

EDUCATION NEWS UPDATE

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January 17, 2020 Education News Update

TEACHING & LEARNING

Digital game identifies struggling readers

Boston Children's Hospital in collaboration with Florida State University has developed a digital game that assesses children's early-literacy skills. The Boston Children's Hospital Early Literacy Screening System helps identify children as young as age 4 who are behind in reading and need additional support to address issues early on.

Jackie Mader. "The game that can spot preschoolers at risk for reading deficits." *Hechinger Report*. January 9, 2020

<https://hechingerreport.org/the-game-that-can-spot-preschoolers-at-risk-for-reading-deficits/>

Workshops to boost parent engagement

The Philadelphia School District is improving parent engagement through its Family Engagement School-Level Workshop Catalogs, which describe workshops available to parents on topics such as reinforcing students' math skills, fostering a growth mindset and helping with homework. The initiative is part of a larger effort to engage families of economically disadvantaged students.

Natalie Gross. "How an 8-page catalog is transforming parent engagement in Philadelphia." *Education Dive*. January 8, 2020

<https://www.educationdive.com/news/how-an-8-page-catalog-is-transforming-parent-engagement-in-philadelphia/569726/>

Restorative justice works if applied well

Schools are implementing Restorative Justice in Education (RJE) initiatives across the U.S., often to reduce out-of-school suspension, which increases the risk for dropout and arrest. Many RJE initiatives also aim to strengthen social and emotional competencies, reduce gender and racial disparities in discipline, and increase access to equitable and supportive environments for students from marginalized groups. Yet whether these benefits emerge depends on whether the reforms are well implemented. Guided by restorative values and principles (such as dignity, respect, accountability, and fairness), RJE practices are proactive and nurture healthy relationships, repairing harm, transforming conflict, and promoting justice and equity. Educators in schools with well-implemented RJE work to ensure that the "vulnerable are cared for, the marginalized are included, the dignity and humanity of each person in the educational setting matters, and everyone's needs are heard and met."

The authors are professors at Rutgers University and Eastern Mennonite University respectively.

Anne Gregory & Katherine R. Evans. "The Starts and Stumbles of Restorative Justice in Education: Where Do We Go from Here?"

National Education Policy Center. January 14, 2020

<https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/restorative-justice>

Study: 24% of autistic children go undiagnosed

New findings suggest that children whose lives could be improved by getting needed services may be falling through the cracks. A new Rutgers study found that 25% of children with autism spectrum disorder may go undiagnosed. Moreover, children whose autism is not recognized are more likely to be black or Hispanic, according to findings published last month in the journal *Autism Research*.

Rita Giordano, The Philadelphia Inquirer. "A Quarter of Kids With Autism May Go Undiagnosed, Study Finds." *Education Week*. January 10, 2020

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/01/10/a-quarter-of-kids-with-autism-may.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news-2-rm&M=59018212&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

Toxins steal IQ points from children

Exposure to lead, mercury, and other toxic chemicals, especially flame retardants and pesticides, resulted in more than a million cases of intellectual disability in the U.S. between 2001 and 2016, research finds. Furthermore, as the target of significantly fewer restrictions, researchers say, flame retardants and pesticides now represent the bulk of that cognitive loss. Adverse outcomes from childhood exposures to lead and mercury are on the decline in the US, likely due to decades of restrictions on the use of heavy metals. Among toxin-exposed children, the researchers found that the proportion of cognitive loss that results from exposure to chemicals used in flame retardants and pesticides increased from 67% to 81% during the same study period. The substances analyzed are found in a wide range of household products (from furniture upholstery to tuna fish) and can build up in the body to damage organs. Exposure at a young age to any of these toxins can cause learning disabilities, autism, and behavioral issues.

New York University/Langone Medical Center. "These toxic chemicals steal IQ points from American kids." *Futurity*. January 14th, 2020

<https://www.futurity.org/flame-retardants-pesticides-iq-2255842-2/>

4 tech giants affecting K12 education

As Amazon, Apple, Google, and Microsoft make themselves increasingly indispensable in education, teachers are getting worried. The tech giants pour millions into K-12 through philanthropies. Microsoft and Google create products just for schools and give them away for free. All four spearhead efforts to expand computer science courses, teach kids to code, or join the engineering profession. Some enlist educators to serve as representatives and sounding boards for the companies. Their influence is front and center at ed-tech conferences.

Alyson Klein. "What Does Big Tech Want From Schools? (Spoiler Alert: It's Not Money)." *Education Week*. January 7, 2020
<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/01/08/what-does-big-tech-want-from-schools.html?cmp=e-ml-enl-eu-news1&M=59020634&U=252955&UUID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

Principal reacts to day spent as 9th grader

A Georgia principal spends a single day as a 9th grader to get a more authentic view of students' experience. Here's what he learned and what he's changed.

Denisa R. Superville. "What This Principal Learned—and Changed—After His Day as a 'Student'." *Education Week*. January 14, 2020
http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/District_Dossier/2020/01/start_the_new_year_by_walking_in_student_shoes.html?cmp=e-ml-enl-eu-news2-rm&M=59020634&U=252955&UUID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

Brain science and literacy instruction

Teachers at a school in NYS and at another in Pennsylvania are learning to monitor and understand students' brain activity to inform literacy instruction as part of a program through the Haskins Global Literacy Hub of Yale University. Teachers use technology to see how the brain changes as students respond to reading instruction. The hope is that the findings will help determine which students will respond to particular interventions.

Sarah D. Sparks. "Brain Scans in the Classroom? Project Trains Teachers to Do Hands-On Research." *Education Week*. January 15, 2020
http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/inside-school-research/2020/01/brain_scans_in_the_classroom.html

FEDERAL/NATIONAL

Lower-income teens don't get help after overdosing

The majority of teens from low-income families fail to get follow-up services, such as anti-addiction medications after an opioid overdose, according to a study from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Part of the issue is the aversion to using medications to treat opioid addiction, although they have proven to be efficient and effective.

Lisa Rapaport. "After opioid overdose, poor teens rarely get addiction treatment." *Reuters*. January 9, 2020

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-addiction-treatment/after-opioid-overdose-poor-teens-rarely-get-addiction-treatment-idUSKBN1Z82CH>

U.S.E.D. could face new fines for violating a court order

The Magistrate Judge of the U.S. District Court in San Francisco is considering new fines after the U.S.E.D. revealed that it pursued scores of additional borrowers for debt collection in violation of her court order.

Danielle Douglas. "DeVos and Education Dept. could face new sanctions for violating a court order." *Washington Post*. January 8, 2020
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/01/08/devos-education-dept-could-face-new-sanctions-violating-court-order/>

HS completions on par among black and white students

For the first time in 40 years, the percentage of black 18- to 24-year-olds with a HS diploma was nearly the same as that of white 18- to 24-year-olds, according to new data from the National Center for Education Statistics.

Megan Ruge. "Among black and white young adults, high school completions are on par, study finds." *Education Week*. January 14, 2020

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/inside-school-research/2020/01/for_the_first_time_in.html?cmp=e-ml-enl-eu-news2&M=59020634&U=252955&UUID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

Education a key 2020 issue

Among all 16 issues in a December Gallup poll regarding issues in the 2020 presidential race, education had the second-highest share of people rating it as "extremely important" and "very important" at 83%. Education was one of five issues rated as "extremely important" by adults, along with health care, terrorism and national security, gun policy, and the economy.

Andrew Ujifusa. "Poll Points to Education as Key 2020 Issue, Especially for Democrats. But Hang On." *Education Week*. January 15, 2020
<http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2020/01/education-key-issue-2020-poll-especially-democrats.html?cmp=e-ml-enl-eu-news2&M=59021424&U=252955&UUID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

Trump boosts school prayer, faith groups

To solidify his evangelical base, President Trump has announced steps to give religious organizations easier access to federal programs and reaffirmed students' rights to pray in public schools. Under orders from Trump, nine Cabinet departments proposed rules intended to remove "regulatory burdens" on religious organizations participating in federal programs by eliminating a rule that they refer people to alternative providers upon request. At the same time, the U.S.E.D. issued its first updated guidance on school prayer since 2003. The expansion of faith-based groups' ability to participate in government programs is a significant show of support for an evangelical constituency long a vital part of Trump's base. A directive orders states to verify that school districts have no

policies limiting constitutionally protected prayer and to refer violators to the U.S.E.D. That's much like the 2003 guidance, but the directive goes further in requiring states to provide ways for making complaints against schools. Collin Binkley and Elana Schor ASSOCIATED PRESS. "Trump boosts school prayer, faith groups." *Public Broadcasting System* January 17, 2020 <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/trump-boosts-school-prayer-faith-groups-as-he-rallies-base>

NEW YORK STATE

Poor NYS districts not given needed financial support

Under NYS's funding formula, school districts in less-wealthy areas are outspent by districts with higher property values and stronger tax bases, according to a *Newsday* analysis. The disparities are tied to the way in which the system is mainly funded, through property taxes. Districts with expensive homes or commercial real estate can generate greater amounts of tax revenue than poorer districts, even though tax rates in wealthier communities are generally lower. The impact is especially noticeable in advanced academic programs. Underfunded schools cannot afford to provide college-level Advanced Placement classes or high-tech courses needing expensive equipment. The need for a funding overhaul has become more urgent since 2012-13, when the state first tightened "cap" restrictions on property taxation. Caps make it harder for poor districts to raise revenue locally. While this article focuses on Long Island, the same funding issues exist statewide.

John Hildebrand & Michael R. Ebert. "Uneven formula? Dollars for education often scarce in high-need districts." *Newsday*. January 11, 2019 https://www.newsday.com/long-island/education/school-funding-aid-inequality-1.40477913#user=5c8795827e553f56154105c0&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Morning-Update

Billionaires court NYS Senate Democrats' support for charter schools

This article describes a recent event held by lobbyists for wealthy contributors who seek funding for charter schools. Democrats accepting cash from charter proponents isn't new, but some were stunned by the chumminess displayed. Denis Slattery. "Senate Dems play nice with deep-pocketed charter school supporters despite progressive opposition." *NY Daily News*. January 13, 2020 <https://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/ny-senate-democrats-charter-schools-20200114-di5n6ahcqnaitiq5joic266esu-story.html>

NYS Legislative houses not coordinated

Despite controlling both chambers, Assembly Democrats and Senate Democrats haven't always been on the same page in the early days of this session. So far this session there has been limited coordination between the chambers. Zach Williams. "Are the Assembly and state Senate working together?" *City & State/NY*. January 13, 2020

https://www.cityandstateny.com/articles/politics/new-york-state-are-assembly-and-state-senate-working-together.html?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Timesunion_Capcon&stn=nf

Gun-rights group wants NYS schools to beef up 2nd Amendment curriculum

A gun-rights group based in Western New York is pushing for all NYS public schools to beef up their Second Amendment curricula. Activists behind 2AWNY.com have sent SED officials a draft curriculum. Proponents argue that schoolchildren should know the role guns played in the formation of the United States as a Democracy.

Rachel Silverstein. "Gun-rights group urges Second Amendment education in NY schools." *Albany Times Union*. January 14, 2020 https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Gun-rights-group-urges-Second-Amendment-ed-in-NY-14972128.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Timesunion_Capcon&stn=nf

State comptroller: School property taxes capped at 1.81%

Annual caps, set by the state based on inflation rates, limit the amount of revenues known as tax levies that school systems and municipalities can raise. Growth in school property taxes for the state will be capped at 1.81% for the 2020-21 academic year, representing the tightest restriction in three years, state Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli announced Tuesday. Annual caps, set by the state based on inflation rates, limit the amount of revenue known as tax levies that school systems and municipalities can raise in any given year. Next school year's restriction is tighter than the 2% caps set in 2019-20 and 2018-19.

John Hildebrand. "State comptroller: School property taxes capped at 1.81% for 2020-21." *Newsday*. January 14, 2020

https://www.newsday.com/long-island/education/cap-on-school-taxes-1.40610830#user=5c8795827e553f56154105c0&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Afternoon-Update

Regents working on standards for computer science

The NYS Board of Regents has moved to approve learning standards for computer science and digital fluency. In NYS, just 44% of all public HSs teach computer science. Few public HSs in NYS offer advanced computer science classes and students are graduating unprepared to join the booming technology industry. Compounding the problem is the state's shortage of educators with the skills to teach computer science to K-12 grades. The standards were conditionally approved by the Regents P-12 Committee on January 13, leaving additional time for the SED to engage with early learning experts to ensure the K-2 standards are developmentally appropriate and implemented equitably across the state. The standards will be returned to the Board later this year for final adoption.

Rachel Silberstein. "N.Y. Board of Regents approves computer science education standards." *Albany Times Union*. January 14, 2020 https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/N-Y-Board-of-Regents-to-adopt-computer-science-14973911.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Timesunion_Capcon&stn=nf

NYS HS graduation rates rise to 83.4%

The NYSED reports that the graduation rate for students graduated by August 2019 rose to 83.4%, up 0.8% from 82.6% for 2018. The latest graduation rate was 7.3% higher than in 2010 when it was 76.1%. Some of the findings:

■ Last year's graduation rate improved for black and Hispanic students, for students with disabilities and for English language learners. All Big 5 city districts saw gains, led by Rochester which still had the lowest graduation rate among the largest districts, but had the biggest gain.

■ The state's charter schools' graduation rate rose nearly 3% to 80.8%. Also, the gap in graduation rates between black and Hispanic students and their white peers narrowed again this year, closed by 3.4 percentage points.

■ The rate was 90% for white students; 75.3% for black students and 74.5% for Hispanic students.

■ Wealthy districts had the highest graduation rates at 95.1%, compared to 70% for the highest-need districts.

■ The graduation rate for English language learners improved, up 4.8 percentage points.

■ Female students continued to graduate at a higher rate than their male counterparts: 87% to 79.9%.

■ Students who were economically disadvantaged graduated at a higher rate with more time, graduating at a rate of 3.9 percentage points higher with one extra year and 5.6 percentage points higher with another two years in HS.

Joseph Spector, Albany Bureau Chief *USA TODAY NETWORK*. "A leap in the right direction." *Democrat & Chronicle*. January 17, 2020
<https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/politics/albany/2020/01/16/new-graduation-rates-in-new-york-heres-how-schools-fared/4488085002/>