



February 17, 2025

What Is Torn Down, Must Be Rebuilt

We Must Be A Part of the Next Iteration of Public
Education - Stay In The Fight

Nihilism is tempting, right? It can feel too daunting and too overwhelming to even know where to begin in processing all of the things that are happening - just to education! Let alone when you consider all the other things like access to IRS records or the elimination of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau or why are so many planes crashing all of the sudden? It's a lot. And we still have to teach the students, feed our families, and try to maintain our relationships. So, here I am reminding you that everything that is getting broken will have to be rebuilt. Who do we want to be on that construction site? If we throw in the towel, if we give in to our anxiety and fear, if we let the hopelessness win, we will be ensuring that the next chapter for public education in America is written by those who intend to finish the book for good.

What does the Department of Education do? And what does it NOT do?

Teaching Intellectual

It Does

Distribute Federal Funds

- Title I - additional funding for schools with high percentages of low income families
- IDEA - provides funding for students with disabilities 0-22 years of age
- Pell and Perkins grants and loans for higher education

It Does Not

Determine Curriculum

The Common Core Standards were created by a group of volunteers coordinated by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices

It Does

Collect Data

On enrollment, staffing, teaching shortages, student demographics, oversight and distribution of the federal student loan programs, investigations into civil rights violations in schools, and more

It Does Not

Indoctrinate

There is nothing about the Department of Education that is mandating "wokeness." Title IX is a federal civil rights law that protects people from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance. It does not mandate Critical Race Theory or any other lightening rod of the right.

Newsweek from ARC
CEO

IDEA to Health and Human Services?

Before there was a Department of Education (think pre-1980), there was an Office of Education, established into law by Andrew Johnson in 1867. The Office bounced around a little but eventually settled into the Department of Health Education and Welfare now known as the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was recently confirmed as the secretary of HHS. There is a lot to discuss about RFK Jr.'s views on a whole range of topics but let's focus on what Department of Education Secretary nominee Linda McMahon said in her confirmation hearing that IDEA would "rest better" in HHS. What does she mean by that and what are the potential impacts of a move like that for students with service and support needs at school?

Let's start with RFK's core beliefs:

1. Robert F. Kennedy Jr believes [vaccines cause autism and has a record of disparaging remarks about the autistic community.](#)
2. He advocates for "wellness farms" - [an institutionalization approach popular in the 1800s](#)

There are more causes for concern but this is a newsletter, not a book, so let's just focus on why this two things combined are bad for the watchdog of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Remember, the ED does not determine curriculum or standards (that's already under local control - someone should remind the GOP and the Secretary nominee). It provides less than 10% of essential funding for most schools, funds approximately 14% of IDEA services, oversees implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA), IDEA, collects data on public education, and [disseminates research funds.](#)

Specifically for IDEA, the Department of Ed provides oversight and holds states accountable for providing education to all students with disabilities. In a [NewAmerica article](#), Carrie Gillispie says, *The critical federal role in four key areas of special education are at risk if the Trump administration dismantles ED: administering federal funding fairly; identifying civil rights violations; providing funding and guidance for improving special education; and ensuring nationwide consistency.*

That's concerning enough without The HHS Secretary's ableism and history of anti-science beliefs. It also positions disability at school within the medical model (IDEA is written this way, too, but it is important that we consider the social implications of educational exclusion and segregation).

IDEA is an educational civil rights law. It was written and implemented to give students with disabilities access to a free and appropriate public education within the general education classroom. Let's not let them forget that.



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