

EDUCATION NEWS UPDATE

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July 31, 2020 Education News Update

TEACHING & LEARNING

Online learning resulted in greater divergence in learning depending on wealth

The number of hours of instruction children received online this past spring varied depending on where they live. More importantly, the type of instruction also diverged dramatically. A national survey revealed that it was HOW students were being taught that varied by income. Low-income schools spent considerably more time reviewing old content. Wealthier schools were more likely to teach new material. Almost a third of high-poverty districts reported that their K-5 teachers primarily reviewed content taught earlier in the year. Even for g.6-12 kids, nearly 25% of high-poverty districts emphasized review. Plus, nearly 50% of low-income districts distributed paper packets of worksheets while more than 75% of wealthier school districts distributed everything digitally.

Jill Barshay. "PROOF POINTS: Survey reveals stark rich-poor divide in how U.S. children were taught remotely during the spring school closures." *Hechinger Report*. July 27, 2020 <https://hechingerreport.org/proof-points-survey-reveals-stark-rich-poor-divide-in-how-u-s-children-were-taught-remotely-during-the-spring-school-closures/>
Kalyn Belsha. "Less time on schoolwork, more paper packets in high-poverty districts, national survey finds." *Chalkbeat/National*. July 23, 2020 <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/7/23/21336460/less-time-on-schoolwork-more-paper-packets-in-high-poverty-districts-national-survey-finds>

NYC parents seek outdoor classes

Many parents and activists are asking leaders to endorse outdoor classes with closed streets around school buildings for recreation, lunch, small group instruction and other activities. One city council member received proposals from 14 schools from his district to use surrounding streets. He is advocating for an "Open Streets: Schools" program to coordinate the operation citywide. Blocks could be closed to traffic during school hours. Tents could be set up for shade or rain protection, or in some cases, blocks could be fully closed to allow semi-permanent tents and outdoor classroom spaces. The push to move outdoors comes as evidence shows less transmission of the coronavirus outside, and as many families remain concerned about school ventilation and social distancing in limited space.

Amy Zimmer & Gersh Kuntzman. "Calls grow louder to use NYC streets for outdoor learning this school year." *Chalkbeat/NY*. July 24, 2020 <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/7/24/21336761/using-nyc-streets-for-schools>

One Vermont MS to move classes outdoors

One Vermont middle school is planning to take in-person instruction outside this fall to open-air tents, where groups or "pods" of students will stay together with one teacher throughout the school day. Other Vermont schools and districts also plan to incorporate outdoor education -- already a standard component for many schools in the state -- to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus.

Lola Duffort. "When students return to school, some educators say -- why not head outside?" *VT Digger* (Vermont), July 27, 2020 <https://vtdigger.org/2020/07/27/when-students-return-to-school-some-educators-say-why-not-head-outside/>

Parents exploring home-schooling options for fall

Fears about the safety of in-person instruction, dissatisfaction with distance learning and concerns kids are falling behind are fueling the demand.

Jesse Cobutn. "More parents inquiring about tutoring, exploring home-school options for fall." *Newsday*. July 28, 2020 https://www.newsday.com/long-island/education/home-schooling-because-of-coronavirus-1.47416114?user=5c8795827e553f56154105c0&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Afternoon-Update

Dr. Fauci: Teachers part of the experiment in reopening schools

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious diseases expert, told educators in a virtual town hall that when it comes to reopening school buildings for in-person instruction, there are still many unanswered questions about how the coronavirus is spread by children, and that teachers will be part of the experiment in reopening schools.

Madeline Will. "Anthony Fauci to Teachers: You'll Be 'Part of the Experiment' in Reopening Schools." *Education Week*. July 28, 2020 http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2020/07/anthony_fauci_to_teachers_youll_be_part_of_the_experiment_in_reopening_schools.html?cmp=eml-enl-enl-news-2&M=59630826&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119f684853cd6f6888bfa

Commentary: It will take a village to re-open schools safely

A respected education reporter notes that what is needed to reopen schools is space, time, personnel, and resources. He suggests creative ways to get what is needed. Two priorities cannot be compromised or negotiated: safety for everyone and genuine learning opportunities. Everything else should be subject to change. 'Out of the box' thinking about how schools use space should consider use of spaces outside of ill-equipped school buildings. Spaces that are empty at least part of the day are everywhere: houses of worship, meeting rooms, theaters, store fronts, and offices.

Superintendents are concerned about liability in such spaces, a problem that should be addressed in legislation. Expanding space available for instruction provides social distancing and lets everyone go to school at the same time. John Merrow. "It Will Take a Village to Open Schools Safely." *The Merrow Report blog*. July 22, 2020
<https://themerrowreport.com/2020/07/22/it-will-take-a-village-to-open-schools-safely/>

Commentary: Learning and curriculum during the pandemic

One of the nation's most respected educators writes that while adults fret about students not learning what's required for our test-prep education system, children can learn plenty. He notes that learning, growing, forming beliefs that are factually based, gaining deep insights into particular subject matters, extending ones' horizons, and mastering something complex matters but frequently is not found in standard curricula. During the pandemic students can perhaps choose or be assigned topics of interest to become highly knowledgeable about, and report on their projects to others. On-line contact about projects or topical areas will allow teachers to individually assist, tutor, and advise on each project or area studied. After a semester or a school year, the child should be ready to present a project to an audience of peers, teachers, and parents. There would be little down time for students. This learning format has been used in many successful schools before the pandemic, and would translate well to online learning.

David Berliner. 'The "Required Curriculum" Vs. "The Not Required" Curriculum.' *Diane Ravitch's blog*. July 29, 2020
<https://dianeravitch.net/2020/07/29/david-berliner-the-required-curriculum-vs-the-not-required-curriculum/>

Could project-based learning become the new standard?

Some districts implemented project-based learning assessed through teacher feedback during pandemic shutdowns this spring, changes some experts say could remain after the pandemic wanes. Educators say the approach enhances learning and engages students, but it can be time-consuming and lead to burnout among teachers and students.

Naaz Modan. "Fast Forward: Is it time for project-based curriculum to replace traditional model?" *Education Dive*. July 28, 2020
<https://www.educationdive.com/news/fast-forward-is-it-time-for-project-based-curriculum-to-replace-traditiona/582088/>

'Learning pods' a lifeline or threat?

As an uncertain school year looms, some parents are banding together to teach their children in private "learning pods," "microschools," or "pandemic pods" -- informal groups of parents who are looking for some kind of educational continuity and child care for their children this fall. Some parents want to share costs of child care and get help with facilitating a district's online program. Others want an educational alternative to what they see as a chaotic school year. Educators worry that the trend will worsen inequities and shrink funding for public schools.

Christina A. Samuels & Arianna Prothero. "Could the 'Pandemic Pod' Be a Lifeline for Parents or a Threat to Equity?" *Education Week*. July 29, 2020
<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/07/29/could-the-pandemic-pod-be-a-lifeline.html?cmp=eml-en-en-news2&M=59631739&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

Some schools upending reading instruction

Some schools are changing the way they teach reading based on research that shows background knowledge is more critical to reading comprehension than general skills like 'finding the main idea.' Baltimore district officials adopted the *Wit and Wisdom* curriculum, which integrates reading into K-8 subject-matter content.

Holly Korbev. "Is it Time to Drop 'Finding the Main Idea' and Teach Reading in a New Way?" *Edutopia*. July 28, 2020
<https://www.edutopia.org/article/it-time-drop-finding-main-idea-and-teach-reading-new-way>

Teachers participate in virtual summer school

For the past few weeks, some teachers have been practicing online teaching in a program called the National Summer School Initiative. The program mentors teachers and identifies best practices to use this fall when many districts will have only virtual classes. The initiative also will work with districts and help teachers around the country network with one another.

Anya Kamenetz. "Can Online Learning Be Better This Fall? These Educators Think So." *National Public Radio*. July 28, 2020
<https://www.npr.org/2020/07/28/895720240/can-online-learning-be-better-this-fall-these-educators-think-so>

Students campaigning for diverse learning content

Students in school districts across the US are standing up against racism, inequality and injustice, both in society and in schools. This article details how, through petitions, social media campaigns, protests and school board meetings, students are working to remove racist materials from schools, to promote diverse and anti-racist materials across subjects, and to add subjects such as ethnic studies and curricula that feature underrepresented groups.

Terry Nyuyen. "Student activists want change — and they're starting in the classroom." *VOX*. July 29, 2020
<https://www.vox.com/identities/2020/7/29/21345114/students-diversify-curriculum-change-antiracist>

FEDERAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Not enough known about COVID in kids

As stakeholders weigh reopening schools for in-classroom learning, useful data about COVID-19 in children and teens is lacking and case counts in certain age brackets have been rapidly rising in recent weeks. Few states disclose the setting in which children or teens tested positive, what percentage of children were tested, whether they were sick or required hospitalization, or whether they died. Yet this information is essential since research suggests not only can children become seriously ill with COVID-19, but they can transmit it. Case counts among children are rising rapidly, with a 46% increase during July 2-16 nationally.

Cheryl Clark. "As Schools Weigh Reopening, Dearth of Data on COVID in Kids." *Med Page Today*. July 23, 2020

https://www.medpagetoday.com/pediatrics/generalpediatrics/87711?xid=nl_medpageexclusive_2020-07-24&utm_source=Salfrin&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MPTExclusives_072420&utm_term=NL_Gen_Int_Medpage_Exclusives_Active

Infected children carry as much COVID as infected adults

A study found that children infected with the coronavirus have at least as much of the virus in their noses and throats as infected adults, and children younger than age 5 may host up to 100 times as much of the virus in the upper respiratory tract as adults. The research does not prove that infected children are contagious, but it should influence the debate about reopening schools, some experts said.

Apoorva Mandavilli. "Children May Carry Coronavirus at High Levels, Study Finds." *NY Times*. July 30, 2020

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/30/health/coronavirus-children.html>

See who received PPP loans

ProPublica has created a [search engine](#) to investigate which companies and nonprofits received federal loans ranging from \$150K-\$10M via the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). Recipients include charter and private schools which 'double-dipped' into funds intended for public schools ([CARES Act](#)) and/or federal money explicitly offered to charter schools, as well as PPP money.

Mercedes Schneider. "Who got the money? See for yourself: ProPublica's COVID-19 PPP loan search." *Deutsch29 blog*. July 24, 2020

<https://deutsch29.wordpress.com/2020/07/24/who-got-the-money-see-for-yourself-propublicas-covid-19-ppp-loan-search/>

The Network for Public Education has produced a list of charter schools and their management groups that received [Paycheck Protection Program](#) (PPP) loans for small businesses and nonprofits as a result of the pandemic. The "question is whether charter schools-- which receive public funding-- suffered any reduction in funding as a result of the pandemic-- or whether charter schools see PPP's likely-forgivable loans as an opportunistic grab."

Valerie Strauss. "Charter schools and their management companies won at least \$925 million in federal coronavirus funding, data shows." *Washington Post*. July 27, 2020

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/07/27/charter-schools-their-management-companies-won-least-925-million-federal-coronavirus-funding-data-shows/>

The list is accessible at https://deutsch29.files.wordpress.com/2020/07/national-list-of-charter-schools_cmos_emos-that-received-small-business-administration-ppp-funding-national-list-.pdf

Teacher strikes are possible over school reopening plans

The American Federation of Teachers executive council has voted to pursue measures, including strikes, to keep schools from reopening for in-person instruction without proper safety precautions. AFT President Randi Weingarten said the union would pursue lawsuits and "safety strikes" if needed, that all options are on the table. An AFT-backed resolution released July 28 offers access to legal and financial resources for locally authorized strikes.

Collin Binkley. "National teacher union supports strikes over reopening plans." *Associated Press*. July 28, 2020

<https://apnews.com/4e8a446186df3c1962137dbe9faf7f38>

Braktkton Booker. "Teachers Union OKs Strikes If Schools Reopen Without Safety Measures In Place." *National Public Radio*. July 28, 2020

<https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/07/28/896265783/teachers-union-oks-strikes-if-schools-reopen-without-safety-measures-in-place>

Emma Coleman. "Teachers Union Authorizes Strikes Over School Reopening Plans." *Route Fifty*. July 29, 2020

<https://www.routefifty.com/management/2020/07/teachers-union-authorizes-strikes-over-school-reopening-plans/167310/>

Gabrielle Wanneh. "Teachers Union Considers Strikes Over School Reopenings." *U.S. News & World Report*. July 28, 2020

<https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2020-07-28/teachers-union-considers-strikes-over-school-reopenings>

Teachers wary of returning to school AND online instruction

Unions are threatening to strike if classrooms reopen, but are also pushing to limit live remote teaching. Their demands will shape pandemic education.

Dana Goldstein & Eliza Shapiro. "Teachers Are Wary of Returning to Class, and Online Instruction Too." *NY Times*. July 30, 2020

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/29/us/teacher-union-school-reopening-coronavirus.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20200730&instance_id=207310&nl=today'sheadlines&ref_id=18877907&segment_id=34714&uver_id=dcf79a08119a6d853cd66088b6ca

Researchers identify what schools need to reopen safely: #1 item is more federal \$\$

K-12 schools will need more federal funding to reopen safely for students and staff, according to guidance from almost 200 education researchers. They also suggest adding instructional time to make up for potential learning loss and blending in-person teaching with independent work. Their [recommendations](#) offer a research-informed roadmap for policymakers to address the [cascading effects](#) of the pandemic on schools. The biggest item on their agenda is [more money](#) from the federal government. The researchers say additional dollars are needed to realize many of their other ideas, including expanding internet access, avoiding teacher layoffs, and added learning time for students.

Matt Barnum. "Education researchers come together on what schools need now — starting with more money." *Chalkbeat/National*. July 23, 2020

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/7/23/21336306/education-researchers-schools-budget-pandemic-letter-recommendations>

U.S.E.D. ‘instinct’ is not to give testing waivers next year

"Accountability aside, we need to know where students are so we can address their needs," Assistant Secretary of Education Jim Blew said on July 24. Therefore, the U.S.E.D. inclination is not to grant states waivers from federally mandated tests for the upcoming school year. He expressed [support for a recent statement](#) from the Council of Chief State School Officers about the importance of assessments for learning "even during a pandemic."

Andrew Ujifusa. "Top DeVos Deputy: Our 'Instinct' Is to Not Give States Testing Waivers Next Year." *Education Week*. July 24, 2020 <http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2020/07/devos-not-give-testing-waivers-next-year.html?cmp=soceml-twfdbltz-ewnow>

Parents skeptical about school openings

As COVID-19 cases continue to surge, President Trump and the CDC said schools might have to delay reopening in virus hot spots but should otherwise start classes. Many parents are not reassured.

Craig Schneider. "Parents still skeptical about schools reopening as Trump, CDC talk delayed openings." *Newsday*. July 24, 2020 https://www.newsday.com/news/health/coronavirus/cdc-education-guidelines-1.47263829?user=5c8795827e553f56154105c0&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Morning-Update

Majority of U.S. schools not handicapped accessible

A majority of U.S. public school districts have physical barriers that can limit access for those with disabilities, according to a new report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office, an independent investigative agency that reports to Congress. The report found that two-thirds of U.S. public school districts have steep ramps, tight door vestibules, inoperable door handles, and other potential violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Districts cite funding constraints as the main reason for not making their buildings accessible, a longstanding problem.

Corey Mitchell. "Many of America's Schools Aren't Fully Accessible for Students With Disabilities." *Education Week*. July 24, 2020 http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/special/2020/07/schools_are_not_fully_accessible_for_students_with_disabilities.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=59627224&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

States focus on health and safety, not academics, for coming year

A new analysis warns that state guidance on reopening schools largely focuses on health and safety practices without adequately addressing the challenges of keeping students on-track academically, a new [analysis of state reopening plans](#) finds. Many districts plan to start the year with remote instruction, and others are preparing to transition to remote learning if virus rates spike. The report urges states to provide more direction.

Evie Blad. "States Overlook Academics in School Reopening Plans, Analysis Finds." *Education Week*. July 29, 2020 http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2020/07/states_overlook_academics_in_s.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=59631739&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

OPINION: We've been defunding education for years

Bloated police budgets have absorbed dollars better spent on education. Good schools help prevent crime, argues Stephon J. Boatwright. "OPINION: Defund the Police? We've Been Doing That to Education for Years." *Education Week*. July 30, 2020

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/07/30/defund-the-police-weve-been-doing-that.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=59631739&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

Coalition: Don't tie federal COVID aid to schools reopening

The proposed HEALS Act falls well short of what schools need, a coalition of education groups have told Congress. The group argues that the coronavirus aid package proposed by Senate Republicans needs revision, and that federal relief money shouldn't be based on schools holding in-person classes. The group includes organizations representing big urban school districts, teachers' unions, local education officials, and others. Instead, they say, Congress should provide schools more money and allow schools to access all the aid regardless of plans for face-to-face classes.

Andrew Ujifusa. "Don't Make Schools Physically Reopen to Get COVID Aid, Groups Urge Congress." *Education Week*. July 30, 2020 <http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2020/07/covid-aid-schools-physically-reopen-congress.html?cmp=soceml-twfdbltz-ewnow>

NEW YORK STATE

State's interim education commissioner resigns

Shannon Tahoe, the state's interim education commissioner, has resigned effective August 13, SED. Tahoe is the third person to step down from the state's top education post in the past year. Regents Chancellor Betty Rosa and Vice Chancellor Andrew Brownsay the board is searching for a permanent commissioner, and expects to appoint another acting commissioner before Tahoe leaves. SED officials did not answer questions about why she is leaving.

John Hildebrand. "State interim education commissioner resigns, becomes third to leave within year." *Newsday*. July 24, 2020 https://www.newsday.com/long-island/education/state-education-commissioner-resigns-1.47243411?user=5c8795827e553f56154105c0&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Afternoon-Update
Reema Amin. "State's interim education commissioner resigns, latest in string of departures." *Chalkbeat/NY*. July 24, 2020 <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/7/24/21337397/states-interim-education-commissioner-resigns-latest-in-string-of-departures>

NYSSBA survey: More state and federal support is needed

Schools that are [hoping to reopen in the fall](#) are banking on an infusion of federal aid, too. (TU)

As Congress negotiates the second stimulus package, local school districts are banking on an infusion of federal aid to help them safely reopen their buildings in the fall. NYS public schools are [providing a range of online, in-person, and hybrid options](#) to families this fall. State health guidance requires districts to invest in PPE and cleaning

supplies, set up staggering class schedules, and arrange extra bus routes to keep students at a safe distance from one another. All of these strategies are expensive. The article references a NYSSBA study.

Rachel Silberstein. "How much will it cost to reopen schools in September? A lot." *Albany Times Union*. July 29, 2020

https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/How-much-will-it-cost-to-reopen-schools-in-15442954.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=headlines&utm_campaign=tu_capitolconfidential

Further economic decline means more retirement costs for school districts

State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli announced a 2.68% decline in the state's pension fund for the past fiscal year, which means taxpayers will have to shoulder more of the cost of retirement benefits paid out to public employees beyond what was projected this spring by the Division of Budget.

David Lombardo. "Decline in stock market will drive up state pension costs." *WCNY* (Syracuse). July 30, 2020

<http://www.wcny.org/decline-in-stock-market-will-drive-up-state-pension-costs/>