

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
PROGRAM ON
EDUCATION POLICY
AND GOVERNANCE



2023 Annual Report



Teaching Patriotism

HISTORY IS HAPPENING this moment. A country is defining itself. Authentic patriotism is surging through the Ukrainian people. Whatever happens next, President Volodymyr Zelensky personifies honor, courage, dedication. If Ukraine survives, this will be its finest hour.

Now we know why civics is best taught as history. Civics is not about learning to write a letter to the editor or registering to vote. Nothing wrong about that, but civics, fundamentally, is learning one's history as a country—just how it came to be, why it is, and what makes it worthy.

There is no need for history to be slurpy or untruthful. Defining moments are riveting. When Zelensky speaks to Congress, we are compelled to listen: "I see no sense in life if it cannot stop the deaths."

This is a teaching moment, a time for teachers to remind students that Benjamin Franklin understood, when signing the Declaration of Independence, what Ukraine's leaders know today: "We must all hang together, or surely we will all hang separately."

Parallels between Ukraine and the American Revolution burst from every page of Kevin Weddle's recent book about the battle of Saratoga, New York, *The Compleat Victory*. British General John Burgoyne intended to



Civics is not about learning to write a letter to the editor or registering to vote. Civics, fundamentally, is learning one's history as a country.

seize Fort Ticonderoga and march to Albany as quickly as Putin planned to capture Kiev. Both Burgoyne at Ticonderoga and Putin in Crimea won early battles with hardly a casualty, stirring over-confidence.

But paper-made plans can quickly turn to ashes. When tanks strike potholes or horse-drawn carriages haul cannon up mountainsides, grand strategies turn into logistics. Burgoyne and Putin found food and transport easier to propose than to produce.

When Burgoyne surrendered at Saratoga, Patriots cheered, France declared war, and the British parliament screeched. Today, Ukrainian heroism stirs democratic patriotism among

self-indulgent Europeans and Americans.

Nothing should be taken for granted. Despite Saratoga, it took six years before King George signed a treaty. Putin seems no less obstinate.

In the meantime, our civic lessons are being learned on the ground. One does not need to manufacture history to teach patriotism; one only needs to explain that history has not come to an end.

PAUL E. PETERSON

Abstracted from the blog post "Teaching Patriotism" in EducationNext.org, March 17, 2022.

Does Charter Competition Help or Hurt?

Effects of charter schools on district performance

By KATHARINA WERNER, M. DANISH SHAKEEL, and PAUL E. PETERSON

THE TOPIC of charter school effectiveness has been fiercely debated among policymakers. Critics claim that the presence of charter schools in a district lowers the test score performance of students in traditional public schools, for example, by drawing teaching resources away from district-operated schools. Proponents argue that by introducing more elements of choice, more options and thus, competition of ideas within a district, a higher share of charter schools will lead to rising test score performance for all students in the district irrespective of the operator of the school they attend.

This paper merges over 4.5 million math and reading test observations for grades 4 and 8 and their teacher

richness of the data, we are also able to take into account many student background and district characteristics.

In a project still in progress, our preliminary findings suggest that an increase in the share of students that attend a charter school in a given district over time corresponds to positive changes in the test score performance of the district. This pattern is similar across performance in both

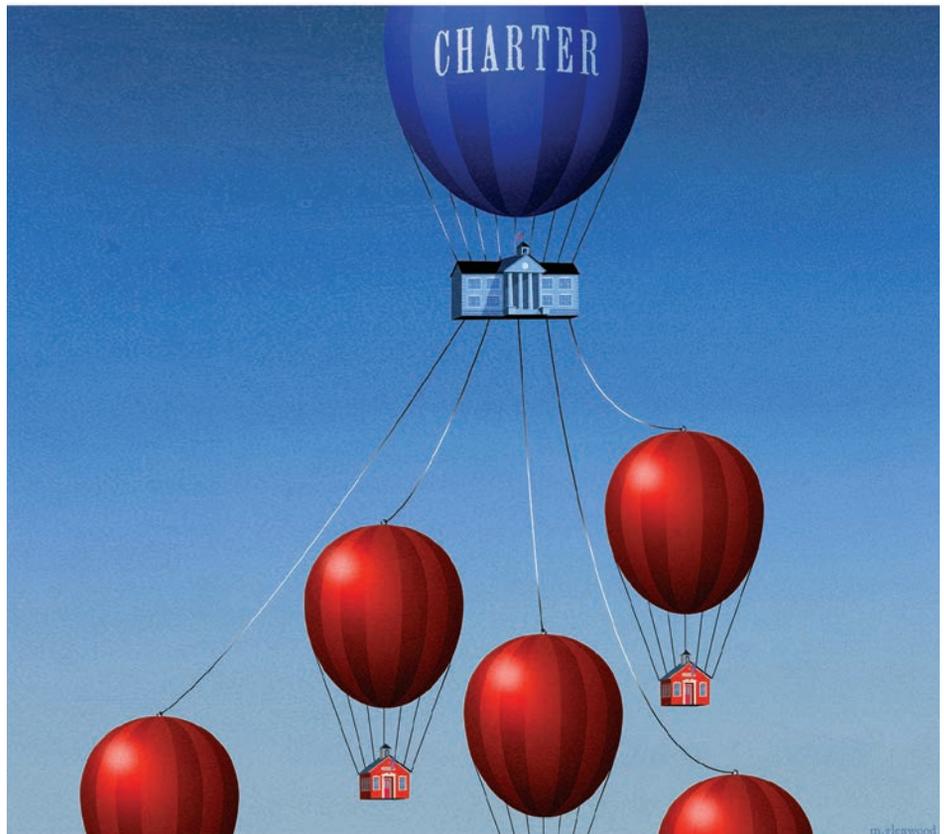


Katharina Werner

M. Danish Shakeel

surveys from the nationally representative *National Assessment of Educational Progress* dataset between 2005–2017 with data from the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools on charter school characteristics at the school-district level to analyze the competitive effects of charters in a district-year fixed-effects model. This design allows us to speak to the question: As the number of students attending charter schools in a district increases, do test scores of students in the district overall rise or fall? Due to the

Preliminary findings suggest that an increase in the share of students that attend a charter school corresponds to positive changes in the test score performance of the district.



mathematics and reading and holds for elementary students (measured in 4th grade) as well as for students in middle school (8th grade). The inclusion of student characteristics as additional controls reduces the size of the effect but does not change the sign or significance of the estimated effects.

Katharina Werner and Dany Shakeel are former PEPG postdoctoral fellows. Werner is an economist at the ifo Institute in Munich. Shakeel is professor and director of the E.G. West Centre for Education Policy at the University of Buckingham (U.K.).

Training the Next Generation of Education

THE PROGRAM ON EDUCATION POLICY AND GOVERNANCE (PEPG) provides high-level scientific training for young scholars who can make independent contributions to scholarly research in education policy.

In pursuit of this mission, PEPG offers graduate and postgraduate fellowships with the generous support of foundations and individual donors. Currently, three fellowship programs are in place. The Mark H. Dalzell Graduate Fellowship, the Charles Koch Foundation Education Entrepreneur Fellowship, and the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation.

We are deeply proud of our fellows, many of whom move on to break new ground in the landscape of education policy and in academia. Here we meet our recent PEPG fellows (from left to right):

NICOLE VENGUER (*MPP '22*) was passionate about supports for marginalized children and families during her time as a PEPG fellow. Now she is a Government Innovation Fellow at HKS's Taubman Center for State and Local Government, where she is focusing on innovations around the early childhood education space in Massachusetts.

DANIEL CURTIS (*MPP*) spent the summer of 2022 in the executive office of Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer working to boost hiring and retention across state and local governments. His plan included new support for tuition costs and investing in alternative paths to certification. Danny has returned to HKS to continue his public policy program.

CHRISTINA PEÑA (*MPA/MBA*) is the daughter of two Mexican immigrants who instilled in her a belief in the transformative power of education. She is a former Teach for America corps member, teaching 3rd grade in the South Bronx. Christina is passionate about the role of technology in classrooms, especially in support of underserved communities.

TARAN RAGHURAM (*MPP '22*) works as a data science associate with Equal Opportunity Ventures, a group founded by Harvard professor Roland Fryer that seeks to increase economic and social mobility among disadvantaged communities in the U.S. Taran helps opportunity-focused companies shape their products and vision for maximum impact.

PRIYANKA VARMA (*MPP*) comes to HKS as a former Education Policy Manager at the Jameel Poverty Action Lab at MIT. She has education fieldwork experience in India, Tanzania, and the Philippines and has worked with the Brookings Institution and the United Nations. Priyanka is deeply interested in education equity and education policy reform.

ANTHONY MICHAEL ABRIL (*MPP*) grew up in San Jose and is a graduate of UC Berkeley. He previously worked for The Bridgespan Group and is a co-founder of the Moringa Fellowship, a program that pairs underrepresented students in tech with organizations. Anthony wants to strengthen economic mobility for low-income BIPOC communities.

SAMANTHA BATEL KANE (*MPP '21*) is a PhD student in education policy at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She studies the economics of education and decision-making in K-12 and higher ed. Samantha recently completed a 10-week residency with Fairfax County (Va.) Public Schools, where she focused on teacher mobility and retention.



Researchers, Practitioners, Policymakers



Training Tomorrow's Reporters

Reporting on emotional stress, testing backlash, and charter challenges

IN FALL 2021, for the first time, *Education Next* received three undergraduate research assistants. The students—Cara Chang, Peyton Elias, and Yanxi Fang—reported and wrote *Education Next* articles for course credit in Harvard's government department under the direction of Paul E. Peterson and Ira Stoll, *Education Next's* managing editor. The students met as a group regularly to learn about interviewing techniques, writing, editing, and promoting a story after publication. It was a double win, as students got valuable training, and *Education Next* got quality content.

Testing Backlash Could Hurt American Global Competitiveness

As U.S. college admissions go test-optional and K-12 standardized testing comes under pressure, China and India loom.

By **YANXI FANG**

PRESIDENT BIDEN has been selling his plan to invest in universal pre-school and free community college on international competitiveness grounds, telling a New Jersey audience on October 25, "Any nation that out-educates us will outcompete us."

Mostly absent from the discussion about expanded access has been talk about testing and accountability. In fact, recent trends in the U.S. have been in the opposite direction. The 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act lowered the stakes attached to nationally mandated state tests.

Colleges are also moving away from the use of standardized testing in admissions. K-12 school systems are moving away from the use of standardized tests for



Yanxi Fang (AB '23), government and data science concentrator, economics secondary

screening and admissions to selective schools and programs amid the pandemic and heightened concern about racial bias.

Some experts are voicing concern that a pell-mell move away from testing could hurt America's standing, especially as America's global competitors are moving in the opposite direction.

Schools Can Help with the Youth Mental Health Crisis

Students with urgent mental health problems are told to wait three months to get 20 minutes of help.

By **PEYTON ELIAS**

THE SUICIDE RATE for persons aged 10 to 24 increased nearly 60% over a decade-long span ending in 2018, making suicide the second leading cause of death for teens, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports.

A White House fact sheet issued in October 2021 says the Covid-19 pandemic has made matters worse. It cites "alarming rates of behavioral health needs among school-age youth, with significant increases in the number experiencing moderate to severe anxiety and depression."

Mental health emergencies among young people have increased across the board. In 2020, there was a 24% increase in emergency room visits for mental health reasons for children ages 5 through 11, and a more than a 30% increase in visits for those between 12 and 17 years old," the White House fact sheet says. In October, First Lady Jill Biden and Surgeon General Vivek Murthy visited Michigan for "a listening session focused on youth mental health."



Peyton Elias (AB '23), psychology concentrator, government secondary

**Soaring Real Estate Prices,
Vocal Opponents Complicate
School Site Search**

The space challenge is one reason that charter growth nationally has slowed, despite strong academic performance overall.

By **CARA CHANG**

IN APRIL, an email from a Boston charter school ended a three-year saga.

“After much consideration, Roxbury Prep has decided to step away from the 361 Belgrade Ave site at this time,” Roxbury Preparatory Charter School wrote to its affiliates last spring.

The announcement ended the charter school’s quest for a new high school building in Roslindale, a neighborhood in southwest Boston, after Roxbury Prep encountered stiff resistance from parts of the community and some government officials. The site, 361 Belgrade Avenue, would have been home to just over 560 high schoolers.

Roxbury Prep, which began as a middle school in 1999, was one of Boston’s first charter schools. In 2010, the charter school partnered with Uncommon Schools, a non-profit charter management organization that oversees 57 schools in the Northeast. Roxbury Prep was one of the Boston charter schools whose effectiveness in boosting student achievement was studied by MIT professor Joshua



Cara Chang (AB '24), government and history concentrator

Angrist, who won the 2021 Nobel prize in economics.

Since 2010, Roxbury Prep has expanded, and in 2020 it enrolled 1,568 students, split among three middle schools and two high school campuses. The prolonged and ultimately unsuccessful effort for the Roslindale site aimed to unite students at the high school, now divided between a former parochial school and converted office space five miles apart.

Charter schools are tuition-free public schools whose management has more autonomy than traditional district-run public schools. That can sometimes work to the advantage of students. When it comes to facilities, the autonomy can cut both ways. Charter schools may have freshly painted or carpeted buildings while public schools lack air conditioning. But while traditional public schools benefit from local tax and bond revenues to pay for new buildings and maintenance, many charter schools have to resort to more creative funding measures when they look for buildings or campuses to call their own. And while district schools have been on existing sites for decades, charter schools have to navigate approval processes for new buildings or to convert old ones. The space challenge is one reason that charter growth nationally has slowed, despite strong academic performance overall.

When it comes to space, charter school leaders have to be “real entrepreneurs,” according to David Umansky. Umansky is the founder and CEO of Civic Builders, a non-profit charter school developer and lender addressing what the organization calls the “immediate need for charter school facilities support.”



*Ira Stoll,
Managing Editor,
Education Next*

Conversations on Education in a Federal System

PAUL PETERSON has enjoyed a long and storied teaching career that began in 1967 at the University of Chicago. To celebrate his numerous contributions to urban politics, federalism, and education policy for over 50 years, 27 of his colleagues and former students gathered at Loeb House on Harvard's campus in May for a series of conversations to explore the impact he has had in his chosen fields and on the careers of so many scholars at universities and research centers around the world. Participants in the celebration included those pictured here left to right:

- CHRISTOPHER BERRY** University of Chicago
- RICK GINSBERG** University of Kansas
- ESTER FUCHS** Columbia University
- MATTHEW DICKINSON** Middlebury College
- MARTY WEST** Harvard Graduate School of Education
- WILLIAM HOWELL** University of Chicago
- JAY GREENE** The Heritage Foundation
- ANDREW RUDALEVIGE** Bowdoin College
- ANNA EGALITE** North Carolina State University
- JASON BEDRICK** The Heritage Foundation
- PAUL E. PETERSON** Harvard University
- CARLOS LASTRA-ANADÓN** IE School of Global and Public Affairs (Spain)
- PAT WOLF** University of Arkansas
- MICHAEL HENDERSON** Louisiana State University
- DANY SHAKEEL** University of Buckingham (U.K.)
- DAVID HOUSTON** George Mason University
- RICK HESS** American Enterprise Institute
- LESLIE FINGER** University of North Texas
- PAUL KANTOR** Fordham University
- ALBERT CHENG** University of Arkansas
- DANIEL HAMLIN** University of Oklahoma
- KENNETH WONG** Brown University
- BARRY RABE** University of Michigan
- TAMMY FRISBY** Utah Supreme Court
- BERTRAM JOHNSON** Middlebury College
- MATTHEW CHINGOS** The Urban Institute

Not pictured:

- DAVID CAMPBELL** University of Notre Dame
- JEFFREY LIEBMAN** Harvard Kennedy School



David Houston, Michael Henderson



Rick Ginsberg

Paul Peterson's Half Century of Teaching



Leslie Finger, Barry Rabe



Paul Peterson, Marty West



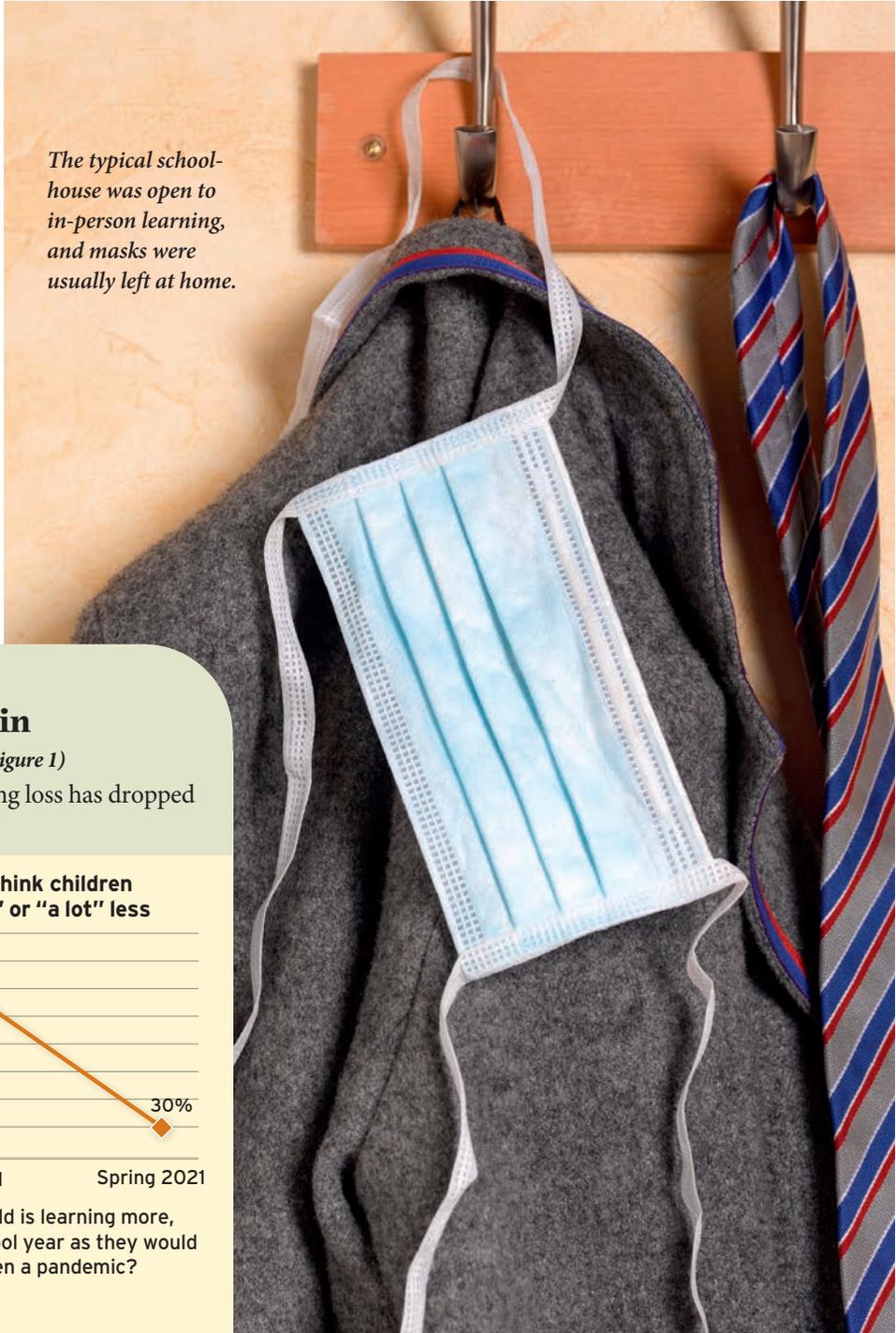
William Howell, Anna Egalite

Parental Concerns Subside, but Public Schools Face Enrollment Declines

Satisfaction with children's schooling on the rise as pandemic disruptions ease

By DAVID M. HOUSTON, PAUL E. PETERSON, and MARTIN R. WEST

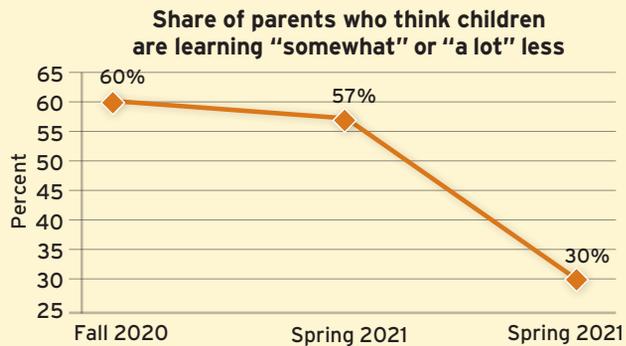
MOST SCHOOLS in America had returned to normal practices by May 2022. The typical schoolhouse was open to in-person learning, and masks were usually left at home. Parents were less fearful that their children had suffered learning losses. By Spring 2022, parental distress had subsided, as children returned to their classrooms. Only 30% had parents who said they thought their child experienced “somewhat” or “a lot” of learning loss, as compared to 60% in the fall of 2020 (see Figure 1). Satisfaction with their children’s schools rose from the lows of the previous year. Parents of 48% of



The typical schoolhouse was open to in-person learning, and masks were usually left at home.

Return to Normal Boosts Confidence in Student Learning (Figure 1)

Parents’ concern about learning loss has dropped by half since the fall of 2020.



QUESTION: Do you think this child is learning more, less, or about the same this school year as they would have learned if there had not been a pandemic?

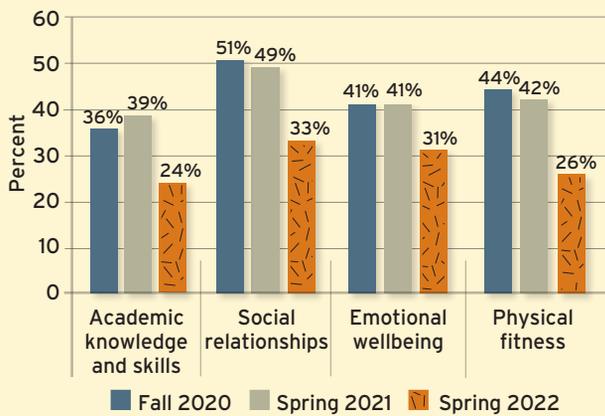
SOURCE: Education Next Survey

Parents Less Anxious about Schools' Response to Covid-19

(Figure 2)

Concerns remain about the impact of masks and social distancing on children's school experiences but have dropped by at least 10 points for each metric since Spring 2021.

Share of children whose parents think schools' Covid-19 mitigation efforts had negative effects



QUESTION: Are the measures this child's school is taking to limit the spread of Covid-19 having a positive or negative effect on your child's (1) academic knowledge and skills; (2) social relationships; (3) emotional wellbeing; (4) physical fitness?

SOURCE: Education Next Survey

By Spring 2022, only 30% of parents said they thought their child experienced "somewhat" or "a lot" of learning loss, compared to 60% in the fall of 2020.

the children said in 2022 they were "very satisfied" with their child's school, as compared to just 31% in late 2020. The percentage "somewhat" or "very" dissatisfied with the child's school shrank from 23% to 11%. Parents were also less anxious about their children's social relationships, emotional well-being, and physical fitness (Figure 2).

These are some of the key findings to emerge from the most recent *Education Next* survey, which was administered online to parents of a nationally representative cross-section of U.S. school-age children in May 2022.

Falling enrollments pose the biggest challenge to traditional public schools. Some parents are more reluctant to

Traditional public schools appear to have lost 4% of their share of K-12 enrollment.

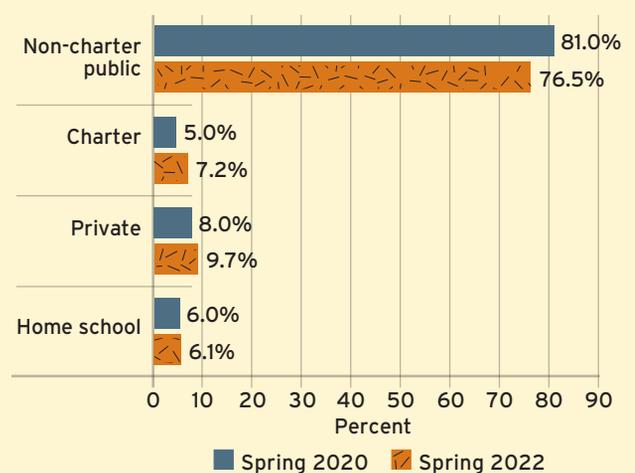
send their kindergarten and first-grade children off to school, and a growing number of adolescents dropped out of school when instruction went digital and job opportunities proliferated. Of those remaining in class, 4% left district-operated schools for another educational sector. According to our polling figures, the district sector share of enrollments fell from 81% to 77% of all school children between 2020 and 2022 (see Figure 3). That means nearly two million students switched from traditional public schools in favor of the private, charter, and homeschooling sectors. Each gained one or two percentage points in market share.

District Schools Saw Migration of Two Million Students to Other Sectors between 2020 and 2022

(Figure 3)

Charter schools siphoned the greatest share of students, while private and home schools experienced modest gains.

Distribution of students by sector



QUESTION: Please provide school type for each child in a grade from kindergarten through 12th grade in your household for whom you are the parent, step-parent, or foster parent.

SOURCE: Education Next Survey

National Assessment Reveals Major Slide in Learning during Pandemic

Martin West moderates event at which disappointing results are announced

THE 2022 ADMINISTRATION of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) showed the largest ever recorded decline in student achievement in math and reading among 9-year-old students. When the disheartening results were announced on September 1, 2022, in Washington, D.C., Martin West moderated the event in his role as a member of the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB). He introduced Peggy Carr, the U.S. Commissioner of Education, who revealed to the media and others in attendance that scores declined for nearly all groups of students, with the largest drops registered by those who were already low-performing.

West opened the event by noting that as a parent of a 9-year-old in March 2020, he'd seen "hidden blessings" of the pandemic, such as more time for young children to "sleep in." But he also pointed out the "frustrations of remote learning" that his own and many other families had endured.

West said the large drop in scores in both math and reading, with particularly large declines among the lowest performing students, must be taken as a wake-up call.

It was West who offered the motion approved by NAGB to alter the NAEP schedule so math and reading performances of 9-year-old students could be assessed in January–March 2022, exactly two years after these tests had previously been administered. In this way comparisons could be made of performances just before and just after a two-year disruption of learning caused by the pandemic and the accompanying policy responses.

The large drop in scores in both math and reading, with particularly large declines among the lowest performing students, must be taken as a wake-up call.

The announcement of a drop in NAEP scores garnered abundant press attention. The *New York Times* carried the news on the top of its front page in an article headlined "Pandemic Set Schools Back Two Decades." The article concluded by quoting West as saying, "I don't see a silver



Martin West, in conversation with U.S. Commissioner of Education Peggy Carr about the decline in scores shown in the 2022 NAEP assessment of 9-year-old students: "I don't see a silver bullet beyond finding a way to increase instructional time."

bullet beyond finding a way to increase instructional time."

West says the just-released results provide "the earliest possible evidence ... our very first glance at learning during the Covid era." More extensive information is expected when the next NAEP survey is released later in Fall 2022.

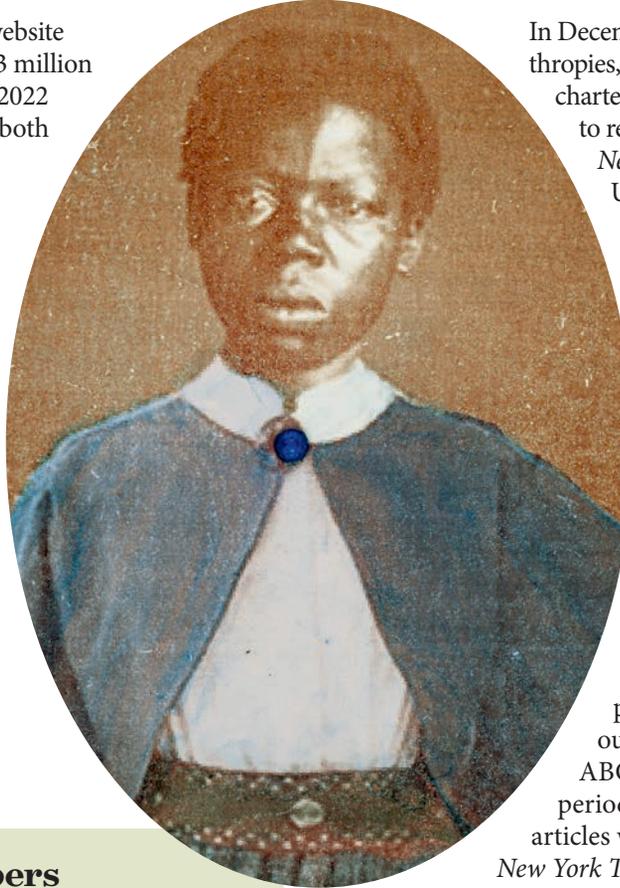
Martin West is the Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Education and Academic Dean at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He is PEPP deputy director and Editor-in-Chief of Education Next.

A Year of Growth and Influence

E DUCATION NEXT'S website generated more than 3.3 million pageviews in the 2021–2022 year, on the strength of both the journal's archive of previously published articles and also on the basis of new content and groundbreaking, authoritative research helping readers to understand the issues facing education during a pandemic and a period of rapid political, social, and technological change.

The journal's policy impact is often indirect, setting the stage for political action. But direct connections happen as well.

Education Next's website generated more than 3.3 million pageviews in the 2021–2022 year.

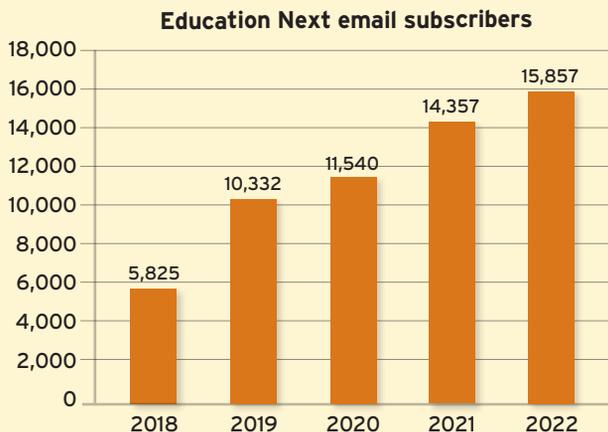


In December 2021, Bloomberg Philanthropies, announcing its \$750 million charter school expansion plan, linked to research published in *Education Next*: “Charter Schools Show Steeper Upward Trend.” The same month, an *Education Next* article, “Critical Race Theory Collides With the Law,” was cited in a concurring opinion by Judge James Ho of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

The articles also have secondary impacts when they are assigned in classrooms, read by government officials, or picked up by other media outlets. From July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, *Education Next* research or experts were mentioned or cited 1,805 times in print, broadcast, or online media outlets, including CBS radio and ABC television. During one two-week period in June 2022, *Education Next* articles were hyperlinked from both the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

Email Subscribers

Subscribers to the *Education Next* email list reached a new high in 2022, surpassing 15,000 readers



NOTE: Email subscribers to EducationNext.org year-over-year; years ending June 30.

Education Next saw an increase in readership in 2022 in both its print and online formats through such compelling content as “Teaching about Slavery” and “Beyond Moneyball.”

Sharing Knowledge and Experience

NOW IN ITS SEVENTH YEAR, the PEPG Academic Visitors initiative has welcomed dozens of experts in education policy, research, and adjacent areas to impart their knowledge and experience from the field to the Harvard community. A hallmark of their participation is co-teaching a graduate level politics of education course and interacting directly with students.

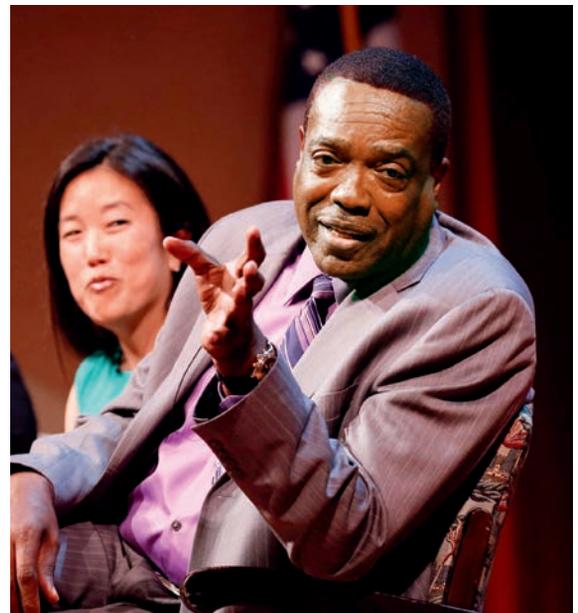
In addition to those pictured, PEPG is excited to have **Paymon Rouhanifard**, co-founder and CEO of Propel America, returning to share his experiences as the superintendent of Camden (N.J.) Public Schools; **Erica Soares**, a senior policy advisor to U.S. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) returning to talk about the Senate with government students; and **Rocco Testani**, co-head of Global Litigation for the Atlanta law firm Eversheds Sutherland, returning to discuss the legal complexities of school finance.



▲ **DERRELL BRADFORD** is the president of 50CAN, a non-profit education reform organization that advocates locally for all students to receive a high-quality education. He recruits and trains local leaders across 50CAN's network for roles as executive directors, fellows, and advocates.



▼ **MICHELLE RHEE** is the founder of 7 Ventures, founder and former CEO of StudentsFirst, and the former chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools (2007–2010). **GEORGE PARKER** is a senior advisor with the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, a former teacher at D.C. Public Schools, and served six years as president of the Washington Teachers' Union.



◀ **NICK MELVOIN** is a board member of the Los Angeles Unified School District. In that capacity he has focused on putting students and families at the center of district decision-making by increasing parent and community engagement, making the district more transparent and accountable, and bringing a new spirit of partnership and collaboration to LAUSD.

▼ **ROBIN LAKE** is director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) a non-partisan research and policy analysis organization developing transformative, evidence-based solutions for K–12 public education. Her research focuses on U.S. public school system reforms, including public school choice and charter schools; innovation and scale; portfolio management; and effective state and local public oversight practices.



► **JOSEPH OLCHEFSKE** has been a leader in the educational community for over 25 years. He recently retired as Chief Executive Officer of Springboard Education in America, a Massachusetts-based provider of extended learning programs to students in grades Pre-K to 8th. He served as superintendent of Seattle Public Schools from 1998 to 2003 and now teaches as an adjunct professor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education.



▲ **JOHN KIRTLEY** is the founder and chairman of Step Up for Students. He created the Children’s Scholarship Fund of Tampa Bay in 1998, which provides privately funded scholarships for low-income children to attend the K–8 school of their choice. In 2001, Kirtley helped fight for a new law that gives corporations tax credits for donating to a scholarship organization that grants scholarships to children to attend the school of their parents’ choice.



School Choice in the Post-Pandemic Era

PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC, growth in school choice options stalled as the political consensus that had generated charter, tax-credit scholarship, and voucher policies was unraveling. But when school districts shifted to online and hybrid instruction, many parents enrolled their children in charter and private schools or taught them from home. Neighborhood pods, microschoools, tutoring, and new approaches to digital learning suddenly popped up in even the most unexpected places.

In the PEPG virtual conference series “School Choice in the Post-Pandemic Era,” experts discussed the latest developments in private, charter, virtual, and district-run school choice. Many panelists concluded that the school choice movement



Daniel Hamlin and daughter Eleanor

was entering a new era of expansion, and the meaning of the concept was itself undergoing fundamental change.

In a keynote address, former Governor of Florida Jeb Bush described how growth in homeschooling, charter schools, education saving accounts, and other choice programs were reshaping American education. The following week, the American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten and Jay Greene of the Heritage Foundation debated what school choice should look like beyond the pandemic. Here is a brief excerpt:

Randi Weingarten: “I think we need to have lots of different pathways for kids within public schools. But what we absolutely have to have are neighborhood public schools where parents want to send their kids, educators want to work, and kids thrive. I think this whole notion of how we rebuild community is



Jay Greene



Randi Weingarten

really, really important in America. I go back to de Tocqueville, and how we do the twin goals of finding the common interest and the common bonds, as well as honoring our diversity.”

Jay Greene: “There’s quite a lot of research that private schools are better at producing [our civic] goals than traditional public schooling. We see higher rates of civic participation, volunteering, and political tolerance among students who are in or went to private schools than in traditional public schools. And so the public good can be very well served through a system of choice in education as it is in many other realms of our life, where we achieve the public good through systems of private choice.”

During the 2021–2022 academic year, PEPG hosted a weekly virtual conference on school choice in the fall and one on school safety in spring. Organized by Paul Peterson and Daniel Hamlin, the two conferences drew 2,200 registrants.



A Safe Place to Learn

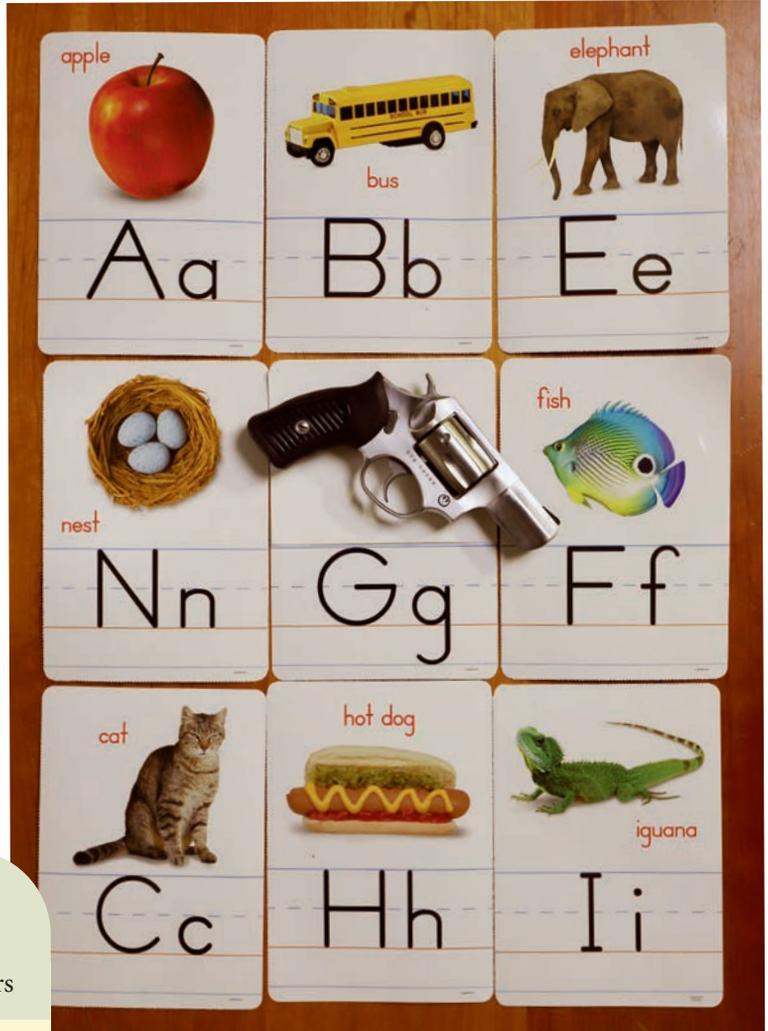
AS STUDENTS RETURNED to in-person learning following the Covid-19 pandemic, school staff began reporting dramatic spikes in physical assaults and mental health issues on school grounds. The purpose of the PEPG virtual conference series “A Safe Place to Learn” was to consider strategies for responding to these challenges. David Banks, Chancellor of New York City’s public schools, opened the conference by discussing ongoing school safety challenges and initiatives in New York City.

Paul Peterson: “Students are not coming to school. It’s not just in New York City. It’s happening in places across the country. Absenteeism on the increase, enrollments down, students leaving for private schools or for the suburbs. Are safety concerns the reason?”



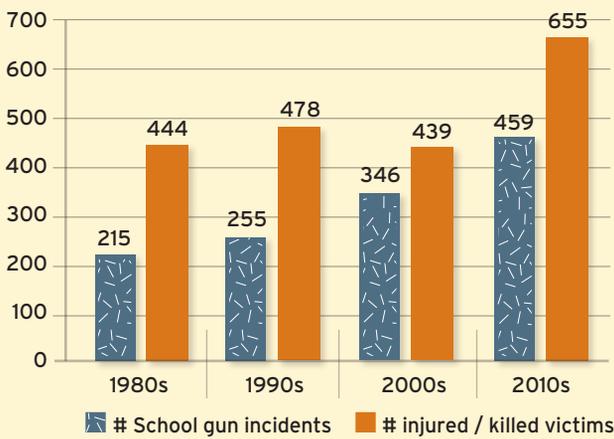
David Banks

David Banks: “It’s a great question. Safety is not the primary reason why parents have been leaving the system. During the last five years we’ve lost 120,000 families from the school system. Sometimes people want to blame everything on the pandemic, but it wasn’t



Trends in School Gun Incidents by Decade

Number of incidents more than doubles in 40 years



SOURCE: Daniel Hamlin, “Are gun ownership rates and regulations associated with firearm incidents in American schools? A forty-year analysis (1980–2019).” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 76 (2021).

entirely the pandemic. And much of it really was, and as we’ve talked to families across the city, the consensus is that we don’t have enough quality schools, and we don’t have enough quality programming.”

As the conference entered its fourth week, tragedy struck. Nineteen children and two teachers were killed in a school shooting in Uvalde, Texas. As the public’s engagement with the safety question reached a new peak, panelists concentrated on the best ways to avoid mass shootings. Just before the event, Daniel Hamlin reported on the rising trend in school violence since 1980 (see figure), and national experts Peter Langman, Dewey Cornell, and Katherine Newman had discussed promising threat assessment techniques, reporting systems, and relational supports for reducing school gun violence. Subsequently, panels explored mental health strategies, new technologies, and new ways of anticipating violence before it strikes.

The Efficiency-Equity Trade-off

School expenditures are more efficiently used when paid for from local revenues

by CARLOS X. LASTRA-ANADÓN and PAUL E. PETERSON

BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, about 44% of school district revenues came from local sources, 44% from state revenues, and the rest from federal grants. Is this an efficient and equitable way to fund schools? Or would it be better to fund schools entirely by either the local school district or by the state?

Some economists say schools would be more efficient if local taxpayers paid all the costs. But plaintiffs in school finance lawsuits argue that states must cover an even larger share of the costs if schools are to be equitable.



Carlos X.
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The Supreme Court has denied plaintiffs' claims, but in many states, courts have said current policies violate their state constitutions. In

11 states, finance reforms were instituted at a time when we could track their effect on student achievement.

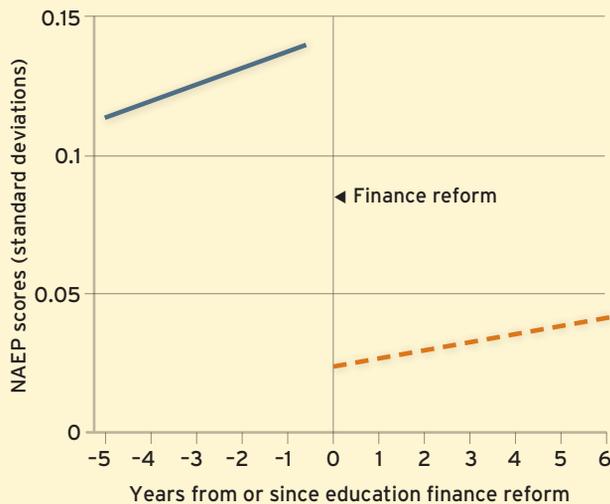
To see whether there is evidence for an efficiency-equity trade-off, we look at trends in the 11 states by tracking student performances in math and reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress

The findings cast doubt on the advisability of a vast expansion in federal expenditures on education such as has happened since the onset of the pandemic.



Effect of Reform on Student Performances in Math and Reading on the National Assessment of Progress

Student performance falls after finance reforms are enacted.



SOURCE: Carlos X. Lastra Anadón and Paul E. Peterson. "Who Benefits from Local Financing of Public Services?" Research paper, 2022. Program on Education Policy and Governance.

both before and after a school finance reform has been implemented. We isolate reform effects by adjusting for student background characteristics, district expenditures, and overall trends in student achievement nationwide.

The reforms, on average, reduce the local share of school expenditure by 6%. After adjustments for school expenditures and other district and student characteristics, the reforms are shown to cause a downward shift in average 8th grade student achievement in math and reading (see Figure). The reforms reduce achievement differences between more and less disadvantaged students. However, reforms achieve greater equity not by raising achievement of the disadvantaged but by negatively affecting the performances of those from more advantaged backgrounds.

The findings cast doubt on the advisability of a vast expansion in federal expenditures on education such as has happened since the onset of the pandemic.

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