



ASCD®

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Policy Points

SEQUESTRATION AND EDUCATION FUNDING: A Primer

It's in the news, it's been a presidential debate topic, and it could cause enormous job losses and economic turmoil within months—yet those who set it in motion in Washington are still mired in bipartisan bickering and cannot agree on how to address it.

Sequestration, the 8.2 percent automatic, across-the-board cuts to nearly all federal spending, will happen in January 2013 unless Congress acts to stop it. For education programs, this will result in a loss of \$4.1 billion to states and districts that receive federal money. Unless federal lawmakers act soon, the potential loss of educator jobs, programs, transportation, and key school services could have a devastating effect in every state.

Unfortunately, the difficulty of reaching a bipartisan and reasonable solution to the sequestration fiasco is compounded by additional politically charged budget issues that face Congress at year's end known as the "fiscal cliff." Tax cuts first enacted under President George W. Bush are set to expire, as is the temporary payroll tax holiday in effect this year. Add to these the threat of sequestration and the result is a perfect fiscal storm!

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

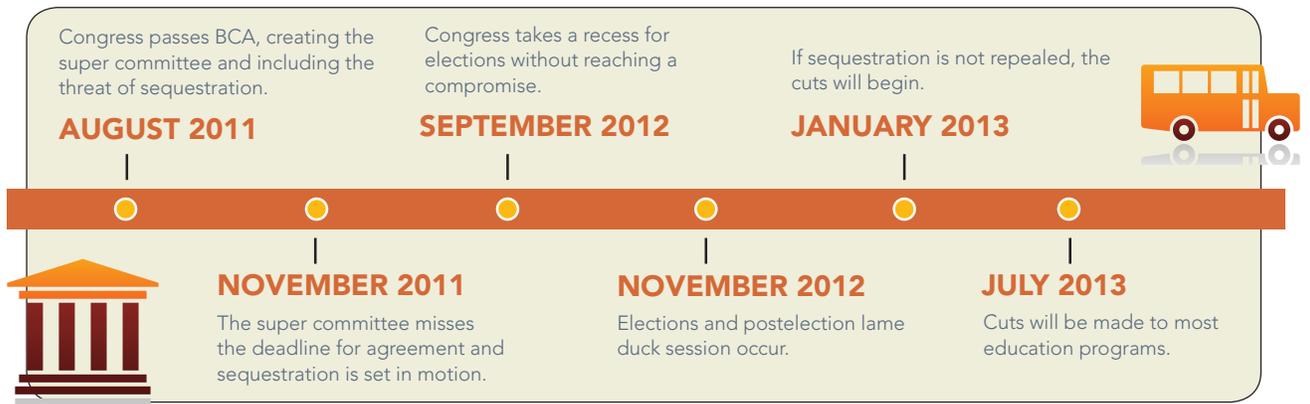
Congress passed the Budget Control Act (BCA) in August 2011, which raised the debt ceiling and created a "super committee" charged with making a bipartisan plan to cut the federal budget deficit by \$1.2 trillion over 10 years. The BCA included sequestration as a threat to force lawmakers on both sides of the political aisle to agree on a balanced approach to reduce the deficit by trimming spending and increasing revenue.

Check out ASCD's sequestration countdown clock to see when the cuts will hit.

The congressional authors of the BCA thought that this trigger of deep, broad, and automatic cuts to both domestic and defense spending would be so painful and widespread that lawmakers would do everything in their power to avoid it. They did not. Sequestration became the law of the land when the super committee failed to agree on a deficit-reduction plan by their Thanksgiving 2011 deadline. Still, Congress gave itself a 14-month delay from the time that sequestration would officially start (November 2011) to when the cuts would actually go into effect (January 2013).

Now that the sequestration cuts are looming on the horizon, congressional leaders are becoming more concerned about the depth of the cuts and the manner in which they will be made. Articulating the views of many in Washington, House Appropriations Committee Chairman Harold Rogers (R-KY) wrote in a recent [letter](#) to all members of Congress, "Clearly, any thoughtful, deliberate agreement will be an improvement over the mechanical and indiscriminate nature of sequestration cuts."

ASCD *Policy Points* is a new ASCD Educator Advocates resource that will spotlight timely education policy issues of importance to all educators. Future editions may illuminate education issues on which you can take action, and will include links to useful resources, infographics, and tips for increasing your influence with policymakers and other education stakeholders. **Sign up at www.educatoradvocates.org to receive the *Capitol Connection* e-newsletter and the most up-to-date information on federal education policy.**



WHAT DOES SEQUESTRATION MEAN FOR EDUCATION?

Even though sequestration will be triggered on January 2, 2013, cuts to most federal education programs will occur six months later in July 2013 and affect the 2013–14 school year. Every district and school that receives federal money will feel the pinch. The largest programs will see the largest cuts (such as Title I and special education). For example, a district that receives \$15 million in Title I funds will have their budget cut by \$1.3 million. If the same district gets

Use ASCD’s sequestration calculator to determine how much your school stands to lose under sequestration.

\$10 million in federal special-education funding, it will lose another \$820,000. Altogether, this adds up to a loss of \$2.1 million in the district’s 2013–14 budget. Many school administrators have already begun the difficult process of deciding whether to lay off school staff; increase class sizes; or, in some severe cases, consolidate schools.

One federal education program will be affected by sequestration in January 2013. The Impact Aid Program, which helps offset the lack of state and

A SAMPLE OF PROGRAMS THAT WILL BE CUT IN JULY 2013	
PROGRAM	CUT BY
Title I	\$1.2 billion
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	\$1 billion
Improving Teacher Quality State Grants	\$200 million
Career and Technical Education	\$144 million
21st Century Community Learning Centers	\$96 million
Teacher Incentive Fund	\$25 million
Carole M. White Physical Education Program	\$6.5 million
Promise Neighborhoods	\$5 million

local tax revenue in districts that include large portions of federal land, will be cut by \$109 million next month.

WHAT CAN EDUCATORS DO?

Educators need to speak out loudly and often! Other interest groups such as defense and health care have been persistent and vocal in their opposition to sequestration and the potential disruption to employment, national security, and citizen safety and well-being. Lawmakers need to hear from educators about the effects of these cuts on U.S. schools and children. Lawmakers also need to hear that teachers may lose their jobs, buses may stop running, class sizes may increase, and schools may close. Indiscriminate, across-the-board budget cuts are not the way to balance the budget, and investments like education with tremendous economic returns must be protected.

Even though most education cuts won’t be felt until July 2013, once sequestration takes effect it will be difficult to undo. In other words, we must stop sequestration now to avoid the cuts next summer. The clock is ticking toward the January 2013 deadline.

ASCD has made it easy for educators to get informed and contact their federal lawmakers—in both the House and Senate—and [urge them to act now](#) to stop sequestration.

- Visit ASCD’s [sequestration web page](#) to access important information about sequestration.
- Use the [sequestration calculator](#) to learn how much your state, district, or school stands to lose.
- Check out the [sequestration countdown clock](#) to find out how much time is left before sequestration is triggered.
- Use our [action alert system](#) to tell your elected officials to repeal sequestration.
- Share these resources with your colleagues, and encourage them to contact their federal lawmakers.