

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

December 10, 2021 Education News Update

TEACHING & LEARNING

Opinion: Mitigating learning loss for students with disabilities

The National Center for Learning Disabilities recommends implementing inclusive, accessible instruction enriched with social and emotional learning activities, ensuring student evaluations are effective and engaging families in the process as strategies to help address learning loss, Javaid Siddiqi, president and CEO of the Hunt Institute, writes. Javaid Siddiqi. "After last year's learning loss, we need a plan for students with disabilities." *The Hill*. December 2, 2021 <https://thehill.com/opinion/education/583778-after-last-years-learning-loss-we-need-a-plan-for-students-with>

Zaretta Hammond on Equity and Student Engagement

For influential curriculum designer, trainer, and author Zaretta Hammond, student engagement is a key but often overlooked element of school equity. In a Q&A, she discusses the role of student engagement in school equity efforts and the importance avoiding a "pedagogy of compliance" for struggling students.

Anthony Rebera. "Zaretta Hammond on Equity and Student Engagement." *Educational Leadership*. December 6, 2021 <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/zaretta-hammond-on-equity-and-student-engagement>

Study: Effects of reading books to children

Researchers examined interactions between 72 parents with their toddlers, ages 2 and 3, and compared interactions while reading tablet apps versus traditional children's books and found that parents talked to their children more while reading a book, adding that children responded less to their parents using the tablet. The study published in *Pediatrics* also showed 98% of families of children younger than 9 own a cellphone or tablet, and toddlers spend on average over two hours per day using digital media.

Rose Weldon. "Children respond better to parents reading from books compared with tablets." *Healio*. December 6, 2021 <https://www.healio.com/news/primary-care/20211206/children-respond-better-to-parents-reading-from-books-compared-with-tablets>

How music education strengthens key skills

Music is a key part of teaching core academic subjects, says neuroscientist Nina Kraus, who notes the connection between literacy and sound processing. Kraus and music educator Anita Collins say music education strengthens three key skills: attention, working memory and perseverance.

Deborah Farmer Kris. "How music can help kids learn literacy skills." *KQED-TV/FM* (San Francisco). December 6, 2021 <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/58810/how-music-can-help-kids-learn-literacy-skills>

Some districts now screen for racial biases during teacher job interviews

Increasingly, school systems ask applicants questions about cultural competency, race, and equity during the interview process...to eliminate lower expectations for students of color and discriminatory disciplinary practices.

Madeline Will. "Districts Are Screening For Racial Biases During Teacher Job Interviews. Here's How." *Education Week*. December 07, 2021 https://www.edweek.org/leadership/districts-are-trying-to-screen-out-racial-biases-during-teacher-job-interviews-heres-how/2021/12?utm_source=nl&utm_medium=eml&utm_campaign=eu&M=64238592&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

Survey: Pandemic takes toll on ELL students

More than 56% of educators who support English-language learners worldwide say the coronavirus pandemic had a significant effect on students' learning, according to a survey by Off2Class, a company that provides resources to English-as-a-second-language educators and serves more than 90,000 students in 120 countries. Of those surveyed, 38.7% said their ELL students should have repeated a grade.

Jo Napolitano. "Survey — 56% of Educators Working With English Learners Say Pandemic Significantly Disrupted Learning; Nearly 4 in 10 Say Students Should Have Repeated Grade." *The 74*. December 6, 2021 <https://www.the74million.org/article/educators-english-language-learners-survey-pandemic-disruption-student-support-retention/>

Commentary: Digital citizenship lessons matter

Monitoring students' internet use cannot replace high-quality K-12 digital citizenship education, writes the managing partner at Novus Consulting Group. He suggests that students must be taught via age-appropriate instruction how to engage online in safe, responsible ways. K-12 leaders are responsible for making sure that students use district-owned computers and Internet access safely and responsibly. Failure to do so could put students at risk and could result in legal liability, bringing significant fallout for district leaders. For these reasons, many school systems use software that monitors students'

Internet activity and reports on possible misuses of technology. However, the use of monitoring software has come under recent scrutiny violating students' privacy. By teaching students how to become responsible digital citizens, not only can educators avoid the privacy issues inherent in watching what students do online, but they'll also be helping students make better online decisions throughout their lives. This is critical, because educators can't always look over students' shoulders as they use the web. Students must learn how to use technology safely and responsibly at all times, including when they're outside of school. Hanine Salem. "Expert Viewpoint: Rather Than Monitor Students' Web Use, Teach Them Good Digital Citizenship." *T.H.E. Journal*. December 8, 2021 <https://thejournal.com/articles/2021/12/08/rather-than-monitor-students-web-use-teach-them-good-digital-citizenship.aspx>

Some say schools must alter math teaching methods

One math teacher and tech specialist for Duval County Schools in Florida (Jacksonville), is using new techniques designed to promote equity. In her algebra classes, students practice equations through singing, dancing and drawing. Activities are sculpted around their hobbies and interests: anime, gaming, Minecraft. Problem-solving is a team sport, rather than an individual sprint to the right answer. Her methods, emphasizing real-world problems and collaboration, resulted in her students, most of whom are Black, improving their scores on Florida's math exam in 2020-21 – even with 1 in 3 learning from home. This article examines this approach as well as others, such as collapsing math "tracks" to put kids of all abilities in the same classes, adding data science courses that carry the same prestige as calculus, and inclusion of real-world problems involving racial and social inequities. The changes have pitted mathematicians and educators against each other and sparked criticism from parents. Erin Richards, Emily Bloch, Gary Stern and Christine Fernando. "Is math racist? A debate is raging." *USA TODAY*. December 8, 2021 This extensive article is behind a paywall but is available by contacting judithw@frontiernet.net.

FEDERAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Youths' symptoms of depression, anxiety doubled during pandemic

The U.S. Surgeon General has issued a public health advisory on the mental health of youths, a warning and call to action to address an emerging crisis exacerbated by the pandemic. Symptoms of depression and anxiety have doubled during the pandemic, with 25% of youths experiencing depression and 20% experiencing anxiety. There are also increases in negative behaviors such as impulsivity and irritability – associated with conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or ADHD. Even before the pandemic, children from all backgrounds faced serious mental health challenges, but nearly two years of disruption took a toll and worsened their mental health – especially for immigrants, students with disabilities and students of color from low-income families. Meanwhile, pandemic-related safety measures reduced in-person interactions among children, friends, social supports and professionals such as teachers, school counselors, pediatricians and child welfare workers. Historically, the problem has been the lack of money to hire counselors. For now, the money is there, but the professionals are not. Howard Blume and Melissa Gomez, *Los Angeles Times*. "US report: Young people are suffering from crisis of mental health." *Democrat & Chronicle*. December 9, 2021 <https://rochesterdemocrat-ny.newsmemory.com?selDate=20211209&goTo=A01&artid=1>

To keep teachers, address these issues

Pay matters, but is often not the main point of dissatisfaction. Other common problems teachers say make them want to quit include: stress, burnout, exhaustion, and too little respect. The pandemic has taken a steep toll on teachers, but many say those negative experiences existed for them before COVID-19. Marina Whiteleather. "To Keep Teachers From Quitting, Address These 5 Key Issues." *Education Week*. December 07, 2021 https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/to-keep-teachers-from-quitting-address-these-5-key-issues/2021/12?utm_source=nl&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=eu&M=64238592&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

Opinion: Parents should oppose conspiracy theories supporting racism and discrimination.

'Parents' rights' and 'school choice' have historically been rallying cries for the right as cover for discrimination. Politicians and bigots have always appealed to white supremacist values to achieve their political goals. In the 1950s, politicians used white resistance to desegregation by turning busing into a trigger for white aggression. Children had been bused since the 1920s, but after the Brown v. Board of Education decision, busing became synonymous with invasion of white privilege. The practice of manufacturing fear around integration has been repeated ever since, with every advance in the Civil Rights Movement facing a racist backlash, including the current uproar over critical race theory, following the Black Lives Matter protests of the last two years. Expanding civil rights isn't anti-American. Discriminating against Black people and maintaining a racial hierarchy do undermine our nation's ideals — especially when they are wrapped in democratic terms like "school choice" and "parent rights." *Andre Perry is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.* Andre Perry. "COLUMN: What rational parents must do to combat education conspiracies." *Hechinger Report*. November 16, 2021 <https://hechingerreport.org/what-rational-parents-must-do-to-combat-education-conspiracies/>

Study: Books, texts still focus on white characters

Educational materials don't reflect the diversity of the nation's schoolchildren, a new report by the New America think tank finds—and many works that do feature characters of color reinforce stereotypes. Texts are more likely to

EDUCATION NEWS UPDATE December 10, 2021 2

depict balance across genders; racial and ethnic communities are represented in some texts, but without reaching the levels seen in student populations.

Sarah Schwartz. "White Characters Still Dominate Kids' Books and School Texts, Report Finds." *Education Week*. December 01, 2021 <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/white-characters-still-dominate-kids-books-and-school-texts-report-finds/2021/12>

Teacher vacancies found most acute in poorer districts

School districts serving poorer families may be more affected by increased rates of vacancies among teachers and staff, according to researchers at the University of Washington. Data show the greatest shortages are among substitute and special education teachers, followed by ES teachers, ELL teachers, and STEM teachers.

Shawna De La Rosa. "Research suggests staff shortages hitting low-income districts hardest." *K-12 Dive*. December 2, 2021 <https://www.k12dive.com/news/research-suggests-staff-shortages-hitting-low-income-districts-hardest/610752/>

Cartoon history of vaccination resistance

The author worked with an artist to create a comic about public school vaccine mandates that provides a brief history of anti-vaccination efforts. Even with the success of the smallpox vaccine, it wasn't always easy to convince people to vaccinate their children. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled on the constitutionality of school vaccine mandates nearly a century ago. While that decision has been pretty much upheld to this day, the question still remains: What will happen if schools mandate the COVID-19 vaccine? Read the [full comic here](#).

Anya Kamenetz. "How vaccine mandates have been received in the past, especially in schools." *National Public Radio*. December 5, 2021 <https://view.nl.npr.org/?qs=553c2324007358275ddf61934746830a2115bbefef832032778f808e48234aa6d7c9d908f27be659a3d374bd352581c20a5ae8389520d1ba238a1edfe183e03659296ac474d75c132bee2b80c5cdded92c7c083c8a58c9d>

National Leaders Back 'Equity or Else' Campaign

Two Congress members plus leaders of several national justice and education union leaders have announced the formation of the "Equity or Else" commission, and stated strong support for President Biden's education budget which includes an increase of 41% for school funding in his proposed FY2022 budget. This Equity Commission will engage municipalities and the federal government to inform government officials at every level on how to create investments and policies that transform quality of life for all Americans, with a focus on equity. The coalition includes: The Alliance for Educational Justice, The Center for Popular Democracy, National Alliance Against Racist & Political Repression, Dignity in Schools Campaign, American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, Journey for Justice, Appetite for Change, Clean Water Action, White Coats for Black Lives, National Nurses United and Black Lives Matter at School.

"News Conference with National Education and Justice Leaders on President Biden's Budget Proposal and Brand New Equity or Else Commission." December 7, 2021 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/J4JAlliance> Website: <http://www.standing4equity.org>

Federal communities of practice will support learning

The U.S.E.D. plans to help school systems accelerate learning by establishing communities of practice, one of which will support preparedness for kindergartners.

Kara Arundel. "Ed Dept announces communities of practice to accelerate learning, support kindergartners." *K-12 Dive*. December 3, 2021 <https://www.k12dive.com/news/communities-of-practices-charged-with-accelerating-learning/610921/>

K-12 spending slips as share of state economic output

A new study concludes that school spending was billions short in recent years compared to where it would have been if spending trends during the early 2000s continued. Funding for K-12 schools in most states is down in recent years compared to over a decade ago based on a metric that looks at spending as a share of economic output.

Bill Lucia. "How K-12 Spending Has Slipped as a Share of State Economic Output." *Route Fifty*. December 6, 2021 <https://www.route-fifty.com/finance/2021/12/how-state-school-funding-has-fallen-over-past-two-decades/187320/>

Colleges preparing for Omicron

US colleges and universities are preparing for the arrival of the Omicron variant in their communities, monitoring the efforts of their counterparts in South Africa, where the variant was first identified. Some schools had begun easing health precautions but are now preparing to re-establish them.

Emma Whitford. "What Omicron Could Mean for Colleges." *Inside Higher Ed*. December 1, 2021 <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/12/01/colleges-must-prepare-inevitable-arrival-omicron>

Equity-Centered Alternatives to Policing in Schools: Lessons From Research

A new NEPC study of 16 major U.S. school districts offers some insight into what districts planned to do *instead* of relying on police (school resource officers) in schools. Understanding these alternatives provides some foundations for moving forward. Some of the alternatives used include equity-centered alternatives to policing, use of restorative practices, promotion of racial equity in the classroom, and deeper community engagement and support. All 16 districts stated that they would implement schoolwide changes in approaching behavior, such as trauma-informed practices, social-emotional supports, or restorative practices. School districts' promising pursuit of evidenced-based alternatives to school-based law enforcement suggest strategies that others can learn from. **Evidence** does not point

to an association between the presence of SROs and reduced disciplinary incidents. There are a number of **effective strategies** available to reduce school violence that do not involve law enforcement.

"Equity-Centered Alternatives to Policing in Schools: Lessons From Research." National Education Policy Center (U.Colorado/Boulder). December 9, 2021
<http://www.icontact-archive.com/archive?c=1748247&f=3100&s=3172&m=230652&t=683ff6e55fcb8d669aa5ea6b8253ac84d14528c98c4873195440427f0ff88d5>

Report: U.S. workforce lagging in digital skills

Experts advocate for strengthening K-12 school curriculum and tax breaks for reskilling existing workers in the area of digital skills. According to [data compiled](#) by the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, roughly 31% of American employees have either no or limited digital skills. Based on 2021 data, the U.S. ranked 29th in terms of students engaging in operating systems, cloud computing, and mathematics courses out of 100 countries. Recommended policy decisions include strengthening the HS computer science curriculum, doubling the number of STEM charter schools, incentivizing colleges to teach computer science and literacy courses, investing more in artificial intelligence, and increasing the federal investment in training and reskilling programs. Expanding the tax code to benefit employer-funded tuition assistance for reskilling existing labor forces was also highlighted. Alexandra Kelley. "Report: US Workforce Falling Behind in Digital Skills." *Route Fifty*. December 9, 2021
<https://www.route-fifty.com/management/2021/12/report-us-workforce-falling-behind-competitors-digital-skills/187389/>

Schools Are Closing Classrooms on Fridays. Parents Are Furious.

Desperate to keep teachers, some districts have turned to remote teaching for one day a week and sometimes more, leaving parents scrambling to find child care and/or cope with remote learning. Beyond the logistics, many parents are worried that with additional lost days of in-person school, their children will fall further behind. Districts cite various reasons for the closings, from a rise in COVID cases to a need to sanitize classrooms. For many schools, the remote learning days are an effort to keep teachers from resigning. Teachers are burned out after a year of trying to help students through learning loss, working overtime to make up for labor shortages, battling over mask mandates and critical race theory, and dealing with increased tensions with parents.

Giulia Heyward. "Schools are closing classrooms on Fridays. Parents are furious." *NY Times*. December 8, 2021

https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/08/us/schools-closed-fridays-remote-learning.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20211209&instance_id=47210&nl=todaysheadlines®i_id=18877907&segment_id=76501&user_id=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

NEW YORK STATE

New NYS guidance on COVID-19 tests

New guidance issued by the NYS Health Department on December 3 expands which kinds of COVID-19 tests can be used for school protocols. The new guidance gives local health departments and school districts the ability to authorize rapid COVID-19 tests as well as over-the-counter at-home tests for students and staff attempting to return to school activities following a known COVID exposure or the onset of symptoms. The guidance also updates the school participation policy. Now all persons who develop COVID-19 symptoms, but have no known exposure, can participate in school activities following a negative COVID test regardless of vaccination status. These new policies will need to be adopted and approved by local health departments and schools should they be put in place.

Matt Drifflil. "New state guidance expands which COVID tests can be used for school protocols." *WROC-TV8 News*. December 3, 2021

https://www.rochesterfirst.com/coronavirus/new-state-guidance-expands-which-covid-tests-can-be-used-for-school-protocols?nss_link=big-story_1_title_6&email=5d13d09406fe309325210ec455be4940065cc236&utm_source=Mailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=WROC%20Daily%20News%202021-12-04&utm_term=Daily%20News

K-12 immersion school's students learn Spanish

A group of students in a Long Island school are learning some core subjects in a 50-50 immersion Spanish program. The students, whose first language isn't Spanish, start their learning in kindergarten and continue through grade 12, and the program, started in 2010, will produce its first bilingual graduates next summer.

Joie Tyrell. "Herrick's district's mission is to 'prepare our students to become global citizens'." *Newsday*. December 4, 2021

<https://www.newsday.com/long-island/education/spanish-immersion-program-1.50441405>

SUNY students sought resignation of Suny Chancellor

SUNY students have been some of the most outspoken critics of SUNY Chancellor Jim Malatras since his appointment last year. They were also among the earliest voices calling for his resignation, which is now effective January 14. The SUNY Student Assembly represents pupils of all ages across the 64-campus system. They have been vocal on a range of issues affecting the university, including how its leadership could be better accountable for their words and actions. They are planning to focus their energy on a variety of fronts, among them engaging in a national search for a new chancellor and working with elected officials to make college more affordable.

Zach Williams. "What the leader of the SUNY Student Assembly thinks about Jim Malatras." *City & State NY*. December 9, 2021

<https://www.cityandstateny.com/politics/2021/12/what-leader-suny-student-assembly-thinks-about-jim-malatras/187425/>

Brockport cancelled school Thursday due to lack of bus drivers

The Brockport Central School District announced early yesterday (December 9) that it was canceling school for students preK-12 because of a bus driver shortage. A brief statement did not say what led to the shortage or

indicate whether any classes would be held remotely, or whether schools would reopen Friday. Other Monroe County school districts have faced acute bus driver shortages during the pandemic. Hundreds of additional hires are needed to get school buses fully back on track. Greece reports needing 24 drivers and 18 attendants, while Pittsford needs 32 drivers and Rochester needs 21 drivers. The problem predates the pandemic. Issues include relatively low pay, unusual hours, the stress of controlling dozens of children, some of whom are disruptive, the ability to safely operate a large vehicle, the dwindling number of interested retirees, and now problems created by the pandemic. Marcia Greenwood. "Brockport scraps school due to lack of bus drivers." *Democrat and Chronicle*. December 10, 2021 <https://rochesterdemocrat-ny.newsmemory.com?selDate=20211210&goTo=A01&artid=0>