



# StraightA's

Public Education Policy And Progress



## **ESSA IMPLEMENTATION: During Hearing with Education Secretary, House Republicans Take Issue with Proposed ESSA Rules**

At a U.S. House of Representatives committee hearing last week featuring **U.S. Secretary of Education John King**, Republicans continued to argue that the U.S. Department of Education (ED) is overstepping its bounds with proposed regulations to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act late last year. Democrats and ED continued to express their belief that ESSA regulations must include safeguards for students of color, students from low-income families, and other traditionally underserved students.

“The U.S. Department of Education continues on the road to regulation of the Every Student Succeeds Act,” said **Phillip Lovell, vice president of policy and advocacy at the Alliance for Excellent Education**, in the [June 25 edition of Federal Flash](#), the Alliance’s five-minute video series on important developments in education policy in Washington, DC. “And while [ED’s] path includes road signs and guardrails, congressional Republicans are taking the form of a highway patrol officer giving [ED] a speeding ticket.”



In his [opening statement](#), **House Education and the Workforce Committee Chairman John Kline (R-MN)** raised concerns with ED’s “negotiated rulemaking,” a process by which ED appoints people to serve on a committee to develop regulations, as well as its proposed rule around “supplement, not supplant,” which governs the use of Title I funds. Regarding ED’s proposed rules around accountability, Kline found some policies that he was “pleased to see,” such as how states set long-term goals and measure interim progress, but he also saw “the department’s bad habit for making decisions that must be left to states.”

King’s [written testimony](#) acknowledged that ESSA “rightly” shifts more authority to states but also expects more of them, including accountability systems that contain new indicators in addition to test scores and high school graduation rates. He said ED’s proposed regulations on accountability provide states with the flexibility to “create their own vision of an excellent, well-rounded education” and include their own indicators of school quality or student success in their accountability systems. At the same time, however, he added that ED’s regulations continued the law’s strong civil rights legacy.

“The proposed regulations ensure a focus on all students and historically underserved subgroups of students in accountability decisions, and provide safeguards to ensure that all students have an accurate measure of their academic performance, and that parents and communities are informed when students are falling behind,” King said.

**U.S. Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA), top ranking Democrat on the Committee**, also [invoked](#) the law's civil rights legacy when stressing the importance of ED's oversight of the law.

"Fulfilling the promise of the Every Student Succeeds Act rests in successful implementation that honors Congress's longstanding intent of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; the intent to support, promote and protect, at all levels of government, the right to an equal educational opportunity for every child, regardless of race, income, language status, or disability," said Scott.

In addition to King's testimony, the hearing included testimony from **Kentucky Commissioner of Education Stephen L. Pruitt**; **Cassie Harrelson, a secondary math teacher for Aurora Public Schools (Colorado)**; **Daria Hall, interim vice president for government affairs and communications as Education Trust**; and **David R. Schuler, superintendent of Township High School District 214 (Illinois) and president of AASA, the School Superintendent's Association**. Archived video from the hearing and testimony from each of the witnesses are available at <http://edworkforce.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=400831>.

King will be back on Capitol Hill this week for another hearing on ESSA implementation when he testifies before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee on June 29. More information on the hearing, including live video, is available at <http://1.usa.gov/28WMjM5>. In King's last appearance before the committee, [HELP Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander \(R-TN\) told King](#) that ED had overstepped its bounds in some of its proposed ESSA regulations and warned that consequences, including a lawsuit, could be forthcoming if ED continued its current path.



### **FUTURE READY LIBRARIANS: Future Ready Schools Announces New Project to Recognize School Librarians as Leaders in School Transformation**

On June 24, Future Ready Schools (FRS)—led by the Alliance for Excellent Education (the Alliance) in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education—announced Future Ready Librarians, an expansion of the FRS initiative aimed at positioning librarians as leaders in the digital transformation of learning. The FRS initiative helps district leaders recognize the potential of digital tools and align necessary technologies with instructional goals to support teaching and learning.

"In today's digital world, the school library has evolved from a place to merely check out books to one that offers opportunities for collaboration, project-based learning, and online access," said **Alliance for Excellent Education President Bob Wise**. "Similarly, librarians are now playing central roles in school leadership and working daily with students, teachers, and administrators. Through Future Ready Librarians, school librarians will be better equipped to support teachers in their transition to a digital learning environment while themselves becoming more future ready."

Follett, the largest provider of educational materials and technology solutions to pre-K–12 schools in the United States, will support the development of tools and resources to connect librarians and libraries in support of the FRS initiative and enable district leaders to better engage and empower librarians to support their FRS vision.

"Follett is thrilled to support the Future Ready Librarians initiative, as it aligns perfectly with our history and our vision for the future of education," said **Nader Qaimari, president of Follett**

**School Solutions.** “Through Project Connect and this initiative, we will continue to advocate for strong, empowered school librarians. Now we can be even more effective as we create new resources and services designed to position librarians as leaders in a digital transformation.”

A network of nationally recognized librarians, including **Mark Ray, chief digital officer for Vancouver Public Schools** in Washington, will provide input on the development of strategies, tools, and resources aligned with the FRS framework. A former high school librarian, Ray has been nationally recognized for transforming the role of the school librarian into a technological innovator in schools.

“Future Ready librarians embrace change and innovation in education,” said Ray. “As teachers, they empower students as creators and digital citizens; as coaches, they collaborate with teachers as curators and guides. Future Ready schools require new kinds of leadership. The Future Ready Librarians initiative will help define what that leadership can be.”

“School librarians lead transformational learning through their instructional leadership in the digital learning landscape,” said **Leslie Preddy, president of the American Association of School Librarians**, a FRS coalition partner. “They support educators and prepare youth for informed living in a technology- and information-rich society. The expansion of the Future Ready initiative to include Future Ready Librarians re-affirms school librarians as critical to the transition and sustainability of effective digital learning.”

Future Ready Librarians builds on the Alliance’s 2014 report, [\*Leading In and Beyond the Library\*](#), which first outlined the Alliance’s belief that school librarians and libraries should play a key role in state- and districtwide efforts to transition to digital learning. The Alliance has also repeatedly stressed the importance of school librarians through Digital Learning Day, which the Alliance first created in 2012 to highlight great teaching practices and demonstrate how technology can improve student outcomes.

The Future Ready Librarians announcement comes on the heels of the [White House’s National Week of Making](#) (June 17–23). The Maker Movement in schools is designed to provide physical spaces within schools where students can collaborate with their peers to build, create, and tinker. These maker spaces are frequently led by librarians and located within school libraries, which have been reconfigured and redesigned to include workstations where students work on projects involving coding and robots, inquiry-based building, and even 3-D printing.

“With skilled librarians leading the charge, school libraries evolve from quiet reading zones to active, flexible learning spaces for student collaboration and innovation,” said Wise. “Such approaches move students to become designers and creators engaged in real-world applications of their learning who are better prepared for success in college and a career.”

For more information on the Future Ready Librarians program, visit [www.FutureReady.org/Librarians](http://www.FutureReady.org/Librarians).



## **HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT: New Report Asks Current and Former Homeless Youth What They Need to Succeed in School**

More than 1.3 million students were identified as homeless during School Year (SY) 2013–14, more than double the number identified just seven years earlier. Yet despite their growing numbers, homeless students, and the school staff who support them, say many schools and communities remain unaware of the issues confronting these students, according to a new report written by Civic Enterprises and released by the GradNation campaign.<sup>1</sup>

The report, *Hidden in Plain Sight: Homeless Students in America's Public Schools*, draws on data collected from those who best understand the needs of homeless students—current and former homeless youth and the state coordinators and local liaisons assigned to help them. According to the youth, school district liaisons, and state homeless education coordinators consulted for the report, homeless students can succeed in school and continue toward successful futures, but that success depends on a collective effort between schools and community organizations to increase public awareness and prioritize actions that provide homeless students with the right support at the right times, the report explains.

“Homelessness is a threat to everything students might want to achieve in their lives, but it doesn’t have to be a barrier to success for millions of students,” **John M. Bridgeland, president and chief executive officer of Civic Enterprises and coauthor of the report**, says in a [statement](#). “Schools, community organizations, and caring adults can create a web of support and lifelines to action that will help students experiencing homelessness cope and thrive.”

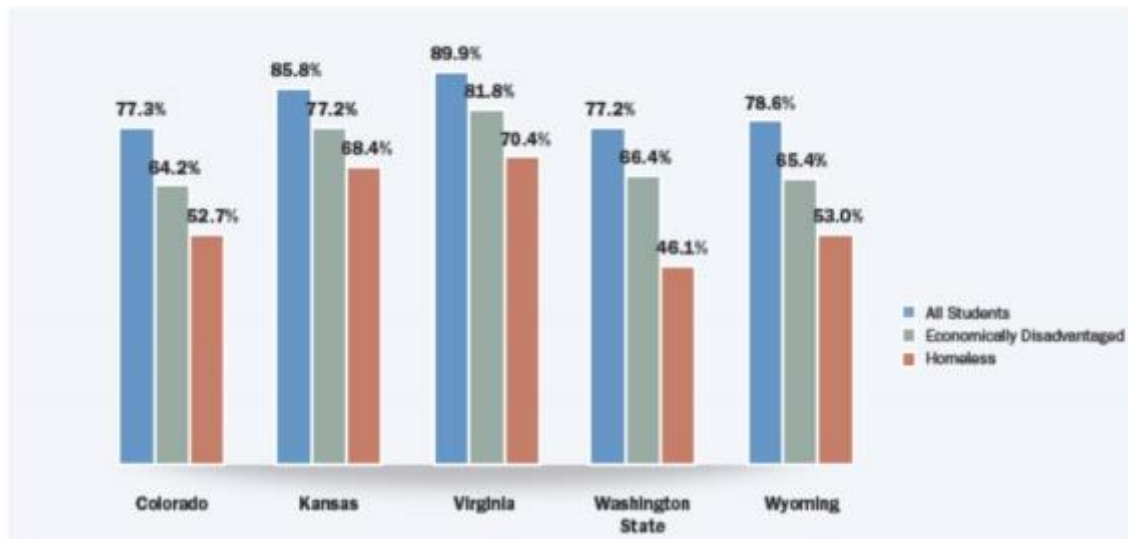
Seventy-eight percent of the young people surveyed experienced homelessness more than once during their middle and high school years and 68 percent said their homelessness made it difficult to succeed in school, according to the report. Students who experience homelessness are *more likely* to repeat a grade, have poor attendance, and fail courses, and *less likely* to complete rigorous college- and career-ready course work and graduate from high school on time—if they even graduate at all. Students experiencing homelessness are 87 percent more likely to drop out of school than their peers in stable housing, the report notes. Among the youth surveyed for the Civic Enterprises report, 60 percent said it was hard to stay in school during their homelessness and 42 percent dropped out at least once.

Homeless students as a subgroup have some of the lowest high school graduation rates. In the five states that currently track high school graduation rates for homeless students—Colorado, Kansas, Virginia, Washington, and Wyoming—homeless students graduate at rates far lower than other students, including other students from low-income families, as the graph from the report shows below. In Washington, specifically, only 46.1 percent of homeless students graduate from high school—a rate lower than all other student subgroups other than foster youth, the report adds. The new federal education law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), requires all states to track and report high school graduation rates for homeless youth starting next school year.

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<sup>1</sup> GradNation is a national campaign of individuals, organizations and communities focused on raising the national on-time high school graduation rate to 90 percent by the Class of 2020 and increasing college enrollment and completion. The campaign is led by America’s Promise Alliance, Civic Enterprises, Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University, and the Alliance for Excellent Education.

**Class of 2014 On-time (Four-year) State High School Graduation Rate by Poverty and Housing Status**



To succeed in school, homeless students need concrete support (such as school supplies, transportation to and from school, and academic tutoring) as well as emotional support, according to the report. In fact, 54 percent of the formerly homeless youth surveyed ranked both types of support as equally important. But most youth also believe their schools did not do enough to provide them with this necessary support. Almost 60 percent of those surveyed said their schools should have done a lot more to help them stay and succeed in school, the report says.

But “[o]ne of the most significant challenges in addressing the needs of homeless youth [and connecting them to essential resources] is simply identifying them,” the report explains. Among the formerly homeless youth surveyed, 67 percent said they were uncomfortable talking with people at their school about their housing situation, and in qualitative interviews, many admitted that no one at their school ever knew about their homelessness, the report says. Additionally, many school and district staff members do not know how to identify the signs of homelessness or how to connect homeless students with support and resources. One-third of school district homeless education liaisons said they are the only staff members in their districts trained to identify and intervene with homeless youth and their families. They emphasized the importance of training school-based staff—specifically guidance counselors, social workers, office and clerical staff, and teachers—to identify homeless youth as well.

“Students spend a significant portion of their day in school—and as a result, schools can offer these students a safe and consistent place to study and access to caring adults who can help them navigate some of the challenges they face,” the report says. “In an otherwise chaotic time of homelessness, schools can be pillars of stability.”

*Hidden in Plain Sight: Homeless Students in America’s Public Schools* is available at <http://www.gradnation.org/report/hidden-plain-sight>.

For additional information about how ESSA supports the education needs of homeless students and other vulnerable youth, read the Alliance’s [fact sheet](#) or watch a [special edition of the Alliance’s five-minute Federal Flash](#) about high school dropout prevention and the reengagement of out-of-school youth at <http://all4ed.org/essa/>.





## **THE SUSPENSION EFFECT: Exclusionary Discipline Practices Increase High School Dropout Rates and Cost the Nation Billions in Lost Tax Revenue, According to the Center for Civil Rights Remedies**

A [report](#) from the Alliance for Excellent Education (the Alliance) shows that a single ninth-grade suspension doubles the risk that a student will drop out of high school. Without a diploma, that student will face a higher likelihood of unemployment and lower wages, earning more than \$330,000 *less* in a lifetime than a high school graduate, [according to a study from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce](#). But students are not the only ones bearing the costs of suspensions. A new study from the Center for Civil Rights Remedies (CCRR) at the Civil Rights Project at UCLA finds that student suspensions cost the nation more than \$35 billion in lost tax revenue and increased social expenditures combined.

“[Thirty-five billion dollars] seems like a huge number, but it’s actually a very conservative estimate,” says **Daniel Losen, CCRR director and coauthor of the report *The High Cost of Harsh Discipline and Its Disparate Impact***, in a [statement](#). “We looked at data from just one cohort of tenth-grade students. Multiply that with tenth-grade cohorts from additional years and costs easily exceed \$100 billion.”

The CCRR report estimates that school suspensions contribute to 67,735 additional high school dropouts nationwide for one cohort of tenth-grade students. Furthermore, each additional dropout costs the nation more than \$163,000 in lost tax revenue in their lifetime, amounting to an \$11 billion fiscal impact nationally, according to the report. Each dropout incurs more than \$364,000 in social expenditures as well, such as increased health care expenses, that cost society a total of more than \$24 billion.

“Being suspended increases risk for dropping out of high school. That is a well-established fact,” says **Russell Rumberger, professor of education at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and coauthor of the CCRR study**. “People without a high school diploma earn less, have more health problems, and are more likely to get into trouble with the law. That means less tax revenue and higher health care and criminal justice costs for all of us.”

The study analyzes data from the U.S. Department of Education’s Education Longitudinal Study of 2002, which includes information on a nationally representative sample of more than 16,000 students who were tenth graders in School Year 2001–02. Among that cohort, 16 percent of all students were suspended, although suspension rates were higher for students of color, according to the CCRR report. Thirty percent of African American and 22 percent of Latino tenth graders were suspended, compared to just 12 percent of white students.

After establishing the basic suspension rates, the researchers examined the impact of suspensions on high school graduation and determined that students who are suspended are less likely to graduate. Students who are suspended face other risk factors, such as poor attendance and lower grades, that also decrease their likelihood of graduating from high school, the report notes. Therefore, the analysis controlled for these other possible contributing variables to isolate the direct impact suspension has on a student’s chances of graduating. When adjusting for these other factors, suspension alone decreases a student’s likelihood of graduating from high school by 12 percentage points.

“Reducing suspension rates would yield substantial economic benefits” for the nation, the report says. For instance, a 1 percentage-point reduction in the national suspension rate would save the nation \$2.2 billion in fiscal and social losses over the lifetimes of those individuals. Meanwhile, cutting the suspension rate in half would result in \$17.8 billion in savings, including \$5.5 billion in additional tax revenue, \$2 billion in health savings, and \$3 billion in crime savings, the report says.

“Not only will school districts increase graduation rates and generate billions of dollars in economic activity if they stop suspending so many students, the research also shows that reducing the racial discipline gap makes good economic sense and will reduce social costs that hit communities of color the hardest,” Losen adds. Because students of color represent a disproportionate percentage of suspended students, they account for a larger share of the fiscal and social losses the nation accrues when those students do not graduate from high school, the report explains. Consequently, the nation could realize even greater economic benefits if efforts to reduce suspensions and increase graduation rates for all students deliberately include initiatives to reduce racial disparities, the report says.

Likewise, a [separate analysis by the Alliance](#) demonstrates how graduating more students from high school creates new jobs, increases consumer spending, boosts tax revenues, and increases the gross domestic product. According to the Alliance’s [“Graduation Effect”](#) data, increasing the national high school graduation rate to 90 percent for a single high school class would likely have the following positive effects on the national economy:

- Create 65,150 new jobs
- Boost gross domestic product by \$11.5 billion annually
- Increase annual earnings by \$7.2 billion
- Increase annual spending by \$5.3 billion
- Increase federal tax revenue by \$1.1 billion

*The High Cost of Harsh Discipline and Its Disparate Impact* is available at <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/news/press-releases/featured-research-2016/school-suspensions-cost-taxpayers-billions>.

To learn more about the “Graduation Effect,” visit [impact.all4ed.org](http://impact.all4ed.org) to explore findings for all fifty states, the District of Columbia, and more than 200 metro areas nationwide, and hear stories from young people who overcame personal and educational challenges to attain a high school diploma.

***Straight A’s: Public Education Policy and Progress*** is a free biweekly newsletter that focuses on education news and events in Washington, DC, and around the country. The format makes information on federal education policy accessible to everyone from elected officials and policymakers to parents and community leaders. Contributors include Jason Amos, editor; Kristen Loschert; Caroline Waldman; and Kate Bradley.

The Alliance for Excellent Education is a Washington, DC–based national policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all students, particularly those traditionally underserved, graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship. For more information, visit [www.all4ed.org](http://www.all4ed.org). Follow the Alliance on Twitter ([www.twitter.com/all4ed](https://twitter.com/all4ed)), Facebook ([www.facebook.com/all4ed](https://www.facebook.com/all4ed)), and the Alliance’s “High School Soup” blog ([www.all4ed.org/blog](http://www.all4ed.org/blog)).