

EDUCATION NEWS UPDATE

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October 16, 2020 Education News Update

TEACHING & LEARNING

Parents worry about learning loss via remote learning

In a recent survey, 76% of public school parents reported that their children are attending school remotely either full time or part time. The remainder reported their children are receiving primarily in-person instruction. Among all parents, 38% said they felt their children were now learning less.

Alyson Klein. "Parents Worry About Learning Loss in Remote Education Environments." *Education Week*. October 12, 2020

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/DigitalEducation/2020/10/parents_children_learn_more_in.html?cmp=e-ml-enl-eu-news2&M=59722706&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

Parents want high-quality remote instruction

Schools should focus on "access to consistent, high-quality remote or online learning," according to 54% of parents surveyed by the National Parents Union; 37% said want a safe return to in-person instruction to be prioritized.

Matt Barnum. "With most U.S. students still learning online, parents say they want better virtual instruction." *Chalkbeat*. October 8, 2020

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/10/8/21508138/parents-schools-covid-online-poll>

Hybrid instruction challenges teachers

As some schools reopen, many are balancing teaching students remotely and in the classroom using a hybrid model. However, teachers report challenges with the format, saying their time and attention are divided and it's unclear whether the approach is sustainable.

Kalyn Belsha. "Teaching in-person and virtual students at once? It's an instructional nightmare, some educators say." *Chalkbeat*. October 1, 2020

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/10/1/21497795/teaching-in-person-and-virtual-students-at-once-is-an-instructional-nightmare-some-educators-say>

Social studies role-play teaches critical thinking

Students nationwide are thinking critically about European colonization of the US in a social studies role-play created by an educator in Portland, in which Christopher Columbus goes on trial. The People vs. Columbus, et al. teaches skills, such as developing an argument and using evidence and historical knowledge in making the case.

Kara Newhouse. "Learning About Christopher Columbus By Putting Him on Trial." *KQED/Mindshift*. October 9, 2020

<https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/56762/learning-about-christopher-columbus-by-putting-him-on-trial>

Will districts replace inclement weather days?

Some districts have replaced inclement weather days with online learning, which made the transition to remote instruction during the coronavirus pandemic operate more smoothly.

Samantha Hernandez. "No more snow days after COVID-19? These schools used online learning to cancel them." *USA TODAY*. October 11, 2020

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2020/10/11/covid-snow-day-school-online-class/5904220002/>

Supporting digital citizenship

Schools can use student safety platforms to help develop students into better digital citizens, writes Jim Gray, executive director of teaching and learning at Vancouver, Washington Public Schools. He offers five strategies, including sharing with students that their online communication and actions are monitored and turning questionable decisions into learning opportunities rather than "gotcha" moments.

Jim Gray. "5 ways student safety platforms promote digital citizenship." *Smart Brief/Education*. October 13, 2020

https://www.smartbrief.com/original/2020/10/5-ways-student-safety-platforms-promote-digital-citizenship?utm_source=brief

Study: Suspensions tied to learning loss

MS and HS students in 28 districts experience more than a year of learning loss as a result of suspensions, with Black students being disproportionately affected, according to a study by The Civil Rights Project at UCLA. Experts assert that during the pandemic, it is even more important to consider alternatives to suspension.

Linda Jacobson. "Study: In 28 Districts, Middle and High School Students Lose More Than a Year of Learning Due to Suspensions." *The 74*. October 12, 2020

<https://www.the74million.org/article/study-in-28-districts-middle-and-high-school-students-lose-more-than-a-year-of-learning-due-to-suspensions/>

Momentum builds for integration in education

New York City, Los Angeles and Miami school districts, among others, have joined the Bridges Collaborative to work toward racial and economic integration of schools. The effort, launched in May, also includes housing groups.

Kalyn Belsha & Sarah Darville. "A new national effort to promote school integration is underway. More than two dozen school districts want in." *Chalkbeat*. October 9, 2020

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/10/9/21509770/new-national-effort-school-integration-bridges-collaborative-desegregation>

Essential characteristics of effective leaders

Great leaders should be respected for the methods they used to achieve results, rather than judging outcomes alone, writes Activate Group CEO Howard Shore. "We can choose whether we want to have integrity, be respectful, have humility, be consistent, be influential -- or not," he writes.

Howard M. Shore. "A person's character is the foundation of great leaders." *Smart Brief/Leadership*. October 9, 2020
https://www.smartbrief.com/original/2020/10/persons-character-foundation-great-leaders?utm_source=brief

Traits of a positive school climate

The article presents features of a healthy school culture and how principals can build and sustain them. The single most important job of the principal is creating a school environment where students feel safe, supported, engaged, and accepted, according to many child development and school leadership experts. Brain development flourishes when children feel emotionally and physically safe, when they know they have adults who care about them, and when they are challenged in their learning.

Arianna Prothero. "The Essential Traits of a Positive School Climate." *Education Week*. October 13, 2020
<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/10/14/the-essential-traits-of-a-positive-school.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1&M=59724826&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

When students learn from home, do school or home rules prevail?

Schools are struggling to identify what's appropriate in remote learning classrooms. In the learn-from-home world, friction can develop when extending regular classroom discipline into young people's previously private spaces. Issues include dress codes and the presence of toy guns and other items visible in students' homes. Along with other experts, Miranda Johnson, director of the Education Law and Policy Institute at Loyola University, urges caution and suggests teachers address disruptive behavior in a way that avoids "exclusionary consequences."

Kathleen Foody. "When School Is Home and Home Is School, Which Rules Prevail?" *Associated Press*. October 14, 2020
<https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-race-and-ethnicity-us-news-ap-top-news-chicago-0a5f5dfca428177c488f27f64914e5d0>

Dip noted in student engagement this past spring

Student engagement fell in the spring when many schools adopted remote instruction, according to data from Remind, which supports digital communication among schools, students and parents. The company's data shows a nationwide decline of engagement on average of 8% to 17% and that roughly 1.3 million students stopped engaging altogether. The company has released estimates showing a precipitous drop in school-student communication at the end of the 2019-2020 school year, right after the coronavirus prompted schools to switch to remote classes.

Brian Bradley. "More Than a Million Students Disengaged from School at End of Academic Year, Analysis Suggests." *Education Week*. October 13, 2020
<https://marketbrief.edweek.org/marketplace-k-12/million-students-disengaged-school-end-academic-year-analysis-suggests/>

To eliminate racism in school, control who is hired

The teachers that principals hire is one of the most powerful levers for turning schools into anti-racist institutions. School leaders can ask about cultural bias, community wealth, how prospective teachers will build positive relationships with students, and show candidates' worldviews will impact their teaching.

Denisa R. Superville. "To Root Out Racism in Schools, Start With Who You Hire." *Education Week*. October 13, 2020
<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/10/14/to-root-out-racism-in-schools-start.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1&M=59726337&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

Teachers still being evaluated – many say it's not fair

Teachers are navigating new technologies, adjusting to different ways of teaching, and trying to reach students who lack internet access and stability at home. And there's yet another looming stressor: teacher evaluations.

Madeline Will. "Yes, Teachers Are Still Being Evaluated. Many Say It's Unfair." *Education Week*. October 15, 2020
<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/10/15/yes-teachers-are-still-being-evaluated-many.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1-rm&M=59728117&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

Survey: In-person learning expands, student absences increase, teachers work longer

In-person teaching is expanding, but hybrid approaches to instruction remain the most popular, an EdWeek Research Center survey found. Full-time in-person instruction is now taking place in more schools, as is a hybrid of face-to-face and virtual learning. Fully remote instruction, at least for now, is losing ground. At the same time, student absence rates are rising, even where kids have returned to school buildings, and teachers are working longer hours than they were in the spring.

Holly Kurtz. "In-Person Learning Expands, Student Absences Up, Teachers Work Longer, Survey Shows." *Education Week*. October 15, 2020
<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/10/15/in-person-learning-expands-student-absences-up-teachers.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=59728117&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

FEDERAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Rapid COVID-19 test not as accurate

The new, easy-to-use rapid test kits, public health experts stress, can help drive down transmission in school buildings, and control the need to quarantine. The tests require no lab equipment and produce results within 15

minutes, much faster than the more accurate and more common COVID-19 tests. But since the new test is less accurate, mask wearing and physical distancing must continue.

Evid Blad. "Why Rapid Coronavirus Tests in Schools May Not Be the 'Game Changer' Some Officials Hope For." *Education Week*. October 9, 2020 <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/10/09/why-rapid-coronavirus-tests-in-schools-may.html?cmp=e-ml-enl-eu-news1&M=59721132&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

Supreme Court nominee says courts can't fix all wrongs

U.S. Supreme Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett said on October 12 that "courts are not designed to solve every problem or right every wrong in our public life," as Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee repeatedly cited educators and schoolchildren, among others, who might be affected by her judicial philosophy if she is confirmed. "The policy decisions and value judgments of government must be made by the political branches elected by and accountable to the people," Barrett said on the first day of her confirmation hearing. "The public should not expect courts to do so, and courts should not try."

Mark Walsh. "Amy Coney Barrett Says Courts Can't Right Every Wrong in Public Life." *Education Week*. October 12, 2020

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/school_law/2020/10/us_supreme_court_nominee_amy.html?cmp=e-ml-enl-eu-news2&M=59722706&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

Pandemic creates crisis in education workforce

A national teacher shortage -- fueled by a spike in teacher retirements combined with a shortage of substitute teachers during the pandemic -- is creating concern. "It's the uncertainty and unpredictability that has created a huge, at least immediate, crisis and shortage," said American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten.

Kate Rogers & Betsy Spring. "A shortage of teachers and Covid-19 create a perfect storm for the education system." *CNBC*. October 9, 2020

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/09/teacher-shortage-and-covid-19-create-challenge-for-education-system.html>

Commentary: Charter schools present problems

Charter school after charter school close business. In educating young people, this is unacceptable. Those students are required, by law, to be educated. The money spent to educate those students at the closing charter schools is gone, but those students will return to public schools immediately and cannot be turned away. The charter school movement is sucking funds out of our public schools, enabled by supportive politicians which make supportive laws just for them in return for campaign donations. (Any public school system doing that would result in people in jail.) Charter operators claim to offer "school choice" but testing shows that charter schools are little different from public schools in educational outcomes. They differ solely in their ability to go out of business, which they do at alarming rates. There are several words for this kind of business: scam, con, Ponzi scheme, etc.

Steve Ruis. "The Limits of School Choice." *Class Warfare Blog*. October 8, 2020

<https://stephenruis.wordpress.com/2020/10/08/the-limits-of-school-choice/>

Free school meal waivers extended through June 30

The USDA announced a further extension to its school meal program waivers, which now allow schoolchildren to receive free meals through June 30. The waiver permits meals to be served outside prescribed settings and to be picked up by students' parents and guardians.

Teghan Simonton. "USDA extends waivers for free school meals." *Tribune Review* (Pittsburgh, PA). October 12, 2020

<https://triblive.com/news/world/usda-extends-waivers-for-free-school-meals/>

Pandemic may drive decline in school enrollment

Dozens of school districts in 20 states are seeing declines in public-school enrollment, following what had been a steady increase in enrollment over 15 years. This decline is attributed in many cases to the coronavirus pandemic.

Anya Kamenetz. "Enrollment Is Dropping In Public Schools Around the Country." *National Public Radio/Morning Edition*. October 9, 2020

<https://www.npr.org/2020/10/09/920316481/enrollment-is-dropping-in-public-schools-around-the-country>

Role of politics and unions in school reopening decisions

Unions and community support for President Trump had a significantly larger influence on district decisions about in-person instruction than the pandemic, according to researchers. The working paper from two political science professors released recently looked at more than 10,000 school districts' reopening plans for this school year, and studied the correlation between those decisions and indicators based on politics, public health, and market forces.

Andrew Ujifusa. "Untangling the Role of Trump, Unions, and Politics in School Reopening Decisions." *Education Week*. October 13, 2020

<http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2020/10/trump-unions-coronavirus-school-closures.html?cmp=e-ml-enl-eu-news2&M=59724826&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

SCOTUS nominee Barrett: Brown v. Board of Education is 'superprecedent'

U.S. Supreme Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett on October 13 called the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* desegregation decision one of a handful of "superprecedents" that it would be "unthinkable" to be overruled. The comments came during questioning before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Mark Walsh, "Says 'Brown v. Board of Education' Is 'Superprecedent' Beyond Overruling." *Education Week*. October 13, 2020

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/school_law/2020/10/barrett_says_brown_v_board_of_education.html?cmp=e-ml-enl-eu-news3&M=59724826&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

CDC guidance regarding schools' COVID-19 testing

As states received federal shipments of rapid new COVID-19 tests, the CDC offered guidance on how and when schools should test students and staff with those tests and others. It suggests schools prioritize symptomatic

individuals and those who've had close contact with those who may be ill with the virus. In a departure from previous CDC guidance, the document also discusses how schools in areas with higher risk of transmission may test broader pools of students and staff as a surveillance tool.

Evie Blad. "CDC Offers Cautions, Guidance for Schools' COVID-19 Testing Strategies." *Education Week*. October 14, 2020
<http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2020/10/school-covid-19-testing-cdc-guidance.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=59726337&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

Federal judge: No Constitutional right to civics education

A federal court judge ruled on October 13 that the U.S. Constitution does not include a right to civics education, despite commending the thrust behind **a lawsuit brought by Rhode Island high school students that hinged on that argument**. The ruling by the U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island, for now means that Rhode Island won't have to remedy what the students argued was substandard civics preparation in many schools, in violation of their rights. But the plaintiffs have already indicated they plan to appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals. Other similarly themed lawsuits have prevailed on appeal.

Stephen Sawchuk. "There's No Constitutional Right to Civics Education, a Federal Judge Reluctantly Concludes." *Education Week*. October 14, 2020
http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2020/10/theres_no_constitutional_right.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=59726337&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

K-12 support staff hit by school workforce cuts

There are signs that K-12 education job cuts are more heavily falling on staff like bus drivers, teacher aides and custodians, as opposed to teachers, as the pandemic stresses public budgets and as legions of students attend classes online at home. But experts caution it is still difficult to get a clear picture of the mix of furloughs, layoffs and hiring freezes in recent months. This is partly due to limitations with education employment data, but also because thousands of school districts are making local hiring and staffing decisions based on uncertain financial outlooks, shifting conditions with the virus, and fluctuations in student enrollment levels. Labor Department figures show education employment shrank by 280,000 jobs in September. If mostly support staff have lost jobs or had hours cut, it is like the broader economy, where lower income people are most likely to report being out of work.

Bill Lucia. "K-12 Support Staff Hit by School Workforce Cuts." *Route Fifty*. October 15, 2020
<https://www.route-fifty.com/finance/2020/10/k-12-education-workforce-cuts-coronavirus-covid-layoffs-schools/169264/>

NEW YORK STATE

Teaching not normal during new normal

Teaching in this new normal of COVID-19 is anything but normal, Long Island teachers say. They've had to change the way they prepare lessons, adjusting to remote learning, as well as avoiding group activities, making sure kids wear masks, and configuring ways through tech glitches.

Eric Schneider. "Long Island teachers: Teaching in this new normal is anything but." *Newsday*. October 10, 2020
https://www.newsday.com/long-island/education/teaching-in-new-environment-1.50032007?user=5c8795827e553f56154105c0&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Morning-Update

NYS Supreme Court: School board & superintendent violated open meeting law

A ruling from the NYS Supreme Court found that the Lake George superintendent and school board violated an open meeting law, but did not give Lake George United for Education what they wanted — their assistant principal back. The decision concluded that the breach of the open meetings law doesn't void or reverse the board's March 2018 resolution to remove an assistant principal in favor of hiring a curriculum coordinator.

Wendy Liberatore. "Lake George board, superintendent violated open meeting law, judge rules." *Albany Times Union*. October 12, 2020
https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Lake-George-board-superintendent-violated-open-15639455.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Timesunion_DailyBrief&stn=nl&sid=5ae0930791d15c3e666094a8

Report: NYS districts with low-income students much more likely to be teaching remotely

A new report from Education Trust – New York found that NYS school districts with a large share of low-income students are nearly twice as likely as wealthier districts to be teaching remotely this fall. In New York's "Big 4" districts, 82% of students are learning remotely. Remote learning, combined with fewer resources in low income neighborhoods, creates barriers for students trying to keep up with classes from home. The situation deepened already existing inequities between school districts and unveiled a lack of technological resources among families living in lower income areas.

Sarah Taddeo. "Report: Students in lower income New York schools twice as likely to be learning remotely." *Journal News/Lower Hudson*. October 14, 2020
<https://www.lohud.com/story/news/2020/10/14/ny-students-low-income-twice-likely-learning-remotely/3643653001/>

Comptroller: NYSED must ensure quality of district transportation staff

The NYSED must do more to ensure that school districts hire qualified transportation staff and school bus drivers, and that employees get required safety training, according to an audit released by state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli. DiNapoli's review found a significant amount of missing documentation regarding required training for safety as well as discrimination and harassment.

Rachel Silberstein. "DiNapoli audit shows lapses in state oversight of school bus safety." *Albany Times Union*. October 14, 2020
<https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/DiNapoli-audit-shows-lapses-state-oversight-over-15647273.php>