new teachers. Collectively, roughly half a million U.S. teachers either move or leave the profession each year—attrition that costs the United States up to \$2.2 billion annually.

*Support from the Start: A 50-State Review of Policies on New Educator Induction and Mentoring* is available at <http://newteachercenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016CompleteReportStatePolicies.pdf>.

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