

EDUCATION NEWS UPDATE

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August 7, 2020 Education News Update

Study predicts chances of COVID infection in schools

Researchers predict that larger schools are likely to have COVID-19 infections in the first week. The study from researchers at the University of Texas at Austin, estimated how many students with coronavirus would likely arrive at school within the first week of reopening, depending on the size of the school and area infection rate. "Based on current infection rates, more than 80% of Americans live in a county where at least one infected person would be expected to show up to a school of 500 students and staff in the first week, if school started today," the *New York Times* reported. Teachers unions in New York have demanded that officials close the entire school for 14 days if a case of COVID-19 is confirmed in the building.

"How many students will arrive infected with COVID-19 when schools open? Here's a breakdown." *Albany Times Union*. August 6, 2020
https://www.timesunion.com/news/slideshow/How-many-students-will-arrive-infected-206369.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=headlines&utm_campaign=tu_capitolconfidential

TEACHING & LEARNING

Teachers to pay for needed extra supplies?

While schools are making bulk purchases of hand sanitizer and face masks, it's less clear if district money will cover all of the other new expenses teachers will encounter this year.

Sarah Schwartz. "Schools Need Extra Supplies Since Kids Can't Share. Per Usual, Teachers Are Paying." *Education Week*. July 31, 2020
http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2020/07/in_socially_distanced_classrooms_some_teachers_are footing_the_bill_for_supplies.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=59635925&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa84853cdc6f688bfa

Commentary: Handling absenteeism during pandemic

Absenteeism data could be a key indicator in determining effectiveness of remote instruction and existence of gaps, according to the authors. They warn about measuring attendance during this time, urging officials not to tie funding to attendance as well as for schools not to penalize chronic absenteeism with fines and court action.

Phyllis Jordan is editorial director of FutureEd; Hedy Chang is executive director of Attendance Works.

Phyllis W. Jordan & Hedy N. Chang. "Analysis: Taking Attendance Amid the Pandemic Is About More Than Student Participation. It Will Be Invaluable Data About Whether Distance Learning Is Actually Working." *The 74*. August 3, 2020

<https://www.the74million.org/article/analysis-taking-attendance-amid-the-pandemic-is-about-more-than-student-participation-it-will-be-invaluable-data-about-whether-distance-learning-is-actually-working/>

Districts seek ways to promote student mental health

Students' emotional health has become more of a priority during the pandemic due to schools' spring closures. Some districts have announced plans to devote time to student mental health, such as spending the first week on building routines and offering grief support services, plus daily and weekly times to connect and develop community.

Erin Richards. "Kids' mental health can struggle during online school. Here's how teachers are planning ahead." *USA Today*. August 2, 2020
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2020/07/31/covid-online-school-kids-mental-health-teachers/5529846002/>

What if we used this coming school year to reimagine education

A teacher suggests that we use the pandemic situation to reimagine schooling. She asks: What if we refused to return to normal? What if we liberated education from narrow measures of intelligence and instead reimagined what qualifies as valuable knowledge? What if we put our resources into what we say matters? What if we sought to shift how communities imagine, solve, heal, and connect? What if social emotional instruction wasn't optional or reduced to posters? What if we focused on capacity-building for restorative justice practices? What if we acknowledged the anger and demands of students? What if our priority was healing and we honored the work of healers and invested in healing justice? What if interconnected citizenship was a learning objective? What if we tracked executive function skills and habits of mind? She describes how this reimagining could infuse curriculum and the way teachers teach.

Ashley McCall is a bilingual third-grade teacher of English Language Arts in Chicago Public Schools.

Ashley McCall. "What If We Radically Reimagined the New School Year?" *Chicago Unheard blog*. July 30, 2020

<https://chicagounheard.org/blog/what-if-we-radically-reimagined-the-new-school-year/>

Helping students adjust to wearing masks

In many places, students returning to school buildings will be required to wear masks. These strategies can help elementary students adjust.

Lori Desautels. "How to Help Students Get Used to Masks." *Edutopia*. July 31, 2020

https://www.edutopia.org/article/how-help-students-get-used-masks?utm_content=linkpos1&utm_campaign=weekly-2020-08-05&utm_source=edu-legacy&utm_medium=email

Exploring social justice through PBL

The open-ended work in project-based learning can help students explore issues that matter to them. A teacher shares how project based learning involved her classes in major issues of the day

Teague Tubach. "Exploring Social Justice Issues Through PBL." *Edutopia*. July 31, 2020

https://www.edutopia.org/article/exploring-social-justice-issues-through-pbl?utm_content=linkpos2&utm_campaign=weekly-2020-08-05&utm_source=edu-legacy&utm_medium=email

Special Report: Guide to education in a pandemic

Education Week presents a special report with a number of articles suggesting a more deliberate approach to curriculum, instruction, assessment, and teacher professional development which could mean a better experience for students, the lack of which could turn equity gaps into chasms.

"Teaching and Learning in the Pandemic." *Education Week*. August 5, 2020

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/reopening-schools/teaching-and-learning-in-the-pandemic.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1&M=59639277&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

FEDERAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

DFER aims to replace public schools with school choice

DFER (Democrats for Education Reform) is an organization founded by hedge fund managers to support charter schools. Their main function is to raise money for political candidates, which gives them leverage. DFER states that "school choice" is a Democratic idea. It lists Democratic politicians who support charter schools. It claims support of AFT leader Al Shanker for charter schools, but fails to mention that Shanker turned against charter schools as he saw them turn into a weapon against public schools and teachers' unions. The DFER does not report negative information about charter schools, e.g., they are 90% non-union, are more segregated than real public schools, divert funding from real public schools, and have a huge failure rate.

"The DFER Democrats who support the Betsy DeVos agenda of 'school choice'." *Diane Ravitch's blog*. August 1, 2020

<https://dianeravitch.net/2020/08/01/the-dfer-democrats-who-support-the-betsy-devos-agenda-of-school-choice/>

Two leading education experts discuss implications of Espinoza decision

Two leading education experts argue that the U.S. Supreme Court's Espinoza decision was another step towards breaking down the separation between church and state and should be viewed with alarm. The authors analyze how the decision involves not only vouchers but charter schools, and what states must do to protect public schools.

Bruce D. Baker of Rutgers University is a school finance expert. Preston C. Green III of the University of Connecticut specializes in education law.

Bruce D. Baker & Preston C. Green III. "The Post-Espinoza End Game." *School Finance 101*. July 29, 2020

<https://schoolfinance101.wordpress.com/2020/07/29/the-post-espinoza-end-game/>

DeVos tells schools to do their jobs

The education secretary's main message to educators has been: Meet your obligations and don't assume the feds will remove major mandates.

Andrew Ujifusa. "Betsy DeVos Pushes Schools to Clear COVID Hurdles Without Special Favors." *Education Week*. August 1, 2020

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/08/01/betsy-devos-pushes-schools-to-clear-covid.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1&M=59635925&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

Reopening schools & pandemic control

Analyses of studies released in recent weeks look at the possibility of students further spreading the coronavirus if schools return to in-person instruction. A study of 20 countries' reopenings found that outbreaks were lessened at schools that mandated face masks, physical distancing and "pandemic pods" -- yet the determining factor often was the rate of community infection.

Sarah D. Sparks. "Will Opening Schools Make the Pandemic Worse?" *Education Week*. July 31, 2020

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/inside-school-research/2020/07/will_opening_schools_worsen_th.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=59635925&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

NAEP expects to administer its exam in 2021

The National Assessment Governing Board has ruled in a 12-10 vote that the National Assessment of Educational Progress (the "nation's report card") should continue as planned in 2021. The decision to proceed with the math and reading assessments was made following input from state and district leaders as well as health experts, but officials say they are unsure whether a request for federal funding to help administer the exams safely will be approved.

Linda Jacobson. "Plans to Administer 'Nation's Report Card' in 2021 to Proceed Despite Concerns Over Reliability and Funding During Pandemic." *The 74*. August 3, 2020

<https://www.the74million.org/article/plans-to-administer-nations-report-card-in-2021-to-proceed-despite-concerns-over-reliability-and-funding-during-pandemic/>

Study: Education budget cuts hurt test scores

Budget cuts to education during the previous recession a decade ago worsened academic outcomes for students, particularly students from lower-income households and those who are Black and Latino, according to a report published in *Education Next*. Data shows that for every \$1,000 a school district's budget declined by, test scores in math and reading were reduced by 1.6%, with a 6 % gap between white students and their Black and Latino peers.

Daarel Burnette II. "Budget Cuts Devastated Academics During the Last Recession, New Research Finds." *Education Week*. August 4, 2020

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2020/08/budget_cuts_during_the_last_re.html

50% failure/closing rate among charter schools

A new report from the Network for Public Education (NPE) documents an astounding 50% failure rate of charter schools over a 15-year period. More than a quarter of the schools folded within five years. The report, *Broken Promises: An Analysis of Charter School Closures from 1999-2017*, includes an animated map that shows the accumulation of failures across the U.S. The study also revealed that charter closures were most likely to occur in the poorest neighborhoods of America's poorest cities.

"Broken Promises: An Analysis of Charter School Closures from 1999-2017." *Network for Public Education*. August 2020
<https://networkforpubliceducation.org/brokenpromises>

NEW YORK STATE

Local district reopening plans

Most local districts plan to offer a hybrid academic schedule, with several days of in-person instruction each week coupled with remote learning on school days when students do not attend class. Most NYS elementary schools plan to offer daily in-person classes, but it remains unclear if it is doable. Every district also has plans for online or remote learning, either for parents who don't want to send their children to school or for districts that cannot safely bring students to school. The article lists plans for all districts in Monroe, Livingston, Ontario, and Wayne counties.

Victoria E. Freile. "Reopening plans: What Rochester area school districts plan to do." *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*. August 4, 2020
https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2020/08/04/rochester-ny-school-reopening-plans-covid/5571370002/?for-guid=bc6a7c11-cfcd-4c73-9f96-b962856c9d54&utm_source=democratandchronicle-Daily%20Briefing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily_briefing&utm_term=hero

Governor: District plans need to assure safety for teachers

Governor Cuomo has said that teachers need to be assured that school district reopening plans will keep them safe as students return to classrooms, adding that he hoped strikes would be avoided over the reopening plans.

Nick Reisman. "Cuomo: Schools Need to Avoid Striking Teachers Unions." *State of Politics/NY*. August 1, 2020

<https://nystateofpolitics.com/state-of-politics/new-york/ny-state-of-politics/2020/08/02/as-schools-reopen--schools-need-to-avoid-striking-teachers-unions>

NYS charter schools receive PPP \$\$; regular public schools not eligible

The Paycheck Protection Program was instituted to provide some relief. Taxpayer-funded charter schools took advantage of the program, but traditional public schools were not allowed to apply.

Emilie Munson. "In New York, taxpayer-funded charter schools secure hundreds of PPP loans." *Albany Times Union*. July 31, 2020

https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/NY-public-charter-schools-secure-hundreds-of-PPP-15448656.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=headlines&utm_campaign=tu_capitolconfidential

Reopening schools will pose major challenge in COVID control

NYS is still in the process of managing its COVID-19 cases, and reopening schools will pose a major challenge to controlling the pandemic.

Massarah Mikati. "Cuomo: COVID-19 numbers drop, but schools will pose a challenge." *Albany Times Union*. August 2, 2020

https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Cuomo-COVID-19-numbers-drop-but-schools-will-15452674.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=headlines&utm_campaign=tu_capitolconfidential

Reopening NYS schools overshadows reimagining them

A controversial announcement in May by Governor Cuomo that NYS would partner with the Gates Foundation to "reimagine" education is now taking a back seat to the urgency of reopening, a teacher on the partnership's committee said. "Our real task is how do we open safely in the fall, with face-to-face [instruction] as much as possible," said Stephanie Conklin, a HS math teacher.

Brendan Lowe. "Gov. Cuomo and the Gates Foundation: For Now, Reopening Education Has Trumped Reimagining It." *The 74*. July 29, 2020

<https://www.the74million.org/article/gov-cuomo-and-the-gates-foundation-for-now-reopening-education-has-trumped-reimagining-it/>

Governor: Districts need to explain reopening plans to their communities

On August 3, the governor stated that school districts need to explain their reopening plans and guidelines to parents since some of their proposals for opening school are difficult to understand.

Nick Reisman. "Cuomo: Some school reopening plans 'indcipherable'." *State of Politics/NY*. August 2, 2020

<https://nystateofpolitics.com/state-of-politics/new-york/ny-state-of-politics/2020/08/03/cuomo--some-school-reopening-plans--indcipherable-->

Even with reopening plans, how feasible is reopening?

After submitting reopening plans, districts face several financial, staffing, and transportation questions before children head back to classrooms. For one, districts must get a handle on how many students and staff will return to the classroom, what percentage will be fully remote, and how many students will participate in a hybrid program.

Rachel Silberstein. "How feasible is it for schools to reopen in the Capital Region?" *Albany Times Union*. August 3, 2020

https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/School-reopening-plans-leave-many-dissatisfied-15454090.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Timesunion_DailyBrief&stn=nf

Last-minute parental decisions likely to change student enrollment

The uncertainty surrounding the reopening of schools in New York could create changes in enrollment for both private and public schools this fall, an analysis published on Tuesday by the Rockefeller Institute found. The report found that last-minute choices by parents could create swings in the student population. That, in turn, could further complicate reopenings of schools as well as funding needs.

Nick Reisman. "School Uncertainty Could Create Enrollment Flux." *State of Politics/NY*. August 4, 2020

<https://nystateofpolitics.com/state-of-politics/new-york/ny-state-of-politics/2020/08/04/school-uncertainty-could-create-enrollment-flux->

NYS teacher unions demand safety protocols in case of new outbreaks

Teachers unions are demanding clear protocols from the state on how school districts should respond to a potential outbreak. Some say Cuomo comments on staff testing at odds with Health Department guidance. The New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) are demanding clear protocols from the state on how school districts should respond to a potential outbreak, recommending a two-week closure period and a return to remote learning until buildings are deemed safe.

Rachel Silberstein. "New York teachers unions demand 14-day closures in event of COVID-19 case." *Albany Times Union*. August 5, 2020

<https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Teachers-unions-demand-two-week-school-closure-in-15461258.php>

RCSD students to spend less time in school buildings than suburban counterparts

Students in the Rochester City School District will spend less time in school buildings than any other area school district this fall. Most county students will attend in-person classes twice a week, but variation exists among districts and grade levels. RCSD will send students in PK-4 to school twice a week, while older students will be online-only, with the exception of students with disabilities. That discrepancy has led to concern that city children will be further shortchanged. Students in cities across the country often have less capacity to learn at home and rely more heavily on learning in person. RCSD has attempted to fill the gap by distributing thousands of computers and wireless internet access devices. RCSD's plan is in line with urban districts across the country. Most of the largest school systems in the U.S. will start entirely online. An RCSD survey showed broad discomfort among staff, parents and students about returning to school in person. Nearly 60% of parents said they're not comfortable with in-person education and another 21% were unsure. Many parents in districts where schools are opening more widely are not comfortable sending their children to school.

Justin Murphy. "RCSD has the least in-person instruction. Is that good or bad?" *Democrat and Chronicle*. August 5, 2020

<https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/education/2020/08/05/equity-concern-school-reopening-covid-rochester-irondequoit/5578473002/>