

# 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](mailto:judithw@frontiernet.net)*

## September 7, 2018 News Round-up

### TEACHING & LEARNING

#### Practice of classroom reading groupings is challenged

Recent studies raise some hard questions about the value of ability-based reading groups. Evidence suggests that the practice may be less beneficial than teachers think: It can exacerbate achievement gaps and even slow reading growth for some children.

Sarah D. Sparks. "Are Classroom Reading Groups the Best Way to Teach Reading? Maybe Not." *Education Week*. August 26, 2018  
<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/08/29/are-classroom-reading-groups-the-best-way.html?cmp=enl-enl-eu-news1&M=58590447&U=252955>

#### Schools try to alleviate psychologist shortage

The shortage of school psychologists could become a crisis, says the director of professional development and standards at the National Association of School Psychologists. One school district with only 19 psychologists partners them with other personnel, including guidance counselors and social workers, to serve students.

Alison DeNisco. "School districts struggle to fill mental health positions." *District Administration*. August 27, 2018  
<https://www.districtadministration.com/article/school-districts-struggle-fill-mental-health-positions>

#### How to Sustain Community Schools

Policies that support community schools are the subject of the *Community Schools Playbook* published by the **Partnership for the Future of Learning**. The *Playbook* is a how-to guide to strategies that sustain community schools, providing examples of policies that support the approach, model legislation, advice on messaging, and implementation resources. Each dollar invested in a community schools strategy results in up to a \$15 return to the community, the *Playbook* notes. The community schools model has been gaining in popularity in recent years due to research indicating positive impacts on students and communities.

New *Community School Playbook* and related information: <https://futureforlearning.org/community-schools-playbook/>  
NEPC/LPI online research compendium on community schools. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/online-research-compendium>

#### BARR model credited with gains for 9th-graders

The Building Assets, Reducing Risks program has been credited with improving many types of schools since it was started by a school counselor in Minneapolis in 1999. The BARR model targets ninth-grade students by prioritizing their strengths and building a web of strong relationships around them to keep them on track.

Tara Garcia Mathewson. "A little-known program has lifted 9th grade performance in virtually every type of school." *Hechinger Report*. August 30, 2018  
<https://hechingerreport.org/a-little-known-program-has-lifted-9th-grade-performance-in-virtually-every-type-of-school/>

#### Beehives offer hands-on lessons across subjects

New York high school teacher Cathy O'Reilly is using beehives to engage students in hands-on science, engineering and math lessons. Students help construct the hives and have studied bees, beekeeping and related topics in biology, physics and math, plus future honey collections will be used in the school's culinary program.

Ray Bendici. "High school bee team generates STEM buzz." *District Administration*. September 2018.  
<https://www.districtadministration.com/article/high-school-bee-team-generates-stem-buzz>

#### Survey: Superintendents reveal key challenges

Finding and keeping good teachers is the most important challenge facing school leaders, according to 60% of superintendents responding to a Gallup poll. The survey also revealed that superintendents are focused on school security and more leaders have started to use armed security on school campuses.

Stephen Noonoo. "The Biggest Challenge for District Leaders? Finding and Keeping Good Teachers." *Ed Surge*. August 30, 2018  
<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2018-08-30-the-biggest-challenge-for-district-leaders-finding-and-keeping-good-teachers>

#### The continuing need for school recess

Research shows that recess can contribute to a positive school climate and increase student engagement. But outdoor time and free play have been cut short in some schools to make room for more instruction time. In addition to standing up for recess, teachers can tweak their own practices to provide students with much-needed breaks.

Erica M. Guajardo. "We Still Can't Afford to Lose Recess." *ASCD Express*. August 23, 2018  
<http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol13/We-Still-Cant-Afford-to-Lose-Recess.aspx>

## Learning model helps students find "right fit"

Teachers at a Minnesota elementary school introduced a model for student-centered learning in 2013 called Impact Academy, which now has expanded to three schools. Their approach centers on assigning elementary students to multi-age learning groups where they are able to complete reading and math lessons at their own pace.

Laura Pappano. 'A "handmade forerunner" of personalized learning, forged by teachers.' *Hechinger Report*. September 6, 2018  
<https://hechingerreport.org/a-handmade-forerunner-of-personalized-learning-forged-by-teachers/>

## NATIONAL / FEDERAL

### Commentary: Arming teachers, expelling students won't work

The author opposes the U.S.E.D. plan to allow states to use federal Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (under Title IV of ESSA) to put guns in schools since these grants are intended to expand and improve student learning. She argues that guns in schools won't make students safer or improve academic achievement. Evidence shows that a focus on social-emotional learning and mental health supports will produce better results.

*Linda Darling-Hammond is the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Teaching and Teacher Education at Stanford University, and director of the Stanford University Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.*

Linda Darling-Hammond. "Arming Teachers And Expelling Students Is Not The Answer To School Shootings, And It's Dangerous."

Learning Policy Institute. June 14, 2018

[https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/arming-teachers-expelling-students-not-answer-school-shootings?utm\\_source=LPI+Master+List&utm\\_campaign=8dca3b66e1-LPIMC\\_Arming\\_20180824&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_7e60dfa1d8-8dca3b66e1-42294815](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/arming-teachers-expelling-students-not-answer-school-shootings?utm_source=LPI+Master+List&utm_campaign=8dca3b66e1-LPIMC_Arming_20180824&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_7e60dfa1d8-8dca3b66e1-42294815)

### DeVos intends no action on schools buying guns

The U.S. secretary of education has told congressional Democrats that she has "no intention" of taking any position on whether schools can use federal funds under the Every Student Succeeds Act to purchase firearms for teachers.

Alyson Klein. "DeVos Has 'No Intention of Taking Any Action' on Issue of Schools Buying Guns." *Education Week*. August 31, 2018

[http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2018/08/devos\\_guns\\_school\\_armed\\_teachers\\_letter.html?cmp=soceml-twfdbltz-ewnow](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2018/08/devos_guns_school_armed_teachers_letter.html?cmp=soceml-twfdbltz-ewnow)

### Colleges benefit while students left in debt

New data reveals how colleges are benefiting from billions in financial aid while students are left with debt they cannot repay. The article illustrates the issues with several graphs.

*Ben Miller is the senior director for postsecondary education at the Center for American Progress.*

Ben Miller. "The Student Debt Problem Is Worse Than We Imagined." *NY Times*. August 25, 2018

[https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/08/25/opinion/sunday/student-debt-loan-default-college.html?emc=edit\\_th\\_180826&nl=todaysheadlines&lid=188779070826](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/08/25/opinion/sunday/student-debt-loan-default-college.html?emc=edit_th_180826&nl=todaysheadlines&lid=188779070826)

### ESSA's new fiscal transparency a sleeper issue

The Every Student Succeeds Act's fiscal transparency reporting mandate prompts both school and district leaders to figure out how they manage productivity—sometimes referred to in education as "performance-based investments." Actual school spending, rather than average district per-pupil spending, can reveal where experienced teachers are working, whether racial minorities and districts' neediest children are receiving their fair (and necessary) share of tax dollars, and if schools that get the same amount of money are getting the same academic results.

Daarel Burnette. "What Is ESSA's New School-Spending Transparency Requirement, and How Will It Work?" *Education Week*. August 9, 2018  
<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/08/09/what-is-essas-new-school-spending-transparency-requirement.html?cmp=enl-enl-eu-news2&M=58590447&U=252955>

David A. DeSchryver & Noelle Ellerson Ng. "Commentary: District Spending Is About to Get a Lot More Transparent. Are You Ready?" *Education Week*. August 24, 2018  
<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/08/29/district-spending-is-about-to-get-a.html?cmp=enl-enl-eu-news2&M=58590447&U=252955>

### Gates Foundation tries again, after many failures, to reform education

The Gates Foundation has announced more than \$90 million in grants to support networks of schools working to help students of color and low-income students get into college—marking its first major wave of K-12 giving since announcing a significant change in direction last fall. The 19 new grants will support improvements in everything from middle school language arts, to the issue of Algebra, to solving the problem of "undermatching,"—when high-achieving, low-income students select colleges that are less rigorous than what their track records qualify them for.

Stephen Sawchuk. "With \$93 Million in Grants, Gates Foundation Launches Newest Strategy to Improve K-12 Schools." *Education Week*.

[http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2018/08/with\\_a\\_93\\_million\\_in\\_grants\\_Gates\\_relaunches.html?cmp=enl-enl-eu-news2&M=58591778&U=252955](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2018/08/with_a_93_million_in_grants_Gates_relaunches.html?cmp=enl-enl-eu-news2&M=58591778&U=252955)

### PKD poll finds that most people don't encourage children to become teachers

The 2018 PDK International poll found that most Americans respect and trust teachers but think salaries for teachers are too low so they wouldn't encourage their children to become teachers. Adults also support free tuition at community colleges and federal funding to help students pay tuition at four-year colleges. HS parents would prefer a 30-minute change in the start and end times of the school day. Respondents also approved spending more to support students needing extra help rather than spending the same on all children.

Madeline Will. "Most People Wouldn't Want Their Child to Become a Teacher, Poll Finds." *Education Week*. August 27, 2018

[http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2018/08/pdk\\_poll\\_finds\\_teacher\\_salaries\\_too\\_low.html?cmp=enl-enl-eu-news2&M=58591778&U=252955](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2018/08/pdk_poll_finds_teacher_salaries_too_low.html?cmp=enl-enl-eu-news2&M=58591778&U=252955)

Complete 2018 PDK report, "Teaching: Respect but dwindling appeal" accessible at [http://pdkpoll.org/assets/downloads/pdkpoll50\\_2018.pdf](http://pdkpoll.org/assets/downloads/pdkpoll50_2018.pdf)

## **Billionaires' riches creating inequality and harming democracy**

This article discusses how billionaires use their riches to change the world to suit their ideals. One fellow at the Aspen Institute has accused Institute members of perpetuating the social problems they thought they were solving. He is now opposing philanthropy, describing how America's wealth inequality and philanthropy grew in tandem. Nick Tabor. "Why Philanthropy Is Bad for Democracy." *New York Magazine*. August 2018  
<http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2018/08/anand-giridharadas-on-winners-take-all.html>

## **DeVos to propose new campus sexual misconduct rules**

The proposed rules bolster the rights of the accused and narrow the definition of sexual harassment, holding schools accountable only for formal complaints filed through proper authorities and for conduct said to have occurred on campus. They would also establish a higher legal standard to determine if schools improperly address complaints. Susan Adams. "New Campus Sexual Misconduct Rules From Betsy DeVos Protect The Accused And Colleges." *Forbes*. August 29, 2018  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2018/08/29/new-campus-sexual-misconduct-rules-from-betsy-devos-protect-the-accused-and-colleges/#3ac816cb4501>

## **Little to no gains found under NCLB and Race to the top**

A new study has found that gains under federal education law since 2001 were minimal and diminished over time. Matt Barnum. "Pressuring schools to raise test scores got diminishing returns, new study of No Child Left Behind finds." *Chalkbeat*. August 13, 2018  
<https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/us/2018/08/13/pressuring-schools-to-raise-test-scores-got-diminishing-returns-new-study-of-no-child-left-behind-finds/>

## **Why education journalism is biased toward the reform narrative**

The author reports that the Education Writers Association keeps a list of sources that writers can turn to when they need someone to call or quote on a particular subject. It is not a balanced or entirely accurate list. The list includes think tanks and other groups supported by reform-minded billionaires. Educators do not appear on this list.

Peter Greene. "Education Writers Association's Balance Problem." *Curmudgucation* blog. August 31, 2018

[http://curmudgucation.blogspot.com/2018/08/education-writers-associations-balance.html?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+blogspot%2FORjvzd+%28CURMUDGUCATION%29](http://curmudgucation.blogspot.com/2018/08/education-writers-associations-balance.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+blogspot%2FORjvzd+%28CURMUDGUCATION%29)

## **Quality Counts articles**

The nation has made modest improvements in student academic achievement in the past decade, but results among states are uneven, according to a new ranking system.

Alix Harwin. "Here's What's Behind the Nation's 'C' Grade on Student Achievement." *Education Week*. September 5, 2018

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/09/05/heres-whats-behind-the-nations-c-grade.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1&M=58601019&U=252955>

Full Quality Counts Report <https://www.edweek.org/ew/collections/quality-counts-2018-state-achievement-success/index.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1&M=58601019&U=252955>

State grades on K12 achievement: Map and rankings <https://www.edweek.org/ew/collections/quality-counts-2018-state-achievement-success/state-grades-on-k-12-achievement-map-and.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=58601019&U=252955>

## **Analysis: Teachers paid almost 20% less than similar professionals**

The teacher wage penalty has continued to increase, with teachers earning significantly less than their college-educated peers, according to a new analysis.

Madeline Will. "Teachers Are Paid Almost 20 Percent Less Than Similar Professionals, Analysis Finds." *Education Week*. Saturday 5, 2018  
[http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2018/09/teachers\\_wage\\_penalty.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=58601019&U=252955](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2018/09/teachers_wage_penalty.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=58601019&U=252955)

## **NEW YORK STATE**

### **NYS-required tests seen as unintelligible**

The authors, faculty members at SUNY New Paltz, analyzed tests that NYS students are required to take, and concluded that the tests are inaccurate, unintelligible, and indecipherable. The SED suppresses data needed by the public to make intelligent decisions about children's education; a surge in zero scores and omissions was uncovered in this study; and ill-conceived tests are perpetuated. "For every discussion and news story about the increase or decrease in test scores, we must remember that behind each statistic is a child—a young child—who lives each day with the decisions that we make about testing."

Fred Smith & Robin Jacobowitz. "Tests are turning our kids into zeroes: A focus on failing." SUNY New Paltz/The Benjamin Center. Summer 2018  
[https://www.newpaltz.edu/media/the-benjamin-center/db\\_20\\_tests\\_are\\_turning\\_our\\_kids\\_into\\_zeroes\\_a\\_focus\\_on\\_failing.pdf](https://www.newpaltz.edu/media/the-benjamin-center/db_20_tests_are_turning_our_kids_into_zeroes_a_focus_on_failing.pdf)

### **Governor signs bill to mandate early screening for autism**

A bill signed by the governor mandates early screening of children for autism and will create standardized ID cards for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Bethany Bump. "Early screening, ID cards are big win to autism community." *Albany Times Union*. August 29, 2018

[https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Early-screening-ID-cards-are-big-win-to-autism-13190973.php?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Timesunion\\_Capcon](https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Early-screening-ID-cards-are-big-win-to-autism-13190973.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Timesunion_Capcon)

### **Spending more DOES matter, even in NYS**

Education advocates insist that NYS has skimped on funding its schools. But NYS already has the highest per-student funding rate of any in the country. But, a new study of over 600 districts across the state — the first of its

kind to look at the recent effects of increased school spending in NYS—found that increased per-student spending led to higher math and reading scores on state tests.

Alex Zimmerman. “New York spends more per student than any other state. A new study suggests it should spend more.” *Chalkbeat*. August 29, 2018  
<https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2018/08/29/new-york-state-school-spending-highest-in-nation/>

### **State education leaders provide updates on ed policy issues**

*City & State* reached out to two top state officials – state Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia and Assemblywoman Deborah Glick, the chairwoman of the higher education committee – to get the latest updates on the top education policy issues, from yeshiva oversight to the rollout of the Excelsior Scholarship.

Rebecca C. Lewis. “Teacher evaluations, yeshiva oversight and the Excelsior scholarship.” *City & State NY*. August 31, 2018  
<https://www.cityandstateny.com/articles/policy/education/teacher-evaluations-yeshiva-oversight-and-excelsior>