

# EDUCATION UNCHAINED

## THE FUTURE OF SCHOOLING IN A POST DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION WORLD

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**W**hile President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs and government spending cuts through the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) have garnered most of the media headlines early in his second term, it is his overhaul of the American education system that may ultimately have the greatest impact on the country in the long run.

Here's where things stand now and why parents and grandparents have reason for optimism moving forward—despite liberal fear-

mongering about Trump's reforms.

### Promises Made

Trump began keying in on education policy late in his first term, recognizing the rising threat from Critical Race Theory (CRT) and left-wing ideology in K-12 classrooms. In November 2020, he created an "Advisory 1776 Commission" to "better enable a rising generation to understand the principles of the founding of the United States in 1776."

In many ways, that commission and its resulting final report set the stage for the parental rights movement that began sweeping the nation in 2021. However, with Joe Biden in the White House, the federal Department of Education (DOE) became an ally for left-wing activists in aggressively promot-

ing progressive dogma in schools.

Harnessing the backlash to the increasingly woke direction of public education, Trump promised major reforms as part of his 2024 platform.

He specifically outlined "ten principles for great schools leading to great jobs." Those principles included cutting federal funding for schools that promote CRT or gender ideology, instituting the direct election of school principals, expanding school choice, and closing the DOE, thereby empowering states and localities.

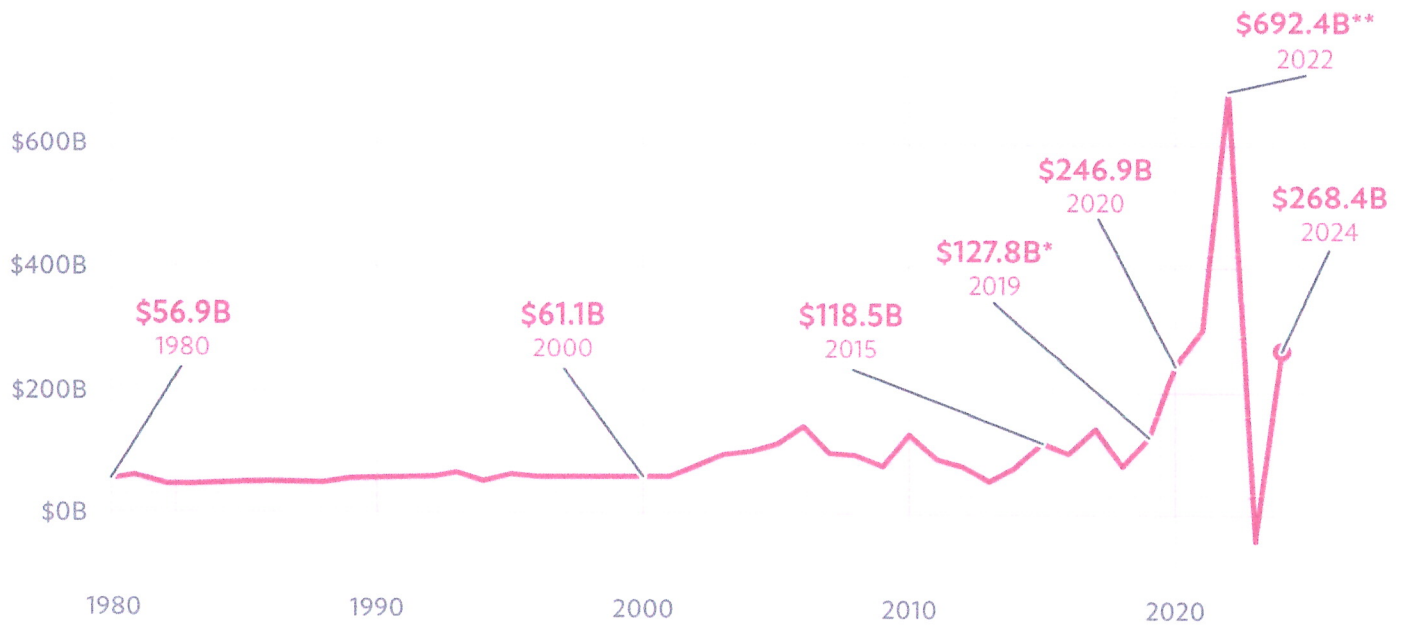
### Promises Kept

So far, Trump has made good on his promises. Under the direction of Secretary of Education Linda McMahon, the DOE has cut more than half of its staff, and Trump is moving toward full closure of the department. Critical

*functions such as federal student aid*

# Federal spending on the Department of Education has skyrocketed since 1980

Yearly federal net spending by Department of Education, adjusted for inflation (2024 dollars), FY2 1980-2024



\*Pre-COVID peak | \*\*Includes COVID funds

Source: Office of Management and Budget and US Department of the Treasury

and funding for special needs students will be placed under the direction of other agencies.

Trump has also signed more than a dozen education-related executive orders, ranging from measures to reduce the influence of foreign governments on American college campuses to ending COVID-19 vaccine mandates in schools. Other orders banned DEI in federally funded education institutions, cut funding for schools teaching CRT and gender ideology, expanded access to school choice, prohibited federally funded schools from allowing men to compete on women's sports teams, and banned school discipline policies based on discriminatory "equity" ideology.

## An Urgent Need for Reform

Elected Democrats, teachers' union bosses, and the corporate media have unsurprisingly reacted with outrage and panic to Trump's reforms—specifically his cuts to the DOE. Nevertheless, an objective look at the department's performance and the state of American education in recent decades underscores the urgent need for significant changes.

Despite liberal insistence that the American education system will collapse without the DOE, the department has only existed since 1979—and, in that time, has overseen a sharp decline in student performance.

for inflation, has skyrocketed from \$56.9 billion in 1980 to \$268.4 billion in 2024—an increase of more than 470 percent. In that same period, overall federal spending increased 193 percent, reflecting the disproportionate growth of the agency.

When Trump took office, the DOE had more than 4,000 employees. The public relations staff alone had grown to more than 80 individuals at a cost to taxpayers of \$10 million per year. Under the Biden administration, more than 1,000 DOE employees were paid more than \$160,000 annually. More than 80 made upwards of \$200,000 per year—four times the average starting salary for a K-12 teacher.

Despite this massive increase

*The DOE's budget, when adjusted for inflation, has skyrocketed from \$56.9 billion in 1980 to \$268.4 billion in 2024—an increase of more than 470 percent. In that same period, overall federal spending increased 193 percent, reflecting the disproportionate growth of the agency.*



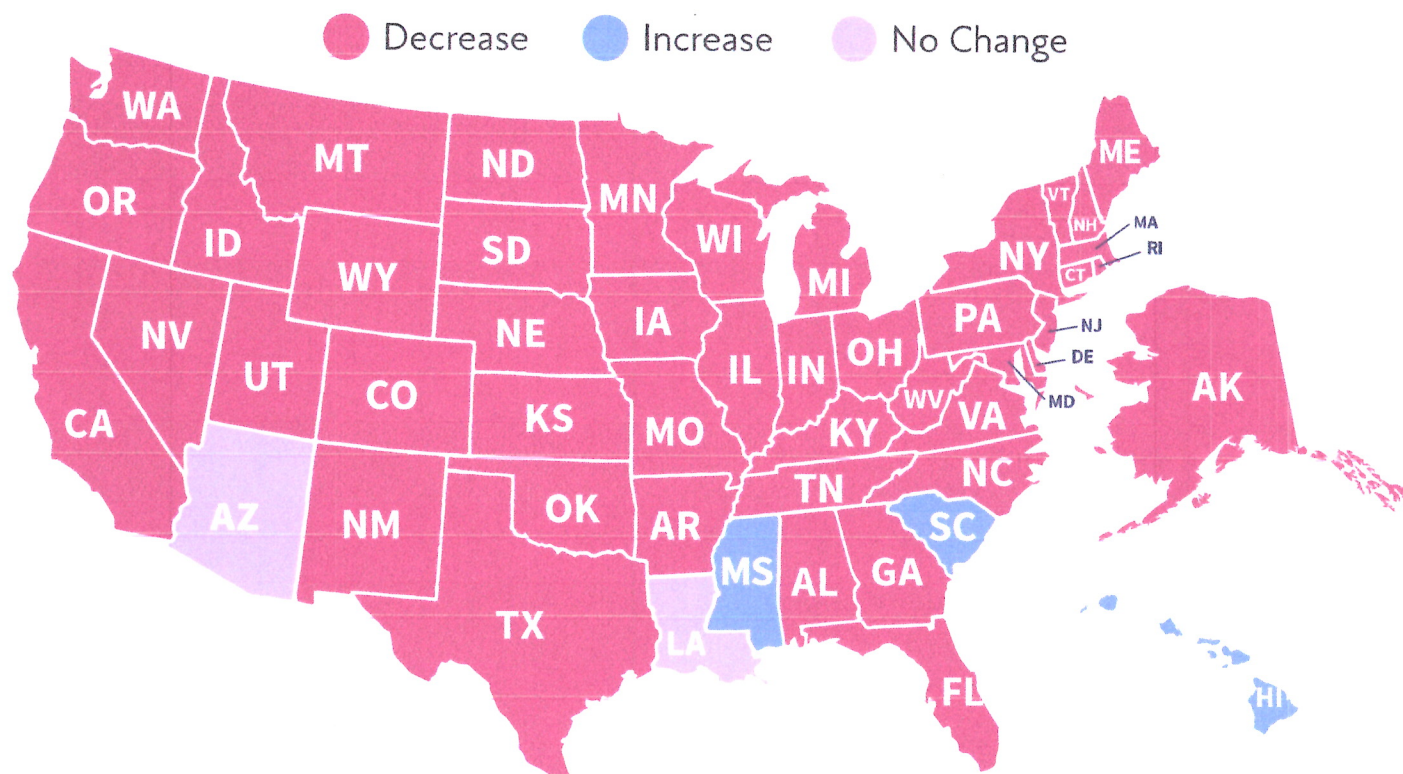
improving—in fact, they’re getting worse. According to the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as “The Nation’s Report Card,” students aren’t recovering from the loss of learning during the pandemic, and many are falling further behind.

The 2024 report found that an astonishing 69 percent of fourth graders and 70 percent of eighth graders scored at or below “Basic” in reading—the largest percentage in NAEP’s history. In math, nearly 25 percent of students also failed to “reach the NAEP Basic level, meaning they likely

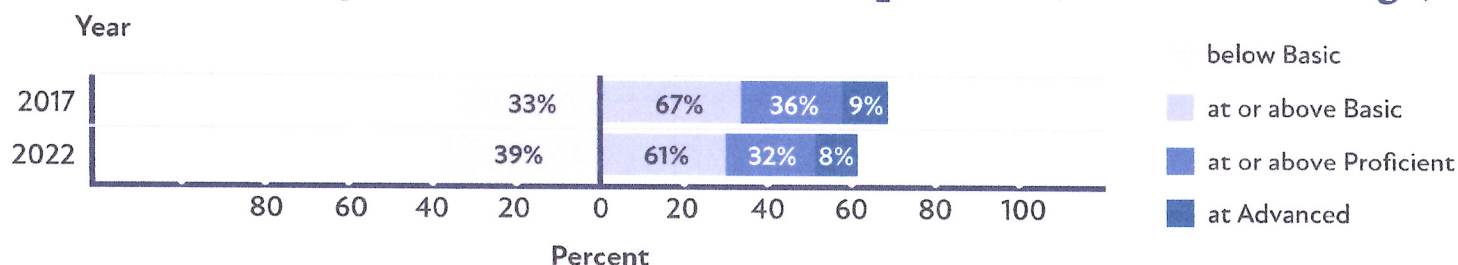
cannot identify odd numbers or solve a problem using unit conversions.”

Since 1992, the first year for which NAEP results are available, fourth-grade reading scores have remained unchanged, while math scores, after an initial increase, are on the decline. Why should taxpayers be expected

## Grade 4 Average Reading Scores Change from 2017 to 2022



## Grade 4 Reading Achievement Level Comparison (National Average)



**NOTE:** Achievement levels are based off of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) criteria and do not represent grade level proficiency as determined by other assessment standards (e.g., state or district assessments).

**SOURCE:** US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2017 and 2022 Reading Assessments.



to continue shelling out hundreds of billions of dollars for such lackluster progress?

Looking at how DOE is spending those dollars, it's easy to see why outcomes for American students are getting worse and why they're falling behind their international peers.

Soon after Trump took office, DOGE identified and eliminated 29 DEI training grants worth a total of \$101 million. In February, the department announced the cancelation of a further \$350 million in contracts that funded "wasteful and ideologically-driven spending not in the interest

of students and taxpayers."

## Looking to the Future

Despite the doomsday predictions from the media and education establishment, the future of American schooling is anything but bleak. In fact, under President Trump's bold leadership, it is brighter than it has been in decades.

For the first time in a generation, parents, teachers, and communities—not unelected bureaucrats in Washington—are being given the power to shape education around the needs of their students, not the demands of an ideological agenda.

Gone are the days when the federal government could weaponize funding to coerce schools into compliance with radical social experiments. No longer will parents be sidelined or treated as political threats for daring to speak up at school board meetings.

Instead, Trump's vision is one of liberation—a system where schools are accountable to the people they serve, not distant regulators.

By dismantling the DOE and restoring power to the states, Trump is putting an end to the one-size-fits-all model that has stifled creativity and suppressed excellence in American classrooms. In its place, a decentralized, flexible, and dynamic system is emerging, one that welcomes innovation and empowers local districts to tailor education to the needs of their communities.

Moreover, charter schools, magnet programs, private and faith-based schools, homeschooling, hybrid models, and vocational academies are *all gaining support under the Trump*

administration's school choice agenda. Families are no longer bound by zip codes or bureaucratic mandates.

Instead, they are encouraged to find what works best for their child, whether that's a traditional public school or an apprenticeship program in one of the skilled trades. This approach recognizes a simple but profound truth: every child is different, and education should reflect that.

This cultural shift is also renewing the role of parents as primary stakeholders in their child's development. When parents are respected and invited to the table, they engage. They volunteer. They show up. They invest. And in doing so, student outcomes improve—not because Washington dictated it, but because communities chose to own their future.

Trump's reforms are also helping to reestablish the truth that education should cultivate knowledge, character, and civic understanding, not produce ideological conformity or advance a partisan political agenda. There's still a long way to go to rid schools of left-wing ideology, but for the first time in decades, it feels like the forces of basic common sense have the momentum.

What we're witnessing is a renaissance of American education. With federal overreach receding and local control expanding, schools are no longer bound by failing policies or political orthodoxy—they are free to serve, to teach, and to grow.

This is not just a policy shift. It is a revolution of mindset and mission. And thanks to President Trump, it's one that puts students and families first—where they've always belonged.

**Take Our Poll  
Below!**

**With more states  
adopting universal  
school choice policies,  
do you support allowing  
all families to use public  
funds to choose the  
K-12 education option  
that works best for  
their children?**

**Scan the code  
to take the  
poll, or visit  
[amac.us/junepoll](https://amac.us/junepoll)**

