

EDUCATION NEWS UPDATE

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October 22, 2021 Education News Update

TEACHING & LEARNING

Commentary: How leaders can balance academics & SEL

Relying on data in a nonjudgmental way and without comparing students with one another is key to bringing students' academic knowledge up to speed this year. Equally as important is addressing students' social and emotional needs and ensuring each student can thrive at school.

Jen Schwanke. "The Anchors That Drive Us: Academic Growth and Social-Emotional Health." *ASCD Inservice*. October 12, 2021
[The Anchors That Drive Us: Academic Growth and Social-Emotional Health - ASCD](#)

How learning pods improve teacher-student connections

Interviews with parents and educators reveal the benefit of flexible, small student groups, such as learning pods that cropped up during the pandemic. Having more control over lessons and schedules allow teachers to develop deeper social and emotional connections with students, show them to how handle social situations and conflicts, and help create a stronger sense of belonging, a study from the Center on Reinventing Public Education says.

The Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) is a nonpartisan research center seeking to rewire our public education system for school coherence, ongoing improvement, and excellence for every student—so it truly prepares every student for the challenges of the future.

Lisa Chu. "What schools can learn from learning pods about supporting effective teacher-student relationships." *Center on Reinventing Public Education*. October 12, 2021. [What schools can learn from learning pods about supporting effective teacher-student relationships | Center on Reinventing Public Education \(crpe.org\)](#)

Literature review of gifted programs

A review of recent research shows how hard it is to increase racial diversity in gifted programs and how the largely white and Asian students who dominate these programs typically don't benefit much from them.

- [Gifted programs provide little to no academic boost, new study says \(April 19, 2021\)](#)
- [Gifted classes tend not to teach advanced lessons and may not help talented students move ahead faster \(April 15, 2019\)](#)
- [Increasing the proportion of Black and Hispanic students in gifted programs is difficult \(April 29, 2019\)](#)
- [Brainy black and Hispanic students might benefit most from gifted classrooms \(March 28, 2016\)](#)
- [Black teachers are more likely to recognize giftedness in Black students \(January 19, 2016\)](#)

Jill Barshay. "What research tells us about gifted education." *Hechinger Report*. October 18, 2021

[PROOF POINTS: What research tells us about gifted education - The Hechinger Report](#)

SEL important for older students also

Experts in SEL and child development say that it's crucial for schools to teach social and emotional skills to 6th -12th graders. This [downloadable has 5 tips on how to make social-emotional learning more relevant](#) to older students.

Integrate SEL into academic learning.

Establish coherence across classrooms.

Focus on adults, too.

Leverage extracurriculars.

Use peer mentoring.

Stephen Sawchuk. "5 Strategies for Teaching SEL to Teenagers (Downloadable)." *Education Week*. October 12, 2021

[5 Strategies for Teaching SEL to Teenagers \(Downloadable\) \(edweek.org\)](#)

New look for early reading instruction

Look for significant changes in early-reading materials. Big names in early literacy like Lucy Calkins, [are revising their materials](#) to incorporate more explicit phonics instruction, per the latest reading science. Teaching children to rely on contextual and visual cues to decipher words will get less emphasis.

Sarah Schwartz. "Popular Literacy Materials Get 'Science of Reading' Overhaul. But Will Teaching Change?" *Education Week*.

October 13, 2021 [Popular Literacy Materials Get 'Science of Reading' Overhaul. But Will Teaching Change? \(edweek.org\)](#)

How staff shortages are crushing schools

Teachers are sacrificing their planning periods, students are arriving hours late, meals are out of whack, and patience is running thin.

Mark Lieberman. "How Staff Shortages Are Crushing Schools." *Education Week*. October 15, 2021

[How Staff Shortages Are Crushing Schools \(edweek.org\)](#)

Studies: Tips to improve testing

Let students "ease into a test" by starting them with easier questions and working their way up, a 2021 study advised. This article offers other tips to help teachers design more effective tests, based on an analysis of more than 12 studies, including to be aware of implicit bias, rigor, and mindset, and to avoid introducing trick questions. Youki Terada. "How to Design Better Tests, Based on the Research." *Edutopia*. October 15, 2021
[How to Design Better Tests, Based on the Research | Edutopia](#)

Commentary: Use 'tour of duty' to develop teachers as school leaders

Schools that want to retain teachers and prepare them for leadership should consider having them spend time in different roles, akin to a "tour of duty" in the military, the principal and CEO of Kellett School, the British International School in Hong Kong. The tactic "develops the school into a talent pipeline, which is constantly attracting dynamic middle and senior leaders who are driving school improvement," he writes. Mark Steed. "A new way of thinking about teacher talent management." *TES (Times Educational Supplement)/UK*. October 13, 2021
[A new way of thinking about teacher talent management in schools | Tes News](#)

Commentary: Use Civics to teach older students SEL skills

Collaboration, empathy, social awareness, and relationship building are some of the same skills that power democracy. Arianna Prothero. "How to Teach Older Students Social-Emotional Skills? Try Civics." *Education Week*. October 12, 2021
[How to Teach Older Students Social-Emotional Skills? Try Civics \(edweek.org\)](#)

Students are suffering a mental health state of emergency

Doctors have seen a spike in significant mental health problems among young people, spurred by isolation, uncertainty, fear, and grief. Alyson Klein. "Children, Teens Are in a 'Mental Health State of Emergency,' Child Health-Care Groups Warn." *Education Week*. October 19, 2021
[Children, Teens Are in a 'Mental Health State of Emergency,' Child Health-Care Groups Warn \(edweek.org\)](#)

Reading remediation results in higher college attendance

Reading remediation during MS proved effective in propelling students into college, according to a study in the *Journal of Public Economics* that looked at a Florida law that took effect in 2004. Students take a remedial class and grade-level class -- during the same year -- in either math or English, and although the effects diminish over time, the students have higher rates of attending college and earning degrees. Kevin Mahnken. "New Study Shows Reading Remediation in Middle School Led More Students to Attend College and Earn Degrees." *The 74*. October 20, 2021
[New Study Shows Reading Remediation in Middle School Led More Students to Attend College and Earn Degrees | The 74 \(the74million.org\)](#)

FEDERAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

ACT scores & participation fell during pandemic

ACT composite scores fell 0.3 points for the HS Class of 2021 to an average composite score of 20.3 points, according to ACT. The scores have dropped every year for the last five, and this year's drop was the largest. A total of 1,295,349 students took the ACT during the year, a decline of 375,000 students. The pandemic resulted in many students being unable to take the ACT or SAT even once, let alone the several times that are common for students, so most colleges went test optional or test blind last year (and most will also be test optional this year). Scott Jaschik. "ACT scores fell during pandemic." *Inside Higher Ed*. October 14, 2021
[ACT scores are down \(insidehighered.com\)](#)

Analysis of claim that students are opting for charter schools

On September 22, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools put out a [press release](#) asserting that charter school enrollment increased during the pandemic in at least 39 states, with a 7% overall increase. A state-by-state analysis of that claim discovered that it was a misleading. Most of the increase occurred at the worst-performing segment of the charter industry: virtual charters. Many brick-and-mortar charter schools lost enrollment. Virtual charter schools have a record of low academic achievement, high attrition, and low graduation rates, as well as massive scandals. Students may have enrolled in virtual schools during the pandemic, but we don't know yet if they stayed or returned to public schools. If they decide to stay in virtual schools, we should be alarmed. Carol Burris is executive director of the Network for Public Education. Carol Burris. "Enrollment jumps in charter schools — with big gains in worst-performing part of charter sector." *Washington Post/Valerie Strauss' Answer Sheet blog*. October 15, 2021
[The real story behind jump in charter school enrollment - The Washington Post](#)

'Moms for Liberty' Group Sets Sights on Local Government

Leaders hope to create a national 'parental rights' movement, starting with school board activism. The group already has 135 chapters in 35 states. The group got its start campaigning against Covid-19-related restrictions, challenging mask mandates and other policies, then added other school-related items to their agenda, such as appropriateness of reading materials for students and the way hot-button issues such as racism are addressed.

Push to dismantle how classes teach race, equality, inclusion

In one district, new rules have been established against classroom displays signaling inclusion and acceptance (LGBTQ+ signs, rainbow flags, Black Lives Matter posters and “safe space” signs) because they’ve been labeled political. Nationwide, other districts have followed suit – particularly those led by conservative boards which are undoing efforts schools have made to include children of color and LGBTQ students and to teach about the full spectrum of the American experience. This extensive article looks at several instances of anti-equity change. Erin Richards and Lindsay Schnell. “Conservative school boards are reshaping US education.” *USA TODAY*. October 21, 2021
<https://rochesterdemocrat-ny.newsmemory.com?selDate=20211021&goTo=A01&artid=4> &/or - *USA TODAY (newsmemory.com)*

ACLU: Oklahoma anti-CRT law violates free speech

Newly passed Oklahoma legislation banning how race and gender can be taught in classrooms is vague, sweeping, arbitrary—and unconstitutional, alleges a new lawsuit filed in federal court. The ACLU alleges that the law harms students of color and weakens what students learn about the state’s history.

Stephen Sawchuk. “Critical Race Theory Law Violates Teachers’ Free Speech, ACLU Argues in New Lawsuit.” *Education Week*. October 19, 2021
[Critical Race Theory Law Violates Teachers’ Free Speech, ACLU Argues in New Lawsuit \(edweek.org\)](#)

Census prompts move for more lessons on indigenous peoples

The number of people listing Indigenous heritage increased by almost 4.5 million in the 2020 census. Many American Natives say the increase in their numbers supports their longstanding argument that Indigenous history should get more attention in public schools. Even before 2020, there was a growing movement to infuse more Indigenous material into school curriculums, to connect students to their roots, and to ensure that all students know about the contributions of Indigenous peoples and to encourage respect for the sovereign rights of tribes.

Tim Henderson. “Census Prompts Push for More Indigenous School Lessons.” *Route Fifty*. October 19, 2021
[Census Prompts Push for More Indigenous School Lessons - Route Fifty \(route-fifty.com\)](#)

Higher ed steps up data protection against threats

Colleges and universities are working to best defend themselves against cyber threats with multi-factor authentication and anti-phishing software. High profile hacks to college and university systems and vulnerability of data are major reasons for concern, according to higher education experts interviewed for this article.

Emily Bamforth. “To protect sensitive data, IT security and researchers must act as teammates.” *Ed Scoop*. October 19, 2021
[To protect sensitive data, IT security and researchers must act as teammates \(edscoop.com\)](#)

NEW YORK STATE

School cafeteria menus limited by national supply chain issues

National supply chain issues in the food-service industry are hitting school cafeterias across the region, prompting last-minute menu changes.

Rachel Silberstein. “School cafeteria menus limited by national supply chain issues.” *Albany Times Union*. October 15, 2021
[School cafeteria menus limited by national supply chain issues \(timesunion.com\)](#)

MC public school enrollment after pandemic

A year after K enrollment plummeted due to COVID-19, Rochester-area suburban schools have mostly regained their losses. K enrollment fell 10% in fall 2020 but gained 10% in fall 2021. Across the county’s suburbs, there are just 56 fewer K students this year than there were in 2019. This year’s 1st grade class has nearly 700 more students than last year’s K class, a jump of 10% across the county. However, in Rochester, K enrollment fell by 36% last year and increased by only 9% this year. Overall, the RCSD reported 21,257 students in September 2021, down more than 4,000 from 2019.

Justin Murphy. “Suburban school enrollment recovers from COVID dip, but it’s a different story at RCSD.” *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*. October 18, 2021. [Monroe County NY school enrollment recovers from COVID; RCSD hasn’t \(democratandchronicle.com\)](#)

Sackets Harbor school installs student support center

Sackets Harbor has used federal coronavirus relief funds to create The Sackets Support Center to address students’ academic, emotional and mental health needs. The space, for MS and HS students, offers an area where students can seek space, quiet, connection or support if they are experiencing a crisis.

Amy Feiereisel. “Kids in crisis: How Sackets Harbor is creatively tackling the mental health needs of their students.” *North Country Public Radio* (Canton, N.Y.). October 18, 2021 [Kids in crisis: how Sackets Harbor is creatively tackling the mental health needs of their students | NCPR News \(northcountrypublicradio.org\)](#)

SED pilot will enable districts to experiment with performance-based testing

State Education Commissioner Betty Rosa has announced that an upcoming pilot program at NYS schools will enable districts to experiment with performance-based assessments as an alternative to Regents exams. The Carnegie

Corporation of New York has awarded the NYSED a \$500,000 grant to support the project which would supplement research related to the department's ongoing review of New York's high school graduation requirements.

Rachel Silberstein. "Alternatives to Regents exams? Pilot program looks at options for New York schools." *Albany Times Union*.

October 18, 2021.

[Alternatives to Regents exams? Pilot program looks at options for New York schools \(timesunion.com\)](https://www.timesunion.com/news/story/alternatives-to-regents-exams-pilot-program-looks-at-options-for-new-york-schools-1107177)

Many NYS public school employees not certified

More than 20,000 public school employees in NYS are currently working without being fully certified after the NYSED initiated a new program last year that temporarily relaxed certification requirements amid the pandemic.

Selim Algar. "More than 20K public school staffers across New York aren't fully certified." *NY Post*. October 20, 2021

[More than 20K public school staffers across NY aren't fully certified \(nypost.com\)](https://nypost.com/2021/10/20/more-than-20k-public-school-staffers-across-ny-arent-fully-certified/)