

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

August 14, 2020 Education News Update

TEACHING & LEARNING

51% of districts nationwide plan hybrid learning

51% of school districts are preparing a hybrid model of instruction for the fall, blending online and in-person instruction. About one-third of districts have not yet announced their plans, according to the sample of 477 districts. Naaz Modan. "Just over half of districts plan some level of in-person instruction for fall." *Education Dive*. August 6, 2020 <https://www.educationdive.com/news/just-over-half-of-districts-plan-some-level-of-in-person-instruction-for-fa/582994/>

Some U.S. schools plan to move class outside

While some educators are skeptical, others see outdoor classrooms as a way to make in-person learning safe. A number of schools and districts are planning to move at least some instruction outside. They're reasoning that lower risk of disease transmission and extra space for children to spread out, can make it safer for face-to-face instruction. Erin Einhorn. "Schools seeking alternative to remote learning try an experiment: Outdoor classrooms." *NBC News*. August 5, 2020 <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/education/tents-yurts-snowsuits-schools-seeking-alternativess-remote-learning-move-classes-n1235809>

Special ed, ELL students may return to classrooms first in some districts

Some districts are prioritizing students with special education needs and/or English-learners, offering them in-person learning before other students, to make up for lost learning and lack of access in the spring.

Corey Mitchell. "Students in Special Education, English-Learners May Go Back to Class First. Here's Why." *Education Week*. August 7, 2020 <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/08/07/students-in-special-education-english-learners-may-go.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1&M=59643028&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

Finding substitute teachers a likely problem as schools re-open

Many substitutes are weighing the costs of going back to school to be exposed to lots of people, under inconsistent safety protocols, for little pay and potentially no health benefits. For districts offering in-person instruction, substitutes will be in high demand. There's already a substitute shortage in many places.

Madeline Will. "Low Pay and High Risk: Being a Substitute Teacher During COVID-19." *Education Week*. August 10, 2020 <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/08/10/low-pay-and-high-risk-being-a.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1-rm&M=59643666&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

In-person summer school provides road map for fall reopening

This article considers challenges, strategies and lessons learned in some districts that held in-person summer school. Those programs followed federal and state guidance, enforced social distancing in classrooms and school buses, and had students use a personal set of supplies for hands-on lessons.

Nora Fleming. "What Summer Schools Learned About the Challenges of Reopening." *Edutopia*. August 7, 2020 <https://www.edutopia.org/article/what-summer-schools-learned-about-challenges-reopening>

Districts consider learning pods in fall plans

Some districts are considering how to adapt learning pods (used by wealthier families at times during spring's remote instruction) to provide support or instruction for small groups of students who need it most. One district plans establish three pods for each grade level and another will establish learning "hubs" for homeless students. Ann Schimke & Marta W. Aldrich. "Pods for all? Some districts and nonprofits are reimagining the remote learning trend." *Chalkbeat*. August 10, 2020 <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/8/10/21362268/pods-for-all-some-districts-and-non-profits-are-reimagining-the-remote-learning-trend>

Commentary: Use this crisis to reset learning progression

A leader of a national education groups argues that there is opportunity amid pandemic disruptions for educators to adopt strategies to reduce achievement gaps and accelerate learning among students with disabilities. She urges focusing instruction, using student strengths to personalize approaches and making active learning a priority.

Lindsay E. Jones is president and CEO of the National Center for Learning Disabilities.

Lindsay E. Jones. "Prioritize Active Learning. Age Matters. Teachers Hold the Key. Ways to Help Special Ed Kids, and All Students, Catch Up - and Move Ahead." *The 74*. August 9, 2020 <https://www.the74million.org/article/jones-prioritize-active-learning-age-matters-teachers-hold-the-key-ways-to-help-special-ed-kids-and-all-students-catch-up-and-move-ahead/>

Educators examine how history is taught

Educators are gathering online to address their own biases in their teaching and diversify how and what is taught about history. Educators in this story share various efforts to improve instruction and include diversity in the who, what, when, where, why and how of history.

Daniella Silva. "Amid a racial reckoning, teachers are reconsidering how history is taught." *NBC News*. August 8, 2020
<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/amid-racial-reckoning-teachers-are-reconsidering-how-history-taught-n1235806>

Clear face masks help those who are hard of hearing

Face masks with large plastic panels reveal the mouth and aid those who read lips. *It's not just those with hearing loss who are clamoring for cloth face masks that have a see-through panel. They are a hot item among teachers... Vendors on the craft site Etsy have taken up the call with masks of varying quality and design.*

Yuki Noguchi. "Demand Surges For See-Through Face Masks As Pandemic Swells." *National Public Radio*. July 28, 2020
<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/07/28/893071631/demand-surges-for-see-through-face-masks-as-pandemic-swells>

Public education faces unheard-of challenges

With coronavirus cases still rising in many areas, schools are struggling to balance safety concerns with pressing academic, social and emotional needs of students. "The result could topple the already fragile ecosystem of schools in this country and devastate public education for years,"

Barbara Kantrowitz is a reporter for the Hechinger Report.

Barbara Kantrowitz. "The cold, hard truth about returning to school." *CNN*. August 7, 2020
https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/07/opinions/school-reopening-threat-to-public-schools-kantrowitz/index.html?utm_source=The-Hechinger-Report&utm_campaign=c272ed9d37-weekly_2020_08_11&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d3ee43e04-c272ed9d37-322606321

Survey considers student motivation during closures

During school closures in the spring, students' ability to motivate themselves to complete schoolwork varied by age, with 57% of 5th-graders saying they were able to stay motivated compared with 26% of 12th-graders, a survey finds. Distractions at home were the most common reason students cited for lack of motivation, followed by feeling stressed or depressed. Large numbers were able to navigate the mechanics of accessing and turning in their schoolwork (87% and 79% respectively); 57% said they spent more time than usual on activities they enjoyed; and 50% reported that they were able to focus on their learning. But remote learning didn't always result in a lot of learning. Challenges were especially high for low-income and Latinx students, who cited lack of ready access to the internet and computing devices.

Dian Schaffhauser. "Report: Students Struggled During Spring Closures." *T.H.E. Journal*. August 10, 2020
<https://thejournal.com/articles/2020/08/10/youthtruth-survey-finds-students-struggled-during-spring-closures.aspx>

School leaders collaborate on reopening guidelines

It is not possible to create the perfectly safe learning environment amid the coronavirus pandemic, say a group of school leaders from across the US who recently helped develop a guide for reopening schools. The American Federation of School Administrators guide notes that there's no way to create a perfect environment. "No matter how many safety protocols are put in place," the guide stated, "children and adults will get sick." As a result, schools will need to shut down, even temporarily, which "will impact education and the social-emotional well-being of communities and families." The guide notes that there are added costs to cover a greatly ramped-up cleaning regimen and "basic sanitary needs" as well as investments for improving online learning programs. AFSA quoted an estimate from the [Council of Chief State School Officers](#), which pegged the additional funding needs at somewhere between \$158.1 billion and \$244.6 billion to reopen school sites safely.

Dian Schaffhauser. "Federation of School Leaders Issues Guide for Reopening Safely." *T.H.E. Journal*. August 10, 2020
<https://thejournal.com/articles/2020/08/10/federation-of-school-leaders-issues-guide-for-reopening-safely.aspx>

40% of incoming college freshmen getting cold feet

A survey by SimpsonScarborough finds that 40% of incoming freshmen are rethinking their decision to attend a four-year college this fall. Just 7% say they think fellow students will adhere to coronavirus protocols, and 34% say they would feel safe living in a dorm. Data are even worse for minority students.

Scott Jaschik. "Nervous Freshmen, Nervous Colleges." *Inside Higher Education*. August 10, 2020
<https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2020/08/10/survey-40-percent-freshmen-may-not-enroll-any-four-year-college>

Q & A: Practical advice on addressing racial justice in K12 schools

Issues of race are of interest to many students. This Q&A offers practical advice on how teachers, most of whom are white, can effectively and appropriately address race issues. Questions addressed include: What are some ways teachers can and should attend to the demonstrations against police violence toward Black people? How might approaches differ for older versus younger students – or for white students versus students of color? What about racial disparities in rates of coronavirus contraction and mortality? How often do public school teachers address systemic racism? What resources can help teachers more effectively address systemic racism in the classroom?

Gloria Ladson-Billings is president of the National Academy of Education and Professor Emerita at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Her areas of expertise include preparation of teachers to be successful with African American students, culturally relevant pedagogy, and the application of Critical Race Theory to education. She is a National Education Policy Center Fellow.

"Practical Advice on Addressing Racial Justice in K-12 Schools: A Q&A with Gloria Ladson-Billings." *National Education Policy Center* (U. of Colorado). August 13, 2020
<http://www.icontact-archive.com/archive?c=1748247&f=3100&s=3172&m=171873&t=683ff6e55fceb8d669aa5ea6b8253ac84d14528c98c4873195440427f0ff88d5>

Detailed description of a typical teacher's day in a hybrid learning system

A teacher in Westchester County describes what an average 40-minute class period might be like using a hybrid/blended learning model as many districts are planning. The article presumes a 3-minute break between classes and has students moving between classrooms. It deals with social distancing and use of face coverings in bathrooms, hallways, and classrooms, the impossibility of disinfecting classrooms between classes and of having all students wash their hands as they enter each room, so every classroom can become more toxic as the day progresses. Class time must be taken each period to cope with safety issues. Each period the teacher must set up the livestream for students at home. Any technical issues result in lost learning time. Teachers cannot move freely because of distancing and livestreaming. Teacher use of face masks and shields can interfere with communications. Student collaboration on projects will be constrained. The time in each 40-minute period spent on actually learning will be quite small. For teachers there will be few options on where to spend time when not teaching. The author questions how much learning can occur in schools while placing students and teachers and their communities at risk.

"Day in the Life of a Hybrid Classroom." *Diane Ravitch's* blog. August 13, 2020

<https://dianeravitch.net/2020/08/13/teacher-a-day-in-the-life-of-a-hybrid-classroom/>

FEDERAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Survey: Most teachers favor remote instruction

Two-thirds of teachers say they favor starting the school year teaching primarily online, according to an NPR poll. Among those surveyed, 82% of teachers say they are concerned about teaching in person this year, with 77% saying they are concerned about their health. On the latter point, teachers are aligned with parents and the general public: Another recent NPR poll found two-thirds of respondents thought schools in their area should be primarily remote, including 62% of parents of children under 18. Half of the survey respondents teach at low-income schools.

Anya Kamenetz. "Most Teachers Concerned About In-Person School; 2 In 3 Want To Start The Year Online." *NPR Morning Edition*. August 6, 2020

<https://www.npr.org/2020/08/06/898584176/most-teachers-concerned-about-in-person-school-2-in-3-want-to-start-the-year-online>

DeVos: Religious groups get equal consideration for education grants

States and local governments that administer funds awarded by the U.S.E.D. must give qualified religious organizations the same consideration they give nonreligious groups when they award subgrants, new [guidance from the agency](#) says. The guidance, announced by Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos Friday, also creates a federal process for individuals and organizations to file complaints under the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

Evie Blad. "DeVos: Give Religious Groups Equal Consideration for Education Grants." *Education Week*. August 7, 2020

<http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2020/08/devos-religious-groups-grants-espinoza.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=59643028&U=252955&UID=def379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

97,000 children test positive for coronavirus in last two weeks of July

More than 97,000 children tested positive for the coronavirus in the last two weeks of July, a 40% increase in the number of children who have been reported to have the virus. The findings are from a [new report](#) from the American Academy of Pediatrics, worrying public health officials who say that school re-openings could lead to a spike in coronavirus cases among students, staff, and families.

Emma Coleman. "Nearly 100,000 Children Test Positive for Coronavirus in Two Weeks." *Route Fifty*. August 10, 2020

<https://www.routefifty.com/management/2020/08/children-coronavirus-100000/167587/>

COVID-19 student-data-privacy concerns

Safely storing videos of classroom lessons and protecting sensitive health information will be a challenge whether or not schools reopen classrooms. A major concern is how to safely and legally store and share videos of classroom lessons featuring students, and what to do with the new sensitive health information being collected by schools now administering health surveys, doing daily temperature checks, and tracing the contacts of students and staff who have contracted or been exposed to the coronavirus.

Benjamin Herold. "School Reopenings Bring Wave of COVID-19 Student-Data-Privacy Concerns." *Education Week*. August 11, 2020

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/08/11/school-reopenings-bring-wave-of-covid-19-student-data-privacy.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=59644817&U=252955&UID=def379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

Supreme Court decision on Brown vs Board of Education is origin of school choice

The blogger reviews Steve Suitts' new book, *Overturing Brown*. Advocates of school choice claim economist Milton Friedman as their godfather but Suitts shows that the true originators of "freedom of choice" were Southern governors and legislatures determined to thwart the Brown decision of 1954.

Thomas Ultican. "School Choice and White Supremacy like Two Peas in a Pod." *Tultican* blog. August 9, 2020

<https://tultican.com/2020/08/09/school-choice-and-white-supremacy-like-two-peas-in-a-pod/>

Schools focus on safety in reopening plans

School leaders nationwide are taking different approaches to safeguarding students and staff from the spread of the coronavirus as some make plans to return to in-person instruction. Safety measures and logistics will stretch already tight budgets as districts weigh staggered schedules, outdoor lessons and more.

Katie Navarra. "From tents to bus rides: Social distancing in school reopening plans." *Education Dive*. August 11, 2020

<https://www.educationdive.com/news/from-tents-to-bus-rides-social-distancing-in-school-reopening-plans/583179/>

VP candidate Harris has record of education advocacy

US Senator Kamala Harris, who advocated for increased teacher pay during her presidential run this year, is former Vice President Joe Biden's choice for a running mate. Besides supporting a proposal that would have resulted in teachers receiving a \$13,500 raise on average, Harris also pushed for measures to improve diversity in schools. Matt Barnum. "VP pick Kamala Harris clashed with Biden on school desegregation, pushed for teacher pay hike." *Chalkbeat*. August 11, 2020 <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/8/11/21364022/vice-president-kamala-harris-biden-education-schools>

What is needed to keep coronavirus out of school buildings?

Spending millions to guard against COVID-19 spread, districts also must convince parents school buildings are safe. These buildings are often aging structures with poor ventilation and other serious issues that can lead to ill health. Daarel Burnette II. "Aging Buildings, Poor Ventilation. What Will It Take to Keep Coronavirus Out of Schools?" *Education Week*. August 12, 2020 <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/08/12/aging-buildings-poor-ventilation-what-will-it.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1&M=59645768&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

CDC: Schools should require cloth face masks and prevent mask-related bullying

The CDC has released new guidance for schools on the use of cloth face masks for students. Recommendations call for wearing cloth face masks rather than face shields. The August 11 update includes a recommendation that schools have plans to prevent and address harmful behavior, such as bullying, discrimination, and stigmatization resulting from wearing or not wearing masks.

Johnny Jackson. "CDC updates K-12 face mask guidance, recommends plan to prevent bullying." *District Administration*. August 12, 2020 <https://districtadministration.com/cdc-updates-k-12-face-mask-guidance-recommends-plan-to-prevent-bullying/>

NEW YORK STATE

Governor approves reopening of schools

While the governor approved the reopening of schools, his announcement does not guarantee that school buildings in the state's local districts will actually reopen in the coming weeks. It is now up to local politicians and superintendents to decide whether and how to reopen.

Liza Shapiro. "New York schools can reopen, the governor said, solidifying plans to make New York City one of the few big U.S. cities to hold in-person classes." *NY Times*, August 7, 2020 https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/07/nyregion/cuomo-schools-reopening.html?campaign_id=60&emc=edit_na_20200807&instance_id=0&nl=breaking-news&ref=headline®i_id=18877907&segment_id=35540&user_id=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

Though schools can reopen in the fall, Governor Cuomo specified that districts must publicly post by August 21 their plans to address remote learning equity, testing practices for students and teachers, and contact tracing should an outbreak occur. School districts must also schedule meetings with parents and teachers to address their concerns. The DOH will examine plans submitted by districts and notify them of approvals or disapprovals by August 17. While districts outside NYC will conduct temperature checks on school premises, parents and school staff will be asked to conduct daily health screenings at home. They will also face random checks at school.

Kathleen Culliton. "NY schools can open but must address transparency." *NY1/Spectrum NYC*. August 7, 2020 https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2020/08/07/ny-schools-can-open-but-must-address-transparency--cuomo-says?mc_cid=3cd6e63559&mc_eid=bc2625d4e3

Districts scrambling to establish plans for contact tracing

School districts are working on how to chart contacts with infected persons as well as how to identify who needs to be tested and isolated. Districts must "develop and maintain plans to support local health departments" in contact tracing, develop protocols under which infected, symptomatic or exposed individuals can return to school and identify conditions that would close a building. The NYS Council of School Superintendents reports that districts are receiving inconsistent advice from local health departments. State teacher unions demand that NYS issue clear, universal protocols regarding school closure and contact tracing. Gathering needed information takes time, which raises the issue of whether or not an entire building should close and who makes that call.

Sophie Grosserode. "Reopening schools: Districts seek more clarity on how to handle COVID contact tracing, closures." *Rockland/Westchester Journal News*. August 9, 2020 <https://www.lohud.com/story/news/education/2020/08/06/ny-schools-covid-reopening-contact-tracing/3303573001/>

Buffalo teachers may sue to prevent return to classrooms

If Buffalo teachers are not satisfied with the district's plan to reopen schools, the Buffalo Teachers Federation will take the matter to court to prevent a return to the classroom. Teachers do not support the current reopening plan but the district says the plan is not set in stone and that conversations to adjust it will occur soon with all stakeholders. Jay Rey. "Schools can reopen, but teachers may not return unless plan is changed." *Buffalo News*. August 9, 2020 https://buffalonews.com/news/local/education/schools-can-reopen-but-teachers-may-not-return-unless-plan-is-changed/article_d3d47328-d9d7-11ea-9fc5-6fae0fedf0af.html

Confusion over district reopening plans

On August 10, Governor Cuomo vowed to prohibit 107 school districts from opening this fall if they do not submit COVID-19 reopening plans to NYS by August 14, two weeks after the original deadline. However, dozens of the

identified districts already did submit plans. This discrepancy highlights widespread confusion about the submission process. In many cases, districts sent the plans to the wrong state agency because of confusing directions. Plans were to be sent to the Health Department. Some districts had submitted plans properly and had received confirmation. Among the districts listed are Victor and Webster, both of which did submit their plans on time as directed.

Jon Campbell. "107 NY school districts fail to submit COVID-19 reopening plans. Or did they?" *Democrat & Chronicle*. August 10, 2020 [https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/politics/albany/2020/08/10/107-new-york-school-districts-didnt-submit-covid-19-plans-did-they/3337171001/?for-guid=bc6a7c11-cfcd-4c73-9f96-b962856c9d54&utm_source=democratandchronicle-Daily%20Briefing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily_briefing&utm_term=hero](https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/politics/albany/2020/08/10/107-new-york-school-districts-didnt-submit-covid-19-plans-did-they/3337171001/?for-guid=bc6a7c11-cfcd-4c73-9f96-b962856c9d54&utm_source=democratandchronicle-Daily%20Briefing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily_briefing&utm_term=herohttps://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/politics/albany/2020/08/10/107-new-york-school-districts-didnt-submit-covid-19-plans-did-they/3337171001/?for-guid=bc6a7c11-cfcd-4c73-9f96-b962856c9d54&utm_source=democratandchronicle-Daily%20Briefing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily_briefing&utm_term=hero)

Rosa resigns as Regent to become interim commissioner

Regents Chancellor Betty A. Rosa resigned from the Board of Regents on August 11 to become interim state education commissioner.

Rachel Silberstein. "Board of Regents Chancellor Betty Rosa resigns to become N.Y. education commissioner." *Albany Times Union*. August 11, 2020 https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Board-of-Regents-Chancellor-Betty-Rosa-resigns-to-15475015.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=headlines&utm_campaign=tu_capitolconfidential

NYSED & SUNY lack permanent leadership

The NYSED is dealing with how to open nearly 700 school districts; so too is SUNY with its 64 campuses. And both agencies are without permanent leaders. On August 11, the SED temporarily filled one gap and created another when Regents Chancellor Betty Rosa resigned to become interim commissioner. Officials said senior staff have been able to fill the gaps at both agencies while they've been without permanent leaders. But both have a major void as they face the unprecedented challenge of keeping students and staff safe this fall as colleges and public schools reopen. Regents vice chancellor T. Andrew Brown will lead the Board of Regents on an acting basis. The United University Professions wants SUNY to have its own system-wide guidance for colleges' reopening this month, but SUNY elected to guide each college's own reopening plans.

Joseph Spector. "Betty Rosa named interim NY commissioner as Education Dept., SUNY seek permanent heads." *Democrat & Chronicle*. August 11, 2020 <https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/politics/albany/2020/08/11/covid-education-new-york-reopening/3331827001/>

State nurses group seeks postponement of school reopening

The New York Nurses Association, the largest association of nurses in NYS, is calling on state and local officials to postpone the reopening of in-person learning. NYSNA cites recent research which found that nearly 25% of school staff are already at high-risk for serious illness and death from COVID-19. The group also says "it's a worrisome sign...that pediatric ICU admissions have more than doubled just in the last six weeks." The organization is also urging state leaders to use the postponement to strengthen supply chains for PPE, and "make the investments in public health and human services necessary so that in-person learning can happen safely."

Susan Arbetter. "New York State Nurses Association: Postpone In-School Learning." *State of Politics/NY*. August 13, 2020 <https://nystateofpolitics.com/state-of-politics/new-york/ny-state-of-politics/2020/08/12/new-york-state-nurses-association--postpone-in-school-learning>

RCSD switching to fully remote to start school year

The Rochester City School District announced on August 13 that it will switch from a hybrid opening to fully remote for the first 10 weeks of the school year, based on advice of medical experts and available classroom space.

"RCSD switches to remote learning for first 10 weeks: parent forums start Saturday." *Democrat & Chronicle*. August 14, 2020 https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2020/08/13/rcsd-reopening-forums-when-they-are-how-you-can-join-how-to-ask-questions/3364040001/?for-guid=bc6a7c11-cfcd-4c73-9f96-b962856c9d54&utm_source=democratandchronicle-Daily%20Briefing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily_briefing&utm_term=list_article_thumb