

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

March 4, 2022 ... Education News Update

TEACHING & LEARNING

Activism grows to counter school book bans

Dozens of bills have been proposed that restrict classroom reading and discussion about sexuality, gender identity, or race. Responses to these bills/laws have come from organizations large and small, and individuals. The American Civil Liberties Union, PEN America, and other groups are working with local activists, educators and families nationwide, helping them to prepare for meetings, to draft letters and to mobilize opposition. The U.S. Supreme Court in 1982 ruled that "local school boards may not remove books from school library shelves simply because they dislike the ideas contained in those books." However, officials are allowed to ban books for reasons other than not approving of the books' viewpoints. Officials might determine, e.g., that the book is too profane or vulgar. The wave of bans has led to new organizations and to a change of focus for existing groups.

Heather Hollingsworth & Hillel Italie. "Activism grows nationwide in response to school book bans." *Associated Press*. March 1, 2022

https://www.fox.com/article/entertainment-arts-and-entertainment-lifestyle/education-florida-62616d5f02b1045c734234583c3203?user_email=b4bc2288665817488b1076bfbca4126dd3d9d7c21ab53ce8eb5844c1742788&utm_source=Mailtru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Mar02_MorningWire&utm_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers

Schools involve students in helping other students with emotional issues

The COVID-19 pandemic amplified the mental health struggles already widespread among young people. Many schools are trying to expand their rosters of adult specialists who can provide support. But some are also involving students themselves. These districts are training students to identify and support their peers who are experiencing mental health challenges. One Ohio HS has formed a "Hope Squad" of trained students g.6-12, who help identify feelings of social isolation and hopelessness among students and encourage them to seek help from trusted adults.

Catherine Gewertz. "Students Train to Spot Peers With Mental Health Struggles and Guide Them to Help." *Education Week*. March 01, 2022

<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/students-train-to-spot-peers-with-mental-health-struggles-and-guide-them-to-help/2022/03>

Coaching skills needed by school leaders

ES Principal Matt Renwick uses "paraphrasing, pausing and posing questions" when acting as an instructional coach for teachers. He explains how he uses each skill and how formal school leaders also can be effective coaches.

Matt Renwick. "Can a Principal Also Be an Instructional Coach?" *Middle Web*. February 23, 2022

<https://www.middleweb.com/46663/can-a-principal-also-be-an-instructional-coach/>

Researcher: Change approach to gaps in student learning

Teachers' examinations of student data can identify where students are struggling, but use of the data has failed to improve student outcomes because educators tend to reteach the misunderstood material in the same way as before or provide practice worksheets. Heather Hill, a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, suggests taking a different approach to the instruction to help students understand the material.

Jill Barshay. "Researchers blast data analysis for teachers to help students." *Hechinger Report*. February 28, 2022

<https://hechingerreport.org/proof-points-researchers-blast-data-analysis-for-teachers-to-help-students/>

Schools deciding whether or not to keep alternative grading systems

Some schools altered approaches to grading during the earlier part of the pandemic and now are weighing whether to keep the new systems or change them. An approach supported by some advocates -- called "equitable grading" -- bases students' grades on what they've learned, rather than behavior, homework or extra credit.

Terry Tang. "No more extra credit? Schools rethink approaches to grades." *Associated Press*. March 2, 2022

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-education-race-and-ethnicity-f674319130960420cb5ad742f9644613>

One way to close the STEM divide

Many students in underserved communities are being left out of STEM, writes a biochemistry major at Hunter College in NYC who leads track projects at Makers for Change. He shares how the organization is bringing maker education to students to help eliminate barriers and assist students with pursuing STEM careers.

Jonathan Gao. "Delivering maker education to STEM deserts." *Smart Brief/Education*. March 3, 2022

https://corp.smartbrief.com/original/2022/03/delivering-maker-education-to-stem-deserts?utm_source=brief

‘Drone Olympics’ teaches coding, problem solving

MS students explored coding by programming drones to navigate an obstacle course during a recent event called the Drone Olympics. Lessons that might seem dry in the classroom become exercises in problem solving when applied to hands-on lessons such as flying drones.

Carolyn Gusoff. “Long Island middle school students take part in "Drone Olympics," learn how to code and fly the technology into future.” *WCBS-TV/WLNY-TV (NYC)*. March 1, 2022

<https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/long-island-middle-school-students-take-part-in-drone-olympics-learn-how-to-code-and-fly-the-technology-into-future/>

FEDERAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Russian invasion of Ukraine raises cyber risk for schools

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has increased cybersecurity concerns worldwide, so K-12 schools could be at greater risk. One expert does not believe schools will be a primary target but adds that "vulnerable targets can be easy targets." Cybersecurity continues to be the No. 1 concern for K-12 ed tech leaders; state and federal legislation to address the issue noticeably increasing in 2021 from the prior year.

Anna Merod. “Russian-Ukrainian crisis may further complicate K-12 cybersecurity risks.” *K-12 Dive*. February 25, 2022

<https://www.k12dive.com/news/russian-ukrainian-crisis-may-further-complicate-k-12-cybersecurity-risks/619476/>

Survey: Whole-child supports a top priority for districts

Most superintendents plan to expand whole-child supports, including social, mental and physical health and development. Eighty-two percent of school leaders surveyed by AASA, report plans to use federal coronavirus relief funds to expand whole-child supports. Investments in summer learning and enrichment, staffing, plus facility renovations and updates are other key areas of spending.

Matt Zalaznick. “Here are the 4 most popular areas for COVID relief spending in schools.” *District Administration*. February 28, 2022

<https://districtadministration.com/5-most-popular-areas-schools-spend-covid-relief-essner-arp/>

Pandemic plan supports students with disabilities

A new White House effort focuses on ensuring that students with disabilities are able to safely attend school in person, among other measures. A meeting with various disability advocacy groups prompted the plan, which includes ensuring adequate access to masks, testing and guidance materials.

Michelle Diamant. “White House Unveils COVID Plan Focused On People With Disabilities.” *Disability Scoop*. February 28, 2022

<https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2022/02/28/white-house-unveils-covid-plan-focused-on-people-with-disabilities/29722/>

Biden urges mental health support for students

During his State of the Union address, President Biden reflected on the mental toll the pandemic has taken on children. Biden proposed providing \$1 billion in new federal funding to support mental health care in schools, including hiring mental health professionals and building on programs initiated from coronavirus relief funds.

Linda Jacobson. “State of the Union: Biden Addresses Student Mental Health, Saying Their ‘Lives and Education Have Been Turned Upside-Down’” *The 74*. March 1, 2022

<https://www.the74million.org/article/biden-to-declare-unprecedented-student-mental-health-crisis-during-tonights-state-of-the-union/>

NEW YORK STATE

Governor announces end of K-12 school mask mandate

Governor Hochul has announced that the state school mask mandate will end on March 2 unless localities issue their own mandates. The mask mandates at SUNY and CUNY colleges and universities will remain in effect.

Michelle Del Rey. “Hochul ends New York school mask mandate starting Wednesday.” *Albany Times Union*. February 27, 2022

https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Hochul-ends-New-York-school-mask-mandate-starting-16951249.php?IPID=Times-Union-HP-CP-spotlight&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=headlines&utm_campaign=tu_capitolconfidential&sid=5931844424c17c09a3f115af