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Trump's Proposed Budget-Cut Targets Include Teacher Improvement

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President Donald Trump's proposed budget, released today, calls for \$9 billion in cuts to the U.S. Department of Education. On the chopping block are programs that provide districts with funding for professional development and improving teacher preparation programs.

The budget would eliminate \$2.25 billion in Title II grants, money that states and districts use to hire and train teachers.

"These cuts, if enacted, will turn into real-life effects on kids," American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten said in a statement. "They do what we feared would happen when Education Secretary Betsy DeVos was nominated: defund public schools with the aim of destabilizing and destroying them. By slashing community schools, professional development and class-size funding, they are cutting what works to help students succeed."

Weingarten stressed the need for funding professional development to help teachers "refine their craft and move new ideas and curriculum in the classroom—just like any corporation would need to train people when implementing a new product or strategy."

Weingarten also criticized the budget's proposed elimination of the \$1 billion 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, which funds after-school and extended-learning initiatives. She noted that community learning centers in Cincinnati and New York are helping to drive higher graduation rates, attendance, and student achievement in their communities.

National Education Association president Lily Eskelsen García agrees with Weingarten that cuts to funding for teacher training and after-school programs would prove devastating, writing in a statement that "these cuts mean students are robbed of the tools and supports they need to get ahead."

While García had harsh words for President Trump, calling the proposed cuts to public education an attempt to further his "discriminatory and hateful anti-immigrant agenda," she did express hope that Congress, which has yet to approve the budget, would not let it pass as is.

Weingarten tweeted this morning that "only someone who doesn't know what public schools do and what kids need would propose these cuts." Neal McCluskey called the tweet "a bit of an overstatement." McCluskey is the director of the Center for Educational Freedom at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank. He called the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program a "deservedly prime target."

McCluskey and Mark Dynarski of the Brookings Institute wrote separate pieces in 2015 about evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs' failure to improve student achievement. The evaluation, writes Dynarski, collected data on outcomes including grades, test scores, attendance, and behavior. The result: "the program didn't affect student outcomes. Except for student behavior, which got *worse*." Dynarski suggested that at the very least the Education Department, in the face of these results, should have reduced spending on the program, if not eliminate it altogether.

As for cuts to funding for teacher professional development, there have been studies that cast doubt on its effectiveness. Stephen Sawchuk writes in this *Education Week* [article](#) about a study that showed PD doesn't factor in to why some teachers get better at their jobs and others don't. But John Luczak of the education policy group Education First argues that districts have been doing a good job of overhauling professional development based on research that shows what does work. A reduction in funding, he says, doesn't take into account the importance of teacher quality in student achievement.

Trump's proposed eliminations also target the \$43.1 million Teacher Quality Partnership program, which funds the creation of model teacher-preparation programs that work with high-needs districts to train candidates for the classroom.

New Visions for Public Schools currently receives funding under the Teacher Quality Partnership program for its New Visions-Hunter College Urban Teacher Residency in New York City. The residency prepares up to 60 candidates each year. So far, the results include improved teacher retention in city schools, and students of the residency's graduates perform better on state exams than students of other early-career teachers, according to Timothy Farrell, the vice president for external affairs for New Visions. He said investing in improved models of teacher prep should be a priority of the Education Department.

"High-quality teacher preparation should be a bipartisan issue," Farrell told *Education Week*. "Cutting evidence-based programs like TQP, which funds innovative teacher preparation models, will only serve to reduce American competitiveness in the long run."

Alyson Klein and Andrew Ujifusa, [writing in the Politics K-12 blog](#), predict some of the cuts will be a tough sell in Congress. It could be months before lawmakers decide which of these cuts to accept or reject, Klein and Ujifusa write.