



## Summary: Making Sense of Federal Policy Series

**Funder Briefing:** 4

**Date:** April 3, 2025

**Topic:** [Making Sense of Federal Policy: Understanding What it Means for NJ: Education](#)

**Speakers:** Robert Kim, Esq., Executive Director - Education Law Center;

Robert B. Morrison, CEO - Quadrant Research;

**Moderator:** Brandon McKoy, President and CEO - Fund for New Jersey;

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### **HIGHLIGHTS**

#### **Education Law Center – Robert Kim, Esq.**

- Mission - protection and advancement of public education and rights of students in New Jersey and nationwide. Engages in litigation, policy advocacy and research to promote public education and student rights. **Burke v. Abbott Litigation:** provide more equitable funding for low-income schools in New Jersey, resulting in significant improvement in funding equity. NJ is the most equitable funded school district in the country.
  - Education Law Center and National Education Association in partnership with NAACP and National Legal Student Defense Network recently sued United States Government to stop the dismantling of U.S. Department of Education. NJ is among the least reliant on federal funding. Title 1 funding for low-income students. IDEA funding is 15 billion dollars annually, a percentage comes to NJ, and it helps students with disabilities. Consequences of dismantling the U.S Department of Education include funding loss, civil rights protection, and lack of essential data collection, and research capabilities.
  - Dismantling the Institute of Educational Sciences and National Center for Educational Statistics means research and data collection from public schools can't be captured, and progress can't be measured.
  - Higher education funding will also be at risk with student aids programs like FAFSA, student loans, work study, public service loans etc. impacting college affordability with high school students heading off to college.
- **Call to Action for New Jersey:**
  - Continued support of state university so students can be allowed to do quantitative and qualitative studies on education.
  - Civic rights data collection needs to be supported to measure the opportunity gaps in public schools.
  - Support for legal services for students to address growing needs of vulnerable populations, particularly immigrants and LGBTQ+ students.
  - Systematic litigation is also needed to defend public education against privatization efforts and to uphold civic rights in education.

- Need to advocate for equitable funding and resources, emphasizing the need for community engagement to ensure all students have access to quality education.
- Students need access to academic freedom, ensuring there isn't censorship in schools, so student continue having access to important authors that lift up the lives and experiences of marginalized student populations.

#### **Quadrant Research** – *Robert B. Morrison*

- Public education in United States is a federal concern but it's a state responsibility with a local function/implementation. It is important to understand that education has always been the responsibility of the state and not the federal government.
- **Average Annual Education Spending (Nationally):**
  - 47% comes from state budgets.
  - 45% from local budget
  - 8% from federal government

The state with largest share of federal funding for public education is Mississippi and they get 23% to support education.

- **New Jersey Education Spending (2022):**
  - 48% from local budget
  - 45% comes from state budgets.
  - 7% from federal funding (\$2.8 billion)

While federal funding is limited, it plays a critical role in supporting programs like Title 1 for low-income, economically disadvantaged students (largest chunk of funding), IDEA for special education students, SNAP program - school nutrition program – free and reduced lunch, and Grants (Race to the Top, ESSER).

- **Clarifying the Role of the Federal Government in Education:**
  - Federal government does not set the curriculum or learning standards. The Board of education is in charge of curriculum.
  - Federal government does not set local educational policies.
  - State attorney general has been instrumental in protecting public education.
- **Community Support:**
  - Need for continuous advocacy to protect public education in New Jersey.
  - Advocate for funding that meets the needs of their communities.