

EDUCATION NEWS UPDATE

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November 19, 2021 Education News Update

There will be no education news update next week – best wishes for a Happy Thanksgiving with family and friends.

TEACHING & LEARNING

Screening for depression in school increases odds of treatment

While the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force recommends universal depression screening for 12- to 18-year-olds in primary care, less than half of US adolescents have regular physician checkups and even fewer get screened. Students who participated in universal school-based depression screening were twice as likely to begin treatment compared to their peers who did not receive this screening, according to a new study. The study provides important insights on how to tackle depression in youth. The next step will be to break down barriers so school districts interested in implementing depression screening can effectively do so.

Barbara Schindo, Penn State. "Depression screening at school ups odds of treatment. *Futurity*. November 10, 2021
[Depression screening at school ups odds of treatment - Futurity](#)

Experts: Conversation improves students' capacity to learn

Stress creates negative brain responses that make it harder for students to learn, but building relationships with them can ease that, write two consultants. They suggest ways to truly tune in to students, discuss how to ask questions that generate thoughtful responses, and share perspectives on ways to frame situations positively.

Cheri Torres & Jackie Stavros. "Tapping conversation to help students learn." *Smart Brief/Education*. November 11, 2021
[Tapping conversation to help students learn | SmartBrief](#)

Reading Remedies

Seven newsrooms joined together to report on the problem and find solutions for America's reading problem.

Teachers are seeing more and more students struggle with reading. Pandemic school closures and remote instruction made learning to read much harder, especially for young, low-income students who didn't have adequate technology at home or an adult to assist them during the day. Many older students lost the daily habit of reading. Even before the pandemic, nearly two-thirds of U.S. students were unable to read at grade level. The author worked with colleagues at *The Hechinger Report*, *AL.com*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Fresno Bee* and *Post and Courier* to explore the problem and several promising solutions at the state, district and school levels.

Jill Barshay. "Reading remedies." *Hechinger Report*. November 15, 2021

[Reading Remedies - The Hechinger Report](#)

Teaching SEL is hard but necessary

Helping students grow their social and emotional skills has become a big part of school counselors' jobs, given the impact of the pandemic on student mental health and behavioral issues. Growing students' social and emotional skills has become a big part of counselors' jobs. But they need more resources to be successful.

Alyson Klein. "Teaching Social-Emotional Skills is Hard, Time-Consuming, and Necessary, Report Says." *Education Week*. November 12, 2021
[Teaching Social-Emotional Skills is Hard, Time-Consuming, and Necessary, Report Says \(edweek.org\)](#)

New data on current math and reading performance

The results of a new study show the magnitude of the task schools have ahead of them. New data on academic performance for 1st - 8th grade students this fall in reading and math show that across the board, students are not doing as well as their peers were before the pandemic. The declines were particularly bad in math.

Sarah Schwartz. "What New Data Reveal About Students' Math and Reading Performance Right Now." *Education Week*. November 4, 2021
[What New Data Reveal About Students' Math and Reading Performance Right Now \(edweek.org\)](#)

Teaching critical thinking about media messaging

It is important that students learn how to evaluate media, according to the author, who maintains the Media Literacy Clearinghouse website for educators. He shares several strategies to teach media evaluation, including asking students to consider who created or paid for a message.

Frank Baker. "Help Students Become Adept Media Evaluators." *Middle Web*. November 14, 2021
[Help Your Students Become Savvy Evaluators of Media Messages \(middleweb.com\)](#)

Building empathy among students

Lessons in empathy often are taught with a focus on the individual, rather than the collective community, writes a 9th-grade English teacher in Kona, Hawaii. Adams suggests strengthening these lessons by shifting individual activities to collective ones and focusing on care instead of skills.

Kauakanilehua Adams. "Empathy Is a Crucial Skill. Here Is How We Are Teaching It to Our Students." *Ed Surge*. November 15, 2021
[Empathy Is a Crucial Skill. Here Is How We Are Teaching It to Our Students. | EdSurge News](#)

Study: Children can recognize emotions behind face masks

Researchers showed pictures of actors expressing anger, sadness or joy with and without surgical face masks to about 300 children ages 3 - 6 and found that the overall rates of successfully reading emotions were over 67% when the actors wore masks and over 70% when they did not. The findings in *JAMA Pediatrics* show that youngsters can still make inferences about others' emotions even when they're wearing masks.

Jen Christensen. "Little kids can likely read your emotions even when you wear a face mask, study finds." *CNN*. November 15, 2021

[Young kids can likely read facial expressions when people are wearing face masks - CNN](#)

Robin Foster & Robert Preidt. "Face Masks Don't Hide Emotions From Kids: Study." *Health Day News*. November 16, 2021

[Face Masks Don't Hide Emotions From Kids: Study - Consumer Health News | HealthDay](#)

How to support middle-schoolers' mental health

MS students are experiencing more mental health challenges, likely worsened by the pandemic and its effects.

Experts during a recent conference discussed the issue and a path forward, saying students' voices must be included in the discussion, and students, who also were represented, said they want a safe, welcoming environment to learn.

Liz Willen. "Surrounded by pandemic angst, what do middle schoolers want? A welcoming, safe place to learn." *Hechinger Report*.

November 16, 2021

[How to quell middle school struggles? A welcoming, safe place to learn \(hechingerreport.org\)](#)

Teachers across America report basic skills often lacking; shutdowns blamed

Nationwide, the first months of school this fall have revealed that students are way behind in skills they should have mastered. Children in early ES have had their most formative first few years of education disrupted by the pandemic, years when they learn basic math and reading skills and important social-emotional skills. While experts say it's likely these students will catch up in many skills, the stakes are especially high around reading. Research shows if children are struggling to read at the end of first grade, the struggle will remain throughout school.

In 2020, 40% of first grade students and 35% of second grade students were scoring "well below grade level" on a reading assessment, compared with 27% and 29% the previous year. Other data show low-income, Black and Latinx students are falling further behind than their white peers, worsening achievement gaps.

Staff Reports, USA TODAY. "First graders way behind in literacy." *Democrat & Chronicle*. November 18, 2021

<https://rochesterdemocrat-ny.newsmemory.com?selDate=20211118&goTo=A01&artid=0>

What is culturally responsive teaching?

Providing answers to questions about culturally responsive teaching is Mandy Smoker Broaddus is a practice expert in Native education at Education Northwest, which provides education support services to schools, districts, and communities. She's also a member of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes in Montana. She provides technical assistance and professional development in schools, tribal colleges, and at the state level.

Kaylee Domzalski. "Q&A: What is culturally responsive teaching?" *Education Week*. November 17, 2021

[Q&A: What Is Culturally Responsive Teaching? \(edweek.org\)](#)

FEDERAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Schools invest COVID-19 funds in mental health

Some US schools are using federal coronavirus relief money (\$190 billion total) to support students' mental health.

Districts are providing staff training and wellness screenings, as well as social and emotional learning curricula.

Carolyn Thompson & Heather Hollingsworth of *The Associated Press* and Kalyn Belsha of *Chalkbeat*. "With US aid money, schools put bigger focus on mental health." *Associated Press & Chalkbeat*. November 11, 2021

[With US aid money, schools put bigger focus on mental health \(apnews.com\)](#)

Debate over masks in schools

NPR asked scientists and policy leaders from different areas of the U.S. when they think kids can safely take off masks in school. Some experts think students should be able to take off masks in school by late December or early January 2022, once children under 12 have had several weeks to be vaccinated. Others would prefer that 100% of adults in the building are vaccinated or masked, and at least 70% of the children are vaccinated. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that it continues to recommend indoor masking for K-12 students, regardless of vaccination status or community transmission levels.

Anya Kamenetz. "When can kids take off their masks in school? Here's what some experts say." *National Public Radio/Morning Edition*.

November 12, 2021.

[When should schools end mask mandates? : NPR](#)

Staff shortages crushing schools

Teachers are sacrificing their lunch periods to cover unsupervised classrooms, monitor lunch lines, and drive school buses. Students are enduring prolonged bus rides and diminished meal options. Principals are still searching far and wide to fill dozens of open positions, including for people who quit after the school year started.

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

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

School districts top cybercrime targets

Cyberattacks against school systems are becoming more aggressive and damaging, exposing personal information and costing taxpayers big bucks to repair school technology or to pay ransoms to retrieve stolen data. Districts are prime targets for cybercriminals because they hold an abundance of information on staff, students and families, which can be stolen and used for identity theft and fraud. During the pandemic, schools fast-tracked the move to remote learning, and the computers handed to students often lacked adequate security. Districts also adopted online teaching platforms that were vulnerable to hacks. School districts are increasingly being attacked with "ransomware," in which a hacker locks up, or encrypts, a computer system and demands money to unlock it.

Craig Schneider. "How school districts became a top — and lucrative — target for cybercriminals." *Newsday*. November 14, 2021

[https://www.newsday.com/long-island/education/hacking-long-island-school-districts-](https://www.newsday.com/long-island/education/hacking-long-island-school-districts-1.50421300?utm_term=non&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Morning-Update)

[1.50421300?utm_term=non&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Morning-Update](https://www.newsday.com/long-island/education/hacking-long-island-school-districts-1.50421300?utm_term=non&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Morning-Update)

Federal COVID aid can help with school transportation

Schools can use federal COVID-19 relief money on bonuses to retain school bus drivers, reimbursements for costs parents incur in sending their kids to and from school, and other strategies [to alleviate transportation problems](#) they may be facing, the U.S. Department of Education says in new guidance.

Andrew Ujifusa. "Here's How Schools Can Use Federal COVID Aid to Solve Bus Driver and Other Transportation Woes." *Education Week*.

November 15, 2021

[Here's How Schools Can Use Federal COVID Aid to Solve Bus Driver and Other Transportation Woes \(edweek.org\)](#)

International college student enrollment rebounding

Enrollment of international students in US colleges is rebounding with an increase of 68% over last year, when numbers plunged because of the pandemic, data from an annual Open Doors survey shows. Many colleges also report ramping up their recruitment of international students with social media and other online strategies.

Elizabeth Redden. "International Enrollments Begin to Recover." *Inside Higher Ed*. November 15, 2021

[International students increase following pandemic declines \(insidethehighered.com\)](#)

Moms for Liberty not a grassroots entity

Moms for Liberty, a nonprofit claiming to advocate for "parental rights," appears to use parents as pawns to advance a far-right agenda. Well-connected partisans are creating outrage and selling it to parents. Moms for Liberty has chapters across the country that target school board meetings, school board members, administrators, and teachers. The group advocates to strip districts of protective COVID-19 measures and modify classroom curriculum to exclude the teaching of "critical race theory" (CRT) and sex education, all in the name of "parental rights."

Olivia Little. "Unmasking Moms for Liberty." *Media Matters for America*. November 12, 2021

[Unmasking Moms for Liberty | Media Matters for America](#)

Groups behind protests at school board meetings

Recent protestors at school board meetings may represent a small minority of parents but their intimidating presence gives them an outsized voice. The protest movement is not entirely grassroots and spontaneous. National supporters include The Manhattan Institute, Citizens Renewing America, Parents Defending Education, Turning Point USA, The Proud Boys, and The 1776 Project.

Anya Kamenetz. "A look at the groups supporting school board protesters." *National Public Radio*. October 26, 2021

[The groups aiding protests against masks, vaccines and Critical Race Theory : NPR](#)

FBI to track threats against teachers, boards

The FBI has established a threat-tracking system for school-related incidents, including threats against school board members and teachers. In a statement Tuesday, the FBI said the goal is to deter violence, not to prevent discourse.

Sadie Gurman & Aruna Viswanatha. "FBI Tracks Threats Against Teachers, School-Board Members." *Wall Street Journal*. November 16, 2021

[FBI Tracks Threats Against Teachers, School-Board Members - WSJ](#)

School libraries the focus of book debates

Some school districts nationwide are hearing calls to ban certain books from school libraries, particularly the graphic novel "Gender Queer: A Memoir." The book has been challenged in South Carolina and Florida, but advocates say it is an important and timely work students should have access to.

Will McDuffie. "Books including 'Gender Queer' being pulled from schools, sparking controversy." *ABC News*. November 13, 2021

[Books including 'Gender Queer' being pulled from schools, sparking controversy - ABC News \(go.com\)](#)

Ongoing teacher and substitute shortage

Schools struggled with decreased numbers of teachers and substitute teachers before the pandemic worsened the situation nationwide. Approximately 30,000 teachers gave notice to leave their jobs in September, and without enough substitute teachers, some schools have decided to cancel classes or temporarily switch to remote learning. Kate Gibson. "Teacher shortages — made worse by COVID-19 — shutter schools across U.S.." *CBS News*. November 12, 2021
[Teacher shortages — made worse by COVID-19 — shutter schools across U.S. - CBS News](#)

Poll: Majority favors vaccine, masks in schools

A Monmouth University poll shows that 61% of the public supports mask mandates for teachers, students and staffers in schools. Data also show that 59% support requiring COVID-19 vaccines for all school staff members and 53% support vaccine mandates for students 12 and over.

Matt Zalaznick. "Good news, bad news? Majority supports masks in schools as COVID closures climb." *District Administration*. November 16, 2021
[Majority backs masks in schools as COVID closures climb \(districtadministration.com\)](#)

Federal dashboard tracks coronavirus cases in schools

The U.S.E.D. and CDC have released a new coronavirus dashboard that tracks case and vaccination numbers in schools. Data, from various sources, also will track whether schools are operating in person, remotely, or hybrid. Dian Schaffhauser. "Department of Ed and CDC Release District COVID Dashboard." *T.H.E. Journal*. November 15, 2021
[Department of Ed and CDC Release District COVID Dashboard -- THE Journal](#)

Critical Zoom flaws now corrected

Several critical flaws in Zoom products, which could have enabled man-in-the-middle attacks, have been patched with guidance from researchers at Positive Technologies. Users of affected products are encouraged to update. Mayank Sharma. "These security flaws could have let intruders snoop on your Zoom meetings." *Tech Radar*. November 15, 2021
[These security flaws could have let intruders snoop on your Zoom meetings | TechRadar](#)

Commentary: How teacher involvement improves ed tech development

Educational technology companies should be hiring teachers or former teachers to help develop and enhance their products, notes the author. Their insights can address ed tech's much-needed elements of specific needs, usage impact and workflow effect.

Jason Carroll. "Walking a Mile in a Teacher's Shoes: The Role of the Teacher in Ed Tech Development." *T.H.E. Journal*. November 15, 2021
[Walking a Mile in a Teacher's Shoes: The Role of the Teacher in Ed Tech Development -- THE Journal](#)

U.S. Supreme Court to hear case about public funding for religious schools

The latest case to come before the U.S. Supreme Court on religious rights and school choice has been nearly 150 years in the making. The justices will weigh Maine's exclusion of religious schools from its "tuitioning" program for students from towns without high schools.

Mark Walsh. "Can Public Money Go to Religious Schools? A Divisive Supreme Court Case Awaits." *Education Week*. November 18, 2021
[Can Public Money Go to Religious Schools? A Divisive Supreme Court Case Awaits \(edweek.org\)](#)

NEW YORK STATE

Regents Chancellor: Critical Race Theory not taught in NYS

Parents, particularly in predominantly white suburban and rural districts, are blasting the NYSED's new educational equity framework, which they see as a ploy to implement critical race theory K-12. The state's recommendations, rolled out in May, offer a blueprint for districts to review and amend their programs and policies to meet the needs of an increasingly multicultural student population. Opponents claim schools have become excessively focused on race and that discourse around educational equity is divisive. According to SED officials, the state's "culturally responsive and sustainable" framework, or CRS, has been wrongly conflated with critical race theory. The "culturally responsive" framework released by the SED in May does not set curriculum standards; it outlines expectations. It instructs districts to identify inequities in areas like student placement for gifted and special education services, suspensions, attendance, teacher diversity, and resources.

Rachel Silberstein. "Chancellor: 'Critical race theory not taught in NY schools'." *Albany Times Union*. November 12, 2021
https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Chancellor-Critical-race-theory-not-taught-in-16588321.php?cmpid=115195&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content= headlines&utm_campaign=tu_dailyheadlines&sid=5ae0930791d15c3e666094a8

Midlakes embarks on literacy curriculum refresh

The Midlakes School District in Clifton Springs has refreshed its literacy curriculum during the pandemic, writes the district's director of curriculum and instruction. She shares how the rural district which serves students almost half of whom qualify for free or reduced lunch, ensured the literacy curriculum had buy-in across the district and expanded that alignment to other subjects. Midlakes began by creating a literacy skills committee, which developed

alignment strategies and best practices for literacy across content areas. The curriculum writing focused on extending the alignment beyond reading instruction as well as on the science of reading instruction.

-mMichelle Robinette. "Building a districtwide literacy ecosystem during the pandemic." *Smart Brief/Education*. November 12, 2021
[Building a districtwide literacy ecosystem during the pandemic | SmartBrief](#)

State panel: Continue masking mandate

A state health panel recommended on November 18 that mandatory masks should continue to be used in schools, health care facilities, jails, homeless shelters, buses and other places.

Bart Jones & Joie Tyrrell. "State health panel approves keeping school mask mandate in place." *Newsday*. November 19, 2021
https://www.newsday.com/news/health/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccinations-infections-1.50426427?utm_source=First+Read+Newsletters&utm_campaign=ecb08351dc-First+Read+111921&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_252d27c7d1-ecb08351dc-34743040&mc_cid=ecb08351dc&mc_eid=bc2625d4e3