

EDUCATION NEWS UPDATE

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September 11, 2020 Education News Update

TEACHING & LEARNING

Commentary: Trauma sensitivity before initiatives

In public education, new ideas are piled on to tackle challenges and performance issues, but their success is limited. Meanwhile, over half of U.S. children have experienced at least one significant trauma. These events have life-altering implications, leading to damage to cognitive function, anxiety, depression, and suicide into adulthood. And the more trauma experienced, the greater the deficits in learning. Some studies indicate that more than 20% of American children have experienced three or more major traumas by age 17. We spend a great deal of time and treasure trying to improve instruction that would be better spent first in dealing with student mental health and healing of trauma. Since research suggests that therapeutic intervention improves the traumatized child's situation dramatically, we might achieve better outcomes if we developed partnerships with local mental-health resources.

Guest blogger Matthew Fleming is an administrator in California with almost three decades of experience as a teacher and principal.

Peter DeWill. "First Things First: Trauma Sensitivity Before Initiatives." *Education Week*. August 16, 2020

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/finding_common_ground/2020/08/first_things_first_trauma_sensitivity_before_initiatives.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2-rm&M=59665138&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

All-remote education still comes with significant costs

While remote learning is less expensive than in-person learning, districts are bombarded by unexpected costs. While lots of districts have laid off employees, others have decided not to layoff. Layoffs are politically risky and there's the possibility that a vaccine will be ready soon and districts will have to immediately open. Costs for districts without in-person learning include professional development, purchase of electronic equipment and software, as well as printing and paper and postage to provide packets to students without internet access.

Daarel Burnette II. "Are All-Remote Districts Really Saving That Much Money This Fall?" *Education Week*. August 28, 2020

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/District_Dossier/2020/08/are_all-remote_districts_really.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=59665138&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca

Many teachers retiring across the U.S.

Veteran K-12 teachers across the U.S. are resigning and retiring at higher rates as schools reopen amid the pandemic, with educators citing stress tied to remote learning, technical difficulties, and health concerns. In NYS, teacher retirements are up 20% from 2019. About 650 teachers filed for retirement between July and early August alone. A number of K-12 teachers said much of the joy they received from personal interaction with students has been undermined or eliminated altogether by teaching through a computer screen rather than a classroom.

Benjamin Fearnow. "Teachers Resigning Across U.S. Cite Remote Learning Frustrations, COVID-19 Concerns." *Newsweek*. August 29, 2020

<https://www.newsweek.com/teachers-resigning-across-us-cite-remote-learning-frustrations-covid-19-concerns-1528553>

Research supported steps to guide recovery from the pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic dealt a blow to schools, which were forced to turn immediately to remote instruction. Most students likely saw their academic learning **drop** considerably, with pre-existing racial and socioeconomic inequities leading to more severe consequences for some students than for others. A group of more than 500 education researchers with diverse positions and backgrounds have issued a statement on how research might inform policymaking and practice during the pandemic. The statement can be read in full [here](#).

The project was organized by professors Katharine Strunk and Douglas Harris, of Michigan State University and Tulane University, respectively.

"Seven Ways Research Can Guide Schools' Recovery from the Coronavirus." *NEPC Newsletter* (National Education Policy Center, U. Colorado at Boulder. September 3, 2020

<http://www.icontact-archive.com/archive?c=1748247&f=3100&s=3172&m=174340&t=683ff6e55fceb8d669aa5ea6b8253ac84d14528c98c4873195440427f0ff88d5>

Providing emotional support for students as school begins

As the school year begins, educators should focus on addressing students' anxiety, fear and stress, rather than overly emphasizing trauma, writes a psychologist and consultant who specializes in multitiered social and emotional learning. He describes four ways to support students this year, including establishing relationship-driven environments as well as coordinating mental health and support staff.

Howie Knoff. "Addressing students' social, emotional and behavioral stress -- not trauma -- when they return to school." *Smart Brief/Education*. August 31, 2020

https://smartbrief.com/original/2020/08/addressing-students%E2%80%99-social-emotional-and-behavioral-stress-not-trauma?utm_source=brief

Teachers prepare for return to remote learning

Lessons from the spring will inform a return to remote learning for some school districts. Some plan more live, online instruction this year than they did this past spring, and educators say districts have had time to secure more digital devices to support virtual lessons.

Kalyn Belsha. "As school starts, teachers across the U.S. are trying live virtual instruction for the first time. Will it work?" *Chalkbeat*. September 3, 2020 <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/8/28/21405828/teachers-first-time-live-instruction-will-it-work>

Almost 50% of teachers consider leaving classrooms

A survey found that 47% of teachers are considering a job change. Of those, 17% thought about changing to a field other than teaching, 12% mulled a leave of absence, 9% considered retirement, and 8% are looking into teaching a "pod," or small group of students paid for privately by parents. Even before the pandemic, teachers were feeling burnt out and demoralized. For many, the changes in recent months—prolonged school closures, emergency distance learning, and politicization of school reopenings—have only pushed them closer to a breaking point.

Emily Tate. "Survey: Nearly Half of Teachers Have Recently Considered a Job Change as COVID-19 Drags On." *Ed Surge*. August 31, 2020 <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2020-08-31-survey-nearly-half-of-teachers-have-recently-considered-a-job-change-as-covid-19-drags-on>

Teacher shortages expected

Large numbers of teachers fear returning to the classroom, traditional solutions for filling vacancies are falling short, and pink slips on the horizon may lead to never-before-seen teacher shortages. More teachers choose to quit, retire, or are laid off because of the health and economic crises caused by the coronavirus pandemic. A change to worker visas could add to the shortfall, as educators from other countries may no longer be eligible to teach in the US.

Bracey Harris & Neal Morton. "When schools reopen, we may not have enough teachers." *Hechinger Report*. September 3, 2020 <https://hechingerreport.org/when-schools-reopen-we-may-not-have-enough-teachers/>

Teachers, parents sue over school reopening plans

Teachers unions have sued over school reopening plans in some states, arguing that employee safety is at risk during the coronavirus pandemic. Meanwhile, parents in states such as Massachusetts and New York have filed litigation seeking an expedited return to in-person teaching. Maria Ferguson of George Washington University says "a legal storm is brewing as safety and social distancing requirements for a physical return to school begin to take shape."

John Kruzel. "Battle over COVID-19 school openings goes to the courts." *The Hill*. August 30, 2020

<https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/514196-battle-over-covid-19-school-openings-goes-to-the-courts>

Pandemic fuels enrollment in virtual schools

Online learning providers are seeing a boom in enrollment as parents seek an alternative to chaotic remote school experiences this spring. Florida Virtual School's enrollment is up 54% year over year for its individual online course offerings and 64% for full-time programs. Public schools' online programs managed by the for-profit provider K12 Inc. have grown from 122,000 enrollments in fall 2019 to 170,000 a year later. Applications to Connections Academy, a virtual school provider owned by Pearson, are up 61%.

Mark Lieberman. "COVID-19 Fuels Big Enrollment Increases in Virtual Schools." *Education Week*. September 3, 2020

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/09/03/covid-19-fuels-big-enrollment-increases-in-virtual.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1&M=59669990&U=252955&LUID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfa>

U.S. shows mediocre academic performance as pandemic continues

An overall grade of C-minus on *Education Week's* Quality Counts' K-12 Achievement Index, along with uneven performance from both low- and high-achieving states, illustrate the challenges ahead for school leaders.

Amid unequal access to the digital devices, internet service, and instructional support that enable remote learning, the nation's academic achievement remains stalled, with a baseline of uneven performance among both low- and high-achieving states. That's the context for the first full update of the Quality Counts K-12 Achievement Index since 2018, on which the nation receives a grade of C.

Sterling C. Lloyd & Xinchun Chen. "Nation Shows Mediocre Academic Performance as Pandemic Continues." *Education Week*. September 1, 2020

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/09/02/nation-shows-mediocre-academic-performance-as-pandemic.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=59669990&U=252955&LUID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfa>

Teachers discuss difficulties with in-person school during pandemic

Five teachers who are back in classrooms talk about challenges they've faced under the new restrictions and ways to make socially distanced school manageable. Teachers who are back in school buildings are devising ways to make new restrictions manageable for themselves and their students. Innovation and creativity don't get rid of the very real worries that many teachers are still facing at the start of this year. Facing this uncertainty is taking a mental toll. Teacher morale is at its **lowest point** since the beginning of the pandemic. Still, teachers headed back into the classroom are turning to colleagues and professional networks to crowdsource, brainstorm, and field-test solutions.

Sarah Schwartz & Madeline Will. "Mask Fatigue and No High-Fives: Teachers Discuss the Hardest Parts of In-Person School During COVID-19." *Education Week*. September 3, 2020

https://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2020/09/mask_fatigue_and_no_high_fives_teachers_discuss_the_hardest_parts_of_in-person_school_during_covid-1.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2&M=59669990&U=252955&LUID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfa

Free Education Week Spotlights

Education Week Spotlights contain coverage and commentary on big issues, such as [Dual-Language Learning](#), [Early-Childhood Literacy](#), [Beating the 'COVID Slide'](#), and [Impacts of COVID-19 on Education](#)

Ed Tech bonanza due to pandemic

As schools go virtual, digital learning threatens to replace teachers and deprive students of a real education. One lesson learned this spring is that remote learning is a very inferior way to conduct school. Students are bored, and teachers are frustrated. Distance learning may be necessary but it's a poor substitute for in-person learning.

The transition to online teaching made everyone aware of the value of person-to-person communication. The human signals that tell a teacher how a class is reacting—the sighs, groans, snorts, giggles, eye rolls, glances, body language—are stripped away online. The teacher can't even tell if she's being heard. Warmth is difficult to express; rapport, trust, bonding almost impossible to build... Students say so, too: "I can't get myself to care ... I just feel really disconnected from everything." Ed tech companies lost no time moving in. And much of what they offer is sub-standard, unproven, and expensive.

Gayle Green. "Ed Tech Cashes In on the Pandemic." *American Prospect*. August 10, 2020
<https://prospect.org/education/ed-tech-cashes-in-on-the-pandemic/>

How school librarians combat misinformation

Political bias increasingly is driven by the information, or misinformation, people read, often online. When it comes to equity, critical thinking skills, and evaluating information, school librarians are critical for students. Librarians are essential to help students gain equitable access to high-quality inquiry instructional experiences for all learners—not just for the future of education but also for the future of democracy.

Eileen Belastock. "School librarians can save democracy." *eSchool News*. September 7, 2020
<https://www.eschoolnews.com/2020/09/07/school-librarians-can-save-democracy/>

FEDERAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

College towns alarmed over COVID-19 outbreaks

As schools and businesses around the country reopen, college towns are moving toward renewed shutdowns because of too many parties and too many COVID-19 infections among students. Outbreaks on campuses have heightened tensions between colleges and their towns.

Bryan Anderso, Jim Salter, Lindsay Whitehurst. "College towns growing alarmed over outbreaks among students." *Associated Press*. August 28, 2020
<https://apnews.com/9d36c40584bc1c9730654b589f672f79>

U.S.D.A. extends free school meals through end of 2020

The U.S. Department of Agriculture loosened requirements for children receiving free meals through schools at the start of the coronavirus pandemic and announced on August 30 it would keep those flexibilities in place through 2020.

Andrea Noble. "USDA Extends Free School Meal Program for Children." *Route Fifty*. August 31, 2020
<https://www.route-fifty.com/health-human-services/2020/08/usda-extends-free-school-meal-program-children/168127/>

DeVos says no waivers from annual tests in 2021

Education secretary Betsy DeVos said in a letter to chief state school officers that states should not count on getting the same waivers from federal testing mandates for this school year that they got last spring due to the pandemic, because these annual assessments in English/language arts, math, and science are "at the very core" of the bipartisan agreement behind the Every Student Succeeds Act, the main federal K-12 education law.

Andrew Ujifusa. "Betsy DeVos Tells States Not to Expect Waivers From Annual Tests." *Education Week*. September 3, 2020
<http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2020/09/betsy-devos-annual-tests-not-expect-waivers.html?cmp=soceml-twfdbltz-ewnnow>

Districts see COVID-19 costs spiraling upward

K-12 school district leaders are being forced to spend on a growing list of needs driven by logistical hurdles involved in reopening schools during the coronavirus.

David Saleh Rauf. "Districts Predict Rise in Spending as COVID Costs Spiral Upward." *Education Week/Market Brief*. August 27, 2020
<https://marketbrief.edweek.org/exclusive-data/district-leaders-predict-spending-will-jump-coming-year?cmp=enl-enl-eu-news3&M=59669990&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfca>

Judge rules against DeVos rule on COVID-19 relief funds

A federal judge struck down a rule requiring public schools to direct a larger share of coronavirus relief to private schools. Public education and civil rights groups argued the CARES Act equitable services rule siphoned needed resources from public schools at a time when funding concerns threaten their ability to maintain staff and operations. Plaintiffs, led by the NAACP, argued that Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos violated the intent of Congress. The judge ruled that DeVos and the U.S.E.D. violated the clear language of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act in issuing a regulation that would illegally divert funds from public school students.

Evid Blad. "Judge Strikes Down DeVos Rule on COVID-19 Relief Funds in Nationwide Order." *Education Week*. September 5, 2020
http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2020/09/judges_strikes_devos-covid-equitable-services.html?cmp=soceml-twfdbltz-ewnnow

Schools might be sued over COVID-19

Districts could be on the hook for legal costs and damages stemming from coronavirus lawsuits. Districts are struggling to get their arms around an elusive but potentially costly challenge: risk management regarding coronavirus. Most districts buy general liability insurance, either self-insurance through a traditional insurance company, or through a pooled plan open-managed by representatives of participating districts. Even before COVID-19, some of these liability policies excluded communicable diseases from coverages. In other cases, insurers have notified districts just in the past few months that they will not cover claims stemming from the pandemic.

Stephen Sawchuk. "Schools May Get Sued Over COVID-19. 7 Things to Know About Managing That Risk." *Education Week*. September 3, 2020
<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/09/03/schools-may-get-sued-over-covid-19-7.html?cmp=e-ml-enl-eu-news1&M=59675129&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfc>

Full in-person instruction gaining ground

Districts nationwide have been rolling back plans to teach students in person because of the coronavirus. But now there are signs that some districts are getting more comfortable with the all-in-person approach. Thousands are starting the year with remote-only instruction, but there are signs that more districts are embracing traditional face-to-face instruction. A survey conducted by the EdWeek Research Center in late August found that while only a small slice of districts plan to conduct all of their instruction in person, their ranks are growing.

Catherine Gewertz. "Fully In-Person Instruction Is Gaining Ground in Schools." *Education Week Teacher*. September 8, 2020

http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2020/09/fully_in-person_instruction_is_gaining_ground_in_schools_this_fall.html?cmp=e-ml-enl-eu-news2&M=59676630&U=252955&UID=dcf379af08119fa8d853cdc6f688bfc

Feds sending 6,900,000 face masks to NYS schools

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will send 6.9 million cloth face coverings to NYS this month for distribution to students, teachers and staff in state schools. Masks arriving in September may prove useful to some schools, but most schools offering in-person learning have already had to procure thousands of face coverings and districts are unsure if they'll get reimbursed for those new costs, amid state budget cuts and limited federal aid.

Emilie Munson. "Feds shipping 7 million masks to New York for students, teachers." *Albany Times Union*. September 9, 2020

<https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Feds-shipping-7-million-masks-to-New-York-for-15553616.php>

U.S.E.D. acts on presidential directive on 'Anti-American Propaganda'

The Education Department plans to scrutinize a wide range of employee activities in search of "Anti-American propaganda" and discussions about "white privilege" as it carries out the White House's demand that federal agencies halt certain types of race-related training. The Department has ordered a review of agency contracts for diversity training and "internal employee activities" to root out topics such as "critical race theory" or materials that suggest that the U.S. is an inherently racist country. The crackdown implements a government-wide directive the White House issued Friday to stop what it called "un-American propaganda training sessions" about race. To implement that policy, the U.S.E.D. will require all of its D.C. and regional offices to review a range of training materials, including outside contracts for diversity workshops, plus content produced internally at the agency.

Michael Stratford. "In crackdown on race-related content, Education Department targets internal book clubs, meetings." *Politico*. September 9, 2020

<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/09/09/education-department-race-related-content-411487>

NEW YORK STATE

MC health officials outline approach for handling COVID-19 cases in schools

Monroe County health officials are planning a deliberate approach if COVID-19 cases are found in schools. In some cases, officials would recommend that a classroom be closed and its students quarantined for two weeks but in other cases they would not, said Dr. Michael Mendoza, the Monroe County public health director. More testing capacity will be needed due to the policy that any student sick with a respiratory illness must stay out of school until symptoms are gone, they've obtained an all-clear from a health-care provider, and they've had a coronavirus test that comes back negative. The article outlines protocols for dealing with COVID-19 diagnosis.

Steve Orr. "COVID-19 and local schools: County health will be deliberate and flexible in their response." *Democrat and Chronicle*. August 28, 2020

<https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2020/08/28/mendoza-health-officials-deliberate-covid-19-schools/5654158002/>

NYS Colleges deal pandemic issues associated with out-of-state students

NYS attracts more out-of-state college students than any state. An influx of out-of-state students could lead to a spike in coronavirus cases. Ithaca College and Columbia University have cancelled in-person learning. The state mandated a 14-day quarantine for all travelers, including students, from 31 states and U.S. territories to mitigate viral spread. About 60,000 of the 140,000 out-of-state students that attend private colleges in NYS are subject to the quarantine, though the list of states subject to the quarantine changes weekly. Administrators are trying to determine financial support for quarantined students. Cornell University, for example, initially planned to give students meals and space to isolate. But as the list of quarantine states expanded, Cornell found that it lacked the space to do so.

Kay Dervishi. "Can New York colleges safely bring students back?" *City & State/NY*. August 27, 2020

<https://www.cityandstateny.com/articles/policy/education/can-new-york-colleges-safely-bring-students-back.html>

Survey: NYS residents fear second wave of COVID-19

Is reopening schools during a pandemic reasonable? More than half of New Yorkers think it's too risky, while almost 90 percent fear a second wave in the fall. (Forbes/TU)

Edward McKinley. "Siena poll: 86 percent of New Yorkers fear a COVID-19 wave this fall." *Albany Times Union*. September 2, 2020
https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Siena-poll-86-percent-of-New-Yorkers-fear-15532734.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=headlines&utm_campaign=tu_capitolconfidential&sid=5931844424c17c09a3f115af

Students left behind in the spring face the same technology issues this fall.

Many kids still don't have the access needed for remote learning. For NYS residents who lack reliable, affordable internet service, remote learning is incredibly hard. While NYS districts developed short-term solutions to connect students to the internet, most of those plans fell short this spring, driving a wedge between those with and without reliable access. There's very little data on how many students were unreachable by remote learning in the spring. Rochester City School District, which will be remote for the first 10 weeks of classes, will distribute laptops and personal Wi-Fi hot spots, but some county legislators say the connection offered by hot spots is too slow. Some state lawmakers support regulating broadband like a public utility, but last year Governor Cuomo vetoed a bill to study the feasibility of a state-owned and operated internet service, saying that it was too expensive.

Annie McDonough. "Remote learning challenges will likely continue in New York." *City & State/NY*. August 30, 2020
<https://www.cityandstateny.com/articles/policy/education/remote-learning-challenges-will-likely-continue-new-york.html>

Upstate districts facing layoffs and deep budget cuts

Schools in upstate cities like Albany, Schenectady and Rochester are facing layoffs and deep spending reductions as millions of dollars in state aid is withheld. Concerns are being raised from advocates and state lawmakers as a major aftershock of the pandemic -- the virtual evaporation of tax revenue -- starts to take its toll.

Nick Reisman. "New York schools face budget reckoning." *NY State of Politics*. September 4, 2020
<https://nystateofpolitics.com/state-of-politics/new-york/ny-state-of-politics/2020/09/04/new-york-s-schools-face-budget-reckoning->

NYSUT suing NYS over cut to state aid

NYS United Teachers is preparing to sue the state for withholding 20% of its funding to local school districts. The Cuomo administration started to temporarily hold back 20% of its payments to local governments as a way to reduce spending, in light of a massive budget deficit. With the 20% funding cuts, freezes on hiring and pay raises, the state has been able to cut spending projections by around \$4 billion. This is all meant to be temporary unless the state does not receive more funding from the federal government. Then these cuts would become permanent. NYSUT, however, cites years of funding shortfalls and increased operating costs due to COVID-19. They say these cuts disproportionately impact low income school districts, potentially violating students' right to a basic education.

Morgan McKay. "NYSUT to Sue State Over Cut in School District Aid." *State of Politics/NY*. September 9, 2020
<https://nystateofpolitics.com/state-of-politics/new-york/ny-state-of-politics/2020/09/09/nysut-state-suit-school-aid>

End of snow days?

Now that remote learning is a common aspect of schooling, the NYSED said in a recent note that school districts can do remote learning instead of having staff and students take time off because of inclement weather.

Massarah Mikati. "The end of snow days? New York gives schools option for remote learning instead." *Albany Times Union*. September 10, 2020
https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/NY-schools-can-choose-remote-learning-over-snow-15556998.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=headlines&utm_campaign=tu_capitolconfidential&sid=5931844424c17c09a3f115af

570+ NYS teachers retired in August

Districts statewide are seeing an increase in teacher retirements fueled by the Covid-19 pandemic. In districts across NYS in August, 572 full-time teachers submitted their retirement papers, a 121% increase from August 2019 and 99% higher than the same time period in 2018, according to the NYS Teachers Retirement System. In all, between April and August this year, 6,054 teachers filed retirement papers with the NYSTRS, up by 506 teacher positions from the same period a year ago. Those numbers do NOT include the NYC school system, where officials said Wednesday there have been fewer teacher retirements this summer compared with recent years.

Tom Precious. "Late-summer teacher retirements skyrocketed in NY amid pandemic." *Buffalo News*. September 10, 2020
https://buffalonews.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/late-summer-teacher-retirements-skyrocketed-in-ny-amid-pandemic/article_dbaac562-f2c8-11ea-ab76-16d31474462d.html?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=headlines&utm_campaign=tu_capitolconfidential&sid=5931844424c17c09a3f115af