

Today, the Bidens visit a public school in Washington, D.C., to welcome students back for another year — or, at least, those kids who actually show up.

Nowhere is America's current education crisis quite as acute as the District of Columbia. Now, in the aftermath of COVID and the subsequent Democrat-mandated lockdowns, the problem is getting so much worse:

- * D.C. students have fallen behind by an average of five months in math and four months in reading — while minority students have fallen even farther behind.
- * 19 percent of all students were proficient in math last year — down from 31 percent in 2019.
- * 31 percent of all students were proficient in reading and writing last year — down from 37 percent in 2019.
- * The decline in test scores was most evident among Black and Hispanic/Latino students.
- * Almost half of ALL students are "chronically absent," or absent for more than 10 percent of the entire school year — up from 29 percent three years ago.
- * More than one-third of all students reported feeling "sad or hopeless" last year.
- * The estimate percentage of ninth graders who will earn a college degree within six years of high school graduating has plummeted to just eight percent.

Meanwhile, Republicans have a solution —

expanding Washington, D.C.'s highly successful "opportunity scholarship" program. Over the past two decades, tens of thousands of District students — primarily from low-income neighborhoods — have received scholarships to attend private schools — and it works. Nearly 90 percent of scholarship recipients graduated high school.

As students continue to reel from the pandemic's effects, it's no secret how we got here.

Democrats did this and they're hoping Americans forget. They won't.

President Biden visits D.C. middle school to mark the start of classes

The president was joined by first lady Jill Biden, a longtime English professor, at Eliot-Hine Middle School

President Biden and first lady Jill Biden greet students at Eliot-Hine Middle School in Washington on Monday. (Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP)

"Oh, my God, it's really you!" shouted a student at Eliot-Hine Middle School in Northeast Washington, where President Biden stopped by Monday to mark the

new school year. There was so much squealing and excitement that one staffer marveled, "This is like the Beatles."

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Biden, accompanied by first lady Jill Biden, first visited the lunchroom — where a big banner touted the school's valued traits of "excellence, responsibility, integrity and communications." Then they dropped by an eighth-grade math class at the 300-student campus.

In the classroom, decorated with colorful posters that displayed math symbols and the order of operations, one student proclaimed loudly, "Joe Biden!" The president hugged one excited child and talked about whether she could someday be-

come president.

"The hardest thing is to come back after three months of not doing any work, not doing any homework," Biden told the students. Their teacher, Heather Thomas, explained that the class would spend the day reviewing concepts from last school year to see what everyone remembered.



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Biden-Harris Administration Seeks Nominations for Non-Federal Negotiators to Continue Rulemaking Process on Student Debt Relief

Representatives of 14 constituency groups will start discussing regulatory ideas on October 10

The Biden-Harris Administration today announced the next step in its work to open a new pathway to student debt relief by soliciting nominations for negotiators who will participate in public rulemaking negotiation sessions this Fall. The Department is seeking nominations from 14 different constituency groups for the Student Loan Relief committee, which will meet for three virtual sessions beginning October 10.

"When the Supreme Court ruled against the Biden-Harris Administration's student debt relief

plan, we did not waste a moment opening up a new pathway to debt relief," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. "As we pursue debt relief through this process, one of the most important steps is bringing together diverse perspectives to help us craft the strongest possible regulations for borrowers. The Student Loan Relief committee will include students, borrowers, state officials, civil rights advocates, representatives from colleges and universities, and other stakeholders so we can make sure all voices are heard and the needs of borrowers are fully considered."

These nominations are the second step in a process known as "negotiated rulemaking," which is required under the Higher Education Act for any regulations related to the Federal student financial aid programs. This process started with a public hearing held by the Department on July 18 and a request for public comments, which solicited more than 24,000 responses. Next, negotiators selected by the Department will meet virtually on October 10-11, November 6-7, and December 11-12 to discuss ideas for regulatory reform. Sessions will be open to the public and include opportunities for public comment.

The Department will provide updated information on this negotiated rulemaking committee on an ongoing basis here.

The Biden-Harris Administration remains steadfast in its commitment to use all available tools to deliver students, borrowers, and their families the relief they are entitled to under applicable law. Overall, the Administration has approved debt relief for more than 3.4 million people and over \$116 billion in loan discharges. This includes fixes to ensure that borrowers get relief promised by Congress through income-driven repayment programs, Public Service Loan Forgiveness, and discharges for borrowers with a total and permanent disability.

The Department is seeking negotiators representing the following categories, each of which will include a primary and alternate representative:

- Four spots for current students and student loan borrowers based upon the level of program attended. The Department is particularly interested in a variety of experiences with student loans and postsecondary education, including attending different types of institutions, receiving a Pell Grant, and borrowing a Parent PLUS loan.
- Four spots for different types of institutions of higher education, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities and minority serving institutions.
- Two spots for State officials and Attorneys General.
- Two spots for civil rights organizations and legal assistance organizations.
- One spot for a U.S. military service member or veteran.
- One spot for a representative from the Federal Family Education Loan program.

The Department will publish proposed rules for the public to comment on in the months following the conclusion of negotiations. We will then consider public comment and produce final regulations next year.

Nominations can be sent to negregnominations@ed.gov and must include clear information about the nominee, their constituency group, resume and experience, and contact information. Any nomination must be received by September 14, 2023. Please see an unofficial copy of the Federal Register Notice here for additional



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