

THE Leader


American Federation of
School Administrators
AFSA, AFL-CIO

Volume 95, Summer 2019

A NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

How Would You Rate Family Engagement at Your School or Community?

By Ambika Kapur

Readers of Education Week took part in an informal survey this year in conjunction with the release of a Carnegie Corporation of New York challenge paper on key strategies for improving K–12 education in the United States. The participants were asked a single question: “How would you rate family engagement at your school or community?”

The results were eye-opening: of the almost 700 respondents, only 34% rated family engagement “good” or “excellent,” with 44% responding “fair” and another 11% judging it as poor.

The limited survey is telling, particularly given what we know about the impact of family engagement in our kids’ education. Research over the past decades consistently has confirmed that the active participation of families is one of the most powerful predictors of children’s development, educational attainment, and success in school and in life. This comes as no surprise for many of us—after all, kids spend only about 1,000 of their 6,000 waking hours per year in school.

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Nest Model: The Most Effective Inclusion Program

True classroom inclusion of students with autism spectrum disorder was the focus of a visit by more than 40 school leaders to PS 84 Jose de Diego School in Brooklyn, New York, during the AFSA’s President’s Council meeting in April.

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Homework is Too Focused on Rote Learning

The Center for American Progress released a new report that takes a first-of-its-kind look at homework assignment quality. Specifically, the study examines how homework assignments align with Common Core state standards and whether they require students to demonstrate the full depth of knowledge required of the content standards.

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Legislative Update: AFSA Gets Big Lobbying Wins

AFSA helped turn back President Trump’s proposed education funding cuts and persuaded the House of Representatives to add \$500 million for the Title II-A professional development program. Next step: the Senate.

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Student Loan Debt: Ever-Increasing Financial Chokehold

By Ernest Logan



AFSA President Ernest Logan

Fewer millennials are buying homes—even as we have some of the lowest mortgage lending rates in decades. In large numbers, millennials are living with their parents longer, delaying marriage and starting families—even with near record-low unemployment. Why?

Undeniably, one major reason is the ever-increasing student loan debt.

Ask any recent college student, graduate of higher education or their families to discuss their single biggest financial burden and cause of emotional stress, and they will tell you without hesitation it's student loan debt—unless

you're a member of the top 2% of wealth in this country.

As school administrators, we understand this problem better than most. To move ahead in our profession, we are always working on our advanced degrees; many of us borrow money to move ahead.

Currently, the average interest rate on a student loan is approximately 7.65%, almost double the rate of a home mortgage, while the 10-year Treasury note hovers about 2.65%. Factor in that tuition costs rise each year by more than 6%, when inflation is less than 2%, requiring students and their

families to take ever-increasing amounts of student debt.

Of note, interest begins accruing from the moment a student receives the first loan distribution at the beginning of the first year of college.

Compounding this is the little-known fact that the borrower cannot pay off any of the principal amount of the loan until all the interest of a student tuition loan is paid first—unlike home mortgages, where monthly payments include a ratio of interest and principal reduction.

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STUDENT LOAN



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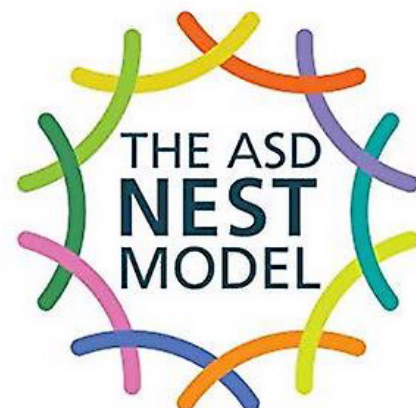
Nest Model: The Most Effective Inclusion Program

True classroom inclusion of students with autism spectrum disorder was the focus of a visit by more than 40 school leaders to PS 84 Jose de Diego School in Brooklyn, New York, during the AFSA's President's Council meeting in April.

PS 84 is one of 43 schools across New York City to adopt the ASD Nest Support Project model; these schools include more than 1,200 K-12 children with ASD.

"With Nest, students with ASD are educated in their neighborhood schools alongside their general education peers. Educators teach the general education curriculum using specialized supports drawn from evidence-based and promising practices," said Co-Project Director Lauren Hough Williams. "Students are helped to develop competence in their social and behavioral functioning in order to ultimately realize their full, unique potential as independent and happy adults."

The Nest Support Project, hosted by the NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human



Development, provides training, professional development and onsite consultation for teachers, therapists and administrators, and workshops and a newsletter for ASD Nest parents. Other activities include research, presentations at national professional organizations, and articles and other publications on relevant topics.

It's a win-win for all students, according to educators in the program. "The school and district provide smaller class sizes, co-taught classes, pre-service training and onsite

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support on Nest practices, regular interdisciplinary team meetings to promote consistency across all settings and a strong home-school collaboration,” said PS 84 Principal Sereida Rodriguez.

Council of School Supervisors & Administrators, AFSA Local 1 President Mark Cannizzaro was a principal at one of the first Nest Model middle schools, Paulo Intermediate School (IS 75) in Staten Island, New York.

“The Nest program fosters an environment where students learn with and from each other while recognizing and supporting the academic and social needs of each individual,” said Cannizzaro. “It also gave teachers and administrators an opportunity to rethink traditional teaching practices and assumptions. Not only did those directly involved benefit from Nest, the enthusiasm it created motivated others and improved the culture of our entire school.”

“It’s an incredible program,” said Troy LaRaviere, president of Chicago Principals & Administrators Association, AFSA Local 2.

The experts agree. “Nest is probably the most effective inclusion program I have ever seen,” said Catherine Lord, Ph.D., the director of the Center for Autism and the Developing Brain.

Stephen Shore, Ed.D., assistant professor of special education at Adelphi University, adds, “Nest is one of the most comprehensive inclusion programs I have seen focusing on promoting strengths of individuals on the autism spectrum—as well as everyone else.”

For more information, visit: <https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/asdnest/about/>. ■

Understanding Inclusion

The concept of inclusion is based on the idea that students with disabilities should not be segregated, but should be included in a classroom with their typically developing peers.

A student in an inclusion classroom usually needs only to show she is not losing out from being included in the classroom, even if she seemingly is not making significant gains. This blanket statement does not apply to all inclusion settings, but proponents of inclusion typically emphasize life preparation and social skills rather than the acquisition of level-appropriate academic skills.¹



Researchers have found the practice of educating children with special needs in regular classes helps to improve the language skills of preschoolers with disabilities. Researchers found that the average language skills of a child’s classmates in the fall significantly predicted the child’s language skills in the spring—especially for children with disabilities.

The results support inclusion policies in schools that aim to have students with disabilities in the same classrooms alongside their typically developing peers.²

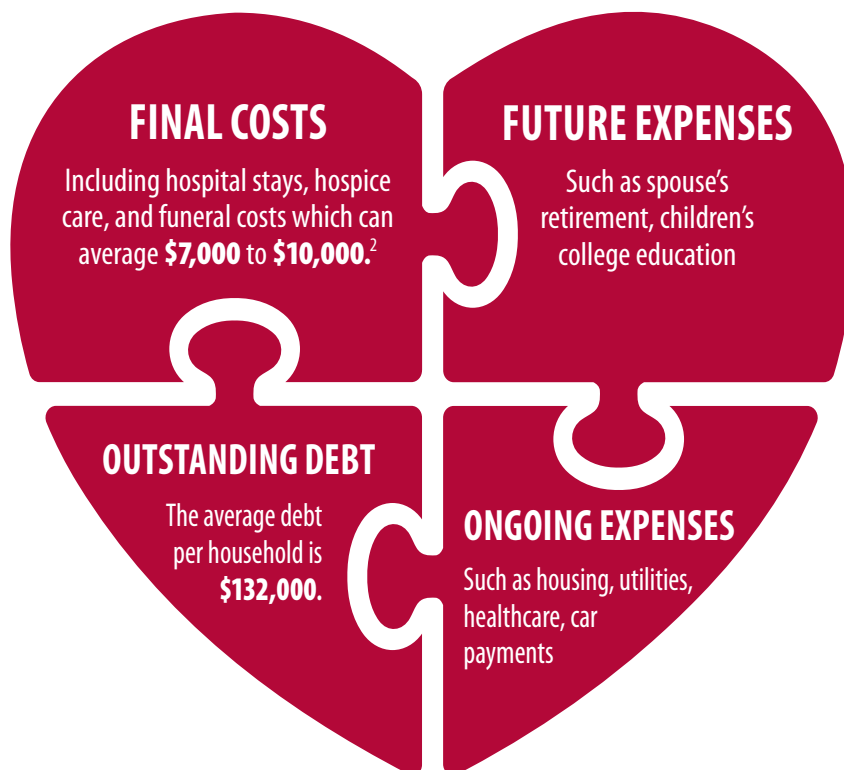


1. Source: Keren Perles, brighthubeducation

2. Source: psychcentral



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¹ Nerdwallet, "2017 American Household Credit Card Debt Study," viewed 8/17/18 at <https://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/average-credit-card-debt-household>

² Forbes.com, Russ Alan Prince, "There's Only ONE Undisputable Reason To Buy Life Insurance," viewed 1/29/18 at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/russalanprince/2013/11/21/theres-only-one-undisputable-reason-to-buy-life-insurance/#58055f1a58b2>



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Homework is Too Focused on Rote Learning

The Center for American Progress released a new report that takes a first-of-its-kind look at homework assignment quality. Specifically, the study examines how homework assignments align with Common Core state standards and whether they require students to demonstrate the full depth of knowledge required of the content standards.

In reviewing a snapshot of homework samples collected using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), the authors of the report found:

- Homework assignments are largely aligned to Common Core standards content.
 - Despite this content alignment, homework is fairly rote and focuses on such basic skills as procedural knowledge in math, or memorization and recall in language arts. It generally does not require students to demonstrate deeper knowledge skills, such as the ability to analyze, conceptualize or generate—as required by Common Core.
 - For many students, homework is not challenging enough. Nearly half of the parents who responded to the survey said their child's homework assignments were too easy.
- Conducting periodic audits to ensure assignments are challenging and aligned to the Common Core standards;
 - Providing access to technology and various supports to ensure students can complete rigorous assignments at home; and
 - Making homework a focus of curriculum reform and instructional redesign efforts.

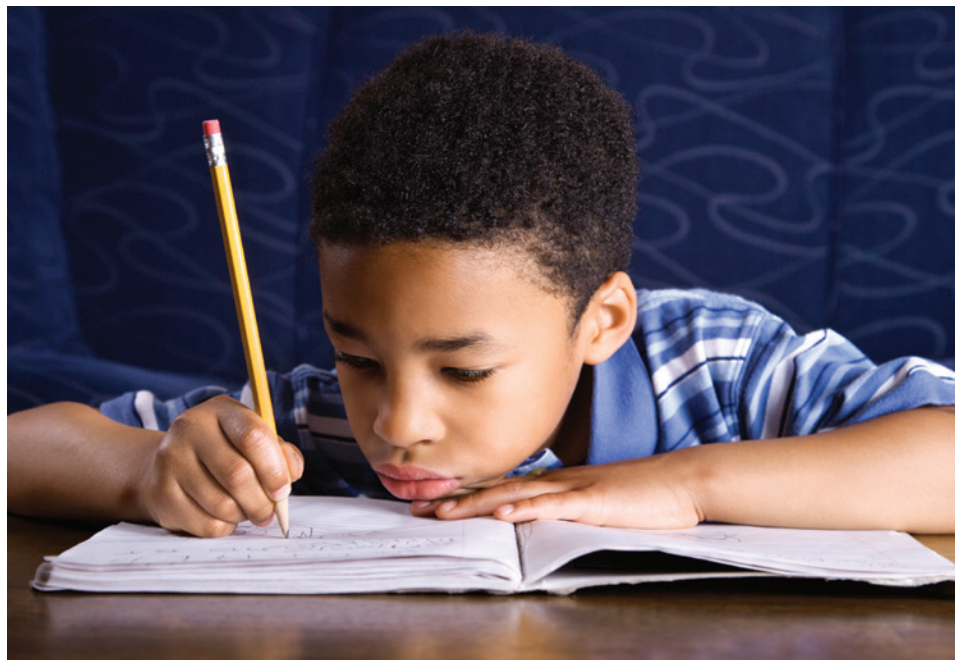
“Improving the quality and rigor of homework is one of the easiest things states, districts and teachers can do to support student achievement,” said [Ulrich Boser](#), senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and co-author of the report. “This groundbreaking

study shows that too many students are receiving assignments that do not challenge them and do not help them retain knowledge.”

“States, districts and schools should develop policies that encourage teachers to assign engaging homework assignments that push students to think critically and apply concepts to real-world situations,” said Meg Benner, senior consultant at the center and co-author of the report. “Exemplary homework assignments in the sample demonstrate that increasing the rigor of homework doesn’t require students to devote hours to homework every night.” ■

The report also includes policy recommendations to help states, districts and schools improve homework quality, and opportunities for students to practice high-quality, rigorous coursework at home. These recommendations include:

- Developing strategic homework policies that prioritize engaging, rigorous homework that follows the 10-minute rule—that is, no more than 10 minutes of homework multiplied by the student's grade level;





2019 Diann Woodard AFSA Scholarship Winners

The Diann Woodard Scholarship is available exclusively to the children of AFSA members. The General Executive Board selects the winners based on academic excellence, passion for volunteerism and display of exceptional work ethic.

AFSA helps students continue their education by awarding five one-time \$2,500 college tuition scholarships every year to outstanding high school seniors.



Christian Guaraca

High School: Monroe-Woodbury High School, Central Valley, New York

College: Johns Hopkins University

Major: Biomedical Engineering

AFSA Parent: Marcela Gonzalez

Supervisor of Hearing Impaired

Local 1: Council of School Supervisors & Administrators

I love playing soccer and listening to music. At my high school, I am the treasurer of STARS, a health education club, captain of the math team, a volunteer for the Interact club, and a member of the National Honor Society and Spanish National Honor Society. I also won the state championship with the varsity soccer team.



Johan Wichterle

High School: Bronx High School of Science, Bronx, New York

College: Middlebury College

Major: Environmental Science

AFSA Parent: Suzy Ort

High School AP Administration

Local 1: Council of School Supervisors & Administrators

My family is originally from the Czech Republic and I spend every summer there with my grandparents and cousins. I greatly enjoy the outdoors, from hiking the Catskill Mountains in the summer to skiing them in the winter. I am an avid skateboarder who loves to explore new parts of New York City, as well as captain of my high school tennis team.



Joanna Cosentino

High School: Midwood High School, Brooklyn, New York

College: Baruch College

Major: Marketing Management

AFSA Parent: Salvatore Cosentino

Elementary and Junior High School AP

Local 1: Council of School Supervisors & Administrators

Growing up in such a diverse and vibrant city has provided me with a drive not only to explore my own passions and creativity, but also to learn more about the people and culture around me. I love to read, write, sing, play piano and trumpet, and I dream of traveling the world. I am an avid member of my school community, president of the Social Justice Club, a member of the Red Cross Club and the Big Sister Program, and a participant in SING for four consecutive years. Outside of school, I volunteer at a local animal shelter to walk dogs and I mentor elementary students learning to play the trumpet. I am also a member of the National Honor Society and an AP Scholar.



Briana Gil

High School: Cresskill High School, Cresskill, New Jersey

College: Northeastern University

Major: Business and Technology

Minor: Music

AFSA Parent: Patricia Gil

Elementary and Junior High School AP

Local 1: Council of School Supervisors & Administrators

I love traveling, reading, coding and music. I am currently completing an internship at Hackensack Meridian Hospital. I am in the Robotics Club, president of a Social Issues Club in school, a member of the National Honor Society and an AP Scholar.



Nathan Poteet

High School: Patuxent High School, Lusby, Maryland

College: University of Maryland

Major: Computer Engineering

AFSA Parent: Matt Poteet

School Supervisor

Local 84: Calvert Association of Supervisors and Administrators

I am the captain of the tennis team and salutatorian of my senior class. I am a member of the National Honor Society and an AP Scholar with Distinction. I love being active and enjoy all racquet sports. I have always had a passion for math and science. I am excited to be a Terrapin!

American High Schools Challenged by Political Incivility, Lack of Civic Education

New national survey of principals finds schools struggling with the opioid epidemic, immigration enforcement and gun violence

"We put citizenship and history on the back burner in our schools," AFSA President [Ernest Logan](#) told delegates at last year's AFSA convention, calling for the union to be the leading advocate to place civics education on the front burner.

"Students have to understand the Constitution and how it establishes our basic rights," Logan said. "They must be taught the rights they are guaranteed under the Bill of Rights, and what the Declaration of Independence says about despots and tyrants."

Logan decried the ignorance of students (and most Americans) concerning the Holocaust, Soviet Communism, slavery and Jim Crow—and the many accomplishments of the labor movement.

His statements take on added importance as a survey finds America's high schools are greatly impacted by political incivility, and riven by untrustworthy information and the omnipresent use of social media.

In this highly charged environment, schools are struggling to address many

of the same critical issues confronting the nation, including opioid abuse, immigration and gun violence. These issues are impacting students and schools, and taking needed time away from the efforts of school principals to strengthen teaching and learning.

The survey, titled [School and Society in the Age of Trump](#), is a nationally representative sample of 505 high school principals conducted in the summer of 2018 by the [Institute for Democracy, Education and Access](#) at UCLA.

It reviewed how a broad set of social issues at the forefront of the Trump presidency are felt, and how these issues affect students and educators within America's high schools.

Nearly nine in 10 principals reported to surveyors that incivility and contentiousness in the broader political environment has considerably affected their school community.

An overwhelming majority of principals reports such problems as contentious classroom environments, hostile exchanges outside of class, and

demeaning or hateful remarks over political views.

School principals also say their work is greatly impacted. The average principal in the study reports spending six and a half hours a week addressing the five societal challenges. One in four principals spends the equivalent of one workday a week responding to the challenges.

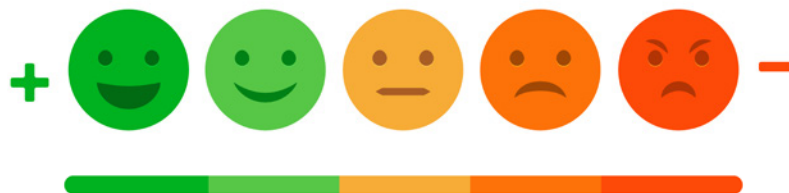
That time represents lost opportunity costs, taking time away from efforts to meet students' academic needs and enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

More than eight in 10 principals report their students have made derogatory remarks about other racial or ethnic groups, and more than six in 10 principals say their students have made derogatory remarks about immigrants.

Here are additional highlights:

- Eighty-three percent of schools see the tensions engendered by incivility and contentiousness intensified and accelerated by the flow of untrustworthy or disputed information and the increasing use of social media that is fueling and furthering division among students and between schools and the communities.
- Sixty-two percent of schools have been harmed by opioid abuse.
- Sixty-eight percent of the principals surveyed say federal immigration enforcement policies and the political rhetoric around the issue have

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negatively impacted students and their families.

- Ninety-two percent of principals say their school has faced problems related to the threat of gun violence.

In interviews with principals, the most commonly reported instances of racial hostility echo President Trump's rhetoric on immigration, with several principals recounting stories of white students chanting "Build the wall!" to demean and threaten students of color.

These tensions are intensified and accelerated by the flow of suspect information across four out of five schools surveyed. The near-constant use of social media also is fueling and furthering division.

Students struggle to discern fact from opinion, identify quality sources, or participate in inclusive and diverse deliberations on social issues.

School climate suffers as students use social media to call one another names or spread rumors. Almost six in 10 teens report having experienced some form of cyberbullying. "Social media," one principal says, "is destroying school safety and climate."

"These findings make clear that schools are not immune from what is happening across the nation," said [John Rogers](#), a professor of education at UCLA and the director of IDEA, in a press release. "The flow of the nation's harsh political rhetoric does not stop at the school house gate, but instead, propelled by misinformation and social media, is fueling anger, fear and division that is negatively impacting students, schools and learning."

"In an environment propelled by fear, distrust and social isolation, schools are feeling the heat of many of the same issues tearing at the fabric of our nation," Rogers said. "Principals tell us these issues are raising student stress and anxiety, and causing students to lose focus in the classroom or miss classes altogether."

"In an environment propelled by fear, distrust and social isolation, schools are feeling the heat of many of the same issues tearing at the fabric of our nation," Rogers said. "Principals tell us these issues are raising student stress and anxiety, and causing students to lose focus in the classroom or miss classes altogether."

"School principals in the age of Trump encounter substantial obstacles," Rogers said. "But the response of some school leaders to these challenges has been nothing less than heroic."

Across the challenges, many principals report spending extra time talking and meeting with students and parents, connecting students and families with community and social services, and planning and providing professional development to help teachers address the identified challenges.

Principals have intervened with immigration authorities on behalf of students, and in dealing with the opioid crisis, some principals have sent backpacks full of food home for the weekend with students or dug into their own pockets for money to help pay utility bills or help with rent.

Virtually every school, regardless of region, community type or racial makeup, was impacted by these societal challenges. More than nine in 10 principals in the survey report experiencing at least three challenges, and more than three in 10 experiences five challenges.

Certain types of schools are more likely to be impacted by particular challenges. Racially mixed schools are most impacted by untrustworthy information and political division. Schools that enroll predominantly students of color are most impacted by the threats of immigration enforcement and gun violence. Predominantly white schools are most impacted by the opioid crisis.

The opioid crisis is experienced most severely in the Northeast, and the impact of threat of immigration enforcement is greatest in the West. The researchers also note that when multiple challenges occur within a school site, they interact with one another in complex and mutually reinforcing ways.

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New Jersey State Law Requires Panic Alarms in Schools

Administrators striving to safeguard their schools know that how quickly police arrive on the scene makes a critical difference. Every second counts in an emergency. Now, working with AFSA and local educators, New Jersey has enacted a law requiring public schools statewide to install panic alarms directly linked to local law enforcement.

Called “[Alyssa’s Law](#),” it is named in memory of Alyssa Alhadeff, a 14-year-old New Jersey native who was one of the 17 people killed in the 2018 Parkland, Florida, high school shooting. New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy signed it into law Feb. 6, just before the first anniversary of the Parkland massacre.

“Coupled with security measures already in place, this law can increase the chances of defusing a bad situation without further harm to students and staff,” said [Assemblyman Ralph Caputo](#), the chief sponsor of the legislation, in a press release. Caputo first introduced the idea in 2013 after the mass shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, only to see it stymied by then-Gov. Chris Christie.

“Assemblyman Caputo is a leader on school safety and deserves our appreciation for pushing this innovative approach for more than five years,” said [AFSA Executive Vice President Leonard Pugliese](#), the former president of AFSA’s Newark local. “New Jersey schools will be safer because of his foresight and persistence.”

Under the law, the alarms will be silent in school buildings, so they don’t alert intruders or panic students, but they immediately will notify local law enforcement of an emergency. A flashing red emergency light also will be installed on the outside of school buildings.



“Especially during active shooter situations, police response time can be a matter of life and death,” said [AFSA President Ernest Logan](#). “AFSA supports stricter federal and state laws, too, but New Jersey’s new law is a commonsense step that will enhance school safety. Alyssa’s Law is a model states nationwide should copy.”

The parents of the bill’s namesake, Ilan and Lori Alhadeff, echoed Logan’s call for widespread adoption of the mandate. “Hopefully other states will follow suit,” they told NJ.com when the bill was signed into law. ■

^ Gov. Phil Murphy signing the bill into law joined by bill sponsor Assemblyman Ralph Caputo and the Alhadeff family.

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AFSA President's Council Works to Strengthen Union Across the Nation

More than 40 local presidents from around the country came together in New York City in April to listen to speakers and discuss ways to make their voices more powerful in dealing with community issues.



GRIEF-SENSITIVE SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

Sign Up Your School • Grants Available

Grief resources in school are lacking.

Nearly 70%

of teachers
have at least
one grieving
student in their
classroom.

Only 7%

of teachers
have had any
amount of
bereavement
training.

Only 25%

of those who lost
a parent growing
up say their school
was well prepared
to help them.

The Grief-Sensitive Schools Initiative is part of New York Life's [nationwide effort](#) to better equip educators and other school personnel to care for the grieving students in their classrooms. GSSI recognizes schools that commit to better support their grieving students by awarding them the "Grief-Sensitive School" designation, which is accompanied by a grant as well as grief-related books and resources from First Book. To date, more than 1,000 schools across the country have taken part in the program.

For more information, visit <https://grievingstudents.org/gssi/>.



House Spurns DeVos and Trump Request for Big Cuts to DOE

The House of Representatives is poised to pass a fiscal year 2020 spending bill that will increase funding for the Department of Education by \$4.4 billion, including a \$500 million increase for the Title II-A professional development program. This action represents a stern rebuke to President Trump's and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos' proposed budget, issued in March, that would have cut the department's budget by 10–12% and eliminated Title II-A entirely. The Senate has yet to move forward with its own spending bills as it awaits the conclusion of negotiations on overall federal spending caps for fiscal years 2020 and 2021.

The House's action represents a big win for AFSA and its members. When the administration released its fiscal year 2020 budget, AFSA President Ernest Logan



took a hard line on the president's proposed cuts to education, saying "In this his third presidential budget since his administration began, the president again offers up another devastating overall cut to the Department of Education—this time 10%. He proposes the wholesale eliminations of the \$2.1 billion Title II-A program that supports professional development for educators and the \$1.2 billion Title IV-A program that funds safe and healthy schools, well-rounded academic programs and effective use of technology. In sum, this budget looks a lot like his previous two budgets—a lot less money for public schools and greater support for private education." ■

AFSA Wins Big in Lobby Work

AFSA's legislative team scored other significant victories during the debate leading up to the House's final vote on the fiscal 2020 education spending bill.

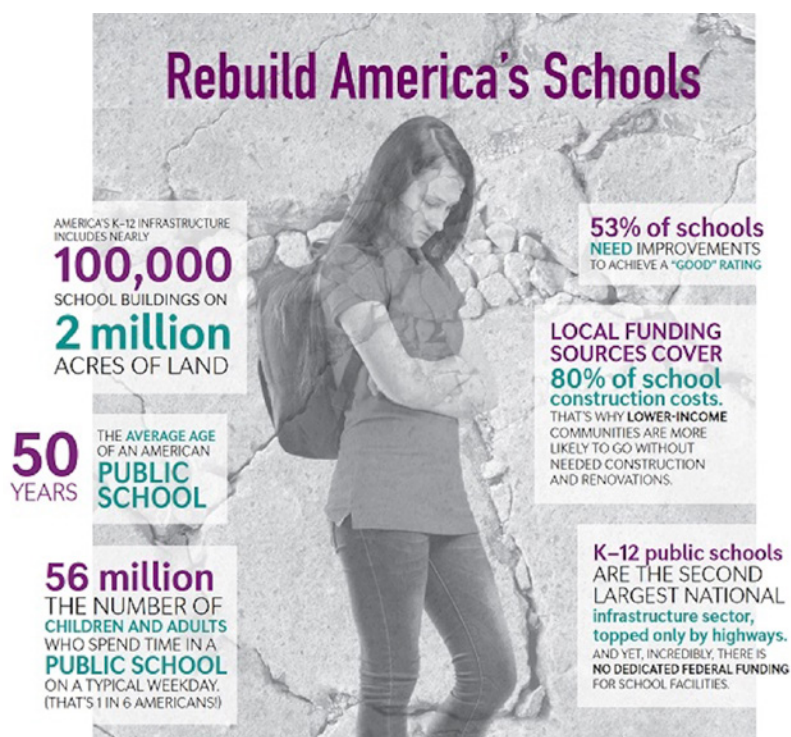
The bill contains no funding for the president's and Secretary DeVos' new choice initiatives and their ill-conceived professional development voucher scheme. Additionally, during the bill's markup, the committee prevented a vote on an amendment that would have opened Title IV-A funding to be used for hardening schools.

AFSA has been working with its coalition partners over the last several years to help achieve these proposed increases and preserve these programs for their intended uses.

Rebuild America's Schools Act Introduced in the House

The Rebuild America's Schools Act in the U.S. House of Representatives would authorize \$100 billion in grants and bonds to construct, modernize, repair, renovate or retrofit public school facilities. Introduced at the end of January by new Committee on Education and Labor Chair Bobby Scott (D-Va.), [the bill](#) is a clear indication the new Congress is dedicated to putting public schools first.

"Chair Scott's bill represents not only a much-needed boost to America's public schools, but an investment in their future health and in the futures of public school students and educators," said AFSA President Ernest Logan. "As principals, assistant principals and school leaders in charge of many of the public school buildings that need an overhaul, AFSA members should follow this legislation and [contact their member of Congress](#) to voice support for the legislation." ■



Source: NEA

HOW WOULD YOU RATE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AT YOUR SCHOOL OR COMMUNITY?

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For the rest of those 5,000 hours, students are learning in community centers and after-school programs, in local museums and science centers and, above all, in their homes—that is, if they are lucky enough to live in communities in which these resources are plentiful, robust and affordable for their families.

The children of families who cannot afford the time or money required to access learning and enrichment experiences outside of school face an “opportunity gap” that impacts their in-school achievement. According to the nonprofit organization [ExpandedED Schools](#), by 6th grade students from higher-income families will have logged 6,000 more hours of out-of-school learning opportunities than their peers from lower-income families.

The question that faces all of us—families, communities, educators, nonprofit organizations and philanthropic funders looking to find solutions to these challenges—is how to develop supportive and effective pathways for bringing families into their children’s education, while understanding that there will not be a one-size-fits-all solution. Differences in income, language, immigration status, race, parental education and myriad other factors mean that educators and parents will have to find the solutions that work best in their communities.

In our quest to better understand the best way forward, Carnegie Corporation of New York commissioned a challenge paper from Dr. Heather Weiss, co-director of the [Global Family Research Project](#). The report

(<https://carnegie.io/2K4Hvt7>) outlines several potential evidence-backed areas for development: increasing student attendance; ensuring families understand what their students’ grades actually mean; acknowledging the crucial role families play in their children’s academic and social development, and giving them the resources and support they need to fulfill that role; providing families with the tools and skills to use digital media to enhance their children’s education; and focusing in particular on transitional moments (say, in the shift from elementary to middle school, or middle to high school) as opportunities for reinforcing the continued need for family support.

One of the key takeaways from the challenge paper is that our path



forward must involve working with families and communities to create opportunities for engagement that make sense, developed out of mutual trust and shared responsibility. In fact, what history tells us is that some of the most successful models of engagement were driven by families—even those in the lowest income brackets, with limited English language skills.

Carnegie Corporation of New York has been working with a variety of nonprofit organizations to come up with strategies that build on past research and successes to create lasting ties among communities, families and schools. These include:

- *Partnering with employers:* The New Orleans-based [EdNavigator](#) partners with employers to bring personal education advisers into the workplace to meet with busy working families. By listening to what families hope their children will be able to achieve through their education, and giving them the tools and information they need to advocate for their children's needs, EdNavigator empowers families to engage and drive change—acknowledging that “family engagement” needs to happen not just in schools, but in the places where families live and work, too.
- *Making home visits:* The [Flamboyant Foundation](#), based in Washington, D.C., helps local schools build mutual trust and understanding between teachers and families by facilitating in-home visits. This allows families to feel a sense of partnership with their children's teachers and gives teachers a better understanding of the support their students are receiving at home. The foundation's program includes training teachers in implicit bias, recognizing that family-teacher relationships often are influenced by unrecognized stereotypes and assumptions. Research commissioned

The question that faces all of us—families, communities, educators, nonprofit organizations and philanthropic funders looking to find solutions to these challenges—is how to develop supportive and effective pathways for bringing families into their children's education, while understanding that there will not be a one-size-fits-all solution.

by Flamboyant suggests that reading scores and attendance improve when families receive in-home visits from teachers.

- *Connecting through technology:* In school districts nationwide, [PowerMyLearning](#) is using technology to connect educators and families. Students are given “family playlists” by their teachers—homework assignments in the language of their choice that prompt them to teach a family partner about what they are learning in class. The approach works on many levels: allowing students to master skills and concepts, creating structured opportunities for families to take part in their children's learning, and opening up lines of communication between teachers and families through a phone application.

These approaches, as promising as they are, are only the start of a much longer process of building the kinds of family engagement that will strengthen our education system and, in turn, our communities.

It is the hope of Carnegie Corporation of New York that by supporting research and making information available to parents, educators, and people interested in improving students' academic experience and achievement, we will inform and inspire many of you to find strategies that work in your cities and towns.

To that end, we've launched a resource center ([Carnegie.org/FamilyEd](#)) where you can keep up to date with the latest research, hear from our nonprofit partners via a webinar, watch videos of successful family engagement models, and read what parents and educators have to say about their experiences. Please take a look and let us know what we can do to support you in your efforts: education@Carnegie.org. ■

Ambika Kapur is a program officer within the Education program at Carnegie Corporation of New York.



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AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOLS CHALLENGED BY POLITICAL INCIVILITY, LACK OF CIVIC EDUCATION

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"It is likely that political division makes schools more vulnerable to the spread of untrustworthy information, just as the spread of untrustworthy information often contributes to division and hostility," Rogers said. "And the fear and distress associated with threats to immigrant communities, gun violence and opioid misuse increases the possibilities for division and distrust among students, and between educators and the broader community."

The report recommends:

- Establish and communicate school climate standards emphasizing care, connectedness and civility, and then create practices that enable educational systems to document and report on conditions associated with these standards;
- Build professional capacity within educational systems to address the holistic needs of students and communities, and extend this capacity by supporting connections between school-based educators and other governmental agencies and community-based organizations serving young people and their families;
- Develop integrated systems of health, mental health and social welfare support for students and their families; and
- Create and support networks of educators committed to fostering care, connectedness and strong civility in their public education systems. ■

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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As a consequence of repayment requirements and the meager starting salaries of new graduates, many, if not most, students and their families may take 20 to 30 years to pay off their loans—and that's as long as they never run into any unemployment or financial challenges. Even worse, many are never able to completely pay their loans, or default.

So is this a full-blown financial crisis for millennials and their families?

On the national landscape, student loan debt is approximately \$1.5 trillion dollars at current interest rates. This debt level threatens the financial stability of our middle class and our national economy.

This crisis will only worsen exponentially as Treasury interest rates increase in

the near future. Imagine the benefits to borrowers and society at large if student loan debt relief were provided so money can be used more constructively: improving credit scores, increasing starter home purchases, improving child care options and health care options, to name a few.

There's no apparent leadership on this widely acknowledged major issue quietly choking to death the financial stability of students and their families who are not part of the 2% wealth club. More importantly, we are long overdue to revise student loan standards for approval, loan default rates, interest rates and the structure of repayment guidelines as a national priority. We will be watching politicians carefully to see who will offer solutions to this brewing crisis. ■



Zack Friedman, a senior contributor at Forbes magazine, reported this year that "99.5% of people who applied for public service loan forgiveness have been rejected."

The Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program is a federal program that forgives federal student loans for borrowers who are employed full time (more than 30 hours per week) in an eligible federal, state or local public service job or 501(c)(3) nonprofit job, and who make 120 eligible on-time payments. However, based on the current statistics, it is not a program that works.

Adding to the lack of current application acceptance, the Trump administration wants to end public service loan forgiveness and has advocated for a simpler, income-driven repayment plan. Please contact your members of Congress (www.callmycongress.com) and let them know you want them to keep the program going.



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