

Dept. of Education: Secretary Miguel Cardona announces “Back to School Bus Tour 2023: Raise the Bar”

Posted on Friday, Aug 25, 2023

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On Tuesday, Sept. 5, U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona will launch the “Back to School Bus Tour 2023: Raise the Bar” from Sept. 5 to Sept. 8. The week-long, multi-state road trip will showcase the many ways schools, families, and communities are doubling down on accelerating student learning and raising the bar in education.

The “Back to School Bus Tour 2023: Raise the Bar” will feature stops in Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

“This year’s Back to School Bus Tour will demonstrate how states, districts, schools and higher education institutions, with strong support and investment from the Biden-Harris Administration, are already working boldly and creatively to Raise the Bar for education in our country – from fostering academic recovery to investing in mental health supports, strengthening and supporting the educator workforce to expanding out-of-school time programs, and building new career pathways to efforts to increase college access and affordability,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. “To serve our nation’s students well for years to come, we need to see pockets of excellence in some places become systems of success in all places. I’m looking forward to lifting up great models in education and highlighting how our country benefits when we work together to invest in our children and young people – the future of our nation.”

Secretary Cardona will kick off the tour in Kansas where he will focus on pressing issues in education including growing teacher diversity, access to higher education, online connectivity, and family engagement.

On day two, Secretary Cardona will continue in Missouri and Illinois where he will connect with K-12 schools, out-of-school time providers, and higher education institutions in various settings, focusing on how school districts, rural communities, and HBCUs are using historic pandemic relief funds to strengthen core instruction and provide well-rounded educational opportunities in order to help students exceed and thrive in their education, and how schools are using Medicaid funding to provide access to school-based mental health.

Later in the week, Secretary Cardona will be in Wisconsin where he will highlight the impact of high school career pathways programs on student success. This visit comes on the heels of the Department's Unlocking Pathways Summit series which consisted of four regional education-workforce convenings to highlight workforce priorities and opportunities for young people that are growing due to recent federal investments, like the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#), [Inflation Reduction Act](#) and [CHIPS and Science Act](#). This includes expanding access to high-wage, high-demand pathways and skills-based learning opportunities, including Registered Apprenticeships and community college programs, in sectors like advanced manufacturing, clean energy, infrastructure, and cybersecurity.

The tour will end in Minnesota where he will lift up ways that school districts continue to use American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to support the academic recovery and mental health supports of students, ahead of the school year. Over the last two years, schools have invested billions of ARP dollars and additional funds through the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) to help students catch up academically, expand access to mental health supports, and hire more high-quality educators.

Throughout the week, Secretary Cardona, Deputy Secretary Cindy Marten, and Undersecretary James Kvaal, will join national, state, and local school leaders to speak with students, parents, and educators for events that celebrate the back-to-school season and underscore the Administration's commitment to helping students recover from the impacts of the pandemic and continue on the road to success. As part of the "Back to School Bus Tour 2023: Raise the Bar," Administration officials will highlight academic and mental health programs and efforts to recruit and support educators funded by President Biden's ARP, which provided historic resources to K-12 schools, colleges, and universities to reopen schools and help students of all ages recover.

Preliminary details about bus tour activities are listed below. Additional information

and exact timing for each site will be released the day prior to the tour stop. Many of the events will include a press availability with Secretary Cardona and local leaders.

DAY 1:

EVENT 1: Teacher Diversity

WHEN: Tuesday morning, Sept. 5

WHERE: Topeka, Kansas

NOTE: With special guest Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly

EVENT 2: K-12 and Higher Education Partnership

WHEN: Tuesday afternoon, Sept. 5

WHERE: Lawrence, Kansas

EVENT 3: Online for All

WHEN: Tuesday afternoon, Sept. 5

WHERE: Kansas City, Kansas

NOTE: With special guest FCC Chairperson Jessica Rosenworcel

EVENT 4: Family Engagement

WHEN: Tuesday evening, Sept. 5

WHERE: Kansas City, Missouri

NOTE: With special guest Rep. Emanuel Cleaver

DAY 2:

EVENT 1: Mental Health

WHEN: Wednesday morning, Sept. 6

WHERE: St. Louis, Missouri

NOTE: With special guest U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra

EVENT 2: HBCUs

WHEN: Wednesday afternoon, Sept. 6

WHERE: St. Louis, Missouri

EVENT 3: Afterschool Programming

WHEN: Wednesday afternoon, Sept. 6

WHERE: Springfield, Illinois

NOTE: With special guest Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker

EVENT 4: Career Pathways

WHEN: Wednesday afternoon, Sept. 6

WHERE: Peoria, Illinois

DAY 3:

EVENT 1: Early Childhood Education

WHEN: Thursday morning, Sept. 7

WHERE: Rockford, Illinois

NOTE: With special guests Rep. Eric Sorensen and NEA President Becky Pringle

EVENT 2: Career Pathways

WHEN: Thursday afternoon, Sept. 7

WHERE: Madison, Wisconsin

NOTE: With special guest Rep. Mark Pocan

DAY 4:

EVENT 1: Full-Service Community Schools and Mental Health

WHEN: Friday morning, Sept. 8

WHERE: Rochester, Minnesota

EVENT 2: Career and Technical Education

WHEN: Friday morning, Sept. 8

WHERE: Rosemount, Minnesota

NOTE: With special guests Rep. Angie Craig and AFT President Randi Weingarten

EVENT 3: Academic Recovery

WHEN: Friday afternoon, Sept. 8

WHERE: Saint Paul, Minnesota

NOTE: With special guest Rep. Betty McCollum

Biden-Harris Administration Actions to Prepare for a Safe and Successful School Year

Since Day One, the Biden-Harris Administration has taken bold action to get schools back open safely amidst a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic and provide states, school districts, and colleges and universities the resources they need to help students recover academically and thrive.

When President Biden took office, less than half of K-12 schools were open for in-

person learning. Within three months, President Biden had signed the historic ARP, providing \$170 billion in funds for K-12 schools, colleges, and universities to reopen safely, stay open, and put students on the pathway to recovery and success. Over the last two years, schools have invested billions of ARP dollars to help students catch up academically, expand access to mental health supports, and hire more high-quality educators, and today, all schools are safely open for in-person learning and students nationwide are on the path to academic recovery.

The Biden-Harris Administration also launched efforts to expand access to effective academic and mental health supports in K-12 schools, including:

- **Launched the National Partnership for Student Success.** Through NPSS, ED and partners are leading strategic efforts to recruit 250,000 new tutors and mentors to help catch up academically and thrive.
- **Launched the Engage Every Student Initiative** to help communities use ARP funds, alongside other state and local funds, to ensure that every child who wants a spot in a high-quality, out-of-school time program has one, whether through a high-quality summer or afterschool program.
- **Awarded over \$2 billion in BSCA funding** to expand vital mental health services and provide additional support for states and districts to design and enhance initiatives that will promote safer, more inclusive, and positive school environments for all students, educators, and school staff.
- **Provided technical assistance** to states, including dozens of fact sheets, [FAQs](#), [Dear Colleague Letters](#), [webinars](#), and [other guidance](#) to elevate evidence-based interventions and practices to help students accelerate their learning, and to make clear how federal resources can support these practices. This includes launching the [Raise the Bar: Best Practices Clearinghouse](#), which includes hundreds of evidence-based examples of how schools are using ESSER funds to support academic and mental health recovery and how school leaders and communities across the country can leverage these funds.