

EDUCATION NEWS UPDATE

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With this edition of Education News Updates, we return to a weekly schedule.

TEACHING & LEARNING

Exciting promise of community schools

The author describes how community schools can lead to meaningful reform, focusing on the recent state-mandated [Blueprint](#) in Maryland to implement them. The Blueprint calls for designating schools that serve highly concentrated populations of impoverished families as “community schools” and providing these schools with extra funding and support. The extra funding is supposed to be used to hire a health practitioner and a school-based staff person who conducts a needs assessment of the school, and based on that assessment, coordinates and manages a wide range of services—including academic, health, mental, and other services—to help address the negative impact that concentrated poverty often has on children and families.

Jeff Bryant is a veteran education journalist.

Jeff Bryant. “Community schools could be the ultimate tool for addressing education inequity.” *Alternet*. August 17, 2022
<https://www.alternet.org/2022/08/community-schools-addressing-education-inequity/>

Classroom management & teachers’ relationships with disruptive students

One of the most vexing dilemmas for teachers is responding to students who misbehave. Experts argue over whether consistent, strict discipline or a more forgiving response is more effective. Preventing behavior problems, much like preventive medicine, has proved to be somewhat effective in previous studies. One new idea is perspective taking. Its advocates advise teachers to put themselves in the shoes of their most misbehaving students and imagine what they are thinking and feeling. Johns Hopkins education professor Hunter Gehlbach found that students of teachers who were briefly trained in this thought experiment reported better relationships with their teachers and earned higher grades. However, while grades improved, math and reading test scores did not. Also, the number of disciplinary incidents were no different among MS students, whether or not their teachers had been trained.

Improved teacher-student relationships don’t necessarily translate into better student behavior.

Jill Barshay. “Borrowing a page from marriage therapy in the classroom.” *Hechinger Report*. August 22, 2022
https://hechingerreport.org/proof-points-borrowing-a-page-from-marriage-therapy-in-the-classroom/?utm_source=TheHechingerReport&utm_campaign=76e451de04_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2022_08_19_04_19&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d3ee4c3e04-76e451de04-322606321

Broad academic gains in U.S. public schools over past 50 years

The first comprehensive analysis has found broad gains in test scores, with larger gains for students of color than white students, showing the steady and impressive progress of American public schools over the past half century. “Contrary to what you may have heard, average student achievement has been increasing for half a century. Across 7 million tests taken by U.S. students born between 1954 and 2007, math scores have grown by 95 percent of a standard deviation, or nearly four years’ worth of learning. Reading scores have grown by 20 percent of a standard deviation per decade during that time, nearly one year’s worth of learning...Black, Hispanic, and Asian students are improving far more quickly than their white classmates.”

Paul Petersen is editor of the conservative journal Education Next and leader of Harvard’s Program on Education Policy and Governance; M. Danish Shakeel is one of his postdoctoral students.

Paul E. Peterson & M. Danish Shakeel. “A Half Century of Student Progress Nationwide.” *Education Next*. August 9, 2022
<https://www.educationnext.org/half-century-of-student-progress-nationwide-first-comprehensive-analysis-finds-gains-test-scores/>

Commentary: Should test scores be used to assess principals?

Assessing school principals based on students’ performance on tests may be misguided, according to a paper published by the Annenberg Institute at Brown University. While researchers said there may be some connection between school principals and student performance, there was not a cause-and-effect relationship.

Lauraine Langreo. “Is Judging Principals by Test Scores a Mistake?” *Education Week*. August 23, 2022
<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/is-judging-principals-by-test-scores-a-mistake/2022/08>

Studies show downside of 4-day school weeks

Some research shows a small negative effect on rural students. Research Seven more recent studies reveal overall negative results, including one in Oregon that found 5th-grade students lost the equivalent of 5 - 6 weeks of school A separate review of 12,000 students at 35 schools in six states with 4-day weeks also found on average that test scores grew less than those of students who attended school 5 days a week.

Jill Barshay. “Seven new studies on the impact of a four-day school week.” *Hechinger Report*. August 29, 2022

Schools see benefits of academic career plans

Academic career plans help students understand "the purpose and meaning of what they're learning," says the VP of research for the Coalition for Career Development Center and a professor at Boston University. In Denver's school district, the executive director of career development and student supports, says academic career plans are credited with boosting attendance, GPAs, test scores and graduation rates.

David Tobenkin. "Academic career plans have students exploring careers as early as kindergarten." *The 74*. August 27, 2022
<https://www.the74million.org/article/as-early-as-kindergarten-students-begin-exploring-careers/>

Virtual exchanges can expand global horizons

Proponents argue that virtual exchange programs shouldn't be dismissed as "second best" to on-the-ground study abroad, and they can expand the global learning ecosystem in important ways. Learning abroad programs often exclude lower-income students, but virtual exchange programs allow students to connect with their peers in other countries to discuss issues. Students at Porterville College in California met with Iraqi students over 10 weeks to discuss an energy crisis and developed a possible solution.

Susan D'Agostino. "Virtual Exchanges Promote Equity in Global Learning." *Inside Higher Ed*. August 31, 2022
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/08/31/virtual-exchanges-enhance-access-global-learning>

Pandemic caused drop in math and reading scores

Test results show that the pandemic led to falling math and reading scores for 9-year-olds, erasing two decades of progress. The declines spanned almost all races and income levels and were markedly worse for the lowest-performing students. The setbacks could have powerful consequences for a generation of children who must move beyond basics in elementary school to thrive later on.

Sarah Mervish. "The pandemic erased two decades of progress in math and reading." *NY Times*. September 1, 2022
https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/01/us/national-test-scores-math-reading-pandemic.html?campaign_id=60&emc=edit_na_20220901&instance_id=0&nl=breaking-news&ref=headline&resi_id=18877907&serment_id=102921&user_id=def579af08119fa81853cde6f688bfa

White House unveils 3-point plan on teacher shortages

President Biden's administration on August 31 released a three-point plan aimed at addressing teacher shortages that focuses on raising pay, enhancing training and partnering with recruitment firms. The firms, including ZipRecruiter and Handshake, have announced efforts specifically aimed at recruiting teachers, including creation of a new web portal for K-12 school jobs.

Alia Wong & Joey Garrison. "Exclusive: Biden administration partnering with job search companies to help fill teacher shortages." *USA Today*. August 31, 2022
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2022/08/31/biden-job-search-companies-partner-take-teacher-shortage/7941397001/>
Morgan Chalfant. "Biden administration partners with job firms to address teacher shortage." *The Hill*. August 31, 2022
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2022/08/31/biden-job-search-companies-partner-take-teacher-shortage/7941397001/>

FEDERAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

School leaders should plan for impending economic shifts

The U.S. may not be expecting a recession, but there are several economic changes that are going to be hitting school districts all at once—and if leaders aren't prepared, they'll have to make major budget cuts. This article addresses three economic shifts that schools will be facing all at once—the end of federal coronavirus aid, declining enrollment and falling inflation—and what they should do to prepare.

Micah Ward. "Should districts brace for a recession? A heads-up for leaders." *District Administration*. August 15, 2022
<https://districtadministration.com/should-districts-brace-for-a-recession-a-heads-up-for-leaders/>

What the climate spending package includes for schools

The newly passed Inflation Reduction Act contains the most sweeping federal legislation on climate change, but does not include a proposed \$100 billion for improving school facilities. However, the spending package does include \$400 million for states to purchase electric vehicles, including school buses, and \$50 million to improve school indoor air quality.

Mark Lieberman. "Biden Signs Climate Change Spending Package, But K-12 Schools Are Mostly Left Out." *Education Week*. August 16, 2022
<https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/biden-signs-climate-change-spending-package-but-k-12-schools-are-mostly-left-out/2022/08>

Schools invest in classroom air quality upgrades

Federal dollars available to improve schools are being used by some districts to make changes that should stymie the spread of the coronavirus and other viruses by improving classroom air quality. One Ohio district invested \$4 million in classroom improvements, including HVAC upgrades, higher-rated filters and ultraviolet irradiation.

Evan Bush, Stephanie Gosk, & Patrick Martin. "For some students, back to school will mean better-ventilated classrooms." *NBC News*. August 18, 2022
<https://www.nbcnews.com/science/science-news/students-back-school-will-mean-better-ventilated-classrooms-rcna42857>

U.S.E.D.: States should use federal funds for teachers

US Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said on "Face the Nation" Sunday that money from the American Rescue Plan is available for states to help shore up a longstanding teacher shortage by recruiting retired educators and providing salaries for student-teachers. A lack of educators has prompted some districts to make tough decisions, including moving to four-day weeks.

Emily Mae Czachor. "Cardona calls on states to use COVID-19 relief funds to address teacher shortages." *CBS News? Face the Nation*. August 21, 2022 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/miguel-cardona-covid-relief-funds-teacher-shortage-face-the-nation/>

School meal programs anticipate challenges

Despite the passing of the Keep Kids Fed Act, which increased federal reimbursements for school breakfast by \$0.15 and lunch by \$0.40 per meal, schools are struggling to make ends meet this school year because of inflation, supply issues and staffing shortages. The School Nutrition Association said SNA is encouraging families to apply for free and reduced-price meals "even if you don't think you are eligible."

Sarah Beth Guevara. "School lunch programs brace for higher costs, supply issues, less funding, staff shortages." *ABC News*. August 20, 2022. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/school-lunch-programs-brace-higher-costs-supply-issues/story?id=88405457>

Some schools install panic button technology

There is growing interest in installing panic buttons -- often accompanying a mobile app -- in U.S. schools following the tragedy in Uvalde, Texas. However, some officials say more work is needed to determine whether the technology works as intended, or if it unintentionally creates a false sense of security.

Heather Hollingsworth. "Back to school, with panic buttons." *Associated Press*. August 22, 2022 <https://apnews.com/article/back-to-school-panic-buttons-4dcc7f89a5f0f1dede7b73868978a090>

College debt relief to be provided

President Biden issued sweeping student debt relief for people earning less than \$125,000 per year (or \$250,000 per year for married couples who file taxes jointly), and extended a pause on federal student loan payments through December 31. Officials also plan to cancel up to \$20,000 in student debt for recipients of Pell Grants. The extra debt forgiveness for Pell recipients is in addition to the cancellation of up to \$10,000 in student debt for most other borrowers. The White House's plans are only expected to apply to Americans earning under \$125,000 per year, or \$250,000 per year for married couples who file taxes jointly. Roughly 43 million federal student loan borrowers are eligible for some level of forgiveness, including 20 million who could have their debt completely canceled,

Danielle Douglas-Gabriel & Jeff Stein. "Biden to cancel up to \$10,000 in student loans, \$20K for Pell recipients." *Washington Post*. August 24, 2022 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/08/24/biden-student-loan-cancellation/>

Collin Binkley, Seung Min Kim, & Chris Megerian. "Student loan forgiveness could help more than 40 million." *Associated Press*. August 25, 2022 https://apnews.com/article/student-loan-forgiveness-biden-plan-99c6e18774744187c9af634fb7eb728?source=hp_email_subscribe&email=hp_email_subscribe@apnews.com&utm_campaign=August25_MorningWire&utm_term=MorningWire%20Subscribers

Judge blocks Florida's Stop WOKE Act

Florida's new Stop WOKE Act, which limits what can be taught about gender and race, has been blocked by a Florida judge who ruled that the law violates the First Amendment. In separate cases, the constitutionality of the law is being challenged by college professors, students and K-12 teachers.

Curt Anderson. "Judge blocks Florida 'woke' law pushed by Gov. DeSantis." *Associated Press*. August 18, 2022 <https://apnews.com/article/education-lawsuits-florida-discrimination-16ffd7a0abd852edf611b6876f637ca6>

Increase in federal funding for technical assistance for community schools

Community schools operate under the supervision of public school boards and they seek to strengthen public educations. "The U.S.E.D. has announced a *notice inviting applications* for the Full-Service Community Schools Program to provide high-quality academic, integrated health and social service, and engagement support for all students. The grant program continues to reflect steady increases in the federal appropriations. The growth signals a consistent interest and confidence in community school strategies as a powerful approach to whole-child educational transformation of schools and communities. Similarly, dedicated state funding opportunities in *Maryland*, *New York*, and *California* reflect a growing body of evidence about how community school strategies—when supported and sustained—can leverage the assets and voices of the full community to support student success."

Havin Kimner, Stacey Campo, & Abe Fernandez. "Increased government funding recognizes the need for strong community school technical assistance." *Brookings Institution*. August 15, 2022

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2022/08/15/increased-government-funding-recognizes-the-need-for-strong-community-school-technical-assistance/>

Schools need improved indoor air quality to stop viruses

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of indoor air quality, but a CDC study found that fewer than 40% of schools have upgraded or replaced HVAC systems since the onset of the coronavirus. The author states that school districts must prioritize improving their ventilation infrastructure and make a point to regularly communicate with students and faculty regarding the state of their school's air quality measurements.

Josh Feinberg is president of the Cleaning Coalition of America.

Josh Feinberg. "We Need to Clear the Air in Our Schools. Literally." *Real Clear Policy*. August 17, 2022

https://www.realclearpolicy.com/articles/2022/08/17/we_need_to_clear_the_air_in_our_schools_literally_848390.html

Students tapped to work in school cafeterias, assist in offices

A growing number of school districts nationwide are hiring HS students to work in cafeterias as staffing shortages persist. As the nation's labor crunch hits public education, some administrators say student-employment programs can open up career paths. Skeptics worry teens aren't well served by the initiatives. In one South Carolina district, several students -- paid \$12.24 an hour -- prepare fruit, chop vegetables and assemble lunches. Leticia Miranda. "Short-staffed school districts are hiring students to serve lunch and answer phones." *NBC News*. August 27, 2022 <https://www.nbcnews.com/business/economy/short-staffed-school-districts-are-hiring-students-serve-lunch-rcna44905>

Political efforts to control school boards analyzed

Some Republican efforts to take over school boards have been successful, but not many. In a recent commentary in *The Hill*, journalist Jennifer Berkshire and NEPC Fellow **Jack Schneider** of the University of Massachusetts Lowell explain that candidates were more likely to lose their races this spring if they opposed either (a) diversity efforts and/or instruction about gender or race; or (b) coronavirus safety measures such as masks, vaccine requirements, or distance learning. Even in heavily Republican areas, such stances have not guaranteed victories. The authors state that "Americans have direct experiences that contradict what they're hearing from candidates." These experiences are likely to be positive, according to the 2022 PDK longstanding annual education poll which found that 54% of American adults assigned grades of A or B to their local public schools—the highest rate since PDK started its poll in 1974. Public school parents are even more likely to be satisfied; 68% assigned their children's schools grades of A or B this year.

"Taking Stock of the GOP School Board Takeover Strategy." *National Education Policy Center* (U. of Colorado, Boulder). September 1, 2022 <http://www.icontact-archive.com/archive?c=1748247&f=3100&s=3172&m=260505&t=683ff6e55fceb8d669aa5ea6b8253ac84d14528c98c4873195440427f0ff88d5>

NEW YORK STATE

Governor announces new Covid-19 guidelines for schools

NYS schools and daycares have new guidelines for how to handle COVID-19 exposures and cases this year, Governor Hochul has announced. These guidelines, for the most part, relax quarantine rules in line with CDC guidance. While not mandatory, vaccinations for children are strongly suggested. Previous guidelines required that if an individual tested positive in a classroom, those exposed would need to stay home for 5 days, or "test-to-stay" back into the class. The state will no longer require quarantining for those exposed to COVID-19, if they are asymptomatic. Instead, those students are advised to continue coming to class and mask for 10 days. Those who test positive will still be subject to five-day isolation, and asked to wear a mask upon return. Random testing will no longer be required by the state, but schools and districts may still choose to do so.

Hailie Higgins, Zach Adams, Eriketa Cost, & James Battaglia. "Hochul announces new COVID-19 guidelines for schools, daycares." *WROC-TV8*. August 22, 2022 https://www.rchesterfirst.com/news-york-state/hochul-announces-new-covid-19-guidelines-for-schools-new-york-policies/?nxs_link=big-story_1_title_1&email=5d113d09406c7036e559bb4b5c7b92a72c79686b9188cc63f596bd4&utm_term=non

Academic ratings for NYS public schools resuming this coming year

Academic ratings for public schools are restarting this year across the state, following a two-year halt because of pandemic disruptions. Many educators point to resumption of ratings and other developments as signs that schools could be headed toward more stable operations.

John Hildebrand. "State to resume academic ratings for schools." *Newsday*. August 21, 2022 https://www.newsday.com/long-island/education/schools-academic-ratings-resume-buqvz0f#utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=non-subs-Morning-Update&ctc=7f80dae0ff17e08169c7036e559bb4b5c7b92a72c79686b9188cc63f596bd4&utm_term=non

NY to release of students' state test scores earlier

NYS Education Commissioner Betty A. Rosa has announced that the SED intends to phase in full computer-based testing in grades 3-8 by the spring of 2026. In coming weeks, many parents are expected to get an early look at their children's scores from springtime state tests, with the trend due to accelerate in future years as Albany moves toward full use of computerized exams. SED authorities released preliminary testing results for grades 3-8 to local schools several weeks ago — more than a month ahead of past years. Districts may share scores of individual students on state tests with parents and guardians now that districts have received that information from the state.

John Hildebrand. "NY moves toward earlier release of students' state test scores." *Newsday*. August 26, 2022 https://www.newsday.com/long-island/education/state-tests-scores-exams-rzapeqvm#utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=non-subs-Morning-Update&ctc=7f80dae0ff17e08169c7036e559bb4b5c7b92a72c79686b9188cc63f596bd4&utm_term=non

NYSUT: NYS should issue uniform school safety guidance

NSUT has released a [report](#) detailing local, state and federal policy recommendations to address violence in schools. It seeks statewide school safety guidance for all districts, from single points of entry to lockdown procedures, as well as uniform staffing ratios for school social workers, counselors and psychologists. It argues that smaller class size, increased hiring of support staff and the adoption of crisis prevention strategies will help stem violence. NYSUT spokeswoman Emily DeSantis said "research shows the best way to prevent school violence is by fostering

a positive school climate that focuses on student and staff social and emotional needs through the recruitment, hiring and retention of staff to properly support students, including counselors, social workers, and nurses."

Robert Brodsky. "NY school districts should have uniform safety guidance, state teachers union says." *Newsday*. August 30, 2022
https://www.newsday.com/long-island/education/uniform-school-safety-rules-new-york-teachers-union-dboxckii#utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Top-Stories&ctc=7180daea0ff17e08169c7036e559bbf4b9e7b92a72e79686b9188cc63f596bd4&utm_term=non

Teachers gain earlier access to public pension system

As part of the state budget, the governor and lawmakers agreed to allow state and local employees, including public school educators, to become vested in the public pension system after five rather than 10 years of employment. Rick Karlin. "New York teachers can vest for retirement pensions after five years, too" *Albany Times Union*. August 27, 2022
Length of service requirements have been eased for public sector workers to get benefits

Advocates seek supports for student mental health

As a new school year kicks off next week, advocates and families are calling for NYS lawmakers to prioritize mental health resources for youth. At a virtual rally on August 28, parents, young people and advocates across the state shared stories about the impact of the pandemic and renewed calls for elected officials to invest more in behavioral health programs and services for children and teens, which experts say have been underfunded for years and are now at a breaking point, with increased demand spurred by the coronavirus crisis.

Jeanmarie Evelly. Advocates push to center youth mental health as new school year begins." *City Limits*. August 29, 2022
<https://citylimits.org/2022/08/29/advocates-push-to-center-youth-mental-health-as-new-school-year-begins/>

Debate over student use of cell phones in school

Across the country, debate is intensifying about whether students' pervasive use of smartphones in school is hindering their education. Across NYS, districts have tried different approaches to dealing with cellphones:

- One middle school in Albany will require students this year, as it did last year, to leave mobile devices in their lockers all day until dismissal.
- The Greece school district will require students in grades 6-12 this year to leave their phones in a magnetically-sealed pouch during the school day, which is being done at many live events like concerts.

The great majority of school districts nationally have policies for cellphone use, with many prohibiting students from using them for personal, non-academic purposes. But many districts set or enforce policies on a school-by-school basis, since inappropriate cellphone use is a bigger problem in MSs, followed by HSs. Many students use their phones properly to take notes, track schedules, do research, and more. Problems arise when they text friends, take photos or video, check out apps or play games. It's often left to teachers to enforce policies. A 2020 study of 202 public schools found over 90% of MS and HS have cellphone policies. Almost 90% of MS principals said they believed that cellphones at school have negative consequences for social development and academics.

Gary Stern & Diana Dombrowski. "Cellphones in classrooms: Some New York schools consider bans to remove distraction." *Rockland/Westchester Journal News*, August 24, 2022/*D&C*, August 27, 2022
https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/education/2022/08/24/cellphone-bans-in-school-ny-districts-consider-regulation/65408115007?NLcohort=B&utm_source=democratandchronicle-DailyBriefing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily-briefing&utm_term=hero&utm_content=PROC-1070DC-E-NLETTER65