

Protecting Students While Public Education is Under Attack

Threat: The Dismantling of the U.S. Department of Education

Dismantling the U.S. Department of Education (ED) has been a key strategy of the Trump administration to shirk the federal government’s responsibility to ensure all students — particularly those traditionally underserved by America’s schools — can learn in safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments.

Without the U.S. Department of Education:

- There would be no federal oversight to ensure states [hold schools accountable](#) for collecting and reporting data on student performance or identifying and supporting struggling schools and students.
- [National data](#) on how schools are serving students, across several domains, would no longer be collected and publicly reported.
- Programs ensuring education for migrant students or students experiencing homelessness could wane.

Table 1: The Functions of the U.S. Department of Education and What’s at Stake for Students

ED Function	What’s at Risk due to ED’s Dismantling
Administering Programs that Provide Federal Support to Schools	<p>Distributing federal education funds for high-need populations</p> <p>Supporting states in implementing programs for key priority areas such as equitable pathways, educator quality, and literacy instruction</p> <p>Building capacity among state and local leaders to collect and report accurate data on a range of topics, including how much schools spend, how many schools have guidance counselors, and how many students graduate from high school each year</p> <p>Monitoring compliance with federal law, including the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and related waivers</p>

<p>Protecting Students' Civil Rights</p>	<p>There are several federal laws that protect students' civil rights:</p> <p>Title VI of Civil Rights Act of 1964: Protects students from discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin</p> <p>Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972: Protects students from discrimination on the basis of sex</p> <p>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): Guarantees children with disabilities the right to a free, appropriate public education and related services</p> <p>Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990: Protects students from discrimination based on disability status</p> <p>The following Department of Education offices are responsible for the oversight and enforcement of these laws:</p> <p>Office for Civil Rights (OCR): Investigates concerns of students' civil rights violations, shares data, and issues guidance</p> <p>Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS): Administers programs that support students with disabilities and provides oversight and enforcement of special education laws</p> <p>Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA): Provides support to states and districts in serving the specialized needs of English learners and immigrant students</p>
<p>Overseeing Data & Research</p>	<p>Tracking & Reporting Produces national education data to monitor student outcomes and experiences, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the "Nation's Report Card"</p> <p>Program Evaluation Assessing effectiveness of programs and interventions that aim to improve student outcomes and close opportunity gaps (either internally or through research grants)</p>

How State Advocates Can Drive Change

- **Lock in student protections at the state level:** Press legislators to codify essential federal programs, funding streams, and civil rights protections into state law to prevent the erosion of critical student supports.
- **Defend transparency and accountability:** Mobilize to ensure states preserve strong data systems and accountability measures that track student outcomes, expose inequities, and drive continuous improvement.