



SPOTLIGHT

[Kids Need to be Tested This Year](#) | NY Daily News

The Fordham Institute's Michael Petrilli makes a logical, student-focused case for administering state annual assessments this school year in a new piece in the NY Daily News, echoing what an increasing number of national voices - including [education organizations](#), [civil rights leaders](#), the [business community](#), and the editorial boards of the [New York Times](#) and the [Washington Post](#) - have said in recent weeks. [Educators](#) and leaders, parents, and advocates all need accurate, actionable data to understand student how student learning was impacted by the pandemic and how best to recover and improve.

[In an interview with the Collaborative for Student Success this week](#) on the same topic, Utah Assistant Superintendent Darin Nielsen affirmed the value of student assessment data in this moment, comparing tests to instruments in a plane. "During [a storm] like this, deactivating or turning away from the instruments intended to provide information about the performance of the plane and its relationship to a desired destination is the last thing I would want my pilot to do," he said. Nielsen provided concrete examples of how student assessment data will be key in not only recovering from the disruption of the pandemic, but in identifying the best innovations in education, the strongest hybrid and remote models, and opportunities to strengthen the weaknesses experienced during this unprecedented time.

The incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden faces [increasing pressure](#) to take a stance in support of state spring assessments - including from [House](#) and [Senate](#) education leaders. Some states have already shared an intent to pursue a second consecutive year of assessment waivers, while education leaders in states such as [California](#) are grappling with how to move forward. While the Biden team has yet to take a firm stance publicly, the selection of Connecticut Education Commissioner Miguel Cardona to be Education secretary has given some hope to assessment proponents, as Cardona's department in Connecticut issued a [strong defense of testing](#) amid the pandemic.



IN THE NEWS

[Biden Unveils \\$1.9 Trillion COVID-19 Relief Plan, Including \\$1,400 Stimulus Checks](#) | NPR

Biden announced details of a COVID-19 stimulus bill on Thursday that encompasses a robust vaccine distribution program, additional direct stimulus payments, funding to supplement state and local budgets, an increase in the federal minimum wage, and nearly \$170 billion for K-12 and higher education - \$130 billion of which is dedicated "for schools to safely reopen." The plan comes a little less than a week before Biden's inauguration, and as new data shows schools [reversing the trend of reopening](#) as virus cases continue to surge. If passed, the aid would help schools further address [climbing costs](#) and concerns associated with pandemic disruption.



[Education in the 2021 State of the State Addresses](#) | FutureEd

FutureEd, an independent think tank at Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy, has

compiled a real-time tracker of education-related initiatives emerging from governors' annual state of the state addresses. So far, FutureEd analysis has identified a nationwide focus on reopening schools as states continue announcing their plans for using new federal relief funding.



Lessons from an Insurrection: A Day After D.C. Rampage, How 15 Educators from Across U.S. Helped Students Make Sense of the Chaos | The 74 Million

In the days following the chaos in the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, educators across the nation were tasked with having [difficult and complex conversations](#) with students and, in typical fashion, many rose valiantly to the challenge - finding personal and meaningful ways to unpack the events alongside the kids in their classrooms or on their screens, while also driving home lessons learned in history, government, and English language arts. In many places, teachers and students grappled with the implications of the day with [principals and district leaders](#), who, like Principal Eric Julia in Ohio, offered words of support, empathy, and shared resilience, "I am so proud to contribute to our democracy through public education. Our work matters. It mattered yesterday. It matters today, and it will always matter. And your work as teachers matters the most."



THE QUICK LIST

[Pandemic's toll shows up on students' college applications](#) | The Associated Press

[Patty Murray Set to Lead Senate Education Committee After Democratic Wins in Georgia](#) | Education Week

[Nevada Closes Digital Divide with Boots-On-The-Ground Effort](#) | Education Dive

[How Online Teaching Needs to Improve—Even After the Pandemic](#) | Education Week