

DIGGING INTO STORIES ON THE GROUND

Pitch Idea Regarding The Dismantling of The Department of Education

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ELEVATOR PITCH

Lawmakers are pushing to dismantle the Department of Education, a move that could strip billions from Title I schools, special education programs, and Pell Grants, while weakening civil rights enforcement. National reports warn of broad risks, and our group aims to investigate how these cuts would hit communities on the ground; it raises awareness by putting people at the center, students losing safe spaces, families missing resources, and teachers left without support—it's not just politics; it's personal.

NARRATIVE

When it was announced in 2024 that Donald Trump had won the presidency, a significant number of students began to worry about the Project 2025 proposal and how it might impact them.

Within this proposal, it was stated that student loan programs, including the Parent PLUS loan, would be removed, as well as loan forgiveness programs. Not only were college students worried;

- parents of students who are disabled**

- students whose first language is not English**

- students who live in low-income areas are also raising concerns about this issue.**

One of the most alarming points in Project 2025, as it relates to education, was the complete dismantling of the Department of Education and the transfer of complete control over education to the states. Already being aware of the racial disparities as they relate to education, HBCUs were directly under attack, with funding being taken, schools being threatened with program shutdowns, and the list goes on.

INVENTORY; STORIES WE'D LIKE TO HIGHLIGHT

People We Have Interviewed so far:

- Sara Feinman is an educator who has worked in an inner city school in Florida, but has moved up North to a whole different school system. She is a U.S History teacher who is well caught up on what's happening.
- Amayah Serrano is a 17-year-old high school senior from Fort Lauderdale, Florida. She's applying for colleges right now but is a little unsure because of the atmosphere of what the current administration is doing
- Isaiah Martin is a college student attending Alabama State University in Montgomery, Alabama. He's an out of state student who depends on financial aid to help him fall through with attending school.
- Abigail Eno, a 4th Year Environmental Engineer, 2022 USDA scholarship recipient. This scholarship was recently discontinued due to the dismantling of the DOE. She shares the benefits of having her scholarship, and how she worries for future generations of STEM majors who will not reap those same benefits.
- Dr. Hernandez Hiraldo, a professor at FAMU, who has taught a range of college level anthropology and religion courses for nearly three decades, while occasionally conducting full time research.
- Ms. Allison Edens is an educator that has worked within the Broward County Public school system for over a decade, who has also held administrative positions outside of being an English Teacher. She has a perspective formed upon seeing the school system change over time.

REPORTING PLAN

Focus: Investigating efforts to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education and the real-world impact on states, schools, and communities

What's Missing:

- Internal ED documents and strategy memos
- Legal analysis from scholars
- Insider interviews with current/former ED officials
- Helpful FOIA responses (many are delayed or unhelpful)

Reporting Done So Far:

- Interviews with students, educators, and faculty
- Multiple FOIA requests filed

Next Reporting Steps:

- Follow up and appeal FOIAs; file new state-level records requests
- Interview ED insiders and congressional staff
- Conduct field reporting in states like Texas and Mississippi
- Consult policy, legal, and budget experts
- Collect and analyze funding-impact data

Challenges:

- Slow/limited FOIA responses
- Reluctant political sources
- Travel and data-analysis needs
- Government shutdown affecting FOIA request Entirely

Thank you!