

## Coffee & Conversation Podcast Sources – 1/11/21

Politico Weekly NY Education (See below)

<https://www.the74million.org/article/when-siblings-become-teachers-its-not-just-parents-who-find-themselves-thrust-into-the-demanding-role-of-at-home-educators/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/08/us/k-12-the-spring-semester-to-come.html>

[https://www.newsday.com/news/health/coronavirus/daily-coronavirus-update-long-island-1.50115865?utm\\_source=appshare](https://www.newsday.com/news/health/coronavirus/daily-coronavirus-update-long-island-1.50115865?utm_source=appshare)

<https://www.newsday.com/news/region-state/cuomo-state-of-state-broadband-1.50117047>

Politico Weekly NY Education

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*Editor's Note: Weekly New York Education is a weekly version of POLITICO Pro's daily New York Education newsletter. POLITICO Pro is a policy intelligence platform that combines the news you need with tools you can use to take action on the day's biggest stories. [Act on the news with POLITICO Pro.](#)*

*Good morning and welcome to the Monday edition of the New York Education newsletter. We take a look at the week ahead and a look back at the past week.*

### **Here's what's going on in New York's education world:**

School districts are responding to Gov. Andrew Cuomo's announcement last week that [buildings needn't close](#) if Covid-19 cases in their region top 9 percent positivity — a departure from state guidance that previously directed schools to do so.

Local school districts would have the discretion to keep schools open if regional infections surpassed the threshold, as long as they produced a lower positivity rate than the surrounding area, Cuomo said. The number had been closely watched in New York City in particular, where its own 3 percent positivity benchmark forced the nation's largest school system to close again in November.

Several parts of the state, like the Mohawk Valley, Finger Lakes and Capital Region, had surged past 9 percent positivity at the time of Cuomo's announcement. The approach also comes as New York has confirmed the presence of the UK strain, with three cases from Saratoga Springs and one on Long Island.

The new state rule is also the latest evidence of Cuomo's evolved stance on schools compared to the early fall, as in recent months he has prioritized keeping them open in the face of relatively low positivity rates in schools.

United Federation of Teachers President Michael Mulgrew quickly [urged Mayor Bill de Blasio to close schools](#) once it hit a 9 percent positivity rate under the state's numbers, after already surpassing the figure according to the city's data, underscoring the potential for another dispute between city and state. Andy Pallotta, president of New York State United Teachers, the state's largest teachers union, urged districts to earn the school community's "confidence" in any decision to stay open or close — and if that fails, ["remote education is the only viable option."](#)

Meanwhile, school staff, bus drivers and child care workers within the state's second prioritized tier [can schedule a vaccination starting today](#), though Cuomo stressed appointments could come as late as April.

Here's what else we're thinking about

— Educators were tasked with [teaching their students about the insurrection](#) at the U.S. Capitol last week. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos [resigned in response](#) to President Trump's incitement of the violent mob (to which AFT President Randi Weingarten said [in a short statement](#): "Good riddance.")

— Shaun Donovan, a candidate for New York City mayor, [told our Madina Touré in an exclusive](#) interview that he would permanently eliminate middle school admissions screens if elected but change the Specialized High School Admissions Test instead of getting rid of it altogether.

— A few colleges and universities in areas with surging infection rates have delayed their spring starts, including [Syracuse University and nearby SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry](#).

**GOOD MONDAY MORNING:** This newsletter is for you, so tell us how we can make it better! Send feedback, tips and education-related events to [mtoure@politico.com](mailto:mtoure@politico.com) and [mbocanegra@politico.com](mailto:mbocanegra@politico.com). Follow us on Twitter: [@madinatoure](#), and [@michebocanegra](#).

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*The pandemic is reshaping and upending every facet of American education as we know it, from pre-K through grad school. [Sign up for the new Weekly Education: Coronavirus Special Edition](#) newsletter, where we explore the new challenges, the debates of the day, and talk to movers and shakers about whether changes ushered in now are here to stay.*

## **AROUND NEW YORK**

### **DE BLASIO LAGS ON PLAN TO TACKLE DIGITAL DIVIDE — THE CITY's Reuven**

**Blau:** "In July, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that the city would 'accelerate' its plan to roll out 'affordable' high-speed internet access for people in public housing and low-income areas hit hard by the pandemic. He cited the city's long struggle to bridge the digital divide and argued there was more need than ever for connectivity when so many people have turned to the internet as a lifeline for everything from work to schooling to getting basic necessities. ... To fund that element of the city's broader Master Plan, de Blasio set aside \$157 million in the budget — including \$87 million 'redirected from the NYPD budget,' he said. At the time, a press release from the mayor's office said the city expected to 'announce partnerships at the end of the summer 2020' with a full 'deployment of the program occurring throughout 2020 and 2021.' Nearly six months later, the city says it has [not yet reached a single deal for the NYCHA project or spent any of the money set aside for the broadband plan](#) — an initiative de Blasio has been talking about since he ran for mayor in 2013."

### **BUFFALO BRACES FOR RETURN TO IN-PERSON CLASSES — Buffalo News' Jay**

**Rey:** "In a region where most public and private schools opened months ago, Buffalo Public Schools has been the one big outlier during the Covid-19 pandemic by sticking with remote learning and banking on mid-school year to resume in-person classes. But Buffalo's delay in reopening, while unpopular with families anxious to get back in the classroom, is [not uncommon among big-city school districts around the United States](#) — from Cleveland to Chicago to Milwaukee to Portland. 'I would guess about half the cities across the country have not opened at all, except in very small numbers in specialized cases, and have remained pretty much entirely virtual for the full school year up to this point,' said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools."

— “**Most students in West Seneca** [will see something this week they haven't seen since March 13:](#) the inside of a classroom. The district's 6,300 students have been learning from home since schools closed at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. A small number of children in special education classes and kindergarten did start to return in November, before the orange zone designation again closed in-person learning, and some special ed classes resumed Thursday. West Seneca and the Buffalo Public Schools have been fully remote longer than any other school district in Erie and Niagara counties.”  
— *Buffalo News’ Barbara O’Brien*

**CUOMO WANTS TO PRIORITIZE NEW YORK NURSES AT SUNY, CUNY** — **Spectrum News’ Nick Resiman:** “Legislation that would [give nurses in New York state priority access to public college and university programs](#) will be part of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's 2021 State of the State agenda, his office announced on Sunday. Cuomo delivers the address on Monday in Albany. The proposal would give both licensed nurses and nursing candidates priority admission to state university and city university programs in the state starting in the fall of 2021 to fulfill credentials and continue practicing.”

**NYC PREPARES FOR 1B VACCINATIONS** — **New York Post’s Reuven Fenton, Kevin Sheehan and Kate Sheehy:** “New York City [opened two massive COVID-19 vaccination hubs Sunday](#) to prepare for a potential onslaught from the next eligible group — including teachers, cops and transit workers — Monday. ... United Federal of Teachers President Mike Mulgrew showed up at an already operating vaccine site, Hillcrest High School in Jamaica, Queens, on Sunday to promote educators’ upcoming access to the inoculations — and watched school registered nurse Cynthia Bennett get a shot in the arm. 'This afternoon, we are e-mailing every UFT member. We will be getting priority access for everyone that says that they want a vaccine,' Mulgrew said.”

## ACROSS THE RIVER

**PARENTS WANT IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION** — **New Jersey101.5’s David Matthau:** “Last summer Gov. Phil Murphy announced all schools would be required to offer in-person instruction unless there was a specific problem. Half way into the school year, almost half of all districts remain closed and are offering only remote learning for their students. A growing number of parents say this is unacceptable and they are demanding state education officials and the governor require at least partial in-person instruction in all districts. This coming Wednesday, parents associated with a group called the New Jersey

Families for In-Person Learning are [expected to hold a rally in Trenton for their cause.](#)

## AROUND THE NATION

**BIDEN TO EXTEND PAUSE ON STUDENT LOAN PAYMENTS — POLITICO's Michael Stratford:** President-elect Joe Biden will [extend the federal government's expiring pause on student loan payments and interest](#) as soon as he takes office later this month, according to a top economic adviser. "On Day One, the president-elect will direct the Department of Education to extend the existing pause on student loan payments and interest for millions of Americans with federal student loans," David Kamin, who will serve as deputy director of the National Economic Council, told reporters on Friday. The suspension of monthly payments and interest for about 40 million Americans with federal student loans is currently set to expire on Jan. 31 — just days after Biden's inauguration.

— **House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn** on Friday [accused former Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao](#) of "running away from their responsibility" by resigning from President Donald Trump's Cabinet before invoking the 25th Amendment to remove him from office. — *POLITICO's Quint Forgy*

**SUPREME COURT TO HEAR K-12 FREE SPEECH CASE — POLITICO's Bianca Quilantan:** The Supreme Court on Friday [agreed to take up a lawsuit that could have broad repercussions for public students' First Amendment right](#) to free speech that happens online or outside of school. The Mahanoy Area School District in Pennsylvania asked the high court to reverse an appeals court decision in favor of a ninth grade cheerleader who was suspended from the cheerleading team for a year after sending an expletive-filled message on Snapchat.

## AROUND THE WORLD

**TRUMP SCRUTINIZES CHINESE FUNDING AT AMERICAN SCHOOLS — Axios' Stef W. Kight:** "The Trump administration is trying to push through a last-minute policy to heighten scrutiny of Chinese government funding in American education, according to multiple administration officials familiar with the rule. China's influence in U.S. classrooms — particularly through Confucius Institutes — has

long concerned Republicans. The outgoing administration has been particularly outspoken, labeling them Chinese foreign missions last summer.”

**[AFRICAN STUDENTS DEAL WITH RACISM, COVID IN AMERICA](#) — KQED’s Chloe**

**Veltman:** “Abdoul Aziz Sandotin Coulibaly has seen plenty of riots and civil unrest in his native Ivory Coast. But the violent insurrection at the US Capitol this week shocked and saddened the 23-year-old UC Berkeley graduate student. ‘I am not really sure if there will be any real inclusion or acceptance of diversity or end to racism in this country,’ he wrote in an email to KQED.”

