

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

June 16, 2023 Education News Update

TEACHING & LEARNING

Study: Instructional strategies for consistent learning

An NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) study identified several small-scale and subtle instructional approaches that can lead to steady growth in student learning. These include adopting a flexible approach to group instruction and encouraging self-directed learning, balancing students' individual learning needs while providing grade-level content and expectations.

Kara Arundel. "These 10 classroom practices support high-growth learning." *K-12 Dive*. June 7, 2023

[These 10 classroom practices support high-growth learning | K-12 Dive \(k12dive.com\)](#)

Testing AI Tutoring

As schools wrestle with how to effectively and responsibly integrate artificial intelligence into programs, some are investigating whether or not AI can be useful in tutoring. Experts say AI can't make the human connections that often make tutoring successful, like giving feedback or encouragement when a student is stuck. AI also can't pick up on body language that suggests a student is frustrated or overwhelmed. AI could, however, act as more of a support staff for tutoring by analyzing recordings of tutoring sessions and offering feedback, encouraging a student to try a new method and offering suggestions about strategies. However AI is used, experts remind users that it can get things wrong, so district leaders should plan for human supervision and review.

Sarah Schwartz. "Can AI Tutor Students? Why It's Unlikely to Take Over the Job Entirely." *Education Week*. May 31, 2023

[Can AI Tutor Students? Why It's Unlikely to Take Over the Job Entirely \(edweek.org\)](#)

Role of textbooks debated

Many teachers say that they prefer to craft their courses using online sources for direction. But some students and educators say that having a textbook gives a necessary foundation, cohesion and accessible source material that everyone can reference to fully understand a subject where internet-sourced curricula fall short.

Holly Korbey. "Should Textbooks Still Play a Role in Schools?" *Edutopia*. June 9, 2023

[Should Textbooks Still Play a Role in Schools? | Edutopia](#)

How third graders got hit especially hard by the pandemic

Third grade students, who were kindergarteners when the pandemic hit, have lost more ground in reading than older students and have been slower to catch up. Post-pandemic test scores reflect historic levels of learning setbacks across the country. Studies show that children who don't read fluently by the end of third grade are more likely to drop out of school or fail to graduate on time. The impacts aren't limited to reading – or third graders.

BIANCA VÁZQUEZ TONESS. "Too much to learn": Schools race to catch up kids' reading." *Associated Press*. June 15, 2023

https://apnews.com/article/reading-third-grade-phonics-b9a14d134888c2b11c2dce38829a8c7?user_email=c93bd35e87c144dc7d80eed892d87d9e67dce2afca22612dae1e8a8e5daf3c5&utm_medium=Morning_Wire&utm_source=Salithru&utm_campaign=MorningWire_June15_2023&utm_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers

Model Kansas HS involves students in research & careers

Kansas's Blue Valley school district created a unique HS program that involves about 1,400 students three hours a day in project-based learning that gives them a taste of life in six strands of work, including sports medicine, aerospace engineering and biological sciences. This article describes the program, which is expanding rapidly to other districts, states, and countries.

Greg Toppo. "In This School District's 'Test Kitchen,' Teens Go Beyond the Classroom to Build Drones, Research Cancer & Try Out Careers." *The 74 Million*. June 14, 2023

[In This School District's 'Test Kitchen,' Teens Go Beyond the Classroom to Build Drones, Research Cancer & Try Out Careers – The 74 \(the74million.org\)](#)

FEDERAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Federal official to combat book bans

The U.S.E.D. is taking steps to combat book bans in classrooms and libraries across the country. To ensure compliance with federal civil rights laws, a new coordinator will be appointed to provide training to schools to address book bans that target specific communities and contribute to hostile school environments.

Anna Merod. "Ed Dept to appoint coordinator to take on book bans nationwide." *K-12 Dive*. June 8, 2023

[Ed Dept to appoint coordinator to take on book bans nationwide | K-12 Dive \(k12dive.com\)](#)

U.S.E.D. asks districts to investigate discipline disparities

The Biden administration has opened a new chapter in the years-long debate over racial disparities in school discipline, recently urging schools to ensure their policies are applied fairly and consistently to students in all racial and ethnic groups. The recommendations stop short of restoring Obama-era guidance.

Evie Blad. "Biden Administration Asks Districts to Investigate Their Discipline Disparities." *Education Week*. June 9, 2023
[Biden Administration Asks Districts to Investigate Their Discipline Disparities \(edweek.org\)](https://www.edweek.org/biden-administration-asks-districts-to-investigate-their-discipline-disparities)

Report on religious attacks on secular public education

A new report lays out the case that a new breed of charter schools is designed to attract families with Christian nationalist beliefs. They serve student bodies that are whiter and wealthier than other charter schools and district public schools. The report exposes how, despite prohibitions on teaching religion in charter schools, such schools have deep connections with the conservative Christian movement.

"A Sharp Turn Right: A New Breed of Charter Schools Delivers the Conservative Agenda." *Network for Public Education*. June 2023
[A Sharp Turn Right: A New Breed of Charter Schools Delivers the Conservative Agenda - Network For Public Education](https://www.networkforpubliceducation.org/a-sharp-turn-right-a-new-breed-of-charter-schools-delivers-the-conservative-agenda)

Americans United is planning legal action to prevent use of public money to fund religion

Americans United for Separation of Church and State is preparing legal action to block Oklahoma's effort to use public money to fund religion since the state has established the nation's first religious public charter school. Americans United will work with Oklahoma and national partners to take all possible legal action to fight this decision and defend the separation of church and state that's promised in both the Oklahoma and U.S. Constitutions.

"Americans United preparing legal action in Oklahoma after board approves nation's first religious public charter school." *Americans United for Separation of Church and State*. June 5, 2023
[AU preparing legal action after Oklahoma board OK'd religious public charter school](https://www.aunet.org/newsroom/aunet-preparing-legal-action-after-oklahoma-board-okd-religious-public-charter-school)

NEW YORK STATE

NYSED says schools must support LGBTQ students

The NYS Education Department has released updated guidance for schools on creating safe environments for transgender and LGBTQ students. The 42-page document focuses on supporting students, and keeping them safe, no matter their self-identified gender — and as some might transition from one gender to another. According to the report, accepting a student's asserted gender identity shouldn't require anything more than them stating their preferences. Schools don't need official documentation to start recognizing a student by their preferred name and pronouns. The report made it clear that the student is in charge of their transition. It said that in some cases, it may not be safe for a student's family to know about their transition. If a student prefers, it said, school staff should work with the student on a plan to inform that student's peers about their transitioning. The report also offers tips for when a student comes out to help the student. School personnel should assess the student's safety: If they've had thoughts of suicidal ideation; if there are signs of child abuse or neglect; if they've been threatened or bullied at school; if they're at risk of homelessness. The report said schools should make sure other resources are safe for LGBTQ students to access before referring students and families. The extensive article discusses other tips at length.

Diana Dombrowski, *Rockland/Westchester Journal News USA Today Network*. "State: Schools must support LGBTQ kids." *Democrat & Chronicle*. June 14, 2023
<https://rochesterdemocrat-ny.newsmemory.com?selDate=20230614&goTo=A01&artid=1>

NYSED developing recommendations on facial recognition issues

In 2020, NYS became the first state to prohibit schools from using security systems with facial recognition technology, citing privacy concerns, but now the NYSED's Office of Information Technology Services is preparing draft recommendations on the subject, as the moratorium expired nearly a year ago. Following debate at one district, a civil liberties lawsuit, the NYSED is drafting recommendations for facial recognition in schools.

Aaron Gifford. "NY Schools Awaiting Decision on Facial Recognition." *Government Technology*. June 12, 2023
[NY Schools Awaiting Decision on Facial Recognition \(govtech.com\)](https://www.govtech.com/news/ny-schools-awaiting-decision-on-facial-recognition)