

EDUCATION NEWS UPDATE

Compiled by Judy Wadsworth, *Alpha Alpha*, for the Monroe County School Boards Association and shared by permission. Send comments to judithw@frontiernet.net

October 19, 2018 News Round-up

TEACHING & LEARNING

Studies link repeating grade to dropout rate

Students who were held back in 4th or 8th grade were 5 percentage points more likely to drop out of school in Louisiana and 10 percentage points more likely to drop out in New York City, according to recent studies. A professor at the University of California at Davis says, "The takeaway from this would be that, at a minimum, we should be retaining fewer middle school students."

Matt Barnum. "Holding middle-schoolers back causes dropout rates to spike, new research finds." *Chalkbeat*. October 12, 2018
<https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/us/2018/10/11/holding-middle-schoolers-back-causes-dropout-rates-to-spike/>

Google partnership to teach about online behavior

Google is helping to educate children about good online behavior as part of a partnership with the National Parent Teacher Association and the nonprofit DonorsChoose.org. Schools that adopt the program, "Be Internet Awesome," will receive resources and training about digital safety, among other things.

Nick Statt. "Google's new educational project wants to teach kids how to combat online abuse." *The Verge*. October 11, 2018
<https://www.theverge.com/2018/10/11/17964482/google-educational-initiative-online-safety-positivity-cyber-bullying-awareness>

Classics disappearing from English class due to Common Core

Classics are disappearing from English classes, mostly because the Common Core, which emphasizes "informational text." The Thomas B. Fordham Institute bears big responsibility for the widespread adoption of those deeply flawed standards. It was paid millions by the Gates Foundation to evaluate them, and found them to be acceptable. Then it was paid millions to promote them.

Kristen Blair. "Out go the classics in English classrooms." *Carolina Journal*. August 30, 2018
<https://www.carolinajournal.com/opinion-article/out-go-the-classics-in-english-classrooms/>

District uses assessment to measure SEL

One school district is using the Devereux Students Strengths Assessment to measure students' social and emotional learning competencies. The assessment results can be used to identify students who need additional SEL support.

Victoria Clayton. "SEL checkups at school." *District Administration*. October 15, 2018
<https://www.districtadministration.com/article/SEL-checkups-at-school>

How to help students communicate face to face

Some students struggle with in-person communication and prefer to communicate via text message, according to an education professor at Brigham Young University. He shares several activities to help students build better social communication skills, including some that integrate digital tools.

Curtis Chandler. "Helping Students Hone Key Communication Skills." *Middle Web*. October 14, 2018
<https://www.middleweb.com/38881/helping-students-hone-key-communication-skills/>

Involving teachers in aligning research to classroom needs

In its latest effort to make education research more relevant to the classroom, the Institute of Education Sciences is working with the Jefferson Education Exchange to bring teachers to the table. [Read more.](#)

Sarah D. Sparks. "How Do You Align Research to Classroom Needs? Ask Teachers." *Education Week*. October 12, 2018
http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/inside-school-research/2018/10/teachers_guiding_federal_education_research_priorities.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2-rm&M=58641493&U=252955&UIUID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cd6f6888bfc

Silence and learning

Intentional silence in the school day offers opportunities for deep reflection and learning. Students who have time for contemplative reflection during the school day are better able to retain what they learn, writes the head of Germantown Friends School. She shares how her school ensures students have time to be silent with their thoughts.

Dana Weeks. "The Value of Silence in Schools." *Edutopia*. October 15, 2018
<https://www.edutopia.org/article/value-silence-schools>

CDC: Developmental disability linked to absences

Students with one or more developmental disabilities were two times more likely to be chronically absent, compared with those without such disabilities, according to a report from the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics. The findings, based on National Health Interview Survey data involving more than 26,000 youths ages 5 - 17, also showed that chronic school absenteeism was most common among those with intellectual disabilities and autism. Shaun Heasley. "Report: School Absences More Frequent For Kids With Disabilities." *Disability Scoop*. October 17, 2018 <https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2018/10/17/report-school-absences/25559/>

How principals find balance in time-consuming job

School leaders who delegate to expert staff, adhere to a schedule, and commit to taking care of themselves can thrive, time-management experts say.

Denisa R. Superville. "I Want a Job and a Life: How Principals Find Balance in All-Consuming Work." *Education Week*. October 16, 2018 <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/10/17/i-want-a-job-and-a-life.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1&M=58642884&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

How principals can eliminate toxic adult behavior

Adult agitators or slackers can sabotage morale in schools and undermine principals. School leaders must confront the behaviors directly and diplomatically.

Corey Mitchell. "How Principals Can Banish Toxic Adult Behavior." *Education Week*. October 17, 2018

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/10/17/how-principals-can-banish-toxic-adult-behavior.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1&M=58644128&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

NATIONAL / FEDERAL

Teacher unions facing added lawsuits

In the wake of the *Janus* Supreme Court case, teachers' unions are facing more than a dozen legal challenges backed by right-leaning groups that could further dampen their membership numbers and finances. [Read more.](#)

Madeline Will. "This Road Just Got a Lot Harder: Teachers' Unions Hit With New Round of Lawsuits." *Education Week*. October 15, 2018

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/10/15/this-road-just-got-a-lot-harder.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1&M=58641493&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

Ways to align facilities to education

Microenvironment renovations offer schools a relatively inexpensive way to align facilities to teaching and learning.

Bill Latham. "Commentary: School Infrastructure Is in Big Trouble. Building New Schools Isn't the Answer." *Education Week*. October 15, 2018 <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/10/16/school-infrastructure-is-in-big-trouble-building.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2-rm&M=58641493&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

Survey finds increased hostility toward LGBTQ students

A significant share of survey respondents expressed concern that school staff contributed to the hostile environment for LGTBQ students in schools.

Corey Mitchell. "Hostility Toward LGBTQ Students May Be Rising in Schools, Survey Finds." *Education Week*. October 15, 2018

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rulesforengagement/2018/10/15/lgbt_students_may_be_facing_more_hostile_school_environments_report_finds.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2-rm&M=58641493&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

Some leading 'reformers' disillusioned with standardized tests

The idea that the Big Standardized Test does not measure what it claims to measure, the idea that it actually does damage to schools, the idea that it simply isn't what it claims to be-- while these ideas are presented as new notions for education reformers, classroom teachers have been raising these concerns for about 20 years. After 20 years, folks are starting to figure out that teachers were actually correct.

Peter Greene. "Is The Big Standardized Test A Big Standardized Flop?" *Curmudgucation blog*. October 9, 2018

http://curmudgucation.blogspot.com/2018/10/is-big-standardized-test-big.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+blogspot%2FORjvzd+%28CURMUDGUCATION%29

Family income predicts education success

The author interviews Robert Pianta, dean of the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, who recently conducted a study showing what social scientists have said for at least half a century: Family income makes a greater difference than whether a school is public or private. His study implies the absurdity of ranking schools by test scores, since the result is rewarding schools where the socioeconomic status of families is high and punishing those that educate poor kids by labeling them as "failing."

Robin Young. "Family Income Affects Kids' Success More Than Public Vs. Private School, Study Finds." *WBUR* (Boston). August 27, 2018

<http://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2018/08/27/public-private-school-family-income-study>

Delayed student debt relief to take effect

A federal judge has opened the door for tens of thousands of borrowers to have their debt forgiven, delivering a blow to the U.S.E.D., which opposed the rule.

Stacy Cowley. "Delayed Obama-Era Rule on Student Debt Relief Is to Take Effect." *NY Times*. October 16, 2018

https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/16/business/student-loan-debt-relief.html?emc=edit_th_181017&nl=todaysheadlines&nid=188779071017

World Bank forcing testing regime on Third World countries

The World Bank was created after World War II by the U.S. and Great Britain to ensure their economic influence over countries devastated by the war and domination over former colonies. While the World Bank's practices keep poor countries in perpetual debt to pay for questionable capital improvement projects and for refinancing debt they already owe to wealthy nations. The World Bank will force Third World countries to adopt the curriculum and curriculum-aligned high-stakes testing being promoted by edu-companies like Pearson. Pearson is in line to provide the hardware, infrastructure, and training for the new digital testing system and a "bank" of exam questions.

Alan Singer is a historian, Professor of Education at Hofstra University, and a former New York City high school teacher.

Alan Singer. "When the World Bank endorses 'education reform' we need to worry." *Daily Kos*. October 15, 2018

https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2018/10/15/1804430/-When-the-World-Bank-Endorses-Education-Reform-We-Need-to-Worry?_id=2018-10-15T03:43:18.335-07:00

Commentary: The folly of placing standardized tests at the center of education

Our seniors are not getting smarter as a result of the testing regime imposed on them. "These seniors have had 12 or 13 years of test-centric education, and the kids coming up behind them have also endured what the 'school reformers' designed. Now some so-called reformers are changing their tune ("Perhaps we have been testing too much," they say) and asking for another chance. Others, however, are still calling for more charter schools, vouchers and other aid for private schools, and more anti-union initiatives.

John Merrow, veteran education reporter for PBS and NPR, is president of Learning Matters, a non-profit media production company.

John Merrow. "As Ye Sow, So Shall Ye Reap....." *Merrow Report*. October 17, 2018

<https://themerrowreport.com/2018/10/17/as-ye-sow-so-shall-ye-reap/>

Guide for protecting personal student data

The toolkit is a user-friendly guide to help educators make informed decisions about the use of ed tech and social media in schools to help them protect their students' privacy and their own.

"Educator Toolkit for Teacher and Student Privacy." Parent Coalition for Student Privacy and the BadAss Teachers Association. October 2018

https://www.studentprivacymatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/PCSP_BATS-Educator-Toolkit.pdf

NEW YORK STATE

John Flanagan calls teacher unions 'forces of evil'

State Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan referred to the state's major teachers union as one of the "forces of evil." He is concerned that the coming elections could impact NYS education policy in a way he does not approve.

Rick Karlin. "November elections could impact N.Y. education policy, spending, for years to come." *Albany Times Union*. October 17, 2018

https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/November-elections-could-impact-education-policy-13315352.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Timesunion_Capcon

NYS residents send more tax money to D.C. than they receive

New Yorkers sent \$24 billion more in tax payments to Washington than it got back in federal spending last fiscal year, one of nearly a dozen states that get less from the federal government than it puts in. Those were the findings of a report released Wednesday by state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli.

Joseph Spector. "What NYers send to Washington is much more than they get back." *Journal News/Lower Hudson*. October 17, 2018

https://www.lohud.com/story/news/politics/albany/2018/10/17/what-nyers-send-washington-much-less-than-they-get-back/1668810002/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Timesunion_Capcon

Commentary: Why the opt-out movement

The testing opt-out movement appears to be picking up steam, with 20% of NYS students opting out of standardized exams over the past four years. We don't hear more about the opt-out movement because it's grassroots without clear leadership or advocacy arm. A majority of the NYS families that opted out from state testing in 2018 were from average-need school districts. Parents, educators and other activists get involved in the Opt Out movement because they are dissatisfied with corporate education reforms that rely on test-based accountability, and with the increased role of "edu businesses" and corporations in schools. Rather than threatening districts with punishments if the opt-out rate rises above some threshold, we should seek to understand why parents are choosing to hold their children out from testing. Many families, if they are dissatisfied with what they see happening in public education, may not want to exit the system, but opting out of testing is a way to protest the status quo and to seek input into decision making. If policymakers were more transparent in crafting policies affecting schoolchildren, and listened more closely to the concerns of parents and teachers, opting out could be a thing of the past.

Oren Pizmony-Levy is an assistant professor of international and comparative education at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Oren Pizmony-Levy. "OPINION: The Opt Out movement is gaining ground, quietly." *Hechinger Report*. October 18, 2018

<https://hechingerreport.org/opinion-the-opt-out-movement-is-gaining-ground-quietly/>