

EDUCATION NEWS UPDATE

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TEACHING & LEARNING

Ed tech fosters future student-centered learning

A third of school systems surveyed intend to launch a full-time virtual school in COVID's wake. There are three key strategies that can be adopted by schools to utilize education technology and lessons learned during the coronavirus pandemic to support student-centered learning, according to a new report. The report suggests making "bold shifts" toward student-centered learning that empowers teachers to better identify and meet the needs of students.

Matt Zalaznick. "3 ways ed-tech is ensuring student-centered learning thrives after COVID." *District Administration*. September 16, 2021
[3 ways ed-tech is ensuring student-centered learning thrives after COVID \(districtadministration.com\)](https://www.districtadministration.com)

Commentary: Tech competence essential to digital equity

Students who learn better through virtual learning should have that opportunity, but the option requires digital equity, a Toronto educator asserts in this commentary. Providing devices and hot spots falls short, though; students and teachers need instruction on how to use the technology as well as being kept current on technology.

Jason Trinh is a Toronto educator, speaker and author.

Jason Trinh. "Ed Tech Access and Competency Make Virtual Learning Options Equitable." *Ed Tech*. September 17, 2021

[Ed Tech Access and Competency Make Virtual Learning Options Equitable | EdTech Magazine](https://www.edtechmagazine.com)

Research: Positive effects of productive failure on learning outcomes

The dominant paradigm in teaching has been that we learn new things best when someone explains them to us. First instruction, then practice: this is the educational formula still applied in countless classrooms. New research demonstrates that exactly the opposite is the case. "If you want to achieve ideal learning outcomes, it's better to first puzzle over a problem that is specifically relevant to a topic before then exploring the underlying principles," says Manu Kapur, a professor at ETH Zurich (a public university in Switzerland).

Manu Kapur. "STUDENTS WHO 'PRODUCTIVELY FAIL' MAY LEARN MORE." *ETH Zurich* (Switzerland). September 20, 2021
[Students who 'productively fail' may learn more - Futurity](https://www.futurity.org)

Survey shows how schools adapted during the pandemic

School districts that have emphasized a healthy culture and strong relationships have been better equipped to adapt during the coronavirus pandemic, according to 84% of those surveyed by the Next Generation Learning Challenges. Of those surveyed, 79% also cited leadership, and 74% cited student-centered learning.

Shawna De La Rosa. "What do school districts credit for successful pandemic pivots?" *K-12 Dive*. September 20, 2021

[What do school districts credit for successful pandemic pivots? | K-12 Dive \(k12dive.com\)](https://www.k12dive.com)

Mentor Project aims to help billions of students

The Mentor Project has provided free mentoring to more than 61,000 students in the US, India and other nations in STEAM, law, business and other fields, says founder and CEO Deborah Heiser. The group provides equal access to world expert mentors for students worldwide who would otherwise never have such an opportunity.

Diana Tsai. "This Nonprofit Is On A Mission To Mentor A Billion Students Globally." *Forbes*. September 19, 2021

[This Nonprofit Is On A Mission To Mentor A Billion Students Globally \(forbes.com\)](https://www.forbes.com)

Racial breakdown of career education confirms deep disparities

A recent report by the U.S.E.D. provides more evidence of racial disparities in career and technical education, first identified in a *Hechinger Report/Associated Press* analysis last year regarding such programs in 40 states. The U.S.E.D. statistics describe a system in which Black and Hispanic students benefit less often from classes connected to higher-paying careers and college degrees than their white peers. Despite years of work by advocates to increase equity in career and technical education, white students are more likely than Black and Hispanic students to take classes in fields such as manufacturing, information technology and STEM, while Black students are more likely to take courses in hospitality and tourism.

Sarah Butrymowicz. "First nationwide look at racial breakdown of career education confirms deep divides." *Hechinger Report*.

September 16, 2021
[First nationwide look at racial breakdown of CTE confirms deep divides \(hechingerreport.org\)](https://www.hechingerreport.org)

Climate change sabotaging education

This summer has brought not only a resurgence of the pandemic, but also stark evidence of the devastating toll that climate change will take on the lives and learning of children. Fires, hurricanes, floods, droughts and heat waves are intensifying, in some cases forcing kids to flee their homes and classrooms. School buildings and budgets aren't up to the task of weathering climate disasters and the experience of living through these calamities is adding to the mental health strains on students.

Caroline Preston. "Climate change is sabotaging education for America's students – and it's only going to get worse." *Hechinger Report*. September 19, 2021
[Climate change is sabotaging education for America's students \(hechingerreport.org\)](https://hechingerreport.org/climate-change-is-sabotaging-education-for-americas-students/)

Helping science teachers tackle controversial topics

The nonprofit National Center for Science Education (NCSE) works to make sure students have an accurate science education. NCSE has been guiding teachers on how to handle politically fraught issues like evolution and climate change for years. Questions about masking, new variants, CDC policy changes, and conspiracy theories prompted the NCSE to develop a set of lessons to tackle the most common misconceptions about how science works. The lessons are based around public health, epidemiology and the pandemic because people are surrounded by misinformation. The NCSE has recruited about [30 teachers](#) from places where conflicts over science have been heated recently, to field-test a series of [lesson plans](#) on the nature of science — as well as a series of climate change lesson plans that had been delayed by the pandemic. The teachers received training so they could launch the series this school year. Making science education more rigorous is more critical than ever, according to new [report](#) from The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

Javeria Salman. "Helping science teachers tackle misinformation and controversial topics." *Hechinger Report*. September 16, 2021
[Helping science teachers tackle misinformation and controversial topics \(hechingerreport.org\)](https://hechingerreport.org/helping-science-teachers-tackle-misinformation-and-controversial-topics/)

FEDERAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Four tips for better communications with families

Asking all parents the best way to alert them to school news allows school leaders to contact them early and often, and a district communications template for principals can make it easier, says a district communication services director. Other education leaders in this interview offered ideas on a science-backed dashboard and translators.

Ileana Najarro. "COVID Protocols Keep Changing. Here's How Schools Can Keep Parents in the Know." *Education Week*. September 10, 2021 | [COVID Protocols Keep Changing. Here's How Schools Can Keep Parents in the Know \(edweek.org\)](https://www.edweek.org/COVID-Protocols-Keep-Changing-Here-s-How-Schools-Can-Keep-Parents-in-the-Know/)

Schools struggle to fill support positions

Schools nationwide are facing serious shortages of school nutrition professionals, bus drivers and substitute teachers, says Chip Slaven, the National School Boards Association's interim director. Low pay, few benefits and erratic schedules are keeping workers away.

Giulia Heyward. "Will the Bus Driver Ever Come? Or the Substitute Teacher or Cafeteria Worker?" *NY Times*. September 16, 2021
[Schools Are Seeing Shortages of Bus Drivers, Cafeteria Workers and Other Essential Roles - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/16/us/politics/school-shortages-bus-drivers-cafeteria-workers.html)

Current school culture wars

The latest fights over mask-wearing and racism exist in part because they touch on differing social values and what it means to be American, experts say, and are driven by desires to win victories and to change narratives. Conflict over the idea of what America stands for often intensifies during periods of change, says Andrew Hartman, a professor of history who studies culture wars.

Chelsea Sheasley. "Can there be a winner in the school culture wars?" *Christian Science Monitor*. September 15, 2021
[Back to school: Can there be a winner in the culture wars? - CSMonitor.com](https://www.csmonitor.com/2021/0915/US/Can-there-be-a-winner-in-the-school-culture-wars-?hpid=hp-top-news-story%3A-school-culture-wars%3Ahomepage%2Fstory)

Book review: How charters control access and enrollment

Charter schools choose students, as explained in *School's Choice: How Charter Schools Control Access and Shape Enrollment*, published by Teachers College Press. Unlike traditional public schools, which accept any student who lives within a defined zone, charters use selection processes. Even where law prohibits cherry-picking students, charters have adopted practices that do just that. This article lists 13 such practices, such as admission hoops, student screening, assigning parental tasks, denying services, counseling out, no 'backfilling' during the school year, and pricing. All of these practices increase the burden on regular public schools.

"Do Students Choose Their Charter Schools, or Is It the Other Way Around?" *National Education Policy Center* (University of Colorado Boulder). September 21, 2021
www.icontact-archive.com/archive?c=1748247&f=3100&s=3172&m=220870&t=683ff6e55fceb8d669aa5ea6b8253ac84d14528c98c4873195440427f0ff88d5

Bringing people together in a polarized climate

Education leaders can help calm a polarized atmosphere by connecting personally with parents on each side of the issue, actively listening, and emphasizing that everyone wants students to be safe, participants said on a Harvard University panel. Exhibiting compassion and modeling problem-solving for students can help as well.

Kara Arundel. "Panelists: Heal school community polarization for sake of children's health." *K-12 Dive*. September 16, 2021
[Panelists: Heal school community polarization for sake of children's health | K-12 Dive \(k12dive.com\)](https://www.k12dive.com/news/panelists-heal-school-community-polarization-for-sake-of-childrens-health/)

Database tracks pandemic's effects of student learning

A new digital platform offers the most comprehensive data available on ways the pandemic has affected learning in K-12 public schools nationwide. The [COVID-19 School Data Hub](#) provides a school-by-school look at which schools and districts operated in person, virtually, or in hybrid mode during the 2020-21 school year; how COVID-19 case rates rose and fell during that time; and, in some cases, how the pandemic affected enrollment and test scores. The database is designed to help in planning—including how in-person, remote, and hybrid learning environments have affected students' mental and physical health, parents' work and personal lives, and more. Jill Kimball, Brown University. "DATABASE TRACKS COVID'S EFFECTS ON US KIDS' LEARNING." *Futurity*. September 21, 2021 [Database tracks COVID's effects on US kids' learning - Futurity](#)

Increasing shortage of teachers and staff nationwide

Schools now face a shortage of teachers and staff the likes of which some districts have never seen, since the ongoing staffing issue has been exacerbated by the pandemic. The stress of teaching has triggered a spike in retirements and resignations. Schools also need more staffers like tutors and aides to make up for learning losses and more teachers to run online school for those not ready to return. Several schools have had to shut classrooms due to lack of teachers. Money is not the main problem—districts have billions in federal and state pandemic relief funding. People aren't applying. Concerns are growing that schools will hire underqualified teachers, particularly in low-income communities where it's already harder to fill positions, and that class sizes will expand. Jocelyn Gecker. "COVID-19 creates dire US shortage of teachers, school staff." *Associated Press*. September 22, 2021 [COVID-19 creates dire US shortage of teachers, school staff \(apnews.com\)](#)

NECP report: CRT opponents maintain inequity

Critical Race Theory, or CRT, has ignited a contentious national dialogue. To provide a better understanding of what CRT entails, the National Education Policy Center today released *Understanding the Attacks on Critical Race Theory*. The authors describe attempts to legislate race-related curriculum. Advocates of this legislation argue that providing students with such information is un-American, divisive, and racist. The authors explain how the assault on CRT is part of a larger effort to delegitimize historically accurate accounts of race and racism in our history; to thwart attempts by members of marginalized groups to participate in civic life; and to retain political power. Francesca López, et al. "Understanding the Attacks on Critical Race Theory." *National Education Policy Center (University of Colorado/Boulder)*. September 23, 2021 <https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/crt>

CDC Panel: No recommendation for booster shots for K-12 staff

The Center for Disease Control vaccine advisory committee has voted against recommending a booster shot for essential workers, including K-12 school staff. Madeline Will. "No Booster Shots for Teachers, CDC Panel Says." *Education Week*. September 23, 2021 [No Booster Shots for Teachers, CDC Panel Says \(edweek.org\)](#)

NEW YORK STATE

Governor Hochul announces state plans to address school bus driver shortage

Governor Hochul announced new efforts to recruit school bus drivers in NYS, including shortening the commercial driver's license application process and trying to recruit current CDL license-holders to drive buses. The state will also work with partners in law enforcement, firefighters, military, and other organizations that have trained drivers to find more individuals interested in becoming school bus drivers. Vera Chinese. "Hochul announces plan to address school bus driver shortage." *Newsday*. September 19, 2021 [Hochul announces plan to address school bus driver shortage | Newsday](#)
"Gov. Hochul announces state actions to address school bus driver shortage." *WETM/WROC-TV8/Rochester First*. September 20, 2021 [Gov. Hochul announces state actions to address school bus driver shortage | RochesterFirst](#)

Orange County district supports students academically & socially

The Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District in Orange County is working to help students recover academically, socially and emotionally this school year. The district is using Response to Intervention to gauge learning loss, and one school has scheduled an extra recess during the day to help students strengthen relationships. Helu Wang. "Bridging the gap' — How schools are helping students navigate back to school." *Times Herald-Record* (Middletown, NY). September 20, 2021 [Schools work to help students recover from pandemic learning loss \(recordonline.com\)](#)