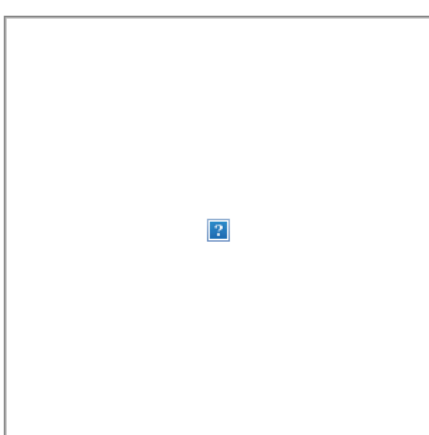
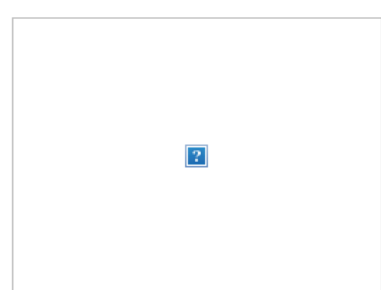




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Murky Future of Federal Education Funding Only Hurts Students (EDUCATION) By Vanessa Wamsley, Staff Writer

By Vanessa Wamsley
May 1, 2013
Filed under [Education](#), [Top Stories](#)



On March 1, President Obama put his signature on the sequestration cuts that loomed over Congress and the White House since the budget debates last August. Although Obama announced the need for more inclusive public preschool education and availability of post-secondary education through federal grants and loans in his **State of the Union** address in January, federal education funds took a big hit from the new cuts. Sequestration puts Obama's education plans in jeopardy, but Republicans who oppose expanding federal funding for education, especially higher education, plan deeper cuts to the Department of Education in their proposed budget. In short, schools across the country must prepare for major cuts in the next few years, and students will feel the brunt of those cuts.

Sequestration, a White House fact sheet states, eliminates Title I funds for 2,700 schools and 1.2 million students affecting about 10,000 teachers and aides. The Title I program provides funding for schools serving high percentages of children from low-income families to help them meet academic standards. Cuts to special education drop federal funding for 7,200 teachers, aides, and other staff for both preschool and **school-aged** teachers. Preschool services, known as Head Start and Early Head Start, lose 14,000 teachers, assistants, and other staff through the sequester. Schools on military bases and Native American reservations, who cannot raise funds through property taxes, may close entirely since they depend largely on federal funding.

In higher education, monies to federal work-study programs drop by \$49 million and to supplemental grants for students with exceptional financial need by \$37 million. The sequester raises student loan origination fees by an estimated 7.6 percent

In mid-March, Congress passed a continuing resolution to provide funding for federal programs through the end of the 2013 fiscal year but maintained the five percent cuts of the sequester. Education cuts, then, take effect for the 2013 school year. Some schools took precautionary steps this year by leaving positions unfilled and cutting some programs, but others, confident Congress and the White House would come to an agreement in order to avoid the punishing spending cuts, face cutting teaching positions and currently operating programs.

The wise superintendent, school board, and prospective college student should have an eye on the budget proposals for fiscal year 2014. As discussions for 2013 spending and 2014 funding overlap, the House passed a budget presented by **Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.)** chairman of the House Budget Committee. It cuts education by 33 percent more than the plan outlined by the White House in 2013. The Senate rejected the House bill and passed its first budget proposal in four years. **Sen. Patty Murray's (D-Wash.)** bill allocates about \$200 billion more over a 10-year period than does Ryan's plan. The White House, claiming its budget plan for 2014 was delayed by negotiations over the 2013 spending, projects it will release a budget proposal for 2014 in April. All plans will likely include cuts to education programs.

With fiscal cliffs, sequesters, continuing resolutions, 2013 spending and the 2014 budget proposals, few in education dare predict what federal funding may be available in the upcoming years. The correlation between money and academic achievement validates strong concern. Despite claims to the contrary, most notably by Stanford's Eric Hanushek, money matters in education. Bruce Baker of Rutgers University, after reviewing the research on spending and educational quality, concluded that raising per-pupil spending improves student performance, given that the money is used wisely.

Money matters, but schools with the most at-risk populations find themselves waiting on politicians to decide if the programs that reach those students will be funded. The economy demands a tighter budget, so requesting more funding seems pointless. Asking that Congress complete its most important job by passing a budget in a timely manner and clearing the murkiness surrounding education funding feels more than fair.

Obama's promises to focus on educational quality for all students must fall through as polarized politics prevent schools from even predicting what federal programs will receive funding. Instead of debating the best methods for educating children, schools must examine where they can cut spending when educating those children.

It seems like a lousy trade-off, especially for the students.

<http://www.shankerinstitute.org/publications/does-money-matter/>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2012/08/12/what-paul-ryans-budget-actually-cuts-and-by-how-much>

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