

Any way you add it up ... **MATH COUNTS!**

教育改革

Education reform

The Economist

听读系列



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教育改革

如何不去关停学校

老龄化国家不需要这么多学校，美国发现很难
关停它们

Education reform

How not to close schools

Ageing countries need fewer schools. America will find
closing them hard

Rain

bilibili 狂奔的外刊

1. AT A MEETING earlier this year, **board** members in **Seattle's** biggest public-school district were **treated** to a **grisly** **chart**.



board /bɔ:d/ **noun** [C + sing./pl. v.] a group of people who have power to make decisions and control a company or other organization (公司或其他机构的) 董事会, 委员会, 理事会

Seattle /si'ætl/ **noun** a port and industrial city in the US state of Washington, the largest city in the north-western United States 西雅图 (美国华盛顿州的港口和工业城市, 美国西北部最大城市)

treat sb to sth to entertain sb with sth special 用 ... 招待; 以 ... 款待

grisly /'grɪzli/ **adjective** [usually before noun] **gris·lier**, **gris·li·est** extremely unpleasant and frightening and usually connected with death and violence 令人厌恶的; 恐怖的; 可怕的

chart /tʃɑ:t/ **noun** [C] a page or sheet of information in the form of diagrams, lists of figures, etc. 图表

Over five years the number of **full-time** staff on the district's **payroll** has **drifted upwards**, even as the number of pupils **on its books** has fallen.



full-time *adjective* (*abbr.* **FT**) for all the hours of a week during which people normally work or study, rather than just for a part of it 全日（制）；全职的；全日的

payroll /ˈpeɪrəʊl/ *noun* [**usually sing.**] the total amount paid in wages by a company （公司的）工资总支出

drift /drɪft/ *verb* [**I**] (+ **adv./prep.**) to happen or change, or to do sth without a particular plan or purpose 无意间发生；无目的地转变；顺其自然地做

upwards /ˈʌpwədz/ *adverb* towards a higher amount or price （数量、价格）上升，上涨，提高

(be) on sb's 'books (to be) on an organization's list, for example of people who are available for a particular type of work （在某机构）登记备用的

In September teachers won a pay rise following a **strike** that delayed the new school year. But **enrolment** could keep **shrinking** for a decade, **reckon** district leaders, who warn of **budgetary black holes**.



strike /straɪk/ **noun** a period of time when an organized group of employees of a company stops working because of a disagreement over pay or conditions 罢工；罢课；罢市

enrolment /ɪnˈrɒlmənt/ **noun** (*especially US en-roll-ment*) [U, C] the act of officially joining a course, school, etc; the number of people who do this 入学，注册，登记（人数）

shrink /ʃrɪŋk/ **verb** [I, T] to become or to make sth smaller in size or amount （使）缩小，收缩，减少

reckon /ˈrek(ə)n/ **verb** [T, I] ~ (that) ... (*informal especially BrE*) to think sth or have an opinion about sth 想；认为

budgetary /ˈbʌdʒɪtəri/ **adjective** connected with a budget 预算的

black hole **noun** an imaginary place in which things are lost （想象中事物消失的）黑洞

Threatened bankruptcy may eventually require “consolidating”, which may mean shutting down schools.



threaten /'θret(ə)n/ **verb** [I, T] to seem likely to happen or cause sth unpleasant 预示凶兆; 有 ... 危险

bankruptcy /'bæŋkrʌptsi/ **noun**
[U, C] *pl.* **bank-rupt-cies** the state of being **BANKRUPT** 破产

eventually /I'ventʃʊəli/ **adverb** at the end of a period of time or a series of events 最后; 终于

consolidate /kən'splɪdeɪt/ **verb** [T, I] ~
(sth) (*technical* 术语) to join things together into one; to be joined into one (使) 结成一体, 合并

shut down (of a factory, shop/store, etc. or a machine 工厂、商店或机器等) to stop opening for business; to stop working 关张; 停业; 倒闭; 关闭; 停止运转

2. Pupil numbers are falling in urban schools across much of America. As a result of **rock-bottom fertility** rates and lower-than-usual levels of **immigration**, the total number of children in the country declined by **1m** in the ten years to 2020. Many big cities have an added problem: families have been leaving.

rock-bottom *noun* [U] (*informal*) the lowest point or level that is possible 最低点; 最低水平

adjective rock-bottom prices 最低价格

fertility /fə'tɪlɪti/ *noun* [U] the state of being **FERTILE** 富饶; 丰产; 能生育性; 可繁殖性; 想象力丰富

immigration /ɪmɪ'greɪʃn/ *noun* [U] the process of coming to live permanently in a country that is not your own; the number of people who do this 移居 (入境); 移民人数

m /em/ *abbr.* million(s) 百万



Chicago's main public school district has lost a fifth of its pupils in a decade (though some of these have decamped to charter and private schools). Los Angeles has lost a quarter. District leaders in that city say numbers could fall a further quarter or so by 2030.



Chicago /tʃɪˈkɑːɡəʊ/ **noun** the third largest city in the United States. It is in the state of Illinois on Lake Michigan and is sometimes called the 'Windy City'. 芝加哥 (美国第三大城市, 位于伊利诺伊州密歇根湖畔, 别号“风城”)

decamp /dɪˈkæmp/ **verb** [I] ~ (from ...) (to ...) to leave a place suddenly, often secretly 逃亡; 潜逃

charter /ˈtʃɑːtə/ **noun** [C] an official document stating that a ruler or government allows a new organization, town or university to be established and gives it particular rights (统治者或政府准许成立新的组织、城镇、大学等并授予某种权利的) 特许状, 许可证, 凭照。美国州政府在公共教育体系之外特许的中小学水平的教育机构, 中文一般称为特许学校

Los Angeles **noun** a city on the Pacific coast of southern California, the second largest city in the United States and the largest in California 洛杉矶 (美国加利福尼亚州南部城市, 位于太平洋沿岸, 是美国第二大、加利福尼亚州最大城市)

quarter /ˈkwɔːtə/ **noun** (also **fourth** especially in NAmE) [C] one of four equal parts of sth 四等份之一的外刊

3. The pandemic **speeded up** these **woes**. Parents who already had **itchy feet** found that a **plague** made their cities less **appealing**. Urban schools kept remote learning longer than others; that gave some families extra reason to leave.



speed up | speed sth ↔ **up** to move or happen faster; to make sth move or happen faster (使) 加速

woe /wəʊ/ **noun** (*old-fashioned or humorous*)

woes [pl.] the troubles and problems that sb has 麻烦; 问题; 困难

(get/have) itchy feet (*informal*) to want to travel or move to a different place; to want to do sth different 渴望旅行 (或换个地方、做别的事)

plague /pleɪɡ/ **noun** [C] any infectious disease that kills a lot of people 死亡率高的传染病

appealing /əˈpiːlɪŋ/ **adjective** showing that you want people to help you or to show you pity or sympathy 恳求的; 可怜的; 希望同情的

Enrolment in New York City's public schools has fallen by 10% in the three years since the disaster started; in a few of its neighbourhoods the decline is almost a fifth. Families with children under five were **especially** likely to leave big cities during the **pandemic**, suggest data from the **Census Bureau**. So the full impact may not yet have **registered**.

especially /ɪ'speʃ(ə)li/ **adverb** (abbr. **esp.**) more with one person, thing, etc. than with others, or more in particular circumstances than in others 尤其; 特别; 格外

pandemic /pæn'demɪk/ **noun** a disease that spreads over a whole country or the whole world (全国或全球性) 流行病; 大流行病

Census Bureau **noun** 美国人口普查局

register /'redʒɪstə/ **verb** [T, **no passive**, I] (often used in negative sentences 常用于否定句) ~ (sth) to notice sth and remember it; to be noticed 注意到; 记住; 受到注意

The logo of the United States Census Bureau, featuring the words "United States" in a smaller font above the word "Census" in a large, bold, sans-serif font, with "Bureau" in a smaller font below it. A horizontal line is positioned under "Census".

United States®
Census
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Class divides

4. School districts are generally funded on a **per-pupil basis**. Even small declines in enrolment may **therefore** be hard. Some of the children who left city schools during the pandemic may **end up** returning to class: a proportion are **home-schooling**, and may tire of that.



class /kla:s/ **noun** [C + sing./pl. v.] one of the groups of people in a society that are thought of as being at the same social or economic level 阶级; 阶层

divide /dɪ'vaɪd/ **verb** [I, T] to separate or make sth separate into parts (使) 分开, 分散, 分割, 分成 ...

per/pɜ:/ **prep.** used to express the cost or amount of sth for each person, number used, distance travelled, etc. 每; 每一

basis /'beɪsɪs/ **noun** [sing.] the way things are organized or arranged 基准; 准则; 方式

therefore /'ðeəfɔ:/ **adverb** used to introduce the logical result of sth that has just been mentioned 因此; 所以; 因而

end up to find yourself in a place or situation that you did not intend or expect to be in 最终成为; 最后处于

homeschooling **noun** [U] the practice of educating children at home, not in schools (儿童) 在家受教育, 家学

But the other trends that have been **thinning** **downtown** classrooms will probably not **reverse** soon, even if immigration starts **nudging** the number of children in America back up.



thin /θɪn/ **verb** [I, T] to become less thick or fewer in number; to make sth less thick or fewer, for example by removing some things or people (使) 变稀薄, 变稀疏, 变少

downtown /'daʊntaʊn/ **adverb** (especially NAmE) in or towards the centre of a city, especially its main business area 在市中心, 往市中心 (尤指商业中心区)

reverse /rɪ'vɜːs/ **verb** [T] ~ sth to change sth completely so that it is the opposite of what it was before 颠倒; 彻底转变; 使完全相反

nudge /nʌdʒ/ **verb** [T] ~ sth (+ adv./prep.) to reach or make sth reach a particular level (使) 达到, 接近

In some cities the need to close schools is growing. About 1% of traditional public schools **shut up shop** each year, says Douglas Harris of **Tulane University** (the closure rate is 5% for **charter schools** and 3% for private ones). The number will probably rise.



shut up shop (*BrE*) (*informal*) to close a business permanently or to stop working for the day 停业; 关张; 倒闭; 打烊

Tulane University *noun* 杜兰大学, 位于美国路易斯安那州的私立综合性大学

charter school *noun* 美国州政府在公共教育体系之外特许的中小学水平的教育机构, 中文一般称为特许学校



Tulane University

5. Recent battles suggest that this is going to hurt. Protests, including a **hunger strike**, **broke out** last year after school-board members in **Oakland, California**, **voted** to close or **merge** several schools. Angry locals **installed** a new board; in January it said it was cancelling many of the cuts.



hunger strike *noun* [C, U] the act of refusing to eat for a long period of time in order to protest about sth 绝食 (抗议)

break out (of war, fighting or other unpleasant events 战争、打斗等不愉快事件) to start suddenly 突然开始; 爆发

Oakland *noun* 奥克兰, 位于美国加利福尼亚州

California *noun* 加利福尼亚 (美国太平洋沿岸的州, 在所有州中人口最多。最大城市洛杉矶, 首府萨克拉门托)

vote /vəʊt/ *verb* [T, usually passive] ~ sth + noun to say that sth is good or bad 表明, 认为, 公认 (某事好或坏)

merge /mɜːdʒ/ *verb* [I, T] to combine or make two or more things combine to form a single thing (使) 合并, 结合, 并入

install /in'stɔːl/ *verb* ~ sb (as sth) to put sb in a new position of authority, often with an official ceremony (常以正式仪式) 使就职, 任命

In Chicago about one-third of schools are operating in buildings at only half-capacity, or less, according to local government data analysed by “Wirepoints”, a blog. The smallest has around 30 youngsters and a little over 20 staff.



capacity /kə'pæsɪtɪ/ *noun* [U, C, usually sing.] the number of things or people that a container or space can hold 容量; 容积; 容纳能力

analyse /'æn(ə)laɪz/ *verb* to examine the nature or structure of sth, especially by separating it into its parts, in order to understand or explain it 分析

Wirepoints *noun* Wirepoints是一家独立的非营利公司，提供关于伊利诺伊州经济和政府的原创研究和评论。

blog /blog/ *noun* (also **web-log**) a website where a person writes regularly about recent events or topics that interest them, usually with photos and links to other websites that they find interesting 网志; 博客; 部落格

youngster /'jʌŋstə/ *noun* (*informal*) a young person or a child 年轻人; 少年; 儿童



-- Connecting the dots between our economy, government and business --

6. The **patchwork** way in which American schooling is **governed**—by board members in some 14,000 districts—may make it more difficult than in other countries for schools in large **metro** areas to shrink **effectively**.



patchwork /'pætʃ_wɜ:k/ **noun** [sing.] a thing that is made up of many different pieces or parts 拼凑之物

govern /'gʌv(ə)n/ **verb** [T, I] ~ (sth) to legally control a country or its people and be responsible for introducing new laws, organizing public services, etc. 统治；控制；管理；治理

metro /'metrəʊ/ **adjective** = **METROPOLITAN** [only before noun] (also NAmE, informal **metro**) connected with a large or capital city 大城市的；大都会的

effectively /ɪ'fektɪvli:/ **adverb** used when you are saying what the facts of a situation are 实际上；事实上

America's teaching **unions** are unusually **tetchy**: their **hostility** towards testing has sometimes **prompted** boards to declare, **gallingly**, that a school's results will play no role in deciding which ones will close or merge.



union /'ju:niən/ **noun** also **trade 'union**) (BrE also **trades 'union**) (NAmE also **'labor union**) [C] an organization of workers, usually in a particular industry, that exists to protect their interests, improve conditions of work, etc. 工会

tetchy /'tetʃɪ/ **adjective** bad-tempered; likely to get angry easily or without good reason 易怒的; 暴躁的; 动辄发怒的

hostility /hə'stɪlɪti/ **noun** [U] ~ (to/towards sth) strong and angry opposition towards an idea, a plan or a situation (对思想、计划或情形的) 愤怒反对, 愤怒反抗

prompt /prɒm(p)t/ **verb** [T] to make sb decide to do sth; to cause sth to happen 促使; 导致; 激起

galling /'gɔ:lɪŋ/ **adjective** [not usually before noun] (of a situation or fact 境况或事实) making you angry because it is unfair 令人恼怒; 使人烦恼; 使人感到屈辱

Tensions about **race** make things more **complicated**. Families in **inner cities** sometimes suspect that their schools have been **earmarked** for **closure** only because parents in richer, whiter areas have more power to make a **fuss**.



tension /'tenʃ(ə)n/ **noun** [U, C, usually pl.] ~ (between A and B) 紧张局势 (或关系、状况)

race /reɪs/ **noun** [C, U] 人种; 种族

complicated /'kɒmplɪkeɪtɪd/ **adjective** made of many different things or parts that are connected; difficult to understand 复杂的; 难懂的

inner city **noun** the part near the centre of a large city, which often has social problems 市中心区 (常有社会问题)

earmark /'ɪəmə:k/ **verb** [usually passive] to decide that sth will be used for a particular purpose, or to state that sth will happen to sb/sth in the future 指定 ... 的用途; 预先安排, 确定 (未来发生的事情)

closure /'kləʊʒə/ **noun** [C, U] the situation when a factory, school, hospital, etc. shuts permanently (永久的) 停业, 关闭; 倒闭

fuss /fʌs/ **noun** [sing.] anger or complaints about sth, especially sth that is not important (为小事) 大吵大闹, 大发牢骚

7. **Dragging feet** rarely helps. Smaller classes do not reliably **boost** results. Excellent teachers are more important; training and rewarding good ones is easiest if they are not thinly spread. Smaller schools also find it more difficult to provide all the courses and **extra-curricular** activities that American education **ought** to offer.



drag your heels/feet to do something slowly because you do not want to do it (因为不情愿而) 拖拖拉拉地做, 磨蹭

boost /bu:st/ **verb** ~ sth to make sth increase, or become better or more successful 使增长; 使兴旺

extra-curricular /ekstrə'kɪkjʊlə/ **adjective**
[usually before noun] not part of the usual course of work or studies at a school or college 课外的; 课程以外的

ought /ɔ:t/ **modal verb** *negative ought not to, short form especially BrE oughtn't to* used to say what is the right thing to do 应该; 应当



Leaders of good school systems **elsewhere** in the world have sometimes been **ruthless** about closing small **institutions**. In 20 years the number of **comprehensive** schools in **Finland**, for example, has shrunk by about 40%.



elsewhere /els'weə/ **adverb** in, at or to another place 在（或去、到）别处

ruthless /'ru:θlɪs/ **adjective** (*disapproving*) (of people or their behaviour 人或其行为) hard and cruel; determined to get what you want and not caring if you hurt other people 残酷无情的；残忍的

institution /ɪnstɪ'tju:ʃ(ə)n/ **noun** [C] a large important organization that has a particular purpose, for example, a university or bank （大学、银行等规模大的）机构

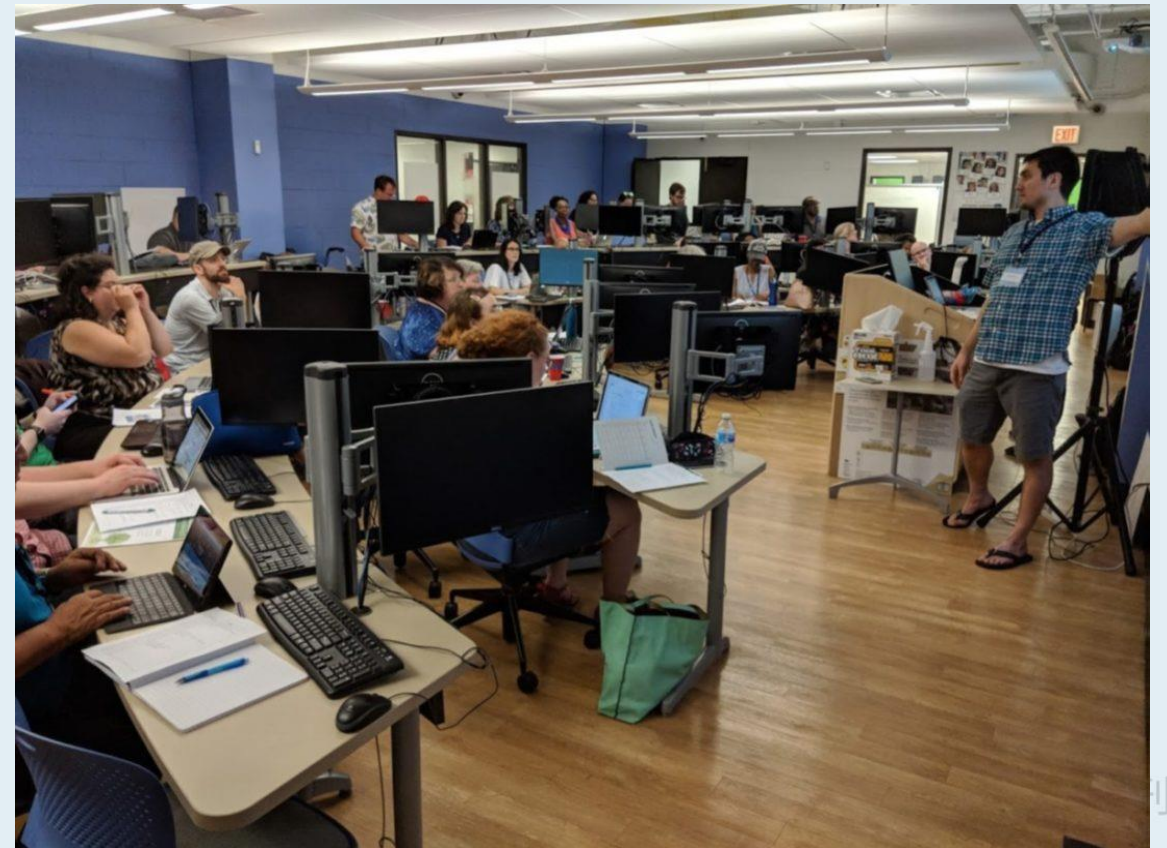
comprehensive /kəmprɪ'hensɪv/ **adjective** (*BrE*) (of education 教育) designed for students of all abilities in the same school 综合性的（接收各种资质的学生）

Finland /'fɪnlənd/ **noun** [*sing.*] a country in northern Europe 芬兰（北欧国家）

8. Planning ahead would save trouble. When New York City closed schools ten years ago it found enough time and money to shut some of them slowly, **grade** by grade. That gave youngsters who did not want to move the option to age out. Authorities in Chicago have given teachers who seem likely to lose their jobs an early chance to **retrain** for roles in high demand.

grade /greɪd/ *noun* a level of ability or rank that sb has in an organization (官衔的) 级别; 职别

retrain *verb* [I, T] to learn, or to teach sb, a new type of work, a new skill, etc. (接受) 重新培养, 再教育, 再培训



But too often talk of shuttering schools starts only when things are desperate, says Paul Hill of the Centre on Reinventing Public Education, a think-tank. That forfeits the chance to close schools “respectfully and transparently”. Instead, doing things in a rush just makes district leaders look “as if they are stealing something”.



shutter /ˈʃʌtə/ *verb* to close by or as if by shutters (用百叶窗) 关闭

desperate /ˈdesp(ə)rət/ *adjective* (of a situation 情况) extremely serious or dangerous 极严重的; 极危险的; 很危急的

Centre on Reinventing Public Education *noun*
重建公立教育中心

think-tank *noun* a group of experts who provide advice and ideas on political, social or economic issues (政治、社会、经济问题的) 智囊团, 智库, 专家小组

forfeit /ˈfɔːfɪt/ *verb* ~ sth to lose sth or have sth taken away from you because you have done sth wrong (因犯错) 丧失, 被没收

in a rush 急急忙忙地, 急速地

9. The worry is that few urban school districts are taking their problems seriously enough, says Marguerite Roza, a school-finance expert at **Georgetown University**. Since the start of the pandemic they have been handed lots of **federal relief** money. Some have used this **merely** to delay decisions about **downsizing** that were already **overdue**.



Georgetown University *noun* 乔治敦大学, 美国华盛顿特区私立研究型大学

federal */ˈfed(ə)r(ə)l/ adjective* (within a federal system, for example the US and Canada) connected with national government rather than the local government of an individual state (在美国、加拿大等联邦制下) 联邦政府的

relief */rɪˈliːf/ noun [U] (especially NAmE)* financial help given by the government to people who need it 救济金

merely */ˈmiəli/ adverb* used meaning 'only' or 'simply' to emphasize a fact or sth that you are saying 仅仅; 只不过

downsize */ˈdaʊnsaɪz/ verb [I, T] ~* (sth) (*business* 商) to reduce the number of people who work in a company, business, etc. in order to reduce costs (公司、企业等) 裁员, 精减

overdue */əʊvəˈdjuː/ adjective* that should have happened or been done before now 早该发生的; 早应完成的

The extra cash that is **sloshing around** has also made unions more likely to demand pay rises and **bonuses**—even in places where drops in enrolment have been sharp. A **cliff edge** approaches next year, when relief funds are set to **expire**. At the moment, it seems the **rows** that follow will be about everything except how best to help children learn.



slosh about/around (*BrE*) (*informal*) (especially of money 尤指钱) to be available or present in large quantities 可大量获得; 大量存在

bonus */ˈbəʊnəs/ noun pl. bonuses* an extra amount of money that is added to a payment, especially to sb's wages as a reward 津贴; 奖金; 红利

cliff edge [*S*] *UK* a point where a situation changes very suddenly and completely in a damaging way, or where something suddenly becomes much worse 悬崖边缘 (比喻情况突然变糟)

expire */ɪkˈspaɪə/ verb [I]* (of a document, an agreement, etc. 文件、协议等) to be no longer valid because the period of time for which it could be used has ended (因到期而) 失效, 终止; 到期

row */rəʊ/ noun (informal) (especially BrE) [C] ~ (about/over sth)* a serious disagreement between people, organizations, etc. about sth 严重分歧; 纠纷

Any way you add it up ... **MATH COUNTS!**

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1. AT A MEETING earlier this year, board members in Seattle's biggest public-school district were treated to a grisly chart. Over five years the number of full-time staff on the district's payroll has drifted upwards, even as the number of pupils on its books has fallen.

在今年早些时候的一次会议上，西雅图最大公立学区的董事会成员看到了一张触目惊心的图表。五年来，尽管学生人数在下降，该地区全职员工的人数一直在上升。

In September teachers won a pay rise following a strike that delayed the new school year. But enrolment could keep shrinking for a decade, reckon district leaders, who warn of budgetary black holes. Threatened bankruptcy may eventually require “consolidating”, which may mean shutting down schools.

9月份，一场罢工推迟了新学期的开始，教师们因此赢得了加薪。但是学区领导估计，入学人数在未来十年可能会持续下降，他们警告说这是一个预算黑洞。濒临破产的学校可能最终需要“整合”，这可能意味着关停许多学校。

2. Pupil numbers are falling in urban schools across much of America. As a result of rock-bottom fertility rates and lower-than-usual levels of immigration, the total number of children in the country declined by 1m in the ten years to 2020. Many big cities have an added problem: families have been leaving.

在美国大部分地区，城市学校的学生人数正在下降。由于到达谷底的生育率和低于正常水平的移民数量，2010年到2020年，美国儿童总数减少了100万。许多大城市还有一个额外的问题：许多家庭离开。

Chicago's main public school district has lost a fifth of its pupils in a decade (though some of these have decamped to charter and private schools). Los Angeles has lost a quarter. District leaders in that city say numbers could fall a further quarter or so by 2030.

芝加哥的主要公立学区在十年内损失了五分之一的学生(尽管其中一些已经转移到特许学校和私立学校)。洛杉矶损失了四分之一学生。该市的区领导表示, 到2030年, 这一数字可能还会下降四分之一左右。

3. The pandemic speeded up these woes. Parents who already had itchy feet found that a plague made their cities less appealing. Urban schools kept remote learning longer than others; that gave some families extra reason to leave.

疫情加速了这些灾难。已经坐立不安的父母发现，一场瘟疫让他们的城市变得不那么吸引人了。城市学校比其他学校保持了更长的远程学习时间；这给了一些家庭额外的离开理由。

Enrolment in New York City's public schools has fallen by 10% in the three years since the disaster started; in a few of its neighbourhoods the decline is almost a fifth. Families with children under five were especially likely to leave big cities during the pandemic, suggest data from the Census Bureau. So the full impact may not yet have registered.

自疫情灾难开始以来的三年里，纽约市公立学校的入学人数下降了10%；在纽约的几个街区，人数下降了近五分之一。美国人口普查局的数据显示，在疫情期间，那些有五岁以下孩子的家庭尤其可能会离开大城市。因此，整体影响可能还没有完全显现出来。

Class divides

4. School districts are generally funded on a per-pupil basis. Even small declines in enrolment may therefore be hard. Some of the children who left city schools during the pandemic may end up returning to class: a proportion are home-schooling, and may tire of that. But the other trends that have been thinning downtown classrooms will probably not reverse soon, even if immigration starts nudging the number of children in America back up.

阶级分化

学区的资金一般都是按学生人数来计算的。因此，即使是入学率的小幅下降资助也可能是困难的。一些在疫情时期离开城市学校的孩子最终可能会回到课堂：一部分人在家接受教育，并且可能厌倦了这种方式。但即使移民开始推动美国儿童数量回升，导致市中心学生人数减少的其他趋势可能也不会很快逆转。

In some cities the need to close schools is growing. About 1% of traditional public schools shut up shop each year, says Douglas Harris of Tulane University (the closure rate is 5% for charter schools and 3% for private ones). The number will probably rise.

在一些城市，关停学校的需求正在增长。杜兰大学的道格拉斯·哈里斯说，每年大约有1%的传统公立学校关闭(特许学校的关闭率为5%，私立学校为3%)。这个数字可能会上升。

5. Recent battles suggest that this is going to hurt. Protests, including a hunger strike, broke out last year after school-board members in Oakland, California, voted to close or merge several schools. Angry locals installed a new board; in January it said it was cancelling many of the cuts.

最近的较量表明，关闭学校将是痛苦的。去年，加州奥克兰学校董事会的成员投票决定关闭或合并几所学校后，爆发了包括绝食抗议在内的抗议活动。愤怒的当地人成立了一个新的董事会；今年1月，新董事会表示将取消许多学校削减措施。

In Chicago about one-third of schools are operating in buildings at only half-capacity, or less, according to local government data analysed by “Wirepoints”, a blog. The smallest has around 30 youngsters and a little over 20 staff.

博客“Wirepoints”分析当地政府数据后表明，在芝加哥，大约三分之一的学校维持着平时一半或者更少的学生容量。最小的学校大约只有30名学生和20多名员工。

6. The patchwork way in which American schooling is governed—by board members in some 14,000 districts—may make it more difficult than in other countries for schools in large metro areas to shrink effectively. America's teaching unions are unusually tetchy: their hostility towards testing has sometimes prompted boards to declare, gallingly, that a school's results will play no role in deciding which ones will close or merge.

美国学校拼凑起来的管理方式——由大约14000个地区董事会成员管理——可能会比其他国家更难有效削减大都市地区的学校。美国的教师工会异乎寻常地暴躁：他们对改革的敌意有时促使董事会宣布：在决定哪些学校将被关闭或合并时，学校的成绩不会起到任何作用。

Tensions about race make things more complicated. Families in inner cities sometimes suspect that their schools have been earmarked for closure only because parents in richer, whiter areas have more power to make a fuss.

紧张的种族问题使事情变得更加复杂。内陆城市的家庭有时会怀疑，他们的学校被指定关闭，只是因为来自更富有、白人更多的地区家长有更大的权力来大吵大闹。

7. Dragging feet rarely helps. Smaller classes do not reliably boost results. Excellent teachers are more important; training and rewarding good ones is easiest if they are not thinly spread. Smaller schools also find it more difficult to provide all the courses and extra-curricular activities that American education ought to offer.

拖拉很难有帮助。较小的班级并不能可靠地提高成绩。优秀的老师更重要；如果他们集中在一起，培训和奖励优秀员工是最容易的。规模较小的学校也更难提供美国教育应有的课程和课外活动。

Leaders of good school systems elsewhere in the world have sometimes been ruthless about closing small institutions. In 20 years the number of comprehensive schools in Finland, for example, has shrunk by about 40%.

在世界其他地方，好的学校系统领导者有时会无情地关闭小机构。例如，在20年里，芬兰综合性学校的数量减少了40%。

8. Planning ahead would save trouble. When New York City closed schools ten years ago it found enough time and money to shut some of them slowly, grade by grade. That gave youngsters who did not want to move the option to age out. Authorities in Chicago have given teachers who seem likely to lose their jobs an early chance to retrain for roles in high demand.

提前计划会省去麻烦。十年前，当纽约市关闭学校时，它已经找到了足够的时间和资金，逐级慢慢关闭一些学校。这给了那些想留下的年轻人离开的机会。芝加哥当局给那些看起来可能会失业的教师一个提前接受再培训的机会，以适应较大的教师需求。

But too often talk of shuttering schools starts only when things are desperate, says Paul Hill of the Centre on Reinventing Public Education, a think-tank. That forfeits the chance to close schools “respectfully and transparently”. Instead, doing things in a rush just makes district leaders look “as if they are stealing something”.

但是智囊团重建公立教育中心的保罗·希尔说，关停学校的讨论往往是在情况危急时才开始的。这就失去了“尊重和透明地”关闭学校的机会。相反，匆忙做事只会让区领导看起来“好像在偷东西”。

9. The worry is that few urban school districts are taking their problems seriously enough, says Marguerite Roza, a school-finance expert at Georgetown University. Since the start of the pandemic they have been handed lots of federal relief money. Some have used this merely to delay decisions about downsizing that were already overdue.

乔治敦大学的学校财务专家 Marguerite Roza 说，令人担忧的是，很少有城市学区足够重视他们的问题。自疫情开始以来，他们已经获得了大量的联邦救济金。一些人只是利用救济金来推迟早就应该做出的裁员决定。

The extra cash that is sloshing around has also made unions more likely to demand pay rises and bonuses—even in places where drops in enrolment have been sharp. A cliff edge approaches next year, when relief funds are set to expire. At the moment, it seems the rows that follow will be about everything except how best to help children learn.

额外的流动资金也使得工会更有可能要求加薪和发放奖金——即使是在学生入学人数急剧下降的地方。明年将接近悬崖边缘，届时联邦救助基金到期。目前，接下来的分歧似乎关乎所有，除了如何最好地帮助孩子学习。