

EDUCATION NEWS UPDATE

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February 4, 2022 Education News Update

TEACHING & LEARNING

Censorship laws leading teachers to consider quitting

More than one-third of teachers responding to a recent survey said legislation seeking to "prevent honest teaching and conversations" in classrooms would make them more likely to leave the profession this year. School districts already are hampered by an ongoing teacher shortage, and such laws are making the situation "demonstrably worse." Anna Merod. "Survey: 37% of teachers will likely quit if K-12 censorship laws reach them." *K-12 Dive*. January 24, 2022. <https://www.k12dive.com/news/survey-37-of-teachers-will-likely-quit-if-k-12-censorship-laws-reach-them/617581/>

New tool to help strengthen news literacy

The nonpartisan, nonprofit News Literacy Project has launched a tool for teachers to help them fight disinformation and strengthen news literacy, in part to highlight the importance of the First Amendment and value of the free press. Jo Napolitano. "As Misinformation Rages, Educators Focused on Improving News Literacy Turn to Outside Groups to Help Kids Parse Fact From Fantasy." *The 74*. January 26, 2022 <https://www.the74million.org/article/media-news-literacy-teaching-students-misinformation-week/>

Commentary: School librarian on censorship

School librarians are thoughtful and purposeful about the book collections they curate, writes a school librarian. She states that she respects families' decisions to determine what books students should check out, but does not believe in restricting access to books for other students.

Kimberly Rues. "Which Books Belong in a School Library? All of Them, of Course." *Ed Surge*. January 28, 2022 <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2022-01-28-which-books-belong-in-a-school-library-all-of-them-of-course>

Commentary: Strategies to improve literacy instruction

Well-trained teachers and school leaders are needed to improve literacy instruction, writes Molly Ness, who launched the Coalition for Literacy Equity this year. She asserts that efforts to train teachers in the science of reading will not be effective without also adopting instructional materials backed up by science.

Molly Ness. "OPINION: It's time. Let's use different ways of teaching children to read." *Hechinger Report*. January 31 2022 <https://hechingerreport.org/opinion-its-time-lets-use-different-ways-of-teaching-children-to-read/>

Commentary: Tips to connecting with students online

A virtual instructor shares several tips to help build meaningful connections with students while teaching and learning online. She suggests starting a "meet your teacher" activity, matching activities to students' interests and asking students daily questions, including inquiring about their weekend.

Dawn Comer. "5 virtual-classroom tools to foster authentic connections." *Smart Brief/Education*. February 1, 2022 https://corp.smartbrief.com/original/2022/02/5-virtual-classroom-tools-to-foster-authentic-connections?utm_source=brief

Commentary: Preventing excessive student absences

Punishing students and parents for poor attendance exacerbates the problem rather than fixes it, says a special education practitioner. Studies show that addressing the cause of student absences is far more productive, so we need to reframe practices towards poor attendance and support children, rather than police them. A 2021 survey highlighted that attendance is important in children's life chances, and reiterated the importance of understanding individual children's experiences. Student respondents **cited unhappiness at school** as their biggest barrier to attendance, especially pupils with special educational needs, disabilities, poor physical health, or mental health issues, who felt that they did not receive the adequate level of support at school for their needs, and who also experienced bullying. When schools shift attitude and language to a strength-based approach, instead of a deficit diagnosis, we improve understanding, pupil self-esteem, engagement and outcomes.

Margaret Mulholland. "What research tells us about fixing attendance." *TES* (London, UK). 31 January 2022. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/teaching-learning/general/what-research-tells-us-about-fixing-attendance>

Study: Socioeconomic segregation rises in schools

An average child from a low-income family attended a school in 2015 where 36% of students were middle class -- down from about 50% in 2000, according to a study by researchers at the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Maryland. Researchers say the increasing segregation particularly affects Latino students.

Linda Jacobson. "Increasing Segregation of Latino Students Hinders Academic Performance and Could Amplify COVID Learning Loss, Study Finds." *The 74*. February 1, 2022. <https://www.the74million.org/article/school-segregation-2015-socioeconomic-white-flight-worsening/>

Pandemic's impact on learning might be worse than predicted

Across grades, subjects, and schools, new data show lost learning is adding up. New research suggests students still haven't regained the academic ground they've lost in the disruptions of the ongoing pandemic, and many HS students will continue to struggle after graduation.

Sarah D. Sparks. "The COVID Academic Slide Could Be Worse Than Expected." *Education Week*. February 02, 2022
https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/the-covid-academic-slide-could-be-worse-than-expected/2022/02?utm_source=nl&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=eu&M=64294683&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa84853cdc6f688bfca

More districts adopt mental health days

More school districts are adding mental health days into their calendars, with 65 districtwide mental health closures reported by Burbio, a firm that tracks school schedules. Officials say the closures are tied in some cases to staffing shortages but also are aimed at supporting mental health and preventing burnout among students and staff.

Daniel Lempres. "Why More Schools Are Adding Mental Health Breaks to the Calendar." *Ed Surge*. February 2, 2022.
<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2022-02-02-why-more-schools-are-adding-mental-health-breaks-to-the-calendar>

Teacher crisis looms

Some experts warn there are longer-term problems with the teacher pipeline that cannot be solved with emergency substitutes, bonuses and loosened qualifications. For years, some states have been issuing fewer teaching licenses, and many districts have had trouble filling vacancies. Shortages are being felt much more widely due to absences during the pandemic, raising fears of many more leaving the profession. To address the problem, states are raising salaries, seeking more teachers outside formal training programs, and pursuing other strategies to develop more educators. Shortages are likely to become more widespread, affecting regions and subject areas that traditionally have not been affected. State officials outlined plans to improve teacher recruitment and retention in [applications last year for federal COVID-19 relief money](#). They include fostering teacher aides to qualify them for classroom teaching vacancies and subsidizing college tuition. Factors blamed for the current shortages include a drop-off in hiring during the Great Recession, the availability of better paying options, the politicization of curriculum, frustrations over standardized tests, less generous pensions and concerns about class size, a lack of autonomy and inadequate resources. The stresses of working through the pandemic threaten to further thin the ranks of educators. Mark Sciforo, *Associated Press*. "Amid scrambles for teachers, some fear worse shortages ahead." *Democrat & Chronicle*. February 3, 2022.
<https://rochesterdemocrat-ny.newsmemory.com?selDate=20220204&goTo=A01&artid=0>

FEDERAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

In UK, parents happier with local public schools than with school choice

A new study has found that parents in England are unhappy with the past three decades of "school choice" but parents in Scotland are satisfied with their local public schools. Three decades of school choice in England has left parents feeling more "cynical, fatalistic and disempowered" than their peers in other parts of the UK, according to new research published in the *Journal of Social Policy*.

Richard Adams. "Parents in England feel 'disempowered' by school choice, study finds." *The Guardian* (UK). January 14, 2022
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/jan/14/parents-in-england-feel-disempowered-by-school-choice-study-finds>

Cardona applauds teachers, outlines education goals

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona praised teachers Thursday, while pushing for more resources and backing for educators and children. He said that the country's immediate education goals should include improving student connectedness, lifting teacher morale, and finding ways for meaningful family engagement. He hopes educators can mitigate the upheaval of the past two years by reimagining education and solving problems that started long before the pandemic.

Diane Benson Harrington. "Cardona shares new education goals." *Smart Brief/Education*. January 27, 2022
https://corp.smartbrief.com/original/2022/01/cardona-outlines-education-goals-for-coming-years?utm_source=brief
Kalya Belsha. "Cardona to educators: 'I know you're stretched'." *Chalkbeat*. January 27, 2022
<https://www.chalkbeat.org/2022/1/27/22904563/cardona-speech-educators-exhaustion-tutoring>

Teachers feel 'beaten down', plan to quit

In a survey, a quarter of teachers nationwide said they planned to quit. The latest surge of the coronavirus has strained an already vulnerable K-12 workforce nationwide, causing teachers to miss more days. Many school officials say they are struggling to find enough substitutes to cover classrooms. Some schools have increased pay for teachers and substitutes, asked students' parents to fill in as subs, or shifted to remote learning. Governors and leaders in some states have instituted policies to ease substitute requirements, while lawmakers in at least 13 states are busy hammering out long-term solutions to teacher shortages.

Aallyah Wright., *Stateline*. "Teachers 'Beaten Down' By Staff Shortages, Covid." *Route Fifty*. January 31, 2022
<https://www.route-fifty.com/management/2022/01/teachers-beaten-down-staff-shortages-covid/361378/>

How meetings can help overcome rancor over teaching race in school

In a town roiled by teaching about race in public schools, some people are quietly fostering reconciliation through a simple idea: sitting down and getting to know each other. Two mothers—one Black, one white—lead weekly gatherings of a group of women in Nolensville, Tennessee who are Black, white, and Hispanic and who want to learn about how race affects their lives and how to best treat others. They are one of a number of groups in Williamson County, Tennessee, that are trying to bridge divides between people of different backgrounds at a time of deepening rancor over race and history – particularly how the two are taught in public schools.

Chelsea Sheasley. “Teaching race in schools: Have these moms found a way forward?” *Christian Science Monitor*. January 28, 2022
<https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2022/0128/Teaching-race-in-schools-Have-these-moms-found-a-way-forward?cmid=ema:mkt:20220201&src=highlight>

Republican lawmakers seek to ban many topics from classrooms

Republicans are drastically broadening their legislative efforts to censor what’s taught in the classroom, according to an *Education Week* analysis of active state bills. There are now 61 censorship bills proposed in 24 states.

Sarah Schwartz & Eesha Pendharkar. “Here’s the Long List of Topics Republicans Want Banned From the Classroom.” *Education Week*. February 02, 2022
https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/heres-the-long-list-of-topics-republicans-want-banned-from-the-classroom/2022/02?utm_source=nl&utm_medium=eml&utm_campaign=eu&M=64294683&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

NEW YORK STATE

NYC to open schools focused on dyslexia

NYC officials are planning to open a new school focused on serving students with dyslexia, Chancellor David Banks said on January 26, with the expectation to open similar schools in every borough. An education department spokesperson declined to offer more details, including where the school would be located, what grades it would serve, and how students would be admitted. The chancellor’s comments suggest that addressing gaps in the city’s approach to reading instruction may be one of the administration’s early priorities. Advocates and experts have argued for years that the city has no systematic approach to reading instruction, leading to scattershot approaches at individual schools that often fail to properly serve students who struggle to master the relationships between sounds and letters, one of the hallmarks of dyslexia.

Alex Zimmerman and Reema Amin, *Chalkbeat New York*. “NYC to open new school for students with dyslexia, Banks says.” *Pix 11 – TV (NYC)*. January 27, 2022. (Originally published by *Chalkbeat*, a nonprofit news organization covering public education.
<https://pix11.com/news/local-news/nyc-to-open-new-school-for-students-with-dyslexia-banks-says>

North Country superintendents want input into mask-wearing decisions

Superintendents in the Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES network are calling on Governor Hochul and Health Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett to include them in future decisions about COVID-19 protocols at schools, so they can be part of what they are calling “A Pathway to Normalcy” to refine guidance on masks and participation in extracurricular activities. The school leaders state that since the start of the pandemic, the guidance and the operational protocols that have come from Albany, the Department of Health and the Governor’s Office have come without any conversations from superintendents, faculty and people in the field that are there every day Wendy Liberatore. “Superintendents want a voice in COVID-19 protocols at schools.” *Albany Times Union*. January 28, 2022

https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Superintendents-want-a-voice-in-COVID-19-16814129.php?IPID=Times-Union-HP-CP-spotlight&utm_source=First+Read+Newsletters&utm_campaign=8db0d6b43-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2022_01_29_12_35&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_252d27c7d1-d4cc1ef34e-34743040&mc_cid=8db0d6b43&mc_eid=bc2625d4e3

Mask mandate can remain in schools until at least March 2, Appellate Division rules

The court said its temporary stay imposed last week stands for now, but did not indicate how quickly it would issue a ruling in the lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the governor's mandate.

Bart Jones and Yancey Roy. “Mask mandate can remain in schools until at least March 2, Appellate Division rules.” *Newsday*. January 31, 2022
https://www.newsday.com/news/health/coronavirus/indoor-mask-mandate-schools-ruling-1.50495009?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Morning-Update&lcg=7f80daea0ff17e08169c7036e559bbf4b9c7b92a72e79686b9188cc63f596bd4&utm_term=non

A New York court granted a full stay on the state’s mask requirement as a legal fight over the mandate – which is now set to expire on February 10 for businesses but will remain indefinitely in schools – continues.

Nick Reisman. “Court grants full stay on New York mask mandate amid legal battle.” *NY State of Politics*. January 31, 2022

https://nystateofpolitics.com/state-of-politics/new-york/ny-state-of-politics/2022/01/31/debate-over-new-york-s-mask-mandate-continues-amid-legal-battle/?utm_source=First+Read+Newsletters&utm_campaign=d4cc1ef34e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2022_02_01_04_35&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_252d27c7d1-d4cc1ef34e-34743040&mc_cid=d4cc1ef34e&mc_eid=bc2625d4e3

Much of governor’s proposed increased state aid to education aimed at charter schools

Advocates for fair funding for public schools in New York finally won a big increase in the budget, but were shocked to discover that almost the entire increase in funding will be diverted to charter schools, which enroll 14% of the state’s students. Either coincidentally or not, Governor Hochul’s election campaign is heavily funded by charter school advocates from the financial industry. In testimony on the governor’s FY23 executive budget, the Education Law Center warned state lawmakers that a proposed increase in state aid to charter schools in NYC will nearly offset the aid increase to district schools under lawmakers’ promised phase-in to reach full funding of the State’s Foundation Aid Formula.

“Testimony of Education Law Center Joint Legislative Budget Hearing – Elementary and Secondary Education.” January 26, 2022

<https://edlawcenter.org/assets/files/pdfs/Newsblasts/ELC%20testimony%20FY%202023%20NYS%20Executive%20Budget%20FINAL.pdf>