

# Guidance and Updates on Federal Executive Actions Related to Public Education

Updated March 20, 2025

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This page provides updates and context about recent federal executive actions that may impact public education. Our goal is to keep families informed about what these developments may mean for California schools and Oak Park Unified School District (OPUSD), and to clarify what remains unchanged.

On March 20, 2025, a new federal executive order was issued directing a significant restructuring of the U.S. Department of Education. While this order does not immediately close the department, it begins a process to reduce its role and shift responsibilities to other federal agencies and to states. Some federal education programs may be administered differently in the future, but they have not been eliminated.

California law and OPUSD policies remain in effect. Student protections, civil rights, special education services, and state funding continue under California’s education code. The district will continue monitoring any developments at the federal level and will provide updates as more information becomes available.

This page outlines what the executive orders mean, what remains unchanged under California law, and where to find support if you have questions. See the March 20, 2025 updates below, or scroll down for January 31, 2025 updates and additional resources for families.

OPUSD follows all state laws and board policies, including:

- [FERPA](#) (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), which protects student privacy.
- [BP 5145.13](#) & [AR 5145.13](#) (Board Policy and Administrative Regulation - Response to Immigration Enforcement) outline our procedures in response to immigration enforcement actions.
- [BP 0410](#) (Nondiscrimination in District Programs & Activities) requires that OPUSD provide equal opportunity for all individuals in district programs and activities.

Below is an overview of the executive orders, their legal status, and how they relate to our district.

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## March 20, 2025 Update

### 1. Dismantling the U.S. Department of Education

**Executive Action:** *Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities*

- **Issued:** March 20, 2025
- **Summary:** President Donald Trump has signed an Executive Order directing a reduction in the role of the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) and shifting certain responsibilities to state governments and other federal agencies. While Congress must approve the full closure of the department, the order instructs Education Secretary Linda McMahon to minimize DOE operations and transfer functions where legally permitted.

#### What This Means for Families

- **OPUSD Schools will continue operating as usual.** The Executive Order also affirms that federally mandated education programs, including services for students with disabilities and low-income families, will continue to receive funding, even as responsibilities shift to other federal agencies.
- **California state law remains unchanged.** Student protections, special education services, and funding for key programs continue under state law.
- **There are no immediate changes to school funding.** OPUSD receives approximately \$1.2 million in federal funding, supporting:
  - **Title I (Support for low-income students)**
  - **Title II (Teacher training and recruitment)**
  - **Title III (English learner programs)**
  - **Special education services under IDEA**
- State Superintendent Tony Thurmond [issued a statement](#) on March 20, stating, “*While today’s Executive Order signals an intent to dismantle the United States Department of Education (ED), we want to reiterate once again that an Executive Order is not law and that Congress alone holds the authority to close a department that Congress created. Any change to the federal government’s obligations to protect students’ access to public education must come from congressional action.*”

While the federal Department of Education’s role is being reduced, California state law continues to protect civil rights and special education services in public schools. These laws currently remain in effect.

#### Civil Rights Protections in Public Schools

- [California Education Code § 220](#): Prohibits discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and immigration status in all public schools.
- [California Education Code § 234](#) (Safe Place to Learn Act) Mandates that schools provide a discrimination-free environment and take measures to protect students from harassment and bias.

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- [California Education Code § 201](#): Recognizes that California students have the right to an education free from discrimination, harassment, and violence.
- [California Education Code § 51204.5](#): Requires instruction in social sciences to include the role and contributions of various groups, including racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and persons with disabilities.
- [Board Policy 0410](#) (Nondiscrimination in District Programs & Activities) explicitly prohibits discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation in all public schools.

## Special Education Services & Protections

- [20 United States Code § 1400\(d\) \(Individuals with Disabilities Education Act - IDEA\)](#): This section outlines the purposes of IDEA, including ensuring that all children with disabilities have access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.
- [34 CFR Part 300](#): This part specifies the responsibilities of states and local agencies in providing special education services to children with disabilities.
- [20 United States Code § 1412](#): This section requires that all public agencies, including school districts, continue providing special education and related services regardless of administrative changes at the federal level.

## 2. Federal Education Investigations and Oversight Changes

- **Issued:** January–March 2025
- **Order:** *Continuing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy (Issued March 14, 2025)*
  - This executive order directs the downsizing of multiple federal agencies, including the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, and the Minority Business Development Agency. Agencies have been instructed to eliminate non-statutory functions and reduce operations to the minimum level required by law.
- **Executive Action:** *Department of Education Investigates 45 Institutions for Race-Based Discrimination (Issued March 25)* The DOE's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has opened investigations into 45 public and private universities based on allegations that their diversity and inclusion programs violate Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.
- **Order:** *"Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing" & "Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity" (Issued January 20 & 21, 2025)*
- **Summary:** Recent executive actions and federal agency guidance have addressed education policies related to race, gender, and federal funding.

## What's Happening

- The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) has opened investigations into 45 colleges and universities for programs that consider race in admissions, scholarships, or mentoring.
- Executive Orders were issued in January to scale back diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts in government and in institutions receiving federal funds.

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- A February 14 [“Dear Colleague Letter”](#) from the DOE advised schools to end educational programs that consider race, and launched a national reporting portal.
- Courts have blocked some aspects of these federal orders, citing concerns about free speech and due process.
- The March 11 layoffs at the U.S. Department of Education reduced the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) workforce, leading to significant delays in processing civil rights complaints related to race, gender identity, and disability.
- The March 14 Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling lifted a previous injunction, allowing the administration to proceed with restrictions on federal DEI-related funding.
- Schools that receive federal grants with DEI-related components may now face compliance reviews, though California law continues to protect DEI initiatives.

## What This Means for OPUSD

- California laws and OPUSD policies remain unchanged.
- OPUSD does not need to make changes in response to the federal guidance. Our policies already comply with both state and federal non-discrimination laws.
- California state leaders have reaffirmed that DEI and inclusive education programs are protected under state law.
- The federal reporting portal does not trigger automatic investigations or funding cuts, there are legal steps that must be followed. On March 1, 2025, the Department released a set of [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) to assist institutions in complying with this guidance.

## 3. School Vaccine Requirements & Federal Funding

**Executive Order:** *Ending COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates in Schools*

**Issued:** February 15, 2025

### What This Means for Families

- California no longer requires the COVID-19 vaccine for school attendance.
  - OPUSD follows California Department of Public Health (CDPH) guidelines.
  - The federal executive order does not change immunization policies in California.
  - Other required vaccines (e.g., measles, polio) remain in effect under state law.
  - Healthcare facilities may continue to follow their own federal requirements.
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## 4. Federal Budget Reviews and Education Grants

**Executive Order:** *Implementing the President’s “Department of Government Efficiency” Cost Efficiency Initiative*

**Issued:** February 26, 2025

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- Summary: Orders a review of federal discretionary grants and contracts to reduce spending and ensure compliance with new administration priorities.
- Impact: Agencies must prioritize reviewing funds awarded to educational institutions and determine whether any contracts should be modified or terminated.

## What's Happening

- Federal agencies have been directed to review and reduce discretionary grant funding.
- The Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology was eliminated in March.
- A federal court ruled that cuts to teacher training grants violated legal procedures and ordered funding to be restored.

## What This Means for OPUSD

- No current changes to OPUSD's federally funded programs.
- The district is monitoring any developments that may affect grants supporting teacher training, STEM, or special education.
- Guidance on digital learning will now rely on state and non-profit resources.

We encourage families to check this page regularly, as we will continue updating it when additional information or federal actions impacting public schools become available.

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## January 31, 2025 Update

### 1. Immigration & Birthright Citizenship

**Executive Order: "Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship"** (Issued: January 20, 2025)

- This order **eliminates birthright citizenship** for children born in the U.S. to undocumented parents.
- **Legal Status**: The order is currently **blocked by a federal judge** and faces multiple legal challenges.

#### What This Means for Families:

- **No immediate changes to OPUSD enrollment policies.** Every child has the right to a public education, regardless of immigration status ([Plyler v. Doe, 1982](#)).
- OPUSD does **not collect or inquire** about a student's immigration status.
- **Relevant Policies & Laws**:
  - [CA Education Code 234.7, 49076.7](#) – Schools shall not request a student's social security number or immigration status.
  - [BP 5111 \(Admission\)](#) – OPUSD does not require documentation related to a student's immigration status.

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## 2. Immigration Enforcement at Schools

**Executive Order: Rescission of "Sensitive Locations" Protections** (Issued: January 21, 2025)

- This order **removes protections** that previously limited immigration enforcement at schools, child care centers, and other sensitive locations.
- ICE is no longer restricted from conducting enforcement actions near or at school sites.

**What This Means for Families:**

- **California law remains unchanged—ICE cannot enter non-public areas of a school without a judicial warrant.**
- Schools **do not collect or share** information about students' or families' immigration status.
- **Relevant Board Policies & Laws:**
  - [Education Code 234.7](#) – Protects students from discrimination based on immigration status.
  - [BP 5145.13 & AR 5145.13](#) – District procedures for responding to immigration enforcement.
  - [BP 1250](#) – All visitors, including law enforcement, must check in at the front office.

**If ICE arrives at a school site:**

1. Staff will **direct them to the site administrator**, who will contact the Superintendent's Office.
2. ICE agents **must have a judicial warrant signed by a Federal Court judge** (Superior Court judges do not sign ICE warrants).
3. Schools **will not provide student information** without legal authorization under FERPA.

 **Resources:**

- [Immigration and California families](#)
  - [California Attorney General's School Guidance](#) |
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## 3. Gender Identity & Nondiscrimination

**Executive Order: "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism"** (Issued: January 20, 2025)

- This order **defines gender strictly as biological sex** and prohibits federal funds from supporting gender identity-related policies in schools.
- **Legal Status:** The order is expected to face legal challenges.

**What This Means for Families:**

- **California law remains unchanged—students retain the right to self-identify their gender.**

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- OPUSD will continue to uphold its policies ensuring a **safe and inclusive learning environment** for all students.

## Relevant Policies & Laws:

- [California Education Code § 220](#): Prohibits discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and immigration status in all public schools.
  - [California Education Code § 234](#) (Safe Place to Learn Act) Mandates that schools provide a discrimination-free environment and take measures to protect students from harassment and bias.
  - [Board Policy 0410](#) (Nondiscrimination in District Programs & Activities) explicitly prohibits discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation in all public schools.
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## 4. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Schools

**Executive Order: "Ending Radical and Wasteful DEI Programs"** (Issued: January 29, 2025)

- This order **eliminates federal DEI programs** and blocks federal funding for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.
- **Legal Status:** This applies to federal agencies and does not mandate changes in local school districts.

### What This Means for Families:

- **This order does not impact California public schools—state law upholds equity-focused education policies.**
- State law requires public schools to provide all students with an equitable, discrimination-free learning environment.

## Relevant Policies:

- OPUSD's nondiscrimination policies are available at: <https://www.oakparkusd.org/domain/1517>

## 5. School Choice & Federal Funding

**Executive Order: "Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity"**

- Issued: January 29, 2025
- Summary: Promotes school vouchers and aims to redirect federal funding toward private and faith-based schools.
- Legal Status: Implementation details are still being developed.

### What This Means for Families:



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- No immediate impact on California public school funding—school vouchers are not part of California's education system.
  - The U.S. Department of Education is reviewing how federal funds could support private school options—but significant legal and legislative hurdles remain.
  - OPUSD will monitor changes in federal education funding policies and publish updates.
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## Additional Resources & Support for Families

This page provides ongoing updates about recent federal executive actions that may impact public education. Our goal is to keep families informed about changes that may affect public schools, what these actions mean for California law, and how they relate to our schools here in OPUSD.

We understand that some recent federal executive orders have raised questions about student protections, funding, immigration enforcement, and school policies. While these actions are taking place at the federal level, it is important to know that **California law and OPUSD policies remain unchanged**. This page will continue to be updated as new information becomes available.

### General Resources

- [CDE: Obligation to Protect Immigrant Families' Rights to Access Public Education](#)
- [Attorney General Bonta's Statement on Access to Gender-Affirming Care](#)
- [ACSA: State of California Immigration Resources for Schools](#)
- [Immigration Enforcement and School Reference Sheet](#)
- [VCOE No Cost Wellness Supports and Services Now Available](#)
- [Guidance for K-12 schools on Immigration Issues](#) – from the California Attorney General's office
- [Educational Rights of Immigrant Students](#) – resource page for educators and families from the Ventura County Office of Education
- [Ventura County Law Enforcement Statement Regarding Immigration Enforcement](#) – released January 17, 2025
- [Responses to 2025 Federal Actions & Communications](#) — California Department of Education
- [Resources to Support in the Case of Immigration Enforcement on School Campuses](#) — California Department of Education

### Resources for Families

- [Immigration and California Families](#) – a new website from the State of California
- [Know Your Educational Rights: Guide for Students and Families](#) — California Attorney General
- [Resources for California's Immigrant Communities](#) — California Attorney General
- [805UndocuFund](#) — financial relief and advocacy for undocumented families



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## January 31, 2025 Message from Superintendent Wenn

Dear OPUSD Families,

Recent federal executive orders have raised questions about their impact on public education. We want to reassure you that California law remains unchanged, and no modifications have been made to OPUSD's policies or practices. Our staff has received guidance on how these federal actions intersect with state law, district policies, and student rights to ensure that all students continue to receive a safe and inclusive education.

We have created a dedicated webpage to support families with key updates and resources from the California Department of Education, the Attorney General's Office, and the Ventura County Office of Education:

<https://www.oakparkusd.org/domain/1848>.

### OPUSD Policies & Legal Protections

OPUSD follows California law and existing board policies, including:

- [FERPA](#) (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), which protects student privacy.
- [BP 5145.13](#) & [AR 5145.13](#) (Board Policy and Administrative Regulation - Response to Immigration Enforcement) outline our procedures in response to immigration enforcement actions.
- [BP 0410](#) (Nondiscrimination in District Programs & Activities) requires that OPUSD provide equal opportunity for all individuals in district programs and activities.

### Students' Right to Education & Privacy

- Every child has the right to a public education, regardless of immigration status (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1982).
- Schools do not collect or share information about immigration status (CA Education Code 234.7, 49076.7).
- Federal immigration enforcement officers cannot enter non-public areas of a school without a judicial warrant ([CA Attorney General's Quick Reference Guide for Schools](#)).

### Nondiscrimination

- [California Education Code § 220](#): Prohibits discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and immigration status in all public schools.
- [California Education Code § 234](#) (Safe Place to Learn Act) Mandates that schools provide a discrimination-free environment and take measures to protect students from harassment and bias.

### Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)

- California law upholds equity-focused education policies, and OPUSD's commitment to inclusive practices remains unchanged.

### School Funding & Choice

- No immediate impact on California public school funding—school vouchers are not part of California's education system.

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- OPUSD will monitor changes in federal education policies and provide updates as needed.

Please visit our [webpage](#) for more detailed information and access to state and local resources. Please contact your school principal or the district office with any questions.

Thank you for your partnership in ensuring OPUSD remains a safe, welcoming, and inclusive district for all students and families.

Sincerely,

Anais Wenn  
Superintendent

**Thank you for being part of our OPUSD community and for your continued trust in our schools.**