

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 21, 2018 News Round-up

TEACHING & LEARNING

Superintendents identify top K-12 challenges

According to Gallup's 2018 Survey of K-12 School District Superintendents, 74% of superintendents say it will be a challenge to prepare students to be engaged citizens -- up from 50% in 2017. The other challenges identified by superintendents in the survey include improving student achievement and retaining teachers.

Laura Ascione. "5 key priorities for today's superintendents." *eSchool News*. September 17, 2018
<https://www.eschoolnews.com/2018/09/17/5-key-priorities-for-todays-superintendents/>

What secondary schools and colleges can learn from each other

Both institutions remain largely unaware of how the other operates. That's a fixable problem, which could benefit from high schools and colleges working together, states the writer.

Ethan S. Ake-Little. "Commentary: What K-12 and Higher Education Can Learn From Each Other." *Education Week*. September 19, 2018
<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/09/19/what-k-12-and-higher-education-can-learn.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1&M=58615793&U=252955>

Suspending primary students can do more harm than good

When schools suspend kindergartners and first-graders, some find it a challenge to turn things around in their academic life, a new study shows. It can set them up for repeat behavior problems later on.

Jared Wadley-Michigan. "Suspending little kids can do more harm than good." *Futurity*. September 14, 2018
https://www.futurity.org/suspension-children-school-discipline-1865152/?utm_source=Futurity+Today&utm_campaign=0ae3f1b3bc-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_09_20_02_21&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_e34e8ee443-0ae3f1b3bc-206440697

NATIONAL / FEDERAL

Google and others sued over apps that track kids

New Mexico has sued Google, several online advertising firms and a maker of popular gaming apps, alleging that the companies allowed the unlawful collection of sensitive data about children including their location. The lawsuit represents a new privacy battleground for tech companies facing mounting pressure about data collection and use.

David Ingram. "Google failed to stop apps from tracking kids, state says in lawsuit." *NBC News*. September 14, 2018
https://www.nbcnews.com/news/amp/ncna909836?_twitter_impression=true

Opinion: Vouchers threaten religious liberty

Charles Foster Johnson, a Baptist minister in Texas and founder of Pastors for Texas Children, writes that vouchers pose a threat to religious liberty, and his specific concern that Brett Kavanaugh endangers religious liberty because of his hostility to the wall of separation, which protects the church from the intrusions of the state.

Charles Foster Johnson. "Kavanaugh threatens religious liberty in Texas [Opinion]." *Houston Chronicle*. September 7, 2018
<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/opinion/outlook/article/Kavanaugh-threatens-religious-liberty-in-Texas-13210544.php>

Winners and losers in Congress' school spending agreement

We now know just how much Congress wants to spend on education in the coming fiscal year.

Andrew Ujifusa. "Winners and Losers From Capitol Hill's School Spending Agreement." *Education Week*. September 16, 2018
<http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2018/09/school-spending-agreement-winners-losers-capitol-hill.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=58611730&U=252955>

Time to change American approach to assessment?

The author provides an overview of emerging critiques of our national obsession with standardized testing.

The U.S. is unique among countries in subjecting students so often to standardized tests, but as testing experts note, the resulting deluge of data comes with significant trade-offs on exam quality. Testing every student every year is a costly prospect, said Marc Tucker, the president and CEO of the National Center on Education and the Economy, a research and policy organization in Washington... And the expense means that the tests are often lower quality than tests used in other countries, and a poor gauge of the higher-order critical thinking skills that students need in college, the workforce, and life, he added...By contrast, very few of the highest-performing countries test students

every year, Tucker said. And when they do test, they often use deeper assessments that include performance tasks or writing prompts, giving educators a richer understanding of what students know and are able to do.”

Alyson Klein. “Is It Time for the American Approach to Assessment to Change?” *Education Week*. September 5, 2018
<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/09/05/is-it-time-for-the-american-approach.html?cmp=e-ml-enl-eu-news-l-rm&M=58607141&U=1926638>

Defunding public schools & transferring resources from public sector to private institutions

New reports by reveal the real impact rich people have on schools and how they’ve chosen to leverage their money to influence the system. One report, “Confronting the Education Debt”, examines the nation’s “education debt” – the historic funding shortfall for school systems that educate black and brown children. A major source of this shortfall is the federal government’s lack of funding for its Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, but state and local governments also contribute to underfunding via tax systems that chronically short schools, particularly those that educate low-income students. Dwindling resources for public schools directly correlates with transferring public dollars to the wealthy. “Our schools are broke on purpose.” Instead of using their political donations to advocate for more direct aid to schools serving low-income kids, wealthy donors “distract us from policy changes that would really help children” to lower taxes.

Jeff Bryant. “Wealthy People Are Destroying Public Schools, One Donation At A Time.” *Education Opportunity Network*. September 13, 2018
<http://educationopportunitynetwork.org/wealthy-people-are-destroying-public-schools-one-donation-at-a-time/>

Study: Free student lunch leads to fewer repeat suspensions

A National Bureau of Economic Research study found allowing all students to have free school lunch, instead of providing it only to those whose parents filled out application forms, may reduce the number of children who get suspended repeatedly from school. Researchers said federal community eligibility for student meals improves nutrition and the “social climate” at schools “by reducing the stigma associated with free meals.”

Matt Barnum. “A benefit of free lunch for all: fewer students get repeatedly suspended, new study suggests.” *Chalkbeat*. September 18, 2018
<https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/us/2018/09/18/could-expanding-school-lunch-programs-help-keep-kids-in-school/>

New report: Federal government shortchanged public schools

A new report concludes that the federal government shortchanged the nation’s public schools by hundreds of billions, at the same time that the top earners raked in billions of dollars. *A new report called “Confronting the Education Debt” commissioned by the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS) details the shortfall in minute detail. Between 2005 and 2017, the federal government withheld \$580 billion it had promised to spend on students from poor families and students with disabilities. Over that same period, the personal net worth of the nation’s 400 wealthiest people ballooned by \$1.57 trillion... We’ve been cheating our children out of the money we owe them for more than half a century!*

Steven Singer. “Report: US Shortchanged Public Schools by Hundreds of Billions of Dollars Over Decades.” *Gadfly on the Wall* blog. September 17, 2018
<https://gadflyonthewallblog.com/2018/09/17/report-us-shortchanged-public-schools-by-hundreds-of-billions-of-dollars-over-decades/>

Providing input into new definitions of NAEP achievement levels

The National Assessment Governing Board, the federal agency in charge of the NAEP assessments, is aware that the achievement levels (Basic, Proficient, Advanced) are being misused. They are considering changing the definitions of the levels. NAGB has invited the public to express its views. Education historian Diane Ravitch shares her letter and urges readers to share their input at NAEPALSpolicy@ed.gov and Peggy.Carr@ed.gov by September 30. The National Superintendents Roundtable also wrote to NAGB to oppose the achievement levels. Both letters recommend that the NAEP abandon the achievement levels because they are technically unsound and confusing to the public and the media. NAEP ‘proficiency’ is unattainable for most students. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) has stated clearly that “Proficient is not synonymous with grade level performance.” Nonetheless, public figures claim that the proficiency standard of NAEP is the bar that ALL students should attain and that American public education is a failure because so many students have not reached NAEP proficiency. When Congress approved the achievement levels in 1992, they were considered experimental. They have never been approved by Congress, because of the many critiques of their validity by respected authorities.

“The letter I wrote about changing NAEP achievement levels: You should write one too!” Diane Ravitch’s blog. September 20, 2018
<https://dianeravitch.net/2018/09/20/the-letter-i-wrote-about-changing-naep-achievement-levels-you-write-one-too/>

National Superintendents Roundtable letter to NAEP governing Board. September 18, 2018
<https://greatschoolwars.files.wordpress.com/2018/09/nagb-final-complete.docx>

NEW YORK STATE

SED recommends not punishing districts with high opt out numbers

School districts with high numbers of students boycotting state standardized tests would not be penalized under changes being recommended by the SED. The state is rolling out new regulations intended to meet requirements set

down under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The law requires, among many other things, a 95% participation rate on the state assessments in math and language arts each spring. The decision drew praise from union leaders. A full list of the proposed changes can be found on the state Education Department's website. Jay Rey. "State won't penalize school districts with high opt-out numbers." *Buffalo News*. September 15, 2018 <https://buffalonews.com/2018/09/15/state-wont-penalize-school-districts-with-high-opt-out-numbers/>