

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 29, 2021 Education News Update

TEACHING & LEARNING

School reforms that parents want

School debates today feature what seems to be a paradox: Americans report exhaustion with school reform of pretty much every stripe, even as huge numbers of parents voice an appetite for novel options such as private school choice, home schooling, and “learning pods.” Parents’ inclination to focus on solving specific problems rather than system change helps explain the appetite for novel school options.

Rick Hess. “The Kind of School Reform That Parents Actually Want.” *Education Week*. October 25, 2021
[The Kind of School Reform That Parents Actually Want \(Opinion\) \(edweek.org\)](#)

Tough task for 1st grade teachers

Many children missed out on kindergarten or experienced a disrupted version. Now, 1st grade teachers will have to fill in the gaps, and there now exists a case study on providing math and literacy foundations.

Madeline Will. “The Tough Task Ahead for 1st Grade Teachers.” *Education Week*. June 22, 2021
[The Tough Task Ahead for 1st Grade Teachers \(edweek.org\)](#)

Why students need lessons in democracy, civics

Lessons on democracy may be more challenging in our political climate, but such instruction must not be avoided, says John Rogers, an education professor at UCLA and co-author of a study published in the *Democracy & Education* journal. While acknowledging the difficulty facing educators and district leaders, he says students need to develop the “capacity to solve problems together, to dialogue with one another, even when they don’t agree.”

Kara Arundel. “Report: Schools’ role in promoting civic engagement.” *K-12 Dive*. October 21, 2021
[Report: Schools' role in promoting civic engagement growing more important | K-12 Dive \(k12dive.com\)](#)

Colleges offer free digital courses

About a dozen colleges and universities, including Stanford, Princeton and Howard, have joined the nonprofit National Education Equity Lab, which provides free, digital college courses to disadvantaged HS students. A computer science course offered by Stanford has enrolled 225 students nationwide. The program is part of colleges’ efforts to diversify undergraduate ranks; it attacks what admissions calls ‘under-matching’

Lee Hawkins. “Stanford Joins Group Offering Classes to Disadvantaged High-School Students.” *Wall Street Journal*. October 24, 2021
[Stanford Joins Group Offering Classes to Disadvantaged High-School Students - WSJ](#)

Principal: How to design engaging schools

An elementary school principal in Kentucky reports on how he worked with his school’s assistant principal and librarian to guide a school redesign that supported student engagement and active learning. He shares seven tips on encouraging active learning spaces in schools, including giving students seating options.

Wes Cottongim, Ed.D. “7 design tips for active learning spaces.” *Smart Brief/Education*. October 26, 2021
[7 design tips for active learning spaces | SmartBrief](#)

Commentary: How tech can help students build critical skills

Teachers can use a variety of digital resources to foster the skills students need for long-term success. The author, an instructional coach, notes that apps such as Notability and ShowMe can help students strengthen their working memory, while the Read&Write browser extension can aid in flexible thinking. He writes that these and other tech tools can help students develop executive-functioning skills, such as time management, self-control and flexibility.

Eric Rodriguez. “Using Technology to Support 10 Executive Functioning Skills.” *Edutopia*. October 21, 2021
[Using Technology to Support 10 Executive Functioning Skills in Grades 3 to 12 | Edutopia](#)

FEDERAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Opinion: School ratings can backfire

The ranking and ratings of K-12 schools (e.g., recent ranking of elementary schools by *U.S. News & World Report*) are compiled using data such as state standardized tests, demographics and funding, according to the author. The author writes about data collected on New York City's public middle schools, and argues that rankings reflect and reinforce inequalities along racial, economic and other lines.

Aaron Pallas is a Columbia University education professor.

Aaron Pallas. "OPINION: Why school ratings can backfire." *Hechinger Report*. October 21, 2021

[OPINION: Why school ratings can backfire - The Hechinger Report](#)

Commentary: School board members coping with culture wars

The latest target of the culture wars is school boards. In this article, school board members in five different states share what school board officials are dealing with--at meetings and behind the scenes. Right-wing activists are targeting board members over mask mandates and the way that race and American history are being taught.

Anya Kamenetz. "What it's like to be on the front lines of the school board culture war." *All Things Considered/National Public Radio*.

October 21, 2021

[Race, masks and vaccines are fueling school board threats : NPR](#)

NSBA apologizes for use of 'domestic terrorism' term

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) has expressed "regret" for how it sought federal aid to address threats and harassment of school officials. It apologized to its members for its letter last month to President Biden in which the group sought federal help in countering threats, harassment, and violence targeting school officials and said that some of the actions could be classified as "domestic terrorism" or hate crimes.

Andrew Ujifusa. "National School Board Group's Apology for 'Domestic Terrorism' Letter May Not Quell Uproar." *Education Week*.

October 24, 2021

[National School Board Group's Apology for 'Domestic Terrorism' Letter May Not Quell Uproar \(edweek.org\)](#)

Rising demand for SEL

The pandemic and racial justice issues have led to increased demand for social-emotional learning. But the growing interest in expanding SEL efforts is raising concerns about the quality of such programs, a report concludes.

Arianna Prothero. "Pandemic, Racial Justice Fuel Surge in Demand for Social-Emotional Learning." *Education Week*. October 22, 2021

[Pandemic, Racial Justice Fuel Surge in Demand for Social-Emotional Learning \(edweek.org\)](#)

School districts increasingly embrace electric bus fleets

Only around 1% of the nation's school buses are currently electric, but that is changing as school districts begin replacing older, diesel buses with electric vehicles. The move has several advantages, including the possibility of monetizing excess electricity.

Michael Casey. "Amid air quality concerns, districts embrace electric buses." *Associated Press*. October 22, 2021

[Amid air quality concerns, districts embrace electric buses \(apnews.com\)](#)

Census: Almost 3 million fewer students enrolled in U.S.

Nearly 3 million fewer students were enrolled in U.S. schools in the past year, according to Census Bureau data, which marked the lowest share in over 20 years, and indicating the magnitude of the educational disruption

Reid Wilson. "Pandemic leads to sharp drop in school enrollment." *The Hill*. October 22, 2021

[Pandemic leads to sharp drop in school enrollment | TheHill](#)

Parents in poverty used tax credit for back-to-school costs

The expanded federal child tax credit program has provided some relief to low-income families during a time when students are facing personal, academic and financial challenges. The program helped nearly one-third of parents who have a household income below \$25,000 purchase school supplies in July and August, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. The organization suggests that Congress make the child tax credit permanent for families with very low incomes.

Naaz Modan. "Analysis: More families used child tax credit for back-to-school costs. *K-12 Dive*. October 25, 2021

[Analysis: More families used child tax credit for back-to-school costs | K-12 Dive \(k12dive.com\)](#)

NEW YORK STATE

County distributing rapid PCR test devices to schools

Monroe County will begin distributing 100 portable, rapid PCR test devices to area schools next week. The tests are required for students who experience new or worsening COVID-like cold symptoms to return to school.

But rapid tests are in short supply, leaving families to often wait days for results, meaning children miss school and parents miss work. The machines, which cost about \$350 each, are being paid for through a state grant supported by the federal American Rescue Plan Act.

Brian Sharp. "Monroe County schools to receive rapid PCR testing devices for COVID next week." *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*.

October 22, 2021.

[Monroe County NY schools to get rapid PCR testing devices for COVID \(democratandchronicle.com\)](#)

Special education providers will not be allowed to keep money left over from federal PPP loans, due to a recent veto by Governor Hochul. The state Legislature had unanimously passed a bill through both houses that allowed pre-K special education providers to keep at least a portion of the PPP money they didn't use, but Hochul vetoed the bill Monday night. This bill would have allowed pre-school special education providers to keep 1% of the revenue per year over the next four years and up to 4% total. The NYSED, with the state Budget Division's approval, budgets the funding for these special education providers, outside the normal budgeting process through the state Legislature, which is how funding for public schools is decided, so special education providers have not always seen the same increase in funding that public schools do and advocates say this is another roadblock to equal funding.

Morgan McKay. "Hochul vetoes bill that would've let special education providers keep leftover PPP funds." *NY State of Politics/Spectrum News*. October 26, 2021

[Special Education Providers can't keep leftover PPP funds \(nystateofpolitics.com\)](http://nystateofpolitics.com)

NYS to establish rules for monitoring for sudden cardiac arrest among student athletes

NYS will establish rules for monitoring students who are exhibiting signs of sudden cardiac arrest as well as treatment for the problem, based on a law signed on October 26 by Governor Hochul. Sudden cardiac arrest is preventable, and identifying warning signs would help. The measure requires the SED to review information from the state Department of Health related to students with symptoms of sudden cardiac arrest. The information will be posted on the department's website and included in a permission or consent form for student athletes.

Nick Reisman. "New York to address sudden cardiac arrest in student athletes." *NY State of Politics/Spectrum News*. October 26, 2021

[NY to address sudden cardiac arrest in student athletes \(nystateofpolitics.com\)](http://nystateofpolitics.com)