

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

September 18, 2020 Education News Update

TEACHING & LEARNING

Educational Leadership Issue: Grade Expectations

The September 2020 issue of *Educational Leadership*[®] explores the pressing topic of grading reform, with a focus on practices designed to make grading more transparent, equitable, and meaningful. This issue highlights best practices for grading as schools reopen during the pandemic. Articles include -

[Taking the Stress Out of Grading;](#)

[Grading During the Pandemic: A Conversation;](#)

[How I Revamped My Grading System;](#)

[Confronting Inequity / Well-Rounded Grading](#)

[Five Inconvenient Truths About How We Grade;](#)

[Eight Essential Principles for Improving Grading](#)

[The Power of Digital Badges](#)

"GRADE EXPECTATIONS". *Educational Leadership*. September 2020 | Volume 78 | Number 1

http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept20/vol78/num01/toc.aspx?utm_campaign=ALL-EL-September2020-090820-091120&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=94616990&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-917XhnsUa-IDkS7doNDF_InvFOx3iBi6A2iC5_GCJA8UVaHz_F7biWZjP0R0RWEI0ODHl6ufYXyLTSiYMyvGH0qte35uOnVDkTrCkoxZasJo&utm_content=94616990&utm_source=hs_email

Television can be educational lifeline to those without digital access

Families who lack broadband internet access at home are turning to television to access education for their children as the pandemic continues to disrupt traditional school schedules. Industry experts are touting the rise of NextGen TV as a potential game-changer for closing the digital divide.

Tom Butts. "TV as a Teacher." *TV Technology*. September 9, 2020

<https://www.tvtechnology.com/opinion/tv-as-a-teacher>

Success of in-person learning

Schools in some areas have been able to reopen to in-person instruction without causing a spike in coronavirus cases. The author writes that media coverage is focused on outbreaks and the shift to online learning, and may be driving concerns about health risks associated with in-person learning.

Alexander Russo. "In-person learning's tentative successes deserve more coverage." *Phi Delta Kappan*. September 11, 2020."

<https://kappanonline.org/rosso-tentative-successes-with-in-person-learning-need-more-attention/>

How to support traumatized students

Educators can deliver daily support to improve outcomes for students with adverse childhood experiences, asserts Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, California's first surgeon general. In this interview, Harris discusses the impact of multigenerational adversity, SEL in the classroom, and the transformational powers of meditation. Among her comments: providing students with the "tools to understand how to recognize what's going on with them, then how to respond -- especially to be able to calm their bodies down -- truly is healing."

Stephen Merrill. "Trauma is 'Written Into Our Bodies'—but Educators Can Help." *Edutopia*. September 11, 2020

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/trauma-written-our-bodies-educators-can-help>

Pandemic-related obstacles for students

Some HS students feel more motivated to learn in school than online and do not have equal access to remote instruction, according to a survey by the ACT Center for Equity in Learning administered in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, from March 26 to April 1. Results also show the toll of the pandemic on students' mental health, with one sharing it felt like life was in "chaos."

Emily Tate. "'Life Is in Chaos': How 13,000 High School Students Are Weathering the Pandemic." *EdSurge*. September 15, 2020

<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2020-09-15-life-is-in-chaos-how-13-000-high-school-students-are-weathering-the-pandemic>

How to offer recess in a pandemic

As some schools reopen to in-person learning, educators and experts are considering the safest approach to recess. While images of socially distanced recess have shown students in isolation, experts suggest ways to compromise by offering a more structured -- or "scaffolded" -- approach.

Stephen Noonoo. "What Should Recess — and Play — Look Like in a Socially Distanced World?" *EdSurge*. September 16, 2020

<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2020-09-16-what-should-recess-and-play-look-like-in-a-socially-distanced-world>

FEDERAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Opinion: School choice fraud and taking local control from poor communities

Birthered in the bowels of the 1950's segregationist south, school choice has never been about improving education. It is about white supremacy, profiting off taxpayers, cutting taxes, selling market based solutions and financing religion. School choice ideology has a long dark history of dealing significant harm to public education.

Market based ideologues are convinced that business is the superior model for school management. These include Bill Gates, the Walton family, Michael Bloomberg, and Eli Broad. Charles Koch and his late brother David created the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) which has contributing members from many corporate leaders and which writes model legislation and financially supports state politicians who promote ideals. In brief, these wealthy people support the portfolio model that closes schools scoring in the bottom 5% on standardized testing and reopens them as charter or 'innovation' schools without elected school boards. Because standardized testing only reliably correlates with family wealth, this system would cause all schools in poor communities to be privatized.

Tom Ultican is retired teacher of physics and advanced mathematics in California, who writes frequently about school "reform."

Thomas Ultican. "School choice is a harmful fraud." *Tultican blog*. September 7, 2020

<https://tultican.com/2020/09/07/school-choice-is-a-harmful-fraud/>

U.S.E.D. ends effort to give relief funds to private schools

The US Department of Education has updated its guidance to eliminate an interim final rule that would have directed more coronavirus relief funding to private schools. The rule, pursued by the department since July 1, was struck down by a judge earlier this month.

Evie Blad. "Education Department Puts Controversial Coronavirus Aid Rule on Ice." *Education Week*. September 10, 2020

<http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2020/09/devos-covid-aid-rule-private-schools.html>

Students go hungry

More than 30 million kids who depend on schools for free or reduced-price meals might not be eating. Among low-income households with children who qualify for free or reduced-price school meals, only about 15% have been getting those meals, because the feeding programs initiated this spring aren't working. In many districts, children who qualify for subsidized school meals aren't getting them because they can't get to them. And some districts said their meal-service budgets are being stretched so much by the pandemic that they could soon face cuts and layoffs. For some children, school meals are the only ones they get in a day. When districts closed for the pandemic, most set up food distribution centers where families could come for a bag containing lunch and often breakfast. The U.S. Department of Agriculture compensated for these meals and in late August extended this support through the end of 2020. However, to receive food families must come to a designated site at a designated time but many cannot due to work and/or transportation issues. Some districts try to take the food to students, but school meal programs are in serious financial trouble because their budgets depend on selling meals to students who can pay. Last spring, Congress created EBT (Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer) putting the value of school meals onto a debit card for groceries. EBT kept between millions of children out of hunger this summer, but the program expired in early September and Congress has not yet renewed it.

Cory Turner. "Children Are Going Hungry': Why Schools Are Struggling To Feed Students." *Morning Edition/NPR*. September 8, 2020

https://www.npr.org/2020/09/08/908442609/children-are-going-hungry-why-schools-are-struggling-to-feed-students?utm_source=npr_newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=20200913&utm_term=.4825555&utm_campaign=ed&utm_id=24074084&orcid=https://www.npr.org/2020/09/08/908442609/children-are-going-hungry-why-schools-are-struggling-to-feed-students?utm_source=npr_newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=20200913&utm_term=.4825555&utm_campaign=ed&utm_id=24074084&orcid=

Districts struggle to keep tabs on COVID cases

Confusion reigns when it comes to finding and reporting data on school-related coronavirus infections. That's a problem for school leaders weighing shutdowns. More than 70,000 new cases of COVID-19 were identified among U.S. children in the last week of August and first week of September, but there was no systematic way for education leaders to know whether sick children or their ill adult peers ended up on campus—or for district leaders to get a handle on when to close schools to curb an outbreak. The federal government does not publicly track school-related COVID-19 cases. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention did track coronavirus-related school closures last spring, it has not continued into the fall.

Sarah D. Sparks. "Districts Struggle to Keep Tabs on COVID-19 Cases." *Education Week*. September 11, 2020

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/09/11/districts-struggle-to-keep-tabs-on-covid-19.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news-l-rm&M=59683740&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa84853cdc6f688bfa>

How the pandemic exposed and might help fix educational inequalities

Education faces existential change as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, which might lead to innovation, helping schools reduce inequality – through everything from micro-schools to joy-based learning. This extensive article reviews the history of racism in public education and suggests ways that the pandemic could lead to improvements.

Stephanie Hanes. "How a pandemic exposed – and may help fix – inequalities in education." *Christian Science Monitor*. September 8, 2020

<https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2020/0908/How-a-pandemic-exposed-and-may-help-fix-inequalities-in-education?cmpid=ema:mkt:20200915&src=highlight>

Concern about unsafe facilities

The condition of school buildings is in the spotlight as experts warn that long-standing concerns about poor ventilation could be problematic during the coronavirus pandemic. Some districts are investing in HVAC, but many teachers remain skeptical and concerned about safety.

Matt Barnum. "The pandemic is spotlighting longstanding issues with America's school buildings." *Chalkbeat*. September 15, 2020
<https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/9/15/21438452/pandemic-schools-buildings-ventilation-repairs>

Private schools & charters netted 6 times the federal \$\$ than did public schools

A new analysis of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans by Good Jobs First points to an imbalance in CARES Act funding between public schools on the one hand and private and charter schools on the other. GJF's Covid Stimulus Watch has identified at least 6,600 charter and private schools that received an estimated \$5.7 billion in PPP loans, which have been made available to private companies and non-profit organizations but not public entities. Approximately 1,200 charter schools and 5,400 private schools received an estimated \$1.3 billion and \$4.5 billion in PPP loans, respectively—averaging \$855,000 per school. In contrast, other parts of the CARES Act allocate only \$13.2 billion for all of the 98,158 public schools in USA, or \$134,500 per school. In other words, private and charter schools are getting six times more per facility than public schools. This gap will likely widen, as charter and private schools are also entitled to a portion of federal funding for public education. There is clearly a significant disparity in CARES Act funding for different kinds of schools.

Melissa Chang. "Private and Charter Schools Receive Approximately \$5.7 Billion in PPP Loans, Raising Questions About Equity in Education." *Good Jobs First/COVID Stimulus Watch*. August 27, 2020

<https://covidstimuluswatch.org/blog/2020-08/private-and-charter-schools-receive-approximately-57-billion-ppp-loans-raising>

Colleges replace SAT, ACT admission requirements

Hundreds of colleges this year have dropped entrance-exam requirements, such as the SAT or ACT, from the admissions process because of the pandemic. Now, admissions officers say they will focus primarily on transcripts, grades and recommendations, while also asking students how they handled challenges presented by the pandemic.

Douglas Belkin. "College Admissions in a Covid Year: SATs Are Out, Personal Stories Are In." *Wall Street Journal*. September 17, 2020
<https://www.wsj.com/articles/college-admissions-in-a-covid-year-sats-are-out-personal-stories-are-in-11600315272>

NEW YORK STATE

Gauging SUNY Chancellor Jim Malatras

Jim Malatras' installation is either a power grab – or the university system's only hope. Newly appointed SUNY Chancellor Jim Malatras has to usher the sprawling university system through a deadly pandemic and fiscal uncertainty while addressing concerns that he is just an extension of the governor.

Zach Williams. "Teacher's pet: Can Cuomo's right-hand man save SUNY?" *City & State/NY*. September 13, 2020

<https://www.cityandstateny.com/articles/policy/education/teachers-pet-can-cuomos-right-hand-man-save-suny.html>

How the pandemic hurts teacher diversity

Layoffs based on seniority can disproportionately affect Black and brown teachers. The Schenectady school district in recent years ramped up efforts to hire more teachers of color, as well as provide anti-racist training for its staff. The district won praise from the NYSED and other groups for its efforts, which included recruiting a more diverse pool of educators, building relationships with historically Black colleges, and providing supports for new teachers. However, cuts in state aid have forced the district to lay off many of these new teachers due to seniority.

Madeline Will. "How COVID-19 Is Hurting Teacher Diversity." *Education Week*. September 14, 2020

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/09/14/how-covid-19-is-hurting-teacher-diversity.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1&M=59685026&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfc>

SUNY & UUP agree on COVID-19 testing

Officials at SUNY have come to an agreement with United University Professions on COVID-19 testing of all union-represented faculty and staff who are required to report to campus.

Rachel Silberstein. "SUNY faculty, staff to be tested for COVID-19." *Albany Times Union*. September 16, 2020

https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/SUNY-faculty-staff-to-be-tested-for-COVID-19-15569107.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=headlines&utm_campaign=tu_capitolconfidential&sid=593184424c17c09a3f115af

NYSUT sues governor for cutting school aid

NYS United Teachers is suing Governor Cuomo, saying he violated the state constitution by his unilateral decision to cut school aid after the government's budget was adopted in April. Hours later, the administration said it will not be reducing state aid funding for schools due later this month. At issue in the NYSUT suit is what the union maintains are illegal budget reduction actions without the specific approval of the Legislature. The Legislature this year gave Cuomo extraordinary powers to adjust the budget downward if the pandemic slammed state tax revenues. NYSUT maintains that the Legislature did not have authority to grant such powers to Cuomo and that the governor did not enjoy those budget trimming powers on his own without a change to the state constitution.

Tom Precious. "Teachers union sues Cuomo over budget actions." *Buffalo News*. September 16, 2020

https://buffalonews.com/news/local/teachers-union-sues-cuomo-over-budget-actions/article_665cc524-f82d-11ea-a79d-7b635ee02a32.html?mc_cid=9c4b3ecf1e&mc_eid=bc2625d4e3

State official: Districts acted prematurely in reacting to threatened aid cut

For months, Governor Cuomo has warned of possible cuts to school aid and many school districts around the state have accepted it as their reality and have initiated cuts and layoffs. Despite the previous warnings, state officials say the school districts acted 'prematurely' since they have yet to experience the cuts.

Amanda Fries. "New York budget director: School districts 'premature' in making cuts." *Albany Times Union*. September 16, 2020
https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/New-York-budget-director-School-districts-15571857.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=headlines&utm_campaign=tu_capitolconfidential&sid=5931844424c17e09a3f115af

NYS administration to make full school-aid payments in September

Governor Cuomo's administration will make full school-aid payments to localities across the state later this month, after previously withholding funds because of revenue losses from the coronavirus pandemic. Mr. Cuomo had held back 20% of payments to municipalities, school districts and social-service providers since April, forcing some upstate school districts to lay off hundreds of workers and cut some in-person instruction.

Jimmy Vielkind. "New York State to Fund School Districts in Full After Withholding Money." *Wall Street Journal*. September 17, 2020
<https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-state-to-fund-school-districts-in-full-after-withholding-money-11600348927>