

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 28, 2018 News Round-up

TEACHING & LEARNING

Commentary: Why math needs to be cross-curricular

Educators can make math relevant to students by incorporating it across subjects and focusing more on "computational thinking," says Conrad Wolfram, founder of Computers-Based Math. Wolfram argues that since computers do most of the computation these days, students need to learn how to answer more complex questions. Tony Wan. "Conrad Wolfram: Let's Build a New Math Curriculum That Assumes Computers Exist." *EdSurge*. September 19, 2018 <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2018-09-19-conrad-wolfram-let-s-build-a-new-math-curriculum-that-assumes-computers-exist>

Study: Group work offers personalized learning

Collaborative group work may help support students' individual needs, according to a study of about 900 HS students by the American Institutes for Research. Findings show that students who experienced more collaboration also "experienced a greater degree of personalization in their learning." Jill Barshay. "Working in a group might be the best way to help kids meet individual goals, study says." *Hechinger Report*. September 24, 2018 <https://hechingerreport.org/working-in-a-group-might-be-the-best-way-to-help-kids-meet-individual-goals-study-says/>

Employers seek speaking skills in new hires

Is school where students should learn to speak clearly, make a 60-second elevator speech, or hold a difficult conversation? That's what employers think.

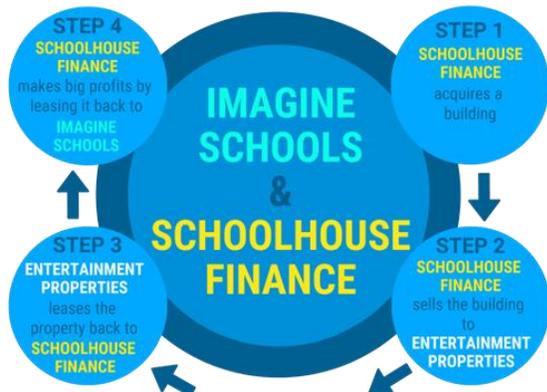
Catherine Gewertz. "Speaking Skills Top Employer Wish Lists. But Schools Don't Teach Them." *Education Week*. September 25, 2018 <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/09/26/speaking-skills-top-employer-wish-lists-but.html?cmp=e-ml-enl-eu-news1&M=58622010&U=252955>
Related articles: [What Literacy Skills Do Students Really Need?](#) and [Full Report: Literacy for the Workplace](#)

Addressing poverty shown to improve education

Programs that address poverty -- such as food stamps, insurance and tax credits -- also improve students' academic performance, graduation rates and likelihood of enrolling in college, according to a review of more than 20 studies. Matt Barnum. "Want to boost test scores and increase grad rates? One strategy: look outside schools and help low-income families." *Chalkbeat*. September 26, 2018 <https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/us/2018/09/26/research-boost-test-score-help-families/>

NATIONAL / FEDERAL

Multi-million dollar charter school deals



At one time, students attended public schools that were controlled by local school boards. There are still public schools, but now there is an education industry relying on entrepreneurs and market forces. You don't have to be an educator to manage or operate or start a charter. There are tax breaks for charter investors. Charter school properties are bought and sold. The profit for entrepreneurs is in the real estate transactions. One recent real estate deal highlighted this change, with investors, return on investment, profits and losses, openings and closings. Such schools are not about education, but business. This blog post includes an article by Tom Chorneau that describes the recent investment deal to buy four schools in three states.

"A private real estate fund... announced this week a \$45 million deal to buy four schools in three states. ESJ Capital Partners... added the schools to a portfolio that includes a number of more traditional investments, including apartment buildings, medical offices and tourist attractions. But the firm also owns 28 charter school properties that they say are valued at more than \$650 million."

"The business of charter schools: A \$45 million charter deal." Diane Ravitch's blog. September 23, 2018 <https://dianeravitch.net/2018/09/23/the-business-of-charter-schools-a-45-million-charter-deal/>

Several articles on Amazon's Jeff Bezos plans to help schools

The author notes that Bezos has promised money for schools and that there are several grass-roots efforts to spread the Montessori method he admires that could really use the money.

Mira Debs. "Opinion: Jeff Bezos and the Trap of the Charitable-Industrial Complex." *NY Times*. September 23, 2018

https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/23/opinion/jeff-bezos-preschools-montessori.html?emc=edit_th_180924&nl=todaysheadlines&nliid=188779070924

The world's richest man says he wants to help tackle one of the biggest issues in education: improving early-childhood learning.

Michele Molnar. "Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos' Ambitious Pre-K Move Sparks Wary Reactions." *Education Week*. September 26, 2018

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/09/26/amazon-ceo-jeff-bezos-ambitious-pre-k-move.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=58620602&U=252955>

Jeff Bezos is one of several tech titans who support the Montessori method. He attended a Montessori school and wants other children, especially those in need, to have the same opportunity.

Christina A. Samuels. "The 'Montessori Mafia': Why Tech Titans Like Jeff Bezos Support the Model." *Education Week*. September 26, 2018

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/09/26/the-montessori-mafia-why-tech-titans-like.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=58620602&U=252955>

Serious questions are being asked about whether Bezos' \$2 billion commitment to improve preschools and help homeless families will be driven by the right principles.

Benjamin Herold. "What's Motivating Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos' Early-Childhood Ed. Approach?" *Education Week*. September 24, 2018

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/09/26/whats-motivating-amazon-ceo-jeff-bezos-early-childhood.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=58620602&U=252955>

Document outlines federal agenda for special education

The U.S.E.D. has released a two-page framework outlining how it seeks to address the needs of students with disabilities. Flexibility and more local decision-making are central to the document's goals for special education.

Shaun Heasley. "Trump Administration 'Rethinking' Special Ed." *Disability Scoop*. September 21, 2018

<https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2018/09/21/trump-rethinking-special-ed/25525/>

NEW YORK STATE

NYS agencies urge district to act against rising use of drugs

In a letter to school district officials, several NYS agencies asked districts to educate students about the dangers of opioids and synthetic cannabinoids. The letter also urges school districts to become trained in administering naloxone — to reverse an opioid overdose — if they haven't already, and to keep a ready supply on hand.

Bethany Bump. "New York warns schools about rise in synthetic cannabinoids." *Albany Times Union*. September 21, 2018

https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/New-York-warns-schools-about-rise-in-synthetic-13248199.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Timesunion_Capcon

LWV & SS specialists publish lessons in participation in government

The League of Women Voters of New York State's Education Foundation and the NYS Social Studies Supervisory Association (NYS4A) have developed seven lesson plans for teachers of the NYS Grade 12 Participation in Government course. These lessons seek to educate future voters to become active citizens. Students will develop a better understanding of how public policy is made in New York and learn more about their rights and responsibilities as citizens, specifically citizens in NYS. Lessons can be customized to meet the needs of individual classrooms or student interests and are designed to be inquiry-based and non-partisan. The lesson plans and additional Voter Services resources are found on the League of Women Voters New York website (www.lwvny.org).

Press release. "Teaching High School Students how to Engage in Politics." LWVNY and NYS Social Studies Supervisory Association (NYS4A). September 2018
Lessons and support materials accessible at www.lwvny.org

Several articles on the 2018 NYS standardized test results

The number of students boycotting state tests has declined slightly statewide, but Long Island remains an opt-out stronghold. The percentage of students in grades 3 - 8 opting out of exams last spring dipped to 18%, down from 19% in 2017 and 21% in 2016. Nassau and Suffolk counties remain the geographic area with the highest percentage of test refusals, with a boycott rate of nearly 50%. Among students who took the tests statewide, 45.2% scored at the proficient level in English, and 44.5% in math. SED officials said results could not be compared with those from prior years because the format of last spring's tests was sharply revised.

John Hildebrand. "State: Test opt-outs dip slightly but Long Island still boycott stronghold." *Newsday*. September 26, 2018

<https://www.newsday.com/long-island/education/opt-out-test-scores-proficiency-1.21269357>

In nearly every district, students did better on the annual math and reading exams. But comparing the results with previous years' is almost impossible.

Eliza Shapiro. "Why New York isn't celebrating higher test scores." *NY Times*. September 26, 2018

https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/26/nyregion/test-scores-new-york.html?emc=edit_th_180927&nl=todaysheadlines&nliid=188779070927

Students in grades 3 – 8 didn't do particularly well on the NYS annual reading and math tests in 2018. Only 45% of the children passed.

Bethany Bump. "45 percent of New York students passed reading, math tests in 2018." *Albany Times Union*. September 26, 2018
https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/45-percent-of-New-York-students-passed-reading-13259754.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Timesunion_Capcon