

COMMUNICATIONS

PRESS RELEASES

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Council of the Great City Schools

1331 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W., Suite 1100N, Washington, D.C. 20004

cgcs.org

FOR RELEASE
March 13, 2020

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Nation's Big-City Public Schools Working Aggressively To Contain the Coronavirus

Big-City School Districts are Taking Numerous Measures to Help Urban Students and Staff

WASHINGTON, March 13 – The nation's urban public-school systems are working hard to protect the safety and well-being of their students and staff as they deal with the ripple effects of COVID-19 or coronavirus. Urban school districts around the nation are taking proactive measures to contain the spread of this virus, while at the same time they are working to meet the educational, nutritional and emotional needs of their students. Examples include the following:

Seattle Public Schools is closing down schools for six weeks as part of a statewide effort in Washington. The school district has kept students and parents continuously informed by posting information on its website and social media channels, creating frequently asked questions, sending letters to staff and families and featuring a daily video of Seattle Schools Superintendent Denise Juneau addressing community concerns as they arise.

“There may have been times we overcommunicated but it was so important that we get our message out there and assure the community that we are doing everything possible to deal with this situation,” said Juneau in a conference call the Council held today with school leaders from its 76 member school districts.

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District is also closing for three weeks. As a result, the district is providing two meals a day at 22 sites across the city for children under the age of 18, whether they attend district schools or not. In addition to picking up grab-and-go meals at these sites, students can pick up instructional materials to help them continue their learning. Instructional packets in all grades are being provided in hard copy since all students do not have internet access at home.

Los Angeles Unified School District, the nation's second largest, has also shut down their schools and partnered with two local PBS organizations to provide students with educational content.

Under the partnership, 700,000-students will receive educational resources at home provided by PBS SoCal and KCET, both on-air and online, regardless of their broadband access. The stations will broadcast content specifically targeted to students Pre-K through the 12th grade. District officials believe the partnership can be a model for other urban school districts and public media organizations throughout the nation as PBS SoCal and KCET work together to deliver a satellite feed that other public media stations can use.

Approximately, 24 big-city school districts have closed schools to contain the coronavirus, while those school systems that have not closed have worked for weeks to prepare contingency plans in the event they have to.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the nation's fourth largest school system, sent out a survey to parents regarding their child's technology needs and used results from that survey to create a plan to provide digital learning for all of its 355,000 students. In the event of school closures, the district will set up distribution centers throughout the city to hand out free computer devices to students so they continue to receive educational instruction online and their learning is not disrupted. The district has also worked with internet providers such as Comcast to provide students with secure and free Wi-Fi. In addition to providing online instruction, the Miami school system has also set up a 24/7 hotline and website for students as well as staff to receive mental health services.

Other big-city school districts have remained open but are monitoring the coronavirus on an hour by hour basis.

“Urban school districts are on the frontlines of efforts to contain the coronavirus in their large communities and are doing everything they can to protect the health and well-being of their students and staff,” said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. “These measures include everything from distributing meals, providing online instruction, writing daily lessons, protecting the needs of students with disabilities and ensuring school buildings are cleaned and disinfected.”

Resources:

CDC's Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) interim guidance for school settings is posted at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

Click [here](#) for a list of closures in school districts represented by the Council and links to district efforts to contain the coronavirus

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Council of the Great City Schools

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FOR RELEASE
March 16, 2020

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Majority of the Nation's Largest Urban School Districts Close Schools Due to Coronavirus Outbreak

Big-City School Districts Continue with Meals and Lessons

WASHINGTON, March 16 – In an effort to restrict the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and safeguard the well-being of their students and staff, many of the nation's big-city school districts have closed their schools.

On Sunday, New York City public schools announced it was closing and will not open until at least April 20. The nation's largest school system is following in the footsteps of other large urban school systems in closing their doors, including the Los Angeles Unified School District, Chicago Public Schools, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the School District of Philadelphia, Houston Independent School District, Des Moines Public Schools, Seattle Public Schools, and Minneapolis Public Schools.

“Urban school districts have worked for weeks to make contingency plans in case they had to close schools due to the coronavirus pandemic and now that the situation is a reality they are stepping up to the plate and taking the necessary steps to educate and feed their students,” said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. “It is a momentous undertaking that urban school leaders are pursuing, but they are not shying away from their responsibility to take care of the nation's 7.5 million urban students.”

To help urban school districts deal with this unprecedented situation, the Council is holding weekly video conference call with leaders from its 76-member school districts where they can exchange information and share best practices with one another.

The Council has compiled a [list of school district closures](#) for all 76 major urban public school districts represented by the national organization. The list is also available on the Council's website at: www.cgcs.org and will be continuously updated.

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Council of the Great City Schools

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FOR RELEASE
March 25, 2020

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Urban School Districts Share Information and Best Practices For Dealing with the Coronavirus

Superintendents and Senior-Level Administrators Help Each Other

WASHINGTON, March 25 – After closing schools to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), leaders in the nation’s urban school districts are turning to one another to share relevant information and best practices as they work to feed thousands of schoolchildren and provide them with instruction and learning, all in a relatively short amount of time.

The Council of the Great City Schools has organized weekly video conference calls for superintendents from its 76-member school districts to discuss common problems and share strategies they are pursuing at the local level in dealing with the coronavirus pandemic.

These superintendent conference calls have proven to be so beneficial for participants that the Council was then asked to conduct conference calls between different groups of senior-level administrators in big-city school districts. As a result, the Council has held conference calls with English language learning (ELL) directors, research directors, legislative directors, chief academic officers, special education directors and chief operating officers.

The calls enable administrators to ask questions and get answers from their peers, who are often dealing with similar challenges caused by the coronavirus. For example, a recent conference call with ELL directors discussed the uncertainty around what English language learner supports look like in an online or remote learning environment. Also discussed was the challenge districts face providing information about technology and online courses in different languages as well as the lack of internet access that may exist in some English learner households.

“These conference calls provide a way for senior-level administrators to hear directly from people who are doing the same work in other urban school systems similar to their own,” said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. “These educators are working hard to curb the impact of school closures on their students and to find solutions that will best serve our urban schoolchildren across the nation during the coronavirus pandemic.”

The Council has also created a section on its website, www.cgcs.org/corona, which includes district instructional resources, materials, action plans, school district closures and other information on what Council member districts are doing in response to COVID-19.

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FOR RELEASE

April 28, 2020

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Urban Schools Coalition Calls for Congress to Provide More Funding For Public School Systems in Next Coronavirus Relief Bill

WASHINGTON, April 28 – The Council of the Great City Schools, the nation’s primary coalition of large urban public-school districts, urges Congress to approve new funding for local school systems in the next coronavirus supplemental appropriations bill.

In a **letter to Capitol Hill**, the organization calls on an additional federal allocation of \$175 billion in Educational Stabilization Funds to be distributed to the local level through the Title I formula. The group also urges Congress to provide an additional \$13 billion for the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), \$12 billion in additional Title I program funding, \$2.0 billion for E-Rate, and emergency infrastructure funds that include public schools.

The letter, signed individually by 61 big-city superintendents, asks federal lawmakers for financial support to help offset the unexpected costs districts are incurring in providing meal services to students and transforming from school-based to home-based learning in the wake of school closures. And as aggressive as schools have been in providing instruction at a distance, districts continue to need resources to provide electronic learning devices and internet connections to every child.

Because of declines in state and local revenues, significant revenue shortfalls are looming for local school systems, as well, with several big-city school districts projecting 15 to 25 percent cuts in overall revenues going into next school year. According to the Council, an estimated 20 percent loss in combined state and local revenues would likely result in some 275,000 teachers being laid off in big-city public school systems alone.

“With additional federal funds, America’s public schools will be able to add summer school, expand the school day after reopening in the fall, retain and stabilize our teaching force, address the needs of our most vulnerable students, narrow the digital divide, and have a fighting chance at salvaging the futures of millions of young people,” said the letter.

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ISTE Launches Initiative to Bring Clarity to EdTech Product Information

WASHINGTON — May 5, 2020 — The [International Society for Technology in Education \(ISTE\)](#) today announced the launch of the Universal Learning Technology ID. This new initiative aims to make it easier for schools and parents alike to find the best edtech tools for their schools and families. By creating a unique code for each product, the certifications, badges, research and reviews from a variety of organizations can become easier to discover and compare.

“With the unprecedented number of edtech tools being used by educators due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we want to make it easier to share what’s working,” said Richard Culatta, CEO of ISTE. “We believe that having a common and unique identifier for each product will make it easier to share ratings and reviews about the products and make it easier for companies to get feedback on their products.”

Unique product codes will facilitate data sharing across product databases. The codes may be used by any commercial or nonprofit organization for the purposes of sharing information about the effectiveness of edtech products. Companies will also be able to provide this unique identifier to streamline district procurement processes. Los Angeles Unified School District’s Sophia Mendoza echoed the challenge of school districts across the country: “The need for greater clarity is paramount, especially in COVID-19 circumstances when educators and families seek guidance in how to identify high-quality digital resources.”

“As thousands of educators turn to resource directories to find edtech products, we have a responsibility to ensure that the information is clear and standardized across the industry,” said Karen Cator, CEO and president of Digital Promise. “Educators need to be confident in the information they are receiving about edtech products. By assigning a unique identifier code to each product, information can be more easily aggregated. We look forward to working with companies and organizations to make this a global, recognizable system in our industry.”

“There are thousands of edtech tools being used in school districts today. A standardized system for identifying products will allow for improved procurement practices,” said Mike Casserly, executive director of the [Council of Great City Schools](#). “This is an important initiative that will bring greater clarity for teachers, principals, and district leaders.”

ISTE will be creating an advisory board of companies and education organizations to provide input and guidance on the implementation of the product identifier.

The following education organizations are supportive of the creation and use of the Common Learning Tech Identifier:

- CCSSO
- CoSN
- Council of Great City Schools
- Digital Promise
- DonorsChoose
- EdSurge
- Educate, UK
- Future of Privacy Forum
- Jefferson Education Exchange
- Learning Tapestry
- LearnPlatform
- Project Unicorn
- SETDA

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STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERS



June 24, 2020

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National Education Groups Lay Out Blueprint for Instructional Priorities and Strategies for Upcoming School Year

Guidance Emphasizes Importance of Addressing Unfinished Learning in the Context of Grade-level Work

Student Achievement Partners and the Council of the Great City Schools today released the following companion documents laying out a blueprint for schools across the country to get the nation's schoolchildren back on track academically after a disrupted school year.

- *2020–21 Priority Instructional Content in English Language Arts/literacy and Mathematics* (www.achievethecore.org/2020-21_PriorityInstructionalContent)
- *Addressing Unfinished Learning After COVID-19 School Closures* (<https://tinyurl.com/ya4g73f9>)

The complementary resources identify grade-level instructional priorities in math and literacy for the 2020-21 school year and describe how schools can recognize and address unfinished learning among their students while ensuring equitable access to grade-level standards and mental health supports.

The two national organizations stress that, while students will have incomplete learning from this school year, resorting to extensive testing, reteaching, and remediation at the expense of grade-level work will further jeopardize the academic success of students, particularly those with specialized learning needs.

The documents, which were developed in tandem with teams of national experts in math and literacy, articulate the rationale for sustaining a focus on grade-level work; outline a set of streamlined, high-leverage standards and topics; and address ways to support the social and emotional development of students. The blueprints also describe specifically how unfinished learning can manifest itself and what teachers can do in math and literacy to address gaps without losing instructional momentum.

The materials were developed by the two partner organizations to help school districts across the county address the incomplete education that many students received over the course of the last school year and keep students on track with their studies in the years to come.

Student Achievement Partners is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving achievement for all K-12 students nationally.

The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of 76 of the nation's largest city public school districts.

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FOR RELEASE
July 1, 2020

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Boston School Committee Member to Lead Council of the Great City Schools

WASHINGTON, July 1 – Michael O’Neill, a member of the Boston School Committee for Boston Public Schools, takes the reins as chair of the Council of the Great City Schools’ Board of Directors for a one-year term, effective July 1.

He advances from chair-elect to lead the 152-member Board of Directors, the coalition’s main policymaking body, comprised of the superintendent and a school board member from each of the coalition’s 76-member big-city school districts. O’Neill succeeds Chief Executive Officer Eric Gordon of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, who will assume the position of immediate past chair.

Barbara Jenkins, superintendent of the Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Fla., becomes chair-elect, stepping up from the Council’s secretary-treasurer post.

Rounding out the Council’s 2019-20 leadership team will be Ashley Paz, school board member of Texas’ Fort Worth Independent School District. She was elected to the secretary-treasurer post that was held by Jenkins after serving on the policy body’s Executive Committee.

“As the nation’s urban public schools rise to meet the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council’s board is in capable hands with O’Neill and his leadership team. Their energy, knowledge and experience will be crucial as big-city school districts face the herculean task of reopening schools and providing for the safety and well-being of the 8.2 million schoolchildren they serve,” says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly, who is stepping aside next year after serving at the Council for 43 years.

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FOR RELEASE
July 27, 2020

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Council Files Amicus Brief Against Department of Education Diverting Money from Public to Private Schools During COVID-19 Pandemic

*Urban Public Schools Will Lose Millions of Dollars Congress Allocated
To Help At-Risk Students*

WASHINGTON, July 27 --The Council of the Great City Schools, the nation's primary coalition of large urban public-school districts, filed an [amicus curiae brief](#) with the United States District Court for the Northern District of California supporting the states and Council members filing suit against the U.S. Department of Education's plan to divert hundreds of millions of dollars Congress intended to support public schools grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic to private schools.

In March 2020, Congress appropriated approximately \$13 billion to elementary and secondary schools through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, (CARES Act) to help school districts address needs arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic. School districts were also required under the Act to allocate a portion of CARES Act funds they received to provide "equitable services" to private schools, just like they do under the federal Title I program. The amount was determined based on the number of low-income students residing in the district and attending private schools.

However, the interim final rule recently adopted by the Department would direct school districts to distribute funds *not* based on the number of low-income private school students residing in their districts, but based on the total enrollment of students attending private schools in the district regardless of their financial need.

The overall effect of the Department's approach would divert hundreds of millions of dollars of critically needed funds away from public school districts serving low-income communities to wealthier private schools at precisely the moment when schools are facing substantial budget cuts.

Devastating Impact on Big-City Schools

The effort by the Department of Education to rewrite the CARES Act would have a devastating impact on the nation's big-city public schools as they prepare for the reopening of schools in the fall and work to keep students and staff safe. The diversion of funds to private schools, regardless of need, would dramatically reduce the funds available to public school districts that are members of the Council.

Sixteen Council member districts estimate that the amount of funds they would lose to private schools would range from about \$628,000 to \$6,485,000. The four Council member districts that are parties to the litigation – New York City Department of Education, Chicago Public Schools, San Francisco Unified School District, and Cleveland Metropolitan School District – said that they would lose about \$53,000,000, \$10,170,000, \$1,740,000, and \$822,952, respectively. Based on the poverty levels found in urban public schools, the Council estimates that its member districts could lose a total of about \$292,000,000 of these much-needed, emergency resources.

Because \$540,000 has been diverted to private school funding, Broward County Public Schools in Florida was not able meet the technology needs of schools as they transitioned to a virtual environment. The nation's sixth-largest school district also had to reduce funds for professional development and instructional materials.

If Baltimore City Public Schools must provide the additional \$2,419,639 to private schools, then it will have to reduce the number of students that can receive Chromebooks to support distance learning by 6,050. The district would also have to reduce the number of students that can be provided a semester of tutoring by 3,252.

Charleston County School District in South Carolina was not able to provide the childcare services that the district's teachers needed to support online instruction. The diversion of money to private schools would result in the school district not being able to purchase sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) to support reopening and struggle to provide Wi-Fi devices for students living in areas with limited internet capability.

The \$1.8 million the District of Columbia Public Schools will lose to private schools could purchase 2,100 additional devices for low-income students to support their virtual learning, while Oregon's Portland Public Schools would need to cut more than \$628,000 from needed Chromebooks, safety supplies and materials.

“Public school districts face enormous challenges dealing with the global COVID-19 pandemic and funds made available through the CARES Act were intended to help schools offset the unexpected costs they were incurring to keep students and staff safe,” said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. “Many of the schools in Council member districts serve disadvantaged communities and must address the digital divide to equitably provide on-line educational opportunities. The Department of Education's unlawful rewrite of the CARES Act severely undermines this critical work.”

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STATEMENTS



Statement by Michael Casserly, Executive Director, Council of the Great City Schools
On the
Killing of George Floyd

This time it was George Floyd. Last time it was Ahmaud Aubery. Before that, Breonna Taylor and so many others. Different names. Different cities. But in every case, the underlying racism and ugliness are the same and will remain the same without dramatic changes to our institutions that address the conditions that allowed this killing to happen.

This time it was the police who were caught in the crosshairs of public attention. But that sickening cell phone footage only captured a small piece of a larger picture, a vignette in the ongoing story of injustice and racism that is our nation's history and our current reality. Mortality statistics under COVID-19 remind us that the same patterns of injustice and inequity extend to health care. And housing. And to us in education.

As we rise to meet the challenges of the current health crisis—to teach children remotely, feed our families, provide internet access, address the mental health of our youth, and fight budget cuts—let us, the leaders of our nation's urban public schools, amplify our efforts to meet this challenge, too—this enduring, defining challenge of our time. Let us ensure that our schools are safe havens where all children are respected and nurtured, where all children can achieve and grow, and where all children are guaranteed equity and justice.

The nation's urban public schools offer our full-throated condemnation of this killing and the racism behind it. And we vow to redouble our efforts to ensure racial justice is at the center of everything we do.

ARTICLES

**ARTICLES- CORONAVIRUS CHALLENGES AND
RESPONSE**

Cincinnati Enquirer

Coronavirus: How will school closures affect learning, families in Ohio and Kentucky?

[Max Londberg and Julia Fair](#), Cincinnati Enquirer Published 4:28 p.m. ET March 12, 2020 | Updated 6:43 a.m. ET March 13, 2020

The threat from the new coronavirus will soon become real for tens of thousands of local students and their families. School will be out, at least temporarily.

Boone County Schools will shift to remote learning on Monday in an attempt to tamp down the pandemic. The district, with more than 20,000 students, was the first in the Cincinnati region to announce it would suspend in-person classes.

The district will be followed by all Ohio schools, affecting more than 1.7 million public school students and thousands more private students, after Gov. Mike DeWine implemented a three-week spring break beginning Tuesday.

"This is not an action I took lightly, but it is the right thing to do," DeWine said

And Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear on Thursday afternoon called for all Kentucky public schools to close for two weeks starting Monday, affecting around 650,000 students.

Ohio and Kentucky aren't the only states to take this step. At least one other, Maryland, announced Thursday it would close all its schools across the state.

School leaders on both sides of the Ohio River have been working feverishly to plan for this possibility.

Each school in the region will likely have a different strategy. But everyone agreed the contingency education plans are unprecedented. They could include learning tools such as paperwork packets sent home with students or digital devices and software to connect students with lessons, practice assignments and assessments.

Kelly Middleton, the superintendent of Newport Independent in Northern Kentucky, said, "We're all a little nervous. It's a pandemic. ... We may be close to worst case."

This is a transmission electron microscopic image of an isolate from the first U.S. case of COVID-19. The spherical extracellular viral particles contain cross-sections through the viral genome, seen as black dots. (Photo: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Beechwood Independent Schools Superintendent Mike Stacy expressed there were "no elders" for him to seek guidance from.

As of Thursday afternoon, there was not a confirmed case of coronavirus in Northern Kentucky or Southwest Ohio, but school officials from across the region are at work on a plan to educate in this era of coronavirus.

Mason and Northwest school districts announced they would close before the rest of the state, beginning Friday and Monday, respectively.

The governors of Kentucky and Ohio had earlier recommended schools prepare to shutter their doors.

Health experts and scholarly research speak to the effectiveness of school closures, coupled with limiting large public gatherings, in [slowing the spread](#) of a virus in an outbreak. Doing so decreases the stress on medical systems.

But the looming school closures and shift to remote learning will fundamentally alter K-12 education for the foreseeable future.

School officials are working to ease the significant barriers that distance learning will create to student learning and access to school meals, according to interviews with local superintendents and other school officials.

A bright spot? School districts won't be under as much pressure to secure cleaning supplies, which was becoming a burden. Cincinnati Public Schools recently saw a delay in a shipment of products because "vendors have been mandated by their suppliers that hospitals and nursing homes take priority over other customers," according to an email from the superintendent.

Feeding kids

Every student in Newport, Kentucky is eligible to receive free meals every day.

That will be even a higher priority than education in a closure, said superintendent Middleton, citing [Abraham Maslow's famed hierarchy of needs](#). The hierarchy places things like access to food and shelter as most important in a list of psychological priorities of human needs.

To ensure Newport students have food, the district devised a plan to offer to-go bags for breakfast and lunch that will be available for pickup at school buildings.

"The (Board of Education) will pay for it, even if it wasn't paid for by the federal program," Middleton said, adding supplying food is "a must."

About 1,400 Newport Independent Schools students are signed up to receive free meals.

A bill introduced in the The U.S. House of Representatives introduced a [bill](#) introduced in the U.S. n Wednesday that includes expanding food stamp eligibility for families experiencing school closures, according to an email to local school officials from Michael Casserly, the executive director of the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), a coalition of the nation's largest urban public school systems

"The areas of the bill most relevant to school districts are the food program provisions and the new federal sick leave provisions," Casserly wrote.

Ryan Messer, a Cincinnati Public Schools board member, said the district's superintendent ensured board members that plans are in place to feed children if schools must close.

Messer added that the district is also tracking absences among staff and students to detect any signals of a possible coronavirus outbreak. The new virus causes a disease called COVID-19. T

About 20,000 Boone County students are signed up to receive free lunches. Their school cafeterias will still be open to those students for breakfast and lunch, said Boone County Board Vice-Chairperson Matt McIntire.

Several principals in the district have offered to deliver meals to families.

Learning remotely with and without internet

Not everyone in the region has internet access, but everyone needs a way to learn.

CPS Superintendent Laura Mitchell delivered a presentation Wednesday to the Board of Education. She relayed how the district plans to handle remote learning.

Schools will make paper copies of learning packets to send home with students, according to Mitchell's presentation. Students will also receive tips for accessing Schoology, an online learning program.

"The packets will contain work for students in the core content areas ... with ways for students to test themselves and offering help sections by grade level," Mitchell wrote this week in a letter to staff members.

Renee Nelson, a CPS parent and a second grade teacher at Pleasant Hill Academy in College Hill, said by text that "unfortunately our students don't all have access to internet at home or devices, so we are only sending a work packet home."

Nelson believes students can learn better online than from a packet. She's been instructed to prepare work that will last a week for students.

CPS students won't be the only ones impacted by a lack of home internet access.

An estimated 10% of students at Middletown City Schools in Butler County don't have internet access, the highest percentage in Greater Cincinnati, according to Census estimates.

In Northern Kentucky, Dayton Independent and Newport Independent have among the highest percentages in the region, with 13% of students without home internet. It's 18% in Silver Grove.

The households of nearly one in five Newport students don't have a computer at home.

Middleton, the Newport superintendent, said he sympathizes with students, particularly seniors who may miss prom, chunks of sporting seasons and other activities.

"You hate it for your kids looking forward to their senior year, some things they're not going to be able to do," he said.

Mindy Nagel, whose two daughters attend CPS schools, said a possible closure won't significantly affect her family, as she and her husband can work from home and the family has WiFi and laptops.

But she worries remote learning could disproportionately affect students without such access and widen inequity in education.

"And what about students whose parents can't take off work to be home with them?" Nagel said.

'There have been a lot of tears': Coronavirus threatens to shut schools until the fall

Kansas was the first state to announce an early end to the school year, throwing into turmoil everything from college admissions to kindergarten graduation.

March 19, 2020, 1:16 PM EDT

By Erin Einhorn

Skyler Buie, 17, wasn't all that interested in going to the prom at his high school in Gardner, Kansas. But graduation?

"It's a special thing that only really happens once," the senior at Gardner Edgerton High School said, "and now we don't get to experience it."

Sarah McGinnity, a mom in Overland Park, Kansas, won't get to see her son dress up like Babe Ruth for his third-grade wax museum project, in which parents watch students deliver speeches dressed as historical figures. She won't see her younger son don a little cap and gown for the kindergarten graduation.

"I get emotional thinking about what they'll miss out on," McGinnity said.

And first grade teacher Kim Taylor won't get to take her class at Victoria Elementary School in Victoria, Kansas, on their annual field trip to the zoo that's part of her year-end ocean unit. She won't get to hug them goodbye on the last day of school.

"I just broke down crying," she said. "I think about my little first graders and just the impact that this is going to have on them."

When Gov. Laura Kelly this week made Kansas the first state to order all public and private schools closed through the end of the school year to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, she created a host of challenges.

Her move — which many suspect will soon be followed by other governors across the country — has thrown into turmoil everything from college admissions to kindergarten readiness.

It's triggered deep sadness among students, parents and teachers, who will miss important rituals and celebrations, as well as serious concerns for the children whose lives and learning have been disrupted.

"Kids can be very resilient, but some kids internalize stuff," Taylor said Wednesday. "I had one parent last night message me and say her child threw himself down on the floor and had this major tantrum. I said 'That's OK. They're scared. Their lives have been turned upside down.'"

An Unprecedented Disruption

Mandatory school closures have already come to 39 states and affected at least 42.1 million students, according to [Education Week](#).

But most of those closures so far have been limited to a couple of weeks, maybe an extended spring break.

The prospect that the ongoing threat from the virus could force schools to close through the end of the school year — something a number of governors have [said is increasingly likely](#) — represents an unprecedented upheaval that will require an unprecedented response, said Michael Casserly, executive director of the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), a coalition of superintendents and school board members from the nation's largest urban public school systems.

"We've had disasters before," he said. "We've had earthquakes and hurricanes and floods and 9/11. But those were individual cities and communities and other folks could contribute personnel and goods and resources."

The coronavirus threatens to close nearly every school in the country, meaning every state and every district could have to rethink what education looks like.

"Governors and the higher education community are going to need to be prepared to waive all kinds of restrictions that we're otherwise legally bound to," Casserly said.

High schools and states could rewrite diploma requirements to allow students to graduate with fewer credits. Colleges might need to adjust admissions standards to welcome students who were not able to complete required courses or exams. Principals will have to alter how they do everything from hiring teachers to enrolling students for next year. And teachers at every grade level will need to quickly find a way to convey the rest of the material they had planned for the school year, and decide how to determine whether students have learned enough to pass to the next grade.

"Maybe it's a series of activities we ask them to complete, or a paper we ask them to write, or maybe a journal of your experience of what you're doing at home," said G.A. Buie, executive director of the United School Administrators of Kansas and the Kansas School Superintendents' Association, a membership organization of school leaders. "It will be different for every community and maybe for every student."

Before Kelly made her announcement Tuesday night, educators in Kansas had been worried that school closures would be extended one week at a time, leaving teachers and students on edge, Buie said.

The closure decision gives Kansas educators some clarity, he said. “It was, ‘Let’s make a decision and start planning and let’s get back to educating kids in some form or fashion.’”

Now, he’s hopeful that the right conversations are happening and that the process could ultimately lead to better schools in Kansas.

“We have to create a new normal in Kansas,” said Buie, whose son, Skyler, will miss his high school graduation. “We’re forced to move forward in new and innovative and creative ways.”

As other states consider following Kansas’ lead, some education leaders are urging caution.

“I’m not sure that, psychologically or otherwise, it’s a wise move for anybody to cancel the rest of the school year right now,” Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, said. “I think we need to give people time to plan and time to adjust before rushing to those longer-term decisions.”

If states do decide to end the school year early, her union is among education groups that have called on the U.S. Department of Education to cancel the annual state standardized tests in math, English and science that some districts and states use to evaluate teachers, make student promotion decisions and decide whether to shut down low-performing schools.

Canceling tests would allow teachers to come up with ways to measure how students are learning at home.

“Letting us rely on teacher and principal ingenuity, school by school, would actually be a pretty good thing right now,” Weingarten said.

Unfinished Learning

As temporary school closures have spread, the big-city leaders in the Council of the Great City Schools have gathered for regular conference calls to share ideas, Casserly said.

At first, school leaders focused on setting up ways to distribute school lunches to students from low-income families who depend on those meals, and on developing ways to get instructional materials to students in their homes.

Now, as the possibility of longer school closings becomes more likely, they’re thinking about ways to minimize the impact on children, especially those who were already behind their peers, children with special needs who need extra support, and children whose parents were already struggling.

The challenge is made [more difficult](#) by the fact that not every child has a computer or internet access at home. Many students don't have a parent or caregiver with the time or resources to help them keep up with online schoolwork. And many teachers don't have the training to effectively teach children who aren't in the classroom.

“The truth of the matter is there's going to be unfinished learning here,” Casserly said. “Even with all the effort that we make to provide lessons and home instruction or online instruction, there's no substitute for being in school. There's no substitute for being in front of a teacher and being with your peers.”

Casserly hopes that if states decide to keep schools closed until the fall, they'll have a plan to help kids catch up next year, whether that means extending the school year, extending the school day or flooding classrooms with extra tutors and instructors.

Taylor, the first-grade teacher in Victoria, said she hopes schools also find a way to celebrate year-end milestones, even if that means holding the big end-of-the-school-year barbeque in August or September.

“You need that closure,” Taylor said, particularly for students who are moving from one school to another or graduating.

“You get so close to these kids and it's so rewarding to see how they flourish over the year, how their little personalities develop and how compassionate they are toward one another,” she said.

“This is so tough,” she added. “There have been a lot of tears.”

NBC—San Diego

San Diego Unified Asks State for More Money to Transition to Online Learning

San Diego Unified and Los Angeles Unified sent a letter to state officials. They say money is needed to prepare for online learning for what could be the rest of the school year.

By [Rory Devine](#) • Published March 23, 2020 • Updated on March 23, 2020 at 9:13 pm

The two largest school districts in California are asking the state for emergency support in the wake of school closures that are lasting longer than hoped.

The San Diego Unified School District and the Los Angeles Unified School District are asking the state for an additional \$500 for every child in the state to help pay for the transition to full online learning.

[In a letter to state officials](#), SDUSD Superintendent Cindy Marten and LAUSD Superintendent Austin Beutner also said they would like to form a task force.

"The combination of state policy makers and practitioners in the field working side by side (remotely of course) may be a sensible approach in these usual times," according to the letter.

SDUSD Trustee Richard Barrera said, "To the state, we're saying here's the support we need to get through the rest of school year online."

Barrera said the state is anticipating a dramatic drop in state revenues which could make the financial situation even more difficult for school districts that depend on state funding.

To that point, Barrera said school districts need the federal government to take the lead in preventing layoffs of those who educate children.

The [Council of the Great City Schools](#), which according to its website, "brings together 76 of the nation's largest urban school districts," sent a [letter to the U.S. Congress](#), asking for federal dollars.

The Council urged lawmakers to include public schools in the stimulus package being considered.

“To avoid mass layoffs of people who educate our kids, we need to be included in the federal stimulus package,” said Barrera, “and we need to be included in a major way.”

Texas Public Radio

Unprecedented Push To Educate Remotely Means Big Ask Of School Technology In Texas And Beyond

By Paul Flahive • 2 hours ago

When Gov. Greg Abbott closed schools on March 19 to slow the spread of COVID-19, he kicked off an unprecedented push to educate students remotely in Texas.

Kenneth Thompson has been running nonstop for weeks, and he is tired.

The Chief Information Technology officer for the San Antonio Independent School District is trying to put a device in each students' hands — 4th through 12th grade.

“We're doing in three weeks what we have planned to do in five years,” Thompson said.

It hasn't been easy. But he says they've made progress. The district released 17,000 laptops to students immediately and has started scrounging for more.

Companies like Dell and Lenovo are so inundated with school requests from across the country they can only offer delivery in May and beyond, said Thompson.

“Everybody is pulling off the same shelf, if you will,” he said. But with some luck, one of his staff members found a local reseller with 30,000 Chromebooks. He bought them all.

As teachers and students in the district adapt to a new world filled with video conference calls and online learning, his team has to build the infrastructure to make it work.

They've issued more than 5,000 mobile hotspots to help bridge the digital divide this school year. They have played with sending wifi-equipped school buses into neighborhoods lacking connections. And then there's the troubleshooting.

“We went from a four-person help desk to a 15-person help desk in a matter of four days,” said Thompson. “My call volume has jumped from 150 calls a day. I think today at around three o'clock we had 900 calls.”

But so far it's going well: They are getting around 15,000 hits on their educational resource website.

Thompson said he chats with other city school district CIOs every night and the mood is — like his — weary.

The efforts of SAISD and districts like it are unlike any in recent history.

“I’ve been doing this work for about 43 years now. And I really cannot think of anything comparable,” said Michael Casserly, executive director of the **Council of Great City Schools**, which helps large urban school districts.

He says the experiences of districts across the country have not been universal. A district like a Miami — which deals with mass disasters like hurricanes — might have a warehouse filled with devices they can deploy on a whim. Others like SAISD have to sniff out the devices.

Some districts have stuck with analog solutions like printed homework and lesson plans.

While online learning is more present and engaging for students and teachers, he said it doesn't have a lot of research behind its efficacy.

“There are bound to be learning gaps here. And those learning gaps are likely to be widest in places with the greatest amount of need, which is unfortunate,” said Casserly.

The road ahead is not without gaps or snags or potential failures. But Casserly said the situation is new, and people are working hard across the country to ensure students get back to where they should be.

New York Times

As School Moves Online, Many Students Stay Logged Out

Teachers at some schools across the country report that less than half of their students are participating in online learning.

By [Dana Goldstein](#), Adam Popescu and [Nikole Hannah-Jones](#)

April 6, 2020 Updated 7:00 a.m. ET

Chronic absenteeism is a problem in American education during the best of times, but now, with the vast majority of the nation's school buildings closed and lessons being conducted remotely, more students than ever are missing class — not logging on, not checking in or not completing assignments.

The absence rate appears particularly high in schools with many low-income students, whose access to home computers and internet connections can be spotty. Some teachers report that less than half their students are regularly participating.

The trend is leading to widespread concern among educators, with talk of a potential need for summer sessions, an early start in the fall, or perhaps having some or even all students repeat a grade once Americans are able to return to classrooms.

Students are struggling to connect in districts large and small. [Los Angeles said last week](#) that about a third of its high school students were not logging in for classes. And there are daunting challenges for rural communities like Minford, Ohio, where many students live in remote wooded areas unserved by internet providers.

Educators say that a subset of students and their parents have dropped out of touch with schools completely — unavailable by phone, email or any other form of communication — as families struggle with the broader economic and health effects of the coronavirus outbreak.

Even before the outbreak, [chronic absenteeism was a problem](#) in many schools, especially those with a lot of low-income students. Many obstacles can prevent children who live in poverty from making it to class: a parent's broken-down car or a teenager's need to babysit siblings, for example. But online learning presents new obstacles, particularly with uneven levels of technology and adult supervision.

Titilayo Aluko, 18, a junior at Landmark High School in Manhattan, is one of the students trying hard to keep up with her classes who has been thwarted by her lack of access to technology. She has a district-issued laptop, but no home Wi-Fi network any more. The

cable company removed the router from her family's Bronx apartment after they had trouble paying the monthly bill.

For classes like statistics and neuroscience, Ms. Aluko has tried to complete assignments and participate in video conferences using her cellphone, but that is sometimes impossible.

"I actually need my teachers, who know me and understand me, to help me, and I don't have that," she said. "I just keep thinking, 'Oh, my God, I might not pass.' I'm just really scared for the future."

Cratering attendance in some districts contrasts with reports from several selective or affluent schools where close to 100 percent of students are participating in online learning. The dramatic split promises to further deepen the typical academic achievement gaps between poor, middle-class and wealthy students.

The scale of the challenge, and the work that will need to be done to catch children up academically and socially, is "huge," said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, a network of urban education systems.

He called the prospect of "unfinished learning" from this time "a serious issue that could have implications for years."

There is no precedent in educators' memories for what is happening right now. Schools have weathered disruptive events like Hurricane Katrina and the California wildfires, but those disasters were limited to shorter time periods and smaller regions. During the coronavirus pandemic, [every state in the country](#) has ordered or recommended closing schools, in many cases through the end of the academic year.

School leaders across the country are already debating how to help students catch up. To maintain social distancing, some regions may bring children back to school in waves, in order to reduce the number of people inside classrooms and buildings at any given time.

There is also concern about whether large numbers of students will need to repeat all or substantial portions of their current grade.

"Many skills build one on another," Mr. Casserly said. "If a child misses out on some key idea, then all of a sudden, additional ideas as they're introduced just become Greek. Will we need some kind of beginning of the year diagnostics to try and figure out just where the kids are, how much they have lost?"

For many students, it seems likely that the answer will be: Yes, quite a lot.

In the Cleveland Metropolitan School District last week, teachers returning from an extended spring break attempted to hold virtual parent-teacher conferences for the first time for all of the district's 38,000 students. Initially, they were able to reach only 60 percent of families, but after a few more days of trying, the number reached 87 percent,

said Eric S. Gordon, the district's chief executive.

The city of Cleveland has one of the nation's highest child-poverty rates. Despite the economic slowdown, many parents continue to work full-time outside their homes in fields like sanitation, health and food service, meaning that many students do not have an adult at home to supervise their learning.

Mr. Gordon estimated that 30 to 40 percent of the district's students also do not have reliable access to the internet at home. So in addition to developing plans for online learning, the district has distributed printed work packets along with free meals, and will soon begin mailing those packets to students' home addresses.

Tracy Radich, a fourth-grade teacher at the Joseph M. Gallagher School in Cleveland, spent Tuesday and Wednesday going down her roster of 20 students, attempting to call each student's parents and make individual plans to help each of them learn from home.

Some of her students' families speak Somali, Swahili or Spanish, so she asked colleagues who speak those languages to help.

So far, only three of her students have been consistently engaged with online lessons, she said. About six do not have regular access to the internet. One boy typically goes to the library to get online, but the city's libraries are now closed, too. She expects to interact with several students mostly through phone calls.

"We are going to come together and meet everybody where they are," Ms. Radich said.

School funding is typically tied to student enrollment or attendance counts across the country, but Ohio has [unlinked](#) funding from those counts, a policy that education experts expect most states to adopt in the coming weeks.

In rural Minford, a town of about 700 in southern Ohio near the border with Kentucky, the district is distributing laptops as well as work packets on paper to students without internet or technology access, estimated at about one-fifth of the student body.

Regardless of whether Minford's students can participate in online classes or turn in work, administrators expect to promote a majority of them to the next grade, said Marin Applegate, the district's school psychologist. "We do not feel they are in control and cannot be held accountable," she said.

Some school systems, like the District of Columbia Public Schools, have stopped taking formal attendance altogether. The nation's largest school district, New York City, which is at the center of the coronavirus crisis, has not yet released data on the number of children participating in online learning. The district said it will officially begin tracking remote attendance on Monday.

In Los Angeles, the nation's second-largest school district, about 13 percent of high school

students have had no online contact with teachers since schools closed three weeks ago, and one-third are not regularly participating in online learning, according to the superintendent, Austin Beutner.

Heber Marquez, a high school English teacher at the Maywood Center for Enriched Studies in Los Angeles County, estimated that just 45 percent of his students were showing up to Zoom classroom meetings.

“A lot of our students have siblings they have to take care of, and their parents are still going out and working,” Mr. Marquez said. “It makes it very difficult to log on at the same time as feeding breakfast to their siblings or helping with chores.”

Many schools are making efforts to distribute digital devices to students who don't have their own at home. Los Angeles is trying to get them to more than 100,000 students, Mr. Beutner said. The Miami-Dade County Public Schools have distributed more than 80,000 mobile devices for distance learning, and more than 11,000 smartphones to serve as home Wi-Fi hot spots, according to a spokeswoman.

In New York, the city's typical inequalities are reflected in the wide range of participation levels in remote learning.

At Brooklyn Technical High School, one of the city's most competitive, Serge Avery, a social studies teacher, said 98 percent of his students have been participating in daily online activities, like reading and responding to a Financial Times article about the coronavirus.

His freshman global history students are currently studying the Middle Ages, and he has considered doing a unit on the bubonic plague. But he thought twice after receiving a heartfelt email from a student, written at 4 a.m., in which she described her mother being taken away by ambulance with Covid-19 symptoms.

Mr. Avery said he worries that even among his high-achieving students, participation could drop off as online learning becomes more of a daily grind for restless teenagers.

“Teachers really get energized by the classroom,” he said. The current limitations, he added, have left both teachers and students “slightly depressed.”

Face 2 Face Africa

The effects of online learning on blacks globally as coronavirus bites

[Ama Nunoo](#) Apr 10, 2020 at 09:00am

There is an ongoing debate on how students will benefit from online courses to help bridge the gap caused by the stay-at-home policies meant to curb the spread of the [novel coronavirus](#).

While some experts believe that this is a brilliant and futuristic approach, others are also of the view that the harsh realities of racial and [economic divide](#) will prevent everyone from benefiting from online classes.

There are some undisputed realities that have been brought to bare as a result of the virus. This reveals the deplorable conditions some students, especially those in under resourced schools in the USA and other parts of the world are facing mainly because of income disparities.

It has been established that blacks and ethnic minorities are [the worst hit races by COVID-19](#) infections and deaths. The absence rates during online lessons in these under resourced schools and school districts are more glaring now, according to [New York Times](#).

“The absence rate appears particularly high in schools with many low-income students, whose access to home computers and internet connections can be spotty,” writes the Times. “Some teachers report that less than half their students are regularly participating.”

“The trend is leading to widespread concern among educators, with talk of a potential need for summer sessions, an early start in the fall, or perhaps having some or even all students repeat a grade once Americans are able to return to classrooms.”

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) is closely monitoring the [temporary closure](#) of educational institutions worldwide and reports that the closures are impacting over 91% of the world’s student population. There are about 1.5 million students who have been affected by the closures.

Inasmuch as the impact is worldwide, those in impoverished communities are [feeling the impact more](#) than those on the affluent side of the spectrum.

Eric Gordon, chief executive of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, told the Times an estimated 30 to 40 percent of the district’s students do not have stable internet at home.

The district has stepped in to provide the much-needed support to the new online learning modules. Worksheets will also be printed and shared with free meals. This improvisation is meant to help the students who do not have access to the technology to level up.

A 2018 [study](#) by Pew Research Center revealed that out of four black teens, one of them cannot do their homework most of the time because they do not have computers or Wi-Fi, whereas only 13 percent of white teenagers encountered similar issues.

In an ideal situation, these underprivileged children from the black and ethnic minority communities could perch with their more 'affluent' mates. Now, that option is off the table because of social distancing meant to prevent the [spread of the virus](#).

In some African countries, their educational services are doing their best to keep the students educated as well through online learning, televised classes and social media. We cannot deny the fact that there is a huge digital divide that will be a big impediment or will inhibit the main aim for online learning that the countries want to achieve.

In most African countries, the reality is that less than half of the people [have access](#) to mobile phones, tablets or computer and internet access. There are also some conditions at home that are not learning friendly. Some children have less support as well, which makes the lack of amenities and the participation in online classes even more burdensome.

“A lot of our students have siblings they have to take care of, and their parents are still going out and working,” Los Angeles County-based teacher, Heber Marquez told the Times. “It makes it very difficult to log on at the same time as feeding breakfast to their siblings or helping with chores.”

Interestingly, their affluent counterparts in some selective schools have “close to 100 percent of students are participating in online learning,” the Times reports.

There would be so much [catching up for the many children](#) struggling to keep up with the online lessons. Michael Casserly, executive director of the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), told the Times that effects and aftermath of the coronavirus school shutdowns and campus closures “could have implications for years.”

“Many skills build one on another,” Casserly said. “If a child misses out on some key idea, then all of a sudden, additional ideas as they’re introduced just become Greek.”

“Will we need some kind of beginning of the year diagnostics to try and figure out just where the kids are, how much they have lost?”

Everyone is in favor of schools closing to protect the children and stop the spread of the virus, but the adverse effects are undeniable.

For many, they will pull through unscathed, but for those in typically black and ethnic communities in the US their story is like the many African children and other children across the world, who are facing challenges with the new mode of studies.

Winnipeg Free Press

Pandemic school closures widen the digital divide

By: Tom Simms

Posted: 04/11/2020 4:00 AM | [Comments: 1](#)

School closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic will result in student learning loss. This is a huge challenge all students will face, but inner-city students will have even more barriers to overcome in the upcoming weeks and months of home-based schooling.

The sudden shift to the online delivery of education has brought a significant transition for students, families and teachers. Connecting with teachers to get education support will be more difficult for inner-city students and their families, because many don't have computers or internet access in their homes.

This "digital divide," the gap between low-income families and middle/upper-income families in terms of their ability to access digital tools and the internet, creates dire consequences for inner-city students and has been accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis.

According to the Pew Research Center's analysis of the 2015 U.S. Census Bureau data, roughly 35 per cent of households with an annual income below US\$30,000 a year did not have high-speed internet connections at home, compared with just six per cent of such households earning \$75,000 or more annually.

A 2013 Statistics Canada report indicated that 42 per cent of households in the lowest-income quartile did not have home internet access, compared with just two per cent of households in the top income quartile.

Mike Casserly, executive director of the **Council of the Great City Schools**, a coalition of the largest urban public school districts in the U.S., maintains that "our biggest challenge will be how to ensure equity" with respect to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Casserly further states, "I have great concern around the unfinished learning we may face when students go back to school next fall. When schools reopen, we are likely to face not only the instruction for the new year but also a lot of catch-up instruction, especially with our struggling students."

The evidence on summer learning loss can be used to help us understand the likely effect of school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Summer learning loss refers to the loss of knowledge and academic skills over the summer months, when students are out of school.

Stay informed

Research indicates summer learning loss is experienced more harshly by students in lower socioeconomic communities and families; it can result in the equivalent of up to three months of declines in measures of grade-level equivalency, and its effect is cumulative, with lower-income students falling behind their more affluent peers as they advance to high school.

The digital divide complicates educators' efforts to continue instruction during this pandemic and deepens the impact of the inevitable COVID-19 learning loss. Bedong Chen's 2015 study, which explored the digital divide in Ontario public schools, identified three levels of intervention to address the digital divide: school infrastructure — hardware, software and internet access support for technology; teachers' knowledge and ability to use technology in the classroom; and parental capacity to access and support internet use in the home for educational purposes.

Some key digital equity strategies in inner-city communities that support students and families for online or out-of-school learning have involved school districts partnering with community organizations to: provide "homework hotspots" in the local neighbourhood for students without home internet access; work with internet service providers to offer discounted high-speed internet plans for low-income households; establish mobile hot spot lending programs, including Wi-Fi hot spot devices and laptops; and develop initiatives for community-based Wi-Fi capacity for free internet to households with students who register for this education-focused broadband connectivity service with local schools and community organizations.

The Manitoba government's community school legislation is well-suited to support the role of neighbourhood schools in low-income communities to be "resources hubs" for families to address the growing digital divide. School libraries could become a "learning commons" and modernize their role from gatekeeper of books to a digital equity resource that works with local community partners to develop connectivity initiatives, lend mobile hot spot devices similar to their present book-lending role, and provide digital literacy education for students, parents and community residents.

The COVID-19 crisis has shown us that bridging the digital divide is not an option, but a necessity. Schools cannot address this issue on their own. The community, philanthropic, private and public sectors need to work together with schools to remove these digital barriers for inner-city students and their families, for now and in the future

The Washington Post

Millions of public school students will suffer from school closures, education leaders have concluded

By [Laura Meckler](#), [Valerie Strauss](#) and [Joe Heim](#)

April 13, 2020 at 6:00 a.m. EDT

Only weeks after the [coronavirus](#) pandemic forced American schools online, education leaders across the country have concluded that millions of children's learning will be severely stunted, and are planning unprecedented steps to help them catch up.

In Miami, school will extend into the summer and start earlier in the fall, at least for some students. In Cleveland, schools may shrink the curriculum to cover only core subjects. In Columbia, Mo., this year's lessons will be woven into next year's.

Some experts suggest holding back more kids, a controversial idea, while others propose a half-grade step-up for some students, an unconventional one. A national teachers union is proposing a massive national summer school program.

"We have to have a recovery plan for education," said Eric Gordon, chief executive for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. "I'm really worried that people think schools and colleges just flipped to digital and everything's fine and we can just return to normal. That's simply not the case."

The ideas being considered will require political will and logistical savvy, and they are already facing resistance from teachers and parents. They'll also require money, and lots of it, at a time when a cratering economy is devastating [state and local budgets](#), with plunging tax collections and rising costs. As Congress considers another coronavirus spending package, schools' ability to make up ground may hinge on how much more they can pry from Washington.

The \$2.2 trillion [stimulus package](#) approved last month included \$13.5 billion for K-12 education. In the next round, a coalition of school administrators and teachers unions is seeking more than \$200 billion, citing those depleted state budgets.

In New York state, for instance, schools were poised for deep cuts, with the state anticipating revenue losses as high as \$10 billion. The stimulus package will reverse those cuts, but without more bailout money, schools won't get any extra funding to deal with the crisis.

'An educational catastrophe'

Just a month ago, most American children were attending school as normal. Today, virtually every U.S. school building is closed. [Seventeen states](#) have ordered campuses shuttered through this academic year, another three recommend it, and educators and parents across the country are bracing for a lost spring — and maybe more.

Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said last week that he expects schools can reopen in the fall. But he can't be sure, he said.

Whenever schools return, researchers say, the likely result is a generation of students forced to play catch-up, perhaps for years to come. Most vulnerable are those who are always the most vulnerable: homeless children, those living in deep poverty and [students with disabilities](#). While some students are adapting to distance learning, others are struggling to find quiet spaces to study, lack reliable Internet access or must care for younger siblings during the day, among other barriers.

“This may be the biggest challenge public education has had to face in the four-plus decades I've been doing this work,” said Michael Casserly, executive director of the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), a nonprofit coalition of 76 of the nation's largest urban public school systems. He said that online learning is likely failing many low-income families and that without “substantial” new spending, schools won't have the money to reverse the damage. “We are facing an educational catastrophe.”

In some districts, the problem is just getting kids to show up.

In the Los Angeles Unified School District, the country's second-largest system, 1 in 4 students has not logged on at all. Older students were more likely than elementary children to be connected, but on any given day in one recent week, a quarter of high school students didn't log in.

Before the coronavirus crisis, only about 1 in 4 students in the high-poverty Baltimore City Public Schools had computers. More Chromebooks are on order, but for now teachers are trying to reach families by phone and Instagram, and the district is broadcasting lessons over its television station.

“What we are providing now is not going to make up fully for all of the time lost,” chief executive Sonja Brookins Santelises said.

In Atlanta's public schools, about 6,000 children still don't have computers, and about 10 percent of students have not yet logged in to the remote-learning system, Superintendent Meria Joel Carstarphen said.

One recent day, Carstarphen visited the home of a family whose children had not logged in. She found their mother struggling to provide food, and discovered the house was in an Internet “dead zone.” She also realized she knew the family's oldest child, a “super sweet kid,” from her visits to his high school football team.

“He’s the man of the house and he’s only a junior right now,” Carstarphen said. “He has not been doing his work and neither have his siblings for three weeks.”

Even when students have computers, parents and caregivers fear that minimal learning is underway. Billie Stewart is raising her 8-year-old grandson, Tony, on Detroit’s east side. She’s received little direction from his school, she said, and trying to keep up with the school’s online offerings has been “almost overwhelming.”

Stewart, 73, has worked hard to lay out a daily schedule for Tony but finds herself unable to keep up. “If I get asked for another password, I don’t know what I’ll do.”

Students are facing “historic academic regression,” said Miami-Dade County Public Schools Superintendent Alberto M. Carvalho, who is planning to extend this school year and start next year early for some students. (Lynne Sladky/AP)

In Philadelphia’s public schools, teachers have been told not to teach new material, due to concerns that lessons cannot be equitably provided to all. Philadelphia plans to begin remote education later this month, but for weeks families have been left largely on their own.

“We’ve been looking for guidance from teachers, but they don’t really know what they’re supposed to be doing,” said Stacy Stewart, who has two children in a North Philadelphia elementary school, plus 1-year-old twins. “Ever since they’ve been out of school, there’s been no structured virtual learning. It’s just been flying by the seat of their pants.”

The school provided a study packet for Mikail, a second-grader, but no direction for Abdul Malik, who’s in kindergarten, other than links to a few education websites. There’s only one computer in the house, which Stewart needs for work, and it’s been a struggle to keep her kids engaged in anything that looks like learning. “I mean, I’m not really a teacher,” she said.

To understand how deep the setbacks may be, researchers are examining data on the so-called “summer slide,” in which students, particularly those in low-income families, lose months of reading and math knowledge. Research differs on the magnitude of the loss, but there’s broad agreement that this year’s losses will be greater than normal.

NWEA, a nonprofit that offers student assessments, used testing data to forecast how much further behind students will fall. In one scenario, it projected that students will return next year having gained 70 percent of what would typically be expected in reading over the course of the previous year, and less than 50 percent of the expected gains in math.

'We have to figure out something'

Some districts are still working to implement and refine remote learning for this academic year. But elsewhere, school leaders are already weighing, planning and in some cases lobbying for a range of ideas to arrest the inevitable academic losses.

In Cleveland, the schools are considering an August “jump-start” session to get students ready for school. Gordon, the district CEO, said the schools may also need to consider a pared-back curriculum for a “recovery year” focused on the basics.

The American Federation of Teachers, the second-largest national teachers union, is proposing a one-month summer school for vulnerable kids across the country. “We have to figure out something in terms of the summer to actually nurture kids,” said Randi Weingarten, president of the union.

But even such a simple idea has detractors, proving how challenging change will be.

“The newest building in our district is 55 years old, and none of them have air conditioning,” said Becky Cranston, who teaches middle-school English in rural Bronson, Mich. “How much learning would happen in a room filled with 30 students when the temperature outside reads 90 degrees? None.”

In Maryland, state Sen. Paul G. Pinsky (D-Prince George’s), chairman of the education committee, has proposed year-round school. Baltimore is considering that for its underperforming schools, along with extending the school day and possibly starting earlier in the fall.

But similar suggestions didn’t go far in Atlanta, said Carstarphen, the superintendent. She floated the idea of a longer school day or school year, she said, but was quickly shut down by middle-class parents who don’t want to give up extracurriculars. Instead, Carstarphen is hoping to channel thousands of additional students into existing summer enrichment programs that focus on topics such as science and the arts. But she said doing so depends on new funding.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools has a more targeted plan: remediation for the most at-risk students, including those who live in poverty or have disabilities, newly arrived immigrants and those learning English. Superintendent Alberto M. Carvalho said it’s possible these students will see “historic academic regression.”

The district plans to use online log-in data to determine who has fallen behind and then target interventions. Some students will see school extend into the summer, and some will come back early. The district plans to redeploy staff members who have less work during the pandemic, forming a new one-to-one digital mentoring program for students who need help.

Michael J. Petrilli, president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a right-leaning think tank, has a more radical idea: Holding back all students in high-poverty elementary schools.

“All of this time away from school is going to be particularly devastating for poor and working-class youngsters, many of whom are already below grade level,” he wrote in [an op-ed in The Washington Post](#).

That idea was rejected by many educators, who said it was akin to punishing children for being poor and unfair to children at low-income schools who are ready to advance. Still, holding kids

back is on the table: Many districts are planning to determine who moves on based on work done before schools closed.

A more modest idea is to create half-grades to accommodate children who are socially but not academically ready to move up, said Keri Rodrigues of the National Parents Union, an advocacy group that has tangled with teachers unions and supports various education reforms.

“Maybe it’s 3.5 until they are ready for fourth grade,” she said.

Greensboro News & Record

With schools closed, the learning 'losses are glacial' for Guilford students, leaders say

[By Jessie Pounds jessie.pounds@greensboro.com](mailto:jessie.pounds@greensboro.com)

Apr 15, 2020

A new study recommended 10 schools be closed as part of a proposal that also suggested \$1.5 billion in renovations, additions and new schools by 2038.

GREENSBORO — Staggering learning losses are expected for Guilford County students due to the school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, district administrators revealed to the Board of Education during an online meeting Tuesday night.

Chief Academic Officer Whitney Oakley said district leaders expect an average student is likely to retain less than 50% of what they would have learned in math this year.

In reading, it's better — around 70%.

“The losses are glacial,” said Deena Hayes-Greene, the school board’s chairwoman.

Oakley said the information comes from the work of two organizations: the **Council of Great City Schools** and the Northwest Evaluation Association.

In its projections, the Northwest Evaluation Association treated March 13 — the last day of school for Guilford County and other districts affected by the coronavirus outbreak — as though it were the final day of classes for the academic year.

It modeled those projections based on previous data that looked at learning losses over summer.

“We know the instruction they are getting is as good as it can be, but is absolutely not the same as face-to-face,” Oakley said Wednesday.

During Tuesday’s night meeting, Oakley also shared key details about how grades will be given this academic year.

The end of the third quarter was moved up to March 13, the last day students were in class before Gov. Roy Cooper announced that all schools in the state would close.

For the fourth quarter, Oakley said students in kindergarten through 11th grade won't be given letter grades. Instead, they will be graded on either a "pass" or "withdraw" basis.

To earn a "pass," students will be asked to complete assignments and lessons that show they demonstrate a basic understanding of a course's core concepts.

Students who aren't able to do that will be considered "withdrawn" from that course. However, they would get another chance to complete those assignments and upgrade to a "pass" before starting the 2020-21 school year.

Seniors who were passing their required courses before March 13 will pass for the spring semester.

For any seniors with an "F" as of March 13, teachers are required to provide opportunities for them to improve to a "pass."

Superintendent Sharon Contreras said Tuesday the issues created by the coronavirus are not just a problem now, but for the future. With the expected learning losses incurred this year, administrators are going to have to be thinking about how to mitigate those losses next year.

Further complicating things, some school board members said they thought the state might still be unwilling for teachers or students to return to school as late as July.

Tuesday night's meeting occurred through the videoconferencing platform Zoom, a departure from the board's usual practice of gathering in the school administration building or the City Council chambers in High Point.

It was streamed live on the district's YouTube channel and on GCS TV, the cable television channel run by Guilford County Schools.

Hayes-Greene and some school administrators were in the administration building, while other board members and administrators joined from homes or offices.



What might your child's school look like when it reopens?

Updated Apr 21, 11:12 AM; Posted Apr 20, 9:19 AM

By [Peter Krouse, cleveland.com](#)

CLEVELAND, Ohio – Gov. Mike DeWine is now talking about re-opening schools, but has yet to offer details about what classrooms might look like and how learning would take place in this era of the coronavirus crisis.

Schools have been ordered closed through at least May 1, given that typical classrooms bring children and teachers into the kind of close contact that leads to the spread of the highly contagious and deadly virus. So, what is a school chief to do?

[Cleveland.com](#) sought answers, or at least educated speculation, from Eric Gordon, chief executive officer of the Cleveland Metropolitan Schools District; David Glasner, superintendent of Shaker Heights City School District; and Charles Smialek, superintendent of Parma City School District.

Here is what they had to say:

When might schools will reopen?

Gordon said he's hesitant to make predictions because he is waiting for guidance from the state.

That said, modeling suggests that Ohio will be past the first peak of coronavirus cases by June. If so, Gordon thinks "formal learning" could resume in August with good health protocols in place.

Glasner said he expects schools to reopen in August.

Can so-called social distancing be maintained?

State education and health officials apparently believe the answer is yes, but they have not shared their plans with our three school chiefs.

Gordon said options could include staggered school days or extended hours that would reduce class sizes, which in Cleveland average 25 students, to perhaps as few as eight. That would allow students and teachers to stay at least six feet apart, as recommended by health experts.

Both options, however, would require less learning time for students unless districts can afford to hire more teachers to work those extended hours and expand their buildings to provide for more classrooms.

“We couldn’t suddenly triple the size of the work force, and even if we did we couldn’t triple the size of the building,” Gordon said.

A third option for some districts would be online classes, something many colleges have adopted. Gordon noted that so-called remote learning is of limited use to the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, where one third of the families do not have reliable high-speed Internet.

Districts also will need to develop social distancing protocols for areas outside of classrooms. Smialek wonders about what can be done in cafeterias during lunch hours and hallways between classes.

“It’s going to take some creativity for sure,” Smialek said. “Think of a high school with 1,500 kids. Think about what the class change looks like in a hallway.”

Would children, teachers and administrators wear masks?

Wearing masks in classrooms is easy enough to envision, though who provides masks, and ensures they are properly fitted and either cleaned or replaced, is another question left unanswered by the state.

Smialek wonders about the ability of children to take care of their masks, given that health experts warn that mishandling masks can expose rather than protect the users from the virus.

“It clearly presents a lot of challenges, Smialek said.

Said Glasner: "We don't want to spend our time spinning our wheels on hypotheticals. For example, what age groups should wear masks? . . . Should teachers wear masks? It would be really helpful to have some clearer guidance from state or federal authorities about what would be expected by grade levels."

Why haven't state officials provided guidance?

They haven't had the time because they have been focused on other things, said Gordon, who is chairman of the Big 8 Coalition, comprised of large urban school districts in the state.

He said the state has been listening to the concerns of interested parties, including the Big 8 Coalition, and he expects guidance will be forthcoming.

Smialek said he was surprised by DeWine's most optimistic tone during one of last week's daily news conference.

"It feels like we've gone from safety, safety, safety," he said, "to 'Whoops what about the economy?'"

Are there concerns about promoting students because of lost learning time?

Some students will be ready to move on, but some may not, Gordon said. One possible solution is to blend grades. For example, second graders who are ahead in their studies could be mixed in with third graders who are behind their peers.

"I do think grade configurations will likely need to be rethought," he said.

If schools reopen in the fall, might students be going to classes the following summer?

Gordon said that is worth considering.

With the loss of nine weeks of the current school year and perhaps no opportunity to make up classes this summer, going to school next summer could be an option to help get students get back on track.

Would the curriculum be changed come fall?

Very possibly, according to Gordon. Changes might be necessary given limited time and resources to focus on essentials such as math, reading and core work skills. Other subjects might need to be slowly added back into the curriculum.

Another possibility would be to blend subjects such as science and social studies. For example; doing math problems that are connected to science.

What are districts in other states considering?

Gordon is on the Council of the Great City Schools, which includes 76 of the largest urban school systems in the country, and its members have been communicating weekly.

Some school districts in California are considering longer days, running from 7 a.m. into the evening, during which students and faculty would stagger the times when they come to school.

Other ideas coming include holding evening classes. And if summer school is not available in June, holding some kind of school camp in August to give students extra help before the school year begins.

Other ideas include so-called blended learning, where students, especially those in upper-level classes, learn remotely but also go to school on certain days to meet with their teachers.

Do school chiefs know what's coming?

“At this point, like many people, I imagine I have many more questions than answers,” Glasner said. “These are all scenarios that we are trying to prepare for.”

Education Week

Schools Lean on Staff Who Speak Students' Language to Keep English-Learners Connected

By [Corey Mitchell](#)

April 27, 2020

For weeks, Alicia Araje-Van Dyk, a multilingual liaison in the Burlington, Vt., schools, has juggled late-night check-ins and predawn wakeup calls.

There are the 1 a.m. calls with Swahili-speaking parents—many of them fresh off 4 p.m. to midnight shifts as essential workers—struggling to use internet hot spots and access online classes for their children in English, a language they barely understand.

Hours later, Van Dyk is often back at it again, stirring pre-teens and teenagers out of bed for their morning classes with early morning texts and phone calls.

During the day, she fields calls from teachers concerned about students who are not logging into class, tracks down tutors for those who are, and counsels her caseload of 43 African refugee families on how they can curb the spread of the novel coronavirus.

“This has been a difficult time,” said Van Dyk, a Burundian refugee who has worked for the school system since 2013. “I cannot imagine the adjustment for families who are new to this country.”

Distance learning has posed a significant challenge for families who are not fluent in English and the teachers who educate them and will continue to be in the months ahead.

Nearly 5 million U.S. schoolchildren are classified as English-language learners and millions more come from homes where their parents speak a different language: About 1 in 4 children, roughly 18 million, in the nation’s K-12 schools live with immigrant parents.

As they struggle to keep instruction going for this vulnerable group of students, school districts around the country are leaning heavily on multilingual staff—employees that have become more of a necessity than a luxury during the nation’s widespread school closures—to connect with these English-learner and immigrant families.

The stakes are high: Among advocates and researchers, there is concern that the extended school closures happening across the nation could exacerbate the struggles of a student population that already faces a high risk of experiencing homelessness, hunger, and academic struggle.

“As [schools] pivoted to virtual or online education, it really [showed] in very concrete ways the impact of language barriers and what their consequences are,” said Gabriela Uro, the director for English-language-learner policy and a researcher for the Council of the Great City Schools, an organization of the nation’s largest urban school systems.

Valuing Connections

Van Dyk is among 11 members of the Burlington school system’s multilingual team who have abandoned their 9-to-5 schedules to work round-the-clock to help non-English-speaking families navigate everything from computers to American culture.

Before online instruction began, the liaisons reached out to determine if families had access to technology, food, and support from social service agencies. They’re also dispatched to soccer fields to break up pick-up games that violate social distancing guidelines.

For some staff, especially those who are immigrants or refugees themselves, helping parents understand the nuances of the U.S. education system can be difficult, because they did not attend schools here either. They’re serving as navigators and cultural connectors in places they do not fully understand themselves.

“The [families] need someone to guide them through all this stuff because of the language, because of the culture,” said Ahmed Jasim, an Iraqi immigrant who works for the Portland, Maine, schools as a parent community specialist for Arabic-speaking students and families. “But sometimes we get lost honestly.”

Schools had trouble connecting with English-learner families long before the coronavirus shut schools.

Federal studies have shown that English-learner families are far less likely to serve on school committees, attend parent-teacher conferences, or go to school or class events, all important opportunities to communicate about students’ academic progress.

“Parents are feeling overwhelmed,” said Celina Moreno, the president and CEO of the Intercultural Development Research Association, a nonprofit focused on ensuring equal educational opportunity. “Without family engagement, all the educational gaps are widening.”

The association is among 40 education and civil rights groups that have asked Congress for a \$1 billion infusion to states and school districts to support English-learner students and bolster family engagement.

When schools shut in Vermont in mid-March, Burlington parent Dahn Tamung needed help getting Chromebooks for her three children, one each in elementary, middle, and high school, and technical support for their transition to online learning. Schools there are now closed for the academic year.

Schools liaison Krishna Bharandi, who worked as a teacher for 10 years in India before coming to the United States, did not have all the answers, but knew people who did.

Using their shared language of Nepali, he helped Tamung communicate with her children's teachers and found staff who could help her find her youngest child's homework assignments online. Tamung speaks with liaisons at least once per week.

"I do not know much about the U.S. school system," Tamung said through her translator, her 8th grade daughter Shusanti. "But me and my community are valued here."

'It's a Struggle'

In states such as Vermont and Maine, refugee resettlement has enjoyed widespread support. State and local political leaders view immigrants as a welcome answer to their struggles to lure younger people to live and work there. But the infusion of new immigrants can pose challenges for schools that need to connect with families in their home languages.

Thirty-one percent of English-learners in Maine speak Somali. Roughly 24 percent of English-learners in Vermont speak Nepali.

In Portland, the parent community specialists serve crucial roles: interpreting for parents of students with disabilities during individualized education program meetings and explaining to parents that they must now serve as co-teachers for their children during distance learning.

"There's a difference now because they have to work with the teachers," said Monique Mutumwinka, a parent community special with the Portland schools who works with families in five languages. "The computer, it's an issue for them, the language is an issue. It's a struggle, especially in this crisis of remote learning, to just learn to use the devices."

To foster communication with families, some districts use software that can send text messages and place phone calls in multiple languages. In Burlington, all recorded phone calls are sent out in nine languages.

"We still struggle with basic ways to connect with families," said Miriam Ehtesham-Cating, the director of English-learner programs for the Burlington schools. "Then all of a sudden, we were not together."

Given just a two-day notice that schools were shutting down and faced with the reality that many families, especially those new to the country, did not have email accounts, the liaisons launched a phone campaign to connect with at least one parent in every household.

The task was daunting: The Burlington schools have about 550 students who are eligible for English-learner support services. At least double that amount have parents who do not speak English at home.

Those learning challenges were already significant for English-learners because of challenges inside and outside of school.

A December 2019 report from the U.S. Department of Education found that few teachers reported assigning English-learners to use digital learning resources outside of class, in part because of concerns about students' lack of access to technology at home.

Now that those same students have been thrust into online learning the odds are stacked against them. Nearly a quarter of immigrants and their U.S.-born children live in poverty. A recent report from the U.S. Department of Education found that while English-learners are only 10 percent of the student population, they represent 16 percent of the homeless student population. In urban districts, English-learners account for nearly 20 percent of student homelessness.

The challenges that English-learners face are why Van Dyk does not mind the middle-of-the-night phone calls from concerned parents or the early morning pep talks for students.

"I understand their struggles," said Van Dyk, who worked as a paralegal and studied law before fleeing her native Burundi. She worked in school cafeterias before taking her current district job.

"Education is the one ticket that everybody is given in life," she said. "I don't want them to fail because they're at home."

Washington Post

Under pressure to reopen this fall, school leaders plot unprecedented changes

Laura Meckler, Moriah Balingit and Valerie Strauss, The Washington Post

Published 7:03 am PDT, Monday, April 27, 2020

From the White House podium to harried homes, pressure is building to reopen the nation's schools. But the next iteration of American education will look far different from the classrooms students and teachers abruptly departed last month.

Many overwhelmed school systems remain focused on running remote education that was set up on the fly. Others, though, are deep into planning for what they see coming: an in-between scenario in which schools are open but children are spread out in places where they are normally packed together.

The new landscape could include one-way hallways, kids and teachers in masks, and lunch inside classrooms instead of cafeterias. Buses may run half empty, and students may have their temperatures read before entering the building. And in districts all over the country, officials are considering bringing half the students to school on certain days, with the rest learning from home. Then they would swap.

"Our students need some kind of normalcy," said Michael Hinojosa, superintendent of the Dallas Independent School District. "Right now, their whole world has been disrupted with things that they've never dealt with before, and they need to be around other people.

Many teachers are scared of going back too early, and teachers unions are cautioning against it. Health experts warn that even if covid-19 cases abate, a second wave of infection could arrive with flu season later this year. Others caution that ideas being contemplated won't do enough to keep children from spreading the disease.

But pressure is building. President Donald Trump has pressed to reopen the economy, and one key to a functioning workforce is a school system that allows parents to do their jobs. Conservative activists have protested stay-at-home orders in several states, with Trump's encouragement. Several states are starting to reopen some businesses, with more planned in May.

Many educators, too, are eager to get students back, having concluded that remote education is far less effective and may leave lasting academic damage. They also fear for the safety and well-being of students who rely on schools for food, health care, social services and emotional stability.

The people who most want to return to school may be the students themselves.

"I want to go back so bad," said Zoe Davis, a 16-year-old sophomore at Chalmette High School in Chalmette, La. Unlike some others, she has a computer and Internet access, and has been keeping up with her classes at home. But she said learning over Zoom is far from ideal, and she misses bonding with classmates over school activities, like the dance team.

"I'm like, 'Wow, school is a major part of my life and why I am who I am,' " she said.

Thirty-four states plus the District of Columbia have ordered schools to remain closed this spring, and another seven have recommended it. Districts remain unsure whether they will be allowed to run in-person summer school.

White House guidelines call for schools to reopen in a second phase of recovery, after symptoms and cases of covid-19 in a state or region have been on the decline for at least two 14-day periods. Rural areas are likely to open first. Last week, Montana Gov. Steve Bullock, D, said his state's schools could begin reopening in May, and new guidelines in Colorado allow for small groups to be taught in person.

But most school leaders are looking toward next school year.

Hinojosa said that Plan A is for Dallas schools to open Aug. 15 under normal conditions, but he believes that's unlikely. So he's considering a schedule in which some students attend school in person on Mondays and Wednesdays and others on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with everyone remote on Fridays. He said lunches would probably need to be in classrooms to avoid large groups, and he is reconsidering sports.

"In Texas we have two sports - football and spring football," he joked. He suggested replacing tackle football with flag football, though plenty of spit and sweat are exchanged in that sport, too. Perhaps more realistically, he raised pushing the season back. A decision will need to be made soon, with summer practices scheduled to begin in July, he said. "This is just around the corner."

In Montana, the state recommended districts consider a mix of in-person and remote learning, and some are planning just that, a spokesman said.

D.C. schools are considering partial openings, first bringing back younger students learning to read, or perhaps seniors, to keep them on track to graduation.

Minnesota state guidelines recommend turning desks to face the same direction and hand washing when entering and leaving the classroom. In Miami, officials are looking to schedule lunch in multiple shifts and smaller groups for physical education.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom, D, last week suggested reducing group activities - such as meals, physical education and recess - and staggered start times. He said he was beginning to talk with school officials about how to make it work.

"We need to get our kids back to school. I need to get my kids back in school," said Newsom, whose children are 8, 6 and 4. "We need to deal with their mental health and parents' mental health."

In San Diego, opening in the fall would require staggered start times and reconfigured classrooms to allow for social distancing, said Howard Taras, the district's physician. In some high school classes, he said, students with the same schedule could be grouped together, with teachers instead of students rotating between rooms to reduce hallway traffic.

He said teachers and students may need to wear masks while at school, and the district will have to ensure that personal protective equipment is available. Teachers, students and staff may have to routinely be tested for coronavirus. And he said that the district may need to run buses half-full to spread out students on board, which means adding more trips. That would be expensive, at a time when state and local governments are bracing for budget cuts.

"I can see this as a scheduling nightmare," Taras said. He said the district will "need a supercomputer" to iron out the details. "But those are the kinds of solutions that we may have to resort to."

In New York City, the nation's largest district, there may be a combination of remote and in-person learning, or staggered starts, said Edie Sharp, chief of staff for the city schools. Her team is also studying other countries' approaches, including certain Chinese provinces, which first brought back students closest to graduation, and Denmark, which began with the youngest.

"There are arguments on either side," Sharp said. "Some of the research on what we see on younger grades and learning loss is really, really compelling. On other side, graduating seniors are very anxious about pathways to high school completion."

Amid the planning, there's plenty of skepticism. Teachers, their unions and some administrators fear political pressure will force a return before it is safe. Some dismiss the social distancing ideas under consideration as a joke, saying it would be nearly impossible to prevent virus transmission in a school.

Teachers unions played a major role in pressuring schools to close across the country, including in New York City, where Mayor Bill de Blasio, D, resisted closing schools before changing course. To date, the United Federation of Teachers counts at least 52 teachers and teacher aides who have died of complications of covid-19, out of the 120,000 employees it represents in New York.

The union is warning about a return to the classroom. An online petition it created lays out a list of demands before schools should reopen. It garnered more than 43,000 signatures in its first two days.

It won't be safe to reopen until there is "massive and accurate" testing, as well as contact tracing and isolation for those who are infected, said Lily Eskelsen García, president of the National Education Association, the country's largest union. She is frustrated by what she sees as

inappropriate pressure from Trump and worries it will lead to bad decisions. "We need evidence it's safe for those kids to go back."

Jami Cole, a third-grade teacher at a school outside of Oklahoma City, gets choked up thinking about the students she has not been able to see for a month. Last week, she returned to her classroom and tearfully sorted through their artwork. Still, she's worries political pressure will influence Oklahoma's governor, Republican Kevin Stitt, to open schools prematurely. He allowed some businesses to reopen Friday.

Cole has rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disorder, and her husband is undergoing treatment for leukemia. "The thought of going back too early absolutely terrifies me," she said.

There are more practical concerns, too. Hand washing is part of any plan for reducing spread of infection, but older schools don't have many sinks, said Mary Filardo, the founder and director of the 21st Century School Fund, a nonprofit that analyzes facilities and other urban education issues.

"Imagine a school of 500 with maybe 10 sinks total for students," she said. Modern schools, she said, have far more bathrooms, but older buildings may have just one per gender, per floor. Some school bathrooms lack such basics as soap.

In more affluent schools, she added, children may have their own crayons and calculators, but in low-income areas, they share, spreading germs.

Hanging over these concerns is the question of whether parents would be comforted enough by these tactics to send their kids to school. In the days before schools closed last month, some districts saw attendance plummet.

"Public confidence may not be there yet," said Michael Casserly, executive director of the **Council of Great City Schools**, a nonprofit coalition of 76 of the nation's largest urban public school systems, which is studying these options. "We don't want to open them and people get sick or nobody shows up or some of both."

Opening too early could leave schools facing illnesses or lawsuits, or both, said Daniel A. Domench, executive director of AASA, the School Superintendents Association.

"You would have to tie kids down to their seats to keep them six feet apart," he said. Still, he said, schools are forced to prepare. When "the governor says schools are going to open, what choice does a superintendent have?"

The Washington Post

Under pressure to reopen this fall, school leaders plot unprecedented changes

By

[Laura Meckler](#), [Valerie Strauss](#) and [Moriah Balingit](#)

April 27, 2020 at 8:56 a.m. EDT

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their jobs. Conservative activists have protested stay-at-home orders in several states, with Trump's encouragement. Several states are [starting to reopen](#) some businesses, with more planned in May.

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In San Diego, opening in the fall would require staggered start times and reconfigured classrooms to allow for social distancing, said Howard Taras, the district’s physician. In some high school classes, he said, students with the same schedule could be grouped together, with teachers instead of students rotating between rooms to reduce hallway traffic.

He said teachers and students may need to wear masks while at school, and the district will have to ensure that personal protective equipment is available.

Teachers, students and staff may have to routinely be tested for [coronavirus](#). And he said that the district may need to run buses half-full to spread out students on board, which means adding more trips. That would be expensive, at a time when state and local governments are bracing for budget cuts.

“I can see this as a scheduling nightmare,” Taras said. He said the district will “need a supercomputer” to iron out the details. “But those are the kinds of solutions that we may have to resort to.”

In New York City, the nation’s largest district, there may be a combination of remote and in-person learning, or staggered starts, said Edie Sharp, chief of staff for the city schools. Her team is also studying other countries’ approaches, including certain Chinese provinces, which first brought back students closest to graduation, and Denmark, which began with the youngest.

“There are arguments on either side,” Sharp said. “Some of the research on what we see on younger grades and learning loss is really, really compelling. On the other side, graduating seniors are very anxious about pathways to high school completion.”

Not so fast

Amid the planning, there’s plenty of skepticism. Teachers, their unions and some administrators fear political pressure will force a return before it is safe. Some dismiss the social distancing ideas under consideration as a joke, saying it would be nearly impossible to prevent virus transmission in a school.

Teachers unions played a major role in pressuring schools to close across the country, including in New York City, where Mayor Bill de Blasio (D) resisted closing schools before changing course. To date, the United Federation of Teachers counts at least 52 teachers and teacher aides who have died of complications of covid-19, out of the 120,000 employees it represents in New York.

The union is warning about a return to the classroom. An [online petition](#) it created lays out a list of demands before schools should reopen. It garnered more than 43,000 signatures in its first two days.

It won’t be safe to reopen until there is “massive and accurate” testing, as well as contact tracing and isolation for those who are infected, said Lily Eskelsen García, president of the National Education Association, the country’s largest union. She is frustrated by what she sees as inappropriate pressure from Trump and worries it will lead to bad decisions. “We need evidence it’s safe for those kids to go back.”

Jami Cole, a third-grade teacher at a school outside of Oklahoma City, gets choked up thinking about the students she has not been able to see for a month. Last week,

she returned to her classroom and tearfully sorted through their artwork. Still, she's worries political pressure will influence Oklahoma's governor, Republican Kevin Stitt, to open schools prematurely. He allowed some businesses to reopen Friday.

Cole has rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disorder, and her husband is undergoing treatment for leukemia. "The thought of going back too early absolutely terrifies me," she said.

There are more practical concerns, too. Hand washing is part of any plan for reducing spread of infection, but older schools don't have many sinks, said Mary Filardo, the founder and director of the 21st Century School Fund, a nonprofit that analyzes facilities and other urban education issues.

"Imagine a school of 500 with maybe 10 sinks total for students," she said. Modern schools, she said, have far more bathrooms, but older buildings may have just one per gender, per floor. Some school bathrooms lack such basics as soap.

In more affluent schools, she added, children may have their own crayons and calculators, but in low-income areas, they share, spreading germs.

Hanging over these concerns is the question of whether parents would be comforted enough by these tactics to send their kids to school. In the days before schools closed last month, some districts saw attendance plummet.

"Public confidence may not be there yet," said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of Great City Schools, a nonprofit coalition of 76 of the nation's largest urban public school systems, which is studying these options. "We don't want to open them and people get sick or nobody shows up or some of both."

Opening too early could leave schools facing illnesses or lawsuits, or both, said Daniel A. Domench, executive director of AASA, the School Superintendents Association.

"You would have to tie kids down to their seats to keep them six feet apart," he said. Still, he said, schools are forced to prepare. When "the governor says schools are going to open, what choice does a superintendent have?"



NEWS 5
CLEVELAND

CMUSD, other urban districts nationwide seek more federal funding

The functionality of education has changed in a matter of weeks

By: [Emily Hamilton](#)

Posted at 6:03 PM, Apr 28, 2020

and last updated 6:54 PM, Apr 28, 2020

CLEVELAND — As the face of education has changed in just a matter of weeks, so has the need for accessible, reliable technology for students and teachers.

“And that’s why we’re asking for the federal government to be thinking of this now and not for it to occur later,” said Eric Gordon, Superintendent of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.

Gordon, along with 61 other superintendents nationwide, are asking Congress for more than \$200 billion in additional relief.

“Staving off the budget revenue shortfalls that we know we can anticipate,” Gordon said, “Across the country we’re expecting a 15 to 25 percent reduction in revenue.”

Those superintendents are seeking those funds to offset costs of student meal services and the purchase of software needed for remote learning.

“We’re going to need the dollars in place to make sure that we can provide those needs,” Gordon said.

President Trump signed the CARES Act last month, which would provide relief for K-12 schools across the country.

However, Gordon said CMUSD has yet to see that money.

“The CARES dollars that have already put in there are certainly welcomed,” Gordon said, “But they’re a fraction of what was even in the recovery package for the recession in 2008 through 2010.”

Additionally, Gordon said he worries Cleveland voters who have fallen on hard times may not pass a school levy closure in November, which would result in a nearly \$70 million financial hit for the district.

“People’s worlds have changed dramatically and if people have suddenly found themselves in unemployment and worried about keeping their homes, that’s going to jeopardize whether they think that can support a levy,” Gordon said.

Furthermore, the jobs of CMSD employees could be in jeopardy.

“Without relief and assuming that we are going to see the kinds of budget reductions that the governor has signaled and others have, there will be an inevitable budget cut coming that will impact personnel,” Gordon said.

The Council of the Great City Schools provided more information about the request in a written release below:

“The Council of the Great City Schools, a nationwide coalition of urban school districts chaired by CMSD Chief Executive Officer Eric Gordon, is urging Congress to allocate more than \$200 billion in new funding for local school systems in the next coronavirus-related spending bill.

“In a letter to Capitol Hill, the council calls for an additional \$175 billion in Educational Stabilization Funds. Distribution would be based on the formula for Title I, which provides financial assistance for schools and local educational agencies with high percentages of children from low-income households.

“The council also is urging Congress to add \$13 billion for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, \$12 billion for Title I, \$2 billion for a fund that helps schools obtain affordable broadband Internet and emergency infrastructure funds that include schools.

“The closure of Ohio’s schools posed challenges for high-poverty districts like Cleveland, including Internet access needed for remote learning. Up to 40 percent of students’ homes had no access to high-speed Internet and many students relied on schools and libraries for access to computers.”

Albuquerque Journal

APS among school districts seeking more federal funding

By [Shelby Perea / Journal Staff Writer](#)

Published: Tuesday, April 28th, 2020 at 3:20pm

Reedy signed a letter drawn up by the **Council of the Great City Schools** that asks for \$175 billion for education in the next coronavirus appropriations bill. The letter, addressed to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and others, also urges Congress to earmark billions of dollars for special education and low-income families.

“The downpayment you made in our public education system by allocating some \$13.5 billion in the CARES Act for our schools was a critical lifeline for public education in this country. But we now urge you to provide a second, substantially larger, installment for public school systems as you work on the fourth supplemental appropriations bill,” says the letter, which is signed by more than 60 school leaders.

Getting emergency infrastructure funding for public schools is also deemed a priority in the letter.

While in-person school has been closed due to COVID-19, APS and districts across the state are still feeding and educating students from afar.

APS is bracing for major hits to its budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1, projecting a multimillion-dollar shortfall even before state lawmakers revisit New Mexico’s spending plan.

Education Week

Nearly 300,000 Teacher Jobs at Risk if Feds Don't Step Up, Big Districts Warn

By [Andrew Ujifusa](#) on April 28, 2020 1:57 PM

Unless Congress provides a massive infusion of aid to help schools handle the fallout from the coronavirus, hundreds of thousands of teachers will lose their jobs and [an "educational catastrophe" would result](#), warns an organization that represents large urban districts.

In a Tuesday letter to federal lawmakers, the [Council of the Great City Schools](#) echoes previous calls from other education groups for Congress to provide at least \$175 billion in new aid for schools that would flow through the existing Title I federal formula that targets disadvantaged students. And the council also wants billions in new aid for Title I itself, special education grants, and remote learning services.

If that additional aid to offset significant cuts elsewhere isn't forthcoming as the economy craters, the council has a dire prediction.

"An estimated 20 percent loss in combined state and local revenues would likely result in some 275,000 teachers being laid off in big city public school systems alone," the superintendents tell Congress. "The ramifications are not only profound for the students involved, but for the nation. This educational catastrophe could weaken the country's economic foundation for years to come without significant financial support from Congress."

A spokeswoman for the group, Tonya Harris, said the figure of 275,000 teacher layoffs comes from "preliminary estimates" from some of the chief financial officers for districts represented by the council. However, Harris declined to share more information about those estimates. The letter was signed by the school superintendents for Atlanta, Baltimore, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami-Dade, New York City, and several others.

A National Center for Education Statistics estimate from a few years ago put the number of full- and part-time public school teachers [at 3.8 million](#). So the loss of 275,000 teachers would likely be a significant share of the teacher workforce, although we don't know if the council's estimate can or should be compared directly to those NCES figures.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided more than \$13 billion in funds earmarked for school districts, and they could receive additional CARES money via governors. But education lobbying groups have said that's not nearly enough.

In early April, a coalition of organizations including the two national teachers' unions [pushed for at least \\$200 billion in aid](#) for disadvantaged students, remote learning, and other priorities. The Council of the Great City Schools' new letter mirrors those demands.

There have been no clear signals as to whether federal lawmakers will direct more coronavirus emergency money to schools in the next round of federal aid. Schools would likely benefit from any money Congress sends to help state and local governments shore up their budgets. But that would shift much of the political lobbying and jockeying to individual states, instead of guaranteeing a set level of federal assistance.

There's evidence that the 2009 stimulus [saved a significant number of teacher jobs](#), although it did not prevent layoffs for many districts. Congress provided \$10 billion in additional money in 2010 to shore up education jobs.

It's hard to identify the impact of the coronavirus on schools in precise terms, and the impacts will surely vary significantly by state and district. But the council's letter states that some big-city districts "are now projecting 15 to 25 percent cuts in overall revenues going into next school year." And we do have some other relatively early estimates about the pandemic's possible financial impact.

An analysis published earlier this month found that even after CARES Act aid is factored in, an across-the-board cut of 8 percent in state aid in all 50 states [would lead to a net cut in per-pupil spending](#).

And a separate study reported that [schools would need \\$70 billion](#) in each of the next three years to avoid significant cuts such as teacher layoffs. For perspective, \$70 billion is close to the size of the U.S. Department of Education's annual budget.



NEW YORK POST

Carranza, national school leaders call for \$200B in federal aid or risk layoffs

By [Selim Algar](#)

April 28, 2020 | 4:50pm | Updated

School leaders from across the country — including New York schools boss Richard Carranza — want \$200 billion in coronavirus aid from the feds to prevent layoffs.

Members of the Council of the Great City Schools warned of dire consequences for public education without a massive infusion of federal money in a joint letter to lawmakers.

The missive cautioned that up to 275,000 teachers could get laid off without the funding.

Carranza and his colleagues wrote that the pandemic has ripped open gaping budget shortfalls that threaten the functioning of major school systems across the country, including New York City.

“These budget cuts will mean teaching staff will be laid off, class sizes will balloon, and remaining teaching staff will likely be redeployed into classes and subjects that they may not be used to teaching—all at a time when they will be asked to address unprecedented unfinished learning from the last school year,” the letter states.

The council added that districts have spent hundreds of millions of dollars on electronic devices to enable remote learning and needs help paying for them.

The city **DOE has spent \$269,187,271** on iPads and associated services since the shuttering of city schools in March due to the pandemic.

The letter questions the effectiveness of remote learning and asserts that kids will be in academic arrears whenever they return to school.

“Some teachers will have little more than a crash course on how to conduct online learning,” it states. “And, the research on the efficacy of virtual learning is not particularly strong. The truth is that there is simply no substitute for students being with their teachers all day.”

Politico

Urban school leaders predict teacher layoffs in 'educational catastrophe' without federal intervention

By Nicole Gaudiano

04/28/2020 05:02 PM EDT

Nearly 300,000 teachers could be laid off from schools in big cities without additional federal relief funding to ease the impact of the coronavirus on school budgets, according to the **Council of the Great City Schools**.

In a [Tuesday letter to congressional leaders](#), the organization wrote that several big-city school districts are projecting 15 to 25 percent cuts in overall revenues going into next school year. The group said an estimated 20 percent loss in combined state and local revenues would likely result in some 275,000 teachers being laid off in big-city public school systems alone.

“The ramifications are not only profound for the students involved, but for the nation,” wrote the Council members, which include superintendents in Florida, California, New York City and Newark, N.J. “This educational catastrophe could weaken the country’s economic foundation for years to come without significant financial support from Congress.”

The letter, signed by 62 big-city superintendents, renews the organization’s call for more than \$200 billion in additional stimulus funds for education.

The group wants \$175 billion in education stabilization funds to be distributed through the Title I formula. It also wants an additional \$13 billion for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, \$12 billion in additional Title I program funding, \$2 billion for the education technology program E-Rate and emergency infrastructure funds that include public schools.

K-12 funding in the CARES Act, [H.R. 748 \(116\)](#), will help offset unexpected costs the school systems are incurring in providing meal services to students and reestablishing instruction, they wrote.

“At the same time, dark clouds are forming on the educational horizon that will spell disaster if Congress does not intervene,” they wrote.

The organization predicted a “far more severe” situation than during the 2008-09 recession that promises “much more substantial damage.” Along with teachers being laid off, the organization wrote that class sizes will balloon and remaining teaching staff will be redeployed to classes and subjects they’re not used to teaching.

Additional funds will help public schools add summer school, expand the school day in the fall, retain teachers, address the needs of vulnerable students and narrow the digital divide, they wrote.

To view online:

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/education/article/2020/04/urban-school-leaders-predict-teacher-layoffs-in-educational-catastrophe-without-federal-intervention-1926448>

Chalkbeat

Returning to school buildings in the fall will be complicated. In some places, it's far from clear it will happen.

By [Kalyn Belsha](#) Apr 29, 2020, 5:03pm EDT

When school buildings started to close due to the coronavirus, many teachers and parents thought the disruption would last a few weeks. As the school closures extended, many have clung to the idea that if they made it to fall, life would return to normal. That's not looking so certain right now.

Teachers unions are warning that sending educators into crowded buildings without widespread testing for coronavirus will amount to an unacceptable risk. Officials in big city districts are finding that some ideas for keeping students further apart, like running extra bus routes and reducing class sizes, could be expensive at a time when budgets are tight. And worries about a second wave of infections have some wondering what once felt far-fetched: Should students just keep staying home?

“We don't have a single member who is not planning for some amount of distance learning next year,” said Mike Magee, the CEO of Chiefs for Change, a nonprofit network of district and state education leaders from across the country. “These things are impossible to predict, but it would be foolish not to have a system ready, if in fact you need to continue distance learning or if you have to return students to distance learning at some point next year.”

Students and teachers not returning in the fall would bring a host of challenges. Parents would face the continued burden of providing or arranging emergency child care, limiting their ability to work and efforts to kickstart the economy. Kids without computers or tablets would continue to depend on what districts provide, and students requiring special education services and English learners would almost certainly go without some of the support they would have received in person.

But COVID-19 can be deadly, and reopening schools will require some ability to assure teachers, students, and parents that they are safe. In New York City, where 68 education department staffers [have died](#), the teachers union says it won't support a return without testing for all students and staff, daily temperature checks, and tracing of those who come into contact with someone who shows symptoms.

“Despite our members' eagerness to return to their classrooms, we are going to insist that no one — student, teacher or family member — should be back in school until protections like these are in place,” New York City's teachers union chief Michael Mulgrew [wrote](#) Wednesday.

The leaders of the country's two largest teachers unions have called for similar measures, and have said they wouldn't rule out teachers strikes if schools reopened too soon.

Randi Weingarten, the head of the American Federation of Teachers, [told Politico](#) that if schools reopened without proper safety measures, “you scream bloody murder” and “use your public megaphones.”

Already, the heads of some of the country’s largest school districts have expressed similar wariness to open quickly. Janice Jackson, the CEO of Chicago Public Schools, [has said](#) that remote learning “may be the new normal even in the fall.” The superintendent of Los Angeles Unified, Austin Beutner, [said](#) the city’s schools won’t reopen until there is a “robust system” of testing and contact tracing in place.

Is that likely? Though U.S. testing capacity has increased in recent weeks, [researchers](#) and [public health officials](#) [say](#) that in most parts of the country, there is not yet enough testing to allow people to safely go back to work. And while some states are [making a big push to hire contract tracers](#), other states are just starting to plan.

Still, districts are under pressure to reopen. On Monday, [President Trump encouraged](#) the nation’s governors to “seriously consider” starting to reopen schools as part of his push to jumpstart the economy. The White House is [finalizing guidelines](#), drafted by federal health officials, that suggest schools consider spacing student desks six feet apart, asking staff to wear face masks, and limiting how much student groups mix.

School districts also may not ultimately be in control. In many states, governors ended up making the calls to close school buildings as coronavirus began to spread — and school districts may need to heed their guidance again when it comes to reopening.

For now, school districts are planning for multiple possible scenarios for the fall and trying to work out how much each would cost.

“It’s like the decisions they have to make around snow days on steroids,” said Michael Casserly, [the executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition representing dozens of the nation’s largest school districts](#). “They’ve been very clear that there’s nobody coming to save them, and that the onus is on them to figure it out.”

When buildings do open, officials are considering how they could cut down on the time children spend in big groups and institute some forms of social distancing. That could mean relatively minor changes like closing or limiting the use of cafeterias and playgrounds or canceling things like assemblies and extracurricular activities. Even with those changes, whether it’s possible to keep kids apart from their classmates in any meaningful way is far from clear.

More sweeping efforts to keep students apart by educating different groups of students in shifts or on opposite days wouldn’t fully solve the child care conundrum facing working parents and could be hugely expensive. Staggering start times could mean doubling bus routes, for example.

Schools are also considering whether they should buy different student desks, install plastic barriers, or outfit buildings with hand-washing stations.

“Changes to the physical structure of buildings and changes to transportation ... These types of things are hard under normal circumstances,” said Magee of Chiefs for Change. “Trying to, on the fly, outfit your building in a way that allows every student to stay six feet apart throughout the course of the day and wash their hands every hour is not actually a small task.”

It would help if the federal government set aside funds to make these kinds of changes. Districts got millions in the wake of the shooting in Parkland, Florida to improve the security of school buildings, Magee noted.

For now, some district budgets are going in the opposite direction, with the economic downturn prompting cuts. The country’s biggest teachers unions, several civil rights groups and many superintendents have asked Congress to allocate more money to schools in the next coronavirus relief package.

And some are worried even if they come up with a solid plan for reopening school buildings, parents will choose to keep their children home.

Pike Township Schools, an Indianapolis school district serving about 11,000 students, is considering creating a voluntary online school option for families concerned about sending their children back. They’re trying to plan for that scenario without knowing what the district’s budget will be or exactly how families will respond once the state-mandated closures end, Superintendent Flora Reichenadter said.

“Parents really want answers to things I can’t give them right now, and they are frustrated about that,” she said. “And I understand.”

Education Dive

4 states receive 'emergency education relief' funds

[Linda Jacobson @lrj417](#)

April 29, 2020

Hawaii, Louisiana, Maryland and Maine are the first states to apply for and receive emergency education funds totaling nearly \$3 billion they can use for either K-12 or higher education, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

The fund, part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, is separate from the [\\$13.2 billion](#) available to state and local education agencies. The Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund is essentially [a block grant](#) giving governors wide discretion in using the money to support "needs related to COVID-19." The amounts available to states range from more than \$355 million for California to about \$4.4 million for Vermont.

It's unclear, however, whether governors intend to split their allotment evenly between K-12 and higher education or direct the funds to the needs they see as most pressing.

Our free newsletter will bring you the latest news and trends in K-12 education. From policy to classroom tech, we'll deliver the intel you need to know.

In Oklahoma, which qualifies for almost \$40 million, there's already a difference in opinion on how the funds might be used. Gov. Kevin Stitt, a Republican, has suggested directing some of the money toward the state's [Opportunity Scholarship Fund](#) — the type of [tax credit scholarship program](#) U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has been promoting for the past year.

But State Superintendent Joy Hofmeister has other plans in mind.

"We do not support that idea," she said. "Our proposal will focus on meeting the immediate needs of public school students whose education has been most significantly impacted by COVID-19."

Officials in Florida are preparing a plan, according to a spokesperson. Missouri education officials [have surveyed](#) district leaders on their greatest needs to determine how they would use the funds. And in Hawaii, which was allotted about \$10 million, Democratic Gov. David Ige's office has indicated the Hawaii State Department of Education would be able to apply for a subgrant once the process has been determined, according to Lindsay Ku'uipo Chambers, communications director for the department.

Further details from governors' offices in the four states were not available.

A 'litany of needs'

Michael Magee, CEO of Chiefs for Change, urged governors to “work with their state education chiefs to ensure funding goes where the research and evidence suggest it will do the most good for students.” He said the organization is preparing some recommendations meant to guide state leaders.

But he added Congress shouldn't be putting governors in a position to choose between their K-12 and higher education systems. “We will need more stimulus,” he said.

Earlier this month, 12 leading education organizations, representing teachers, parents, school and district leaders, and other specialists [submitted a letter](#) to Congressional leaders calling for \$200 billion for K-12 education — \$175 billion “to help bolster state budgets,” \$13 billion for special education and \$12 billion for Title I “to help school districts address the litany of needs for these students, playing catch up in the aftermath of COVID.”

On Wednesday, the **Council of the Great City Schools** also sent [its own letter](#), calling the \$13.2 billion a “down payment” and warning “dark clouds are forming on the educational horizon that will spell disaster if Congress does not intervene.” Superintendents of 62 large, urban districts signed the letter.

Meanwhile on Monday, DeVos announced [a competitive grant program](#) for distributing another \$180 million in discretionary funds for K-12 schools under the CARES Act.

“This is the time for local education leaders to unleash their creativity and ingenuity, and I'm looking forward to seeing what they do to provide education freedom and economic opportunity for America's students,” DeVos said in a statement.

The statement mentions “microgrants to families” for technology, statewide virtual learning programs and new models for providing remote instruction as three categories for the awards.

But reacting to the announcement, American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten said the secretary was using the money to “move full-steam ahead with turning our public schools into online cash cows for her corporate friends and offering families vouchers that divert resources away from the schools that need those resources.”

USA Today

What schools will look like when they reopen: Scheduled days home, more online learning, lots of hand-washing

[Erin Richards](#)

USA TODAY

April 29, 2020

Imagine, for a moment, American children [returning to school this fall](#).

The school week looks vastly different, with most students attending school two or three days a week and doing the rest of their learning at home. At school, desks are spaced apart to discourage touching. Some classrooms extend into unused gymnasiums, libraries or art rooms – left vacant while schools put on hold activities that cram lots of children together.

Arrival, dismissal and recess happen on staggered schedules and through specific doors to promote physical distancing. Students eat lunch at their desks. Those old enough to switch classes move with the same cohort every day – or teachers move around while students stay put – to discourage mingling with new groups.

Teachers and other education staff at higher risk of contracting the virus continue to teach from home, while younger or healthier educators teach in-person.

Everyone washes their hands. A lot.

Frequently touched school surfaces get wiped down. A lot.

That outline of a potential school day was drawn from interviews with more than 20 education leaders determining what reopened schools might look like come fall. In the absence of a vaccine for COVID-19, they know social distancing and hygiene will be important to limit spreading the virus. The question is how to implement those measures in schools usually filled with crowded hallways, class sizes of more than 30 people and lunchrooms of hundreds.

"The whole thing is overwhelming," said Dan Weisberg, a former district official and the head of TNTP, a nonprofit formerly known as The New Teacher Project that helps districts recruit and hire more effective teachers.

Beyond blanket health recommendations, schools will have to figure out the rest by themselves – with little new money to pay for the changes they need to make.

"This is where federal dollars could help," Weisberg said. "This is where state guidance could help. This is where galvanizing people behind the idea on how to plan for next year could help."

Instead, schools are getting conflicting cues. President Donald Trump reportedly said in a call with governors Monday that they should ["seriously consider" reopening public schools](#) before the end of the academic term. That's after 43 states and Washington, D.C., have already [ordered or recommended schools be closed](#) through the end of the school year, according to Education Week magazine.

When will schools reopen?

[Not soon, education leaders say, despite Trump's declarations](#)

A [draft of new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) on reopening the economy recommends that schools place desks six feet apart, serve lunch in classrooms and close playgrounds, according to The Associated Press.

The [CDC's guidance for schools](#) so far has been vague. It suggested schools look to their local health officials to make decisions on dismissals, event cancellations and other social distancing measures. The CDC never suggested outright that schools should cancel – governors and school leaders called for that on their own.

'Economics will drive choices' made by school districts

Reopening schools is critical to fully bring back the economy. More parents can work when their children are in school. Just as important: Many kids aren't learning much at home. Those learning the least are students who lack devices and internet access – many of whom were already academically behind before schools closed.

U.S. schools were not prepared for an overnight shift to virtual learning, and the situation has exacerbated the inequities between students who have support and resources at home and those who don't.

'Historic academic regression': [Why homeschooling is so hard amid school closures](#)

But bringing kids back to school presents major worries about health, not so much for children – who seem to be less at risk for getting sick – but for their teachers and parents. Preliminary research has shown that children can carry and transmit the virus without showing symptoms themselves.

Many school buildings lack the space to keep children a recommended six feet apart. That's why education leaders foresee a need to continue virtual learning, with kids attending school in person on alternating days or weeks.

And that's only the start. Districts also must figure out food service, especially for the [52% of students who qualify for free- or reduced-price lunches](#) and depend on those meals. Schools must provide enough qualified staff to teach students in smaller groups. They must provide emotional

support to staff and students. And they need to develop measures to help catch up children who have fallen the farthest behind.

"There is going to be attrition of teachers," said Weisberg. "And whatever challenges exist are going to be way worse if you're not fully staffed."

Then schools have to figure out how to pay for it all.

"Economics will drive the choices districts make," said Marguerite Roza, a professor and director of the Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University.

On Monday, superintendents from 62 of the country's largest school districts called on Congress to provide about \$200 billion more in educational stabilization funds to help prop up budgets, buy more technology for families and better serve low-income students and those with special needs.

In California's [Long Beach Unified School District](#), with 84 schools and 10,000 employees, departments are reducing their budgets in anticipation of receiving less money from the state. Superintendent Chris Steinhauser, who signed the letter to Congress, said his district expects to receive around \$10 million to \$15 million in federal stimulus dollars from the CARES Act, but that's about one-quarter of the federal aid the district got in the first year of the last economic recession.

"I would argue the economic meltdown of today is going to be far worse," Steinhauser said.

How other countries are reopening schools

U.S. leaders are watching and learning from other countries that are reopening their schools. Denmark [reopened schools on April 15](#) for lower grades. Classrooms held no more than 10 students each, and desks were placed more than six feet apart. In some cases, children move in cohorts that remain the same day to day.

Leaders in Israel this week tentatively approved [sending students up to third grade back to school](#) starting Sunday, according to The Times of Israel. Older students will continue learning from home. Classes will be kept small, and kindergartners will be split into groups that meet on different days, according to the plan, which is contingent on infection rates staying low.

Sweden's strategy: [Top official says 'herd immunity' might be a few weeks away](#)

Shanghai and Beijing started bringing some students back this week. Germany has brought middle and high school students back to complete advancement exams.

Estonia plans to start bringing back children with disabilities in mid-May, according to Jake Bryant, a former teacher and associate partner at the global consultancy firm [McKinsey & Company](#), which released a report this week with ideas for schools to consider as they plan to reopen.

U.S. schools could consider bringing back vulnerable students first for more one-on-one help, or scheduling more days of in-person instruction for them, Bryant said. Students with disabilities, or those whose families rely on schools for food or other assistance, could attend in-person three days a week, while more highly resourced students with access to technology at home could attend two days a week.

"I don't believe reopening will be a linear path to normalcy," Bryant said.

He also said schools will have to get better at remote learning, whether because of a virus resurgence, a need to quarantine infected students or because school days need to be split up to create more space in classrooms.

"Students will face a steep hill to return to grade level, as they likely have less learning time until a vaccine is widely available," he added.

Some lessons can be learned from schools in West Africa that reopened in 2015 after months of closures to contain the Ebola virus outbreak.

Deborah Malac, a U.S. ambassador to Liberia at the time, said cities and counties will probably have to adopt a patchwork of solutions, based on their rates of local infections. She said the lack of data about infections and other aspects of COVID-19 is still the greatest challenge facing U.S. health officials.

"We went through all of this (in Liberia) for months," she said. "Once the epidemic is in front of you and you're trying to catch up, it's not a pleasant place to be in."

Beyond academics, schools are burdened by meal distribution

Schools have become a key resource for families needing food assistance, which will likely continue no matter what schooling scenario takes shape.

Breakfast and lunch in buildings this fall will largely depend on how districts weather food and money shortages now plaguing emergency feeding programs that have provided meals to students ever since schools closed.

Food service workers have had to rethink traditional breakfast because of shortages of staples like milk, according to Diane Pratt-Heavner, spokeswoman for the nonprofit [School Nutrition Association](#).

"Most of our school nutrition directors have been working through their (non-perishable) inventory to make sure nothing is wasted, but that means that when they get back to school they won't have any reserves," she said. "So they'll have to find a way to replenish in order to give students a proper meal."

Katie Wilson, CEO of the [Urban School Food Alliance](#), says the 12 large school districts in her association are collectively losing \$38.9 million a week by serving food to their students during school closures without the revenue they generate from students who pay for meals.

Without a federal bailout, school food programs will be forced to make cuts, meaning there may be fewer cafeteria workers to prepare meals, Wilson said. Schools will also have to figure out how to prepare and serve foods in buildings while adhering to social distancing measures.

School food workers are already running low on supplies, gloves, masks and cleaning supplies, Pratt-Heavner and Wilson said.

Education Week

Here's How Many Teaching Jobs Could Be Lost in Each State in a COVID-19 Recession

By [Madeline Will](#) on April 30, 2020 12:01 AM

Almost 320,000 teaching jobs could be lost if states cut their education budgets by 15 percent in a coronavirus-inflicted recession, a new analysis has found.

That hypothetical cut would mean an 8.4 percent reduction in the U.S. teaching corps, with some states seeing reductions as large as 20 percent, according to the analysis by the Learning Policy Institute. With schools cutting that many teaching positions—either through layoffs or eliminating vacant positions—class sizes would increase.

"What we're hearing from some states is it's going to be a lot higher than [a 15 percent cut], but everyone's guessing at this point, so we stayed on the conservative end," said Michael Griffith, a senior school finance research and policy analyst at LPI and the author of the analysis.

On Wednesday, the Commerce Department reported that the U.S. economy contracted at a 4.8 percent pace from January to March, signaling the start of a recession. That's the biggest decline since the Great Recession, when the United States lost more than 120,000 teaching positions. (The country would have likely lost about 250,000 more teaching jobs during that time period without federal recovery money, Griffith said.)

The LPI analysis assumes that local and federal funding will remain flat. It includes [the \\$13.5 billion that schools received from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act](#) but does not assume any additional federal funding. (A coalition of education groups [has asked Congress for](#) \$200 billion in new aid for schools, but federal lawmakers have not signaled that another infusion of emergency money for schools is coming.)

Public schools spend about 80 percent of their budgets on staff salaries and benefits, and the analysis assumes that districts would continue their current spending patterns. If states slash education budgets, Griffith said, school districts would likely lay off early-career teachers first.

A national economic downturn would impact states in different ways, depending on how much their schools rely on state revenue, Griffith said. California, New York, and Texas would see the largest teacher reductions, the LPI analysis shows, while South Dakota, Rhode Island, and Montana would lose the least amount of teachers.

The impact of these cuts could come quickly, Griffith warned.

"We've never fully recovered from the last recession—we still have fewer teachers than we did in 2008," he said. "Last recession, [districts] had a lot more cushion there, and they were able to ... eliminate administrative positions, eliminate certain programs, tighten their belts, and still kind of make it [for a while] before laying off teachers."

And school districts that serve high percentages of children from low-income families will be hurt the most, since wealthy districts have high levels of local property tax revenue that can soften the blow, Griffith said.

"The more reliant you are on state funding, the harder this is going to hit you as a school district," he said. "There starts to be a separation of the haves and the have nots."

Earlier this week, the [Council of the Great City Schools](#) [estimated that 275,000 teachers could lose their jobs in big-city school districts alone](#), although the group did not provide details about that projection.

'Just Horrifying'

For the past couple years, teachers across the country have been gaining momentum as they fight for more education funding. Now, they fear, all that progress will be lost.

Already, several states [have reduced](#) anticipated pay raises for teachers. In Hawaii, the governor is considering cutting teachers' pay by 20 percent starting June 1. Corey Rosenlee, the president of the Hawaii State Teachers Association, said he's worried more about teachers being driven out of the profession en masse than he is about potential layoffs.

"I don't know how many years it's going to put us behind," he said, adding that Hawaii was just about to fund a program to address persistent teacher shortages when the coronavirus outbreak happened. "There's going to be a short-term consequence of losing teachers, ... but what is the long-term impact going to be? Right now, a lot of our students are saying, 'I can't afford to be a teacher.'"

In Arizona, where teachers staged a six-day strike in 2018 for higher wages and more school funding, there could be an 8 percent reduction in teaching jobs, according to the LPI analysis. That translates to about 4,200 lost teachers.

"That would be just horrifying for our students," said Kelley Fisher, a kindergarten teacher and a lead organizer for the grassroots group Arizona Educators United. "We already have one of the highest class size averages in the nation, and that would just make it go up."

The cuts made to school funding during the Great Recession devastated districts, she said, and they're still catching up to where they were in 2008.

"To think of going back to that again—it's not even a possibility in my mind," Fisher said. "There are so many teachers in Arizona that are willing to stand up and not let that happen again."

Huffington Post

School Districts Are Preparing To Lay Off Thousands Amid Coronavirus-Related Budget Shortfalls

Big city districts have warned that they may have to cut as many as 275,000 staff members combined as tax revenue plummets due to economic shutdowns.

By Rebecca Klein

Robert Runcie, superintendent of Broward County Public Schools in Florida, is currently preparing for a disaster.

It's not related to the multitude of logistics required in transitioning hundreds of thousands of students to distance learning after the [coronavirus](#) pandemic closed all of the district's hundreds of schools. It's the school budget cuts that could come next, a result of sharp state and local revenue shortfalls after the crisis stopped the American economy in its tracks.

"It's going to be really dramatic," Runcie, whose district is the sixth largest in the country and serves more than 260,000 students, said of the potential cuts.

On Tuesday, Runcie was one of more than 60 superintendents to [sign a letter to congressional leaders](#) warning that big urban school districts could be forced to lay off as many as 275,000 teachers unless the federal government intervenes. The schools are in desperate need of funds because they're facing an estimated 20% loss in local and state revenues, according to the letter, sent under the banner of the **Council of the Great City Schools**.

School districts were already anticipating a difficult year. Their students have endured months of academic interruption, potentially losing months of learning. Schools are scrambling to find ways to pay for unexpected coronavirus-related expenditures as their buildings have turned into community [feeding hubs around the country](#). Millions of parents have lost their jobs, leading to home-life upheaval for kids. The sudden loss of staff could turn a bad situation into a disaster.

"The ramifications are not only profound for the students involved, but for the nation," says the letter, which includes the signatures of the superintendents of New York City's and Los Angeles' schools. "This educational catastrophe could weaken the country's economic foundation for years."

Individual school districts are primarily funded through a combination of state and local revenue, with a small portion of funding from the federal government. At the local level, school districts are often reliant on dollars generated through property taxes, which can be a disadvantage for poorer areas, inextricably tying districts' fate to that of their communities' success. At the state

level, education represents one of the biggest items on a budget, often funded through a combination of income taxes and sales taxes.

As states work to revise their budgets amid unanticipated deep revenue losses, school districts have been told to prepare for draconian cuts.

In Florida, Runcie has told his community to brace for [cuts of up to 25%](#) in state funding for public schools, even though Florida already has one of the [lowest levels of per-pupil spending](#) in the country. He can quickly tick off the reasons for the new deficits.

“Disney shut down — Disney accounts for about 50 million visitors to Florida,” he noted. “The cruise industry is shuttered. So are restaurants. Last I heard, hotel occupancies were down in the single digits.”

“We know it’s coming, and unless there’s a federal infusion to help support that and offset what we see coming, it’s going to be really dramatic,” Runcie added.

If the district doesn’t get help, its leaders will start by looking to see where it could make cuts for “everything that is outside of the classroom.” But eventually it could affect class size, transportation services and, in the worst-case scenario, staffing, Runcie said.

Outside of Spokane, Washington, Freeman School District Superintendent Randy Russell said he’s preparing three budgets for next year: a normal one, one including a 5% cut and a doomsday scenario for a 10% cut.

“You’re talking about cutting right into the bone if you have to cut 5 to 10%,” said Russell, who leads a small district of about 900 students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

He estimates that 82% of his district’s budget goes to basic education services and programs, such as career and technical education, and salaries and benefits for staff. Any cut means a cut for “people and programs.” It could mean a new fee for extracurricular activities. It certainly means less wraparound and academic support for kids. “Everything would be on the table,” he said.

“As soon as you start bumping up class sizes or reducing personnel, then you’re taking away support systems for kids, and nobody wins in that scenario,” Russell said.

But so far, Marguerite Roza, director of the Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University and an expert in school finance, worries that the severity of the budget shortfalls aren’t being properly communicated to school leaders. That means that they, in turn, have been keeping communities and teachers in the dark. Staff and communities need time to prepare and process what’s to come, she said.

Districts could start making cuts now to avoid further pain in the fall, Roza said, such as halting pay to substitute teachers while schools are closed (she says she’s heard of some continuing to

pay them even amid school closures). Indeed, throughout the country, districts are the biggest employer in many communities.

“The teacher shortage is now gone,” said Roza, noting that districts may be loath to hire in the fall. “What are people going to do about all these raises they promised?”

In New York, where the governor has warned that state support for schools could fall as much as [20%](#), teachers and advocates have already started fighting back against cuts. Earlier this month, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio [unveiled a budget plan](#) that also included significant cuts to education services, including a hiring freeze and cutbacks in counseling.

New York City Council members, community members and teachers said at a virtual press conference Monday that the city and state should reduce contracts for costly consultants and institute higher taxes on the states’ billionaires to offset revenue losses. One of the more controversial suggestions included a hiring freeze for the New York Police Department.

Elementary school teacher Liat Olenick told the story of a 7-year-old student who was struggling academically already before this crisis, who has a family in transitional housing, and who has been sick, even spending some time in the hospital.

“What happens to this 7-year-old when schools reopen and her class is even bigger than it was before and our already part-time school counselor is even more part-time?” asked Olenick.

The Council of the Great City Schools letter asks congressional leaders for a significant infusion of cash to help stave off some of these cuts. The March coronavirus relief package provided schools with about \$13.5 billion in relief, but school leaders say this only scratches the surface of the problem and are asking for \$200 billion more dollars, including for special education services and Title I, the program that helps fund districts that serve primarily low-income students.

Indeed, the group points to an injection of funds Congress provided during the 2008-2009 Great Recession. These funds offered a lifeline to schools, says the letter, though some states [still aren’t up to their pre-recession spending levels](#).

“The situation now, however, is far more severe and promises to cause much more substantial damage,” says the letter.

“Vast numbers of students will be entering the next school year substantially behind academically — at exactly the time when budget cuts due to local and state revenue shortfalls will be occurring.”

USA Today

After coronavirus, expect high school dropout wave. 9/11 was the trigger for my sisters.

Coronavirus school closings are an economic and education disaster for disadvantaged students, both now and over a lifetime of accumulating inequality.

Stacy Torres
Opinion contributor
April 30, 2020

“[An educational catastrophe](#).” That’s how Michael Casserly, executive director of the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), described the effect of COVID-19 school closures on low-income K-12 students. The pandemic has sparked both an immediate emergency and a slow-motion disaster for disadvantaged students in the United States.

The abrupt transition to remote learning has exposed a stark digital divide that prevents students without computers or reliable internet access from logging on. Attendance is also hindered by other preexisting inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic, such as uncomfortable, unaffordable or unsafe housing, homelessness, parental job insecurity, and caring for siblings when parents perform essential work.

Educational disruptions especially threaten African American and Latino students, as their families suffer disproportionate unemployment and COVID-19 complications and death. Nearly half of [Latinos report job loss](#) or a pay cut compared with about a third of all U.S. adults, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey.

At Esperanza Elementary School not far from my home in East Oakland, California, [80% of families](#) have one or both parents out of work and in 60% of households, both parents lost jobs.

Economic pressure weighs on teens

Across the country, significant percentages of students aren’t attending online classes. Los Angeles Unified School District, the second largest in the nation, reports 25% of students have not logged on at all. Chronic absenteeism [raises the odds of dropping out](#) in the future. In addition to barriers accessing educational materials and setbacks acquiring foundational skills, students have also lost anchoring connections with teachers and peers that harm their ability to stay in school.

The coronavirus crisis is also putting economic pressure on jobless parents and on teenagers who may need to work or care for younger siblings. Doug Harris, a Tulane researcher who tracked students after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, predicts that “unfortunately, we’re going to see a [spike in the high school dropout rate](#)” and a decline in college enrollments.

What future do the most vulnerable U.S. students have to look forward to without our help? Will the pandemic force them to drop out and work at the grocery store or an Amazon warehouse to help their families make up for income loss? What will happen to the older siblings — many of them sisters — looking after younger siblings?

After my mom died, my caretaking responsibilities for my three younger sisters ranged from managing our household finances to attending parent-teacher conferences. I often reflect on how high school provided me with refuge. The daily encouragement I received from teachers who believed in me when I didn’t believe in myself nurtured a flickering hope that I had a future.

My sisters dropped out after 9/11

For my twin sisters Joelle and Shauna, the Sept. 11 attacks triggered school disruption that even today casts a long shadow economically, physically and mentally. The trauma compounded the loss of our mother to cancer five years earlier. At 15, they fled the attack on the World Trade Center as students at the High School for Leadership and Public Service, one of two schools closest to the towers, a block and a half away. The second plane engine [landed on the school’s roof](#), and damage closed the building and [suspended instruction for three weeks](#) as the school relocated.

My sisters soon stopped attending, missing enough work that they felt powerless to catch up. Instead, they earned their GEDs and went to work at 16. Neither graduated from college. Besides the long-term effects of educational loss, physical concerns still haunt them. Joelle had pneumonia last year, and Shauna attributes her sensitive lungs (“that look like I smoke two packs a day”) to the dust cloud that enveloped them when the towers fell. She can’t afford health insurance and worries about the risk of complications from COVID-19: “I’m going to have to ride it out alone.”

At minimum, the next stimulus package must provide billions more for educational funding, including summer school, extra instructional days next academic year, and additional tutoring and technology for poorer students. State budget deficits will force schools to do more with fewer resources, weakening their ability to support returning students if layoffs lead to larger class sizes and teacher burnout.

But we must invest in more than “making up” for lost classroom time. Securing students’ mental health is also necessary for meaningful learning. Reconnecting the most vulnerable families focused on survival will require patience, sensitivity and coordination with a sufficient number of mental health providers and school social workers.

“Lead with love, [not with lessons](#),” implores Larry Ferlazzo, a columnist for Education Week and teacher at Luther Burbank High School.

Hard-to-reach students need concerted outreach but not punitive contact from truancy officers or family court involvement. Taking a [trauma-informed](#) approach that recognizes the layers of trauma inflicted by the pandemic can bolster social and emotional support so that students not only return but also remain in school. Drafting student reentry plans that prioritize safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness and empowerment can mitigate the potential for the educational system to retraumatize students who will have endured varying degrees of calamity.

Early exit from school has lifelong negative consequences for health and economic outcomes. It leads to [accumulating inequality over a lifetime](#) that diminishes well-being later in life. If we don’t invest now in safeguarding the futures of young people, we risk the collective loss of a generation derailed.

Chalkbeat

Voluntary or mandatory? Remote or in person? Districts grapple with summer school logistics, equity questions

By [Kalyn Belsha](#) May 1, 2020, 6:23pm EDT

What does summer school look like during a pandemic?

Chicago Public Schools, like districts across the country, is still deciding. If public health offices say it's safe, Chicago may hold summer school in its buildings, perhaps in small groups. If that doesn't happen, it could be held virtually.

The district has decided one thing: students who received an “incomplete” in a class will get first priority, including students who didn't complete online work or printed work packets while school buildings were closed. But that decision has raised questions, too, about what's fair and whether the district will be able to reach students they struggled to help while school was in session.

“How will targeting students who do not have devices or Internet access for summer school play out, especially since it's likely that summer school will need to be remote as well?” Chicago's teachers union president, Jesse Sharkey, said in a statement. “These students will be further discouraged because they will feel — whether it's the intention or not — punished for that lack of access.”

As the summer months approach, school districts across the country are grappling with big questions about how to hold summer school, at a time when helping students catch up has particularly high stakes and the months to come may be devoid of activities that usually occupy children and teens. Already, some cities have announced that [summer jobs programs will be canceled](#), and many beaches, pools, and parks may also be closed.

Many districts are still deciding whether they should try to offer summer school in person or online, whether they should dramatically expand the number of students who attend, and whether the program should focus squarely on catching students up in core subjects.

“Most of them will do some form of summer school, [and] most of them will do it remotely,” said Michael Casserly, who heads the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), which represents dozens of the nation's largest city school districts. “I think their preference would be to do it in person, but I think nobody is exactly sure what decisions are likely to get made above them that might require them to go back into online mode. So they mostly decided, let's do it online and turn our attention to other things.”

The head of Los Angeles Unified, Austin Beutner, for example, [has said](#) that students who received Ds will be enrolled in summer school, which will be held remotely in four-week blocks and focus on literacy and math.

In Miami-Dade County, district officials plan to offer virtual summer school in the early summer months, mostly for students with disabilities, students who were absent a lot, and students who didn't actively participate in remote learning. If public health officials give the district the go-ahead, Miami also plans to open schools at the end of July for students who are "demonstrating low levels of academic performance" as well as English learners and students with disabilities.

In [New York City](#), middle and high school students who receive a "course in progress" mark will be automatically enrolled in summer school, while students who receive a "need improvement" may need to attend.

The [mayor has said](#) online learning will stretch into the summer, and that he anticipates many more students than usual will participate in some kind of summer learning, both to catch up and to stay busy.

"I think we have a much bigger set of kids who are going to need some more help because [of] the disruption that they went through, the trauma they went through, they didn't yet have the iPad, whatever it is," Mayor Bill de Blasio said.

Meanwhile, others are cutting summer school or focusing only on the basics. [A mid-size district in Boulder, Colorado](#), for example, is switching from a summer enrichment program that exposed students to science, technology, engineering, and math to an online program that catches students up on math and literacy. Others, [like a small district in Ames, Iowa](#), have said they plan to cancel summer school entirely and will focus on providing additional instruction when schools reopen, [though it's unclear when that may be](#).

Decisions about summer school can be fraught even in normal times, since students can experience attending as a punishment. With so many students missing traditional classroom time, the extra learning could be particularly helpful — but the lack of state tests, usual grading and attendance policies, and regular contact with teachers will make it hard to determine who needs it most.

And with many students still lacking devices and internet access, it may be hard for students to do summer work remotely. Nationally, students who attend higher-poverty schools have been more likely not to log in or make contact with their teachers while school buildings have been closed, a [recent survey](#) from the Education Week Research Center indicates.

Some civil rights groups and large teachers unions, like the American Federation of Teachers, have called for voluntary summer sessions.

There's also the open question of whether school districts will receive extra money to help pay for expanded summer school, and if some will avoid the expense to save money for what is likely to be a tough upcoming budget year.

Many [big-city superintendents](#), and some [teachers unions](#) and [economists](#), have called on Congress to put more money for summer school in a future coronavirus relief package.

“With additional federal funds, America’s public schools will be able to add summer school, expand the school day after reopening in the fall, retain and stabilize our teaching force, address the needs of our most vulnerable students, narrow the digital divide, and have a fighting chance at salvaging the futures of millions of young people,” dozens of superintendents wrote in a letter to Congressional leaders this week.

Cassie Walker Burke contributed reporting.



Schools Face Nightmare Scenario After Coronavirus Crisis

While schools debate reopening amid the coronavirus pandemic, some are worried about the budget cuts that lay ahead.

By Lauren Camera Senior Education Writer • May 1, 2020, at 4:52 p.m.

School officials from the country's biggest school districts recently sent a message to Congress: Inject the K-12 system with a serious infusion of cash ahead of what forecasters say is the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, or brace for the catastrophic results of hallowed out school budgets.

"Dark clouds are forming on the educational horizon that will spell disaster if Congress does not intervene," 62 superintendents from school districts like New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago and Miami wrote. "Significant revenue shortfalls are looming for local school districts that will exacerbate the disruption students have already faced."

They paint a nightmare scenario that's "far more severe and promises to cause much more substantial damage" than the budget cuts that occurred in 2008 during the Great Recession.

They're bracing, for example, for 15% to 25% cuts in overall revenues going into next school year. A 20% loss in combined state and local revenues, they warned, would likely result in the big city public schools laying off about 275,000 teachers.

Without federal support, they warn of the perfect storm in which the majority of students enter the next school year significantly behind academically at the exact moment budget cuts due to local and state revenue shortfalls occur.

"The ramifications are not only profound for the students involved, but for the nation," the 62 big-city superintendents wrote to Congress. "This educational catastrophe could weaken the country's economic foundation for years to come without significant financial support from Congress."

They're far from the only ones sounding the alarm, as the education community in near lockstep pressures Congress for help.

"The most terrible and lasting effects of the coronavirus pandemic will of course be measured in loss of life," a new report from the Albert Shanker Institute, a policy organization aligned with the American Federation for Teachers, begins. "But a parallel tragedy will also be unfolding in

the coming months and years, this one affecting those at the beginning of their lives: an unprecedented school funding crisis that threatens to disadvantage a generation of children."

Educators, principals, superintendents and education policy experts are already thinking aloud about the myriad complications and expenses involved with reopening schools in a world where so much has changed: continued efforts to get digital learning tools and working WiFi in the hands of every student should a second wave of the virus force school closures in the fall; effective training for teachers about how to make distance learning work; more mental health workers in schools to help students who experienced trauma during the pandemic; increase in support staff should some districts decide to stagger reopening by having groups of students come certain days and learn remotely on others.

"We are almost certainly going to be asking school districts to do more with less," says Jess Gartner, CEO and founder of Allovue, an education finance organization that helps schools districts craft more equitable budgets. "All of those require additional training, additional devices, additional services, potentially extended hours, which will require more staff. And we're talking about all those solutions in a landscape of 15 to 30 percent budget cuts."

"That is just an impossible situation," she says. "So we are yet again setting up our schools for failure. Six months from now we will point fingers and say education leaders are so incompetent and states are so wasteful because mistakes will be made because everyone is trying to do even more with even less."

It's difficult for education finance experts to predict exactly how deep the looming cuts will be. State and local revenues, which fund almost 90% of school budgets, aren't yet tallied for the month of March, so there's no reliable data for how the social distancing policies and shuttered storefronts will impact funding levels.

"For most states, they're kind of guessing and the numbers will come in May 7-15," Marguerite Roza, research professor at Georgetown University and director of the Edunomics Lab, says. "Every state differs in how they collect revenues. Property taxes are relatively stable. People are paying them and they are wrapped into their mortgages. The districts, I think they are waiting for a bailout before they make any changes."

To date, Congress has injected \$13 billion into the country's public school system through the \$2.2 trillion coronavirus relief package. National education leaders have been clamoring for Congress to inject more federal relief into the system, characterizing the initial stimulus as wholly inadequate.

For a school system like New York City's, which serves more than 1 million children, the 20% budget cut New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo floated last week would equate to a \$5 billion hit.

So big city superintendents asked lawmakers for an additional \$175 billion to offset unexpected costs districts are incurring in providing meals to students, equipping them with computers, tablets and other electronic learning devices and erecting temporary WiFi hotspots.

They also asked Congress to provide an additional \$13 billion to bolster services for students with disabilities, \$12 billion for schools that serve lots of poor students and \$2 billion for a federal program that establishes broadband connections in rural and low-income communities.

The budget crisis can't be fixed by Congress alone, many are quick to point out.

"States cannot continue business as usual," Bruce Baker, professors at the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University and co-author of the Shanker Institute report, says. "If they once again rely on federal aid to help them during this recession and recovery without putting their own houses in order, they risk prolonging the damage, and they will also be less prepared to weather economic downturns in the future."

Make no mistake, he says, immediate relief in the form of a federal stimulus is necessary, preferably a prolonged injection of funding that's distributed over a number of years to avoid the so-called fiscal cliff that occurs when aid suddenly ends. But Baker says it's also incumbent upon states to do their part by increasing funding for K-12, especially for states that haven't returned to pre-2008 funding levels, prioritizing those dollars for the most vulnerable children and building up budget reserves.

"The seniors graduating this spring started kindergarten in the fall of 2007," says Baker. "Most of these students have spent almost their entire K-12 careers in schools with less funding than there was when they started. If this happens again, it will be because we let it happen."

In the meantime, states and school districts are bracing for the hit.

In Detroit, where revenue for schools is forecasted to be down 6% to 13%, school officials said they will likely be forced to delay salary increases they expected to give. In Colorado, where revenue shortfalls are expected to be \$2 billion to \$3 billion, state budget officials said it would likely delay school construction plans and the hiring of social workers, and could, if bad enough, threaten funding for the state's full-day kindergarten program. In Indiana, some school districts are asking residents to approve property tax hikes to bolster school funding. And in Hawaii, Gov. David Ige proposed cutting the salary of state workers, including public school teachers, by 20%.

Notably, Chicago seems to be in a better position than other big city school districts, though there are still concerns. Educators there led a historic 10-day strike last year to force the city to give teachers raises and increase funding for special education and to hire more counselors, nurses and librarians, but [school officials recently announced](#) they're on track to fulfill those obligations by injecting \$125 million into the system thanks in part to funding from federal coronavirus relief package.

"My biggest concerns are equity because we know from historic situations of recession that in situations where there are cuts, equity is often treated like a luxury item," Gartner says. "It is a scenario where we need to be taking an equity first approach because our students with the greatest needs are going to have even greater needs during this time."

"My concern," she continues, "is that any prior attempts to be thinking about resource equity and how to best serve high-needs and high-poverty students will get pushed to the side or down the priority list when they really need to be moved up on the priority list."

The Oklahoman

Funding just one of many K-12 challenges

by [The Oklahoman Editorial Board](#)

Published: Sun, May 3, 2020 1:06 AM Updated: Sun, May 3, 2020 1:31 AM

The economic collapse from COVID-19 has education leaders across the country urging Congress to provide more relief. Funding, however, figures to be just one part of any recovery.

The U.S. Department of Education recently made \$13.2 billion available for use by K-12 schools. A letter sent to Congress last week by the **Council of Great City Schools** acknowledges that step but says an “educational catastrophe” is pending without further help in the next coronavirus relief bill. Sixty-two urban school district superintendents, including Sean McDaniel of Oklahoma City and Deborah Gist of Tulsa, signed the letter.

“Significant revenue shortfalls are looming for local school districts that will exacerbate the disruption students have already faced,” the letter says. The group seeks about \$30 billion.

In Oklahoma, revenues have fallen so steeply in recent months that the Legislature will have roughly \$1.3 billion less to appropriate in fiscal year 2021 than it had this year. The governor and legislative leaders say they want to protect core services, but cuts seem inevitable. As Carolyn Thompson, chief of government affairs for the state Department of Education, said recently, “It’s hard to envision a scenario where education doesn’t take some sort of cut.”

Additional federal money will be needed. So too will be a hard look at how schools operate when they return to “normal” this fall, something education policy wonk Ray Domanico explored in a recent essay at the website economics21.org.

Domanico, senior fellow with the conservative Manhattan Institute, says funding will be a major concern, “but there is a growing awareness that the public health needs, laid bare by the COVID-19 crisis, will require serious rethinking of the fundamental organization of the school day and school year. So will the relationships between human resources and technology between school and home.”

Some schools were better equipped than others to handle “distance learning” after their buildings were closed by the coronavirus. Domanico argues that for all but the more advanced and motivated students, learning losses will need attention when in-class instruction resumes, particularly for students in high school and middle school.

Structural changes may be required to accommodate social distancing practices that are likely within schools. Domanico suggests schools could be open five days a week, but a student might

attend just three days and work remotely the other two. Another possibility is to alternate weeks of in-school attendance and remote learning.

Technology would be central to such configurations, as would “a tremendous amount of training and preparation for educators,” Domanico writes. “It also will require joint efforts between government and industry on a large scale to create the systems that will finally deliver on the promise of technology in education on a large scale.”

Such changes also would require further involvement and cooperation from parents. “Communications between educators and families will need to be routine, frequent, rational and clear,” Domanico says.

These challenges “will be great,” he says. However, Domanico is on point when he says, “If the federal government is going to be writing big checks, it needs to incentivize fundamental change in schools to prepare for future challenges.”

Tulsa World

Tulsa World editorial: Local school districts need federal help to avoid 'catastrophe'

May 3, 2020

The Tulsa and Oklahoma City school district superintendents see disaster looming and are asking the federal government to intervene.

The **Council of Great City Schools**, which represents the nation's largest public districts, [sent a letter to Congress](#) seeking to be included in the next coronavirus supplemental funding bill. It warned of an "educational catastrophe" that could lead to 275,000 teacher layoffs.

U.S. public schools are largely funded by state and local revenue. The COVID-19 pandemic choked those revenue sources as the spreading virus shut down businesses. Some districts anticipate at least 25% less funding.

In Oklahoma, plummeting oil prices creates a double-whammy on funding.

Tulsa Public Schools receives about 52% of its budget from state funds, used for teacher and staff pay, and about 30% of its income derives from local property taxes. Other funding comes from federal and philanthropic sources, which is typically earmarked for specific programs. Before the pandemic, TPS went through a painful process of cutting \$20 million from its budget after the state could not catch up from a decade of education cuts.

Recent state revenue reports have put all agencies on notice that more budget cuts are coming. The longer the people in Oklahoma City wait to pull the trigger, the deeper the cuts will be.

The Council of Great City Schools is asking Congress for \$175 billion in stabilization funds distributed through the [Title I program](#), which supports schools with concentrations of children living in poverty. It also seeks an additional \$13 billion for special education through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, \$12 billion more for Title 1 schools, \$2 billion for the [E-Rate program](#) for discounted internet services and emergency infrastructure funds.

Congress needs to act on these requests. These are reasonable and specific to programs for students most in need of support.

Oklahoma is set to receive a total of \$200 million in emergency education funding, and Gov. Kevin Stitt wants to use \$40 million of it for what amounts to private school vouchers and expanding Advanced Placement classes in rural areas.

[We disagree](#); that won't put out the fire threatening to consume our classrooms.

Superintendents have sounded the warning bell, and Congress needs to respond.

Washington Post

K-12 school leaders warn of ‘disaster’ from huge coronavirus-related budget cuts as layoffs and furloughs begin

By [Valerie Strauss](#)

May 8, 2020 at 6:00 a.m. EDT

Just as they face unprecedented challenges and financial costs, leaders of K-12 public school districts around the country are warning of dire consequences from sharp budget cuts from state legislatures attempting to deal with the economic fallout of the novel [coronavirus](#) pandemic.

The alarm was sounded by school superintendents in 62 cities, who sent a letter to Congress through the nonprofit [Council of the Great City Schools](#) asking Congress for billions of dollars in new federal education assistance and warning that some 275,000 teachers could be laid off in their districts alone because of budget cuts caused by a drop in state and local revenue during the crisis. (You can see the letter in full below.) Those would add to existing shortages in virtually every state.

“Dark clouds are forming on the educational horizon that will spell disaster if Congress does not intervene,” the letter said. “Significant revenue shortfalls are looming for local school districts that will exacerbate the disruption students have already faced. Some 40 to 50 percent of school district revenue, in fact, come from local sources that are expected to drop precipitously in the months ahead. This revenue decline will come on top of revenue losses in the months to come from state sources that have been more widely reported. Several big city school districts are now projecting 15 to 25 percent cuts in overall revenue going into next school year.”

In California on Thursday, Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) released a budget analysis showing a \$54.3 billion budget deficit through summer 2021, with projections that the K-12 public schools could lose some 20 percent of their state funding. The superintendents of the two largest school systems in California — Austin Beutner of the Los Angeles Unified School District and Cindy Marten of the San Diego Unified School District — warned that “irreparable harm” would be done to children if that happened.

Meanwhile, some districts around the country have already started furloughing and even laying off some employees.

The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District in California has begun laying off dozens of employees, as has New Jersey’s Lawrence Township Public Schools, which let go 22 full-time employees and 80 school aides; and the Randolph Public School District in Massachusetts, where dozens of workers — including teaching aides and food service staff — were told they will be furloughed full time or part time. Many other districts warned their communities of coming furloughs and layoffs.

Rep. Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (D-Va.), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, said on Thursday that Congress must help states balance their budgets because otherwise “it’s going to come at the expense of education.”

“Virginia showed what happens with these shortfalls. Just recently, the General Assembly came back and had to adopt budget adjustments that canceled a 2 percent raise for [K-12] teachers, funding for high-poverty schools and more counselors, and freeze on [college] tuition,” Scott said. “All of that is because of revenue estimates.”

Similar cuts are happening in other states. For example:

- In New York, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo (D) proposed a 3 percent increase in education funding for 2020-2021 before the pandemic started. That never happened. Instead, in early April, he and the state legislature approved a budget that cut \$1.1 billion from K-12 education, the exact amount that Congress had allocated to New York school districts in March as part of its \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, known as the Cares Act. The hardest hit was New York City, which lost \$716.9 million with Cuomo’s cut, according to an analysis [by the nonprofit Education Law Center](#). That analysis also said the state education cuts most impact high-poverty school districts.
- In Ohio, Gov. Mike DeWine (R) has ordered all state agencies to cut as much as 20 percent of their budgets for the remainder of the fiscal year, which ends in that state on June 30. For K-12 public schools, his plans call for \$300.4 million, with cuts targeted in the wealthiest districts.
- In Georgia, Gov. Brian Kemp (R) told state agencies to cut 14 percent from their budgets for the next school year, and federal coronavirus aid won’t come close to covering that.

Even before the covid-19 pandemic, some states had never fully recovered from education funding drops that started after 2008 because of the Great Recession. The nonprofit Center on Budget and Policy Priorities [reported last year](#) that in seven states, combined state and local school funding in the 2017 school year was at least 10 percent below prerecession levels in inflation-adjusted terms. And it said that in all, 22 states plus the District of Columbia remained below prerecession levels.

But the letter from the Council of the Great City Schools to Congress with the signatures of 62 superintendents asking for assistance said the harm caused to districts because of the economic downturn caused by covid-19 will be “far more severe and promises to cause much more substantial damage” than that from the Great Recession.

“Unlike in 2008 and 2009, schools nationwide had to close in mid-March and will likely stay shuttered through the balance of the school year,” the letter said. “As aggressive as schools have been in providing instruction at a distance, districts continue to need resources to provide electronic learning devices and Internet connections to every child.

The amount of time devoted each day to lessons is less now than what would occur in a regular classroom. Students' ability to interact with their teachers remains limited. Some teachers will have little more than a crash course on how to conduct online learning. And, the research on the efficacy of virtual learning is not particularly strong. The truth is that there is simply no substitute for students being with their teachers all day."

The superintendents asked for far more money than the \$13.5 billion that Congress allocated for K-12 education in the Cares Act.

"The down payment you made in our public education system by allocating some \$13.5 billion in the Cares Act for our schools was a critical lifeline for public education in this country," the letter said. "But we now urge you to provide a second, substantially larger installment for public school systems as you work on the fourth supplemental appropriations bill."

Specifically, they are seeking in new funding:

- \$175 billion in Educational Stabilization Funds distributed to the local level through the Title I formula, which provides funding for low-income students.
- \$13 billion for the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act.
- \$12 billion in additional Title I program funding.
- \$2 billion for E-Rate and emergency infrastructure funds that include public schools. E-Rate is the Schools and Libraries Program, which gives discounts of up to 90 percent for eligible schools and libraries to get affordable telecommunications and Internet access.

The lack of resources in many school districts and low teacher pay because of underfunding sparked a teachers protest movement in 2018, starting in West Virginia and spreading to other states, most of them led by Republicans and where teachers are not legally allowed to strike but did anyway.

The movement, known as Red for Ed, was seeking not only more pay for teachers, some of whom have to work two or three jobs to pay their bills, but also more resources for schools that can't afford to pay nurses and counselors or buy enough paper for educators in every classroom. The coming budget cuts will only make worse the situation that sparked and fueled the strikes.

EdSource

Democrats ask for \$12 billion for special education in next coronavirus bill

Money would pay for extra staff to help students with disabilities catch up after schools reopen

Fearing that special education students will fall substantially behind their peers as a result of prolonged school closures and distance learning, a group of Democratic U.S. Senators is asking for almost \$12 billion in the next federal coronavirus aid bill to be earmarked for those students.

The [request](#), backed by California Senators Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris, would pay for tutors, aides, assessments, technology and other measures to help students in special education, many of whom have been disproportionately impacted by school closures because of the difficulty of providing needed therapies online.

“As we grapple with the impacts of COVID-19, and the resulting school closures, we must meet the needs of all students, including students most vulnerable to educational disruptions,” the senators wrote. “To that end, we write to urge you to ensure that any future COVID-19 relief package protects the rights of students who experience disabilities and provides school districts with emergency funding so that educators are able to effectively serve these students during this unprecedented time.”

Advocates in general welcomed the request. Since U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos in April ordered school districts to continue providing special education services during the school closures, some districts have been struggling to provide occupational, speech, physical and behavioral therapy virtually.

The result is that some students with disabilities — such as Down syndrome, cerebral palsy and autism — risk losing skills and falling behind. Under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, school districts are

required to provide extra tutoring and other services to help those students catch up. The cost of those services would fall mostly to states and school districts, because the federal government only provides a fraction of the funding needed for schools to fully implement special education.

The \$12 billion would help offset those costs. And it's urgently needed, said Lauren Rhim, executive director of the National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools, a nationwide advocacy group.

"To say this (situation) is unprecedented is wholly inadequate. There is so much learning loss happening right now for all students, but especially those students in special education," Rhim said. "The sooner we can hire more staff and assess what services students will need, the better."

The stakes are high for students enrolled in special education because they rely on school services not just for academic support, but also for therapies that could propel them to college, employment and independent living, she said.

"What's often the case is that kids with disabilities are an afterthought (in education policy)," she said. "But no one relies more on an education to live a full life. It's often the difference between having a job, living independently, and not."

The newest coronavirus aid bill, Congress' fifth, is currently being negotiated in the House of Representatives. It's unclear how the Republican-controlled Senate will respond, but Republicans in the past have generally been supportive of special education. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, signed March 27, originally called for broad waivers to special education law. But some Republicans agreed to strip that provision and turn over the decision to DeVos, who later opted to keep the law intact.

So far, federal aid related to the coronavirus has topped \$3 trillion, with \$1.6 billion so far expected for California schools. But none of the money has been set aside specifically for K-12 special education students.

The request, signed by 24 senators and addressed to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Minority Leader Charles Schumer, asks for \$11 billion to be given as grants to states under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the federal law that guarantees students a free public education suited to their abilities. It also calls for \$900 million for programs for infants, toddlers and preschoolers with disabilities, and an unspecified amount for training teachers in technological skills needed to improve their online lessons.

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Washington, a longtime advocate for special education policy and one of those who submitted the funding request, said that providing extra support for students with disabilities is “absolutely critical.”

“I’ve been incredibly proud and inspired to see the creative and innovative ways that special education teachers are working to meet the needs of students with disabilities under the law. But more must be done to support their amazing work,” she said. “I’ll continue fighting to uphold the protections of IDEA and provide the funding necessary to ensure that students with disabilities and educators have the resources they need.”

Separately, the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), which represents 76 large urban school districts nationwide, last week sent a [letter](#) to Congressional leaders asking that extra money in the next coronavirus aid bill be reserved for special education students. The \$13 billion request is in addition to a request for \$175 billion to help school districts offset revenue losses.

“There’s just a desperate need for funding. We’re facing an extremely dire fiscal cliff for the upcoming school year,” said Jeff Simering, director of legislative services for the organization. “And we’re trying to protect the kids who are the most at risk academically, have the greatest need.”

Given the partisan rancor in Congress, Simering is not optimistic that funding will be forthcoming.

“We’re trying to underscore the desperate need,” he said. “Hopefully they won’t let us twist in the wind.”

Kansas City Star

Many Kansas City area kids punt online class. Schools worry how they'll do next year

BY MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS

May 13, 2020 05:00 AM

When the coronavirus forced Kansas City area classrooms online in March, [Raytown school](#) officials noticed almost all students logging in for their daily schoolwork.

But as time wore on, that number dwindled. At times, up to 40% of students in grades three to 12 were not clicking in.

“It is a universal struggle we are all seeing,” said Brian Huff, Raytown’s associate superintendent of curriculum and instruction.

Urban and suburban districts on both sides of the state line say the reasons vary, from no internet access to no interest, and from students’ behavioral issues to plain parent fatigue.

And then some students just don’t work well without a daily in-person connection.

“It’s hard to pull them in when they are at home,” said Heather Mayfield, an English teacher at [Shawnee Mission’s Trailridge Middle School](#). “Home is great. There’s snacks and the outdoors and FaceTime with friends. It’s really challenging to motivate in this environment.”

As a result, many students are falling behind. And as educators look ahead to the next school year, they worry how some students will ever catch up.

Teachers call parents and try to be supportive, but “that’s part of the challenge,” said Mark Tallman, associate executive director of [Kansas Association of School Boards](#). “We’ve moved from a model of trying to teach lessons to just trying to stay in contact.”

In Kansas City Public Schools, only half the students are regularly doing classwork online. A few have disappeared from class. “Less than 6% of our students have been completely disengaged,” said Kelly Wachel, district spokeswoman.

The numbers of fully engaged students peaked in Raytown in the first two weeks, when about 5,900 of the 6,000 students were online, Huff said. “It was the novelty of it.”

Now, at best, the district is seeing 75% to 80% engagement. “But if you are talking about complete engagement where they are completing all assignments, then we are talking about more like 60%. And I’m still pretty pleased with that.”

Pleased because educators made the pivot from in-person classrooms to online teaching within days. Three months ago, Huff said, most teachers had never even used the online conferencing tool Zoom.

But the curriculum they’ve used in the classroom doesn’t work the same in the virtual world. Some students are thriving, he said, but others tune out or never tune in.

Not logging in

Districts have scrambled to close the digital divide, providing laptops, iPads and hot spots to students who don’t have the resources to log in. The most recent numbers from the [National Center for Education Statistics show that 14%](#) of school-aged children don’t have internet access at home.

But regardless of the equipment they have, sometimes parents are not equipped to help, said Maria Fleming, assistant superintendent for education services in the [Fort Osage district](#). They may be working from home themselves and not have the time, or they feel unprepared to help.

“Some students have trouble with behavior, and one of the triggers is when you put academic stress on them,” Fleming said. “Some parents are just not willing to take that on. And I get it.”

Some students are homeless, and others are having to work to help support their families. Or no one at home speaks English.

In school buildings, districts have resources to deal with such scenarios. There are health care workers, counselors and therapists. “But when we made the shift, a lot of those resources are removed,” Huff said.

“Take a family that is a single parent who suddenly loses their job. Now they are worried about how to pay for rent, for food. That family is going to be more concerned with safety and security than education.”

The children in those families are the ones Mayfield of Trailridge Middle School worries most about: “Those kids who are not connecting and they are not OK because they are bearing some emotional toll worrying about the safety of their family.”

But Mayfield said she also realizes a fair number of students are not logging in because they are not motivated to do so. “I have to be realistic. There are those kids who really do not like school and for some of those kids this is a gift. But it is not a gift that is going to benefit them,” she said.

In Missouri and Kansas, state educators have told teachers that the grade a student left school with when buildings were closed cannot be lowered. That’s another reason some students might not be logging in.

Shawnee Mission officials said they don’t have the data yet on how many students are logging in for classwork, and like other districts in the Kansas City area, they are not penalizing students who don’t.

“We want kids to participate and we want to make sure our kids are OK,” said David Smith, district spokesman. “But our efforts have been around preparing, and that includes making sure we have ways to deliver equitable education to all our kids.”

Meanwhile some students and their parents have just grown tired of the virtual schooling process.

When Katrina Pickens’ husband was called to active duty at the end of March, she was left alone to help her three children with the steady flow of online work from their Shawnee Mission teachers.

“At the very beginning I knew a lot of parents who were, like, this is going to be great,” Pickens said. “But after going through this for a month, I feel like most people just are not as engaged as they were at first. I was very laid-back at first. I was not going to try and do perfect. But it still became overwhelming.”

Pickens, who has two children in elementary school and one in middle, said she would log on to her computer and “I would have an email from one child’s seven middle school teachers, an email from each of my other kids’ teachers, an email from the principal, an email from their special teachers. There are emails saying sign up for this virtual thing and sign up for that virtual thing. And ever since this all started, the internet has been really slow. I mean it’s good that teachers are really trying, but it’s frustrating. For the kids too. “

Pickens, who has been outspoken in the school district about the amount of time students spend with screens, said she just stopped pushing her children to engage.

“When I found out that there wasn’t going to be grading and no attendance I was like, thank God, because this is not going to be a priority. We are most interested in enjoying time together playing outside.”

Goody bags and free takeout

Although states are not holding districts accountable for low attendance during the pandemic, schools are making “extraordinary efforts” to connect with students who have been chronically absent from the virtual classroom, said **Michael Casserly, executive director of the [Council of the Great City Schools](#)**, an organization of the nation’s largest urban school systems, including Kansas City and Kansas City, Kansas.

“We are not sitting back and being passive about this and saying, oh well,” Casserly said. “Everyone is cognizant of which kids are not logging in. And a lot of our school districts are deploying staff that is not otherwise engaged and having them call families or drop by their places of residence. And some of those outreach efforts have helped.”

Luis Hinojosa, principal at East High School in Kansas City, said at his school, emotional trauma specialists reach out by phone and video conference to students they know have struggled and are not connecting and work to bring them into the virtual classrooms.

Of the 1,200 students who attend East, Luis said, “there are only 53 who have not connected.”

Teachers at East have been really creative, said Ben Richardson, vice principal. In addition to knocking on doors, “some teachers will drive through neighborhoods and hold up signs outside to get a student’s attention.”

At Northeast Middle School, where 75% of students are engaged on a regular basis, Principal Brett Schrierwer said teachers call families weekly.

One teacher holds a weekly contest for students who complete assignments. The winners get a takeout meal delivered to their home. You have to be present in class to win.

Other teachers drop off goody bags on front steps with notes thanking students for good work. Another group of teachers organized a Zoom movie night with students.

Schrierwer said one teacher realized some of her students didn’t have computers because their parents didn’t have transportation to the school to pick up the free laptops and hot spots. She picked up each of those parents one at a time and drove them to the school to get the computers and then drove them home. “She did that one day for seven hours,” Schrierwer said.

“When we are finally able to connect with those students they know how much we love them, and then we see this turnaround in engagement,” Schrierwer said.

Nevertheless, Huff said, districts still know, “we obviously will have students who will not engage at all the rest of this year.” That is significant, he said, because “20% of instruction this year was virtual.”

They expect districts across the country to notice coronavirus had “an academic toll. But it is hard to gauge the degree,” Casserly said.

However severe, it won’t show up in the current end-of-year grades since most districts have eased grading, “because we can’t be sure that every kid has adequate access and adequate support,” Fleming of Fort Osage said.

Next school year

Teachers expect a notable number of students, even some who have been present online regularly, will return in the fall having missed a chunk of the previous year's lessons.

“So we are looking at how do we go back and recoup that,” Fleming said, adding that in some instances, what students didn't learn could prevent them from moving forward. “For example fourth-quarter geometry is a building block to be successful in algebra,” she said.

The [Kansas City, Kansas, school district](#) says student participation online is 80%. And teachers plan to “do some rehabilitation in the fall, maybe for the first 60 days,” said Superintendent Charles Foust. “But we will also be pushing forward. It may be a mixed bag.”

Summer school will be an option for some students, but in most cases those classes too will be online.

So when school starts back, whether it's in person or online, “we will see highly differentiated classrooms,” Huff predicts. Teachers may be meeting with students in small groups to help them fill in the gaps.

“We are going to be intentional about looking back and addressing some of the key standards we didn't get to teach face-to-face,” Richardson said.

“I don't think we are ever going to really completely fill all the gaps,” Mayfield said. “I have so much anxiety about next school year, because we really don't know yet what it is going to look like. But one thing is for certain, I don't think any of us are going to be able to say to our students, hey, why didn't you learn that last year?”

As for next year, school administrators say they will be ready whether teachers and students are back in their classrooms or not. In districts throughout the Kansas City area, teachers have continued with training for improving online education and connecting with students remotely. And KCK schools plan to offer training to parents too, “because they are the biggest champs,” Foust said.

“We are learning a new set of skills to be used from this point forward,” Hinojosa at East High said. “There is a good chance when August comes around we are not going to be going back into school. We'd better be ready this time.”

New York Times

DeVos Funnel Coronavirus Relief Funds to Favored Private and Religious Schools

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, using discretion written into the coronavirus stabilization law, is using millions of dollars to pursue long-sought policy goals that Congress has blocked.

By **Erica L. Green**

May 15, 2020 Updated 12:35 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON — Education Secretary Betsy DeVos is using the \$2 trillion coronavirus stabilization law to throw a lifeline to education sectors she has long championed, directing millions of federal dollars intended primarily for public schools and colleges to private and religious schools.

[The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act](#), signed in late March, included \$30 billion for education institutions turned upside down by the pandemic shutdowns, about \$14 billion for higher education, \$13.5 billion to elementary and secondary schools, and the rest for state governments.

Ms. DeVos has used \$180 million of those dollars to encourage states to create “microgrants” that parents of elementary and secondary school students can use to pay for educational services, including private school tuition. She has directed school districts to share millions of dollars designated for low-income students with wealthy private schools.

And she has nearly depleted the 2.5 percent of higher education funding, about \$350 million, set aside for struggling colleges to bolster small colleges — many of them private, religious or on the margins of higher education — regardless of need. The Wright Graduate University for the Realization of Human Potential, a private college in Wisconsin that has a [website debunking claims that it is a cult](#), received about \$495,000. Bergin University of Canine Studies in California said its \$472,850 allocation was a “godsend.”

“I think we are one of the most important educational institutions out there right now,” said its founder, Bonnie Bergin, who is credited with inventing the service dog.

On the Senate floor this week, Senator Chuck Schumer, Democrat of New York and the minority leader, accused Ms. DeVos of “exploiting congressional relief efforts.” He said she had been “using a portion of that funding not to help states or localities cope with

the crisis, but to augment her push for voucherlike programs, a prior initiative that has nothing to do with Covid-19.”

House Democrats included language in [a stimulus bill set for a vote on Friday](#) that would limit Ms. DeVos’s ability to use about \$58 billion in additional education relief for K-12 school districts for private schools. Congress has largely rejected Ms. DeVos’s proposals to create programs that resemble private school vouchers, and public education groups say Ms. DeVos is abusing discretion granted to her under the emergency legislation to achieve a long-held agenda.

“And it only took a pandemic,” said Sasha Pudelski, the advocacy director at the AASA, the School Superintendents Association.

The Education Department called the accusation “absurd.” But in a statement, the department said that every student and teacher had been affected by the pandemic. “The current disruption to our education system has reaffirmed what Secretary DeVos has been saying for years: We need to rethink education for all students, of every age, no matter the type of school setting,” it said.

Ms. DeVos has long held that taxpayer funds should be available for private school tuition, giving parents the chance to escape failing public schools and public education competition to drive improvement.

A spokesman for Republican members of the House Education Committee defended Ms. DeVos’s actions: “While there are likely multiple ways the secretary could have interpreted this broadly written law, the language the appropriators wrote gave her the flexibility to implement it as she has done.”

The most contentious move is [guidance that directs school districts to increase the share of dollars](#) they spend on students in private schools. Under federal education law, school districts are required to use funding they receive for their poorest students to provide “equitable services,” such as tutoring and transportation for low-income students attending private schools in their districts. But the department said districts should use their emergency funding, which was doled out based on student poverty rates, to support all students attending private schools in their districts, regardless of income.

Her guidance comes as elementary and secondary education groups lobby Congress for billions of additional dollars to lift students out of the educational crisis caused by the pandemic. In big cities, which serve the most vulnerable students, district leaders are projecting [budget shortfalls of up to 25 percent](#) because of collapsing tax revenues, said the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), which represents 76 of the nation’s large urban districts. Its member districts said they could be forced to lay off 275,000 teachers.

In New York City, Chancellor Richard A. Carranza [told City Council members on Tuesday](#) that the school district was facing “the most horrific budget” it had ever seen.

The federal Education Department said if school districts were to count only poor students, “they would be placing nonpublic school students and teachers at a disadvantage that Congress did not intend.”

“It’s sad, but unsurprising, that some would put their own financial interests ahead of the needs of all students and teachers,” the department said.

Educators are pleading with the department to revise or rescind the guidance. In Montana, school officials estimate that compliance would shift more than \$1.5 million to private and home schools, up from about \$206,469 that the schools are due under current law. In Louisiana, private schools would receive at least 267 percent more funding, and at least 77 percent of the relief allocation for Orleans Parish would be redirected, according to [a letter state that education chiefs](#) sent to Ms. DeVos. The Newark Public Schools in New Jersey [would lose \\$800,000 in federal relief funds](#) to private schools, David G. Sciarra, the executive director of the Education Law Center, said in a letter to the governor of New Jersey asking him to reject the guidance.

Pennsylvania’s education secretary, Pedro A. Rivera, protested to the department that under the guidance, 53 percent more money would flow “from most disadvantaged to more advantaged students” in urban districts like Philadelphia, while rural districts like Northeast Bradford would see a 932 percent increase.

“School districts can — and should — ignore this guidance, which flouts what Congress intended to do with the CARES Act: support students who need it the most,” said Randi Weingarten, the president of the American Federation of Teachers, and Daniel A. Domenech, the executive director of AASA.

Indiana has announced it would not enforce the guidance. [In a memo](#), its superintendent of public instruction, Jennifer McCormick, a Republican, said the state “ensures that the funds are distributed according to congressional intent and a plain reading of the law.”

“I will not play political agenda games with COVID relief funds,” she said on Twitter.

Private school educators say that they have always been included in emergency relief funding, including for Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, and this situation should be no different.

Sister Dale McDonald, the director of public policy and educational research at the National Catholic Educational Association, said many of its schools would need to be cleaned, and their staffing would need to be shored up. At least 100 member schools are at risk for not reopening at all.

“In an emergency, kids shouldn’t have to prove they’re poor to get what they need to continue their education,” Sister McDonald said.

A competition announced by Ms. DeVos in which states can vie for tens of millions of dollars either to create statewide virtual schools or offer “microgrants” is also drawing

fire for mirroring voucher programs that help parents pay for services outside the public school system. The program also stands to [benefit virtual education companies](#) that Ms. DeVos has personally invested in.

Representative Robert C. Scott of Virginia, the chairman of the House education committee, said the competition's point system was weighted in favor of rural areas and voucher-friendly states, rather than those most affected by the coronavirus.

"This program design is indistinguishable from a standard voucher scheme and is the latest attempt by this department to promote privatization initiatives against both the wishes of the American people, and the intent of Congress," he wrote to Ms. DeVos. The microgrant program has been cheered by champions of school choice.

"They are smart to take advantage of the lag and lack of disciplined delivery of education," said Jeanne Allen, the chief executive of the Center for Education Reform. "We don't have any choice but to make parents and families the unit of education right now."

Trish Stevens, who has a special-needs daughter, said a program in Arizona that was much like the microgrant proposal had been "life changing" for her child, who is supposed to have \$150-an-hour speech therapy and \$250-an-hour tutors.

"It's like the Wild West of education right now," she said, "and we're all just trying to figure it out."

Ms. DeVos is also under fire from college educators [for disbursing millions](#) of dollars to hundreds of small colleges that may not need it. The coronavirus relief law set aside about \$350 million for schools that demonstrated "significant unmet needs related to expenses associated with coronavirus." The department was supposed to prioritize schools that did not receive at least \$500,000 from other categories of higher education funding. Instead, Ms. DeVos used the money to ensure that small schools received \$500,000 each.

That meant outsize per-pupil allocations at [several private schools and religious institutions](#) with as few as 50 students while some public community colleges received as little as \$500 a student.

Ben Miller, the vice president for postsecondary education at the liberal Center for American Progress, said the allocations came as large public colleges were "rationing," and community colleges "starve."

Aaron D. Proffitt, the vice president for academic affairs at God's Bible School and College in Ohio, said the school did not plan to claim its allocation because it was getting by on small donations. Ms. DeVos had criticized elite colleges that received stimulus funding they did not apply for and had urged schools to reject money they did not need.

“Of course, when you get a letter from the Department of Education giving you money, you start thinking about all the good things you can do,” Mr. Profit said. “But when I read the CARES Act, the intention was not to do all the good things you could do but try to meet needs. We are trying to cooperate with the law as written.”

Washington Post

Some D.C. public schools students could resume in-person classes in early August, if health conditions allow

By [Perry Stein](#)

May 22, 2020 at 2:12 p.m. EDT

Some third-, sixth- and ninth-graders in D.C. public schools could start school in person in early August, weeks before school starts for other students, city officials announced Friday, offering a potential glimpse into a new school year expected to look markedly different from previous ones.

The plan is contingent upon the city entering Phase 2 of its reopening strategy, officials said. The city is expected to enter Phase 1 soon, but officials said they have not yet defined the metrics that will be required to enter the next phase.

The school year will begin Aug. 31, but officials are unsure whether it will be in person or remote. If there is some in-person learning, parents should expect modified schedules, with students attending school in person on some days and remotely on others. Any in-person learning is dependent on the city entering Phase 2 of the reopening plan.

Education officials did not say exactly what those hybrid schedules would look like, but they said they are surveying families to understand what they would prefer.

Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D) stressed that the city is tracking the novel [coronavirus](#) closely but cannot yet give parents the definitive answers they are seeking.

“We are following how this virus is moving around this city and our ability to contain it and how well we can open slowly,” Bowser said. “We can do some things that we haven’t been able to do in the last two months, but we can’t go crazy.”

The plan to bring back students in third, sixth and ninth grades is designed to help stem learning losses for students at critical points in their education, officials have said. The program, which is being described as a “summer bridge” program, will be optional, but the school system will be able to accommodate all 11,500 students in those grade levels, Chancellor Lewis D. Ferebee said Friday. Ferebee said the district is looking at Aug. 10 as a potential start date.

Schools across the country have been shuttered since early spring, when the coronavirus started to spread across the United States. School districts across the country are considering similar plans to bring some students back early, said Michael Casserly, executive director of the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), a coalition of large, urban school districts.

The announcements arrived a day after the mayor's advisory group [delivered](#) its cautious recommendations on how the city should reopen. Under the plan, which is also contingent on the city reaching Phase 2, schools would be restricted to 10 people per classroom and would have irregular schedules until a vaccine or cure is available.

But city leaders have said that these are recommendations and that the city is making plans without knowing exactly what health conditions will be in the fall. If health conditions improve or worsen, the plans could change, too.

Bowser spent the bulk of her daily briefing Friday on education, hinting at what the coming months would look like for parents and children in the nation's capital.

Summer school will be remote, taking place between June 22 and July 24, with specialized programming for English language learners and students who have special-education needs.

The beloved Summer Youth Employment Program, which funds summer jobs for people ages 14 to 24, will go on, but most of the jobs will go virtual.

The Department of Parks and Recreation said it will provide 5,000 children with supplies and activities to have remote summer camp at home. If the city enters Phase 2 of the reopening plan, camp will switch to in-person, serving 3,200 students across 27 sites. There would be 10 children per site, officials said, with three two-week camp sessions.

Deputy Mayor for Education Paul Kihn and Ferebee acknowledged that students have fallen behind during the campus closures. Kihn said the city is looking into giving students no-stakes diagnostic exams at the beginning of the next academic year to see where they stand.

Ferebee said the school system was also considering Saturday classes and extra instruction time during the regular school week.

High school graduation will also go virtual in June. Graduates will receive caps, gowns and yearbooks.

"We remain committed to having joyful, student-centered graduation ceremonies," Ferebee said.

Ferebee said the city is considering changing remote-learning policies ahead of the fall. For example, while the school system tracks which students have been participating in distance learning, it does not formally take attendance. That could change as remote learning stretches on.

Tiffany Settle, mother of a third-grader and a seventh-grader at DC Prep charter school in Edgewood, said she understands there are factors beyond the city's control but she wants officials to be open with parents about all the possibilities and plans.

Her younger child is excelling in distance learning, but she said it's a struggle for her older son. If students cannot return in the fall, she hopes her kids' school offers more live instruction.

“We need to be part of the process because we are the ones entrusting the city with our children,” she said. “None of these children are going to learn anything if all they are getting is 30 minutes with their teacher and then watching a video.”

Laura Meckler contributed to this report.

Education Week

How to Contend with Pandemic Learning Loss

Teachers will need to work together to uncover missed learning

By Heather C. Hill & Susanna Loeb
May 27, 2020

Just about everybody agrees that the school closures resulting from COVID-19 will lead to some student “learning loss” and that the loss will affect students differently depending on their social advantages, the effectiveness of their schools, and their degree of trauma.

Researchers have tried to predict the magnitude of pandemic-related learning loss by making comparisons with what happens when students are out of school in the summer. Recent work by researchers at NWEA, a nonprofit provider of student assessments, estimated that students would end this school year with only about [40 percent to 60 percent](#) of the learning gains they’d see in a typical year.

Data from the federally funded Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, however, suggest a much [smaller loss](#). And estimates that use summer comparisons aren’t taking into account the learning that schools have worked hard to provide virtually this spring.

Yet even if the loss is on the larger side—say, the equivalent of three months—this change is small compared with typical existing learning differences among students as they enter a new grade. Most schools are already set up to contend with such variability, and that can work in students’ favor as schools return to something closer to normal.

"Most experts cautioned against a heavily remediation-focused approach to addressing unfinished student learning."

Teachers have always faced students who return in the fall with unfinished learning. Research from teachers’ time-use logs show that many spend the first months of mathematics instruction, for instance, reviewing prior-year content. This fall, that review period would give students a chance to achieve mastery of material missed in the spring.

Teachers also already report spending [more instructional time](#) with students who are struggling academically, another compensatory mechanism. And key topics—the American Revolution, identifying themes in a text, fractions—recur repeatedly in the curriculum. Although reformers

often object to the repetitiveness of the U.S. curriculum, in this case, it will aid students who have missed material this spring.

The fact that schools are used to responding to students with unfinished learning doesn't mean we have nothing to worry about. Children who suffered trauma from other natural disasters typically [lost ground academically and experienced more behavioral problems](#) in the short term as compared with children who did not. And we know that some communities—mostly low-income communities or those of color—are being hit harder than others by COVID-19 and its economic consequences. Schools must try to marshal resources to address those additional needs.

To learn more about how missed learning may play out in the fall, we contacted several experts in English/language arts and mathematics, including Joanne Carlisle at the University of Michigan, Bill McCallum of [Illustrative Mathematics](#), Jon Star and Catherine Snow at Harvard University, and Denise Walston of the [Council for the Great City Schools](#). We asked each to report their level of alarm about learning loss and what strategies they would suggest schools look to in the summer and the fall.

All experts reported feeling more concern than alarm with regard to general pandemic learning loss. In ELA, said Carlisle and Snow, students are introduced to most content by March, though they observed that with fewer opportunities to practice new skills after the closures, levels of mastery might be lower. The ELA experts were most concerned about beginning readers, who tend to need more continual reinforcement of skills.

Math experts made similar observations—with the caveat that some math content that is primarily taught in the spring, like geometry, may be missed. All experts noted the challenge of supporting the children whose learning has been strongly affected by school closures and the effects of the pandemic.

As of this writing, there is little sense of what school will look like in the fall. However, both experts and research suggest several strategies that districts can profitably work on this summer and as school begins. These include:

- **Providing opportunities for teachers to learn about material never taught to or practiced by their incoming students and to adjust new school year lessons appropriately.** Teachers will need opportunities to communicate across grade-level teams about very specific missing content.
- **Making sure teachers have information about what students know and can do at the beginning of the new school year.** Formal assessments are unlikely to provide this information in an efficient manner, both because of the time lag in reporting results and because those results are often not granular. Instead, the experts recommend quick, informal assessments done by classroom teachers.
- **Moving students immediately into grade-level-appropriate content in the new school year, rather than repeating material from the end of the prior grade.** Where new lessons draw on concepts affected by the shutdown, schools can add extra review but in a “just in time” fashion.

Curriculum materials may also be helpful in this effort, at least in math, because many already identify key skills and knowledge at the beginning of each lesson.

- **Finding time and resources for additional high-impact supports for students most in need, such as [tutoring or extra time working with a teacher or paraprofessional](#).** Most experts cautioned, however, against a heavily remediation-focused approach to addressing unfinished student learning, for instance, by pulling students out of the classroom for compensatory instruction, because it interferes with learning new material.
- **Tracking down students who have disengaged from instruction this spring.** Students are [more likely to disengage from instruction](#) when it occurs in digital settings, and there is a worry that more students than in past years will drop out entirely. To the extent possible, identify students at risk (perhaps using administrative data from online learning platforms) and have teachers or other adults in the school reach out.
- **Identifying opportunities to recover instructional time.** Studies of U.S. classrooms show missed or wasted instructional time due to either interruptions (e.g., field trips, [announcements](#)) or to teacher and student absences. Schools can help minimize the impact of student absences by keeping kids connected while at home and of teacher absences through the use of “understudies”—staff who can cover classes and ensure instruction continues when teachers fall ill. Leaders should plan for minimizing such disruptions in the fall to the extent that returns to school buildings could make them possible.

Finally, schools will need to take steps to address students’ emotional needs and to strengthen the bonds between teachers and students, especially in districts that may see intermittent school closures. In our next essay, we’ll take up effective responses to trauma in school settings.

Heather C. Hill is a professor of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and studies teacher quality, teacher professional learning, and instructional improvement. Her broader interests include educational policy and social inequality. Susanna Loeb is a professor of education and of public affairs at Brown University and the director of the university's Annenberg Institute for School Reform. She studies education policy, and her interests include social inequality.

Washington Post

Public schools face a fall with a lot more costs and a lot less funding

By [Laura Meckler](#) and [Valerie Strauss](#)

May 27, 2020 at 6:54 p.m. EDT

Callaway High School graduate Keyarie Harris, of Jackson, Miss., pauses to get her temperature taken before graduation. Public school districts are facing increased costs for things like masks and thermometers just as state budgets are getting slashed. (Barbara Gauntt/AP)

As school districts consider how and when to get students back to classrooms, they are facing a financial riddle with enormous implications: Every back-to-school plan involves new spending at a time when states and districts are bracing for significant cuts.

The needs are enormous. Students who fell behind this spring will require extra help. Counselors will be needed to help children who have lost family or suffered trauma. Nurses will be called on to ensure students and staff are healthy.

Authorities, meanwhile, are recommending a raft of new procedures, some of them costly, designed to stem the spreading of germs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends requiring masks for staff and encouraging them for children. It suggests no-touch trash cans, cleaning school surfaces, buses and playground equipment daily, allowing fewer children on buses, and checking student and staff temperatures daily.

“We know that it will cost more to return to school,” said Austin Beutner, the superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District, the second largest in the country. “It will cost more because we need to invest in protective equipment. It will cost more because schools need to not just be cleaned but sanitized. The mental health crisis in the communities will come to the schools when we reopen. We need more nurses and counselors to support students.”

But like most states, California is facing massive budget shortfalls. Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) has already proposed a 10 percent cut to the state's main K-12 school fund, with additional reductions elsewhere. In Los Angeles, that would translate to a \$500 million loss and "irreparable harm," Beutner said. In San Diego, officials said it might mean something even worse. Given the costs associated with safely reopening, the district might be forced to conduct school remotely as a cost-savings move.

"The math simply will not work," said district spokesman Andrew Sharp. "We cannot ask schools to do more at the same time as their funding is being slashed."

Local officials and education advocates are begging Washington to fill the gaps. But prospects for substantial new federal money appear shaky at best, with Senate Republicans showing little interest in writing a big check.

From 'hopeful' to 'grim'

With the economy spiraling, governors across the country have ordered significant cuts to K-12 education spending, with more promised as next year's budgets are finalized. With falling revenue, it's almost impossible to balance the budget without cuts to K-12 spending, which makes up more than a third of the state budget on average.

Educators fear a scenario worse than the Great Recession, when slashed state budgets led to teacher layoffs, reductions in school days, elimination of some full-day kindergarten programs and less money for textbooks and equipment.

Schools never fully recovered. Before the [coronavirus](#) crisis, there were 77,000 fewer local school workers than there were in 2008, before the last recession, yet schools were serving about 2 million more students, said Michael Leachman, vice president for state fiscal policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a liberal-leaning think tank. Funding also remained below prerecession levels when adjusted for inflation, according to the center.

Complaints of low pay and meager funding sparked the [2018 Red for Ed movement](#), in which teachers, first in Republican-led states, went on strike or led protests to demand more resources and better pay. Many governors promised raises that are now in jeopardy. In Virginia, a promised teacher salary hike has already been rescinded.

The cuts are just now making themselves apparent. Many districts had to trim their 2019-2020 budgets, which typically end in June, to make up for lost revenue this spring. They are now finalizing budgets for next fiscal year.

The Philadelphia schools, for instance, are projecting a \$38 million deficit for 2020-2021, compared to a \$167 million surplus the system had been anticipating. The forecast “went from hopeful and investment-oriented to grim in a matter of weeks,” said Helen Gym, a public education activist who serves on the Philadelphia City Council.

New York City schools absorbed \$185 million in budget cuts this year, squeezing the savings out of the district’s central office budget. But a \$642 million shortfall for next academic year will eat into individual school spending. The city is also delaying a preschool expansion and trimming other programs.

Broward County Public Schools, in Florida, already announced a hiring freeze, anticipating a cut from the state ranging from \$35 million to \$150 million for next year. Cuts on the higher end would mean larger class sizes and cutting or eliminating arts, school safety programs and transportation services, said Superintendent Robert Runcie.

And in Paterson Public Schools, in New Jersey, the preliminary 2020-2021 budget would require nearly 245 teacher layoffs and a tax increase averaging \$240 per homeowner each year. Superintendent Eileen F. Shafer said she also is concerned about the cost of protective equipment for staff and of cleaning 54 buildings. “There is substantial cost that goes along with covid,” she said.

Calling on Congress

In March, as the economy ground to a halt, educators pressed Congress for help. But while a [\\$2 trillion assistance package](#) included about \$13.5 billion for K-12 schools, education groups said that was far short of what was needed. They’re now lobbying for some \$200 billion more. Without it, 275,000 teachers could be laid off, according to estimates by [the Council of the Great City Schools](#), a lobby group for big urban districts.

[A bill passed](#) by the House earlier this month included \$90 billion to states for K-12 and higher education, but its prospects in the Senate are dim. Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), chairman of the Senate Education Committee, said last week that he is not sure whether additional funding is needed.

“Tennessee has gotten about \$5 billion from the federal government in a month that it didn’t expect to get because of the shutdown of everything,” he told reporters. “I want to wait and see what the impact of all that will be.”

Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) said in an interview that it is imperative that Congress provide more money: “It’s been haphazard right now, but it can’t be haphazard in the fall. It will take more money, and Congress should provide it.”

Still, she did not list K-12 funding on a rundown of coronavirus-related priorities released Friday, though a Murray spokeswoman said it remains a top priority nonetheless.

Whatever the final damage, it is expected to look a lot like the virus’s other impacts: tougher on poor urban districts than wealthier suburban ones. Those better-off districts, with strong local property tax bases, are better positioned to absorb budget cuts than those that depend more on state allocations.

Which is why, this spring, Ohio imposed a 3.7 percent average cut to school districts, with much larger reductions for wealthy districts. The result was that the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, the state’s poorest district, lost \$5.7 million this spring, compared with \$16.7 million if the cuts had been spread evenly. Meanwhile, the wealthy Upper Arlington Schools, in suburban Columbus, lost \$1.8 million in state funding — more than half its annual appropriation — and had to write a refund check to the state.

The cuts are unsettling, but Paul W. Imhoff, Upper Arlington’s superintendent, said he understood. “You have to look at it through the equity lens,” he said.

Still, Cleveland school officials are worried about next fiscal year, which begins in July. Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine (R) has said he is looking at cuts of up to 20 percent for some agencies. Local property tax collections could fall off amid economic distress downtown. And in November, the district needs to ask voters to renew a tax levy that expires at year’s end.

Eric Gordon, chief executive of the district, said officials are polling and otherwise trying to figure out whether the levy can be renewed, or even increased. He said he is terrified by a scenario where the levy fails and other tax support falls away. But he is crafting a budget for next academic year that assumes the levy passes and state contributions are not cut again.

“We’re looking at the potential of catastrophic decisions if this worst-case scenario were to come true,” he said. “My job is to make sure it doesn’t.”

Education Week

How to Assess English-Learners' Needs From a Distance? Here's Some Help

By [Corey Mitchell](#) on May 28, 2020 8:35 AM

Despite coronavirus-related closures, school districts are enrolling newly arrived students and children scheduled to start kindergarten in the fall—and federal law mandates that districts screen the students to determine if they need English-learner support services.

Districts are using home-language surveys to determine if students are eligible to take an English-language screening test. But with social distancing requirements that prevent face-to-face screenings, schools must find other ways to assess how much support new English-learners will need in remote learning environments or when classes resume.

To help out, the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), a membership organization of the nation's large, urban school systems, has developed a set of sample questionnaires to be used as provisional screeners for English proficiency during the COVID-19 outbreak.

A recently released [fact sheet from the U.S. Department on Education on English-learners and distance learning](#) advises that district must attempt to identify English-learners to the "greatest extent possible" even though physical campuses are closed.

The biggest challenge for schools could come when classes resume for elementary schools, where a larger share of students are English-learners. Federal data show that [roughly 16 percent of the nation's kindergarten students are English-learners](#). Since most districts cancelled in-person kindergarten registration this year, schools may not have enough information to allocate adequate resources to support children who will arrive to school with little exposure to English at home.

The sample questionnaires from the Council of the Great City Schools help assess students' English-speaking and listening skills as beginner-level, intermediate-level or

advanced-level for students in three different grade bands—kindergarten through 2nd grade, 3rd through 5th grade, and 6th through 12th grade.

However, the organization cautions that provisional screenings cannot replace the formal English-learner identification process, which districts must administer once their schools resume normal operations.

Instruction During COVID-19: Less Learning Time Drives Fears of Academic Erosion

By [Catherine Gewertz](#)

May 28, 2020

The picture of instruction that has emerged since the coronavirus forced students and teachers into remote learning is clear and troubling: There's less of it, and the children with the greatest need are getting the least. These dynamics carry serious implications as schools plan to reopen in the fall.

But even though the picture of diminished instruction is clear, it's not simple. Pandemic learning is complex and contradictory.

Some students are getting live video lessons for hours daily and staying in close contact with their teachers, while others get no real-time instruction and hear from their teachers perhaps once a week. Many teachers are pulling 12-hour days, while many others work less than they did a few months ago. Some parents push angrily for stronger academics during home-learning, while others demand relief, saying they can't handle home-schooling along with their other obligations.

These crosscurrents put teachers and education leaders in a bind: How do they maintain high-quality instruction while providing the flexibility families—and they themselves—need to survive a national crisis? That is an especially important question if remote learning, or some version of it, continues in many districts next fall due to the coronavirus.

The defining question in K-12 education right now is “balancing the tension between high expectations and the need for flexibility” as everyone in the system tries to regain their footing, said Bree Dusseault, who's been leading an analysis of districts' coronavirus responses for the Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington.

It's a tricky high wire: If districts and schools allow too much flexibility, they can be accused of letting children fall behind. If they refuse to soften their expectations, their communities might demand more compassion.

‘The Picture Is Very Uneven’

The national picture shows a system providing less for children, whether it's by choice or by limited ability to shift suddenly to distance-teaching.

In surveys by the EdWeek Research Center, teachers report they're spending less time on instruction overall, and they're spending more time on review and less on introducing new material. Nationally, on average, teachers say they're working two fewer hours per day than when they were in their classrooms. And they estimate that their students are spending half as

much time on learning—3 hours a day—as they were before the coronavirus.

Those dynamics are fueling worry about students’ academic erosion. But EdWeek data suggest that risk is even greater for students in high-need neighborhoods. There, students are more likely to have teachers who communicate with them less frequently, and who report spending less time teaching new material. Teachers in those districts also say their students spend only two hours a day on learning now, an hour less than what teachers overall report their students are spending.

“The picture is very uneven. Not all of our kids are getting access to the same things,” said Michael Casserly, who leads an advocacy group for large districts, the Council of the Great City Schools. If these patterns persist, he said, they could create “a permanent underclass” of young people who lack the skills for work and civic responsibility, an inequity that “harms the national economy and offends one’s sense of moral equity.”

Robin Lake, the executive director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education, warned the House education and labor committee [in recent testimony](#) that without a major improvement in schooling soon, students could descend into “academic death spirals.”

So many teachers are [working longer hours now than before their schools closed](#) that they found the EdWeek survey data hard to believe. Rebecca Sorenson, a 3rd grade special education teacher in rural Michigan, said that in addition to lesson planning, she holds four or five Zoom sessions a day, each with one student, and spends hours weekly driving to her students’ homes, which are spread over 116 square miles, to drop off books and study materials. “I’m working longer hours now than ever,” she said.

Instructed to Scale Back Expectations

Interviews with teachers, however, surface a host of dynamics that have reduced teachers’ work hours and led them to focus on review instead of new material. Some arose from state and district directives.

Laura Peden, a kindergarten teacher in rural Paxton, Ill., said her district, following a state directive, tried to stick to a five-hour day remotely and proceed with its usual curriculum. But it quickly heard that parents, many of whom are essential workers, were overwhelmed, she said.

Now she conducts one Zoom session with her class per week, sends paper packets home, and communicates with parents once or twice a week through Facebook and Class Dojo. District officials told schools not to teach new material, she said, because they worried that the “huge discrepancy” in parents’ abilities to manage at-home teaching could exacerbate achievement gaps.

Many states have signaled the need for flexibility during coronavirus, [waiving seat- and instructional-time requirements](#). Many districts offered flexibility by using [pass/fail grading systems](#) or deciding that students’ remote-learning work wouldn’t lower their grades.

But those policies might have affected student engagement. High school teacher Angie Black, who teaches accounting, business law, and personal finance in Leadwood, Mo., said she’s

working maybe two or three hours a day now, compared with six or more before, because so few of her students are signing on. She'd planned multiple sessions per day, to cover all 100 of her students, but she needs only one.

"They're like, 'I'm passing this, so I'm not doing any more work,'" Black said.

In some cities, teacher unions [negotiated agreements capping work time](#). In Los Angeles, for instance, teachers are expected to work no more than four hours daily, including meetings, planning and professional development.

Gloria Martinez, the elementary vice president for United Teachers-Los Angeles, said the agreement was necessary to accommodate the time teachers needed for professional development on distance-learning, as well as juggling care for their own loved ones at home. It also sought to protect children from too much screen time, and parents from exhaustion managing work and family care, she said.

Some Duties Disappeared

Some duties teachers performed in their schools have dropped off their schedules.

Kelly Carver, a 2nd grade teacher in Ralston, Neb., said she no longer has the 25-minute daily lunch duty, or the 40 to 45 minutes she tacked onto each end of her workdays for tutoring. Susan Shelton, a high school English and journalism teacher in Pleasant Grove, Utah, no longer stays "after school" to help students produce the yearbook.

Jackie Wagner, a K-5 special education teacher in Broken Bow, Neb., said that the lessons she once conducted herself—filled with hands-on activities—she can't do remotely.

"Before, I'd plan lessons and then do them with the kids," Wagner said. "Now I plan lessons and hand them over to parents." she said. Given the responsibilities her students' parents are juggling, "I'm lucky if my kids get one hour a day" to practice her lessons at home, she said. She's worried that students like hers, with special needs, will be harmed "for three or four years down the road" from this year's learning losses.

Some teachers reported that even though they wanted to cover new material, distance learning made that tough.

"Without being in front of them, so I could walk around, look over their shoulders at their work, see the looks on their faces to see if they're getting it, it's really tough to introduce anything new," said Shelton.

Before schools closed, she conducted 80-minute class sessions every other day, each with 90 minutes of homework. Now she assigns 40 minutes' worth of work every other day.

Parents are concerned about the decline in their children's learning time. In a few cities—such as Arlington, Va., and Newton, Mass.—they've started petitions to demand more instructional time for their children. Gallup polls showing [rising concern among parents](#) about a negative impact on their children's learning. And a poll conducted by AP-NORC found that [lower-income parents are particularly worried](#) about their children falling behind in the sudden shift to home learning.

Dennisha Rivers, who has two sons in the Louisville, Ky., schools, said her children spend “maybe an hour” each day on schoolwork. She has little time to help them, and no doubt that they’re falling behind. She’s confident her 13-year-old can bounce back, but she wonders how her 7-year-old, who has a learning disability, will regain lost ground.

‘No Such Thing as a COVID-19 Pass’

Districts are taking very different approaches to instruction as they balance flexibility and expectations.

Providence, R.I., requires students to “attend” class from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., a schedule similar to their brick-and-mortar classes, except for a longer midday break to let their parents get to district-run meal sites.

Teachers take attendance, and use monitoring apps, to track student participation, said its chief equity officer, Barbara Mullen, and have consistent engagement from about 80 percent of the district’s 24,000 students in this working-class, predominantly minority community. Bus monitors have been redeployed to work call centers, so fewer than 100 students still elude contact.

“There’s no such thing as a COVID-19 pass,” said Providence Superintendent Harrison Peters, who said he got some pushback from families wanting more leniency.

“We were very sentimental about what kids are going through right now, but at the end of the day, this world will still expect these kids to perform. I have to have high expectations for children of color who already start behind the eight ball.”

Miami-Dade County, a big, high-poverty district, stuck with its planned curriculum, making an unusually smooth transition to remote learning because of good planning and an aggressive push to distribute devices and WiFi hotspots. The district had already been incorporating digital learning into its system, but Superintendent Alberto Carvalho kicked that transition into high gear in January, when he saw the virus take hold in China.

When buildings closed, the district didn’t attempt to replicate its seven-hour, 20-minute school day, moving instead to an approach in which students cycle through live online instruction and independent work on assignments. Instead of starting and ending “school” at fixed times, Carvalho said, students and teachers are “playing a wider field” of time, interspersing work and breaks across a 12- or 14-hour period.

The district’s i-Ready learning platform for grades K-8 shows a consistently high level of engagement, with 90 percent or more of students in every income bracket and ZIP code using the platform every week since buildings closed, Carvalho said.

‘Abdication of Responsibility’

Martha Basulto, a 2nd grade teacher at Coral Reef Elementary in Miami, divides her 49 students into two 90-minute Zoom sessions daily, and with her co-teacher, moves through the district’s

curriculum. She boasts 100 percent attendance, and she reports that formative assessments taken between September and May show that except for one student who needs extra support, all her students have gained academic ground and are ending the year on or above grade level.

“We followed that pacing guide to the dot,” she said. “We didn’t drop the ball.”

Cleveland, another high-poverty district, opted for a long-range approach when it switched to distance learning. Christine Fowler-Mack, the district’s chief portfolio officer, said the district deemphasized new material in favor of review because it knew that a large swath of students lacked computer access. It scrambled to distribute thousands of devices and Wi-Fi hotspots, but a large gap still persists.

“We knew we couldn’t, in an equitable way, ensure that students, if presented with instruction on new material, would be able to engage,” Fowler-Mack said. So the district prioritized learning continuity, distributing paper packets designed to review and strengthen core content areas, while it dove deep into planning for summer and fall instruction that will recapture missed material, and build in extra supports and interventions for students who are struggling academically or emotionally.

Experts anticipate that most districts will face steep challenges in the fall when they must help students recover lost academic ground, especially since many aren’t tracking attendance or progress. That makes it tough to know what students need and how to be ready to support them, said Dusseault, of the Center on Reinventing Public Education.

But if districts aren’t better prepared in the fall, with “plans to address the different types of access gaps, instructional gaps, then it’s an abdication of responsibility to those students and their families,” she said.

USA Today

'Going to see massive cuts': Without more coronavirus relief, schools slash budgets, prep layoffs

[Erin Richards](#)

USA TODAY

May 28, 2020

The [West Bloomfield School District](#) in suburban Detroit has clear plans for fall: One option has students learning at home three days a week to limit the spread of the coronavirus, buildings deep cleaned routinely and buses carrying smaller loads and running more frequently.

What's less clear for West Bloomfield – and for most other districts in America – is how to pay for the plans.

The country's unprecedented economic pause to slow the spread of the coronavirus has depleted sales and income tax revenue for states, and, in turn, for schools. Preliminary estimates predict jaw-dropping state budget holes that some [education funding experts warn](#) could cost in the range of 300,000 teaching jobs.

Districts are scrambling to respond to a double whammy: a reduction in money from states and an increase in costs to operate safely as the pandemic wears on.

"It's a major challenge," said Gerald Hill, superintendent of West Bloomfield. "We have increased costs due to social distancing, due to all of the (personal protective equipment), due to unusual transportation requirements and additional deep cleaning requirements. If we're cut by 20%, but it's costing us 20% more to operate, we're at a 40% cost difference."

A [\\$3 trillion House bill](#) backed by Democrats in early May included nearly \$1 trillion for states and local governments, but Republicans are balking. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Tuesday lawmakers would decide in the next few weeks [whether there would be another relief bill](#), according to CNBC. Even if there is, McConnell signaled it would have to be narrower in scope than what the House passed.

Time is running out; many state and school district fiscal years begin July 1. Around the country, school boards and grassroots groups pressure lawmakers to send more stabilization funds before then.

"Schools are instrumental to restarting the economy," Hill said. "It makes very little logical sense to delay another round of funding."

Funding may drop up to 30%

Because states and school districts can't pass budgets that aren't balanced – unlike the federal government, which can operate with a deficit – school leaders are preparing for dramatic cuts to staff and services in the upcoming fiscal year.

Michigan expects a \$3.2 billion state budget shortfall, including a [\\$1.1 billion deficit](#) in the school aid fund, Hill said. That could translate to a \$700 drop in the roughly \$9,200 West Bloomfield receives per student this year – and potentially another \$700 drop next year if there's no federal intervention.

"I've been in education for 50 years, and I have never seen this level of financial complication," Hill said.

Though the \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act passed at the end of March included \$13.5 billion for school district budgets, that money could be used only for costs related to the pandemic, not to plug budget holes.

West Bloomfield received \$253,000 for its 5,700 students. The money helped pay for a new computer system to aid with online instruction.

More money went to high-poverty districts. On average, school districts nationwide got about \$286 per student, said Michael Griffith, a senior researcher at the [Learning Policy Institute](#), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that provides research on education.

Districts will need \$230 billion – and up to \$305 billion – to stabilize their budgets and [avoid massive layoffs](#), according to Griffith's calculations.

Consider: In the recession that started around 2008, K-12 schools received \$64 billion in federal aid, about five times as much as they've seen for the pandemic, Griffith said. Revenue, which dropped about 8.6% during the Great Recession, is predicted to plummet as much as 15% to 30% this time.

Even with the higher level of federal aid during the recession, the nation saw losses of about 120,000 K-12 teaching jobs, Griffith said, setting up the possibility of even greater job losses this time.

"Without additional federal dollars, we're going to see pretty massive cuts," Griffith said. "If schools get nothing more (from the federal government) than the CARES Act now, we could see two to three times that loss in teaching positions."

Pressure on lawmakers to act

Across the country, school boards are passing resolutions that call on federal lawmakers to support a new round of money for schools, and community groups also sound alarms.

In Philadelphia, where the school system projects a \$38 million shortfall, district leaders encourage state residents to contact state and local lawmakers each Thursday with calls and letters to maintain funding for schools.

More than 60 superintendents of large districts signed [a letter](#) calling for an additional \$200 billion in federal relief for K-12 schools.

"I think it's political suicide for congressional Republicans and the Trump administration to not provide more aid to state and local governments," said Michael Petrilli, president of the [Thomas B. Fordham Institute](#), a conservative education policy think tank in Washington.

After all, Petrilli said, an election is coming up, so another relief bill is likely; what's uncertain is how much will be in it for schools.

"There's no guarantee federal money is coming through or how big it's going to be, so it's smart to plan for cuts," Petrilli said.

Rick Hess, director of education policy studies at the conservative [American Enterprise Institute](#) in Washington, said that to some degree, districts always want more money. He said it's important to watch what safeguards are attached to any new federal money, such as requiring districts to prove that they're actually using it to bolster instruction.

"I think there's a legit case that some new funds are needed," he said. "But what is the public getting for its money?"

States face biggest hits

States that rely heavily on sales taxes will be hit hard by the crisis. Griffith said he worries about states that rely on declining oil revenue. New Mexico, for example, projects cuts to its state budget of 22% to 32%.

Florida was among a number of states that passed a budget before the pandemic hit, which means lawmakers will have to adjust it to account for cratering sales tax revenue. Florida doesn't collect income tax, and sales taxes are usually bolstered by a thriving tourism industry. But after Disney World, Universal Studios and cruise lines shut down, that money dried up.

In April, sales tax collections in Florida were [down by \\$598 million](#) – or 24% below expectations, according to a state report. That makes up the largest part of the budget and provides most of the money for education in the state.

In Broward County Public Schools – Florida's second-largest school district with more than 268,000 students – analysts are preparing scenarios for accommodating a 10%, 15% or 20% cut in money from the state. District officials worry they could look at a \$146 million shortfall.

"As a school system in one year, we've never experienced a \$146 million budget cut," said John Sullivan, Broward's director of legislative affairs.

That figure looms despite \$30 million in savings achieved through a hiring freeze on 134 positions, cutting all department budgets by 10% and eliminating all travel. Some of that is the kind of budget tightening districts pursue nearly every year. Other measures, such as the hiring freeze in Broward County, are in response to financial worries brought on by the coronavirus.

Most districts don't have the flexibility to deal with these financial headwinds, not after having to race to put together feeding and online instructional programs for students no longer attending school, said Michael Casserly, head of the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), which represents large, urban districts.

"The combination of that leanness plus the unexpected costs they're having to incur is a perfect storm in combination with these expected revenue shortfalls," Casserly said. "I don't know how Congress or anyone else expects us to handle this through the usual cost-cutting."

Back-to-school costs: \$20M for masks

In Ohio, Gov. Mike DeWine announced the need to [cut \\$775 million](#) from schools, universities, Medicaid and state government offices to balance the state's budget by the end of the month. Those cuts include \$300 million from what would usually be sent to schools.

Like many districts, Ohio's must spend more money on certain pandemic-related items. Columbus City Schools officials predict they'll need to spend an additional \$20 million this year on disposable face masks for students and staff, \$10 million on hand sanitizer and \$25 million on more computers so every child can connect to their studies from home on specified days.

"As we add these theoretical numbers up, we're getting into the hundreds of millions – and that's not even addressing what's happening with teaching and learning," said Scott Wortman, spokesman for [Columbus City Schools](#).

In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom [proposed cutting 8% of what school districts got last year](#) under the state funding formula – totaling about \$6.4 billion, according to EdSource, an education news site.

In response, superintendents from six of California's largest districts warned Newsom and lawmakers that they may not be able to open on time if the governor's proposed cuts go through.

"The notion that schools can continue to operate safely in the fall with a decreased state budget is not realistic," [the letter](#) said. "We cannot in good conscience risk the health and safety of our students and staff by returning to the classroom prematurely and without funding for the necessary precautions given the continued lack of a national testing program and a lack of clear understanding of the impacts of coronavirus on young people."

USA Today

What schools will look like when they reopen: Scheduled days home, more online learning, lots of hand-washing

Erin Richards

USA TODAY

May 28, 2020

Imagine, for a moment, American children returning to school this fall.

The school week looks vastly different, with most students attending school two or three days a week and doing the rest of their learning at home. At school, desks are spaced apart to discourage touching. Some classrooms extend into unused gymnasiums, libraries or art rooms – left vacant while schools put on hold activities that cram lots of children together.

Arrival, dismissal and recess happen on staggered schedules and through specific doors to promote physical distancing. Students eat lunch at their desks. Children learn with the same peers every day – or teachers move around while students stay put – to discourage mingling with new groups.

Teachers and other education staff at higher risk of contracting the virus continue to teach from home, while younger or healthier educators teach in-person.

Everyone washes their hands. A lot.

Frequently touched school surfaces get wiped down. A lot.

That outline of a potential school day was drawn from interviews with more than 20 education leaders determining what reopened schools might look like come fall. New guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention supports those plans and more: Teachers and older students should wear masks, especially when they have to interact in close quarters.

In the absence of a vaccine for COVID-19, social distancing and hygiene will be important to limit spreading the virus. The question is how to successfully implement those measures in

schools usually filled with crowded hallways, class sizes of more than 30 people and lunchrooms of hundreds.

"The whole thing is overwhelming," said Dan Weisberg, a former district official and the head of TNTP, a nonprofit formerly known as The New Teacher Project that helps districts recruit and hire more effective teachers.

"This is where federal dollars could help," Weisberg said. "This is where state guidance could help. This is where galvanizing people behind the idea on how to plan for next year could help." The new CDC guidance on reopening the economy, a 60-page document released in the third week of May, recommends that schools place desks six feet apart, serve lunch in classrooms, close playgrounds, keep children in the same groups every day and cancel field trips and extracurricular activities. It also recommends daily health checks and temperature screenings of staff and students daily, if feasible.

Baby steps toward reopening

A few U.S. schools have cautiously returned to in-person instruction.

In California's Marin County, three school buildings opened May 18 to serve the most needy students: those with disabilities, and those who had fallen off track in high school and were not participating remotely.

Teachers wearing masks worked with eight cohorts of 12 students across the three schools, officials said. Students washed their hands on arrival, and tape marks in classrooms reminded some to keep their distance. New cellphone sign-in systems track who comes in and out, which means contact tracing can begin promptly if an infection is detected.

In Montana, 11 schools reopened after Gov. Steve Bullock turned such decisions over to districts this month.

Willow Creek School, located 40 miles west of Bozeman, reopened on May 7. The tiny K-12 school enrolls 56 students; only 37 returned for in-person instruction.

On a recent afternoon, teachers supervised recess while wearing cloth face masks and holding 6-foot pool noodles. When recess ended, students lined up on orange circles spray-painted on the sidewalk at evenly marked intervals. As the line moved inside, each student was met at the door with a squirt of hand sanitizer.

The school has implemented staggered schedules and separated desks. Younger students walk through hallways holding hula-hoops to prevent them from touching things.

'Economics will drive choices'

Reopening schools is critical to fully bring back the economy. More parents can work when their children are in school. Just as important: Many kids aren't learning much at home. Those learning the least are students who lack devices and internet access.

Bringing kids back to school presents major worries about health, not so much for children – who seem to be less at risk for getting sick – but for their teachers and parents. Preliminary research has shown that children can carry and transmit the virus without showing symptoms themselves.

Many school buildings lack the space to keep children a recommended six feet apart. That's why education leaders foresee a need to continue virtual learning, with kids attending school in person on alternating days or weeks.

And that's only the start. Districts also must figure out food service, especially for the 52% of students who qualify for free- or reduced-price lunches and depend on those meals. Schools must provide enough qualified staff to teach students in smaller groups. They must provide emotional support to staff and students. And they need to develop measures to help catch up children who have fallen the farthest behind.

Then schools have to figure out how to pay for it all.

"Economics will drive the choices districts make," said Marguerite Roza, a professor and director of the Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University.

Superintendents from 62 of the country's largest school districts have called on Congress to provide about \$200 billion more in educational stabilization funds.

"Not only are we going to be faced in the fall with a shortfall of revenues, but we'll have to be spending considerably more on transportation, on masks, on cleaning, on additional bus routes," said Mike Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, which represents large, urban public school systems.

Burdens of meal distribution

Schools have become a key resource for families needing food assistance, which will likely continue no matter what schooling scenario takes shape.

Many districts have lost money because they're providing meals to needy adults as well as children, and they can only claim reimbursement from the federal government for student meals.

Without a federal bailout, school food programs will be forced to make cuts, meaning there may be fewer cafeteria workers to prepare meals. Schools will also have to figure out how to prepare and serve foods in buildings while adhering to social distancing measures.

“Most of our school nutrition directors have been working through their (non-perishable) inventory to make sure nothing is wasted,” said Diane Pratt-Heavner, spokeswoman for the nonprofit School Nutrition Association, “but that means that when they get back to school they won’t have any reserves.”

Skylar Rispen with the Great Falls Tribune and Daphne Duret with the USA TODAY Network contributed to this report.

Chalkbeat Colorado

Who gets to decide how schools work this fall? It's complicated.

By [Kalyn Belsha](#) Updated May 30, 2020, 1:44pm EDT

Earlier this month, as Idaho's stay-at-home order expired, the West Side School District hatched a plan to reopen for the school year's final few weeks.

With no confirmed cases of the coronavirus in the county, the rural district in the southeastern corner of the state thought school could return to something like business as usual. But the state board of education said districts needed local public health officials to sign off — and the health officials rejected the West Side school board's plan.

It was a frustrating outcome for Superintendent Spencer Barzee. “We want their guidance, but we don't want their mandate that you're not going to school,” he said of state officials and health officials in the fall. “I have an elected school board that can make that decision.”

The Idaho district's experience is just one of several kinds of power struggles that school districts saw this spring as schools across the country shut their doors to help stop the spread of the coronavirus. Those tensions played out in much bigger cities that were hot spots for the virus, too, such as New York City. There, the mayor made the call to close school buildings for the rest of the school year, only to be told by the governor that the decision was not his to make.

It's unlikely we'll get through the fall without similar tensions, given the structure of America's education system. While states generally have legal authority over school districts, there is a “powerful tradition of local control over education,” says Jeffrey Henig, a Columbia professor of education and political science.

And with so many fraught issues tied up in reopening schools — the safety of students and staff, the costs facing cash-strapped districts, and the potential hit to the economy if parents can't send students to school — divisions are to be expected, even in places where political conflict usually doesn't reach the schoolhouse door.

“I think on this issue we're likely to see a lot of unusual turmoil,” Henig said. “There's no getting around the fact that it's going to be a mess.”

Across the country, governors, mayors, state education chiefs, local superintendents, school boards, and public health officials are weighing what a safe reopening of school buildings could look like in the fall. For local school leaders, it's an even more complicated set of questions than they faced in March, since they are making plans both for opening schools and for potentially having to close them again if their area faces a new wave of cases. And those are just two of the many contingencies they're planning for right now.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said that decisions should be made with “local health officials and other State and local authorities” who can assess the spread of the coronavirus. Several states have already established task forces for reopening schools, often to provide guidance to local districts.

But exactly how involved governors should get is a point of contention. Tennessee Sen. Lamar Alexander, a Republican who heads the Senate's education committee and served two terms as the state's governor, said recently he thought governors “should generally defer to the local school district” on reopening plans.

“If there is a statewide health risk by the actions of a local community, then perhaps the governor should step in,” he said. “But generally speaking, I think it ought to be up to the local school board, the classroom teachers, and the community to decide how to make their schools safe.”

Whether new statewide orders will be handed down, and how much time local districts have to respond, is a cause of concern for some superintendents, said **Michael Casserly, who heads the Council of the Great City Schools**, which represents the nation's largest urban districts.

“Some local school districts were given only a matter of days before they had to close up shop, and in many cases it was done without any particular conversation at the local level,” Casserly said. “School districts are worried about this happening in reverse.”

Several school leaders said they didn't foresee any issues working with state and health officials to make decisions. But the potential for conflict may be greater in communities where there are political, racial, or other divides between local and state governments, or in cities where mayors run the school systems and aren't used to deferring to governors on education questions.

In New York City, this tension is still evident. While the governor eventually agreed with the mayor that schools should remain closed in the spring, last week he said a decision about when and how to reopen New York City schools wouldn't be made until July, at least, and that it would be his call, not the mayor's. Then this week, the head of the state's education board said the work of deciding how to reopen schools across New York should be left largely to the state's education agency.

"There is so much uncertainty it's hard to even describe the uncertainty," said Kim Watkins, who heads an education council in Manhattan and has a daughter heading into middle school. "I know that there are a lot of people thinking of all of these issues, but we just don't have a plan yet. Hopefully the mayor and the governor will figure out a path forward."

Some places have already said they are leaving decisions in local hands. In California, the head of the state's education agency said that local school districts "will make their own decisions about when they will open." And draft guidelines from the state indicate districts will have a lot of flexibility to decide what in-person learning will look like, EdSource reported.

In Miami-Dade County, meanwhile, a spokesperson for the public schools said the schools superintendent would make the final call. "The authority to open and close schools lies with the Superintendent," said Daisy Gonzalez-Diego. But, she noted, he will work with the governor's office, and state health and education officials.

In Atlanta Public Schools, too, officials expect they'll have a lot of say over their reopening plans, though they do plan to check in with health officials and surrounding school districts.

That's partly because they operate under a unique state initiative that gives them a lot of flexibility to opt out of state requirements in exchange for signing a performance contract. And Georgia is usually the kind of state that issues recommendations, not mandates, says Jason Esteves, Atlanta's school board chair.

“If something does come down from the state that we don’t agree with ... I don’t anticipate us having to follow anything,” Esteves said. “What we need to do is make sure we’re making the best decisions for Atlanta.”

For Pedro Martinez, the superintendent of San Antonio Independent School District, the spring closure decisions were a source of frustration. “We definitely didn’t have any control,” he said.

Now, officials are gearing up to start summer school, and hoping that the in-person sessions will help schools show families what it will look like to practice social distancing in classrooms. But Martinez knows that whatever plans the district makes now are “all contingent on new information coming, and that new information comes in daily or weekly, and also what our local and state governments may require.”

One thing he’s keeping an eye on is whether state education officials suggest specific limits on how many students can be in a classroom for the fall as they did for summer school.

“We tell parents: ‘Be ready, this is a time we have to be flexible,’” Martinez said.

Education Week

Most Educators Want Schools to Stay Closed to Slow Spread of COVID-19

By [Holly Yettick Kurtz](#) and [Kevin Bushweller](#)

June 3, 2020

As school district leaders struggle to solve the complex equation of reopening buildings in the fall or maintaining virtual learning, several factors are weighing heavily on their minds. How do you make educators feel comfortable in their work environments when more than half of them prefer school buildings stay shut to slow the spread of COVID-19? What about educators and students with underlying health conditions? And what if remote learning must continue in the fall even though the approach led to declining student engagement this spring?

The EdWeek Research Center's sixth coronavirus-focused survey reveals 10 key findings related to those and other questions, drawn from questions answered by 1,907 educators (1,014 teachers, 447 principals, and 446 district leaders) between May 20 and 28. The findings, taken together, show how messy the challenges of maintaining high quality teaching and learning in the fall will be, whether school buildings reopen or not.

"I don't think the public was as aware of how complicated the decisionmaking is," said Jeanné Collins, superintendent of Vermont's Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union, a rural school system with about 1,500 students.

1. 65 percent of educators say schools should stay shut to slow the spread of the coronavirus

Nationwide, 74 percent of Americans say many businesses should remain closed to slow the spread of the coronavirus while the remainder would prefer to open up businesses to get the economy going—even if it results in more infections, according to a Washington Post-Ipsos poll conducted April 27 to May 4.

Asked a similar question about closing or re-opening schools, 65 percent of teachers, principals, and district leaders surveyed by the EdWeek Research Center expressed a similar sentiment, saying that school buildings should remain closed to slow the spread of the disease. The remaining 35 percent say the U.S. should open up schools and get the country going again, even if that means more people would get the coronavirus.

High school teachers and principals are more supportive of reopening schools than were educators working with younger students. And educators are significantly more likely to support a reopening if they or a close loved one do not have an underlying health condition associated with a higher risk of suffering ill effects from the virus.

A new report by the American Enterprise Institute examines the "wide-ranging implications" for schools, state by state, given that it might not be safe for many educators to return to school buildings until a vaccine is developed. This could lead to districts having to come up with alternative staffing plans, as well as figuring out how to address potential teacher shortages.

The severity of the problem will vary by state, according to an AEI analysis of federal data. In Hawaii, for instance, 45 percent of principals are 55 and older, compared with only 9 percent in Illinois. More than a quarter of public school teachers in Maine and New Mexico are in this age group, compared with just 10 percent in Colorado and 8 percent in Kentucky.

2. More than 1 in 3 educators say they have a physical condition associated with a higher risk of suffering serious illness from the virus

Thirty-six percent of teachers, principals, and district leaders say they have a physical condition associated with suffering adverse effects of the coronavirus. An even higher percentage, 69 percent, report that a close loved one they see often has such a condition.

In addition, seven percent of respondents are age 65 or older, which the CDC indicates is a risk factor for severe illness. And 26 percent are male, another risk factor.

Teachers in those categories worry about the implications of returning to school.

Cossondra George, a middle school math teacher in Newberry, Mich., has asthma and will turn 59 in August. The thought of returning to school in the fall has led to "lots of sleepless nights."

"I'm really concerned about my health, I'm concerned about my students' health," she said. "I just feel like opening schools back up has to be a really well-thought-out process."

But so far, when it comes to maintaining social distance in the classroom, "there are so many more questions than there are answers in my mind," George said.

3. Nearly 2 of every 3 educators are concerned about the health implications of resuming in-person instruction

Sixty-six percent of teachers, principals, and district leaders are somewhat or very concerned about the health implications of resuming in-person instruction in the fall.

Regionally, the percentage of educators who are very concerned ranges from 22 percent in the West to 32 percent in the Northeast. Urban educators are also significantly more likely to be very concerned than are their rural counterparts (34 percent versus 22 percent). And 35 percent of educators who have physical conditions that put them at greater risk of suffering severe illness are concerned, compared with 21 percent of those who don't have such conditions.

"In a situation where people carry the virus asymptotically, ... we're going to have to have all these different options for kids, as well as teachers," said Randi Weingarten, the president of the

American Federation of Teachers. “Let’s not put people who may be immunocompromised in a scary or threatening position.”

4. 12 percent of teachers say the pandemic may lead them to leave the profession even though they were not planning to do so before the crisis

One in 5 teachers say they are somewhat or very likely to leave the classroom at the end of the 2019-20 school year. (This survey question was developed in partnership with Teach for America.) However, that percentage is somewhat deceiving because 38 percent of those who now expect to leave say they were already likely to do so prior to the pandemic.

A more accurate accounting of the impact of the pandemic on teacher turnover is evident in the overall percentage of teachers who were not likely to leave prior to the pandemic but now plan to do so. Overall, that percentage is 12 percent, more than 1 of every 10 teachers.

Seventy-nine percent of those who indicate that the coronavirus may be pushing them out of the classroom report that they have a close loved one with a physical condition believed to make people more vulnerable to the impact of the disease.

Offering early retirement to at-risk teachers or staff has been proposed by the American Enterprise Institute, a think tank in Washington. According to an AEI report, this could also be a cost-saving measure for districts, which are expected to face steep budget cuts that could lead to teacher layoffs.

“You want it to be one option among multiple options,” said Frederick Hess, the director of education policy studies at AEI and one of the authors of the report. “I don’t really want to see us pushing educators out of the profession. That’s not preferred.”

5. Teachers say they’re less effective working from home, but the vast majority will return even if virtual learning continues in the Fall

In-person interactions play a key role in education. So it is perhaps not surprising that the majority of educators say they are more effective working in offices or schools rather than working from home. That said, perceptions do vary by role, with 82 percent of teachers versus 64 percent of district leaders saying that they are more effective in offices/schools.

Most teachers (80 percent) predict that the vast majority of their colleagues (more than 80 percent) will return to the classroom in the fall even if school remains virtual or becomes a hybrid of in-person and online learning. (The question about the percentage of colleagues returning to the classroom was developed in partnership with Teach for America.)

For Education Week’s latest annual Technology Counts report, teachers were asked what impact the coronavirus school building closures and the shift to full-time virtual learning had on their teaching, for better or worse. The frustrations of working from home were clearly high, but many teachers also reported that, by necessity, they had learned new technology skills and approaches to reach students more effectively in virtual environments.

“This shift to remote learning ... has required me to use innovation and creativity for the most critical assessments while highlighting the importance of the teacher-student relationship,” said Liz Russillo, a 9th grade science teacher at Smithfield High School in Rhode Island. “I will never again take for granted the student showing up for class early to tell me about their weekend or the student sitting in the back of the room trying to stay under the radar because they are having a bad day.”

6. Nearly a quarter of educators say they would not return to their school buildings if they reopen without social distancing measures

The CDC recommends staying at least six feet away from others to limit the risk of contracting the coronavirus. Twenty-four percent of teachers, principals, and district leaders say they’ll leave their jobs if schools reopen without these kinds of measures in place. Educators with conditions that put them at risk of suffering severe consequences of the virus are much more likely to say they’d leave if schools reopen without social distancing, compared with their peers without such conditions. (32 percent versus 19 percent).

However, 35 percent of educators also say social distancing measures will make it very difficult to have all students in school at the same time, meaning they’d need to implement extreme approaches such as double or staggered sessions to pull it off.

Julie, an elementary school computer science teacher who requested that her last name and the name of her school not be used, said her husband is 57 and has an upper respiratory disease. If he contracted COVID-19, he might not survive, she said.

The thought of returning to her job in an elementary computer lab keeps her awake at night. She sees more than 400 children a week, and “they touch everything.”

7. Less than half of teachers have taught live, interactive classes during closures

The stereotype of coronavirus instruction is one of a teacher interacting with students online, the Hollywood Squares like Zoom interface displaying student faces. Only that’s not necessarily the reality, according to survey results.

Since schools closed due to the pandemic, less than half of teachers (48 percent) say they’ve taught live, online classes in which they interact with students and students interact with one another. The most common means of instruction is collecting and returning work online.

That said, the share of teachers who’ve engaged in live, interactive internet instruction has increased considerably since the EdWeek Research Center last asked about it on March 25. Back then, just 21 percent of teachers had used that method.

Elementary teachers are most likely to teach live, interactive classes: Fifty-six percent say they do so, compared with 40 percent of middle school teachers, and 38 percent at the high school level. And rates of live, interactive instruction are higher in the lowest poverty districts.

Among teachers who do teach live classes, the majority (59 percent) spend less than one hour per day doing so.

Laura Peden, a kindergarten teacher in rural Paxton, Ill., said her district, following a state directive, tried to stick to a five-hour day remotely and proceed with its usual curriculum. But it quickly heard that parents, many of whom are essential workers, were overwhelmed, she said.

Now she conducts one Zoom session with her class per week, sends paper packets home, and communicates with parents once or twice a week through Facebook and Class Dojo. District officials told schools not to teach new material, she said, because they worried that the “huge discrepancy” in parents’ abilities to manage at-home teaching could exacerbate achievement gaps.

8. Less than half of principals are interacting daily with teachers, parents, and students

On a typical day, when schools are not closed due to a worldwide pandemic, most principals have at least some kind of interactions with teachers, students and probably even parents. Yet with schools closed, less than half of principals say they interact daily with these groups. Forty-seven percent of school leaders interact daily with teachers, a quarter interact daily with students, and 17 percent interact daily with parents.

But many principals are trying to maintain communication under difficult circumstances.

Sergio Garcia, the principal of Artesia High School in suburban Los Angeles, stays in “constant communication” with his staff through texts, online meetings, and drop-ins to instructional sessions.

He has also reached out to give them face masks with the school’s mascot on them, and lawn signs proclaiming that they’re “all in this together.”

“Knowing how distant you can feel, I knew we needed to support our teachers,” Garcia said.

9. Student engagement continues to decline

Seventy-six percent of teachers report that student engagement has declined a lot or a little in the past two weeks. That’s way up from the last time the EdWeek Research Center asked that question two weeks earlier, when 59 percent of teachers reported declines.

High school teachers were slightly more likely to report declines than elementary or middle school educators.

Those findings are fueling worry about students’ academic erosion. EdWeek data suggest that risk is even greater for students in high-need neighborhoods. There, students are more likely to have teachers who communicate with them less frequently, and who report spending less time teaching new material. Teachers in those districts also say their students spend only two hours a day on learning now, an hour less than what teachers overall report their students are spending.

“The picture is very uneven. Not all of our kids are getting access to the same things,” said Michael Casserly, who leads an advocacy group for large districts, the **Council of the Great City Schools**. If these patterns persist, he said, they could create “a permanent underclass” of young people who lack the skills for work and civic responsibility, an inequity that “harms the national economy and offends one’s sense of moral equity.”

10. Live, synchronous videoconferencing is educators’ top tool for science, English/language arts, and math instruction

Three times, on three different surveys, the EdWeek Research Center has asked teachers and district leaders to identify the tools they say are very effective at teaching three different subjects (math, English/language arts, and most recently, science) during the coronavirus closures.

For all three subjects, respondents are most likely to point to live, synchronous videoconferencing tools such as Zoom. Sixty-two percent say this is a very effective way to teach science. Sixty-three percent say it’s a very effective way to teach English/language arts. And 57 percent say it’s a very effective way to teach math.

For science, experiments students can do with materials they have at home are a close second, with 58 percent of educators saying this method is very effective. Shared documents, such as Google Docs or Word Online, is cited as the second most effective virtual teaching method for English/language arts. Pre-recorded videos on specific concepts produced by the teacher is number two for math.

It’s very possible those live, video conferencing teaching skills will be necessary in the fall too.

Public-health officials have warned of a possible resurgence of COVID-19 cases this fall, and the specter of the virus will loom until a vaccine is widely available. Seventy percent of educators who responded to an EdWeek Research Center survey in early May said they’re already planning for multiple reopening scenarios for the fall.

“It seems prudent, if you’re a district leader, to be planning for the possibility that sometime in school year 2021, or multiple times, you’re going to have to close for one, two, maybe three weeks at a time,” said John Watson, the founder of Evergreen Education Group, a K-12 digital learning research and consulting firm. School leaders who work with Evergreen’s Digital Learning Collaborative have told Watson they’re preparing for “a significant percentage of parents who don’t want to send their kids back to the physical school.”

Student Leaders “Zooming” In

By Charlie Hudson

Jun 5, 2020

Last week’s article highlighted eight scholarship recipients announced when Dr. Larry Feldman, Miami-Dade School Board Chairman, held the District 9 Student Leadership and Scholarship Awards Event, via Zoom Thursday, May 22, 2020.

Jackie Fals, his Chief of Staff, as well as Addys Lopez, and Corina Bethencourt were co-hosts. Ms. Marie Izquierdo, Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Magaly Abrahante, Asst Superintendent Title I Admin and Early Childhood, Dr. Eduardo Barreiro, Director of the Migrant Education Program, along with Ms. Rachel Bueno, Ed Specialist were signed in. Sponsors Ms. Burth, Ms. Molina, Mr. Sans-Gomez, Ms. Santalo, Ms. Soderholm, and Ms. Wethy were also on-line with other teachers, supporters, students, and family members.

This article presents the five notable students who rounded out a total of thirteen recipients selected from sixty excellent applicants.

Aisha Chebbi, Senior Class President from Coral Reef Senior High, was the ninth recipient in the Student Leadership Advisory Council (SLAC) category.

In always standing up for others, “She hopes to be a lifelong learner and use her education to be a vehicle for positive change in her community and country.”

The Feldman Family UF Scholarship went to Saiyara Raaida of the Medical Academy for Science and Technology (M.A.S.T) Homestead. Immigrated five years ago from Bangladesh, the family not only faced creating a new life, but did so amidst tragedy. Her grandmother passed away from cancer and her mother was diagnosed with multiple medical conditions requiring frequent hospitalizations. Raaida, who endured bullying to become an admired senior, contributed 1,000 hours of community service in addition to stellar academic work. University of Florida is her first step toward her goal of becoming a cardiac surgeon. For her, “In considering the many immigrant students are in Miami It's okay to be a part of multiple culture. No one but yourself can tell you how much you should follow your traditional culture or how much you should adapt to your new culture. Don't let anyone calling you whitewashed or fob get to your head.”

The Yetta Feldman and Alejandrina Fals Scholarship recognizes a student from the Title IX Migrant Education Program who has exhibited a commitment to making a difference in their communities. “Dr. Eduardo Barreiro along with Ms. Rachel Bueno, helped select the recipient of this scholarship, named after two amazing women,” Fals explained. Nayeli Ortiz from Homestead Senior High School has taken it upon herself to work alongside her parents in agriculture since a very young age. She has cared for her sisters and family, excelled in school, and will attend Miami-Dade College to become a registered nurse.

In 2016, the School Board established the District School Board Scholarship. Kristina Alzugaray, a senior at Cutler Bay Senior High School, contributed almost 2,000 hours in community service with a dedication to protecting children against violence. “She was selected to attend and present at Sandy Hook Promise’s annual Youth Summit for SAVE Promise Clubs across the country and was the only student representative to address Congress with Sandy Hook about gun violence.” Her major in Political Science will help her continue to advocate for change to protect the most vulnerable.

Ms. Tonya Harris, Director of Communications for The Council of Great City Schools, was linked in from Washington, D.C. She also serves as staff liaison to their Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls. She spoke of the importance in providing support to a student segment that too often feels undervalued. Dr. Feldman, involved with this organization since 2008, rose to become its Chair. As past chair, he was recognized this year as the CGCS and Green Garner National Urban Educator and School Board Member of the Year. That honor comes with a \$10,000 scholarship. In one portion of Dr. Feldman's announcement of Laura Garcia from South Dade Senior High as the recipient, he touched on a shared theme for many. "I am honored to bestow this scholarship to a student who has impressed us with her achievements and the obstacles she has overcome to become the success story she is today. This young lady, like many of our students, braved a perilous journey to make it to this country from her native land. Her mother sacrificed much to provide for her family an opportunity to live the American dream and take advantage of the opportunities that education would open to them."

Yovanna Alvarez fled Cuba with her mother and three-year-old Laura, taking on whatever jobs she could. This in actuality meant multiple jobs, a pattern the daughter adopted in order to help her family. "When I was 14 I began working at a Zoo Cuts, as a cashier and cleaning lady. When I was 16, I had to quit because there was no one available to take care of my little brother and I stepped up rather than force my mom to pay for his care." She persevered academically, however, and also completed more than 500 community service hours.

"Being an immigrant, or a minority does not mean you cannot succeed. More than anything, I want other students to know that the struggles that come with this reality can be used as fuel to ignite passion and never ending drive. Having obstacles in your way only makes success more sweet and well-earned, because success will come. However, it may come when you least expect it. It also may come in a way you don't expect. Whatever your interest, do it with passion, unwavering motivation, and commitment to make a difference however small it might be."

Although she knows other professions would likely bring greater financial reward, she will attend University of Florida to double major in Fine Art and Anthropology, mainly cultural anthropology, and linguistics with a minor in Spanish. In becoming a teacher, she will embrace a profession she admires.

MDCPS Superintendent Alberto Carvalho had stepped out of an important meeting to address attendees and was able to return to the end of the event. “I am very, very proud of Laura, and glad I can share in this moment.”

NBC News

June 8, 2020, 5:11 PM EDT

By Kenzi Abou-Sabe, Christine Romo, Cynthia McFadden and Omar Abdel-Baqui

Kenedi Cain and Xavier Prater, who live 4 1/2 miles apart, are both dedicated high school students with high hopes for college — she wants to be a film director, he hopes to be an architect.

When [COVID-19](#) hit and schools across the country closed their doors and transitioned to online learning, they both found themselves in the same predicament: neither had a computer.

But Xavier, 17, who lives in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, received a laptop from his school a few days after it closed. Kenedi, 16, who lives in Detroit, did not.

Months later, Xavier is carrying on with his schoolwork. He misses his classmates and school activities, but he's keeping up with his SAT prep, and not much about his learning has changed.

Kenedi was finally loaned a laptop by a youth group she's a part of in late May, but she's sharing it with her four younger siblings. Choosing to prioritize their education over her own, she's barely logging on.

Kenedi and Xavier are separated by not much more than a ZIP code, but educators say that's enough to make a world of difference as the pandemic lays bare the existing disparities in the U.S. education system and worse, threatens to exacerbate them. The crisis, experts say, is likely to widen achievement gaps at public schools that serve disadvantaged children.

“It's a tale of two ZIP codes,” Keri Rodrigues, president of the National Parents Union, said. “It is very, very different” for “students that live in urban communities versus your privileged, white, wealthy communities.”

[“Where will I be by the time I'm a senior?”](#)

Casey Edgar teaches 11th grade math to nearly 150 students at the Martin Luther King Jr. Senior High School in Detroit. Or, at least, she used to.

“The first week, I was in touch with, I would say, 50 to 60 percent,” she said. “And then the second week, it reduced to approximately maybe 30 percent. Now, it's running at about 20 percent of the students I still talk to on a regular basis.”

When the Detroit Public Schools Community District transitioned to an online program — about a month after schools closed in mid-March — an estimated 90 percent of the students were, like Kenedi, without access to a computer or decent internet.

Printed packets were made available for students without those resources, but Edgar said the packets are likely of limited usefulness for students who aren't able to connect with their teachers. “What good is a packet if you don't know how to do it?” she asked.

In April, the school system secured a \$23 million donation from local businesses to provide a laptop and six months of internet access to each one of Detroit's roughly 50,000 public school students, but the laptops are not expected to be distributed until late summer, long after the school year has ended.

In the meantime, the months of lost learning for students not receiving face-to-face instruction, or receiving less of it, is expected to take a steep toll on an achievement gap that already plagues many Detroit students.

"I expect it to be exponential," said Edgar, who thinks the lack of engagement is the consequence of a few things, namely that many still lack the tools to log on, and that because students aren't being graded, there's less incentive to keep participating.

But down the road, in Grosse Pointe, the school district had a laptop in the hands of every student who needed one within days of schools shutting down. At last count, the district said 93 percent of high schoolers were actively engaged in online learning.

In the Detroit school system, engagement in the online learning program is hovering at 50 to 60 percent, according to the district. That figure doesn't count students who may be filling out printed packets of schoolwork in lieu of online assignments, but it still amounts to nearly half of the district's 50,000 students not regularly getting instruction from their teachers.

Kenedi is one of those students. A sophomore at the Cass Technical High School, one of Detroit's best high schools, she was left with two options when school shut down — try to do her schoolwork and video chats with teachers entirely on her phone, or share a computer with her four younger siblings, who all have their own schoolwork and their own scheduled video chats with teachers.

"I have four classes throughout the day that I have to attend at different times, and my brothers do as well, and a lot of those times cross each other or they're at the same exact time," she said.

Kenedi's parents are both essential workers, which means that she's in charge of her siblings for most of the week.

"I like to think of myself as the third co-parent," she said. The teenager occasionally works on packets of schoolwork, but made a decision to put her own education on the back burner so that she could home-school her siblings on that one computer.

"Whoever doesn't have the computer on the specific day, I give them little stuff to keep their mind going," she said "So my youngest brother, I usually have him write a story about the day before, or tell me something about, you know, his favorite food."

Still, Kenedi said sometimes worries creep in about what this will mean for her future. She received a 4.0 grade point average on her last report card, but that achievement was hard earned.

“I’m trying to keep good spirits, but I mean, it’s certain stuff that I don’t have a choice but to think about,” she said. “One being, where will I be by the time I’m a senior? Will it be hard for me to get into college even with my [advanced] classes?”

Kenedi said she likens the situation to living in an empty, decrepit house beside someone who owns a mansion and has limitless resources.

“He gets whatever he wants, whenever he wants, whenever something wrong happens,” she said. “And it’s just like, wow, why can’t we be like that? Or why can’t we step in and give to our students like they are because our students are no different from theirs.”

Without the necessary resources, Kenedi and other Detroit students have been forced to make hard decisions about their education.

Lacking a laptop, King High School junior Azane Scott used her phone to connect with teachers and write essays when she wasn’t babysitting her infant brother. But when her grandmother died in late April, she put her lessons aside. She didn’t start logging on again until mid-May, when her mother bought her a laptop.

Quincey Strickland, a Communication and Media Arts High School junior, also began doing schoolwork on his phone but said the device wasn’t adequate for productive learning. Eventually he gave up, and as of late May, hadn’t done any schoolwork in over a month.

Ridgeley Hudson, a King High School senior and a board member on the school district council, said the lack of resources has left many students feeling discouraged.

“It doesn’t take the coronavirus to highlight the disparities between the suburbs and the city. We knew that they have been treated far better than we have,” Ridgeley said. “It’s like they get things first and we get the scraps.”

[“That’s just money and who has it and who doesn’t.”](#)

Detroit is far from the only city dealing with these disparities.

In the D.C. Public Schools, when schools closed in March, the district estimated that 30 percent of students didn’t have access to a laptop or a tablet in the home. A spokesperson for D.C.’s teachers union said that number was likely too low an estimate.

The Chicago Public Schools system provided laptops to 122,000 students, bringing its percentage of students with digital access up to 93 percent. But only 84 percent of students were handing in assignments during the week of May 11.

The Detroit Public Schools Community District superintendent, Nikolai Vitti, believes that his students will incur about six months’ worth of learning loss as a result of the coronavirus shutting down schools.

“I think our students have taken a step back, unfortunately, because they’re not experiencing the regular, face-to-face instructional interaction,” Vitti said. “Obviously

there's a level of volunteerism that goes along with this period of learning. And based on the home situation of the child, learning may not be happening.”

Vitti said laptops are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the ways in which children in low-income districts are suffering due to the coronavirus.

“There are so many other issues that our families, and therefore our students, deal with that's not education. Where will folks live? Are they paying the light bills?” he said.

“Those are basic needs that get in the way of thinking, ‘I have a test on Wednesday that I have to study for,’ or, ‘What's my GPA need to be to get into that college?’”

“Whether you're talking about devices, you're talking about technology in a classroom, you're talking about arts, music or teacher salaries, we're at a disadvantage,” Vitti added.

“That's just money and who has it and who doesn't.”

He's not wrong. Local funding for Grosse Pointe students is far higher than in neighboring Detroit— \$4,876.82 compared to \$823.38 per student, according to the National Public Education Financial Survey. Vitti estimates that if Detroit used the same funding formulas that the neighboring suburbs do, the school district would have \$160 million more in funding.

Detroit students do receive more in state and federal funding, but federal dollars come with strings attached. In line with those restrictions, Vitti said Detroit has largely used these funds to hire additional support staff —such as guidance counselors and reading coaches — because the federal money can't be used to dramatically increase teacher salaries or to improve the facilities.

“What's happening is the federal dollars are serving as a way to fill a large gap that is created — or perpetuated — by how states are funding districts,” Vitti said.

“We know that lawmakers, politicians, and even other communities believe that certain kids are more important than other kids based on the color of their skin and the ZIP code that they live in. And that's it. That seems very simplistic, but that's ultimately what we're talking about.”

The situation could be about to get worse. A number of states, including Michigan, have discussed budget cuts due to the economic downturn caused by closures and shelter-in-place orders. Because education often makes up one of the biggest costs in a state's budget, education advocates worry it could be on the chopping block.

The **Council of the Great City Schools**, which represents the country's large urban school districts, is anticipating that 275,000 big-city teaching jobs will be lost next year due to budget cuts.

Budget cuts are all the more concerning because public schools will be attempting to do more with less. In addition to the costs of personal protective equipment and socially-distant classrooms in the fall, education funding in many states still had yet to recover from the Great Recession.

According to an analysis by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, when COVID-19 hit, K-12 schools across the country were already educating 2 million more students with 77,000 fewer teachers than before the recession.

The 74

Cleveland and Ohio's Urban Districts Say DeVos's Pandemic Aid Plan Would Cost Them Millions Meant for High-Poverty Students

June 8, 2020

[PATRICK O'DONNELL](#)

A coalition of Ohio's largest urban school districts has joined school officials around the country in opposing U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos's plan to send federal coronavirus funds to private school students rather than high-poverty public school pupils.

The [Ohio 8 Coalition urged Gov. Mike DeWine in a letter](#) last month to award federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act money to schools based on poverty levels, saying their schools would lose out on millions of dollars under DeVos's plan, which calls for the money to be distributed to private schools based on enrollment, without considering family income.

The coalition, for which Cleveland school district CEO Eric Gordon serves as co-chair, said in its letter that DeVos's plan "subverts the intent of Congress and weakens the ability of the funds to do the greatest good."

"The past few months have laid bare the inequities that exist across our state, which is why Ohio must distribute the CARES dollars as they were directed to by Congress," the letter states.

"Following watered down guidance from the USDOE will weaken Ohio's ability to address the unique needs of low-income children, children with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, and foster care youth."

In addition to the Ohio letter, the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), an association of the nation's big-city school districts that Gordon also chairs, opposed DeVos's plan last month in a [joint statement with other national groups](#) such as the AASA (American Association of School Administrators), American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, National

Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Secondary School Principals and National School Boards Association.

“No Council district — that we are aware of — supports the Ed Department’s questionable interpretation,” said Tonya Harris, spokesperson for the Council of the Great City Schools.

According to published reports, eight states, including Maine, Indiana and Mississippi, are disregarding DeVos’s guidance, while 10 states, such as Kentucky and Tennessee, have said they will follow DeVos’s plan.

The CARES Act, passed by Congress in March, gives K-12 schools \$13.5 billion to stabilize budgets through the pandemic. State school agencies across the country, including the Ohio Department of Education, believed the money would be awarded using Title I rules — which determine federal aid to schools based on poverty — and started planning to use that method.

But DeVos’s April 30 guidance that private school enrollment should be used, followed by her vow to issue a rule to distribute CARES money by enrollment, has pitted private schools against high-poverty districts.

In Ohio, the Ohio School Boards Association, Buckeye Association of School Administrators and Ohio Association of School Business Officials took the same position as the Ohio 8, also writing to DeWine urging him to award money based on poverty.

In its letter, the Ohio 8 said that DeVos’s approach would cost the Cleveland school district \$2.3 million and the Cincinnati schools \$4.9 million. The hits to the Dayton and Youngstown schools would be under \$500,000 each. Totals were not provided for Akron, Canton, Columbus or Toledo, the other members of the Ohio 8.

Gordon added in a press release for the coalition that Ohio should not dilute CARES aid because the shift to remote learning and other needs “will require all available resources for students living in poverty.”

Gordon also urged residents of his district and members of the Cleveland school board at the board’s last meeting to lobby the Ohio Department of Education and congressional representatives to keep the money going to poor students. The district has posted a [sample letter to Congress](#) on its website for residents to use.

But with private school advocates in Ohio and nationally backing DeVos, the money sits in limbo. After first telling schools it would award money using Title I, the Ohio Department of Education has since asked schools to collect income and Title I eligibility data for private school students. Money will be awarded now based on poverty, but additional dollars for private schools will be held in reserve until the issue is resolved in Washington.

“Unfortunately, there is still significant disagreement at the national level on the process for addressing the equitable services requirements under the CARES Act,” the state told schools May 29. “This process could take months before a resolution.”

DeWine and his staff would not comment on the issue.

Advocates for private schools told The 74 last week that [the pandemic has threatened survival of many private schools](#). Jessica Poiner of the Fordham Institute, which is active in Ohio, wrote last week that private schools are worried about families being unable to pay tuition next year, fundraisers being canceled and donations dwindling.

“These various funding losses could add up,” [she wrote](#). “Many of Ohio’s private schools were already operating on razor-thin margins prior to the pandemic. The fallout of COVID-19 could be the final straw that forces them to close their doors.”

For the Ohio Association of Independent Schools, which represents 45 private schools in the state, it's more a matter of fairness than survival. In a tweet in late May, the association said public schools in Ohio are receiving 92 percent of CARES funds set aside for schools but are acting like "they're entitled to virtually all of it."

Dan Dodd, the association's executive director, told The 74 that the CARES Act does not give clear direction on how to distribute the money and that if Congress wanted it allocated a certain way, it should have directly said so.

He estimated that about 40 percent of his schools' students would meet Title I criteria, but most of the schools don't calculate it. If Ohio uses the Title I standard, schools would have to seek financial information from some students after the school year is over and figure out who qualifies.

Frank O'Linn, superintendent of the 108 schools in the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, called DeVos's position "straightforward and compelling."

"The pandemic has affected everyone, regardless of what type of school they attend," he said.

Larry Keough, spokesman for the Catholic Conference of Ohio, also said that all students are affected by the pandemic and need extra help, regardless of economic status.

"It saddens me that, during a pandemic, children are being pitted against each other," he said.

WDRB--Louisville

In light of pandemic, JCPS receives \$30.3 million through CARES Act

[Sara Sidery](#)

June 9, 2020 Updated

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (WDRB) -- Jefferson County Public Schools will receive \$30.3 million in emergency funding through the federal CARES Act.

The grant is part of Congress's \$30 billion dollar education bailout that aims to help school districts address issues caused by the pandemic. The Jefferson County Board of Education unanimously approved the receipt of funding at its meeting on Tuesday night.

Over the next two weeks, JCPS will work on a plan to figure out where that money is needed and how it could be spent, a district spokesperson said. The district is reviewing the financial impacts of its online learning. After the state ordered schools to close, the district sent 25,000 Chromebooks to students in need.

Educators have expressed concerns about the pandemic's impact on the achievement gap, especially in homes without computers or Wi-Fi. [Superintendent Marty Pollio has said](#) additional funding could shrink the digital divide and help students who've fallen behind.

The Council of the Great City Schools, an organization that pushed for the bailout, said grants can also help add summer schooling, expand school days after reopening, and retain teacher staffing.

The amount of grant money is based on school districts' federal Title I dollars, which help support schools with more low-income students.

According to financial documents, JCPS can use the federal aid through September 2022.

CNN

Inside an elementary school preparing for fall classes

By [Bianna Golodryga](#), CNN

Updated 9:27 AM ET, Fri June 12, 2020

With a possible vaccine still months if not years away from widespread distribution, school districts across the country are scrambling to come up with guidelines for how to reopen in the era of Covid-19. They know they have until the beginning of the next school year to get it right. Michael Casserly, executive director of the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), says there is "very detailed planning around everything from class size to how many kids are going to be on the buses to how we clean the classrooms and the buildings, how we secure the environment."

Houston's interim superintendent Grenita Lathan sees herself as a problem-solver, but Covid-19 has her "stumped," she says.

Those things and more are being addressed in the Houston Independent School District -- the largest district in Texas, and [7th largest in the country](#), overseeing more than 210,000 public school children. Getting students back into the classroom as safely and as soon as possible has been the sole focus of interim superintendent Grenita Lathan since schools closed in March. Lathan notes that it's not the first crisis she's had to steer through. "I want to remind people we're still recovering from 2017 when Hurricane Harvey hit, now we're being hit by Covid-19," she says. "I know how to get things done but this virus has stumped me, I will tell you the truth."

She has assembled a reopening taskforce with district staff, health officials and others. "We've invited parents that have a medical background to be a part of that committee," she says. "And we're looking at all aspects of not only our transport, our buses, but our classrooms, our facilities, the interaction of when a visitor, mainly a parent, comes into the front office of a school." Like other school districts, Houston is prepared for a blended model, where some students are on campus and others are learning from home virtually.

Lathan showed CNN inside Harvard Elementary school, the city's oldest and one of its most ethnically and socioeconomically diverse -- and, coincidentally, my former school -- to demonstrate what parents and students can expect when doors eventually reopen. Lathan demonstrates how temperatures will be checked for students as they enter school. Greeting them will be a school official and nurse, with thermometers for a mandatory temperature check. Next, there is a carefully marked path to the PPE station, with hand sanitizer and [where each student is given their own face mask](#) that must be worn throughout the day. This, Lathan says, will be one of the most challenging aspects of the new era. "One of the biggest issues that we possibly will encounter, especially with elementary students, is ensuring that they

keep their mask on if masks are required to be worn," she says. "How do we do that throughout the school day? Because you know, children, that's hard. It's hard for us as an adult."

In-person class sizes will be significantly smaller -- perhaps 12 students spaced out 1 or 2 to a table with the rest of the students online and tapping in to the classroom.

Tables will be spaced out in classrooms and have only one child or a pair at each, Lathan said. Cafeterias will be less crowded, those familiar group tables used by just a few students at a time as more meals are served in the classroom. And those meals are likely to be prepackaged, at least at the start, Lathan said.

Hallway traffic will be regulated and it will be the teachers transitioning from class to class when the bell rings.

And then there is the question of recess -- a sacred time for all students.

"We will have a reduced number of students out on the playground at a certain time," Lathan says. "We'll need to make sure that we're cleaning all of our playground equipment throughout the day."

Similar blueprints are being modeled in other large school districts, including for the 2 million students in Los Angeles. The LA County Office of Education guidelines include staggered days, one-way halls and solo play.

It's not just schools that are being converted. Approximately [480,000 school buses are used to transport more than 25 million students](#) each day nationwide. Houston transports between 45,000 and 60,000 students over 600 square miles daily. Lathan points out hand sanitizers and labeled seats showing where students would be spaced out and seated as they board. There's consideration for an additional staff member assigned to each bus, to make sure students remain socially distant.

Experts believe the logistics, even at a national scale, are doable. But how to finance them is an even bigger hurdle. Congress allocated a portion of its initial \$2 trillion stimulus package in March [to K-12 schools](#). Congressional Democrats proposed an additional \$3 trillion package earlier this month which included \$90 billion for the Department of Education to distribute among states. That bill was rejected in the Senate.

Casserly, of the Council of the Great City Schools that brings urban public school districts together to improve education, says the initial funding was helpful, but more is needed, and soon. "On the horizon, costs are much, much larger," he says. "Many of our school districts are projecting shortfalls of any place between 15% and 25%. It provides the possibility of a perfect storm financially that is going to be difficult to stand without substantial financial support." He adds, "You can't control a pandemic, but you can control the response to one."

Casserly says the priority for schools nationwide is to open their doors again to the most vulnerable students.

"We're most worried about students who are economically disadvantaged, students who are English language learners, students with disabilities, students who don't have internet at home," he says. "In addition, we've got a fair number of homeless students. We'll have to meet their needs as well as families that are going through a lot of distress at the moment."

Lathan in Houston agrees her priority is reopening for the neediest students, including those with special educational needs, even as others continue online learning for a time. She and her team are also concerned about some 10,000 students they have not been able to make contact with. She knows many students and parents are desperate for Harvard Elementary to reopen.

"Be patient," is her message to them. "Allow us an opportunity to finalize our plan, to ensure students can be on the playground and be in the classroom, in the cafeteria and on our buses. Be patient with us."

CNN's Julian Cummings contributed to this story.

ideastream

CMSD CEO Tells Congress K-12 Schools Need \$200 Billion To Tackle COVID-19

[Jenny Hamel](#)

Published June 15, 2020

Cleveland Metropolitan School District CEO Eric Gordon, as part of a coalition of 61 superintendents from large urban school districts around the country, asked Congress for \$200 billion in federal funding Monday, testifying at a virtual hearing of the U.S. House Education and Labor Committee.

The House recently passed the HEROES Act, a coronavirus relief package that includes approximately \$58 billion dollars to help K-12 schools offset coronavirus related impacts. Gordon called it “a good start,” but said more is needed.

“That was based on the \$110 billion that was allocated in the 2008 through 2010 recession,” said Gordon, who testified as part of the national [Council of the Great City Schools](#). “Knowing that this recession is predicted to be about twice that size a magnitude.”

Gordon told committee members school districts across the country and locally are facing budget cuts while also tackling added expenses, all due to the coronavirus. Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine recently slashed \$300 million from K-12 schools in Ohio, [as part of broader pandemic-related state budget cuts](#), and districts expect more cuts down the line.

“I used my district here in Cleveland in my written testimony to show Congress that in a district that serves communities – it’s 86 percent children of color and the poorest city for children in America – that we’re facing up to a \$127 million dollar deficit, if all of the potential revenue sources collapse at the same time,” Gordon said. “That’s a quarter of our budget.”

When DeWine first issued the stay-at-home order in Ohio, [CMSD scrambled to procure thousands of Chromebooks and buy hotspots](#) for students [without internet access at home](#). Gordon described the end of the school year as “nine weeks of lost learning, which exposed the disparities between districts with ample resources and “fragile districts like ours.”

Among CMSD’s other expenses, Gordon said the district will have to pay for personal protective equipment, sanitation supplies, internet and technology for remote learning, as well as staff training, as well.

“There's going to be a need to retrain our professionals. This is not the way we were trained to deliver education,” Gordon said. “So it's going to be more than a day or two of professional development, but through retraining efforts to make sure that our staff are ready to go. And I think a lot of those things are going to contribute to added costs for our district and districts across the country.”

EDUCATION WEEK

By Sarah Schwartz

June 18, 2020

One thing is clear from this spring: Countless students will start next school year with considerable learning loss. But for most districts, there's one option for catching students up that isn't on the table: holding them back a grade.

Superintendents in several big city school districts, including Baltimore and Boston, have said publicly that they won't retain students due to their academic performance during the school closure period. And while most states either don't have specific guidance around promotion for next year, or note that it's a district decision, **about a dozen have encouraged schools to promote students to the next grade.**

"The spring was really a hold-harmless period for kids across the country, and specifically for big city school districts," said **Raymond Hart, the director of research for the Council of the Great City Schools.** "Most are promoting students to the next grade level, with the understanding that beginning to teach grade level standards next year will involve going back and shoring up past learning."

Nationally, other school leaders seem to agree with this approach. In an EdWeek Research Center survey from early April, only 22 percent of district leaders said that students would be held back as a consequence for not completing work during school closures. A recent **RAND Corporation survey** found that principals were also hesitant to require students to repeat a grade in response to the COVID crisis: 84 percent said they would not take this measure.

District leaders who have chosen to avoid retention cite evidence that it doesn't improve outcomes, and argue that holding large groups of students back will disproportionately hurt students of color and students from low-income families.

"There's just so much you can put on kids and teachers who are dealing with a lot of trauma right now," said Brenda Cassellius, the superintendent of Boston Public Schools.

'Huge Equity Implications'

In Boston, the district has built multi-tiered systems of supports into its remote learning plan, in attempts to minimize learning loss during the closures. About 15,000 of the district's 53,000 students require academic interventions during this period and have personalized success plans, which will be handed over to their next school year's teacher, Cassellius said.

Students who have an incomplete in a credit-bearing course at the end of the school year will have the chance to finish over the summer, or make up the course through a credit recovery program next year.

“This is not about social promotion. This is about acceleration of students, and making sure that we’re addressing any learning loss,” Cassellius said.

She and other district and state leaders who have advocated for promoting students next school year have advocated for acceleration over retention, pointing toward retention’s mixed research base.

A few studies have found that holding elementary students back and providing them with extra support—such as interventions, summer school, or high-quality teachers—**can lead to academic gains**. But in these cases, it’s hard to separate the potential benefits of these extra supports from the effect of retention itself, said Paco Martorell, an associate professor of education at the University of California, Davis.

Some of Martorell’s research, which examined retaining 5th graders in New York City, found that students who were held back did better on 6th and 7th grade assessments.

“There’s probably some academic benefits of being held back, but whether that persists in the long term, the evidence on that is pretty mixed,” he said.

For older students, the outlook is worse. “The studies that have the strongest research design tend to find that for late middle school, 7th to 8th graders ... retention is not effective, and it probably has negative effects—increasing the likelihood of dropping out, not graduating from high school,” Martorell said.

But he was quick to point out that COVID school closures are a context unlike what any of these researchers have studied.

“If there’s differential learning loss because of the move to online learning, that has huge equity implications whether or not you hold students back,” Martorell said. The question shouldn’t be who to retain, he said, but what are schools and teachers doing to offset learning loss for everyone?

In an **opinion piece for the Baltimore Sun**, Baltimore schools CEO Sonja Santelises described how holding students back next year could further inequities, asking readers to “consider how retention might play out in practice: for instance, the implications of using a single blunt assessment to decide who should be left back; the imperfect logic of focusing on low-income students, some of whom are performing above grade level; the role that bias might play in deciding who is left back; the role that parent advocacy might play in deciding who is advanced.

“The likely practical outcome of this extraordinarily expensive approach—\$15,000 per student at Maryland’s current spending rate—will be to burden large groups of students already adversely affected by segregation with lowered expectations and even more segregation,” she wrote.

‘Get Them Ready for the Next Level’

Though many districts are discouraging broad retention plans, it’s hard to know yet exactly whether fewer students than usual will be held back next year nationwide. A handful of states have **suspended their 3rd grade reading laws**, policies that prevent students from advancing to the next grade unless they can demonstrate grade-level proficiency. Many of these policies are tied to performance on state tests, which states have canceled in response to the pandemic.

In some states, though, these policies have been amended instead of waived. In South Carolina, for example, the state department of education has **instructed schools** to make 3rd grade promotion decisions based on “a collection of data points that may include formative assessments, teacher-made assessments, quarter grades earned, and prior parent notification and input” in lieu of test scores.

Bree Dusseault, the practitioner-in-residence at the Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington Bothell, said that many schools in the **organization’s database of district coronavirus responses** adopted a do-no-harm approach to grading for these past few months—switching to a pass/fail system, for example, or saying that students’ grades could only be improved during this time period, not lowered.

“What we don’t have insight into is exactly how and whether districts used grades to promote or retain students,” she said.

In Baltimore, high school English/language arts teacher LaQuisha Hall is glad that students’ performance during this period won’t be used to make such decisions. She was overwhelmed hearing about some of the challenges her students and their families have gone through this spring. “I wouldn’t have felt good for holding a student back for something that wasn’t their fault, or their choice,” she said. She’s “in 100 percent agreement” with Santelises’ decision, she said.

Having been forced to adapt quickly this spring, she feels ready to take on new challenges in differentiation and intervention in the fall. Doing so won’t be entirely “out of the norm,” she said. “We get students with deficits every year,” Hall said. “Our job as an educational leader is to pull them up and get them ready for the next level.”

Education Week

Why Schools Are Not Holding Students Back to Address COVID-19 Learning Loss

By Sarah Schwartz

June 18, 2020

One thing is clear from this spring: Countless students will start next school year with considerable learning loss. But for most districts, there's one option for catching students up that isn't on the table: holding them back a grade.

Superintendents in several big city school districts, including Baltimore and Boston, have said publicly that they won't retain students due to their academic performance during the school closure period. And while most states either don't have specific guidance around promotion for next year, or note that it's a district decision, **about a dozen have encouraged schools to promote students to the next grade.**

"The spring was really a hold-harmless period for kids across the country, and specifically for big city school districts," said **Raymond Hart, the director of research for the Council of the Great City Schools.** "Most are promoting students to the next grade level, with the understanding that beginning to teach grade level standards next year will involve going back and shoring up past learning."

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School districts see soaring costs for face masks and extra cleaning supplies as new year approaches

By Jackie Valley
June 29, 2020

The back-to-school shopping list is larger than normal this year.

As educators tackle the gargantuan task of how to reopen schools amid the COVID-19 pandemic, it's not just a matter of separating desks, rerouting traffic flow and figuring out transportation plans.

They need soap, hand sanitizer, face masks and more — all in mega quantities.

School districts' purchasing teams are hurrying to buy additional cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE) ahead of the upcoming academic year, which may include [a mix of in-person and virtual instruction](#). While some of the items are considered routine — soap, disinfectants, paper towels — education officials are calculating how much extra will be needed given new safety protocols.

“There's a lot of kind of hidden costs here that a lot of people don't necessarily think about unless you're trying to implement a solution to the situation,” said **Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council for the Great City Schools**, which includes the Reno- and Las Vegas-area school districts as members.

The Clark County School District offered a glimpse of those expenses in its reopening proposal, pegging PPE costs at \$15 million and additional cleaning supplies at \$225,000.

Face masks, once an item used mostly by maintenance workers and school nurses, are on track to be as ubiquitous as pencils and notebooks in classrooms. Reopening plans under consideration by the Clark and Washoe county school districts mention face mask use in buildings. And, last week, Gov. Steve Sisolak ordered face masks mandatory in public settings, with a carveout for children under the age of 9.

In Washoe County, the quest for face masks began in the spring as soon as health officials started recommending them for use in public settings. Roy Anderson, the school district's emergency manager, said it was a "little bit of a scramble" acquiring face masks at first. Volunteers helped out, he said, donating about 3,000 homemade face coverings to the district for use by staff members who were handing out food and distance-learning materials to students and families during the closure.

Now, face masks are among the items being ordered in bulk by the Washoe County School District as the calendar inches toward August.

"We're definitely ordering enough that if we need to pass them out to all students, we can," said Andrea Sullivan, the district's director of procurement and contracts.

The district also ordered two to three times as many gloves, paper towels and jugs of soap than it normally would, she said. In addition, the purchasing team assessed the number of classrooms and students while calculating how many disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer to buy.

The purchasing team was acting on the advice of a reopening task force, which included a subcommittee focused on PPE needs. Sullivan said the initial large order

for the upcoming school year will come with a price tag ranging from \$500,000 to \$700,000.

The extra costs are coming at a time when many education budgets across the country are shrinking and other needs are cropping up, too. School districts, for instance, are spending millions on technology purchases to make distance education possible for students without access to a computer or internet at home.

But unlike Chromebooks, items like face masks generally aren't a one-time purchase. A school district with roughly 200,000 students that is part of the Council for the Great City Schools estimated it would cost \$8.8 million every 30 days to provide masks to all students and staff every other day, Casserly said. (Washoe County School District's enrollment is about 64,000 students, while the Clark County School District serves roughly 320,000 students. School board discussions about both districts' reopening plans indicate students likely would be asked to wear a face mask, but schools would need a supply on hand for children who don't bring one.)

“That doesn't count all the cleaning supplies that school districts will go through not only to clean but to disinfect, which they're going to have to do most every day,” he said.

The federal CARES Act — and, specifically, a subset within it called the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund — may cover some or most of those costs. The Clark County School District listed ESSER, FEMA and general fund revenue as potential funding sources for those needs.

Paying for the supplies is only half the battle, though. Procuring them can be a challenge given supply and demand.

Clark County Superintendent Jesus Jara said it has been tricky finding face shields for bus drivers. The large, urban district is going through the bid process, he said, to buy face masks as well other products.

The big question: Will all the orders arrive in time for the start of the school year?

Casserly said many school districts have hesitated to buy too much too soon because so many plans for the upcoming school year remain up in the air. That situation, however, could cause a major supply crunch if orders multiply exponentially later this summer.

“They’re right to be worried about it because even the vendors will have their own supply problems,” he said.

The Washoe County School District started ordering additional supplies and PPE about a month ago. Boxes have already started piling up, which Sullivan said is forcing the district to reckon with a new problem — “making sure we have enough storage space.”

The Nevada Independent is a 501(c)3 nonprofit news organization.

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The Washington Post

Trump and DeVos want schools ‘fully’ open, but not many are listening

By

[Laura Meckler](#)

July 10, 2020 at 6:31 p.m. EDT

President Trump and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos spent much of this week pressuring and cajoling schools to reopen. DeVos, in particular, made clear she means five days a week.

But school systems across the country have already decided on models where students learn from home part of the time. That includes a charter school network that DeVos has repeatedly praised for its approach during the pandemic.

Like many other systems, Success Academy Charter Schools, a network in New York City, says it cannot safely reopen with all children in the building because there is not enough room to keep them apart.

“There’s not enough space,” said Ann Powell, a spokesperson for Success Academy. “It’s hard to practice social distancing, which is the recommendation, unless you have a lot of empty classrooms to spare, which is not the case for Success Academy.”

Many schools face the same problem, which is why districts across the country have announced hybrid plans, where students will be in schools some days and learning from home on others.

Those plans have been developed locally, often in accordance with state guidelines. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published [guidance](#) for school reopening, including a raft of recommendations for keeping students confined to small groups with distance between them. The CDC also suggests eating lunch in classrooms, minimizing student traffic in hallways and spacing desks at least six feet apart.

But Trump [attacked those guidelines](#) this week, calling them on Twitter “very tough & expensive” and demanding “very impractical things.” Administration officials also stressed the academic as well as social-emotional benefits for children being in school.

Nonetheless, a desire to put distance between students, in hopes of controlling the spread of the [coronavirus](#), has prompted these hybrid plans, which now are on tap for most large city school districts, said [Michael Casserly, who heads the Council of Great](#)

City Schools. Some districts are considering full-time, in-person school for children who need special attention, he said, but none are planning it for everyone.

School systems on both coasts, where there have been coronavirus outbreaks, also plan hybrids, said Sasha Pudelski, advocacy director for AASA, the School Superintendents Association. Many rural districts, though, are planning to have kids in school full-time, she said.

Pudelski said the pressure campaign from the White House is, regardless of its merits, too late.

“Some districts are reopening in early August, in a couple of weeks,” she said. “For them, this is much too late to be weighing in on this important issue.”

Trump ran into this himself at a White House dialogue on school reopening on Tuesday. One guest, Patrick Daly, principal of St. Vincent de Paul High School in Petaluma, Calif., said he plans a hybrid system. Trump replied that he hoped the school would be in-person full time. “I know you want to try,” he said.

The administration has been backed up by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which recommends that all schools try to open fully, citing the academic and social-emotional damage done when children miss school. But on Friday, the AAP, in a joint statement with teachers unions and superintendents, said that schools in areas with high levels of covid-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, should not be compelled to reopen against the advice of local experts. “A one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate for return to school decisions,” they said.

As secretary, DeVos has pushed for flexibility and local control. But in recent days, as the White House pushed for schools to reopen, she was clear: Schools should be open full-time for all. On Wednesday, after a meeting of the White House coronavirus task force, she said schools “must fully open and they must be fully operational.” She singled out plans in Fairfax County, Va., for a hybrid system as a failure.

At the same appearance, she mentioned three school systems for praise, saying they kept learning going in the spring, “and they’re getting ready to do it again this fall.” The first example she cited was Success Academy.

But this fall, Success Academy plans a system where students will get two days of in-person learning or, for some, two and a half. The rest of the week will be taught remotely.

DeVos also singled out Miami-Dade County Public Schools as having succeeded in remote learning. Florida has mandated that schools return full time this fall, but Miami-Dade Superintendent Alberto Carvalho said his district would not reopen until covid-19 rates come down.

Angela Morabito, a spokeswoman for DeVos, said schools “must start from a position of fully reopening in the fall, knowing that there may be some exceptions to the rule depending on the local health situation. Schools should be planning for the rule, not the exception.”

The third school DeVos singled out for praise, International Leadership Texas, another charter network, is giving parents a choice between full-time in school and full-time remote learning. That decision came after Texas on Tuesday ordered all districts to offer full-time, on-campus options for families who want it.

Superintendent Eddie Conger said in an email he expects about 30 percent of families will opt for in-person school, which will allow for distancing inside buildings. “If 100% of our parents said ‘no I want in-school,’ that’s going to be a major, major challenge.”

As covid-19 cases have spiked in Texas, he said, the number of families preferring remote school has gone up. Even with fewer kids, he fears bringing students back will drive more infections, especially among teachers and staff. [Kids do not appear to get particularly ill](#) from the coronavirus, but less is known about how easily they spread it to adults.

“If we’re putting groups of people together, until we have a vaccine, we’re going to increase the number of covid cases,” Conger said. In his letter to parents laying out the options, he warned them that remote options are the only ones that “can guarantee that your child will not get covid-19” while learning in school.

The Washington Post

Despite pressure from Trump, major districts say schools will stay closed in fall

By

[Laura Meckler](#)

July 13, 2020 at 7:35 p.m. EDT

Resisting pressure from President Trump, three of the nation's largest school districts said Monday that they will begin the new school year with all students learning from home.

Schools in Los Angeles, San Diego and Atlanta will begin entirely online, officials said Monday. Schools in Nashville plan to do the same, at least through Labor Day.

Several other big cities were considering similar plans, while others have adopted hybrid plans where students will be in school on certain days and at home on others. Some have announced plans to open five days a week, as the White House has demanded, but they appear to be in the minority.

The decisions are another sign that the [coronavirus](#) pandemic will continue to wreak havoc on fundamental aspects of American life, and the economy, well into fall. Many parents who need to work will be left scrambling for child care. And while some schools found success with virtual school in the spring, it was a disaster for many, with little indication it will be drastically better in the new school year. In some ways, it may more challenging, as students will be starting with new teachers who do not know them.

Still, some school leaders are concluding that the risk to students and staff is too great to allow in-person education of any kind.

“The skyrocketing infection rates of the past few weeks make it clear the pandemic is not under control,” said a joint statement from the Los Angeles and San Diego districts. They said they would return to in-person learning later in the academic year, “as soon as public health conditions allow.”

Monday's developments from California and Georgia, two states with surging rates of covid-19 infection, reflect the deep divide that has opened over the risks and benefits of in-person school. Trump and his senior aides emphasize the benefits to children and parents of having students in schools, while others voice concern that reopening will allow the virus to spread.

At the White House Monday, Trump again pressed his case for in-person learning.

“Schools should be opened,” he said when asked for his message to worried parents. “Schools should be opened. Kids want to go to school. You’re losing a lot of lives by keeping things closed.”

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos pressed the same message on Sunday, dismissing concerns about rising case loads as “little flare-ups” that can be managed as they arise.

She also noted that children do not appear to become seriously ill or die of covid-19, though it’s less clear how easily they spread the disease.

Others are concerned about teachers and school staff, who face more significant risks. An estimate from the Kaiser Family Foundation found 1 in 4 teachers are at elevated risk based on their age or underlying health conditions.

Asked Monday about an Arizona teacher who died of covid-19, White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany focused on the benefits to children and compared teachers to other essential workers.

“There’s a way for essential workers to go back to work, just as our meatpacking facilities did. Just as you all in the media are essential workers, we believe our teachers are as well,” she said.

The message was more nuanced Monday from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a fresh sign of the rift between Trump and the experts who work for his administration. Last week, Trump questioned the CDC guidance on schools opening, calling it too tough and expensive and pushing for changes.

In a briefing for school officials and other decision-makers, a CDC official said Monday that decisions about whether to open schools should depend on the local situation.

“We’re in a very different place in the nation right now than we were even two weeks ago as far as transmission rates go,” said Erin Sauber-Schatz, lead for the CDC’s Community Interventions and Critical Populations Task Force. “There are places where transmission is low. And those places, it will be safer to open schools for students, teachers and staff.”

She said the CDC would soon release new documents aimed at helping parents decide whether to send their children to school.

“There is a lot to consider. It’s not a clear answer at this point in time,” she said. “I can say from personal experience, it’s a really tough choice.”

In Atlanta, the schools had been planning a hybrid option, with students in school on certain days and learning from home on others. But amid rising cases, the superintendent announced a plan for all-virtual learning for at least the first nine weeks of school, or until the spread of the coronavirus falls off.

“In a perfect scenario, we would have a face-to-face engagement for the first day of school,” Atlanta Public Schools Superintendent Lisa Herring told the district’s school board. “We also do not want to turn our ears and eyes away from the truth.”

The statement from Los Angeles and San Diego said their decision was a “significant disappointment” for teachers and “an even greater disappointment to the many parents who are anxious for their students to resume their education.”

They added there will be training for teachers and students about how to better use online education.

The announcement came on the same day that California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) put many restrictions on daily life in the state back in place. He ordered bars closed and halted indoor operations of restaurants, wineries and theaters statewide, among other restrictions.

Some rural districts have said they plan to reopen fully for in-person school. In addition, districts in Kansas City, Mo.; Indianapolis; Providence, R.I.; and Reno, Nev. are all planning to offer in-person school five days a week for at least some students, said **Michael Casserly of the Council of Great City Schools**, which represents urban districts.

But many other urban districts — including New York City, the country’s largest — have announced hybrid plans. The idea is to try to create distance between students by reducing the number in the building at any given time.

“It’s all over the place and changing constantly because of conditions and state directives,” Casserly said.

Education Week

How America's Leaders Have Failed Educators on COVID-19

By [Andrew Ujifusa](#)

July 16, 2020

A crisis of leadership threatens to overwhelm the nation's schools as they struggle to start a new year during a pandemic. And it's unclear exactly who can and will fill the vacuum. Before the pandemic, politicians and power players took for granted the traditional routine of opening bell and homeroom period that—educational mission aside—assured that adults could head off to work.

With that routine broken, the educators directly responsible for the upcoming school year—chief among them tens of thousands of local superintendents and principals—now mostly hear a discordant chorus instead of clear direction. There are those in positions of authority and influence who want school buildings open immediately, but they offer conflicting plans for how to restart. Sometimes the clamor of voices alternates between demands and indifference.

It only takes Greene County, N.C., schools Superintendent Patrick Miller a few seconds of discussing his job to say he's on the "brink of insanity" as he readies for the new school year.

"The two terms I'm sick of are, 'unprecedented' being one and 'fluid' being the other. But I can't think of better terms to describe it," Miller said. He added that despite his appreciation for crucial support he's gotten from the state, there's a lot of "political noise" around his work and that sometimes, "I'm in a fog. I'll wake up in the middle of the night."

The bewilderment and backlash at the local level has been intense and public. Some have focused on what they deem a lack of "empathy & grace," as Richmond, Va., Superintendent Jason Kamras put it in a July 14 social media [broadside directed at the Trump administration](#) and its pressure for immediate brick-and-mortar reopening.

Others have decried what they see as a lack of clear direction, or a growing and entangled mass of guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on down.

The trajectory of national education politics has affected the environment, too. Years of distrust if not open hostility between U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos and many education leaders had already drained away goodwill DeVos might have drawn on during a crisis. That wariness has grown due to a few factors, including DeVos' dictates that schools should reopen or put their full federal funding at risk if they don't.

DeVos has encouraged educators to reach out to the department without addressing in detail how she's made a consistent effort to reach out to educators, and cited one district and one charter school network she says can be role models. And the administration has highlighted money already made available by Congress, which, DeVos has pointedly observed, schools haven't spent much of.

But mostly, DeVos has stressed that it's educators' job to reopen schools safely and not rounded the sharp edges off her demands that are in virtual lock step with **those from President Donald Trump** that "SCHOOLS MUST OPEN."

"There has to be a posture of doing something, of action, of getting things going," **DeVos told Fox News' Chris Wallace** on July 12. Implicit in that comment was that educators have not demonstrated enough urgency. And her department stepped up the pressure earlier this week by declaring on Twitter: "It is safe for schools to reopen."

Watching DeVos' remarks about schools losing federal aid, Liz Garden, an elementary school principal in Holden, Mass., wondered incredulously, "Is this reverse psychology?" "The damage being done by just that one bullying statement—if you're not going to get kids back in school, we're not going to give you money—now we're being threatened?" Garden said. "It would be great to have some more guidance and some more understanding."

Angela L. Morabito, an Education Department spokeswoman, said DeVos "regularly communicates with and continues to speak with governors and other education leaders about ways schools can deliver a full-time education to students in the fall," citing more than 50 calls with state superintendents and commissioners by early June.

As for guidance, Morabito said, "the administration is committed to a locally-driven, federally-supported approach to helping schools and local districts reopen safely in the fall." And she insisted that DeVos "has great working relationships with many state and local leaders, and education leaders from across the country."

But DeVos isn't the only target for unease over leadership. Disputes between state leaders are destabilizing the situation too. And a growing number of districts have decided to start the year with remote-only instruction. That's precisely what educators and officials say they'd prefer not to happen.

"We get different messages from different times from those state and federal agencies. And we're expected to open schools in five weeks. The CDC says this, then the state interprets it one way, then another way," said Michael Hinojosa, the superintendent of the Dallas district. "Now some of the things we thought we could pull off are no longer feasible."

School leaders want to be able to tell the public that they must stick to clear requirements and guardrails about things like face masks, social distancing, and what to do if a child seems ill, and that the health and safety of the community depends on adhering to them. Josh Starr, a former superintendent who is the CEO of PDK International, a professional educators' group, put his view bluntly: School officials are looking for political cover so they can do key parts of their jobs, and states need to step up because DeVos isn't.

"People are desperate for leadership. And part of it is, educators are exhausted," Starr said.

'Avoid Unnecessary Confusion'

In Education Week survey results from the early period of the pandemic, 54 percent of teachers' opinions of their governors rose by "a lot" or "somewhat" as a result of how they handled the virus. Yet these teachers also said they knew that harder times were to come. They were right.

The disagreements and lack of cohesive leadership don't just cross state, local, and federal boundaries, but can affect work within those levels of government.

In a **July 7 letter** to North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper, a Democrat, state Superintendent of Public Instruction Mark Johnson, a Republican, wrote that he was "concerned about inconsistent health guidelines" from the state health department about reopening schools.

Touching on concerns he had about how schools would deal with face coverings and social distancing on buses, and stating that his omission from previous discussions "has resulted in a confusing and inconsistent policy," Johnson said. "I am writing with the hope that the science supporting new guidelines might be explained and to present a possible resolution to avoid unnecessary confusion at the local level."

Despite that squabbling, Miller of the Greene County district said the state chief has provided helpful and constantly updated resources to help schools prepare, and that state leaders have clearly been working hard to address his concerns.

But he's hopeful for more emergency aid. And when the governor announced that the state would pay for five masks for each student and staff member, he appreciated it but also regretted the timing. "I wish I had known that earlier, because I had already ordered masks ... I could have used that \$17,000 that I spent for something else," Miller said. "I never realized how much hand sanitizer cost until I had to buy 500 cases."

Despite his best efforts, after 13 years as the superintendent, Miller said he's fearful that if his district's budget isn't in the black at the end of the year, "I'll potentially lose my job. That's just something that I just have to wrestle with. And I'm not alone."

Other examples of such division aren't hard to find; in fact, there's one next door. South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster, a Republican, held a press conference July 15 **demanding that schools reopen** five days a week for face-to-face classes. But state Superintendent Molly Spearman, a fellow elected Republican, did not join him at the event and later said she disagreed with McMaster. Montana's governor and superintendent have also **clashed**.

When Susan Enfield, the superintendent of the Highline district in Washington state, looks at what she's gotten from the constellation of leadership above her, she feels a mixture of appreciation and vexation. (Enfield is a member of the board for Editorial Projects in Education, the nonprofit entity that publishes Education Week.)

She appreciates the weekly calls from state Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal with district leaders and his quick action to do things like cancelling the state assessment in the spring. And she acknowledges that he and other officials are operating in a "quicksand landscape" of constantly changing information.

Yet Enfield also wishes Reykdal would get districts and teachers' unions to agree to some "high-level" stipulations about the nature of instruction and other matters, instead of fragmented local negotiating. And she criticized what she's seen as a lack of coordination between the state health and education departments about certain rules.

"You have multiple agencies trying to communicate things that impact schools. It's just another example of trying to do the best we can and having the rug pulled out from under us," Enfield said.

In response to Enfield, the state education department spokeswoman, Katy Payne, said that while the state's guidance "gives districts significant flexibility" to design various learning models next year, "There is no legal mechanism in the state of Washington for statewide bargaining for educators or even 'high-level' agreements" to bind local officials.

"Our guidance for school districts about reopening in the fall was shaped by enormous amounts of feedback from management and labor, but not through formal agreements," Payne wrote.

Enfield doesn't have black-and-white views about DeVos.

Many of Enfield's peers "do not believe that she is an advocate for public education" and doesn't have the relevant experience working in schools to provide motivation and understanding in the pandemic. But Enfield also questions what help DeVos is getting from White House officials, and says a lack of cohesion or planning at that level trickles down to officials Enfield deals with directly.

"We would appreciate clearer guidance. We would appreciate, in some cases, some directives and mandates," she said.

Every Child, Every School, One Calendar

Sitting between federal and local education leaders, Rhode Island Commissioner of Education Angélica Infante-Green said she's taken a "whole-state approach" to planning for the upcoming year.

One of the state's key decisions was to ensure that everyone has been put on the same school calendar. That took close coordination with Infante-Green and her office, state health officials, teachers' unions, local private schools, and Democratic Gov. Gina Raimondo. If schools must shut down again, there won't be a fragmented or confused response from local leaders.

"It directly impacts everyone," Infante-Green said of the pandemic. "In education we're used to being siloed. This has taught us the hard way to partner with private schools in a way that we've never done before."

Infante-Green said she's had a couple of calls with DeVos' team about school reopenings, and that more of those discussions would be helpful. She also participates in a weekly call with other state education commissioners organized by the Council of Chief State School Officers, as well as separate, regular meetings with state K-12 leaders in the Northeastern states. But she says she hears from colleagues elsewhere who are "planning all this on their own in a vacuum. I have information they don't have."

"Right now, we can't go by the same rules we had in the past," Infante-Green added. "We need a little more flexibility, we need a little more guidance. But I don't think that threats help us at this moment."

Yet the state's work hasn't been immune from criticism. District leaders said they were **caught off guard** by Rhode Island's plan to reopen schools with in-person attendance on Aug. 31, the Providence Journal reported. Infante-Green, whose agency released **school reopening guidelines** in mid-June, said such confusion about reopening has since been cleared up.

Peer Support and Money

Anxiety is palpable at the local level. A survey conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals that was released July 8 found that just one out of three principals believe they could ensure the health of students and staff if schools reopen in the fall. In responding to that survey, one principal said his "fear is that the public will be looking at each measure as a political statement."

That's a sentiment district leaders must take into account, Starr of PDK International said.

In some states or in areas where local school boards are deeply split, he said, “there’s a real challenge there for a superintendent to try to make decisions about trying to get kids back in schools and keep them safe, given the politics of it.”

Echoing Infante-Green, Hinojosa of the Dallas district said he’s found some of the most helpful information from his fellow big-city superintendents, in part through regular calls that the **Council of the Great City Schools** has helped arrange.

“We’re more alike than anybody else that I deal with,” he said. “It’s made us more efficient.”

Part of his strategy, Hinojosa said, is to do media interviews whenever he can, even if it annoys his board members. But not everyone is so inclined. In response to a request for an interview with St. Paul, Minn., schools Superintendent Joe Gothard, a spokesman for the district noted that state guidelines for school reopenings aren’t due until the week of July 27 and added, “Until that time it would be premature for Dr. Gothard to discuss decision-making.”

Education leaders are frank about what they believe would demonstrate leadership: more money from the federal government.

Enfield says the reaction she’s looking for from the nation’s capital is essentially: “Here are the steps you have to take, and here are the dollars that we will allocate to support that. I mean, it’s pretty basic.”

Infante-Green said bluntly of DeVos: “I need her to advocate for more dollars.”

And Hinojosa expressed his support for a House-passed bill that contains \$58 billion in direct coronavirus aid for schools, and stressed that as far as his community and Texas are concerned, “The crisis doesn’t seem to be dissipating. It seems to be expanding.”

Policies in the Lone Star State continue to be a moving target. On July 15, the state education department said districts could conduct remote learning full-time without losing state aid—but only if **local health authorities** signed off on it, the Texas Tribune reported.

‘Resting on Our Shoulders’

But not everyone observing the situation takes the same view on lack of leadership—or the central role of money—when it comes to the needs of the needs of students and parents. In the spring, Ginny Gentles watched the Arlington, Va., district’s response to the pandemic and to her children’s education with deep frustration over what she saw as the lack of robust academic options offered remotely. The experience has led her to focus her demand for leadership on her local district and others: “Make wise commitments and visions. And make a commitment to educating children and serving families well.”

A visiting fellow at the right-leaning Independent Women’s Forum, who worked on Capitol Hill and in the Education Department under President George W. Bush, she said what Trump and DeVos have communicated represents “clear direction” regardless of whether local K-12 leaders like it. And a new federal aid package, she said, won’t provide concrete help to schools by the time they start the 2020-21 year.

“This isn’t Betsy DeVos’ fault that this is going to be a challenging school year,” she said. “What she says or what President Trump says does not ultimately impact local decisions.” At the same time, the Education Department, she said, should serve as more of a “repository for success stories” and “sharing what works well.”

As Garden, the Holden, Mass., principal, prepares for the upcoming school year, she has a not-dissimilar desire for the federal government to release recommendations that draw on good plans beyond the one “flashy” district DeVos singled out for praise recently (the Miami-Dade district). But she expressed little optimism that would take place.

Instead, Garden is watching the local budget-cutting process unfold. She's had to let two teachers and a paraprofessional go and an assistant principal leave without being certain she can hire a replacement. And she's changing course so that she now views her role as principal of an “urgent care facility.” The focus, she said bluntly, is not on teaching and learning, but on health and welfare.

“I'm like: Oh, sure, *now* we're in the public eye,” Garden said. “I do feel like it's resting on our shoulders. It's a lot of weight to carry, a lot of stress, and a lot of worry.”

Wisconsin Examiner

Public Schools Fight for Funding

MPS, other public school districts have gotten no federal CARES funding while choice and charter schools get millions.

By Terry Falk, Wisconsin Examiner - Jul 21st, 2020 12:47 pm

Millions of dollars that were earmarked for low income students in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act have been distributed to the states. But because of a federal lawsuit, Wisconsin school districts are still waiting for the money, which has not been released yet by Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

Attorney General **Josh Kaul** has joined attorneys general from five other states in suing the Department of Education over a rule created by Education Secretary **Betsy DeVos**. An analysis by the Congressional Research Service supports the position this rule change might violate federal law.

Under the rule, money intended for low-income students under a formula used by the federal Title I program, which counts the number of students eligible for free and reduced lunch, would be siphoned off to higher income schools. Because 40% of Wisconsin's children in public schools are eligible for free and reduced lunch, a large percentage of the \$175 million in education-related CARES money directed to Wisconsin would go to higher income schools, many of them higher income private institutions.

"This money was intended for low-income kids, and now we are going to be sharing it with the 'university' schools and the Wayland Academies of the world," says **Dan Rossmiller**, Governmental Relations Director for the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB).

But until the issue is resolved in federal court, no one is receiving the money.

"The bills are piling up," says **Chris Thiel**, legislative policy manager for Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). How long can school districts say to vendors the money is coming for goods and services that have been purchased?

"This is typical of most grants," says **Paul Blaise**, director of business services for South Milwaukee schools. But without a timeline, with the money tied up in court, no one knows how much or when the dollars will flow. "We haven't spent the money because we are still trying to get it from DPI," says Blaise.

The South Milwaukee district should receive \$549,000 under the CARES Act. About \$10,000 may go to the three private schools in the district. For Milwaukee Public Schools, some \$15 million of the \$55 million allocated to the district under the CARES Act could be going to private schools, depending upon the formula the court upholds.

But DPI is already going along with DeVos' rule change, says Rossmiller. "Despite the fact that the Wisconsin Attorney General had filed a lawsuit to block the U.S. Department of Education rule," he says. "DPI has decided to capitulate to the U.S. Department of Education It will distribute and withhold the greater amount" using the DeVos formula, according to the allocation amounts the state of Wisconsin has told school districts they will receive (although they still haven't actually seen the money).

It's a "messed up" system, said Blaise. He objects to the fact that the burden is on school districts to work with the private schools within their borders to find out how many students qualify for free and reduced lunch.

Private schools get more

In their resolution urging Congress to allocate additional money to public schools, the Oak Creek-Franklin school board questioned a loophole that allowed private schools to receive additional money under the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). The idea of the program was to pay businesses to maintain workers even if their businesses were shut down.

As the Examiner reported, while public schools were not eligible for PPP payouts, Wisconsin's private voucher and charter schools applied for and received millions of dollars in loans they will likely not have to pay back.

Between \$35 and \$85 million went to charter and voucher schools in the Milwaukee school district alone, the Examiner's investigation of publicly available data shows.

Over 100 Wisconsin private schools received funds under this program. Amounts ranged from \$150,000 to well over two million dollars.

At least one of the schools that received a PPP loan, Milwaukee College Prep, told the Examiner that it had returned the money. But it appears many schools are keeping the PPP payouts.

The DeVos-founded group American Federation for Children urges private schools to take advantage of PPP loans on its website: "The Paycheck Protection Program, part of the federal relief passed by Congress, includes for-profit AND nonprofit organizations with fewer than 500 employees. As long as the school maintains payroll for eight weeks, the loan will be forgiven. Private schools and faith-based organizations are eligible and should apply quickly," the website states. "It is important for school leadership to recognize not only their standing as an educational institution, but also as a small business."

Since public schools were not able to apply for PPP funding, Blaise points out that his South Milwaukee district was at a disadvantage as it kept on paying food service workers, even after the district went from serving about 3,000 students for both breakfast and lunch to about 100 lunches. Schools receive federal funds for meals through a reimbursement system based upon the number of lunches served. So the school system paid the wages for these food service employees out of its own pocket.

“Private schools are getting more pandemic funding than public schools,” says Thiel. “They were all advised to get that PPP funding.” And now, under the DeVos rule, funds intended for low-income students can go to all private schools regardless of need.

Budget crunch will get worse

Meanwhile, U.S. Senate leaders are balking at a bailout meant to soften the blow of budget cuts likely to come later this year as state legislatures slash school funding in the middle of the school year. Wisconsin schools will face hard choices if Washington fails to act.

The April 15 tax deadline came and went as both the federal and state governments gave everybody a few more months to file. That causes problems for Wisconsin’s Legislative Fiscal Bureau, says Thiel. By now, school districts should have a good idea about how much money is available for education for this school year. But the bureau’s estimates may not come out with numbers until the middle of August or later, pretty close to the beginning of school.

Thiel points out that the state began the fiscal year with a small surplus and even a rainy-day fund, but everyone expects that legislators will have to come back, perhaps after the November election, to pass a budget repair bill. Schools are bracing for cuts to education.

A coordinated effort has been launched at both the state and national levels to persuade Congress to support school funding. Milwaukee Public Schools efforts are being channeled through the **Council of Great City Schools**. The Wisconsin Association of School Boards has sent out legislative alerts to its members, and several school boards across the state have passed resolutions supporting additional money. Both Wisconsin’s major teacher unions: the Wisconsin Education Association Council and American Federation of Teachers-Wisconsin have rallied their educators. Other administration and educational organizations are on board as well.

This year, Wisconsin’s Dan Rossmiller chairs the Conference of State Association Legislative Staff for the National School Board Association. Senator **Lamar Alexander** is floating a school funding package worth \$50 to \$75 billion. While this is far below the \$200 billion proposal coming from the House, Rossmiller considers it at least a “good start.”

Congress is back in session this week, with only a few short weeks before the August recess. to put something together just in time for the start of the new school year.

Sen. **Tammy Baldwin** has been very supportive of the effort to increase school funding. Sen. **Ron Johnson** has stated that he will come out with a formal statement this week.

Meanwhile, several states have already passed budget repair bills that slashed school funding. Wisconsin school districts normally pass proposed budgets in late May or early June and final budgets in late October. But normally the amount of money a school district will receive from the state has already been determined, even in years when the Legislature has had difficulty hammering out a biennial budget. No one is prepared for a budget repair bill later in the school year.

The Senate may pass its own version of the Heroes Act passed by the House as early as later this week. But how or when the two chambers can reconcile their differences and what the provision for education is unknown

Concludes Chris Thiel: “There is nothing cheap about a pandemic.”

Star Tribune

St. Paul school board approves remote learning plan

Most urban districts going virtual this school year.

By [Anthony Lonetree](#) Star Tribune

AUGUST 5, 2020 — 10:53PM

The St. Paul school board on Wednesday signed off on plans for a virtual start to the 2020-21 school year.

The state's second-largest district joins a strong majority of urban school systems in choosing to open the year with distance learning.

A Star Tribune review of 67 member districts of the [Council of the Great City Schools](#) showed that 47 had elected to stick with remote *learning*, seven will make full in-person instruction available and nine are offering a hybrid of the two, according to data compiled by the publication Education Week. Four districts are undecided.

St. Paul and Minneapolis both are part of the Great City Schools group, as are Milwaukee and Chicago, which are going remote only, and Des Moines, which will start the school year with a hybrid plan.

Under guidance issued last week by Gov. Tim Walz, St. Paul could have started with in-person instruction for elementary students and a hybrid for middle and high school students. But Superintendent Joe Gothard, citing the uncertainty of enrollment numbers and how buildings will be staffed and used, said that he did not believe the district was ready to reopen safely and efficiently.

“This isn’t a decision I want to make,” he told board members Wednesday about the distance learning move. “To say that I don’t take it lightly is an understatement. This is to make sure we can (reopen) safely.”

In a four-hour-plus presentation, Gothard and his administrative team explained the rationale for the recommendation and gave a rundown of various supports that are to be provided to students and families under what the district has dubbed Distance Learning 2.0.

Academic support centers will be set up in each of the district’s geographic zones to provide in-person support to students struggling with coursework, social-emotional needs and distance-learning technical concerns.

Gothard also is setting aside Sept. 25 and Oct. 14 as pivotal dates to determine whether the district is ready to move to a hybrid option.

A Sept. 25 decision would be tied to a potential reopening on Oct. 19 following the state's "MEA Break," while an Oct. 14 decision could pave the way to reopening on Nov. 16 — the start of the district's second quarter.

The district needs plenty of lead time, he said, to work through challenges related to in-person instruction.

In the middle schools and high schools, for example, only one-quarter of classrooms could accommodate students with proper social distancing. That, officials say, creates scheduling, staffing and furniture implications.

Gothard said pressures at the elementary level also could require the hiring of an additional 1,200 staff members for full in-person instruction and 300 to 400 if a hybrid plan were adopted.

Board Member Steve Marchese said district leaders should be specific about the data points that could trigger a move to reopen schools, not just for transparency's sake but also so people can advocate for funding needed to make it happen.

"We shouldn't do this flying blind," he said.

Marchese voted against the plan, approved 5-1, after trying unsuccessfully to add an in-person pilot program for special-education students and English language learners.

Washington Post

Chaos coast to coast as a school year like no other launches

By

[Laura Meckler](#),
[Valerie Strauss](#) and
[Nick Anderson](#)

August 9, 2020 at 5:58 p.m. EDT

It's going to be screen time all the time for kindergartners and graduate students alike. Teachers are threatening strikes. And students are already coming home with covid-19, the disease that has upended American education.

The 2020-2021 school year has dawned and it's more chaotic than any before. Plans are changing so fast that students and parents can hardly keep up. Districts that spent all summer planning hybrid systems, in which children would be in school part of the week, ditched them as [coronavirus](#) cases surged. Universities changed their teaching models, their start dates and their rules for housing, all with scant notice. And many districts and colleges have yet to make final decisions, even now, with the fall term already underway in some parts of the country.

"Plans are changing right up till the moment that schools open," [said Michael Casserly, executive director of Great City Schools](#), a lobbying group for large districts.

Chicago Public Schools announced last week that it would begin the year online, after planning a hybrid system. Districts across the country have pushed back their opening dates. Last week, the first week of school in Georgia's Cherokee County School District, administrators sent [14 letters](#) to parents, each disclosing new coronavirus cases. That included 13 students, ranging from first to 12th grades, and a few teachers. More than 300 students who had been in contact with them were directed to self-isolate for 14 days.

"Our parents wanted a choice for their children, and we delivered — it is not perfect, and we all know that, but perfection is not possible in a pandemic," Superintendent Brian V. Hightower said in a [message to the community](#) on Friday.

Another Georgia high school, in Paulding County, drew national attention after students posted pictures and video of their peers walking without masks in tightly packed hallways. Now, six students and three staff members there [have tested positive](#) for the virus, according to a letter sent to parents over the weekend. And on Sunday, the superintendent said the school would go online only for Monday and Tuesday and would announce plans beyond that on Tuesday evening.

Last week, [Johns Hopkins University changed its mind](#) and said classes would be fully online, discouraging even those who had signed leases from returning to Baltimore. Students at Washington University in St. Louis [faced the opposite problem](#) when the school said on July 31 that all dorm rooms would be converted to singles, leaving juniors and seniors scrambling to find housing at the last minute.

In Congress, talks over a pandemic relief package [collapsed last week](#), leaving no clear path to providing schools with funding that lawmakers in both parties agree is urgently needed.

“We knew how to close schools,” said Annette C. Anderson, an assistant professor of education and deputy director of the Center for Safe and Healthy Schools at Johns Hopkins University. “But we have no idea how to properly reopen schools.”

The result of this chaos is uncertainty for students and their parents, with profound ramifications for health, learning, emotional development and economics in schools that open and those that don't.

Of the 20 largest K-12 districts, 17 plan to begin the year fully remote. The big outlier is New York City, by far the nation's largest district, which plans a hybrid system and has withstood intense pressure from teachers and others to reverse course.

On Friday, New York Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo (D) [gave the state's 732 school districts the go-ahead](#) to open in person if they like, as long as the state's low coronavirus infection rates stay low.

Across the country, school districts have wildly different plans based on their geography, infection rates and partisanship.

Four percent of rural districts and 21 percent of suburban districts have announced fully remote plans, compared to 55 percent of urban systems, according to a study of 477 districts chosen as a representative national sample by the Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington at Bothell.

Robin Lake, the center's director, also reviewed parent surveys from districts across the country and was struck by how divergent views are.

“Some are saying they are terrified,” she said. “Others are saying, ‘I think this whole covid thing is a farce.’”

Like so much in the United States, decisions appear to be falling along partisan lines, with schools in Republican areas far more likely to open than those in Democratic communities.

[Polling shows](#) Republicans are far more likely than Democrats to say going back into school buildings is safe. And an examination of district plans compiled by [Education Week](#) suggests that campuses are more likely to be open in conservative communities than in liberal ones.

Education Week's database includes 153 districts in states won by Hillary Clinton in 2016. Of them, 67 percent plan fully remote learning this fall.

Of the 307 districts in states won by President Trump in 2016, 58 percent plan to hold fully or partly in-person classes.

Some of the divide may trace to the fact that rural areas tend to lean more Republican and in some cases have fewer coronavirus cases. But the overall trend worries Daniel A. Domenech, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, which represents school superintendents.

“It's a very dangerous and explosive situation, and unfortunately people are more inclined to follow their political bent than to do what is safe for their own families and their own children,” he said.

Trump and his allies have [repeatedly pushed](#) districts to open, noting the importance of in-person education for students' academic and

social emotional growth, as well as for parents' ability to work. Some administrators and the parents they serve seem to be listening.

In Washington County, Utah, for instance, schools were accommodating the desires of a very conservative community when they opted to open for full-time, in-person school. School begins there this week.

“As restrictions lifted, we felt — and the community felt — that would be in the best interest of students to get them back on as normal a schedule as possible,” said Steven Dunham, director of communications for the district.

“We are trying to put into place every safety precaution we can,” Dunham said. “We are also trying to fulfill the requests of the parents in this community.”

The district is requiring students and staff members to wear masks, as ordered by Utah Gov. Gary R. Herbert (R). But Dunham said that “a significant number of parents” have asked the school board to defy the order, something the board has declined to do.

The pressures in more liberal communities often cut the other way, with teachers unions saying it is not safe to reopen campuses.

The American Federation of Teachers passed a resolution endorsing actions including strikes to protest any orders to return to classrooms, and teachers in New York City have threatened to walk out over the issue. The newly installed president of the National Education Association said she, too, supports strikes if needed to get the attention of decision-makers.

“Our members are looking at every option that they have in their toolbox to get those in charge to listen to them when they say their schools are not safe,” NEA President-elect Becky Pringle said in an interview. In her inaugural speech, she promised financial help to any affiliate that concludes its reopening plan is not safe for teachers.

Pressure to keep schools open has been intense in Texas and Florida, two states where Republican governors ordered them open and then backed off as infections continued to climb.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (R) said in July that all schools must reopen. Then he said districts could operate remotely for the first three weeks.

Then he extended that for several more weeks. Local health departments stepped in to bar some districts from opening. A few days ago, Abbott said the decision was up to local school officials. John Kuhn, superintendent of the 3,300-student Mineral Wells Independent School District, said he's trying to follow the state's orders.

"But it's not easy," he said. "It keeps changing."

Kuhn said he has decided to open schools for students who want to come, but he is encouraging parents to keep their children home so there will be fewer in the classroom and social distancing will be easier. School starts there next week.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) also ordered all districts open, then later retreated, saying remote learning would be all right where coronavirus rates are highest. On Friday, he made clear that not all districts would be granted that dispensation, telling Orlando's News 6 that he was concerned that Hillsborough County, which includes Tampa, plans to stay remote.

"The law requires you to offer a certain amount of in-person instruction," DeSantis said, referring to his executive order. "I'm concerned about it."

For colleges and universities, the tumult of campus closures in March gave way to the chaos of planning for reopening under volatile and unprecedented conditions. Some are bringing back most of their students. Others are bringing only certain groups — freshmen, for instance. Still others are telling students it's best to stay away for the fall. Many international students cannot get visas to travel to the United States, and others who are here are dependent on colleges for emergency housing.

No matter where they are living, students are resigned to a course catalogue with a heavy dose of online learning. Classes might be fully online or hybrid, limiting face-to-face contact with faculty members.

Dorm rooms, by default, will become classrooms. Harvard University is inviting freshmen and select others to live on campus, but all of its undergraduate teaching will be online.

Like their K-12 counterparts, many colleges face pressure from their faculties to shift to remote learning. More than 350 faculty members at the University of Iowa signed a petition demanding that classes be all online. There was similar pushback from faculty members at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

As of last week, nearly 30 percent of 3,000 institutions planned to be fully or primarily online and about 24 percent were fully or mostly in person, according to an examination by the Chronicle of Higher Education and Davidson College.

The review found that 16 percent planned a mix of approaches and 26 percent had not yet decided.

Much remains in flux. The University of Virginia had announced in June that students would be invited to campus for classes starting on Aug. 25. They would live in residence halls under a strict public health regimen that includes assigned sinks and showers. Now U-Va. says the undergraduate arrival will be delayed because of the surge in virus cases, and face-to-face teaching will not start until after Labor Day.

Some plans fell apart weeks after they were announced. The University of Southern California in July reversed course on an aggressive reopening, and then last week ratcheted back again to almost entirely remote. [Georgetown](#), George Washington and American universities, all in the nation's capital, took similar zigzag paths toward remote openings.

At American, a private university with about 14,000 students, officials had painstakingly pieced together a plan to house about 2,300 students on campus in single dorm rooms and teach through a blend of in-person and online methods. The school calculated classroom capacity under a social distancing model, taking into account whether seats were fixed or mobile. It tracked how many faculty members had health concerns and who could teach in person and when. Assembling

the course schedule, said AU President Sylvia M. Burwell, was like solving a Rubik's Cube.

By the end of July, that plan went out the window.

"I'm disappointed," Burwell said. "We're all disappointed."

Burwell, who was health and human services secretary during the Obama administration, said the trajectory of the pandemic now dictates caution. She said she spent weeks gathering facts and enduring many sleepless nights before deciding to shift course. Now she's pledging to make it work.

In California, the leader of the largest public university system in the country saw this moment coming months ago. Timothy P. White, chancellor of the 482,000-student California State University System, had announced on May 12 that most fall instruction on its 23 campuses would be remote. It was at the time a shocking statement of higher education's vulnerability to the virus.

Now White says he is glad he staked out a radical position. It gave his faculty ample time to prepare and freedom to innovate. "It allowed a different mind-set," he said. The attitude: "Now, let's get to work and figure out how to do it great."

ABC News

Thousands of students, staff sent home nationwide as COVID snarls school reopenings

Only 17 states meet the WHO's criteria for safely reopening a community.

By
[Anne Flaherty](#)
August 14, 2020, 5:07 AM

The U.S. attempt to return children to the classroom this fall has turned into a slow-motion train wreck, with at least 2,400 students and staff either infected with [COVID-19](#) or self-isolating because of exposure, and the vast majority of large school districts opting to go online this summer amid rising cases of the virus.

President Donald Trump and Education Secretary [Betsy DeVos](#) have mostly waved off the situation unraveling this week in states like Georgia, Alabama, Indiana and Tennessee, where schools opened their doors after a months-long hiatus due to the pandemic -- only to quickly backtrack as soon as infections popped back up.

Trump and DeVos have demanded that schools stay open full-time and threatened to pull federal funding if the institutions fail to do so. At a White House event this week, DeVos made no mention of the crisis in Georgia and elsewhere and said families shouldn't be held "captive to other people's fears or agendas."

DeVos has "consistently said the decision to reopen should be made at the local level, and some schools may need to temporarily remain virtual based on local public health situation," Angela

Morabito, a spokesperson for the Education Department, told ABC News late Thursday in an emailed response to questions about the recent school closures.

"She's also, for the last 30 years maintained that parents and families need options when it comes to the child's education and that has never been more evident than now," Morabito wrote. "Parents need to have access to safe, in-person options as well as distant or remote learning options if that is what is best for their family. The key word here is safe."

But what is "safe" is not at all clear to most school officials and at the heart of a bitter debate unfolding just months ahead of the presidential election.

There is universal agreement that in-person instruction is superior to online classes and particularly vital for at-risk students. But local officials warn of complicating factors: Crowded hallways, opposition to masks, dilapidated buildings with windows sealed shut and reluctant staff.

"There was no way for us to socially distance our children and follow other guidelines" with in-person instruction five days a week, said Helena Miller, chair of the Rock Hill school board in the red state of South Carolina.

Schools in neighboring states this week seemed to make the same point as they struggled to stay open within days or weeks of reopening -- many students without masks and walking in crowded hallways. Georgia's Cherokee County -- which was hit the hardest -- reported that nearly [1,200 students](#) and staff were self-isolating after known exposures.

There were other schools too. A community college in Mississippi told [300 of its students](#) to quarantine after nine positive cases were confirmed, along with students in Gulfport and Corinth districts. Indiana schools were also hit with an estimated 500 students in quarantine across several districts, as [administrators expressed concern](#) that there would not be enough staff available to continue instruction.

"Unfortunately, we are in a situation where parents seem to be sending their child/children to school even when they are symptomatic or possibly even when they, as parents, have been tested and are awaiting the results, later to find out they are positive," wrote Reece Mann, the superintendent of Delaware Community School Corporation in Muncie, Indiana, in an email to parents, according to The Associated Press.

There's no federal standard on when it's considered safe to reopen schools, although the White House and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevent have released various documents suggesting "phased" reopenings and advising that kids and staff wear masks and keep students six feet apart.

As a result, most schools have become hyper-focused on their own local virus data, with some looking to the World Health Organization's recommendation that fewer than 5% of an area's daily tests must turn out positive for 14 days before schools in the area can reopen. As of Friday, only 17 states meet that criteria, according to a [tracker](#) by Johns Hopkins University.

"We pay absolutely no attention to what the White House has to say on this and neither do most big city school districts," said Michael Casserly, the executive director of the Council of Great City Schools, a coalition of the nation's largest urban public school systems.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, suggested communities look at the number of new COVID-19 cases in a given week for every 100,000 people. If the rise in new cases is higher than 10%, it should be cause for serious concern.

If "you're in a red zone, I think you really better be careful," he said Thursday in a livestreamed discussion sponsored by Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

Miller, in South Carolina, said her board anguished for months before finally deciding on offering parents a "hybrid" option, starting Sept. 8. The option allows parents to choose in-person instruction for their kids two days a week -- a move that cuts down the number of kids in a school at one time to allow for social distancing.

The hybrid model has been sharply criticized by DeVos when it was initially adopted earlier this summer by a Virginia school district. At the same time, DeVos has argued that a national plan for schools isn't needed because schools are run by local officials.

"There's not a national superintendent, nor should there be, therefore there's not a national plan for reopening," she said last month.

Many parents agree with DeVos and want to at least try to move ahead with in-person classes as much as possible.

"I definitely still say, 'Give this a shot.' I think there is a way to do this in person," Carlo Wheaton, the parent of a junior at Woodstock High School in Georgia, told WSB-TV in Atlanta after the school announced it had to close temporarily after 14 people tested positive for the virus and 15 more were waiting for their test results.

Dan Domenech, executive director of AASA, the School Superintendents Association, said one solution is money. His group estimates that schools need \$490 per student -- an estimated \$200 billion nationwide for the 54 million students attending school in the U.S. -- to allow for schools to reopen safely.

The money could be used to improve ventilation and expand classrooms to allow instructors to teach their students while socially distanced.

Trump announced Wednesday that he plans to provide 125 million masks for students. Domenech said he'd take it but it's a drop in the bucket for schools.

"We see what's happening in Washington: nothing," Domenech said.

Miller said at her local school board presidential politics and White House events aren't part of the equation, and that she's leaning on her local health department and governor's office to figure out what to do when there is no playbook.

"There are no right answers," she said.

Washington Post

Federal judge halts Betsy DeVos's controversial rule sending coronavirus aid to private schools

By

[Valerie Strauss](#)

August 23, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. EDT

A federal judge in Washington state temporarily blocked Education Secretary Betsy DeVos from enforcing a controversial rule that directs states to give private schools a bigger share of federal [coronavirus](#) aid than Congress had intended.

In a lawsuit filed by the state, U.S. District Judge Barbara J. Rothstein on Friday issued a preliminary injunction and castigated the Education Department over the July 1 regulation about the distribution of federal funds. The money, about \$13.5 billion, was included for K-12 schools in Congress's March \$2 trillion-aid package — known as the Cares Act — to mitigate economic damage from the pandemic.

Rothstein slammed the Education Department for arguing that states would not suffer irreparable damage if forced to implement the rule and said there was cause to put a preliminary injunction on the rule while the broader issues are worked out.

The department claim that the state faces only an economic inquiry, which ordinarily does not qualify as irreparable harm, is remarkably callous, and blind to the realities of this extraordinary pandemic and the very purpose of the Cares Act: to provide emergency relief where it is most needed," Rothstein wrote.

The Education Department did not respond to a request for comment about the decision.

U.S legislators from both parties said that most of the funding was intended to be distributed to public and private elementary and secondary schools using a formula based on how many poor children they serve that had long been used for distributing federal aid.

But in April, DeVos said she wanted money sent to private schools based on the total number of students in the school — not how many students from low-income families attended. That would have sent hundreds of millions of dollars more to private schools than Congress intended.

Critics blasted the plan, saying DeVos was pushing her agenda to privatize the public education system and build up alternatives to public schools.

When the rule went into effect on July 1, it had been modified from DeVos's original plan. It limited the aid going to private schools, saying school districts charged with distributing Cares Act funding could base the amount for private schools on the number of poor students enrolled.

But public schools could then use Cares Act funding only to help poor students—a directive that opponents said was not a real alternative for school districts. The **Council of the Great City Schools**, a nonprofit organization that serves as the voice for the 76 largest urban public school districts in the country, said in an amicus brief that the rule would divert hundreds of millions of dollars “of desperately needed funds” from public schools serving at-risk students.

Private schools also were eligible to receive loans- which could be forgiven-through another part of the Cares Act, the Paycheck Protection Program, which public districts could not tap.

Private schools, including some with endowments worth of millions of dollars, obtained PPP funds. For example, Sidwell Friends Schools, where former presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama had sent their daughters, won \$5 million in PPP funding, which was intended to help small businesses and low-wage workers during the pandemic. Sidwell has a \$52 million endowment but says it is restricted in how it can be used.

The Washington lawsuit was not the only one filed against the Education Department's new rule. Eight states, including DeVos's home state of Michigan, as well as the District of Columbia and four school districts sued the education secretary in July.

At a hearing held virtually last week before U.S District Judge James Donato in San Francisco, Michigan Assistant Attorney General Neil Giovanatti called DeVos a “Reverse Robin Hood” who was trying to take from the poor and give to the rich. The lawsuit says DeVos does not have the authority to dictate how the Cares Act money should be distributed.

WLKY--Louisville

JCPS students start new school year online

The 98,000 students in the district will start with NTI for at least six weeks

Updated: 8:41 PM EDT Aug 25, 2020

School is back in session for Kentucky's largest district, but the buildings still sit empty.

On the first day of school, Jefferson County Public School students are learning online and will for at least the next six weeks, as suggested by the governor.

JCPS schools switched to non-traditional instruction at the end of last year as the novel coronavirus began spreading, but then it was more "trial by fire."

JCPS officials told WLKY News they've made big improvement to NTI as students move into fall. They're calling the new launch NTI 2.0.

Some of the new features include:

- Additional live, recorded instruction.
- Focus on a more-structured school day.
- Streamlined student work.
- Portal with assignments for the week.
- More opportunities for small group interactions with instructors.

Michaela Kaelin, a second grade student at Kenwood Elementary, attended her first day virtually.

"It's not good or bad, it's just different," she told WLKY's [Marvis Herring](#) on Tuesday.

Despite Gov. Andy Beshear's recommendation, [there are several schools allowing in-person classes](#). Most of them allowed families to choose between online learning or in-person classes.

[Some schools have a waiting list](#) for online learning.

WLKY News asked Dr. Marty Pollio why JCPS went solely with NTI 2.0 for the first six weeks.

"There's about 76 school districts in the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), which is the top 76 school districts by enrollment, and --I think -- right now, all but two are going virtually," responded Pollio.

He said the district has thousands of high-risk students and staff members, which also affected the decision.

Pollio said the about two-thirds, or 60,000 students, have been issued Chromebooks from the district since the pandemic began.

WLKY News and Commonwealth Bank & Trust have partnered with the district to help purchase supplies for students in need.

Omaha World Herald

Pospisil: OPS playing fall sports in the spring is a flawed option

[Stu Pospisil](#)

September 6, 2020

You can have remote learning and fall sports, too.

We know that by a thorough study of the school districts the Omaha Public Schools considers its peers, the **Council of Great City Schools**.

The council consists of 74 U.S. members, but 28 districts are in states where the decision on fall sports was taken out of their hands by their state high school athletic associations.

Of the 46 districts that have control over their decision, 27 (58.7%) are going ahead with football and fall sports. Only five have canceled fall sports. The remainder, including Omaha, are on hold or have extenuating circumstances to work out.

Of the 27, two-thirds — 18 — are in remote learning for high schools. From Atlanta to Detroit to Tulsa and, yes, Wichita, the district that has a template some are hoping OPS considers.

This is the week for OPS, it appears, to decide the fate of fall sports. It seems the only option administrators will present is to move football, volleyball, softball, cross country, girls golf and boys tennis to the spring — and have the NSAA agree to it.

It's a flawed option.

OPS is making itself an island to the rest of the state more than ever by not returning to fall sports when the other schools in Douglas County, the other schools in the Metro Conference and the other schools in the state are executing return-to-sports plans with strong success rates. If other Class A schools were in the boat with OPS, it would be different.

The idea for a spring season for fall sports may have sprouted from the St. Louis schools, so far the only large district in Missouri to take up that state association's offer to have alternate fall (March 12 through May 1) and spring (May 14 through July 10) seasons and hold state championships for the fall, alternate fall, spring and alternate spring seasons.

The NSAA, to accommodate OPS, would have to allow out-of-season competition between schools, and permit dual participation for the first time in 50 years. We call the ban on dual participation the Johnny Rodgers rule, for it was enacted shortly after the future Heisman Trophy winner could dash from baseball field to jumping pit at the track in the same afternoon for Omaha Tech.

OPS now has placed the burden of solving its problem on the back of the NSAA, which has said it's willing to accommodate schools re-entering fall sports at any time — and OPS is the only one that stayed on the sideline. If OPS were to return to football by October, I could see the NSAA agreeable to dropping the ninth-week games in Class A in favor of putting all 31 teams in the playoffs that weekend. That would be a magnanimous move by the state association. Dual participation and out-of-season competition in the spring, however, are other matters.

OPS teams are in the same predicament as some in Cleveland, one of five Council of Great City Schools not having sports during remote learning. Consider some of the points Cleveland coaches, not just those in football, made in a reconsideration letter to the CEO of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District:

“We are concerned about the lack of equality we would be giving our students if they do not have fall athletics. Surrounding school districts and private schools currently have plans to safely play sports. In the city, four other high schools have not yet canceled fall sports. Additionally, in Cuyahoga County, no other high school has announced plans to cancel fall athletics ...”

My take: It's the same dynamic as between OPS and the rest of Douglas County and the metro area.

“We are concerned about the relationship between CMSD schools and other school districts. It is common perception that CMSD athletics are viewed, statewide, as inferior. We are doing our best to fight that perception and make our league well respected throughout the state. From a participation, talent, and competitive perspective, the high school varsity athletics programs in the CMSD were already weak before the pandemic and outside schools did not take our teams seriously, often scheduling their junior varsity or freshman teams to play our varsity for a variety of sports. Canceling the fall season would devastate (the city league) in ways from which we may never be able to recover.”

My take: Some sports in OPS do have perception issues, but not all. Some in the OPS athletic community are concerned that a prolonged closure of athletics could have long-term implications from which the district might never recover. OPS can't let its sports slip to the level of Des Moines — last year, that district came to OPS to study what is working well here — or Kansas City, Missouri.

“We are concerned about CMSD enrollment. Just as studies have shown that strong and successful athletics programs boost enrollment, unhealthy and failing athletics programs hurt enrollment. A large number of parents are upset with the possible decision to cancel CMSD fall sports and they are seriously considering transferring their children to schools that will provide sports this fall. These families will not return to the CMSD. Future parents will likely not enroll their children into our district as (city league) offerings will not provide opportunities and experiences given by other schools in our city and surrounding area.”

My take: The exodus already is happening here. If football resumes, Burke has lost six football players who were starters, some on offense and defense, two to a high school

in Florida. More families with high school athletes would like to leave but financially cannot.

“We are concerned most importantly about our children who participate in CMSD athletics. Without sports, the holistic development of the students on our teams will be adversely affected. Many students have expressed that sports are the primary motivator for them staying in school. If we cancel fall sports, we may lose these students forever; not to mention that if sports do not occur, the positive impact coaches and teammates have on students would be lost.”

My take: This holds true for every urban school district.

While Cleveland and Omaha are in the same boat, Wichita and Pittsburgh are districts that in the past two weeks had school boards vote to keep fall sports. In Pittsburgh, the decision was unanimous. Several board members said they changed their stance after listening to students and parents over two days of comment.

Then there is the refreshing take by Detroit’s superintendent of schools, who wrote a three-page letter to the Michigan High School Athletic Association last week in support of opening football, which the MHSAA subsequently did.

There are no easy decisions here, and there is much for OPS to consider. But if it is taking its cues from its peers, as it purports, the majority is showing the way to have sports while in remote learning, too.

Washington Post

A chaotic, down-to-the-wire start of school in New York serves as a harbinger for other cities

By
Moriah Balingit

September 30, 2020 at 12:30 p.m. EDT

NEW YORK — In the neighborhood of East New York, elementary school Principal Janet Huger-Johnson, who grew up there, aims to make her school a sanctuary, a place where kids might be able to forget for a moment that they are living through a pandemic.

So Tuesday, the day tens of thousands elementary school students were to be welcomed back across New York City, she donned a pair of colorful sneakers and a polo shirt with East New York Elementary School of Excellence emblazoned on it. It was also personalized with her own slogan: “It’s Huger Time.”

Huger-Johnson tried to broadcast warmth through two masks and watched as lines of students, spaced out along yellow circles that had been spray painted on the sidewalk, took their first steps into the building since mid-March. The hallways were mostly empty, and the freshly polished linoleum glistened. The school was somehow both frozen in time and hurtling toward an uncertain future. Bulletin boards in the hallways were wrapped in cellophane, displaying winter-themed art projects and presentations from Black History Month, which was in February.

“I didn’t want the children to feel all of this,” Huger-Johnson said. “In the middle of that, you’re hopeful that kids are not impacted by just the struggles as we as adults were going through.” A zealous planner, Huger-Johnson has been working nearly nonstop since schools closed in March to build an online curriculum essentially from scratch, researching best practices and software and pumping up an exhausted teaching corps that has suffered illness and loss. But no amount of planning and orchestration would make this year normal. It could not make up for the fact that 100 families — nearly a quarter of the school’s enrollment — were still awaiting tablet computers from the city’s education department or that two-thirds of her teachers were working remotely because of medical conditions, leaving her building shorthanded. The city lost at least 75 school employees to covid-19 — including a cafeteria worker at East New York Elementary.

And there was nothing she could do about the fact that the city’s infection rate was creeping upward, with outbreaks in Zip codes not far from East New York, inching toward the threshold that would force the city to shut down all schools. For the first time in weeks, the city’s positivity rate had exceeded 3 percent. Mayor Bill de Blasio has said he will shut down schools if the seven-day rolling average exceeds 3 percent.

Speaking from city hall not long after schools opened their doors on Tuesday, de Blasio called it “cause for real concern.”

This year, Huger-Johnson and school leaders across the country are being asked to do more: Keep children safe from school shooters *and* bullies *and* the novel [coronavirus](#); tutor those who are below grade level *and* catch up the legions of students who fell behind in the spring; address continuing trauma wrought by the pandemic *and* the kids' existing mental health problems.

At East New York Elementary, this has meant more check-ins on the emotional well-being of students, but also limiting student-to-student contact. The playground is wrapped in yellow caution tape, off-limits to students. A classroom has been set aside as the isolation room — a place where students who develop symptoms at school will be quarantined. Plush toys have been removed from all classrooms because they cannot be easily disinfected. Last week, the stuffed animals were corralled in a classroom and sat forlornly in a line, as if yearning for playmates.

One of the most taxing mandates in many places is that schools provide virtual learning in addition to traditional, in-person classes. And, as economic calamity wreaks havoc on school budgets, many of them are taking on these responsibilities with fewer teachers and fewer resources — all in the midst of a pandemic whose impact on children is still poorly understood.

The virus has created a cascade of logistical challenges for schools, immensely complex organizations even in non-pandemic times. New York City is by far the nation's largest district, but the challenges it faces are common to school districts large and small, urban and rural. “Frankly, I don't know of another institution, public or private, that has so many moving parts with so much public pressure on it from so many angles on it as much as public schools have,” said [Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools](#), a coalition of large, urban districts. “I have never seen a situation like this in the 43-plus years I've been doing this work, where public school leaders have devoted so much time, effort, creativity and just sheer endurance in trying to solve a set of problems where there's just no obvious good resolution.”

Few districts are more complex than in New York City, home to children from some of the nation's wealthiest and poorest Zip codes and one of the most linguistically diverse communities on the planet. It is also massive, with 1,700 public schools that educate more than 1 million students — roughly the population of Vermont. And its school system is under the control of de Blasio, who is frequently sparring with the powerful teachers union.

In an attempt to accommodate all families, de Blasio in July offered them the option of keeping their students home full-time for remote learning or a “blended” option, in which students would return to classrooms part-time and take virtual classes the rest of the time. Teachers, too, would be able to apply for medical accommodations to allow them to work from home if they had an underlying condition that would make them more vulnerable to covid-19. At the last minute, the city also allowed staff members who live with medically vulnerable people to apply for medical accommodation.

The plan created immense staffing needs. At East New York Elementary School of Excellence, Huger-Johnson said, about two-thirds of her teachers qualified to work from home, meaning she had more than enough to teach virtual classes. But she still needs two additional teachers for in-

person instruction. Until she can hire them, students who arrive at school are taking virtual classes from their classrooms under the supervision of a substitute teacher.

It's the same way many high schools are dealing with staffing shortages — middle and high schools are set to reopen for students on Thursday — but it is an arrangement that erases the benefits of in-person instruction.

The union that represents the city's principals said the system needs at least 1,200 more elementary school teachers.

Despite Huger-Johnson's efforts, there were some parents who arrived at school frustrated Tuesday morning. Because the school wants to cut down on the number of students wandering hallways, no child is allowed in the building early. One woman fidgeted anxiously and huffed that she needed to be at work. Another showed up with her two sons, only to be turned away because the school said she had signed up for remote learning. And yet another was still weighing whether to send her asthmatic son, who is struggling with reading, back to school. But there were moments of normal first-day jitters. Eva Gray's 5-year-old daughter, Grace, clung to her mother's legs. She had picked out her favorite mask — a blue one with white polka-dots — and a pair of mary jane shoes with cats on them for her first day.

"She said she's happy," Gray said. "She wants to come and see kids."

Charlotte Observer

Nearly 5,000 fewer students in CMS this year — an unprecedented drop

[BY ANNIE MA](#)

OCTOBER 02, 2020 06:30 AM,

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools experienced an unprecedented year-over-year decline in enrollment, another consequence of the pandemic as the coronavirus upends public education across the country.

In the district's annual headcount — a point-in-time estimated measurement of enrollment on the 20th day of school — there were 142,177 students. That's down from last year's headcount of 146,888, a 3.2% drop.

In recent years past, enrollment gains in CMS have generally been 1 to 2% annually. But, since 2016 — until this year — enrollment has been relatively flat.

In a normal year, a steep decline would be dire for the district's budget, as state funding is directly tied to student enrollment. But legislation passed by the North Carolina General Assembly holds school districts harmless for the drop in enrollment this year, due to anticipated declines caused by COVID-19.

Districts across the state [pushed for that measure](#), backed by the state board of education, saying that they would be unable to meet the needs of their students if they were to lose funding. The state allocates money to school districts based on enrollment projections, and money is taken back when enrollment falls short during the first two months of the school year.

“Among the many things that COVID-19 has revealed is the tenuous financial position that many of our districts face,” state board chairman Eric Davis said in August, the News and Observer reported. “It's important in these uncertain times that we ensure adequate funding for our public schools.”

In CMS, the loss of nearly 5,000 students in a single year translates to funding for roughly 250 teaching positions. Despite the relief from the legislature, if the projected enrollment does not bounce back, school districts could see significant hits to their budget next fall.

District officials say there's no singular explanation for the drop in the number of students enrolled this year in CMS.

“Parents are perhaps are making different choices based on their preferences right now,” said Akeshia Craven-Howell, associate superintendent for student assignment and school choice.

“(The drop) is atypical, and it's not just CMS that is experiencing it.”

Nationally and locally, education leaders say the largest dip in enrollment comes from fewer children in kindergarten and first grade.

Craven-Howell said that could reflect families choosing to defer starting their children in school or withdrawing them to homeschool, in light of the pandemic.

CMS began the year with virtual-only instruction and board members recently approved a plan to gradually bring students back, beginning with lower grades. On Thursday night, the school board approved [modifying that plan](#) to slightly increase in-person instruction days for elementary children. The proposal, however, does not usher in a full return to classrooms right away.

Statewide, the interest in homeschooling was so intense over the summer that the website for declaring a home school was [shut down](#) multiple times due to high traffic. The number of notices of intent to start a home school filed during the summer of 2020 was [nearly three times](#) more than during the same period the previous year, according to Carolina Public Press.

Craven-Howell said the district does not formally track where students go once they leave CMS. But she noted that principals had reported that many families who were withdrawing from the district also expressed a desire to return once CMS shifts back to in-person learning.

The declines mirror a national trend, particularly among large, urban districts. [Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of Great City Schools](#), a network of urban school districts, said that its members reported an average decline of 3 to 5% in enrollment, with some reporting a decline as high as 9 or 10%.

Nationally, the withdrawal from public schools is also being driven by the youngest grades. An Education Week [survey](#) of 400 school district administrators and principals found that more than half reported a decline in kindergarten enrollment.

[“Parents are just keeping those youngest of the young students home,” Casserly said.](#)

[CMS’s reported enrollment decline is roughly on par with the Council of Great City Schools network’s latest data.](#)

Craven-Howell said that the enrollment declines varied across the district, and that some schools were as much as 10% below their projected numbers. She said she expects to see students come back as the district moves towards more in-person instruction, leading to an increase in enrollment.

“What that means is we have to be thoughtful in terms of how we’re staffing schools,” she said. “The other implication is that as a district, we should not assume every one of these students will come back, and we have to be thoughtful and intentional in reaching out to families.”

CMS’s budget process occurs on a district level and positions are allocated to individual schools based on expected enrollment, assistant financial officer Kim Brazzell said. While some schools are currently overstaffed, the district does not intend to reassign teachers out of those schools in anticipation of possible enrollment growth as the pandemic progresses and in-person learning increases.

“A lot of principals have been in touch with the parents,” she said. “That’s how they’re finding out from parents, ‘oh, he’s going to a charter or private school, but as soon as you guys are open he’s coming back.’... Should those kids return, we want (schools) to have the staff they planned on having there.”

The CMS board recently voted to approve a phased return to in-person learning, beginning with pre-K on Oct. 12. The district would add in elementary, middle and high schools in three subsequent phases at three week intervals, should the county’s coronavirus numbers improve or hold steady.

TUDA

Politico

What happens to 'The Nation's Report Card' in a coronavirus crisis?

By Nicole Gaudiano

06/29/2020 07:37 PM EDT

Education leaders on Monday raised major concerns about next year's Nation's Report Card, with one suggesting proceeding with testing as planned could make administrators appear "tone deaf" during the coronavirus pandemic.

The remark from Michael Casserly, the **Council of the Great City Schools**' executive director, came during a robust debate over the next steps for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, also known as "The Nation's Report Card."

Wary superintendents: Responding to a survey, 21 of 27 superintendents in urban districts said they preferred to postpone the 2021 testing until at least 2022, Casserly said during a virtual meeting of the National Assessment Governing Board, which sets NAEP policy.

Moving forward with administering the tests in January or February, possibly during peak flu season and coronavirus outbreaks, he said, could make the governing board and the National Center for Education Statistics, which runs NAEP, "appear tone deaf to the needs of students, teachers and schools across the country."

"The message that you risk sending is that you value testing over the health and well-being of students and staff," he said. "In short, we think there are significant risks of the reliability and validity of the sample because student counts will not be stable this coming school year. There are risks of the quality of the data it's likely to yield and there are risks to the reputation of NAGB and NAEP if the predictable comes to pass."

Key context: The message came as a stark reminder of the overwhelming challenges facing educators next year and as the governing board wrestles with what to do next. Civics and history assessments, also scheduled for next year, appear to be off the table. A decision on reading and math is expected by August.

Board member Andrew Ho said the board should be prepared to do its job and consider 2022 as a fallback plan, calling this moment "one of the most dire scenarios that we've ever faced in U.S. educational history."

It would be a "hit to our reputation" if 90 percent of students are in 90 percent of schools in the spring and "we are not there to do our job," he said, even while recognizing the unlikelihood of that scenario.

“I’m worried deeply that there's going to be no understanding of just how much we've lost and how much we have to learn if we aren't there in the spring, and kids and schools are, and need us,” he said.

But board member Dana Boyd, an El Paso, Texas, elementary school principal, said she has a teacher in the hospital right now with Covid-19, “fighting for her life” and the issue is “bigger than data.”

“Before it hit home, I would say ‘yes, let's, let's do this,’” she said. “But when it hits home and it hits one of your own, you have a different perspective as a principal.”

More debate: Casserly, responding to Ho’s comment about 90 percent participants in the NAEP sample, said “I can guarantee you right now that you will not have it.” Surveys show that at least 25 to 35 percent of all parents won’t be sending their children back to a brick-and-mortar environment in this next school year, he said. “If you do this badly, if you make a hash out of this, it is really going to come back on the reputation of NAEP and everybody’s trust in the entire system,” he said.

Because of the virus, he said, superintendents aren’t sure when or if their schools will be open, the same students may not be in their classrooms on any given day, rooms may not be large enough to accommodate test takers and most districts will be restricting outside visitors.

Alberto Carvalho, a governing board member and superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, said he’s going to reopen with four models of schooling, calling into question the equity of assessment protocols, even beyond the issue of safety. It is “unfathomable,” he said, for him to predict a scenario where this “new normal” will be able to adapt to “assessment as we know it.” “Florida is the epicenter now, and guess where the epicenter of the epicenter is? Miami,” he said.

What's next: Some state chiefs are in favor of making the decision at a later date but others are advocating for postponing for a year, said Carissa Moffat Miller, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Stephen Pruitt, president of the Southern Regional Education Board, said there’s “valid concern” about whether moving forward this year would be in the best interest of students and NAEP. “I mean, at the end of the day, there's going to be an asterisk around the 2021 results if it's given,” he said.

Standardized Testing and COVID-19: 4 Questions Answered

By [Sarah D. Sparks](#)

July 9, 2020

Big state and national tests always require finely tuned coordination among researchers and schools. During the pandemic, large-scale assessments could become a complicated mess—if they can be pulled off at all.

Large-scale tests—from the Nation’s Report Card to state accountability exams—face an uphill climb next year, experts say, amid concerns that administering them could expose staff and students to a higher risk of coronavirus and prove difficult to do consistently among the shifting school set-ups expected next year.

“I have a teacher in the hospital right now who is fighting for her life from COVID-19,” said Dana Boyd, a member of the governing board for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, and the principal of East Point Elementary School in El Paso, Texas. Boyd was one of the members at a recent meeting calling for the tests to be pushed back from their planned 2021 administration. “Before this hit home I would’ve said, yes, let’s do this. ... [But] it’s bigger than data.”

The added risk, coupled with ongoing uncertainties about what schools will look like next year, is prompting states to consider another year without testing and may lead the federal government to delay the main National Assessment of Educational Progress in reading and math for the first time ever.

“I wouldn’t want to be blind for four years from 2019 to 2023, in one of the most critical and volatile periods in American educational history,” said Andrew Ho, Harvard University education economist and another member of the National Assessment Governing Board, which supervises the NAEP, also known as the Nation’s Report Card.

But [Michael Casserly, the executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools](#), said that 21 out of the 27 superintendents of the big-city districts that participate in the Trial Urban District Assessment, a smaller administration of NAEP, favor pushing the large federal assessments back by at least a year.

“And no one had a better idea,” Casserly said.

What are the infection risks for a large assessment?

Testing environments generally can lend themselves to social distancing, of course; the same spacing that would reduce virus transmission would also deter cheating, for example. Still, at a time when schools are trying as much as possible to limit the number of students in school at a time, and keep the students who do attend in stable clusters, the traditional format of large standardized tests can be a challenge.

For example, to administer the 2021 NAEP in math and reading in grades 4 and 8, the National Center for Education Statistics typically sends out 3,000 proctors to roughly 13,000 schools nationwide over the course of a couple of months. Because each student takes only

a subset of the NAEP's questions, these proctors bring 22,000 tablet computers preloaded with the selected questions for each student.

Health and safety requirements differ from state to state and at times district to district, but at a minimum the proctors will need additional training and equipment to safely supervise the tests and clean equipment between testing sessions. Casserly said many school districts have also limited outside access to school buildings and are requiring various kinds of health or temperature screenings for entry.

"Test administrators often move from school to school in the same test, presenting the possibility that they could spread the virus into multiple schools," he said. "If anyone in the school becomes sick, that school is likely to be shut down at least temporarily with no notice."

How could the pandemic challenge testing validity?

The biggest argument in favor of large-scale testing next year has been the need for information about students' growth and learning during the longest period of schooling disruption in more than a century. But that disruption isn't over, experts say, and likely will make the results from any large test difficult to compare across districts and states.

Casserly, of the Council for the Great City Schools, explained that 25 percent to 35 percent of urban parents polled in his districts have reported they do not plan to send their students back for face-to-face instruction next year. Many schools plan to alternate groups of students using in-person and remote learning, and because some districts plan to help keep students at a safe distance from each other by using space in under-enrolled schools to house students from over-enrolled schools. In both cases, that means the students on campus during testing may not be the same as the students enrolled at the school, and the background characteristics of students who stay home versus those who attend on different schedules may differ significantly, which could skew test results, Casserly said. Some test officials are trying to plan for that reality. Peggy Carr, NCES' associate commissioner, said that the agency planned to stagger testing days for NAEP with at least two visits per school, plus a make-up day, to capture students who had uneven attendance patterns.

"At the end of the day, there's going to be an asterisk around any 2020-21 [test] results if they're given," said Stephen Pruitt of the Southern Regional Education Board, a 16-state group which coordinates around education and economic issues. "I think you have to ask the question, are people really going to even pay attention to themselves this year? If states are already considering not testing themselves, would they really give an honest effort to administering NAEP?"

How could the pandemic affect state tests for 2020-21?

The U.S. Education Department waived requirements for 2019-20 state accountability tests during the school closures this spring, and a few states, including Georgia and Michigan, have already requested waivers for 2020-21 testing as well.

"Given the ongoing challenges posed by the pandemic and the resulting state budget reductions, it would be counterproductive to continue with high-stakes testing for the 2020-21 school year," said Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp and state Schools Superintendent Richard Woods [in a letter on the waiver request](#). "In anticipation of a return to in-person instruction this fall, we believe schools' focus should be on remediation, growth, and the safety of students."

By contrast, Texas Education Commissioner Mike Morath explicitly announced last month that he would administer the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, or STAAR, next school year. Texas, one of the states that monitor student growth, will have to adjust its A-F school accountability system because it has missed this spring's round of student testing, and Morath worried that missing two years of student data could make it difficult to understand how students have been affected by the pandemic.

"We cannot allow this public health crisis to become a generational education crisis," Morath said in a presentation to the state school board. Schools would provide more time for students to take the online test and the overall testing window would be expanded to about 30 days, according to a Texas Education Agency spokesperson. This could allow smaller groups of students to be tested at a time; the state plans to release more detailed guidance for schools on how to test safely later in the school year.

Unlike national tests, state accountability tests are usually proctored by local teachers or central office staff, meaning that districts may be able to cut down on the number of visitors needed to enter the school building. Chris Minnich, chief executive officer of the testing group NWEA, said it is working with Georgia and Nebraska to pilot a different kind of state assessment, which would be administered in shorter chunks at three periods over the course of the year. That may reduce the time and number of students needed for testing at any given time.

Can large tests be conducted remotely?

Remote testing could provide an option for assessing students who are learning in schools with hybrid schedules but testing in a digital or online format is not the same as remote testing. While NAEP, state accountability tests such as those in Texas and Georgia, and international tests like PISA have all moved to digital formats, they do not have remote proctoring, and critics have raised questions about how quickly such a system could be up and running.

The NWEA tested about 100,000 students online this spring using its adaptive MAP Growth test, Minnich said. But he said formative assessments used to inform instruction are easier to administer at home than large-scale assessments more commonly used for research or accountability, because they require less security.

"Teachers and proctors generally receive a pretty distinct guidance about what questions they can help the kid with and not help the kid with, and I think that'll be harder when you're dealing with individual parents possibly at home," Minnich said. "I do get concerned about students who have very specific accommodations not receiving those accommodations, because that actually is a big deal."

The College Board, which had originally planned to administer the SAT remotely this summer, had to cancel because of security concerns, but in the United Kingdom, medical students successfully took three-hour "open book" medical exams with questions designed to be impossible to simply look up online.

As part of the ongoing discussions of the NAEP, former Wyoming Gov. James Geringer said delaying large-scale assessments could provide an opportunity to adapt them to align with whatever changes in instruction become permanent in the classroom after the pandemic.

"Knowledge is still knowledge ... but the nature of how we test will depend upon how education has been delivered, how equitable it's been in terms of access for students,"

Geringer said. "I think there're going to be dramatic changes in how students learn and how they're exposed to information ... We have to deal with near-term uncertainties, but we also have to be planning for the certainty of change to how [testing] has been conducted in the past."

The 74

Plans to Administer ‘Nation’s Report Card’ in 2021 to Proceed Despite Concerns Over Reliability and Funding During Pandemic

August 3, 2020

Nationally mandated reading and math tests scheduled for 2021 should proceed, the National Assessment Governing Board decided Friday. But the board [acknowledged](#) that it might be impossible to collect accurate assessment data and that Congress might not provide enough funding to give the tests under social distancing conditions.

The 12-10 vote came after considerable debate over whether the results would still be useful given the likelihood that many students won’t be in school and that flawed data could tarnish the “gold standard” reputation of the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Most members of the board, which sets policies and schedules for the national tests, agreed that even with significant uncertainty over the extent of in-person learning in the spring, the assessments will provide some window into how much learning students have lost and whether gaps between groups of students have widened during the pandemic.

“I think this is one of the most important NAEPs that will ever be done,” Haley Barbour, former governor of Mississippi and chair of the governing board, said during the live-streamed session. “It will be testing something that hopefully isn’t going to be common in the future of our schools.”

Erik Hanushek, a senior fellow at Stanford University’s Hoover Institution, added that if the tests were delayed until 2022, it would be hard for the U.S. Department of Education to “resist” requests for waivers from states for spring assessments. So far, Georgia has asked for a waiver, but U.S. Assistant Education Secretary James Blew told reporters recently that such requests were premature and the department would likely turn them down.

Andrew Ho, a professor at Harvard University, was among those opposed to moving forward with the assessments, which he said are only useful when they answer “specific questions accurately.” He said he didn’t want to keep spending money on something that could be viewed as a “symbolic political gesture.”

The governing board made its decision on math and reading after gathering input from state and district leaders and listening Thursday to a panel of health experts. But they still don’t know whether Congress will approve the National Center for Education Statistics’ request for an

additional \$65 million to conduct the tests in smaller groups and to hire and train 7,000 testing administrators — 4,000 more than normally needed.

Peggy Carr, associate commissioner at NCEES, told the members that the agency would have to stop spending money in December in order to still have enough to conduct the assessment in 2022 if 2021 becomes impossible.

Congress mandates that fourth- and eighth-graders take the reading and math assessments every two years, and states are required to participate in order to receive federal Title I funds for schools serving low-income students. Policymakers often use the results to determine whether or not U.S. schools are improving and to compare results between states.

The board made a less controversial decision to delay until 2022 voluntary civics and U.S. history tests for eighth graders. The long-term trend assessment for 17-year-olds, originally scheduled for March this year, will also be scheduled for 2022.

‘Parental reluctance’

Thursday’s session was the first time in its 30-year history that the governing board has consulted public health experts in preparation for an assessment, Barbour said. The question-and-answer session offered insight into not just planning for the assessments, but reopening schools in general.

“Parental reluctance” will determine whether there are enough students to test in person, said Annette Campbell Anderson, an assistant professor at Johns Hopkins University who is leading work on a state-by-state school reopening [tracker](#). She added that parents likely need to see a continuing decline in transmission rates between now and the end of the year to “feel comfortable about returning.”

Monitoring states’ “living and breathing” reopening plan documents, she said 22 states have addressed all 12 categories in the tracker, but there is still wide variation about issues like transportation, nutrition, student privacy, and the degree of choice teachers have over returning to the classroom or working remotely.

One glaring inconsistency, Anderson said, is how administrators plan to respond if someone in school becomes infected after schools open. “All the states say something very different about what to do if there is a case,” she said.

Dr. Teena Chopra, an infectious disease specialist at Wayne State University, said if a student in a small cohort tests positive, all of those students in that cohort would need to stay home and get tested. If someone outside of that group tests positive, then the school would need to close.

She added that in addition to face masks, and potentially plastic shields for teachers, Wayne State is actually recommending more conservative distances of 10 feet between students at the university. Most guidance for schools recommends six feet.

Carr told the board that under normal conditions, students would take the test in groups of 25, but that it was currently planning for groups of 10.

But depending on classroom size, even that might be too many. “We need to acknowledge that the physical plant of many of our schools would make 10 feet impossible,” said Dr. Nathaniel Beers, president of HSC Health Care System in Washington, D.C., and a former official with District of Columbia Public Schools.

Experts, including Chopra, have stressed that as long as the disease is still spreading within the community, schools should remain closed. Based on that criteria, between 22 to 33 states should keep schools closed, Beers said. Plus, the testing window would fall in the middle of flu season. “That is going to throw everything into chaos again,” he said.

Results ‘with an asterisk’

Carr has stressed that results would still be valuable and would likely be the only nationally representative sample with comparisons across states for the 2020-21 school year.

The agency is also planning to add questions to the math and reading assessments that would provide more context for the results — on topics such as technology use and access, resources for instruction, how instruction was organized, and teacher preparation for distance learning.

The most recent [results](#) released last October showed a decline in reading for both grades and overall performance in math relatively flat for the past decade. Recent trends also show that while top-performing students in some subject areas have continued to improve, performance has dipped for those scoring at the bottom of the scale.

Some who follow testing trends, such as Michael Petrilli, president of the conservative Thomas B. Fordham Institute, have linked the lack of growth in scores to the [Great Recession’s](#) impact on family income and school budgets. Now with another recession, a pandemic, and the uneven impact of school closures on students’ learning, there’s been strong interest in having some barometer of student learning.

At a [June 29 meeting](#), Carissa Moffat Miller, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, indicated that state superintendents were divided on whether testing in 2021 should go forward. Michael Casserly, executive director of the [Council of Great City Schools](#), suggested that state and district leaders were leaning toward postponing, and Miami-Dade County Public Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho, also a member of the governing board, made that clear Friday, saying that there was no certainty “we wouldn’t get anything more than flawed information.”

Stephen Pruitt, president of the 16-state Southern Regional Education Board, said the organization wasn’t taking a position, but said “a more immediate need is for teachers to have classroom-level tools they can use to quickly assess students’ skills and learning, so they can lift each student to grade-level or beyond.”

If NCES determines at the end of the year it's not feasible to go forward with the tests, Petrilli and others don't think there will be long-term negative consequences. He said he's long thought testing students in reading and math every two years was unnecessary.

“At a national or state level, we just don't see changes that frequently,” he said, “and it sucks up a lot of money that could be used to test other subjects more frequently, or could be used to do state-by-state testing in 12th grade.” He added that because student participation in the assessments might be so low, “any results would come with an asterisk.”

‘Find out where children are’

But skipping a second year of assessment at the state level — after states were already exempted from testing this past spring — is another issue, according to state education officials. On July 20, the CCSSO issued a statement emphasizing that educators, policymakers, and parents still need assessment data to better understand the impact of the school closures on students.

“We need to be hopeful that we will be able to administer our statewide assessments,” said Mississippi State Superintendent Carey Wright. “We have got to find out where children are in order to know where to take them. I would hate for us to go yet another year without some feel for what's happening across the state.” And on Monday, Chiefs for Change, another superintendents organization, issued [a statement](#) agreeing that NAEP should continue as planned and that it's too soon to call for a “wholesale suspension” of state testing.

If students aren't in school, however, is there any way to gather accurate assessment data? That would be tough, said Scott Marion, executive director of Center for Assessment. He called efforts to assess students remotely “not pretty,” and said, “I have to question whether we're going to get something of value.” The fact that the College Board [canceled plans](#) to administer the SAT remotely, he added, suggests such methods are not yet reliable in K-12.

Assessment experts, he said, would be comfortable with bringing small groups of students into a building and assessing a sample of them, but he said teachers, parents, and students would still want individual results.

In a [recent article](#), Marion and co-author Ajit Gopalakrishnan suggested that states move ahead with regularly scheduled assessments, but not make those results the centerpiece of state accountability systems — such as school grades and rating systems — as they usually are. They call instead for measuring how well schools handle health and safety precautions, respond to students' social-emotional needs, and provide high-quality instruction, whether in-person or remote.

“The question is not whether we can calculate accountability results in 2021 in ways similar to before COVID. Some argue we can,” they wrote. “We think the important question is whether we should calculate accountability results in 2021 in ways similar to before COVID. Our answer is unequivocally no.”

GEORGE FLOYD KILLING

Education Dive

Educators call for schools to be 'safe havens' against racism

Linda Jacobson @lrj417

June 2 2020, 10:57 a.m. EDT

Education leaders and organizations joined others Monday in condemning a Minneapolis police officer's killing of a black man last week while urging students and community members to refrain from contributing to the wave of violence that continued to spread over the weekend.

California state Superintendent Tony Thurmond is among state and district leaders condemning the killing of George Floyd and saying schools must do more to address racial bias.

Michael Casserly, the executive director of the **Council of the Great City Schools**, called the cellphone video of officer Derek Chauvin's knee on George Floyd's neck "a vignette in the ongoing story of injustice and racism that is our nation's history and our current reality."

He added that at a time when educators are teaching remotely and districts are facing budget cuts, schools must also "amplify" efforts to address inequity. "Let us ensure that our schools are safe havens where all children are respected and nurtured, where all children can achieve and grow, and where all children are guaranteed equity and justice," he said in a statement.

In a press conference Monday, California state Superintendent Tony Thurmond discussed the difficulty he has had in knowing what to say publicly about Floyd's death as well as those of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor.

"Since March 13, I haven't discussed anything other than the coronavirus," he said, but added he will now convene conversations with educators, elected officials and "leaders in every sector" to address "what we do in the classroom, why we haven't done more to address implicit bias."

To begin the initiative, he announced an email address — createracialjustice@gmail.com — for those who want to share what they're feeling or their interest in being involved. He said he will also create new online resources related to the issues.

"We must not let this moment go unnoticed," he said.

With most students across the country still learning from home, schools faced less risk protests would reach school property. The Long Beach Unified School District, however, did find graffiti on the exterior of two downtown schools, a spokesman said.

Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent Austin Beutner suggested the school closures are a barrier during a time of turmoil.

“Today we should be in a classroom helping students process all that is happening around us,” he said in a statement. “Schools must be part of the solution because a great education is the most important part of the path out of poverty. But opportunity gaps for black students have persisted for more than a generation. The war on poverty declared more than 50 years ago seems to have been lost.”

The National Association of Elementary School Principals highlighted the role of administrators in addressing "grief triggers that highlight the trauma of inequality and discrimination."

"Principals — who research says are among the most trusted professionals — are tasked with advancing culturally responsive teaching and learning, which includes not only welcoming diversity in the classroom," the statement said, "but also teaching students how to navigate an increasingly racially, ethnically and socioeconomically diverse society."

Meanwhile, outgoing Atlanta Public Schools Superintendent Meria Carstarphen reminded students to pursue nonviolence.

“If you are choosing to be involved, please continue to lead by example,” she wrote in a [blog post](#), urging them to lean on principals, counselors, teachers, school resource officers and other educators for support even though school is out.

Calvin Moore Jr., the CEO of the Council for Professional Recognition, which grants credentials to early-childhood educators, also called for restraint.

“We recognize that protest is a strong part of our country’s tradition, yet we should do so within the law and with respect for others and their rights,” he said in a statement.

Other organizations described steps they’re taking in response to Floyd’s killing.

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, for example, announced it is contributing \$10,000 to the Equal Justice Initiative, which focuses on issues such as mass incarceration, excessive punishment and racial inequality.

Kansas City Star

‘End the gross violence on black lives’: Kansas City school leader speaks out

[BY MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS](#)

JUNE 04, 2020 11:47 AM

Every year, the district is rocked by the violent death of students, an issue [Bedell, who is African American](#), has been vocal about since coming to Kansas City in 2016. Bedell has talked candidly about his challenging upbringing. He grew up in a rough neighborhood in Rochester, New York, and at one point as a child was homeless. He has used his story to relate to and inspire his students.

Bedell said many of the district’s students and their families have participated in the ongoing protests in Kansas City. The protests, in cities across the country, were sparked after Floyd, a black man, died on a Minneapolis street when a white police officer pressed his knee into Floyd’s neck for several minutes to restrain him.

“We support our students as they question, protest and demand change,” Bedell wrote. “We join them in this call to action to end the gross violence on black lives allowed to thrive in a system designed to prevent them from full participation in and benefit of the American dream. “

Here is Bedell’s full statement:

“Black lives matter in Kansas City Public Schools. This is simple and true. We say it proudly and we will act on it as individuals and as a public school system urgently and intentionally.

“We love our children, our schools and our city. The events of this past week unnerve us as we think about and care for our community. We’re painfully aware that our children of color, family members, staff and neighbors bear the weight of 400 years of systemic racism in this nation. We know the history of segregation that continues to have a

generational impact on the economic, social and educational opportunities of our kids. We will call out and name racism when we see it.

“We mourn for George Floyd, Ahmaud Aubery and Breonna Taylor. We mourn for every black person who has ever gasped for breath under the knee of society against their necks. When we see those names, we see our own children. We will speak and take action on their behalf. We will defend the lives of our black and brown children.

“As a black superintendent and as the most diverse elected School Board in the region, we have made equity our top priority. We support our students as they question, protest and demand change. We join them in this call to action to end the gross violence on black lives allowed to thrive in a system designed to prevent them from full participation in and benefit of the American dream. When we have equity as a priority, it elevates our ultimate outcome of student achievement and success in this world.

“Because black lives matter, it’s time to do the hard work of real change. We are prepared to use our platforms to craft laws, policies and practices that will promote true equity for our black and brown children, families, staff and neighbors. We implore our entire community to engage and do this hard work with us.

“We have to address the deep, implicit biases and underlying stereotypes that surround black people in this nation and that feed racism, fear and hate. We know our education system can help, but we can’t do it alone. We call on our partners in the business, philanthropic, civic and faith communities to stand with us in active engagement to tear down the institutional barriers that have long been foundational in this country.

“Because black lives matter, equity is the foundation of everything we do in KCPS. Equity is why we launched an initiative to end the school-to-prison pipeline in KCPS and create a restorative justice model of school discipline and security. Equity is why we are bridging the digital divide by teaching our children remotely, providing Chromebooks and wifi hot spots, connecting with our students to check on their mental health, feeding our families and fighting budget cuts to critical services. Equity is why we work to reform policies on economic development, the criminal justice system and affordable and sustainable housing.

“This work is only the beginning. Our hearts and minds must be tender, ears open to plea for air in the black and brown communities and our feet ready to march for action. We do this because black lives matter.

“We join Michael Casserly, Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools, in saying, “The nation’s urban public schools offer our full-throated condemnation of this killing and the racism behind it. And we vow to redouble our efforts to ensure racial justice is at the center of everything we do.”

USA Today

Kids need to talk about George Floyd, protests and racism. With coronavirus school closures, it's hard to do.

Erin Richards

June 1, 2020

Jason Lukehart spent most of last weekend glued to scenes of protests from around the country following the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police.

Sunday night, Lukehart, a fourth-grade teacher in Oak Park, Illinois, tapped out a message to his students' parents: He would be holding a special Zoom session first thing Monday to talk about the unrest. He didn't want to supersede any conversations parents were having with their own children; the additional Zoom session was optional.

The majority of his young students logged on early at 7 a.m. Lukehart, who is white, said he didn't want to preach. He wanted students to know they could share what was on their minds.

"We've talked about the concept of white privilege and I was able to go back to some of those discussions," Lukehart said. "I want my white students to have the right perspective on this stuff in an age-appropriate way. For my black students, I hope they feel like I care about them."

In times of great political and social upheaval, schools often serve as a protected space outside the home for students to wrestle with difficult concepts, guided by an educated professional. But those conversations are hard to have right now. To start, there's a pandemic, and school buildings are closed. It's also the end of the academic term. Not to mention the ongoing hurdle: Many teachers are uncomfortable talking about race and racism, especially racism against black Americans.

More teachers and parents can and should talk with children about racial injustice in America, experts say. That includes conversations about police and community relations, and about the long history of white people marginalizing people of color in this country, which planted the roots of economic and racial segregation.

"Teachers can be incredibly powerful in teaching young people to engage in these conversations rather than avoid them," said Howard Stevenson, a clinical psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education.

One major obstacle:^e 8% of the public-school teachers who would lead those discussions are white, and white people are less likely to habitually talk about race than people of color, studies show. Black teachers, who are more likely to discuss race, make up only about^a 8% of America's teachers.

"White people are less exposed to what to do around race and more likely to be socialized to avoid racial matters and see them as dangerous," Stevenson said.

The good news for breaking that cycle: Kids who grow up having more conversations about race with their parents and families are better at navigating situations around race, including speaking up for themselves, studies show. Compared with children who don't ever talk about race, they also tend to perform better on tests of conflict resolution and anger management, Stevenson added.

"Racial socialization and literacy is more important than your own racial background," Stevenson said.

Naming or sidestepping racism

On Memorial Day, George Floyd, a black man, stopped breathing after now-fired Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on his neck for more than eight minutes. Since then, major protests over racial injustice and the plight of black and brown communities have sprung up in cities across the U.S. and the world.

Tens of thousands of people have taken part in largely peaceful demonstrations, but some gatherings have been punctuated by violent encounters between police and protesters and late-night looting and vandalism.

Many superintendents and educational organizations were quick to denounce the racism that underscored Floyd's death as well as other recent incidents where black people died at the hands of white citizens or police officers, including Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia and Breonna Taylor in Kentucky.

"The nation's urban public schools offer our full-throated condemnation of this killing and the racism behind it," **Michael Casserly, head of the Council of the Great City Schools**, said in a statement. "We vow to redouble our efforts to ensure racial justice is at the center of everything we do."

Schools must be part of the solution because education is key to a path out of poverty, said Austin Beutner, the superintendent of Los Angeles schools – the second largest district in the country with more than 600,000 students, about 17% of whom are black.

"This tragedy must be more than a topic of conversation at every dinner table, in every board room and government hearing," he said in a statement. "It must serve as a wake-up call to unapologetically and with conviction address

the systemic bias and institutional racism which exists in many parts of society."

Other district leaders avoided mentioning racism directly in email communications with parents. In Bernards Township School District, a wealthy New Jersey district where just 0% of the district's 6,000 students are black, district officials initially pointed parents toward resources for addressing "frightening news" with their children.

After the message raised eyebrows among some parents, a late-night follow-up email Wednesday from the superintendent said the district would examine whether it was doing enough to educate students about racism and social justice.

Black educators share important perspectives

Outside of Flint, Michigan, Jessyca Mathews teaches English at Carman-Ainsworth High School, with an emphasis on activism and inquiry, plus a unit on protests.

Classes finished about two weeks ago, but many of Mathews' former and current students have contacted her independently to discuss what they're feeling.

Even if classes were in session, Mathews said, having conversations via videoconference from students' homes would not be ideal. Many parents may not agree with the points of view students want to share, she said.

"Over Zoom, it's like a meeting," Mathews said. "They don't need a meeting right now. They need a comfortable place to process what's going on, and to think about what actions they can take."

In normal times, Mathews' classroom is a safe space to have those discussions. She's black and can relate to the lived experience many of her black students are feeling.

"I'm fortunate to be able to talk about different things that white educators can't," she said. "I also get pushback. It's not easy. You'll have parents come at you, they'll say: 'That's not to be discussed in the classroom.' Or they'll say: 'That's a political issue.' "

It's not, she said.

"Me living as a black person is not a political issue," she said. "I respect those white educators who have taken a step to say, 'Before I do anything, I need to listen.' Do your research. Listen to perspectives. You're going to hear harsh truths that you may not want to embrace."

School leaders can encourage discussions about racial injustice by creating a place for black students to share with each other first, and then a space for the larger school community to discuss the issues, said Shaun Harper, a professor and executive director of the Race and Equity Center at the University of Southern California.

"If educators are going to engage each other and students and families around this topic, they must be willing to use words like 'racism,' 'white supremacy' and 'anti-blackness' in those conversations, referring to it as injustice against black people and black communities," Harper said.

Minneapolis teachers try to connect with students

In Minneapolis, the epicenter of the protests, Southwest High School history teacher Robert Kohnert wrote a message to his 8th graders after the first explosive night.

Whatever was happening in their worlds, he said, he was there to support them. And despite any tense moments he may have had with them during the year, he said, he cared about all of them.

About 60% of the students who attend Southwest High School are white, and about 30% are students of color. Overall, Minneapolis Public Schools' district enrollment is about 30% students of color. Yet most teachers, about 80%, are white.

Adding to the layers of inequity: Many of the most vulnerable students Kohnert and his colleagues work with are black children from disadvantaged households. Some didn't get technology right away to do online classes. For some, food or housing is a concern. Kohnert doesn't even know where all his students have gone.

And those students are most likely to experience the protests in profound and personal ways.

During the year, Kohnert works hard to make sure students can access versions of history from the viewpoints of non-white authors and historians. Students can choose from textbooks written by indigenous people, by Latinos or by black authors, he said. Then they all can discuss the differences.

"I tell them at the beginning that I'm a white male who is going to walk you through U.S. history, but that I'm going to do it in a flawed way," he said. "I don't know what it's like to be a black person, or a woman. The recognition of that sets a certain tone for the dialogue I want them to have."

Black youth share their thoughts

Whether adults facilitate it or not, young people are talking about race and class issues.

In Milwaukee – a city five hours south of Minneapolis but similar in its stark racial segregation – daily and nightly protests have brought hundreds of youth and adults into the streets.

"Police are supposed to protect us, but police have gained a reputation for being feared by a majority of people, especially in the black community," said Emmanuel Komba, a 17-year-old black student at Rufus King International High School in Milwaukee.

Komba said his parents wouldn't let him attend the protests because they didn't want him getting hurt. But he said if school was still in session, he would have been talking about it there with students and teachers. Rufus King is an urban school with a diverse population, and issues related to racism are talked about frequently, he said.

With schools out, Komba talked with other Milwaukee teens about the protests this week during a videoconference with Urban Underground, a youth empowerment organization that helps young people engage in projects that improve the community.

Executive Director Charlen Moore invited each of the teens to share their thoughts while on the call.

"Right now, they're being bombarded with so many different types of messages," Moore said. "We want to get a sense of where they are mentally and emotionally. We want to help them process their thoughts and feelings."

For many in Milwaukee, the George Floyd protests bring back memories of Dontre Hamilton, a black man killed by an on-duty white Milwaukee police officer in 2015. Hamilton, who was mentally ill, had been sleeping on a park bench by a popular Starbucks in the middle of downtown. Protests followed his death. The city awarded Hamilton's child a \$3.5 million settlement in 2016.

Moore said many of the black teens she works with know what it feels like to not be considered a priority.

"That sort of rage has been what we're seeing across the country," she said.

"How long are we going to continue to just be left behind as not thought of as human?"

The Chicago Crusader

House Passes the Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys Act

Posted By [leslie](#)

July 28, 2020

Recently the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed the Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys Act (S.2163/H.R. 1636) by a vote of 368-1. The bill, which was introduced by Congresswoman Frederica Wilson (D-FL) and cosponsored by House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), would establish a 19-member commission to examine the social disparities that disproportionately affect Black males in America. Chairman Nadler supported bringing the legislation, which was referred to the Judiciary Committee, directly to the House Floor for a vote.

“We cannot turn a blind eye to the systemic racism and inequality that has harmed so many throughout our nation,” **said Chairman Nadler**. “The legislation passed by the House today will unearth the many social, cultural, economic, educational, health, and other issues that have for centuries served as barriers to the advancement and safety of Black men and boys. I want to thank Congresswoman Wilson for her tireless work on this legislation, and I urge the President to sign it into law.”

“I am elated that this legislation, which I have been fighting for several years to pass, is now poised to become national law. The commission will review police brutality, gun violence, fatherhood, recruiting and training Black male teachers, and even sneakers, which play an important role in the lives of Black boys. Welfare reform and the 1994 crime bill, which includes the controversial three strikes provision and harsh sentencing guidelines, also will be revisited. These federal policies left a devastating impact on Black men and boys in America,” **said Congresswoman Wilson**. “The commission’s underlying goal is to interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline and to better understand and eventually eliminate the educational and social chasms that have made it extraordinarily difficult for Black males to become upwardly mobile.”

The Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys Act establishes a permanent, bipartisan commission within the United States Commission on Civil Rights. Its 19 members will include congressional lawmakers, executive branch appointees, issue experts, activists, and other stakeholders who will examine social disparities affecting Black men and boys in America. Based on its findings, the commission will issue policy recommendations to Congress, the White House, and federal agencies. The bipartisan, bicameral Caucus on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys, which Congresswoman Wilson founded and co-chairs, will craft legislation to implement those recommendations.

The legislation is cosponsored by more than 200 members of Congress and has been endorsed by more than 20 renowned civil rights leaders and organizations, including Rev. Al Sharpton, Rev. Jesse Jackson, actor Omari Hardwick, My Brother's Keeper Alliance, NAACP, the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, the **Council of the Great City Schools**, Teach for America, the National Football League, Reform Alliance, Teach for America, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and Alpha Kappa Alpha, Sorority, Inc.

COUNCIL REPORTS AND REVIEWS

Las Vegas Review-Journal

CCSD survey shows students, parents favor in-person schooling

By [Aleksandra Appleton](#) /Las Vegas Review-Journal

June 11, 2020 - 9:54 pm

A Clark County School District survey presented to the school board Thursday night found that students, parents and staff strongly support a full-time return to in-person schooling over other options such as a blended school day or more distance learning.

The Reopening Our Schools survey found parents and students in particular strongly oppose distance education for the 2020-21 school year, as well as most blended learning options that would see students split their time between the classroom and home.

School staff, on the other hand, showed more willingness to adopt a blended learning model with half-day sessions, while returning to schools on a year-round calendar or after Labor Day drew mixed responses from most groups.

In terms of safety and social distancing measures, enhanced cleaning was a top priority for all, [according to the survey](#), while staggering pick-up, drop-off and lunch times to reduce crowding was unpopular with students. A COVID-19 vaccine was less important to parents than students, who rated the vaccine among their top three mitigation measures behind cleaning and hand-washing.

School and central office staff largely indicated that all of the possible mitigation measures were important.

The reopening survey also asked respondents to evaluate different aspects of distance education, including how they were affected during the last quarter. More than half of all student respondents said their academics and relationships with friends suffered, though relationships with family members improved.

The results are based on more than 94,000 responses, according to the district, though respondents who have multiple roles at the district, such as teachers who are also parents, were counted more than once. They will be considered along

with input from subject matter experts and other factors, including the status of the pandemic, in developing a plan.

Board president Lola Brooks said she expects the plan to come before the board at the June 25 meeting, adding that health guidelines and a structure for learning should be the most important factors under consideration.

“I think we’re going to need to be realistic about how much more prepared we need to be,” Brooks said. “We cannot have 360 schools doing 360 different things.”

Trustee Danielle Ford said she’d like to see CCSD wait and see as other districts reopen first.

Recommendations must be announced no later than 20 days before the start of school, according to an order signed by Gov. Steve Sisolak on Tuesday, which also allowed schools to reopen buildings for summer school. CCSD Superintendent Jesus Jara said Thursday he was surprised by Sisolak’s announcement.

In closing remarks, Jara also said that the lack of information on possible budget cuts was creating an undue burden on school principals, who will only have a few weeks to prepare for reopening if more information is not provided soon.

“Unless resolved, an inevitable delay of the start of the school year will be the result,” Jara said. “We need direction from our officials who have not only fiduciary responsibilities, but an obligation to lead.”

As part of the COVID-19 presentation, CCSD also provided a breakdown of students who could not be contacted during distance learning by ethnicity and socioeconomic status, a report trustees had requested in April.

[Of a total of 4,370 students](#) who could not be reached at all from the day schools closed on March 15 to the last day of school on May 20, just over 2,200 are Hispanic or Latino, approximately 1,100 are Black or African American and approximately 600 are Caucasian.

Students who identified as Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian or two or more races represented fewer than 100 no-contacts each.

More than 2,700 qualified for free and reduced price lunch, and just under 1,000 received special education services, according to the presentation.

“I want to note that one student not reached was one student too many,” said Deputy Superintendent Brenda Larsen-Mitchell.

Outside of coronavirus-related issues, the board approved a request from Rainbow Dreams Academy Charter School to turn the school into a preschool and kindergarten program only, eliminating first through eighth grade, despite concerns from trustees about future accountability.

The board also approved updates to its policies regarding English language learners with an eye toward inclusion, in part changing language that said English learners “cannot effectively participate in general education instruction” until they master English to putting the onus on schools to “ensure that students with limited English proficiency meaningfully participate in educational programs and services.”

Trustees approved an annual \$59,611 membership fee to the **Council of the Great City Schools**, an advocacy organization made up of 76 urban school districts across the country, with Trustee Linda Young abstaining.

Las Vegas Review-Journal

CCSD board hears update on payroll system issues

By [Julie Wootton-Greener](#) Las Vegas Review-Journal
May 14, 2020 - 4:30 pm

Don't miss the big stories. Like us on Facebook.
Updated May 14, 2020 - 8:35 pm

The Clark County School Board heard an update Thursday night about steps to move forward after the problematic launch of a new payroll software system led to thousands of employees being shorted pay earlier this year.

The school district's \$17 million Human Capital Management System was rolled out in early January. [Issues with the software](#) affected 6,400 licensed teachers and 1,450 substitute teachers who didn't receive their full pay in January.

CCSD issued five checks to make up for shortages, but some employees reported they were still missing pay — in some cases, more than \$2,000. The district offered interest-free loans to affected employees and also reached out to utility companies on their behalf.

A [presentation to the board](#) Thursday touched on “fragmented collaboration” between implementing partners and CCSD, and a “lack of confidence in the use of the system,” according to meeting materials.

CCSD negotiated and recouped more than \$700,000 as a continued support credit from the vendor, CherryRoad Technologies.

Mike Casey, chief operating officer for the school district, said some data still must be analyzed and there are 192 potential instances that may require issuing a check to an employee for money owed. He said the district also has had “some clean payrolls” with correct processing in recent months.

In most cases, when a project is about to go live, there's a "go/no go" meeting that includes 100 percent of stakeholders, said Mike Del Prado, project recovery manager with the firm Executive Option.

It's the last meeting to decide whether to go live with a system or whether there are issues that need to be addressed, Del Prado said. "It's a hard conversation to have, especially if there are critical gaps, because there's a lot of time and cost involved."

He said that from his analysis about the CCSD launch, it appears not all stakeholders were involved in that meeting.

The system went live with "critical functional gaps still open," according to meeting materials.

CherryRoad was "very accommodating, given the circumstances," Del Prado said.

More than 80 percent of remediation items have now been completed and submitted for testing, he said. Del Prado said he expects 95 percent will be tested and operational by the end of this month.

The ultimate goal is moving from a project model to operational support model, Del Prado said. "We're not there yet, but we're trending towards that."

Board chairwoman Lola Brooks said the board was presented with information prior to the launch that was "overly optimistic" and that no issues were raised.

The focus now is making sure the system is up-and-running 100 percent and that employees are paid, she said, adding it's also important to look back at where critical failures occurred in order to be more forward thinking in the future.

Also during the Thursday meeting, the board unanimously approved a [memorandum of understanding](#) with Hazel Health and School Based Urgent Care Network for telehealth primary care services for CCSD students.

Services will be provided at no cost to students, with parent or guardian consent. The offering begins Friday and runs through May 31, 2025.

Also, the **Council of the Great City Schools** — a coalition of 76 urban school districts across the country — [presented findings](#) of a review of the district's special education services.

Las Vegas Review Journal

Parents fear coronavirus put CCSD special ed students in deep hole

By [Aleksandra Appleton](#) Las Vegas Review-Journal

May 19, 2020 - 6:24 pm

Parent Allyson Juneau-Butler says it is difficult during a normal school year to get her son the services and support he needs from the Clark County School District's special education program, described in a new report as understaffed and underfunded even before the novel coronavirus hit.

But the [school closures ordered by Gov. Steve Sisolak](#) in mid-March have raised concerns that what was hard before will be a much bigger challenge in the fall for parents and teachers forced to deal with learning loss and a backlog of assessments that they say could leave students without the tools necessary to their education.

Juneau-Butler and other parents say they have been unable during the closures to arrange updates for their kids' individualized education plans, or IEPs, legal documents that define a student's needs and outline the services the district will provide.

After being told that revision meetings weren't being held now, she said she fears that delaying the update until fall will put her son weeks behind in receiving the support he needs, as new evaluations will require the gathering of new information on his academic and socio-emotional skills.

She believes many families will be in the same boat, creating a backlog for teachers, school psychologists and other team members who help create or update the plans for special education students.

"It's frustrating to see that your child struggles and then see a delay in getting those services," Juneau-Butler said.

Juneau-Butler said she and her wife worked full time during school closures, making it hard to sit with their son during virtual instruction to keep him focused. She said that she's aware of the services CCSD will offer virtually for special education students over the summer but that distance learning has not been a good fit for her two children.

"Typically developing children can work pretty independently in many cases," she said. "That's not the case with us."

Assessments, meetings on hold

Clark County School District representatives say the district has been holding IEP meetings since March 31 via telephone or videoconference except in cases in which a parent requested an in-person meeting or a student required an in-person assessment.

Students with existing IEPs have had access to distance learning resources along with their general education peers and have been in contact with their teachers, they said.

“Most assessments for special education services require in-person meetings that are not currently supported during school closure,” a statement said. “In such cases, the assessments will resume when school reopens.”

Special education students were required to be included in districts’ distance learning plans, according to a March 12 directive from the U.S. Department of Education and a [follow-up](#) stating that federal disability laws should not prevent districts from offering remote learning during school closures. The follow-up was issued after some districts indicated they were “reluctant to provide any distance instruction because they believed that federal disability law presents insurmountable barriers to remote education.”

The directives acknowledge that schools might not be able to provide all services in the same manner as before, but encouraged alternatives like time extensions, closed captioning or speech or language services through video conferencing.

Distance learning has been a mixed bag for special education students, according to advocates like Wendy Broder-Stock of the tutoring and advocacy group NEAT Services. Some students meet with their teachers daily, and others struggle to learn from home.

Assessments for new or updated services have largely been on hold since schools were closed, she said, as they often require considerable time spent with a student.

“It’s really hard to do an assessment over Zoom or over Hangout,” Broder-Stock said.

Trevor Hayes, a Nevada System of Higher Education regent, said he’s been in the process of having his daughter evaluated for dyslexia through CCSD for over a year. A final meeting was delayed when schools closed, he said, adding that he doesn’t know why it was put off.

“If I were to venture a guess, it probably seems too hard to do, so they’ve put us on the back burner,” he said.

A CCSD school psychologist, who spoke on condition of anonymity out of concerns over retaliation, said the district initially asked staffers to hold off on evaluation meetings after schools closed and await further guidance. The meetings resumed about two weeks later, she said, but some staffers found that the notes and files necessary to conduct evaluations were locked away in school buildings.

She completed much of her caseload this quarter but said there will be a few cases that carry over to fall because they require comprehensive assessments that can't be done remotely.

To parents' fears about a potential backlog of assessments in the fall, she acknowledged that's possible, particularly for cases in which contracted translation services must be scheduled.

When meetings are held virtually, attendance is typically excellent, she said, an experience also echoed by teachers who say they believe meetings by video chat could be a viable option going forward to provide flexibility to working parents.

Great City School report

The **Council of Great City Schools**, an organization made up of the 74 largest school districts in the country, recently evaluated CCSD's special education programs, citing the need for improvement in the large number of vacancies, low state funding and lack of uniform practices districtwide.

The report was written prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. But focus group feedback included in the report says special education assessments were sometimes delayed even then because of school psychologist shortages, among other things.

The report did recognize the district's assistive technology service, which provides equipment like speech-generating devices, characterizing it as one of the best in the nation.

Superintendent Jesus Jara said at a news briefing Tuesday that the district is working to make such technology available to students while schools are closed.

He added that the district will address possible learning losses among special education students by assessing knowledge levels at the beginning of the year and then wrapping any missed standards into the first quarter.

"How do we provide the one-on-one support at this time? It's something that we are struggling with, to be candid," Jara said. "As far as the learning loss that we're expecting ... it's going to be something that we'll have to assess" when students return in late August.

The report also found that CCSD students have far lower rates of exiting special education into general education, as well as lower rates of inclusion in general education classrooms — a practice known as learning in the least restrictive environment possible.

Jara said he believes large class sizes and a lack of professional development opportunities for teachers have stymied inclusion practices.

"To be very clear, this is not about educators not being willing," Jara said. "We have not provided professional development systemically."

A school funding formula with weighted funding for special education students would help the district provide those resources, he said.

A resource teacher who asked to remain anonymous said a blended learning model in which his students participate in their general education classes but also take extra video meetings with him could be a possibility. However, he said he worries that asking students to do these extra class hours would not meet inclusion standards.

During this quarter's distance learning, he says he's used video calls, offering extra help in the chat box. Of the 19 students he taught, five were active participants, half did some work and the others did none, he said.

Sarah Comroe, a teacher and parent to three CCSD students with IEPs, said there will likely be no one solution that fits everyone. She said her daughter's IEP meeting was also delayed until fall after being set for March, as it required meeting with a speech language pathologist despite the fact that the student is not receiving speech services.

"Kids with IEPs will be heavily impacted no matter what we do, because it's already so complicated," Comroe said.

She said it's critical for the district to plan for the fall, particularly with students who are from low-income backgrounds, experience homelessness or fall into other categories that affect their ability to engage in education.

"If we don't figure out fall now, we're going to be in much worse shape," she said.



CCSD Superintendent Dr. Jesus Jara discusses special education report, end of the school year

by: [8NewsNow staff](#)

Posted: May 19, 2020 / 10:35 AM PDT / Updated: May 19, 2020 / 01:09 PM PDT

LAS VEGAS (KLAS) — Clark County School District's Superintendent Dr. Jesus Jara discussed a recent report regarding CCSD's special education program in a virtual meeting on Zoom video conference May 19.

The report, done by the **Council of the Great City Schools**, outlines 10 recommendations. One includes expediting the district's system that helps determine how students are placed in academic programs. Dr. Jara said he plans to move ahead with a plan despite the district's nearly \$40 million budget deficit.

The report was presented to CCSD's Board of School Trustees at the May 14 board meeting.

Additionally, Dr. Jara was available to take general questions regarding the end of the school year. He said parents should expect a public survey — in the coming weeks — for the next school year.

Broward schools selects new maintenance chief

By SCOTT TRAVIS

SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL |

MAY 19, 2020 | 5:54 PM

The Broward School Board agreed to promote a longtime employee to head the [troubled maintenance department](#), following questions about whether he was fairly selected and whether he'd be supervising his brother.

Mark Dorsett, 59, is a maintenance manager who has worked in the district since 1986. On Tuesday, he was appointed to the recently created executive director of the department, known as Physical Plant Operations. His will pay will increase from \$112,000 to \$140,000.

Dorsett's brother, Phillip Dorsett, is an electrical supervisor for the district's maintenance department. Several School Board members asked whether having an employee lead a department his brother works in complies with the district's nepotism policy, but district staff appeared to be unaware of the potential conflict.

"We don't always have the ability to navigate all the relationships," said Eric Chisem, who oversees non-instructional hiring. Once nepotism is known, "we have a very strong process in place that even forces us to relocate people, reassign people or construct memorandums of agreements."

District officials were not able to say specifically whether having two family members in the same chain of command violated policy. The district's nepotism policy refers to direct supervision, defined as "directly responsible for another ... employee's appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, job assignments, overtime/ payroll authorization or job performance evaluation."

Mark Dorsett told the South Florida Sun Sentinel he doesn't think that applies since his brother reports to a manager, who reports to Director Sam Bays, who now reports to Dorsett in his executive director role.

"There are two levels of management above him," Mark Dorsett said. "There is no direct supervision over him."

Phillip Dorsett said he hasn't been told his job might be affected by his brother's promotion.

Board member Nora Rupert also questioned whether Mark Dorsett was the most qualified candidate.

He was interviewed by two selection committees of district administrators, and in both cases, he ranked second behind Ken Enfante, who has overseen maintenance in the private sector for about 25 years. Enfante wasn't offered the job.

Maurice Woods, chief officer of strategy and operations, said he ultimately decided to hire Dorsett.

"We were blessed and fortunate to have two fairly strong candidates," Woods said. "I did additional due diligence spending time with both and trying to figure out the best roadmap for the department. I'm 100% confident in the candidate we made the offer to."

Dorsett's time on the job will be limited. He is in the state deferred retirement program and scheduled to leave the district in January 2023. However, Board member Rosalind Osgood said she believes he's a good choice to help improve a department that has been plagued by many problems.

[A review by the Council of Great City Schools](#) found the department suffers from a huge work backlog and questionable spending. In December, a grounds supervisor was [federally indicted](#) on bribery charges.

"We have someone that has worked for us for a while, and I feel will be very good during this transition while we are trying to get that department in order," Osgood said.

Dorsett said he too believes he can help.

"I've been in district 34 years understand the process of what needs to happen," he said. "I'm going to take a little time to take this in and evaluate what the work that's head of me."



MPS May Be 'Losing The Best And Brightest' Due To HR Problems; Superintendent Pledges Change

By EMILY FILES • MAR 5, 2020

When Andrew Martin was hired to work in MPS in 2012, he showed up to his assigned high school and was greeted with confusion. “The principal said, ‘Oh I didn’t know we were getting somebody. What position are you here for?’ And I said ‘Well, I was hired as a social studies teacher,’” he remembers.

The mix-up was sorted out, and Martin stayed with MPS for eight years. But along the way, he kept hearing other stories about human resources mishaps and delays that frustrate even teachers who really want to work for MPS.

“I can’t imagine how many teachers ... we’ve lost because they weren’t able to get questions answered,” Martin says. “Or if you get hired at a job and you do a background check and drug test, that takes a matter of days; whereas here, it takes weeks upon weeks to fill those positions.”

Those stories are backed up by an [independent review](#) of MPS’s HR office conducted by the [Council of Great City Schools](#) in summer of 2019. Superintendent Keith Posley, who has been in his job since 2018, called for the review.

>> [Read the full Council of Great City Schools report here.](#)

The report is critical, painting a picture of a complacent department with no big-picture plan for recruitment and retention of high quality teachers.

In a time when Wisconsin school districts are facing a shortage of educators, the review calls into question whether MPS’s own HR operations are hampering the district’s ability to attract and retain staff.

Although the review was discussed at a school board meeting in November, the document was not posted publicly. WUWM obtained the report through a records request with the school district.

[Peter Goff](#), an expert in educational administration at UW-Madison, read the 40-page report at WUWM's request.

"What this [review] tells me is this is an HR department that's bureaucratic, it's about pushing things through," Goff says. "It's not about talent management. It's not about teachers. It's not about making sure our schools are staffed with the best people."

A "Passive" HR Office Amid Teacher Shortage

MPS' human resources problems are long-running. In fact, this was the third review of the department in 10 years, and many of the issues identified in 2009 and 2012 reports were the same in 2019.

But the response to the review may be different this time around. Teachers' union officials, school board members and HR staff say they think Superintendent Posley is serious about making improvements.

"As far as previous reviews, I can't speak to," Posley tells WUWM. "But as far as this review, I can 100% assure you that progress is being made there...we're looking at this as an opportunity to do better and become stronger as an organization."

There's a lot of work to do. The report says MPS human resources "suffers from inertia" and is "frozen in the past."

"The council team saw no evidence of an overall districtwide or HR philosophy, strategy, or detailed recruitment and retention plan for teachers, especially those that reflected the diversity of the students they served," the report authors wrote. They go on to say, "No one at the school or district levels are held accountable for retaining the district's best talent. It is also not clear that the district knows who its best talent is."

David Palmer, a former L.A. Unified School District administrator, was the lead investigator in the Council of Great City Schools review. He says he's seen many of the same issues in other school districts, but one thing that stood out about MPS was the feedback from principals. On a scale of 1-10, principals rated the HR office a 4.8. They told Palmer that HR was so unresponsive during the hiring process that they often had to go in-person to central office to get answers.

"Candidates aren't hearing from HR, they're not getting calls back...and they're going to the principal who interviewed them, and they're trying to find out, 'hey what's going on, I've got other opportunities,'" Palmer says. "[Principals] actually have to leave campus and rattle the cage a little bit to get things moving."

Leia Scoptur is MPS' interim chief human resources officer. In an interview with WUWM, she emphasized that the district has four people in charge of hiring 600 or 700 teachers each year.

"And unfortunately, while we do the best we can with making sure we're having as many personal touchpoints as possible, sometimes sheer volume can impact the quickness of those responses," Scoptur says.

MPS Working To Improve HR

MPS has made changes in the last several months in response to the review. The district [is buying](#) new applicant tracking software, reducing hurdles in the physical and drug screenings, and putting more people in charge of responding to candidate questions.

MPS is also trying become more nimble with snagging good educators early by offering contingent contracts to applicants at job fairs and student teachers, something that wasn't done previously.

Garland Elementary School principal Steven Krull says he's noticed a more aggressive recruitment effort with student teachers at his school.

"I do see contingency contracts now, I do see some high-level HR people coming out, I don't know if the word is 'scouting' for student teachers? But I am seeing that those types of behaviors are there when they weren't before," Krull says.

But there are some recommendations from the HR review that have not happened. The very first recommendation is to hire a permanent HR chief. Leia Scoptur has been in the interim role for a year and a half.

The review says: "Leaders in interim positions appeared to approach their work tentatively and were hesitant to implement needed change for fear of 'rocking the boat.'"

Posley declined to provide a timeline in which he plans to hire a permanent HR director, but says Scoptur "does not look at this from an interim standpoint."

Peter Goff, the UW-Madison professor, says improving operations in the HR department is key to improving academic outcomes for MPS' more than 70,000 students.

"It's not a 'sexy' problem," Goff explains. "But until they actually are able to take that seriously and acknowledge the fundamental role of talent management and human capital in the HR department, we're (going to) see these problems that Milwaukee has struggled with for the last 20, 30 years are going to continue to plague its system."

When asked how he plans to measure whether MPS is successful in reforming HR operations, Superintendent Posley said the improvements will show up in students' test scores.

"They will show up in student academic outcomes," Posley says. "When we move the academic needle, we know we have the right people on the bus and we're moving in the right direction."

Hiring season gets underway soon, and the HR improvements MPS is working on will be tested.

Andrew Martin, the teacher from the beginning of this story, wasn't left with a great impression of human resources on his way out of the district in early February. Martin left his job at James Madison Academic Campus after he received an appealing job offer somewhere else. He says it was an emotional decision for him, and the response from HR was "cold."

"They pulled out a one-page form and handed it to me and said, 'Well here, you have to fill this out,'" Martin says. "And that was it. There was no exit interview, there was no commentary of 'why, what else could we have done?'"

Interim Chief Human Resources Officer Leia Scoptur says the fact that Martin was not offered an exit interview was an oversight. After WUWM notified her of the issue, Scoptur said the forms would be updated.

MPS administrators plan to update the school board on a regular basis about changes in HR. The next update is scheduled for March 17. At that meeting, there will be opportunity for the public give testimony.

The Columbus Dispatch

Are Ohio schools' equity policies enough to fight racism?

By Alissa Widman Neese
The Columbus Dispatch
Posted Jun 29, 2020 at 6:12 PM
Updated at 10:03 AM

Experts say that while the momentum spurred by current events is great, effective school policies against racial inequality must go beyond “lip service” or a “well-intentioned piece of paper.”

When she visited the Advanced Placement classrooms and saw mostly white students, Talisa Dixon knew things needed to change.

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights school district, near Cleveland, is 77% black or multiracial. But the superintendent saw little diversity in the most rigorous academic courses.

“It was blatant,” Dixon recalled. “There were inequities, opportunities some students didn’t have.”

Today, participation — and success — in those courses has improved so much that the national College Board placed the district on the 10th annual Advanced Placement District Honor Roll in December. Dixon credits the results to an equity policy, a plan to eliminate practices that give some students an advantage while placing others, including students of color, at a disadvantage.

Now superintendent of Columbus City Schools, Dixon said she’s excited to watch similar work unfold in Ohio’s largest district. The Columbus Board of Education is set to approve an equity policy of its own soon.

Other school districts throughout Ohio and the nation are taking part. The new resolutions, policies and statements are set against a backdrop of nationwide unrest and protests calling attention to racial injustice, following the death of George Floyd under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer in late May.

Officials in the Akron and Youngstown school districts in northeast Ohio, which already have equity policies, have recently committed to revising and strengthening them to more explicitly address racism’s impact and how to mitigate it.

In central Ohio, districts such as Hilliard, Upper Arlington and South-Western have created task forces to explore solutions, involving both school employees and outside professionals.

Many districts have also released statements condemning racism and pledging to change.

Experts say that while the momentum spurred by current events is great, effective policies must go beyond what school board governance coach AJ Crabill calls a “well-intentioned piece of paper.”

“If they really want to cause change, they need to have some kind of measurable outcome,” said Crabill, with the Council of Great City Schools, a coalition of the nation’s largest urban public school systems, including Columbus.

“Equity means so many things to so many different people. Without a clear definition, it’s easy for nothing to get accomplished.”

Unlike equality, which is treating everyone the same, equity in education is recognizing some students need more support or resources than others.

An effective equity policy specifically recognizes groups that often start behind, Crabill said in a meeting with officials from Columbus City Schools last week.

It also lists specific goals for those groups, such as elevating particular areas of academic achievement, and how to accomplish and measure them.

One example is allocating a higher ratio of counselors to those groups. Another is finding ways to encourage the district’s most effective, experienced educators to work in schools with higher concentrations of such students.

In districts where a majority of students are children of color, or live in poverty, officials must also consider members of other student demographics who historically struggle, such as children who are homeless, in foster care or are affected by incarceration, he said.

“By calling out particular groups of students ... it isn’t saying ‘The rest of our students don’t matter,’” Crabill said. “It’s saying, ‘Until we make it right for these students, we haven’t made it right for all our students.’”

Those intricacies are why the Columbus Board of Education, which originally discussed approving its equity policy Tuesday, has agreed to hold off and further hone its plan.

On June 2, the board hired its first chief equity officer to oversee the work. Dionne A. Blue, currently chief diversity officer for schools in the Evansville, Indiana, area, arrives in Columbus on Aug. 1, with a \$141,000 annual salary and a two-year contract.

Blue’s input will help refine the policy, and it’s possible the board will seek more guidance from outside experts, said Columbus Board of Education President Jennifer Adair.

“We want it to be done right,” Adair said.

Such work takes time, said Ethan Ashley, co-founder of School Board Partners, a New Orleans nonprofit group that supports school board members in efforts to be anti-racist.

“Our young people and our families deserve more than just lip service,” Ashley said. “We’re proud of the folks digging in and doing the work right now, not just for this generation, but generations to come.”

In Hilliard, Samantha Chatman, principal of Alton Darby Elementary School, will chair the district’s justice and exclusivity task force that will present recommendations for action to the school board. Its 20 members include representatives from across the city.

It will be emotional, personal work, said Chatman, the district’s only black administrator.

“We’re in a crisis in our world,” she said.

Change starts with open, honest conversations — especially with students, Chatman said.

“Our kids are reading stories. They’re on social media. If they’re going back to school in the fall, they’re going to be talking about these issues,” she said. “We have to be prepared.”

Sun Sentinel

Former Broward schools supervisor pleads guilty to bribery

By SCOTT TRAVIS

SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL |

JUL 20, 2020 AT 8:09 PM

An FBI investigation into the contracts for asphalt and paint striping led two people to plead guilty on felony charges.

A former Broward Schools custodial and grounds supervisor has pleaded guilty to accepting bribes, while a subcontractor doing business for the district pleaded guilty to witness tampering, following FBI investigations into the school district's troubled maintenance department.

Federal authorities [charged](#) Richard Ellis, 50, with four counts of bribery and four counts of extortion in December. As part of a [July 13 plea deal](#), the U.S. Attorney's Office agreed to drop the extortion charges.

Alan Johnson, 53, a painting subcontractor for Pence Sealcoating, made \$6,189 in payments to Ellis, while secretly assisting the FBI. Johnson pleaded guilty July 10 to witness tampering [in a separate case](#) involving the school district.

Each face up to 20 years in prison and \$250,000 in fines, according to their plea deals. Ellis is scheduled to be sentenced Sept. 22, Johnson on Oct. 6.

Pence, who has received about \$10 million in district business in the past seven years, had a contract to handle the repairs of traffic signs, paint striping, asphalt sealcoating, and work on driveways and athletic facilities.

Ellis, reached Monday, declined to comment.

“Richard Ellis is a really good and honest person who led his guard down and consequently used poor judgment at the urging of what he thought was a friend and colleague,” his lawyer Michael Dutko said, referring to Johnson. Dutko said Johnson approached Ellis about wanting more work and offered the bribes.

“Richard had no money problems. He had no debt to speak of. He lived within his means. He thought he was assisting a friend who was having financial problems with getting more work,” Dutko said.

Johnson’s lawyer, Richard Della Fera, disputes Dutko’s version of events, saying that Ellis approached his client to request the payments.

“Ellis had gotten demoted or didn’t get a promotion but still had a hand in doling out work,” Della Fera said. “He said if you want to continue this work, I need \$500 for every order.”

Della Fera said Johnson “accepts responsibility for his own conduct and hopes that’s taken into account when he’s up for sentencing in October.”

The office of Kathy Koch, chief communications officer for Broward schools, acknowledged a request for comment Monday morning but didn’t provide one. Pence Sealcoating had no comment, according to Della Fera, who represents the company in addition to Johnson, their subcontractor.

The FBI started investigating the school district in 2017, after an internal audit concluded Broward schools [grossly overpaid for asphalt services](#). At the time, Pence was the only vendor for that kind of work.

On Nov. 17, 2017, an unnamed subcontractor of Johnson's, who handled painting work on district play courts, was contacted by the FBI and that subcontractor alerted Johnson, according to court files.

“That same day [Johnson] gave to the subcontractor two sets of invoices — the accurate invoices that the subcontractor had submitted to the defendant's employer, and a set of false invoices that defendant had submitted to the Broward County auditor,” according to court documents submitted by U.S. Attorney Ariana Orshan.

The changes included the types of materials used, the cost of materials for the projects and discounts. The subcontractor turned both invoices over to the FBI.

Ellis was unaware of the FBI investigation in August 2018 when he started accepting kickbacks from Johnson, prosecutors said. Hoping for leniency on his own case, Johnson agreed to wear a secret recording device while making cash payments to Ellis.

Ellis “agreed to ensure a steady flow of work” for Pence, in exchange for cash payments, the indictment alleges. The payments were based on a percentage of the value of the invoices, the report said.

Johnson met with Ellis four times between September and December 2018, the indictment said.

It's unclear whether the FBI is still investigating the Pence contract or any others. The district hasn't paid Pence since Ellis's December arrest, district records show.

The guilty pleas come amid growing concerns over how the district handles maintenance and construction.

Last fall, a [scathing review](#) by the [Council of Great City Schools](#) found exorbitantly high costs for groundskeeping in Broward schools, particularly when performed by outside contractors. The review found Broward spent \$6,189 per acre for this work, compared with an average in Florida of \$694 per acre and a national average of \$1,353.

Broward School Board members said in January issues in the department had reached a crisis level. Many work orders are delayed for years. The district [created a new executive director](#) position to oversee the department, [filling it in May](#) with maintenance veteran Mark Dorsett.

A bond approved by voters in 2014 to renovate aging schools has also been a disaster. A June update lists only nine out of 233 projects completed. Projected costs are projected to increase by at least \$436 million.

ABC News—Columbus

Columbus City School leaders talk plans for future, want community feedback

by Haley Nelson

Tuesday, July 21st 2020

COLUMBUS, Ohio (WSYX/WTTE) — Columbus City Schools leaders talked about new goals and what's next for the district Tuesday while navigating the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This evening's conversation is really about community engagement and community outreach," said **AJ Crabill with the Council of Great City Schools.**

Those were some of the big topics during a special virtual meeting with Columbus School Board Members and district leaders, where there was discussion of the Five Year Strategic Plan Goal Setting Process.

"It sounds like there will likely be two to six engagement sessions that you all specifically host or you are inviting people to come to, but it sounds like the bulk of what you all were collectively interested in is going to where the people are and I just want to say I applaud that. I think sitting around waiting for people to come to you is just not an effective strategy," he said.

The team wants feedback from the community about goals for the district and more.

"Frankly that is the way we have always done things. We check all these boxes with the CEO of this organization or the leader of that organization. And the people that send their kids to our district are the working-class folks. They are the ones we need to be meeting with, they are the ones we need to be communicating with more on a day-to-day basis," said Columbus City Schools Board Member James Ragland.

There were displays of passion from members as they discussed ways to connect with the community.

"We had our corporate engagement and that is what we were focused on and then we have our family engagement. And so I think that is where we were going in that moment in time. We agree with you. We don't want to do this how people perceive as normal, right? We really want to get down into it and talk to the people who are most impacted," said Board President Jennifer Adair.

"I was not proposing to only meet with the CEOs and directors. My proposition was just to share the list to look at who was missing, who was not missing," said Board Vice President Ramona Reyes.

The team discussed engagement and outreach across Columbus, while the COVID-19 pandemic is a factor in upcoming plans.

"I have seen some school systems that have done joint in-person virtual sessions so that there are people who are physically in the room. In fact, I was participating in one just last week. So there were people who were physically in the room and there were people who were connected via Zoom," said Crabill.

The group will continue planning.

There were no announcements about the re-opening plan, after Superintendent Dr. Talisa Dixon said over the weekend that school may need to start completely remotely in the fall given recent COVID-19 numbers in Franklin County.

What Should We Teach? 5 Steps for Keeping Kids on Track This Fall

By [Sarah Schwartz](#)

August 5, 2020

Prepping curriculum during a pandemic doesn't require the logistical gymnastics of organizing socially distanced school buildings or designing hybrid schedules. Still, instruction this fall will have to look different, experts say.

And though adjustments to a scope and sequence may feel less dramatic than some of the other changes to school this year, they're no less urgent.

Less time in the classroom means instructional leaders will have to streamline curricula, focusing on just the essential standards. And then there's the big question of unfinished learning. Some researchers have predicted that learning loss from spring's school closures will be much greater than what usually occurs after a normal summer. How can districts make sure students stay on track?

Even if students had little access to instruction in the spring, experts say schools should fight the impulse to go back and reteach whole units from last year.

"There's an opportunity cost to time that is not spent moving students forward," said Emily Freitag, the co-founder and CEO of Instruction Partners, a nonprofit consulting organization that works with districts on teaching and learning. If students who are already struggling start the year in remediation, while students who thrived during the closures are given grade-level work, that widens equity gaps, she said.

"We don't want people to go back and say, 'I have to teach quarter four from last year,' because then those students are going to be farther behind," said Danielle Neves, the deputy chief of academics for the Tulsa district in Oklahoma.

Now more than ever, schools need to give all students access to grade-level work, experts say. At the same time, they need to create a range of entry points into the curriculum—scaffolds for students, and places where teachers can refresh or reteach concepts from last spring that students need in order to succeed this fall.

How to do this? Education Week distilled advice from curriculum experts, district leaders, and teachers into this five-step process for getting started:

1. Focus on the most important work of the grade.

Faced with the possibility of rolling school closures or hybrid schedules, students and teachers may have less time together this year than in the past. Daviess County Schools, in Kentucky, is starting the year later than usual, and will have fewer instructional days as a result, said Jana Beth Francis, the assistant superintendent of teaching and learning for the district.

“It’s going to change the flow of instruction quite a bit, because any curriculum map that we had that says ‘Spend seven days on this unit, 15 days on that unit’ has to be revisited and really examined. We’re going to have to really think about how to be tight with what we’re teaching,” she said.

To make the best use of limited time, experts suggest streamlining the curriculum to cover only the essential standards. Some state departments have put out lists of these priority standards, while organizations including [Student Achievement Partners](#), the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), and [TNTP](#) have released guides designed to help schools and districts adjust their curricular maps.

These guidelines advise focusing on skills and understandings that are going to be most important to students’ future success—and prioritizing depth rather than breadth.

For example, the [Common Core State Standards](#) say that 1st graders should learn how to tell time to the hour and the half-hour in math lessons. “We’re probably not going to do that this year,” said Bailey Cato Czupryk, a partner for practices and impact at TNTP. Getting rid of lessons on analog clocks frees up time to make sure that students have a deep understanding of foundational concepts—like adding and subtracting within 20, another 1st grade math standard, Czupryk said.

In English/language arts, this prioritizing looks slightly different, as the standards spiral more. Students develop many of the same reading, writing, and speaking skills in greater complexity and sophistication as they progress through grade levels. It’s important that students get lots of time to work with complex text, practicing these skills in context rather than in isolated activities or worksheets. This might look like choosing fewer texts for close reading and analysis, so that students can spend more time thinking about, writing about, and discussing the ones that are selected.

There’s one area where the traditional scope and sequence shouldn’t be pared down, though: foundational reading skills in the early grades. Research has shown that explicitly teaching students which sounds match up with which letters, in a systematic sequence, is [the most effective way to teach them how to decode words](#). Skipping sounds or skills in the sequence can lead to gaps in students’ knowledge that hinder fluent reading.

2. Figure out what students will need to know and be able to do in order to successfully complete grade-level work. Then, identify places where teachers might need guidance on how to revisit these prerequisite skills and content from last spring.

The goal is to deliver “just-in-time” support, equipping students to tackle grade-level content while avoiding re-teaching whole units from the spring. What might this look like? An example from the Student Achievement Partners guidance demonstrates:

In 7th grade math, students are supposed to learn how to find the area, volume, and surface area of two- and three-dimensional objects. This work builds on concepts that are in the 6th grade standards—understanding how to find the area of polygons and the volume of right rectangular prisms.

A 7th grade teacher would first need to assess whether her students know how to find the area of polygons. If they don’t, she might have to revisit this 6th grade skill as part of her

lesson. But that doesn't mean that she has to review every single 6th grade math skill before she can start with 7th grade content—she's paying attention to the connections between grades as she goes, so she only has to review when necessary.

In English/language arts, students may need scaffolds to engage with grade-level text. For example, if a 6th grader is having trouble following the main points in a reading, her teacher may need to pre-teach relevant vocabulary or concepts, so students can build background knowledge about an unfamiliar topic.

It's easier to plan where students might need just-in-time support if all teachers within a school or a district are using the same, high-quality materials, said Mike Magee, the CEO of Chiefs for Change, a national network of district leaders and state education chiefs. In the spring, he said, these districts were at an advantage. "At a minimum, their teachers, their students, and their parents were speaking one language when it came to content," Magee said.

Some curriculum providers, too, have [outlined where teachers should check for students' understanding of previous content](#), and embed review if necessary.

3. Have teachers play a major role in curriculum mapping for the fall.

Even if schools are using districtwide curricula, teachers are still the people in the school system who are most likely to know what students did or didn't get to this past spring, said Robin McClellan, the supervisor of curriculum and instruction for elementary schools in Sullivan County public schools in Blountville, Tenn.

In her district, teachers were paid a stipend to be part of the team streamlining the districtwide curriculum this summer, she said.

Teachers in consecutive grade levels should be having conversations about how content builds, said Dale Winkler, the vice president for school improvement at the Southern Regional Education Board.

That's what teachers did in Daviess County, said Francis. At the end of the school year, the district used the remaining teacher contract days to conduct a "gap analysis." Sixth grade teachers, for example, could meet with 7th grade teachers and outline what they didn't cover. The 7th grade teachers could then evaluate what of that content would be a necessary "building block" for the coming year, she said.

In Holmen, Wis., 5th grade teacher Cathy Burge participated in a similar session with the 4th and 6th grade teams at her school, going over the multi-grade map her district's instructional leadership created.

Last year's 4th graders missed their geometry unit, so the teachers talked about setting up a station in the 5th grade classroom this year where students could learn how to use compasses and protractors to measure angles. The skills come up again in middle school, Burge said, "so they need to get it."

4. Understand that just-in-time support should be determined by students' needs.

Even with all this planning ahead, teachers won't know exactly which students will need what support until they're in the (physical or virtual) classroom. For more on how to

determine students' prior knowledge, and what this process of formative assessment should look like, [see this article in our series](#).

5. Curriculum and instruction must support students' social-emotional health.

"I don't think we're going to be able to accelerate learning if we don't engage kids," said Cato Czupryk of TNTP. Even "the most beautiful scope and sequence" falls short if students don't feel safe and supported, she said.

Creating this kind of environment presents special challenges this year, as teachers may have to build relationships and create classroom culture virtually—or in a socially distanced classroom that doesn't allow for the same kind of student collaboration as years past.

Schools should think about developing these relationships as deeply connected to teaching and learning, not as a separate goal, said Freitag of Instruction Partners. In practice, that might mean starting the first day with an exciting, tricky problem that teachers and students can dive into together, rather than a formal diagnostic test, she said.

It also means making space to talk about the realities of students' lives right now, shaped both by the pandemic and the movement for racial justice. "There's no way to engage students authentically right now that doesn't include both of those topics," Freitag said. Making time for students to have authentic conversations with each other—whether that's through synchronous classes, message boards, or even phone calls with classmates and teachers—is more important than ever.

"Learning should be fun, and it should be a challenge," said Francis, of Daviess County. "And if we take away all that time for inquiry, and how you think about something, and how you're creating something, and we take away the experiments in science, then we are taking a group of students who have experienced a major trauma, and not reviving their joy of learning."

Education Week

Schools Failed English-Learners During the Shutdown. How Can They Do Better?

By [Corey Mitchell](#) on August 18, 2020 11:50 AM

The national shift to distance learning this spring left many of the nation's nearly 5 million English-learner students shut out of the learning process—without internet, without language support, and without the devices they needed to participate in online education.

The [experience was tough even in places where schools found ways to connect with English-learners](#). Now, as schools begin to reopen, districts should redouble their efforts to make up for lost time, a new report from the [Council of the Great City Schools](#) suggests.

The report urges districts to pay close attention to how they choose and use technology and assess what skills students have learned and lost since schools shut down. It also emphasizes the importance of: family engagement for parents and other relatives who are not fluent in English; professional development that emphasizes effective teaching strategies for all educators who work with English-learners; and rethinking how schools deploy English-learner specialists to ensure that students have ample opportunity for one-on-one or small-group learning support during online-only classes.

"The reality of what many [English-learner] and immigrant families have faced during the pandemic must be incorporated ... into any planning for the reopening of schools," the report from the council, a membership organization of the country's large urban school systems, reads. "The failure to address the needs of these students in the reopening of schools would jeopardize the educational outcomes of a sizable portion of students."

Nationwide, English-learners comprise about 10 percent of students in the nation's public schools. But they represent a larger portion of the population among the districts that belong to the Council of the Great City Schools, a membership organization of the country's large, urban school systems

But while some districts around the country are [planning for English-learners to return to in-person classes first](#) in order to make up for lost learning in the spring, the spread of coronavirus will cut off that option for others, at least at the beginning of the year. As the pandemic continues to rage in some parts of the country, many of the nation's largest districts are starting the school year with remote learning as their lone back-to-school instructional model. The report also urges school districts to keep tabs on several groups of students, including those who had low attendance during classes in the spring and former English-learners who were reclassified as English-proficient in the weeks and months preceding school closures. The concern for both sets

of students is that their English skills may have regressed since they last met face-to-face with instructors.

Advice on how to facilitate co-planning and co-teaching with English-learner educators and general education teachers and use the talents of multilingual staff to connect with families was also included in the report. Here's a look at the document:

Language Magazine

City Schools Offer Guidance on English Learners

September 15, 2020

A new report from the Council of the Great City Schools suggests a wide range of actions that schools and districts can take to help English learners (ELs) make up for the educational opportunities lost during the first few months of school closures due to the pandemic. *Supporting English Learners in the COVID-19 Crisis* makes recommendations on all sorts of crucial decisions such as which technology to use when, how to assess what ELs missed during shutdown, how specific professional development for all educators who work with ELs can help, how to encourage family engagement, and how to deploy aides and English-learner specialists to help afford students one-to-one or small-group learning support during remote classes.

The Council of the Great City Schools is a membership organization of the country's large, urban school systems, which not only educate a higher percentage of the nation's ELs but also are more reliant on remote education this semester than smaller districts.

Among the recommendations to address the heightened needs of English learners, the report calls for school districts to adopt a systems-oriented approach to EL services that is supported by all departments:

Schools and educators need district guidance on how to plan instruction, even in the absence of annual English-proficiency assessment scores, to continue progress in developing English proficiency.

Schools require clear guidance on how to determine needed levels of support in content-area instruction, the number of periods and delivery of English language development, and necessary monitoring and supports for recently redesignated ELs.

Districts need to determine how stand-alone ELD classes are delivered during remote or hybrid instruction, particularly with high school courses that may be credit bearing and in districts that have strict ELD time allocations delineated in

state law, in state regulation, or in compliance agreements with the U.S. Department of Justice or the Office for Civil Rights.

Teachers need long-term, hands-on professional development and ongoing coaching to build capacity to meet the needs of ELs, especially in using technology to deliver remote or hybrid instruction.

The report continues with recommendations on “greater use of well-designed and universally understood graphics and carefully curated information” during enrollment, screening, and placement; making learning for ELs accelerated rather than remedial; ensuring that every district’s EL program includes attention to the development of English proficiency; including dedicated time for targeted English language development (focused language study) regardless of instructional modality—remote, hybrid, or in person; and providing instruction that emphasizes language through content, or discipline-specific academic language enrichment (DALE).

The full report is available at [https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/domain/35/publication/%20docs/CGCS ELL%20and%20COVID web v2.pdf](https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/domain/35/publication/%20docs/CGCS%20ELL%20and%20COVID%20web%20v2.pdf).

San Diego Union-Tribune

Commentary: The COVID-19 pandemic is a chance to rethink math now and when students return to the classroom

By Aly Martinez

Sep. 15, 2020, 7:38 PM

Within a month of coronavirus-related school closures beginning last spring, California parents were [anxious](#) about the effect on their children: Nearly 90 percent were afraid their children would fall behind academically, and 80 percent reported heightened stress levels.

With many schools, including those in the San Diego Unified School District, reopening remotely, those concerns have only amplified. I'm acutely aware of these worries as a parent of three elementary-aged children.

As San Diego Unified's TK-12 instructional coordinator of mathematics, I anticipated as early as last April that this school year would be atypical. Rather than waiting until we knew precisely what school would look like, the San Diego Unified Math Leadership Team and I began a months-long process to plan for the fall, with a focus on ensuring that students continue to develop mathematical practices like sense-making and critical thinking through rich and relevant mathematics.

Our resulting [plan](#) emphasizes moving forward with rigorous grade-level math.

It may seem reasonable to offer remediation or reteach last semester's content at the start of the school year. That would mean testing students to measure gaps and developing individual plans to fill them.

But when this was tried in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, researchers reported that it "[didn't lead to student growth](#)."

Research also shows that strategies like [reducing rigor](#) and [requiring students to repeat courses](#) rarely work. Instead of holding students back, San Diego Unified is following two key guidelines.

First, we are prioritizing essential content. Traditional math curriculum has often been criticized for being "a mile wide and an inch deep," crowded with topics that few students learn well. Though the Common Core standards have helped to address this, there is still a disconnect between what college teachers say matters and the multitude of topics that high school instructors feel compelled to teach, as David Coleman, CEO of the College Board, has [observed](#).

We are collaborating with national experts to streamline and modernize the math curriculum. This does not mean arbitrarily cutting content or eliminating learning outcomes. Nor does it mean creating “watered-down” versions of courses. The adaptations follow guidelines from the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), [Illustrative Mathematics](#) and [Achieve the Core](#) to prioritize the most essential mathematics and identify opportunities for going more in depth, and making connections and applications.

For example, students in eighth- and ninth-grade should be able to make sense of data that is presented in various ways, such as histograms and scatter plots. It is more important that they can interpret the data and use it to solve problems than it is for them to draw the data by hand. So we prioritize by having students spend more time on the former and less on the latter.

The district has done this prioritization work so that teachers do not have to spend hours figuring out what to teach and instead can focus on how to teach in a way that is engaging, collaborative and rigorous.

Secondly, because unfinished learning is natural, we are building in just-in-time supports. Educators have long identified a “summer slide” in students’ knowledge. People are understandably anxious about lost time or forgotten learning from last year. Instead of delaying access to grade-level content to fill in all the gaps at the start of the year, San Diego Unified math teachers will be providing integrated just-in-time supports throughout the year, and only as needed.

This “just-in-time” approach makes [more sense](#) than the default “just-in-case” thinking.

Most people don’t take a class in repairing a leaky faucet just in case one day they have a leak. Most people wait until they have a leaky faucet and then learn how to fix it.

In practice, this means that we won’t spend a few weeks at the beginning of sixth grade reviewing fraction skills from previous grades that students have forgotten or have incomplete understandings about. Instead, we’ll provide activities and practice when students actually need to use fractions to solve a sixth-grade problem, like when using rates and ratios.

Prioritizing essential mathematics and offering just-in-time support for students is key for a productive year. The circumstances are challenging. We are adapting to them in ways designed to prevent students from falling behind and allow them to thrive in their math courses.

In fact, this opportunity to rethink mathematics may have powerful implications for how we teach math even after we return to the classroom.

Martinez is the instructional coordinator of mathematics for the San Diego Unified School District.

Tampa Bay Times

**Hillsborough School Board pushes back against planned staff cuts
Morale will worsen, members warn, and the pandemic has already created too much stress.**

By **Marlene Sokol**

Published Sep. 22

Hillsborough County superintendent Addison Davis and his team found themselves playing defense Tuesday at a School Board workshop that brought to light the public pushback against planned personnel cuts.

The attacks continued at the board's regular meeting later in the day, with teachers, parents and students pleading their case to protect arts instruction — something that Davis said was never in jeopardy.

“We have been trying to message that in no way, shape or form, were we ever going to eliminate, reduce or remove any art, music, PE programs or accelerated programs,” Davis said, opening the 4 p.m. meeting and trying to head off a barrage of criticism. “These are the foundation of what we do — and right now, more than ever.”

But by that time, word had spread about specific cuts. Those affected had mobilized on social media and 34 members of the public had signed up to speak.

Board members told Davis in the morning session that they do not want to see school morale plummet in the midst of a frightening pandemic. Some questioned the validity of his financial presentation.

“These numbers are realities,” Davis countered after board member Cindy Stuart picked apart his assertion that an operating deficit of \$72 million can grow to \$128 million, as more than 7,000 students are missing from district rosters.

Steve Cona, the board member most supportive of Davis, insisted the district must be financially prudent and not, for example, transfer money from its capital account to cover negotiated pay raises.

But he was in the minority. Around the dais, there were calls to abandon the goal of getting the district's financial reserves up to 5 percent of anticipated revenues, which became district policy after a steep drop in reserves in 2015.

Instead, the members said, Davis should aim for the 3 percent threshold that is state law, and spare schools from painful cuts. A modest correction would be better, member Tamara Shamburger said, than “mutilating the morale of our staff.”

Michael Kemp, the deputy superintendent who worked for Davis previously in Clay County, delivered a string of admonitions throughout the morning.

“You can shoot the messenger, but the message remains the same,” he said.

“Tough decisions have to be made. ... We can’t continue to kick the can down the road. This team, it’s not in our DNA not to address the issues.”

The issue, Kemp and Davis contend, is that Hillsborough has too many teachers and not enough student enrollment to support all of them. The Gibson Consulting Group came to the same conclusion in 2016 after being hired to study the district’s finances.

Going school by school, they have asked principals to reconfigure schedules so classes are not under-enrolled. They said Tuesday that the **Council of Great City Schools, an organization of large districts of which Hillsborough is a member**, is sending a team to do an efficiency audit for free.

“I am happy to know that we are having the financial audit,” board member Stacy Hahn said. “Even happier that we are not paying for that audit.”

But Hahn was the first to push back against cuts. “I have lots of colleagues who are teachers,” Hahn said. “They are suffering right now, they really are.”

Hahn, Shamburger and Lynn Gray said they are concerned about morale as the district continues to lose students. In addition to the missing 7,300 students — of which an estimated 3,000 are being homeschooled because of the pandemic — there are more than 30,000 in privately run charter schools. Those charter school departures could cost the district close to \$250 million this year, as money follows the children.

That brings student enrollment down to 215,000 and, excluding the charter students, closer to 185,000.

Yet, according to Kemp, the district spends money as if it taught 225,000 students.

Some board members said the district has not done a good enough job communicating its plan. Stuart suggested the numbers on Davis' slide show are exaggerated. Money lost to charter schools should not have been included in the deficit calculations, she said. “We approved those contracts,” she said.

Several did not like seeing the word “deficit” at all, saying it was too frightening.

“The community has a lot on their plate, and they’ve got a lot of time on their hands to sit around and talk about this,” Stuart said. “Our secretaries are losing their mind on the second floor.”

Board member Karen Perez asked pointed questions of Davis about salaries he is paying his executive team, who are largely from Clay and Duval counties, and how they compare to their predecessors under former superintendent Jeff Eakins.

The two went back and forth. Perez said executive payroll has increased by about \$760,000, while Davis said it has not. He said the people he hired are earning what they are worth. And Davis said he saved \$7.5 million early on by phasing out many jobs in the district bureaucracy.

Perez also grilled Davis on money spent to renovate the downtown headquarters, which Davis described as “a sickly building.”

And there were references to Achieve 3000, the educational software company that employs Davis' brother, and which now has a \$3.6 million annual contract with the district. While Davis and the district's attorneys said there was no conflict in the deal, critics return to it frequently on social media.

Returning at 4 p.m., Davis and the board heard from more than 30 people who were angry, tearful or both. Some were students reading from their smart phones. Because there were so many, Cona, who was running the meeting, limited them to one minute apiece.

There was a group from Orange Grove Middle Magnet School, where chorus director Jessica Blakley believed her job and program were in jeopardy.

Student Jenesis Montero sobbed through her mask. “Why would anybody want to take away something so beautiful from people like me, their family and friends?” she asked. Later, the group was told the chorus program was safe. But one speaker wanted a written guarantee that Blakley would be allowed to remain.

Teachers union president Rob Kriete told Davis and the board that “clearly the employees in the district are terrified. They are stressed out. And they are working harder than ever before.”

Emily Lee, a teacher at Burney Elementary issued a scathing rebuke, telling Davis that “big box” curriculum products were replacing knowledgeable teachers, the contract was not being honored and the new administration had little credibility because “you paint different, opaque pictures to each group you speak with.”

When it was over, some of the board members promised to take the speakers' remarks into consideration. They tried to end the meeting on a positive note. Cona thanked everyone who came out to speak.

But, he told them, “there are difficult decisions that need to be made. And at this point, doing nothing is not an option.

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Boston Globe

By James Vaznis Globe Staff

Updated July 2, 2020

Boston School Committee member to lead national organization

JAMES VAZNIS

July 2 at 3:01 PM ET

Michael O'Neill, a longtime member of the Boston School Committee, will take over as chair of the board of directors of the **Council of the Great City Schools**, a coalition of 76 large urban school systems nationwide.

"As the nation's urban public schools rise to meet the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council's board is in capable hands with O'Neill and his leadership team," said Michael Casserly, the council's executive director, in a statement. "Their energy, knowledge and experience will be crucial as big-city school districts face the herculean task of reopening schools and providing for the safety and well-being of the 8.2 million schoolchildren they serve."

O'Neill will serve in the post for one year and he will lead the 152-member board on a search to replace Casserly, who is stepping down as executive director next year after 43 years working with the group.

A resident of Charlestown and a graduate of Boston Latin School, O'Neill has been a member of the Boston School Committee since 2008 and has been actively involved with the Council of the Great City Schools for several years. O'Neill, who also is executive vice president at Zozimus Agency in Boston, said he is honored to hold the new post.

"I love the work I do for the council and for the Boston Public Schools," O'Neill said in a statement. "As a graduate of a Great City School system, I know the value of an excellent public education and am committed, now more than ever, to make that possibility a reality for all of our students. The work is hard and the challenges are high, but the drive and commitment that is shared with all who do this work is unflagging."

Atlanta Journal Constitution

Atlanta school board names superintendent finalist

The Atlanta school board on Tuesday announced its pick for the superintendent job.

Lisa Herring -- a native of Macon, Spelman College graduate and the current superintendent of Birmingham City School District-- is the board's choice to lead Atlanta Public Schools. Herring is wrapping up her third year as superintendent of the Alabama district.

Georgia law requires the Atlanta board to wait at least 14 days before it can vote to hire her. That time is typically used to introduce the finalist and give the public a chance to ask questions and vet the candidate. Employees, parents and others will have to settle for virtual online meetings in the coming weeks because of restrictions aimed to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

The board wants to have a new superintendent on the job by July 1.

The board announced in September, to the surprise and [consternation](#) of some, that [a majority of members did not support extending Superintendent Meria Carstarphen's contract](#), which expires June 30. The board launched a national search that resulted [in 84 applications](#).

It cited Herring's experience in urban public school systems, partnerships she built with civic organizations and businesses, and her work to try to turn around low-performing schools as among the reasons she stood out.

"We believe with her passion for serving students paired with her focus on equity and achievement for all, Dr. Herring is the best leader to take APS to a new level and close the achievement gap for so many of our students," said board chairman Jason Esteves in a written statement.

Herring went through four rounds of interviews, including in-person talks before the coronavirus shutdowns. In a [video message](#) announcing her selection, Esteves said Herring "shot to the top and impressed all of us with her Georgia roots, passion for equity and student success and strong experience."

If hired, she'll step into a high-profile, often political role in a much bigger district in Georgia's capital city during a pandemic that's upended education.

It's a high stakes job amid great uncertainty and enormous challenges. Big decisions are looming for APS and other districts about how to manage budgets and support the many students who are expected to fall behind while school buildings are closed.

The Birmingham district is less than half the size of APS. It enrolled roughly 22,700 students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade this year, compared to more than 52,000 in Atlanta. The district [has 42 schools](#), while APS has 87.

Herring's district employs more than 2,700 employees and has an annual budget of about \$302 million, according to its website. APS employs more than 6,000 full-time workers and has a general fund budget of more than \$850 million.

The districts do share some notable similarities.

Both are members of the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), a coalition of the nation's largest urban districts.

Like APS, the Birmingham district is overseen by a nine-member elected school board. And, as in Atlanta, many Birmingham students are low-income and African American.

APS has tried in recent years to turn around many of its historically low-performing schools, a challenge familiar to Birmingham. The district had the state's highest number of schools on Alabama's so-called "[failing schools](#)" list, which represents the bottom 6% of public schools based on test scores. Sixteen of the 75 schools that appeared on the November, 2019 list were in the Birmingham system. Birmingham had 20 schools on the list in January, 2019.

The Atlanta board applauded Herring for her work to improve schools. The Birmingham district received a "C" grade on the [most recent Alabama Department of Education report card](#). That's up from an "F" grade, according to information released by the Atlanta board.

In 2018, the district received full accreditation after the state intervened amid problems with low cash reserves and infighting among board members, according to [the news site AL.com](#).

Herring cited her skills as a school counselor, which she said help her to "listen and learn." "My calling is truly to serve all people regardless of their background or influence and it would be an honor to serve the people of Atlanta," she said, in a written statement issued by the Atlanta board.

Herring joined Esteves and the other eight members of the Atlanta school board in a recorded video message about the announcement.

"I'm excited to work alongside this board," she said in that message.

Before going to Birmingham, she served about a year as [chief academic officer for Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Ky.](#) That district enrolls about 100,000 students and is the 29th largest in the nation, [according to its website](#).

Prior to that post, Herring held several administrative positions at Charleston County School District in South Carolina. She worked there as deputy superintendent of academics and chief academic officer, among other roles.

While in Charleston, Herring was among the finalists for that district's superintendent post but did not get the job, [according to the Post and Courier newspaper](#). She eventually hired an attorney and in 2015 renegotiated her contract with the district, the paper reported. Earlier that year, she [was also finalist for the Birmingham superintendent job](#). Though she didn't get the Alabama job then, she would be [named superintendent just a couple of years later](#).

Herring spent the first part of her career working in DeKalb County School District from 1999 to 2007, according to her [LinkedIn profile](#). In DeKalb, she worked as a school counselor and as assistant director of student support services; she also worked in the Bibb County school system, according to a biography provided by the Atlanta board.

Herring and her daughter, Imani, are both Spelman graduates, and Herring completed observational field work at Atlanta's Therrell High School.

She has a master's degree from the University of South Carolina and a doctorate from Georgia Southern University, among other academic credentials.

Voice of San Diego

How Los Angeles and San Diego Unified Started Driving State Education Policy

The moment was ripe for a novel statewide organizing approach. Coronavirus had upended schooling and many important questions, beyond even money, would have to be answered over the course of the pandemic.

[Will Huntsberry](#)

[July 28, 2020](#)

Back in May, Gov. Gavin Newsom proposed a new draft of his budget, based on the bleak financial outlook caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. California's rosy fiscal position had evaporated in a matter of weeks and it was time for the bad news: Schools would take the biggest hit.

Newsom said he was left with no choice but to cut \$7 billion from education. It was one of the biggest single year drops in funding ever proposed. Education leaders immediately compared it to the devastating austerity of the Great Recession.

At the time, the state's two largest school districts, Los Angeles and San Diego Unified, had been cultivating a partnership for weeks. And even though they had different purposes in mind for the new alliance, the moment of Newsom's cuts was going to be a big moment for them.

"In the last recession, the entire education establishment rolled over," said Richard Barrera, vice president of the San Diego Unified school board. "These big cuts were coming and everyone in Sacramento capitulated. Most districts were just waiting to be told, 'Here are your guidelines. Here's what you have to spend.'"

Barrera, a union organizer by trade, believed school districts should at the very least fight back against Newsom's budget. Within days, Los Angeles and San Diego Unified wrote a letter saying [they wouldn't be able to physically reopen campuses if Newsom's cuts went through](#). Other big districts signed onto the letter. School leaders pushed their local legislative delegations to restore the money.

The moment was ripe for a novel statewide organizing approach. Coronavirus had upended schooling and many important questions, beyond even money, would have to be answered over the course of the pandemic. In the absence of few concrete guidelines from the state, Los Angeles and San Diego Unified's new partnership was actually setting them up to drive education policy across California.

“Education is a weird sector in that there’s all of this latent political power — because people actually care about schools more than anything else — and it never gets used,” said Barrera. “My experience with health care unions is you get in there and you fight like hell. So I was really focused on trying to get other districts on the same page and focused on this issue.”

Barrera, along with board president John Lee Evans, started working towards this group organizing effort shortly before the pandemic.

Back in December, in the normal times, the California School Boards Association held its annual conference in the San Diego Convention Center. Superintendents and board members from all over the state were in town. Barrera and Evans saw an opportunity to gather leaders from other big city districts.

For Evans, the meeting would be about money. California [ranks among the bottom half of states in per pupil funding](#). “We wanted to have a discussion about longer term funding. Because now we come back every year and just fight over pennies basically to get a little bit more,” Evans told me. Evans and Barrera gathered together superintendents and board members from some of the biggest districts in California, including Los Angeles Unified.

“Fresno, Long Beach, Santa Ana. I think Sacramento. I think we had about seven districts total,” Barrera told me.

Kelly Gonez, a board member with Los Angeles Unified, was there with another board member and some staff members from the district. She has tried to facilitate school district collaboration in various roles at the [Council of Great City Schools](#) and the state school board association. I asked her how other people took to the idea of advocating together for better funding.

“It seemed pretty novel [to some people]. Not quite revolutionary, but close to it,” she said. “We had each been in our own silos trying to advocate with our own local legislators. But it was really exciting for people to be part of this new coalition that was forming.”

Barrera said education leaders don’t often recognize their organizing power.

“Most superintendents are educators, teachers. They come up through that system. They tend to be, for most part, non-political, great, wonderful people who care about kids,” said Barrera. The group left the meeting with a loose plan to advocate for more funding — not manage a pandemic. But an opportunity to leverage the partnership came sooner, and under different circumstances, than expected.

In March, as it became clear California was on the edge of a wide scale outbreak, [no one was very sure what schools should do](#). Closing schools would be bad for vulnerable students. Not closing schools might be bad for everyone. If schools must close, when is the right moment? School districts were scrambling — and they were getting very little guidance from state officials. Los Angeles and San Diego school officials started a dialogue. Ultimately, both districts decided it would be better to close sooner rather than later. On Friday, March 13, they

issued a joint statement saying that physical campuses in both districts would close the following Monday.

Before the end of the day Friday, all of San Diego's 41 other school districts had also decided to close. Most others across the state did the same. In a vacuum of no clear state guidance, Los Angeles and San Diego discovered they could set the tone.

"In the absence of other folks making those decisions we will go out and try to see if we're on the same page and make a decision together," Barrera said.

When it came to Newsom's proposed budget cuts in May, the partnership also worked. This time, Los Angeles and San Diego brought in some of the big city districts they'd met with in December. Five other districts signed their letter demanding more funding from the governor. After sending their message, each of the districts went to work on their own hometown legislators. After Newsom made his initial proposal, it was the legislators' turn to negotiate with him on the parts of his budget they didn't like. San Diego and Los Angeles Unified were banking on the fact that legislators could turn the budget back in their favor.

The districts negotiated aggressively. "Cuts will mean that the reopening of schools will be delayed even after... clearance from public health officials is given," they wrote. Essentially, they were saying to legislators, "If you don't make this budget right, we will not open our schools." Everyone had finally realized the true value of a publicly-funded education system, free to all. It was the biggest engine for the economy and an invaluable source of childcare and stability. The legislators listened.

By the time the Legislature and governor came to an agreement, schools would not take any budget hit at all.

"You've seen collective advocacy from big districts before," said Carrie Hahnel, a fellow at the Opportunity Institute, who tracks state education policy. "But I'm certain that Los Angeles and San Diego's joint decisions put more pressure on the state."

Los Angeles and San Diego had clearly implied they would physically reopen if the state came through with more money. But in retrospect, they were making a commitment they had no way of knowing they could keep.

They got the money they asked for — the federal government also seems poised to kick in more money for schools — but, in their latest joint decision, both districts decided they would not physically reopen on the first day of school.

As the pandemic worsened over the summer, the lack of clear state guidance about how and if to reopen schools was creating another vacuum.

Each of California's 1,000-plus school districts — some have dozens of students, others tens of thousands — were forced to decide individually whether or not to open. The message from the Governor was clear: The decision is yours. We won't tell you what to do or how to do it.

"The reality is that we are school districts, not public health experts," said Gonez. "We had to step up, in the absence of clarity at the state level."

On July 13, the districts jointly announced they could not safely reopen on the first day of school. They would start the school year with online learning. Again, other districts quickly followed their lead.

Coronavirus cases were increasing. The first day of school was coming very near. Barrera said he and other leaders felt the moment weighing on them. “We felt like we had the responsibility to inform parents, teachers, students and the whole community. People have to be able to prepare,” he said.

Even though they got the money they asked for, Los Angeles and San Diego school officials ultimately didn’t believe they could create a safe environment on such short notice and with so little guidance.

This time it wasn’t just other school districts that followed. Days later, Newsom announced new rules that supported Los Angeles and San Diego Unified’s decision. Schools would be ordered to close in counties with a certain minimum number of new coronavirus cases. Those counties included San Diego and Los Angeles.

“I hope maybe there will be less of a need for us to step into that void, as the state steps up a little more,” said Gonez.

But if Newsom and the state Department of Education don’t step up, Los Angeles and San Diego schools have made one thing amply clear: They can and will make decisions together. And when they do, those decisions will have massive impacts for the state’s 5 million other students.

Charlestown Patriot-Bridge

Guest Op-Ed: Not Your Typical School Year

September 30, 2020

By School Committeeman Michael O'Neill

As someone who has been front-and-center as a policy-maker in urban public education for more than a dozen years, I thought I had seen quite a bit over the years. The challenges of recessions, closings, superintendent changes, lawsuits and protests have been as much a part of my experience as have school openings, improved graduation and achievement rates, and increased focus on eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps.

But nothing can compare to the shared challenges we are now experiencing for the 2020-21 school year as a result of COVID-19. In the midst of a global pandemic, urban school districts are trying to establish worthwhile remote learning while also working to reopen our schools in either a hybrid or full, in-person learning model. Additionally, we all are trying to learn from the recent focus on our social and racial inequities and their impact on our school and student communities, while also navigating the fiscal challenges that are certain to be pending from this health pandemic.

Thus, I was both nervous and energized to assume the position of Chair of the Board of Directors of the **Council of the Great City Schools**, effective July 1, 2020. From my six prior years as a member of the Executive Committee of the Council, including terms as Secretary/Treasurer and Chair-Elect, I had confidence that the organization was well prepared to help guide our member districts through these challenges, as well as to navigate the turbulence within the organization itself as we work through our own leadership adjustments, due to the pending 2021 retirement of Executive Director Dr. Michael Casserly. I also had the opportunity to work closely with my predecessor, Eric Gordon, the CEO of Cleveland Metropolitan Public Schools, so I knew the organization was in excellent shape from a governance and policy perspective. My faith in the organization that we all belong to has only deepened this summer.

During this time, I have noticed three themes emerging:

Like our students, we are building virtual peer networks and learning in new ways.

Many of us are rebuilding our peer networks virtually and are learning and growing in a new way. This became so clear to me recently as I had the opportunity to join each of the dozen-plus “job-alike” calls that the Council team has hosted every single week since mid-March when schools closed. These conversations among colleagues – from Chief Financial Officers to Superintendents; from Chief Academic Officers to heads of ELL programs; from food service, facilities, communications and operations specialists to School Board members — have allowed all of the participants to share with and learn from colleagues nationally who are facing similar circumstances and often are working on solutions that can be shared and emulated. Interestingly, the weekly meetings are allowing us to see, talk with, and get to know and respect national peers with whom we might typically see or meet only once or twice a year.

One particular example stands out for its value to those participating in these weekly calls. A conversation among approximately forty Chief Legal Counsels from our member districts revealed a shared legal concern on a major issue, and one counsel had particular expertise on how best to respond. After discussion, all on the call quickly agreed with the suggested course of action and decided to follow. Outside of these calls, it would have typically required hours of legal research and advice to uncover the correct path, the cost of which was saved by those districts participating in the call.

This example multiplied many times over shows how members are building their national networks and from that experience reshaping how they listen, share and learn. I have no doubt that the districts that are actively participating are seeing the value of their membership in the Council come to life week after week, and I actively encourage all of our School Board representatives and Superintendents to invite your senior leaders to participate as often as possible, for the benefit of your district and your students.

Our collective work benefits us all to a greater degree.

The second thing I have noticed as an example of the benefit of our virtual peer networks is that the power of our collective work is even better than the sum of the parts. Many districts have both contributed to and shared the benefits of the Council' Strategic Support Teams (SST), when a team of experts from across the country visit one district, at their request, for an in-depth look at a department or area that needs improvement. While that effort has been affected by current travel restrictions, the collective power of the member districts' knowledge and expertise has borne fruit with the Returning to School Series reports. Working together, a number of our districts have shared expertise and best practices in a range of topics that are of interest to every district. I encourage you to take a close look at these reports.

Can we seize this opportunity to redo how we provide education, especially to those most in need?

My third conclusion is that we are at a critical junction in public K-12 education. When this health pandemic passes, will we return to "normal," or will we have a "new normal" – and what does that even mean? I, for one, hope that we use this national crisis as an opportunity to think about the good that has come from this unusual situation, especially the more widespread acknowledgement of the inequities in our systems that we all knew existed but have been unable to overcome. From technology gaps to food and health inequities, the sunlight from this pandemic has finally made a wider society realize that we are not one nation, equal for all. How will we, our nation's top educators, react and adjust to this? I hope collectively we engage even more passionately to think differently about how we provide education and how we can eliminate opportunity gaps. From the simple (there should never again be "snow days" but rather seamless "remote days" when there are weather challenges) to the more futuristic (allowing students from one high school to participate remotely in a specific class in another school or community college in a different part of your city), we now have an opportunity to rethink our challenges and imagine new solutions that were impossible six months ago.

I encourage members to participate in our upcoming virtual 64th Annual Fall Conference, scheduled for October 13-17. I thank the dedicated team from the Dallas Independent School District that was working so hard to host us and regret that we cannot attend in person. We do plan to schedule our 2024 conference to be in Dallas. However, rest assured the excellent Council team is laser-focused on providing a productive and worthwhile use of your time, so that we can all share and learn about the key issues facing us right now, even as we also look to learn and grow into new education models for the future.

I close by reminding all of us that the challenges are great right now and the pressure is enormous. The eyes of a nation are on us, and we all know how the critical decisions we are making on a daily basis affect the students, families, staff and communities we serve. People react differently to the pressure we all feel, and our communities need us more than ever, even if they are finding unique ways — both positive and negative — of sharing those concerns with us. Yet, to paraphrase Teddy Roosevelt, we are not the critic, but rather that person in the arena. We all are striving collectively to do the right thing for our communities, and even with the mud in our face and dust in our eyes, we must keep before us that moral center of truth that brought us to this work in the first place and continue shining the light on the 8 million-plus youth we collectively serve.

Michael O'Neill has been a member of the Boston School Committee since 2008 and is the current Chair of the Board of Directors of the Council.

BERNARD HARRIS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

NEWS...NEWS...NEWS...NEWS



Council of the Great City Schools

1331 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W., Suite 1100N, Washington, D.C. 20004

cgcs.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 19, 2020

CONTACT: Tonya Harris
(202) 393-2427 or tharris@cgcs.org

Four Urban Students Named 2020 Math and Science Scholars

Council of the Great City Schools Awards Bernard Harris Scholarships

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Four graduating high school seniors have been selected by the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) to receive the 2020 CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarships. The students were chosen from several hundred applicants in urban school districts across the nation for academic performance, leadership qualities and community involvement.

Now in its second year, the scholarship was created by former NASA astronaut, Dr. Bernard Harris, the first African American to walk in space, to encourage and assist promising students of diverse backgrounds who plan to pursue science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) studies after high school.

The awards were given to two African-American and two Hispanic seniors from high schools in the 76 big-city school districts represented by Council.

“Increasing cultural diversity in the nation’s STEM workforce is vital and has been a life-long mission for me,” said Dr. Harris. “I strongly believe in fostering the next generation of STEM leaders and am happy to help these talented students become the innovators and leaders of tomorrow as they pursue excellence in their chosen fields.”

Each scholar will receive \$5,000 for continued education in a STEM-related field. This year’s award winners are:

- Raul Ayala, who attended the School of Health Professions in Dallas, TX
- Vanessa Cid, who attended Hialeah High School in Miami, FL
- Abani Neferkara, who attended Lincoln High School in Portland, OR
- Eliska Peacock, who attended School Without Walls High School in Washington, DC

In the fall, Ayala plans to attend Brown University to study mechanical engineering. Cid will pursue a degree in biochemistry at Stanford University. Neferkara plans to study molecular and cell biology at Brown University, and Peacock will study computer science at Stanford University.

“The Council is proud to partner with Dr. Bernard Harris on this important scholarship program to provide talented minority students in urban school districts a way to pursue STEM studies after high school,” said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools. “The generous support of Dr. Harris helps advance these young men and women as they begin the next stage of their lives.”

Administration of the scholarship program, including the application process, pre-selection and presentation of awards, is provided by the CGCS. Dr. Harris makes the final selection of recipients.

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About The Council of the Great City Schools

The Council of the Great City Schools is the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools. Composed of 76 large city school districts, its mission is to promote the cause of urban schools and to advocate for inner-city students through legislation, research and media relations. The organization also provides a network for school districts sharing common problems to exchange information, and to collectively address new challenges as they emerge to deliver the best possible education for urban youth. www.cgcs.org

About The Harris Institute

The Harris Institute is a 501 (c) (3), non-profit organization founded by former NASA Astronaut Dr. Bernard A. Harris, Jr., to serve socially and economically disadvantaged communities locally and across the nation striving to reach the most underserved populations in the areas of Education, Health, and Wealth. The institute supports programs that empower individuals, in particular minorities and economically and/ or socially disadvantaged, to recognize their potential and pursue their dreams. The education mission of The Harris Institute is to enable youth to develop and achieve their full potential through the support of social, recreational and educational programs. The Harris Institute believes students can be prepared now for the careers of the future through a structured education program and the use of positive role models. More than 50,000 students have participated and benefited from THI programs. www.theharrisfoundation.org/

2020 CGCS Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship Applicants

Demographic Overview:

Total Candidates from Council Districts: **441**

Number of Districts Represented: **60**

Number of African American Male Applicants: **103**

Number of African American Female Applicants: **170**

Number of Hispanic Male Applicants: **59**

Number of Hispanic Female Applicants: **109**

CGCS School Districts	African American/Black		Hispanic		Grand Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Albuquerque Public Schools	2	0	0	1	3
Anchorage School District	1	1	1	0	3
Arlington Independent School District	3	4	1	1	9
Atlanta Public Schools	11	4	0	0	15
Aurora Public Schools	1	1	0	0	2
Austin Independent School District	1	1	4	3	9
Baltimore City Public Schools	3	1	0	0	4
Birmingham City Schools	0	1	0	0	1
Boston Public Schools	0	0	2	0	2
Bridgeport Public Schools	0	1	0	0	1
Broward County Public Schools	11	13	5	1	30
Buffalo Public Schools	3	0	0	0	3
Charleston County School District	0	1	2	0	3
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	5	2	1	2	10
Chicago Public Schools	23	4	4	8	39
Clark County School District	1	0	2	2	5
Cleveland Metropolitan School District	1	3	1	0	5
Columbus City Schools	3	3	0	0	6
Dallas Independent School District	3	2	5	7	17
Denver Public Schools	0	0	1	0	1
Des Moines Public Schools	0	0	1	1	2
Detroit Public Schools	8	1	1	0	10
District of Columbia Public Schools	10	5	6	1	22
Duval County Public Schools	5	2	0	0	7
El Paso Independent School District	1	0	1	0	2
Fort Worth Independent School District	2	1	1	0	4
Fresno Unified School District	1	1	1	1	4
Guilford County Schools	5	5	2	2	14
Hillsborough County School District	4	4	6	0	14
Houston Independent School District	3	0	8	4	15
Indianapolis Public Schools	2	0	0	0	2
Jefferson County Public Schools	2	4	0	0	6
Long Beach Unified School District	2	1	1	1	5

CGCS School Districts	African American/Black		Hispanic		Grand Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Los Angeles Unified School District	3	2	6	3	14
Manchester School District	1	0	0	0	1
Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools	3	2	1	0	6
Miami-Dade County Public Schools	7	1	19	9	36
Milwaukee Public Schools	1	0	0	0	1
New Orleans Public Schools	3	0	0	1	4
New York City Department of Education	5	4	3	1	13
Norfolk Public Schools	0	2	0	0	2
Omaha Public Schools	2	0	0	1	3
Orange County Public Schools	7	4	3	7	21
Palm Beach County School District	6	4	6	0	16
Philadelphia School District	7	9	2	0	18
Pinellas County Schools	1	1	1	0	3
Pittsburgh Public Schools	1	0	0	0	1
Portland Public Schools	1	1	0	0	2
Richmond Public Schools	0	3	1	0	4
Sacramento City Unified School District	0	0	1	0	1
San Antonio Independent School District	1	2	0	1	4
San Diego Unified School District	0	0	4	1	5
San Francisco Unified School District	0	1	0	0	1
Santa Ana Unified School District	0	0	1	0	1
Seattle Public Schools	1	0	1	0	2
Shelby County Schools	0	1	0	0	1
St. Louis Public Schools	1	0	0	0	1
St. Paul Public Schools	2	0	0	0	2
Washoe County School District	0	0	2	0	2
Wichita Public Schools	0	0	1	0	1
Grand Total	170	103	109	59	441

CGCS School District	African-American or Black		Hispanic		Grand Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Albuquerque Public Schools	1		1		2
Anchorage School District	2		2		4
Arlington Independent School District	3	1	2	2	8
Atlanta Public Schools	8	5			13
Aurora Public Schools	1	1			2
Austin Independent School District			1	2	3
Baltimore City Public Schools	2	4			6
Bridgeport Public Schools		1			1
Broward County Public Schools	9	7	7	1	24
Buffalo Public Schools			1		1
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	11	1		1	13
Chicago Public Schools	10	4	2	5	21
Cincinnati Public Schools	1				1

Clark County School District	1	1	2		4
Columbus City Schools		1			1
Dallas Independent School District	2	5	4	7	18
Dayton Public Schools	1				1
Denver Public Schools			1		1
Des Moines Public Schools				1	1
Detroit Public Schools	1			1	2
District of Columbia Public Schools	14	7	2		23
Duval County Public Schools	4				4
El Paso Independent School District			1	2	3
Fort Worth Independent School District			2		2
Fresno Unified School District	1	1			2
Guilford County Schools	4	3	2		9
Hawaii State Department of Education				1	1
Hillsborough County School District	1				1
Houston Independent School District	6	7	12	8	33
Indianapolis Public Schools	1				1
Jefferson County Public Schools	3	2	1		6
Kansas City Public Schools	1				1
Long Beach Unified School District	4	2	1		7
Los Angeles Unified School District	6	3	12	5	26
Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools	6		2		8
Miami-Dade County Public Schools	4	1	14	7	26
Milwaukee Public Schools	2	1	2		5
Minneapolis Public Schools	1				1
New Orleans Public Schools	1	2			3
New York City Department of Education	3	4	3	1	11
Newark Public Schools	5	2	3	1	11
Norfolk Public Schools	2				2
Oakland Unified School District	1				1
Oklahoma City Public Schools	1			1	2
Omaha Public Schools	2	1	1		4
Orange County Public Schools	8	4	5	3	20
Palm Beach County School District	8	6	7	5	26
Philadelphia School District	1	1	1		3
Pinellas County Schools	1	1		2	4
Providence Public School District				1	1
Puerto Rico Department of Education			1		1
Richmond Public Schools	1	1	1		3
Sacramento City Unified School District			1	1	2
San Antonio Independent School District	4		4		8
San Francisco Unified School District			1		1
Seattle Public Schools	2		1		3
Shelby County Schools	1	1			2

St. Louis Public Schools		1			1
Toledo Public Schools	1	2	2		5
Wichita Public Schools	4			1	5
Grand Total	157	84	105	59	405



Dallas ISD senior awarded Bernard Harris scholarship by the Council of the Great City Schools

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BY THE HUB ON JUNE 22, 2020 UNCATEGORIZED

Raul Ayala is one of four graduating high school seniors who have been selected by the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) to receive the 2020 CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarships. The students were chosen from several hundred applicants in urban school districts across the nation for academic performance, leadership qualities and community involvement.

Now in its second year, the scholarship was created by former NASA astronaut, Dr. Bernard Harris, the first African American to walk in space, to encourage and assist promising students of diverse backgrounds who plan to pursue science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) studies after high school.

The awards were given to two African-American and two Hispanic seniors from high schools in the 76 big-city school districts represented by Council.

“Increasing cultural diversity in the nation’s STEM workforce is vital and has been a life-long mission for me,” said Dr. Harris. “I strongly believe in fostering the next generation of STEM leaders and am happy to help these talented students become the innovators and leaders of tomorrow as they pursue excellence in their chosen fields.”

Each scholar will receive \$5,000 for continued education in a STEM-related field. Ayala attended the School of Health Professions at Yvonne A. Ewell Townview Center and plans to attend Brown University to study mechanical engineering.

“The Council is proud to partner with Dr. Bernard Harris on this important scholarship program to provide talented minority students in urban school districts a way to pursue STEM studies after high school,” said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools. “The generous support of Dr. Harris helps advance these young men and women as they begin the next stage of their lives.”

Administration of the scholarship program, including the application process, pre-selection and presentation of awards, is provided by the CGCS. Dr. Harris makes the final selection of recipients.

June 19, 2020

Eliska Peacock
2920 Pennsylvania Avenue S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20020

CGCS-Bernard Harris Scholarship Award Program
Council of the Great City Schools
1331 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Suite 1100N
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear CGCS-Bernard Harris Scholarship Program Committee:

Thank you and all the rest of The Council of the Great City Schools-Bernard Harris Scholarship Program very much for making this scholarship possible. It is indeed a great honor to be a 2020 CGCS-Bernard Harris Scholarship Recipient. I am beyond thrilled and very grateful to receive this scholarship!

This 2020 CGCS-Bernard Harris \$5,000 scholarship means a great deal to me and it significantly helps my family and me towards my college expenses. This scholarship will allow me to excel at Stanford University as I pursue my bachelor of art's degree in computer science starting this fall. I was proud to end my final high school year with A's in all of my classes which included 4 AP classes: AP Statistics: AP Physics C: Mechanics: AP Research and AP Latin.

As a high school senior, my AP Research project was studying bias in facial recognition. While at Stanford, I hope to study and do some research with Professor Fei-Fei Li, a thought leader in artificial intelligence and a champion of diversity in STEM. I look forward to the experience of meeting Professor Fei-Fei Li, especially since her work involves increasing diversity and inclusion in artificial intelligence education. I hope to be able to study under her and gain more insight into the social responsibility of artificial intelligence.

To help me prepare for school in the fall, I will be participating in Google's Computer Science Summer Institute (CSSI) program in July of this year. I was happy that I made it through two competitive rounds to get selected for this virtual computer science program where I will learn directly from Google engineers. Next summer of 2021, I plan on doing a paid internship with Amazon as a "future engineer" where I will work and learn directly from some of Amazon engineers. I plan to stay active in the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) in college and throughout my professional career due to the many benefits of belonging to such an organization. I hope to continue to inspire others like me as a role model and help them in their STEM journeys.

I am sincerely appreciative and grateful for this prestigious scholarship award and honor. Again, thank you for this 2020 CGCS-Bernard Harris Scholarship and honor. I promise to make The Council of the Great City Schools and the Harris Family proud and to reach back and help others like me.

Sincerely,



Eliska Peacock

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media Report

Tracking The Council's Social Presence

Monthly Update

August/September 2020





Twitter

Goals

- 45,000 Impressions
- 2 Link Clicks Per Day
- 40 Retweets
- 100 Likes
- 40 New Followers

Stats

- 33,100 Impressions 
- 3 Link Clicks Per Day 
- 28 Retweets 
- 141 Likes 
- 85 New Followers 

Analysis

Despite the school year looking different this year we had a lot of good content for August and September. Posts such as our 9th COVID-19 “Returning to School” report, the 64th Annual Fall Conference going virtual, and the announcement of the Green-Garner Award finalists were well received.

In October we will hold our 64th Annual Fall Conference and I am sure we will meet and possibly exceed all of our goals.

Top 1-5



CGCS @GreatCitySchls · Aug 17

1,935

129

6.7%

Our 9th **#COVID19** "Returning to School" report focuses on **#ELLs**, the fastest-growing group in Great City Schools. Despite pandemic hardships, ELLs are resilient. Now is the time to harness their experiences for rich, content-based language instruction. See cgcs.org/corona. pic.twitter.com/QjmxUI4F6m

[View Tweet activity](#)

Promote



CGCS @GreatCitySchls · Aug 4

1,883

30

1.6%

As summer comes to an end, many schools are going to have virtual school to keep students safe. Join us and **@MilwaukeeMPS** help **#ConnectMilwaukee** so all students can have the vital tools for online learning.

Donate: mpsfdn.org twitter.com/mpsfdn/status/...

[View Tweet activity](#)

Promote



CGCS @GreatCitySchls · Aug 11

1,654

74

4.5%

The Council is holding its 64th Annual Fall Conference virtually, Oct. 13-17. The theme is "Championing Urban Education." Click here to register cvent.me/mq23vZ pic.twitter.com/57CxmnlKTY

[View Tweet activity](#)

Promote



CGCS @GreatCitySchls · Aug 15

1,642

29

1.8%

"We pay absolutely no attention to what the White House has to say on this and neither do most big city school districts," said Michael Casserly. twitter.com/AnneKFlaherty/...

[View Tweet activity](#)

Promote



CGCS @GreatCitySchls · Aug 4

1,172

25






2.1%

Nominations are being accepted for the 31st Annual Green-Garner Award, presented to the nation's top urban school district superintendent. Deadline to apply is September 4. Click tinyurl.com/y3ndpc4w to access the brochure. pic.twitter.com/lbxrYCfm9d

[View Tweet activity](#)

Promote

Top 6-10

	CGCS @GreatCitySchls · 20h Congrats to @Detroitk12 superintendent, @Dr_Vitti on being named a finalist for The 2020 Green-Garner Award! The award is the nation's highest urban education honor recognizing outstanding contributions in urban education! pic.twitter.com/A9PSCMnqrN	3,544	151	4.3%	Promote
View Tweet activity					
	CGCS @GreatCitySchls · Sep 25 Congrats to all the Green-Garner Award Finalists! 🎉 This year we have 20 finalists, the most ever. The ceremony will be held on Thursday, October 15th at our virtual 64th Annual Fall Conference. Be sure to register to see who will win this years award. cvent.me/mq23vZ pic.twitter.com/kYe6d98xjX	2,580	510	19.8%	Promote
View Tweet activity					
	CGCS @GreatCitySchls · Sep 11 On this day we remember the lives and loved ones lost on this tragic day. We honor the first responders and all who banded together on this day and the following days after. #911Remembrance #NeverForget pic.twitter.com/4zQERV7Hol	1,204	24	2.0%	Promote
View Tweet activity					
	CGCS @GreatCitySchls · Sep 16 City Schools Offer Guidance on English Learners languagemagazine.com/2020/09/15/cit...	996	21	2.1%	Promote
View Tweet activity					
	CGCS @GreatCitySchls · Sep 22 Have you registered for our 64th Annual Fall Conference? Former First Lady Laura Bush will be on of our keynote speakers. Did you know she was a former public school librarian! #CGCS20 pic.twitter.com/wnG7dL9Wk	817	19	2.3%	Promote
View Tweet activity					

Highlights



CGCS
@GreatCitySchls

Congrats to all the Green-Garner Award Finalists! 🎉 This year we have 20 finalists, the most ever. The ceremony will be held on Thursday, October 15th at our virtual 64th Annual Fall Conference. Be sure to register to see who will win this years award. cvent.me/mq23vZ



CGCS @GreatCitySchls · Aug 17

Our 9th #COVID19 "Returning to School" report focuses on #ELLs, the fastest-growing group in Great City Schools. Despite pandemic hardships, ELLs are resilient. Now is the time to harness their experiences for rich, content-based language instruction. See cgcs.org/corona.



CGCS @GreatCitySchls · Aug 11

The Council is holding its 64th Annual Fall Conference virtually, Oct. 13-17. The theme is "Championing Urban Education." Click here to register cvent.me/mq23vZ



🗨️ 1 ❤️ 7 📌 🎵



Supporting English Learners in the COVID-19 Crisis

Address the needs of English learners as schools reopen. Explore how the reopening of schools would impact the educational outcomes of a diverse group of students and the overall success of districts across the country.

Highlights



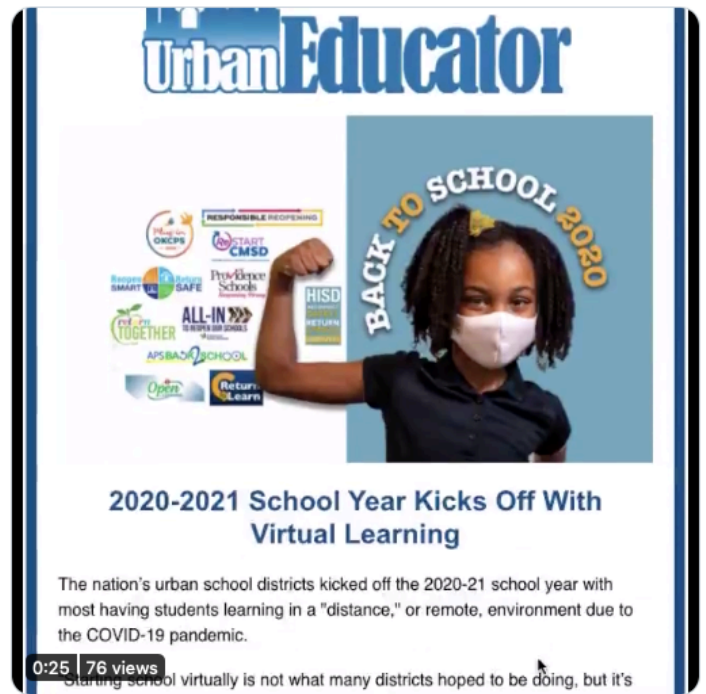
CGCS @GreatCitySchls · Sep 16

Our new series called Spotlight features shorter, more s dealing with COVID issues. Here's our first one: "Increasing and Improving Air Quality in Schools" tinyurl.com/y5hde



CGCS @GreatCitySchls · Sep 24

Our September UE #newsletter is here! 📖 Featuring stories on:
-2020-2021 School Year Kicks Off With Virtual Learning
-Virtual Fall Conference to Feature Bestselling Author @DrIbram
-@LASchools Launches COVID-19 Testing and Tracing Program
conta.cc/2RWWesx



CGCS @GreatCitySchls · Sep 22

Have you registered for our 64th Annual Fall Conferen Lady Laura Bush will be on of our keynote speakers. D was a former public school librarian! #CGCS20



CGCS @GreatCitySchls

🎉 Congrats to @Detroitk12 superintendent, @Dr_Vitti on being named a finalist for The 2020 Green-Garner Award! The award is the nation's highest urban education honor recognizing outstanding contributions in urban education!



SOCIAL MEDIA – FALL CONFERENCE



Our 64th Annual Fall Conference is going virtual! The Council of the Great City Schools invites urban school superintendents, board members, senior administrators, deans of colleges of education and sponsors to join us on October 13-17, 2020, Eastern Standard Time (EST). We encourage you to spread the word about our annual conference, “Championing Urban Education,” to your extended community.

We’ve compiled images and/or text for you to compose social media posts or emails for our CGCS 2020 Virtual Fall Conference.

Social Media Images

Make sure to follow the Council on Facebook and Twitter to receive conference updates, and tag us in your posts @greatcityschls.

You can also follow this [link](#) for images. Scaling the images are permitted, but all other modifications are prohibited.

Hashtags are a great way to add visibility to your posts by making them easier to find on social media. To help make those posts easier to find, here are some common hashtags to use when posting about our CGCS 2020 Virtual Fall Conference.

#CGCS2020

#CGCSvirtual20

#ChampioningUrbanEducation

Suggested Marketing Language

General Posts:

CGCS 64th Annual Fall Conference is going virtual! #CGCS20 will be held October 13-17. You don’t want to miss it! @greatcityschls #CGCSvirtual20 <https://cvent.me/mq23vZ>

Interested in issues impacting urban public school districts? Attend #CGCS20 virtually October 13-17. Register today! #CGCS20 <https://cvent.me/mq23vZ>

Other sample posts:

The theme for the fall conference is “**Championing Urban Education.**” Use this theme to construct posts, such as posting how you plan to champion education in your district.

Example:

Championing Urban Education means ensuring EVERY student will receive a quality education. <https://cvent.me/mq23vZ>

This year’s speakers are former First Lady Laura Bush, Bestselling Author Ibram X Kendi and Former Democratic Presidential Candidate Julián Castro. Construct posts around these speakers.

Examples:

Excited to hear former First Lady Laura Bush speak at the 64th Annual CGCS virtual fall conference. She was a former public school librarian! #CGCS20

Can’t wait to hear from Ibram X Kendi, bestselling author of How to Be an Antiracist#CGCS20

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

Share your experience

We want to hear about your experience at the CGCS 2020 Virtual Fall Conference! We encourage you to post and tell others about what you learned and enjoyed online! Here are a few questions to guide your posts:

- Which session(s) did you enjoy?
- How will you apply what you learned in your classroom, school, or district?
- Are you a first-time conferee or do you attend every year? If you attend every year what brings you back?

Our hashtag #CGCS20 doesn’t disappear once the conference is over. Keep using it in your social media posts and check back to see what others are saying about the conference.



2020 CGCS Fall Conference Fact Sheet

2020CGCS Fall Conference | Championing Urban Education

CGCS' 2020 Fall Conference is the Council's largest conference for its 76-member school districts. It brings together the nation's largest urban public school systems in a coalition dedicated to the improvement of education for children in the inner cities. The CGCS 2020 Fall Conference is a forum to discuss issues and share information and best practices to improve teaching and learning.

Conference Highlights:

Keynote Speakers

Laura Bush, First Lady of the United States (2001-2009)

Julián Castro, Former Democratic Candidate for President

Ibram X. Kendi, Bestselling Author of *How to Be Antiracist*

Events

Green-Garner Award Celebration honoring the nation's top superintendent

All-student Town Hall panel discussing race and social justice issues

Sessions

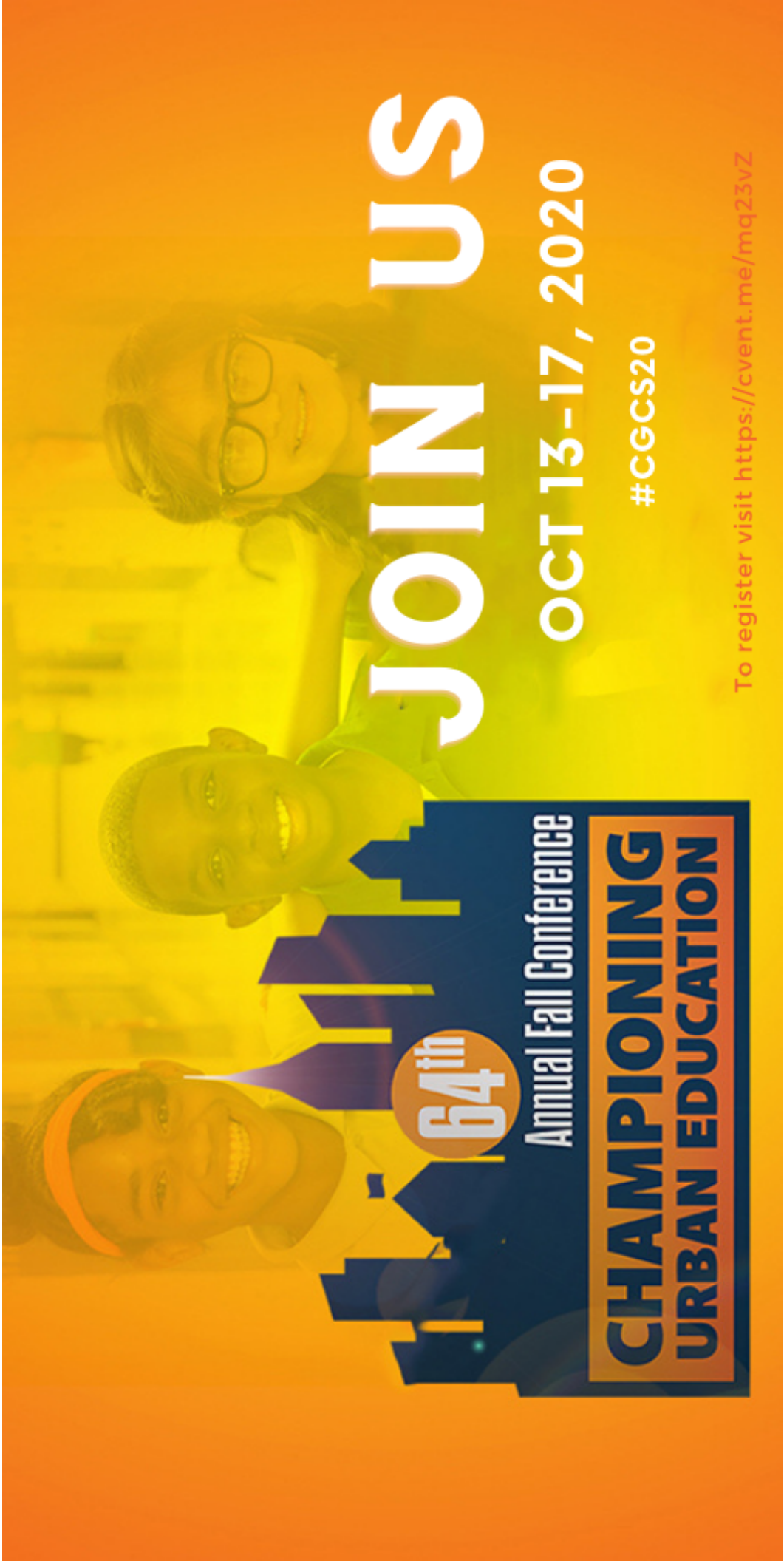
CGCS conference sessions touch on various topics including equity and increasing academic achievement.

Who can attend the CGCS 2020 Fall Conference? Urban School Superintendents, School Board Members, Senior Administrators, and Deans of College Education are encouraged to attend the annual Fall Conference. We also invite non-members to join us.

When and where will the CGCS 2020 Fall Conference be held? CGCS' 2020 Fall Conference will be held October 13-17, 2020 virtually!

How do I register? Go to <https://cvent.me/mq23vZ> to register.

Are there sponsorship opportunities available for companies? Yes!!! If your company is interested in sponsoring go to <https://cvent.me/mq23vZ> to view our different sponsorship opportunities.



JOIN US

OCT 13-17, 2020

#CGCS20

64th

Annual Fall Conference

**CHAMPIONING
URBAN EDUCATION**

To register visit <https://cvent.me/mq23vZ>



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

THOMAS FRIEDMAN

New York Times Columnist and Best-Selling Author

**64TH ANNUAL FALL
CONFERENCE**

OCT 13-17, 2020

#CGCS20

To register visit <https://cvent.me/mq23vz>





KEYNOTE SPEAKER

LAURA BUSH

First Lady of the United States (2001-2009)

**64TH ANNUAL FALL
CONFERENCE**

OCT 13-17, 2020

#CGCS20

To register visit <https://cvent.me/mq23vz>





KEYNOTE SPEAKER

JULIAN CASTRO

Former Democratic Candidate for President

**64TH ANNUAL FALL
CONFERENCE**

OCT 13-17, 2020

#CGCS20

To register visit <https://cvent.me/mq23vz>





KEYNOTE SPEAKER

IBRAM X. KENDI

Bestselling Author

**64TH ANNUAL FALL
CONFERENCE**

OCT 13-17, 2020

#CGCS20

To register visit <https://cvent.me/mq23vz>





TOWN HALL MEETING:
ALL-STUDENT PANEL ON RACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES



64TH ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 13 - OCTOBER 17, 2020

SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIT



THE SOCIAL PULSE

COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS

2020 Social Media Audit



OBJECTIVE



THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS AUDIT IS TO EXAMINE THE CURRENT SOCIAL MEDIA FOOTPRINT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS DURING THE PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE OF JANUARY 1, 2019-DECEMBER 31, 2019

Over the years, the Council of the Great City Schools' digital presence has evolved. This report provides a snapshot of how the organization, its followers, and engaged communities are currently performing online. The goal is to understand "the now" to help inform the Council's strategy for growth in 2020.

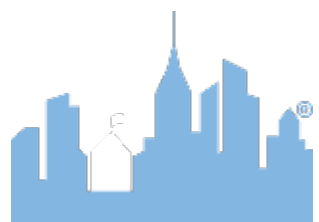
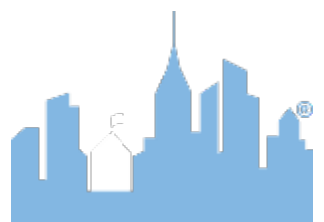
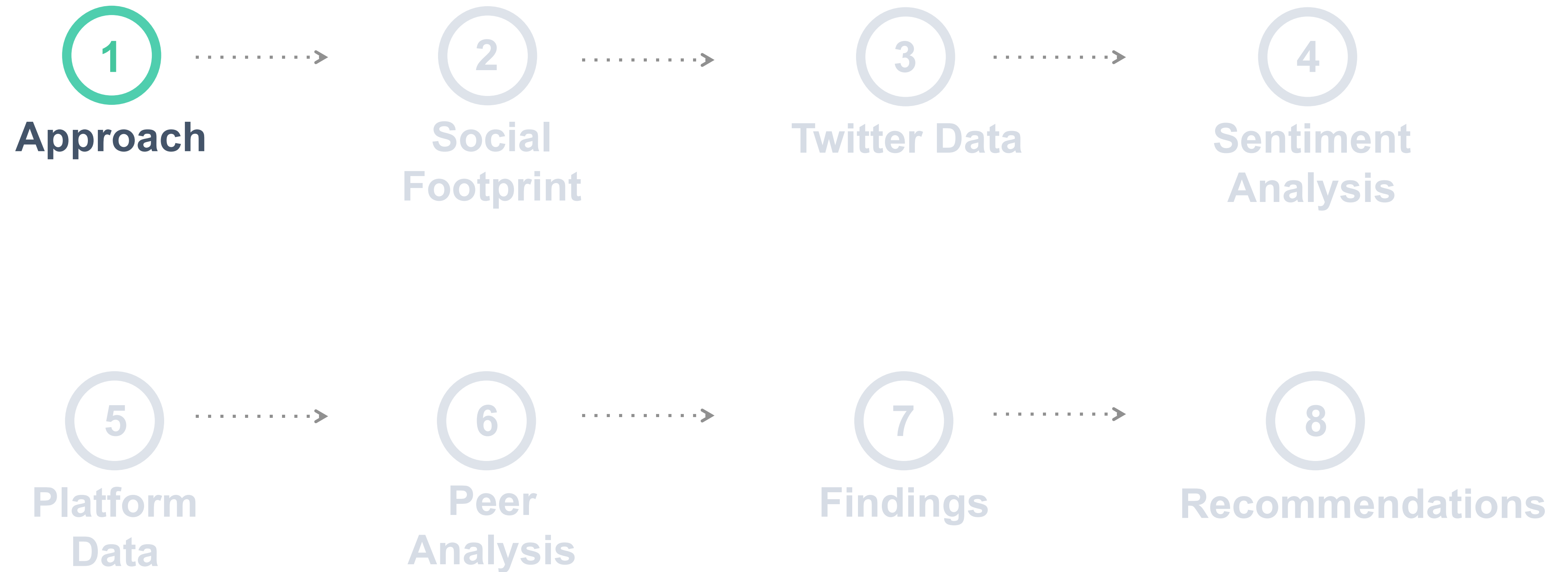


TABLE OF CONTENTS



APPROACH

DEFINE INPUTS



Data analysis defines a set of key inputs to understand:

- Trends
- Social Media Footprint
- Influence
- Social Sentiment

DESIGN ASSESSMENT



Inputs provide intel to design an assessment:

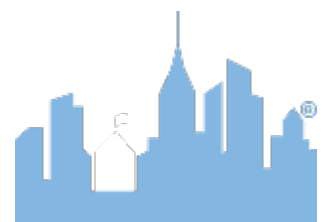
- Social Differentiation
- Audience Alignment
- Engagement and Loyalty
- Reputation

DETERMINE IMPACT



Assessment determines impact of social footprint moving forward:

- Social Positioning
- Messaging Strategy
- Content Strategy
- Nomenclature



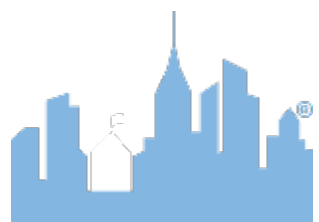
UNDERSTAND SOCIAL PERFORMANCE

Get clear visibility into your entire social presence to quantify how your message generates attention.

Gain intelligence on all content across social media channels.

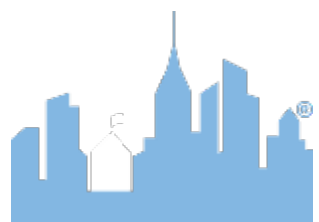
Identify your audience to see how they engage.

Use data to inform your strategy and content assets, to drive deeper relevance on your social voice moving forward.

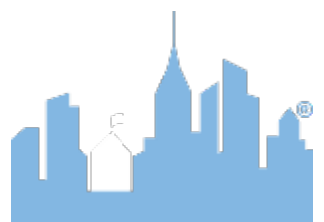
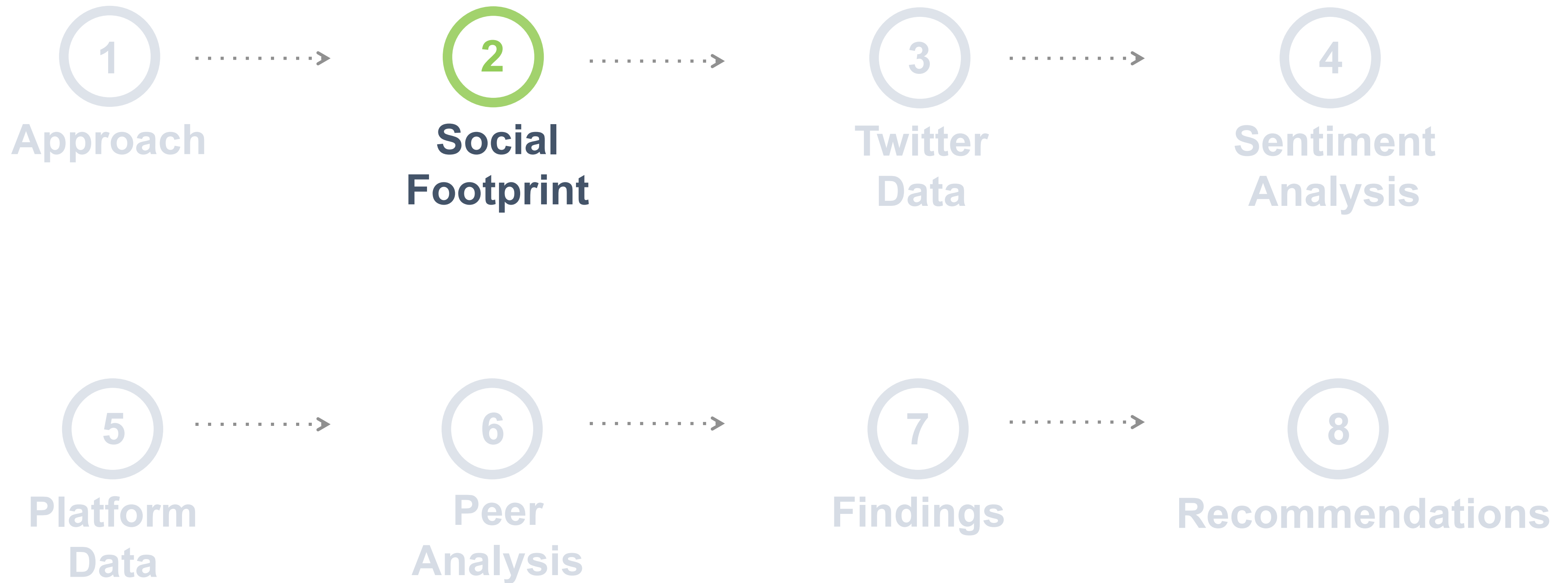


LEVERAGE MARKET ANALYTICS

- Aggregated daily or lifetime social metrics to measure engagement, amplification, impressions, and performance.
- Identification of top-performing content to understand best practices and chart strategy moving forward.
- Trends to inform your strategy and messaging to appropriately target your audience.
- Detailed demographic data illustrates audience data, including gender, influence, location, interests, and average income.



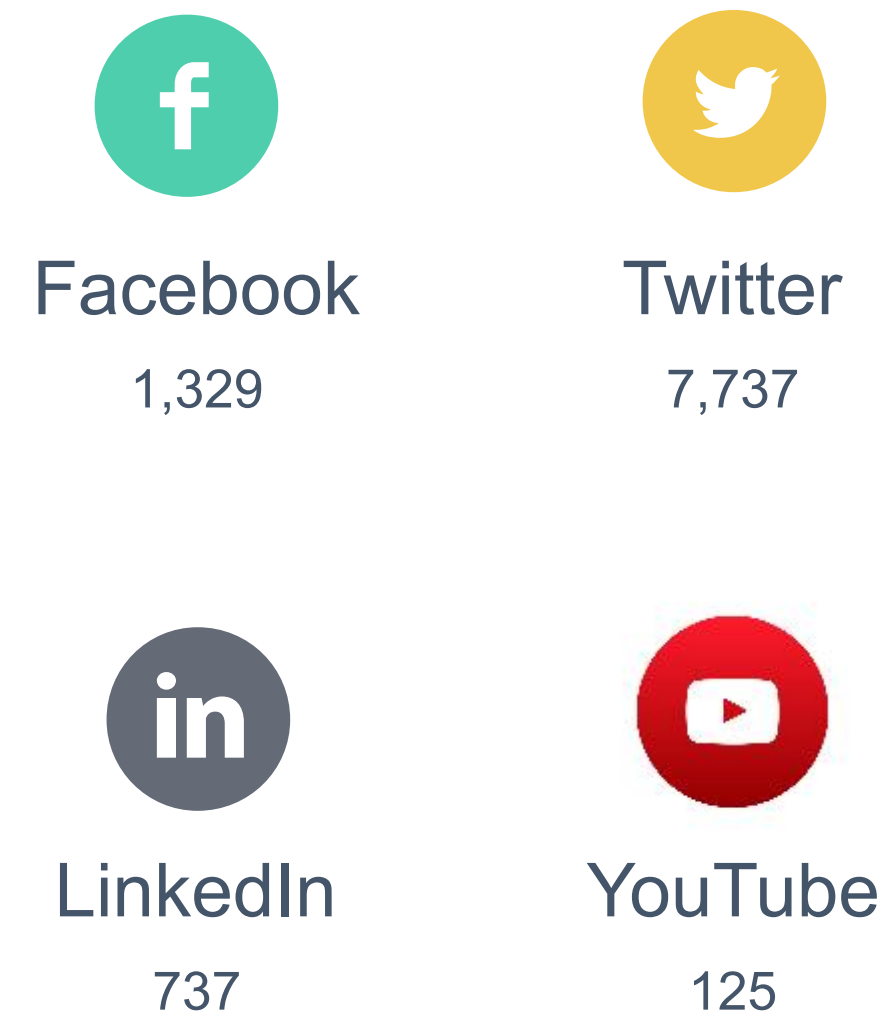
SOCIAL FOOTPRINT



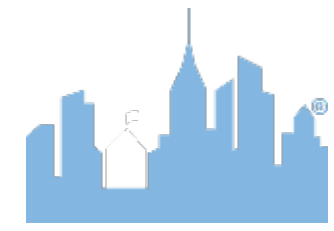
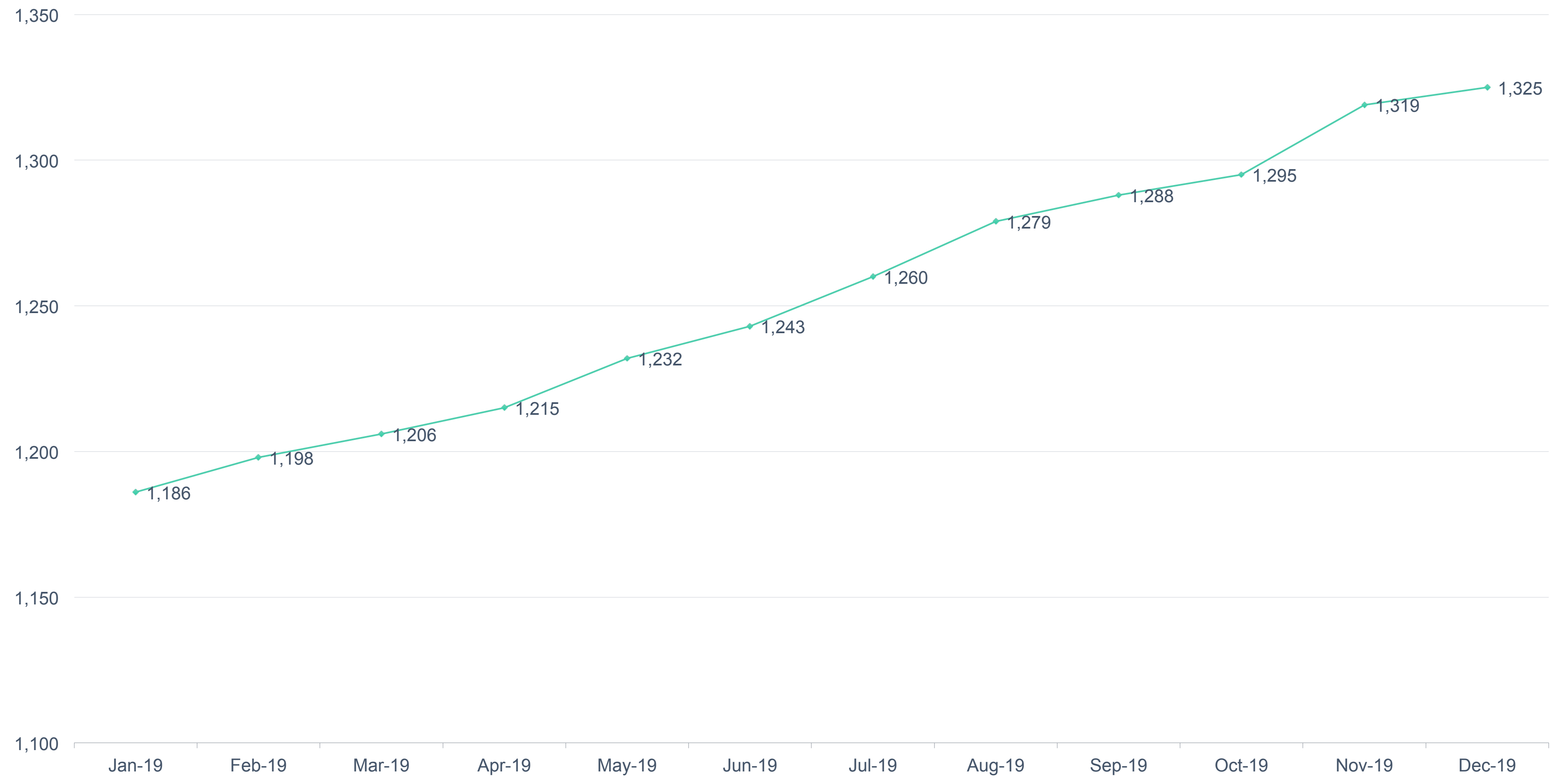
FOLLOWERS PER PLATFORM

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

Your message can be positioned differently across multiple social channels. Your followers define your community, which defines which audiences you can segment and micro-target.

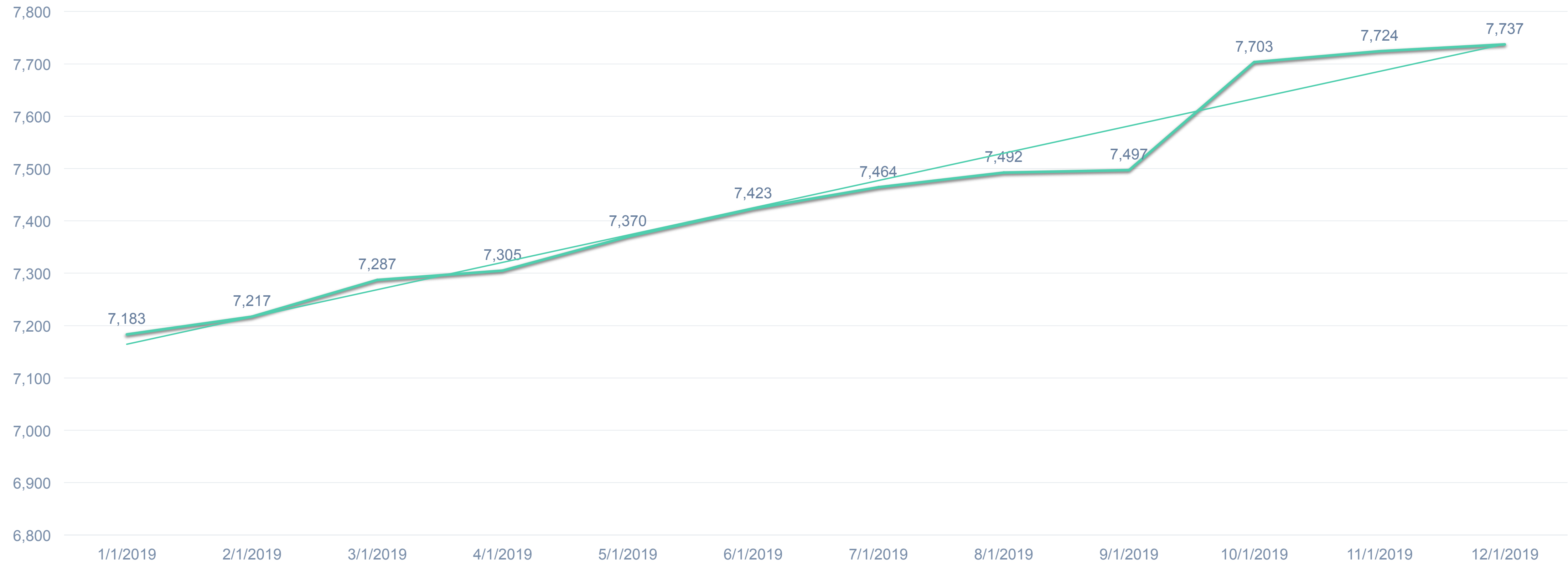


FACEBOOK FOLLOWER GROWTH

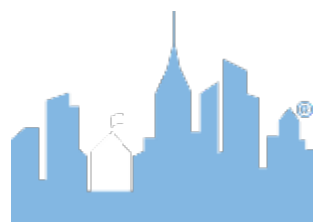


*SOURCE FACEBOOK

TWITTER FOLLOWER GROWTH



Follower growth was consistent throughout 2019, with a notable increase in September and October, coinciding with the CGCS annual meeting and the TUDA release.



KEY DEFINITIONS

REACH



Reach depicts how many eyeballs see a post, on average, across all of a given influencer's platforms.

ENGAGEMENT



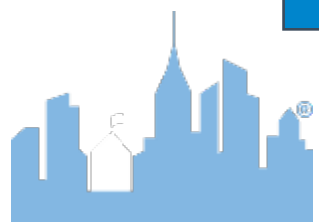
Engagement depicts how many likes and comments a given influencer receives, on average, across all of a given influencer's platforms.

AMPLIFICATION

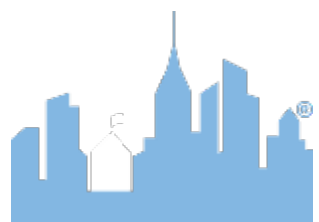
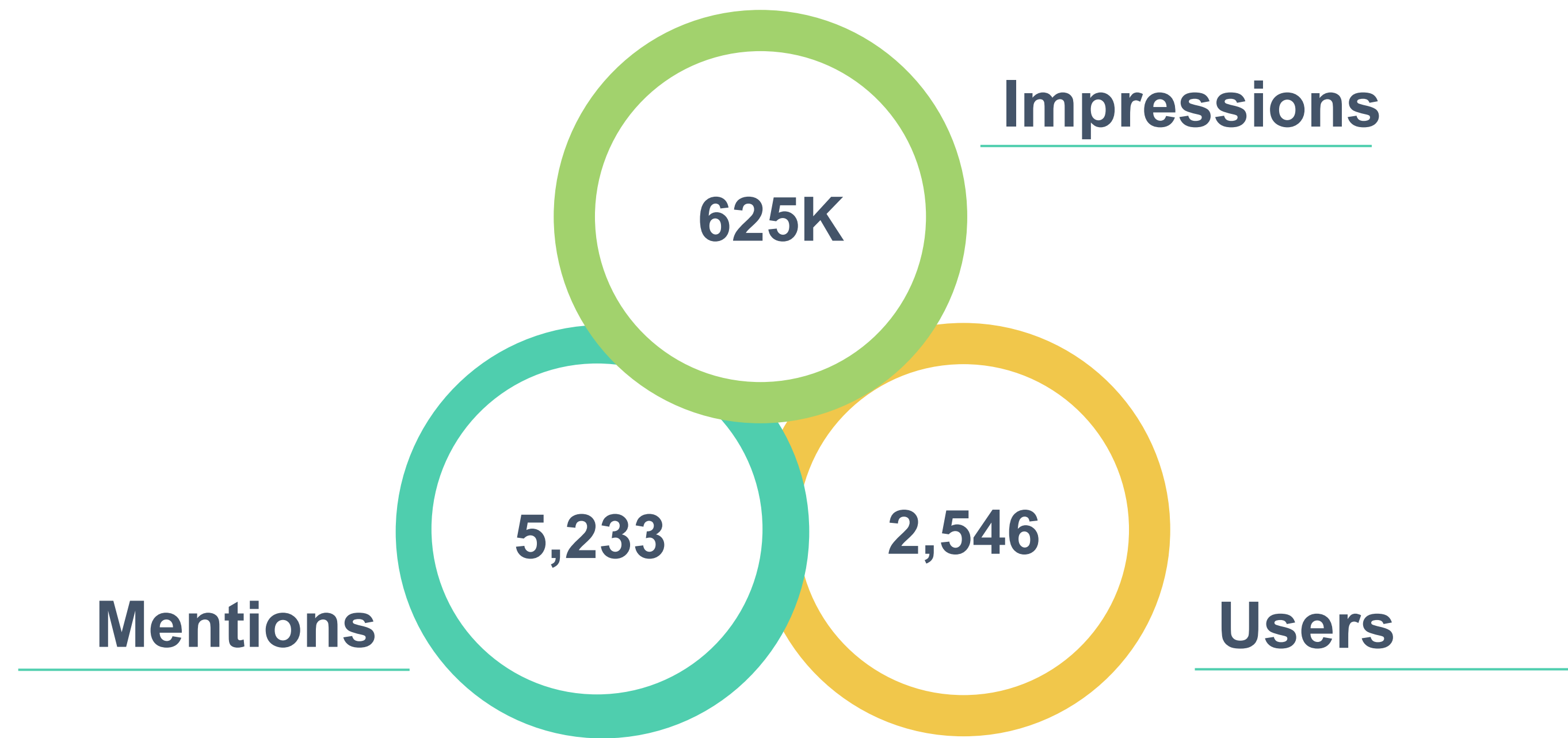


Amplification depicts how often, on average, a given influencer's post is shared, retweeted, and/or passed along to additional users via the @ tag in the comments section across all of a given influencer's platforms.

The relative Reach, Engagement, and Amplification scales are percentile-based. In other words, they show where one falls for reach, amplification, and engagement when compared to others with the same audience interests. Engagement is defined as the sum of average retweets/posts plus average likes divided by the number of followers.



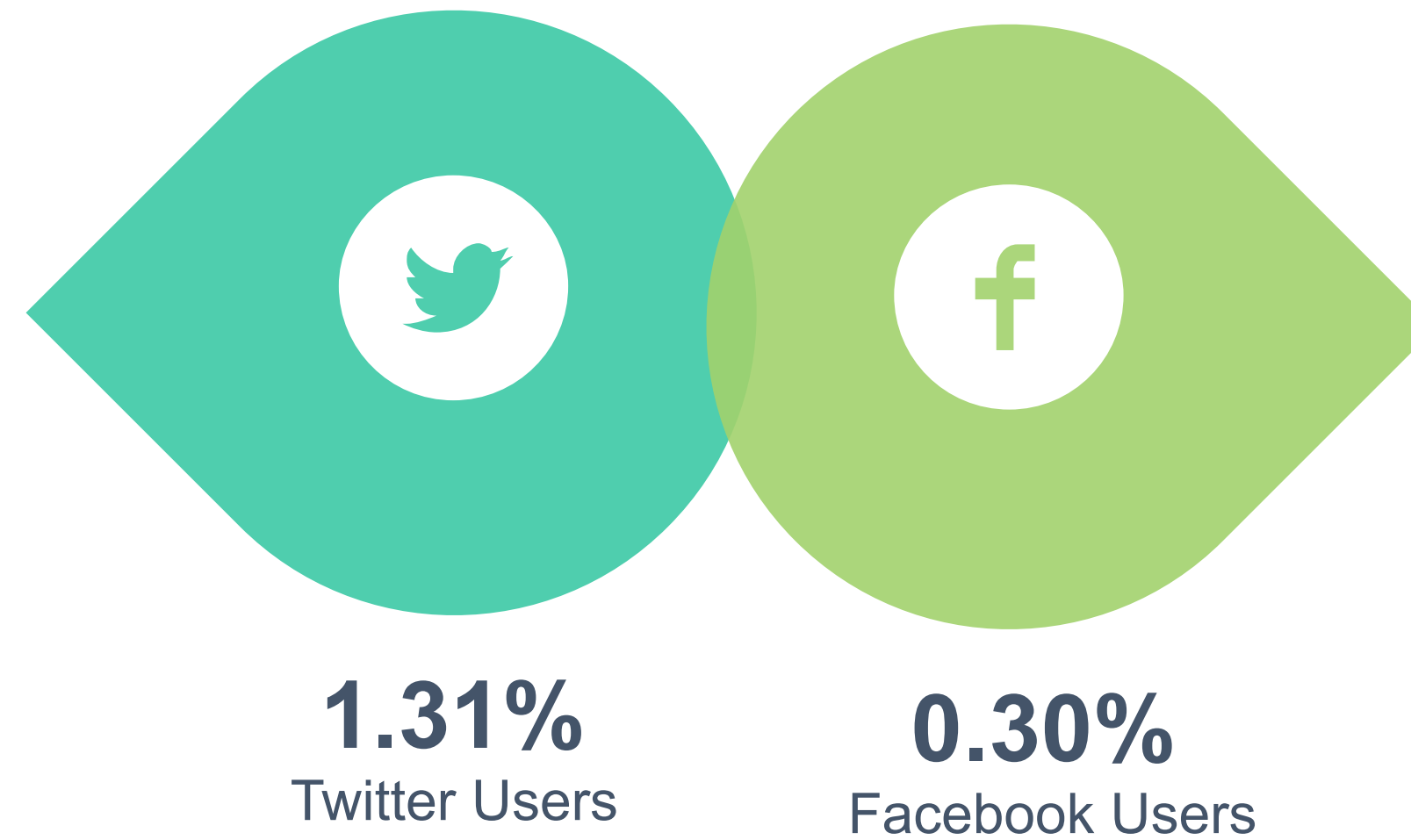
TWITTER TOPLINES



ENGAGEMENT

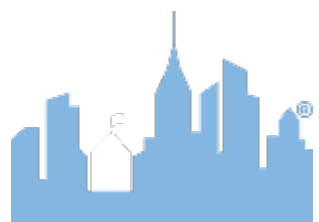
OVERALL ENGAGEMENT RATE

1.16%



Engagement rate determines effectiveness of one's message. Users with high engagement are more likely to be effective in message amplification.

Engagement is categorized as low on Facebook, low on Twitter, and below average on Instagram.

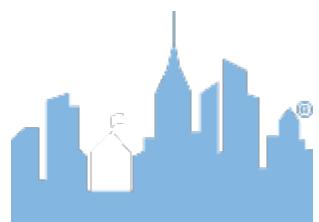


ENGAGEMENT BENCHMARKS

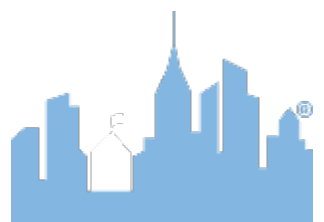
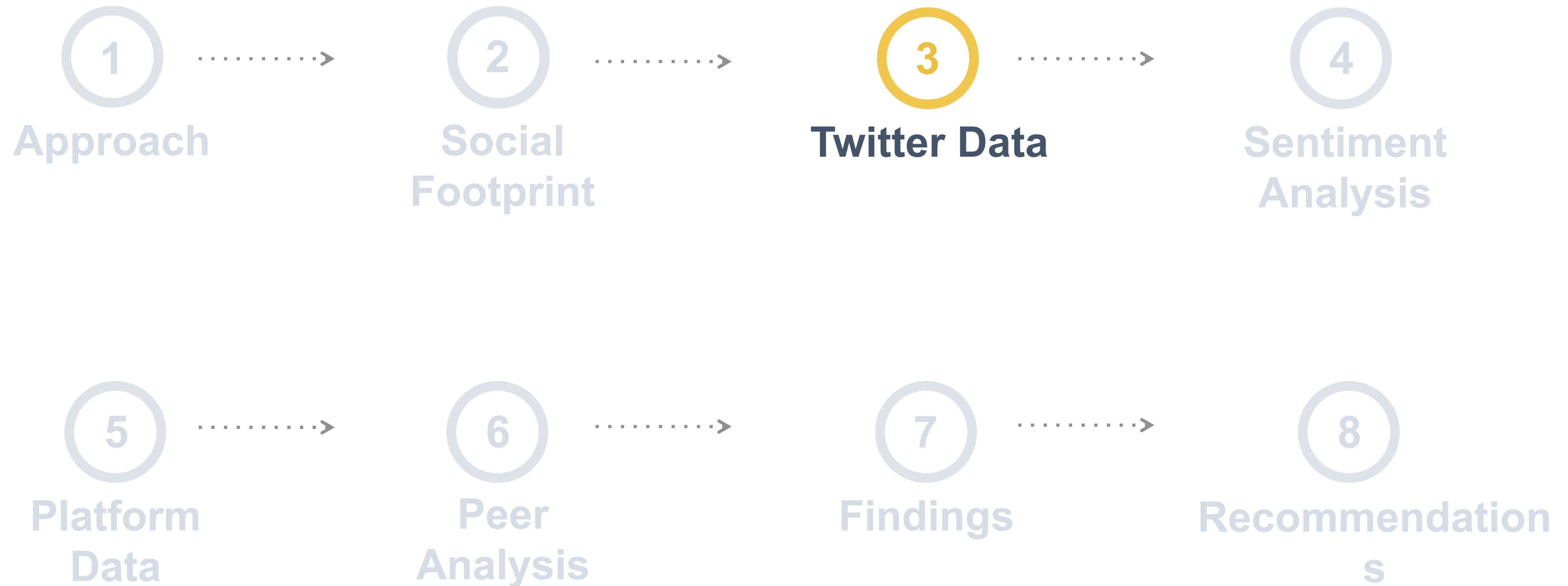
Engagement rate is often deemed one of the most important metrics when reporting on social media analytics. Engagement rate defines a numerical value that can be used to measure the success of content. It provides an indication of how often a user's followers engage with them on social media.

We analyzed millions of data points to produce average and above average engagement rates across each social platform. Our analysis showed that the average (i.e. 50th percentile) engagement rate on Twitter is only around 0.60%, and the 99th percentile (i.e. the top 1%) is only around 2.7%. **CGCS's engagement rate on Twitter is 1.31%.**

A Facebook engagement rate that's above 0.5% is considered good. If posts continuously have a lower than 0.2% engagement rate, chances are you have a very inactive follower base and your followers aren't engaged with your content. **CGCS's engagement rate on Facebook is 0.3%.**



TWITTER DATA

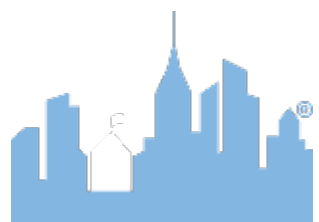


DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Knowing your audience is critical for understanding how to tailor your message appropriately: a message that is applauded by one community might be deemed insensitive by another.

Analyzing demographic data helps to generate success, ensuring that your message has a far greater likelihood of resonating with each segment of your audience.

Audience diversity is imperative to message adoption, engagement, and amplification.



GENDER IDENTIFICATION



NOTE TWITTER DATA ONLY CLASSIFIES TWO GENDERS

*SOURCE TWITTER AND FACEBOOK



EDUCATION

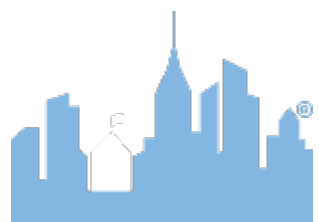
TWITTER EDUCATION BENCHMARKS

- 18% of adults with a high school diploma or less use Twitter
- 25% of adults with some college experience use Twitter
- 32% of adults who graduated college use Twitter

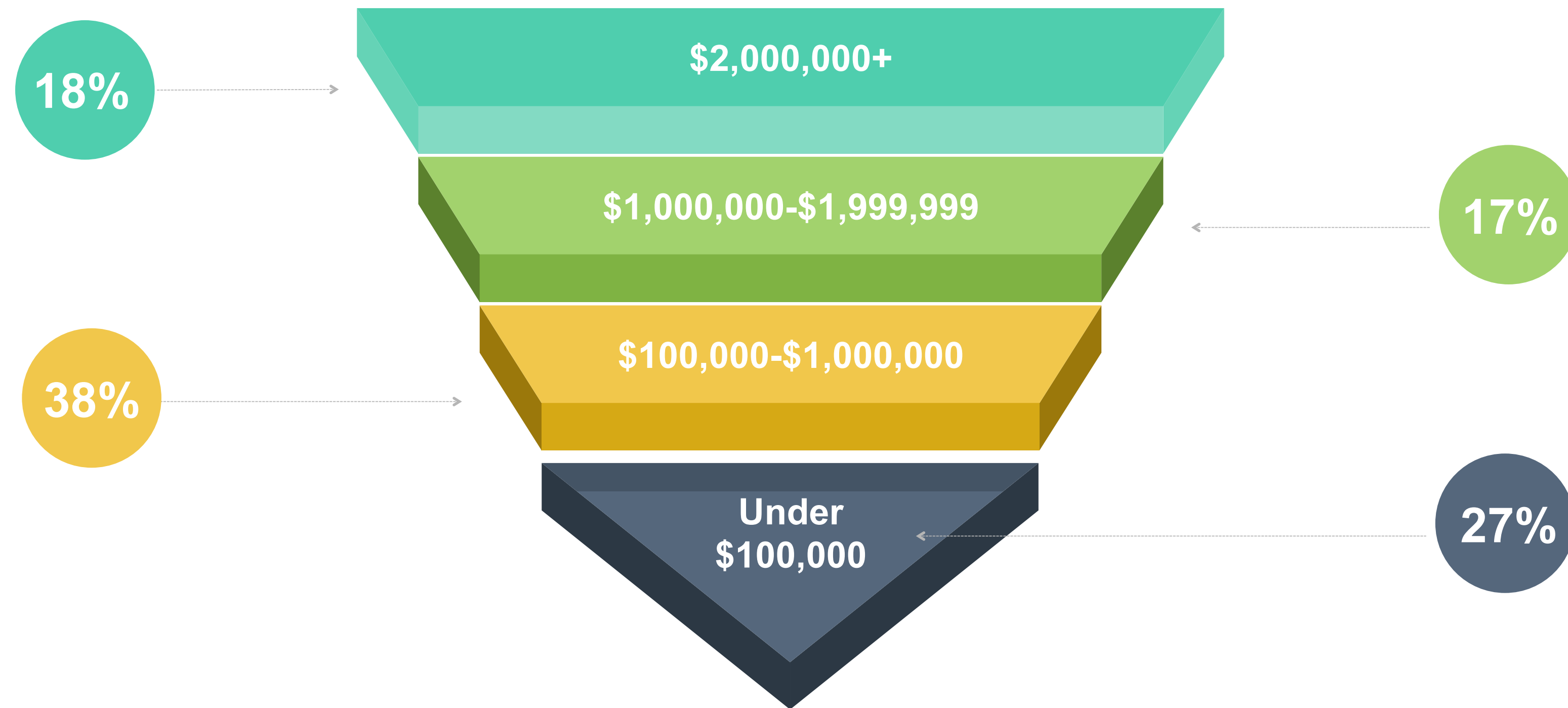
CGCS TWITTER DEMOGRAPHICS



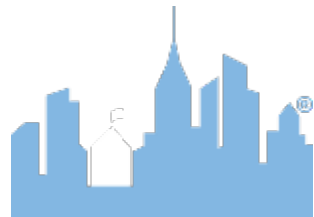
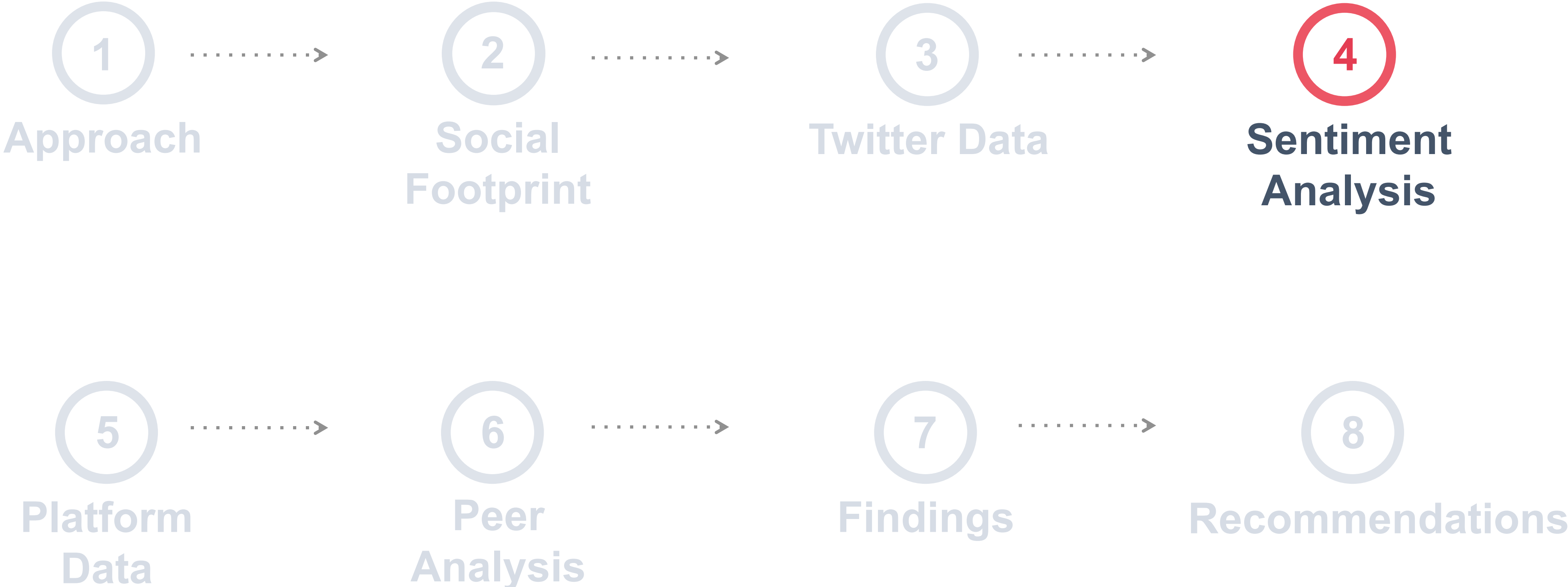
8% HAVE NOT RECEIVED A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE



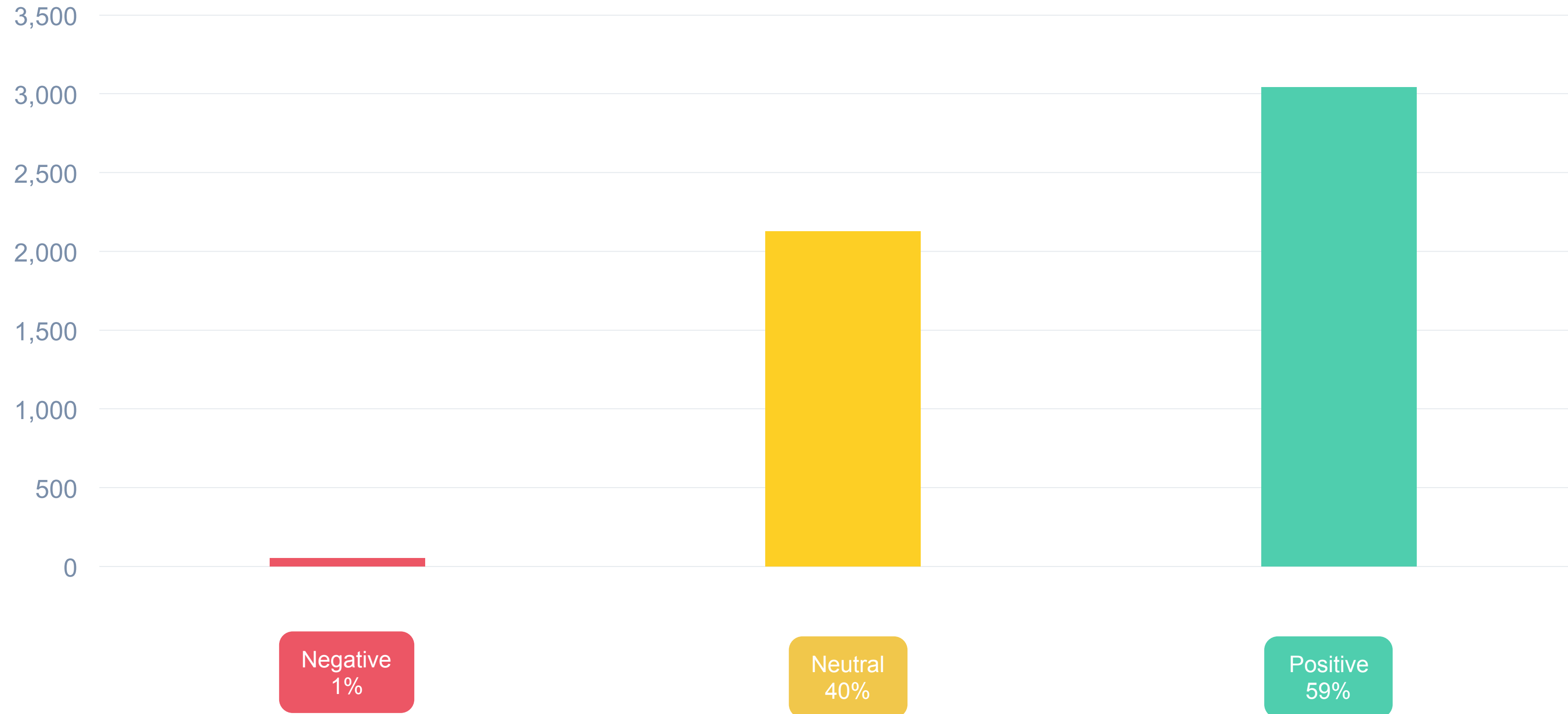
CGCS TWITTER INCOME DEMOGRAPHICS



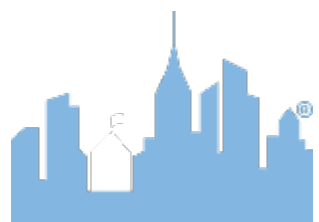
SENTIMENT ANALYSIS



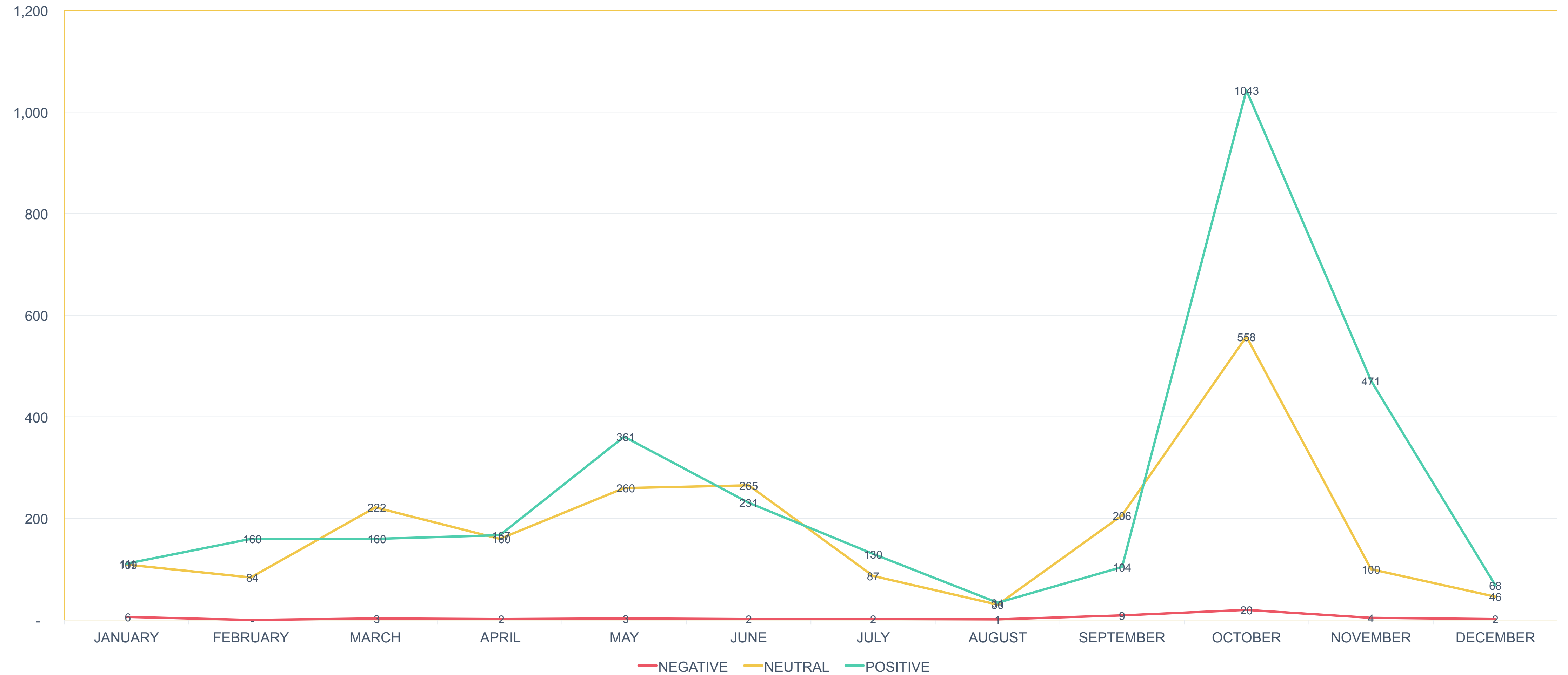
SENTIMENT



The above chart illustrates 5,221 social mentions with sentiment from the period of January 1, 2019 – December 31, 2019. Note that positive mentions made up a larger percentage than both negative and neutral combined. With neutral totaling 2,127 mentions, this provides room for growth and the ability to transform neutral to positive to further build upon The Council of the Great City Schools' positive reputation.

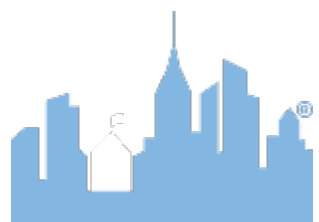
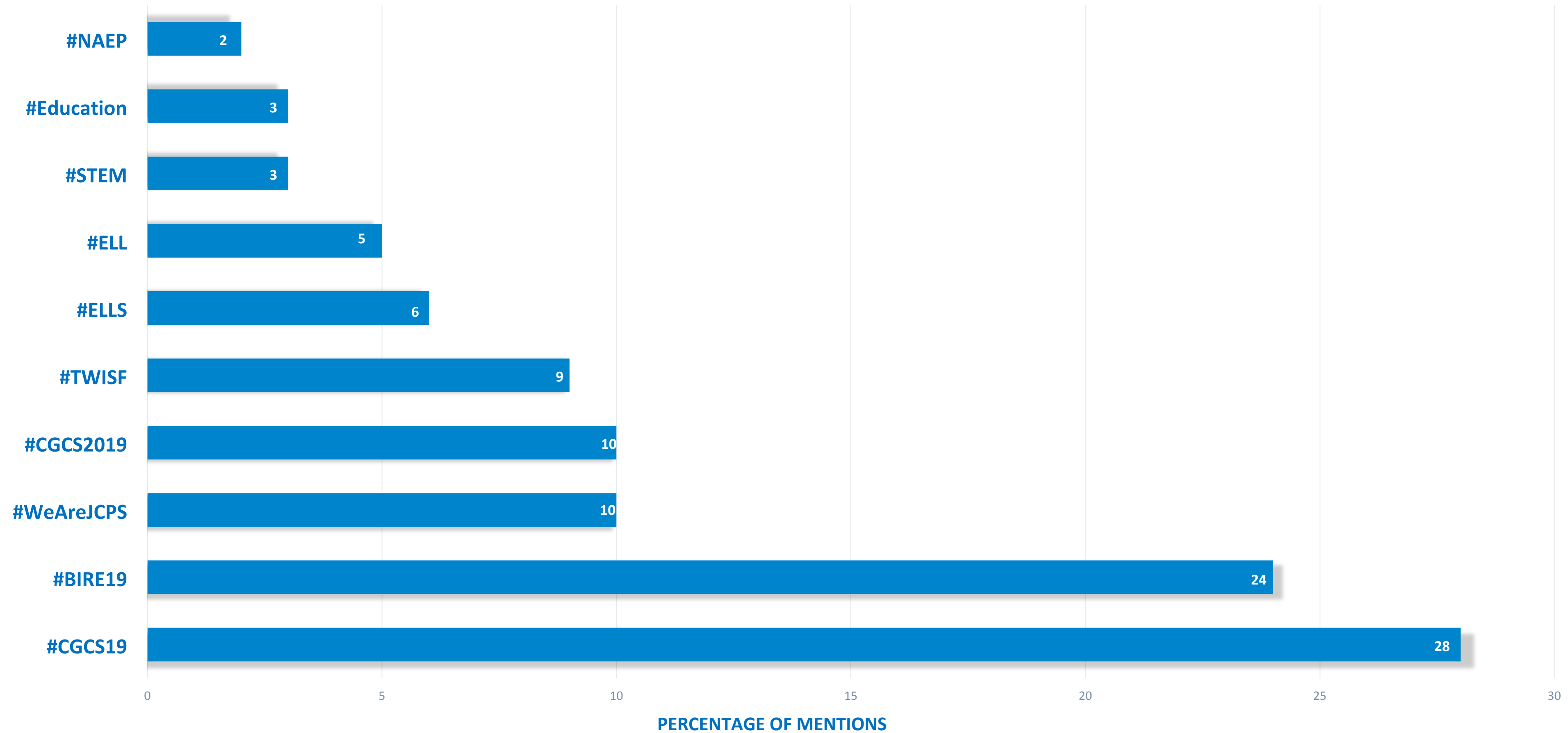


SENTIMENT PER MONTH

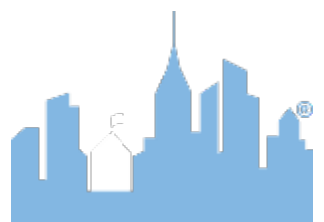
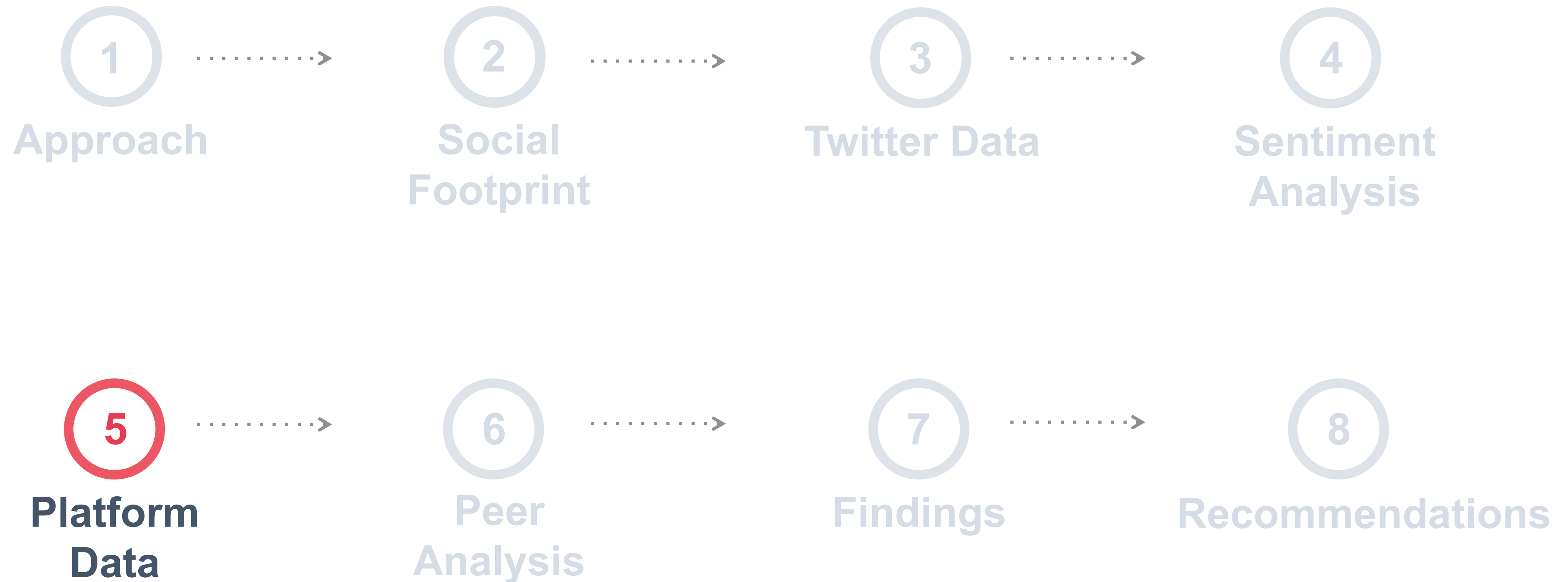


*SOURCE MELTWATER

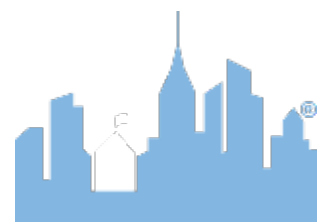
TOP TEN HASHTAGS



PLATFORM DATA



TWITTER STATS



MOST IMPACTFUL TWITTER FOLLOWERS

1

Eugene Scott

D.C. native • @WashingtonPost political reporter for @TheFix • All politics is identity politics

2

Yamiche Alcindor

@PBS @NewsHour White House correspondent. @NBCNews & @MSNBC contributor. Formerly of @NYTimes & @USATODAY Email: yamiche@newshour.org

3

Edutopia

Inspiration and information about what works in education.

4

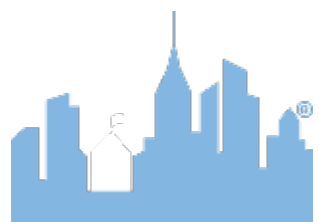
Taye Diggs

I'm serious chocolate and don't get it twisted. <http://iammixedme.com>
@CWallAmerican Host @CriticsChoice Ambassador @PlaySqorr

5

VetApologist

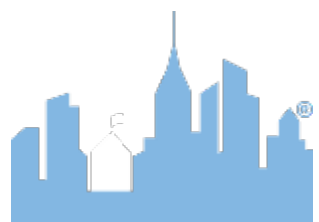
Christian, patriot, husband, father, grandfather, retired Navy vet, apologist, theologian, biologist, prolife, teacher, author, data analyst, #MAGA, #KAG



**FOLLOWERS WITH THE HIGHEST SOCIAL AUTHORITY, SOURCED FROM FOLLOWERWONK*

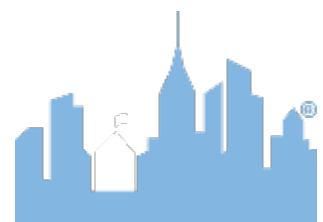
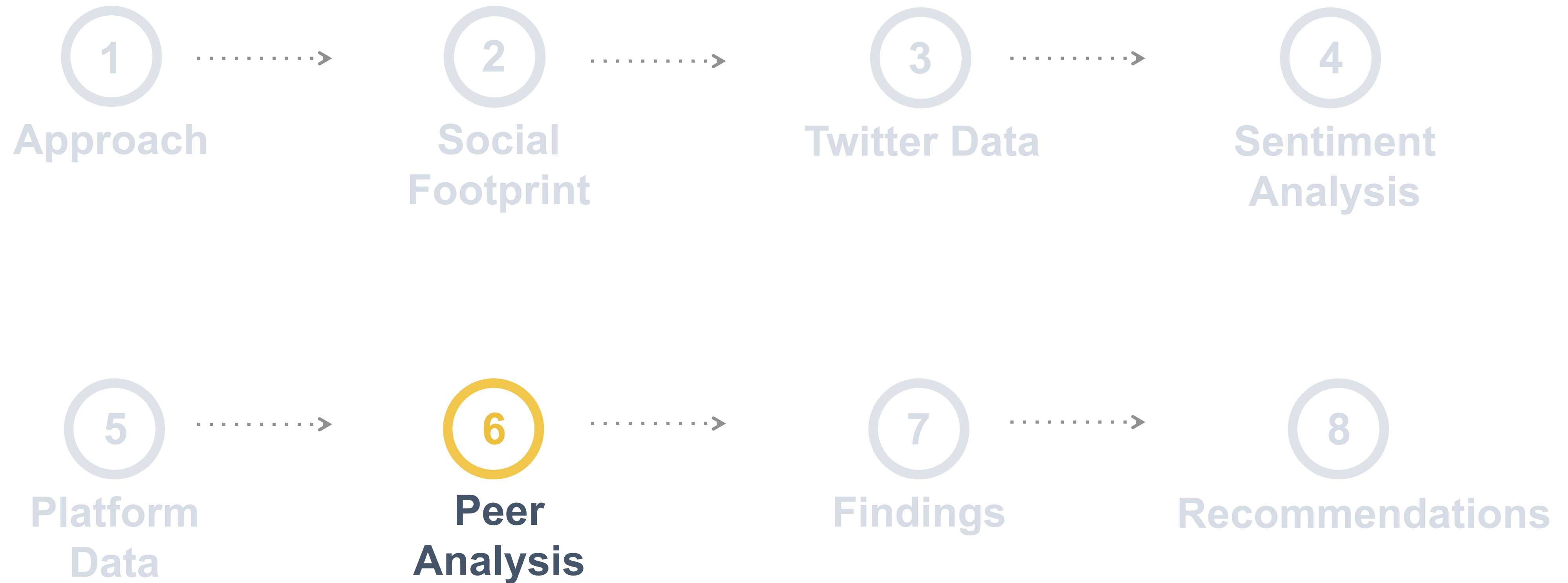
MOST FOLLOWED TWITTER FOLLOWERS

- 1 Edutopia – 1.13M followers**
Inspiration and information about what works in education.
- 2 Education Week – 845.5K followers**
Inspiring you through K-12 news, analysis, and opinion. Empowering you to make a difference in your community.
- 3 Nonprofit Tech for Good – 8K followers**
Promotes organizations doing great work in the world & shares useful technology resources. NPOs, NGOs, charities & activists. #GivingTrends20 | #NGOtech19
- 4 Iraqesque – 663.6K followers**
Best of the current living, culture, traditions & history of Iraqis. How Iraq interacted with the rest of the world since Mesopotamia cradled human civilisation
- 5 Taye Diggs – 643.9K followers**
I'm serious chocolate and don't get it twisted. <http://iammixedme.com>
@CWAllAmerican Host @CriticsChoice Ambassador @PlaySqorr



**PROFILES THAT HAVE THE MOST FOLLOWERS- SOURCE: SOCIAL RANK*

PEER ANALYSIS

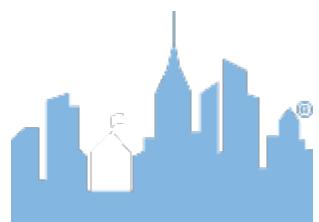


PEER ANALYSIS

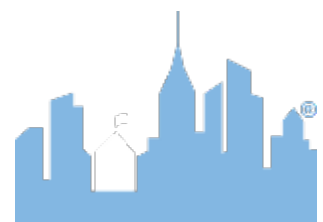
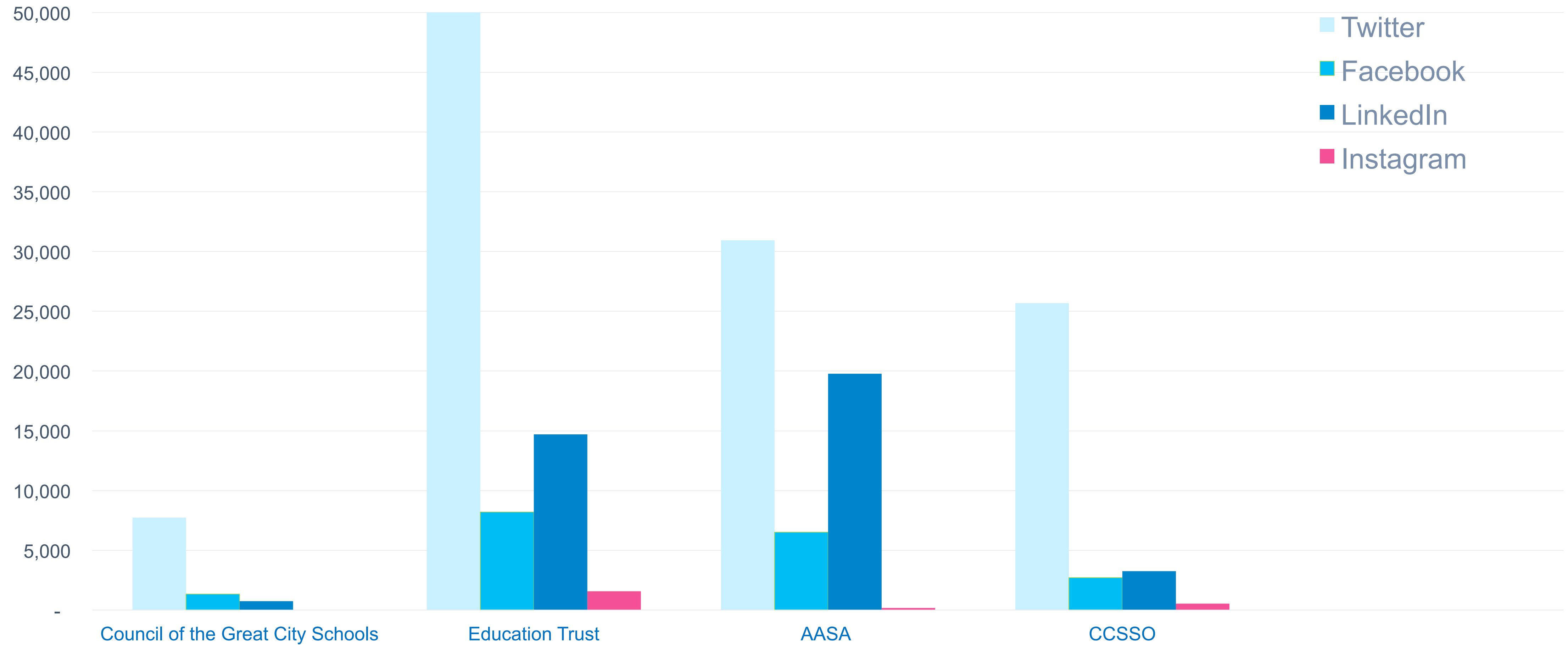
The peers selected in this analysis were chosen based on similar focus areas and CGCS' suggestions

The peers selected for this report include:

- EdTrust
- AASA
- CCSSO

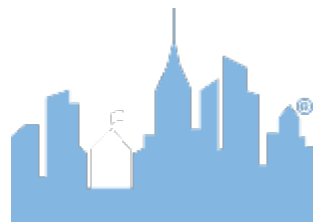
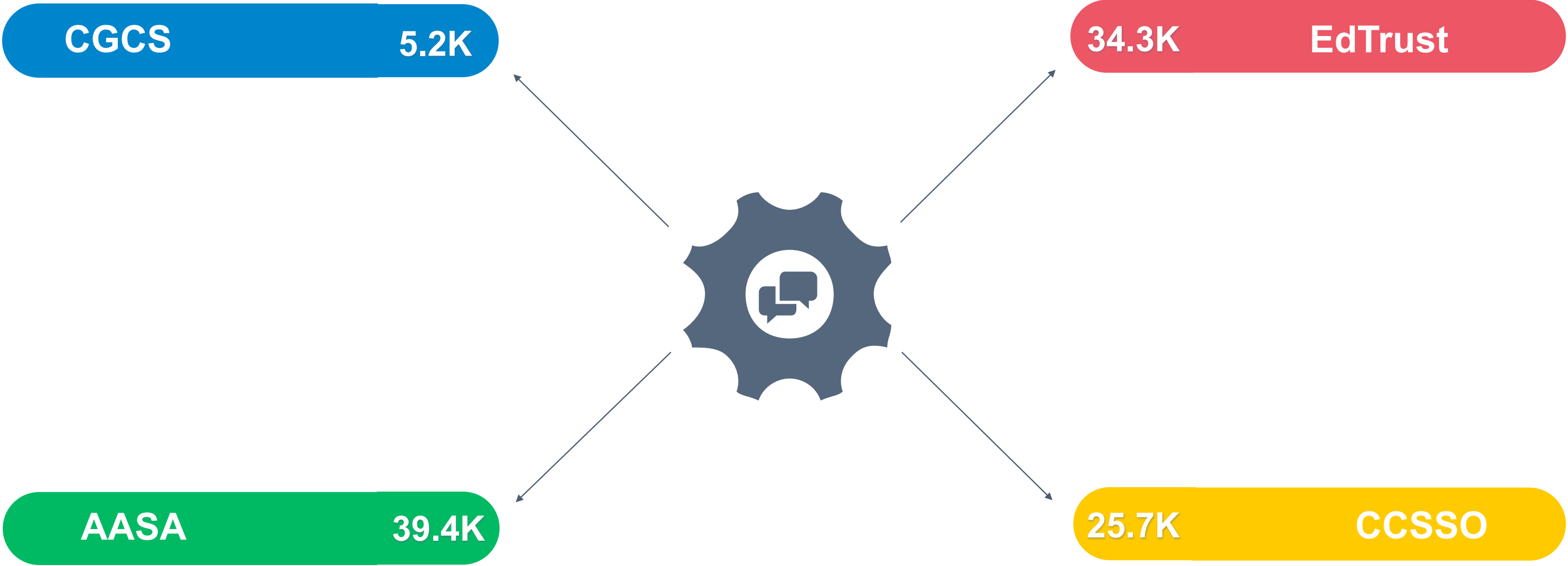


FOLLOWERS PER PLATFORM



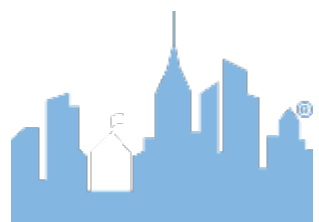
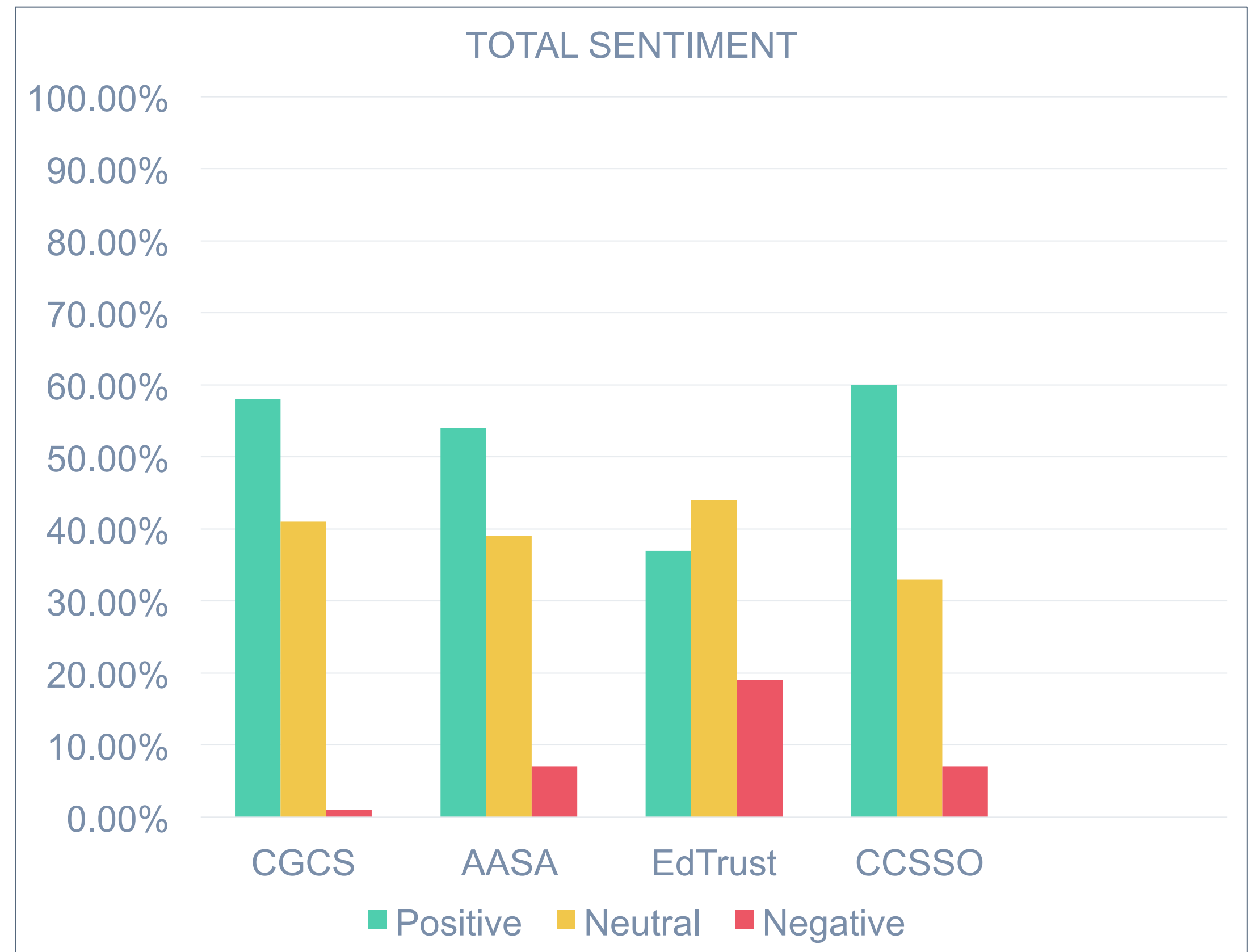
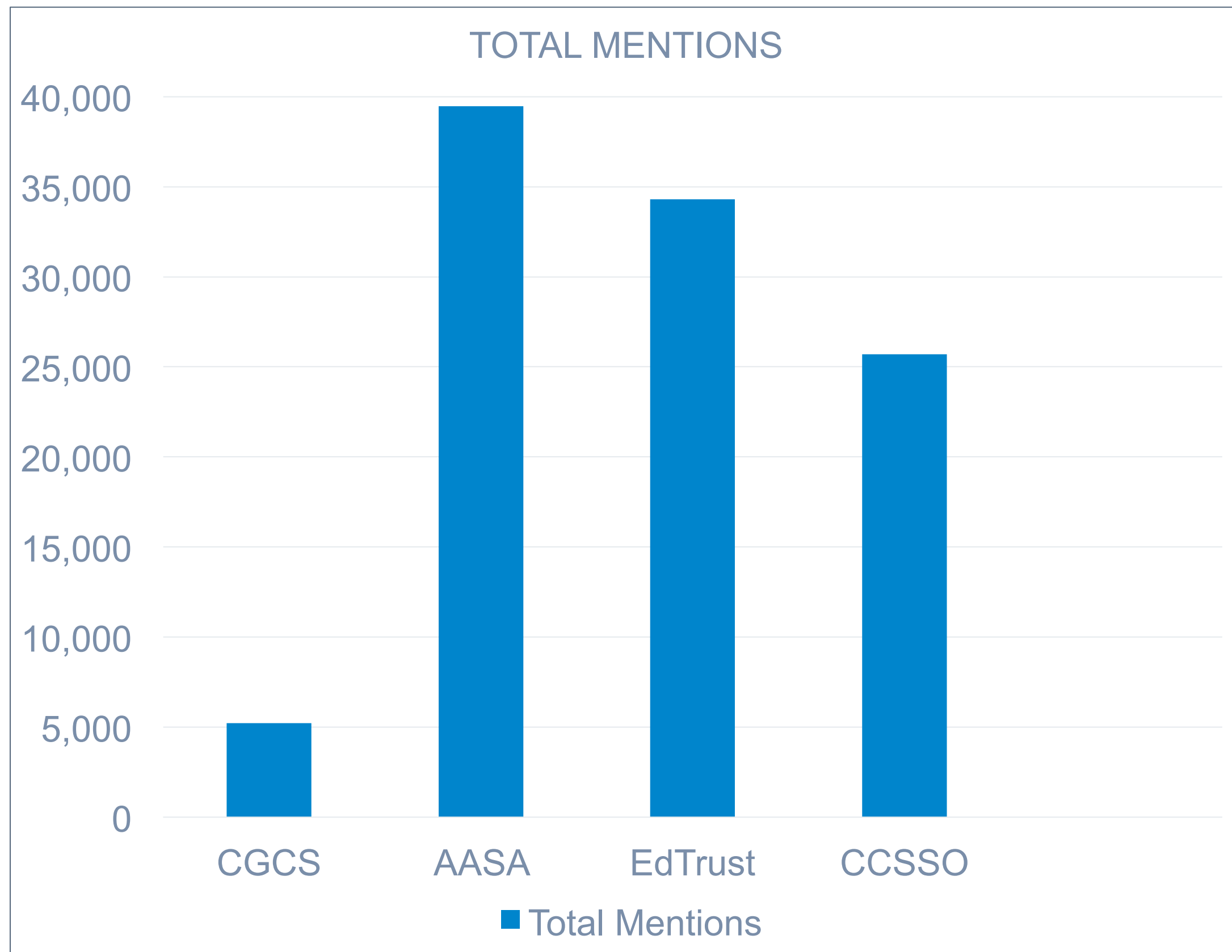
**SOURCE INDIVIDUAL PLATFORMS*

MENTIONS COMPARISON



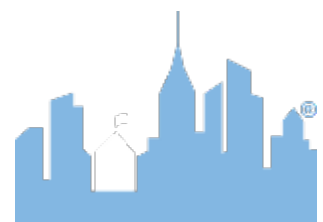
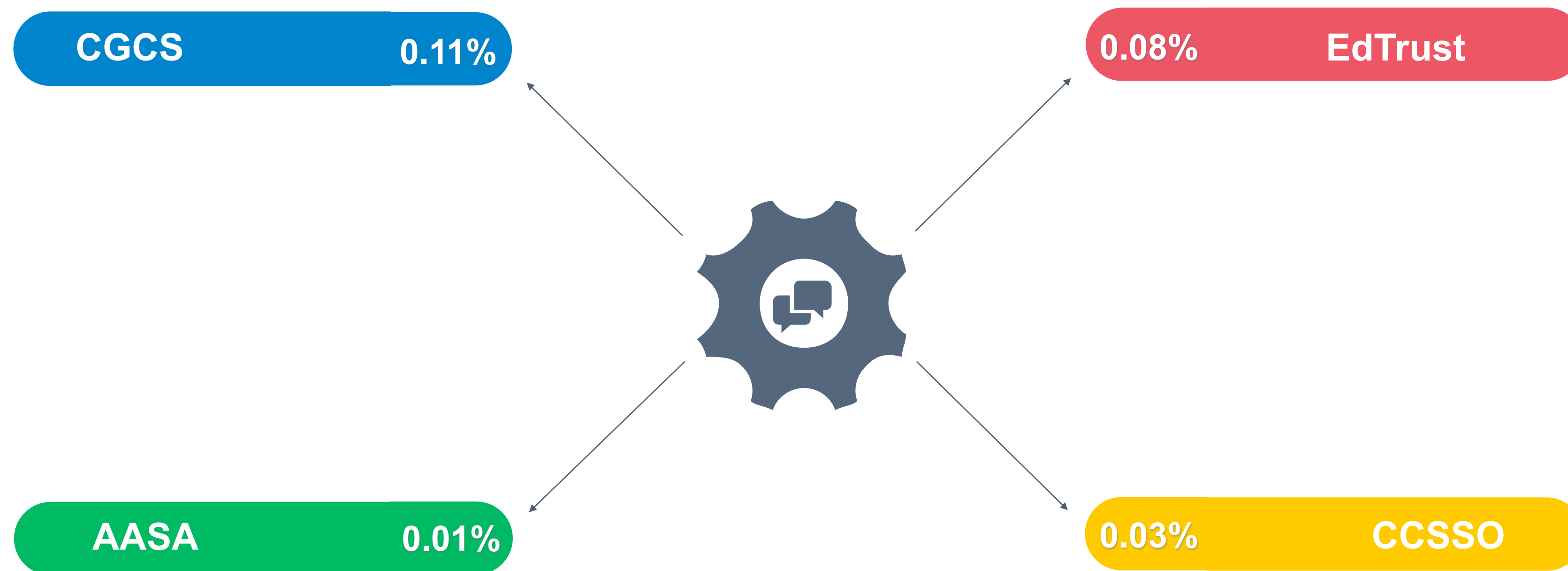
*SOURCE SYSOMOS

MENTIONS ANALYSIS



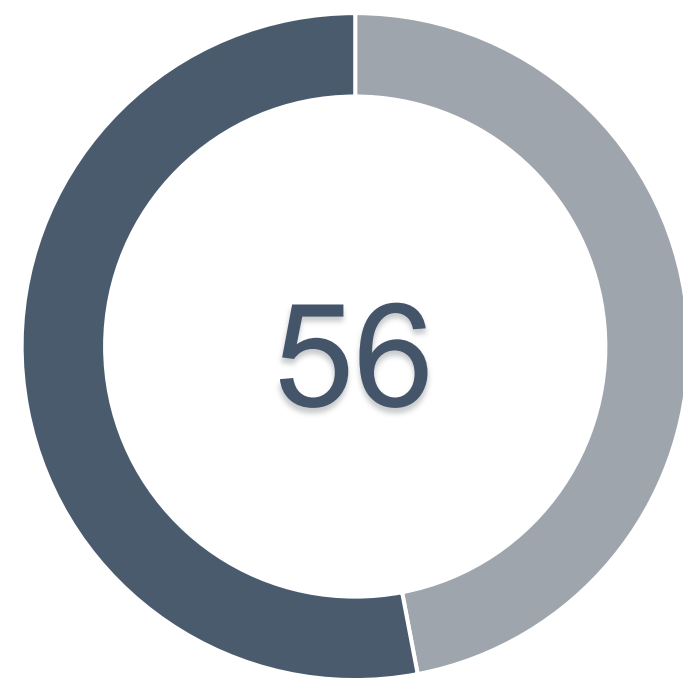
TWITTER ENGAGEMENT COMPARISON

The sum of average retweets plus average likes divided by the number of followers.

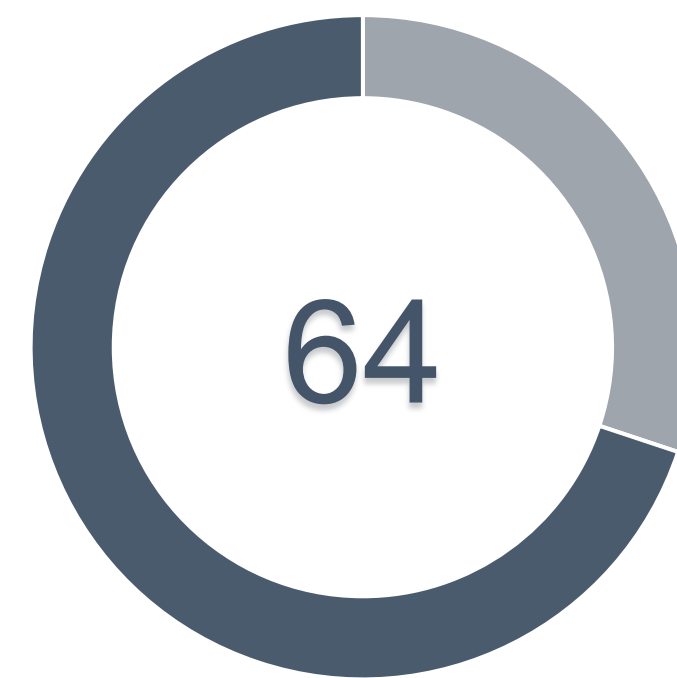


SOCIAL AUTHORITY COMPARISON

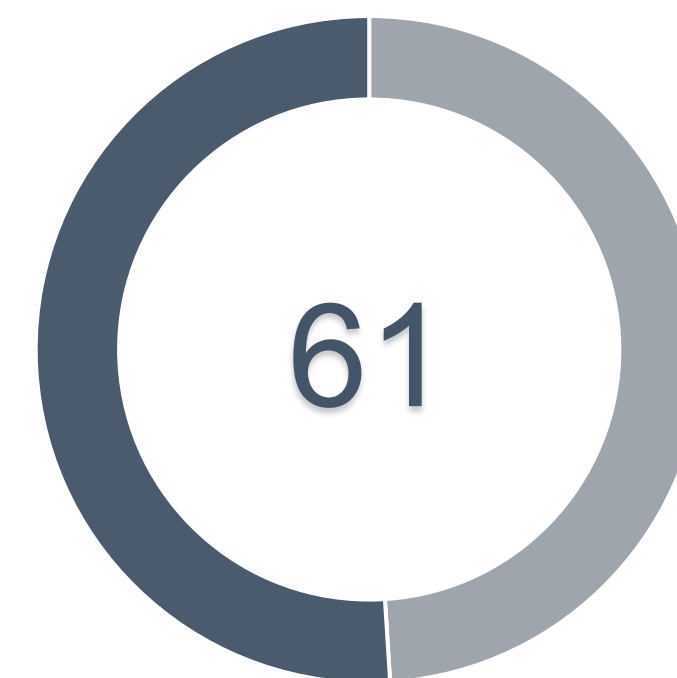
Social Authority is a blend of follower count, tweets, the age of the account, influence of followers, and reach.



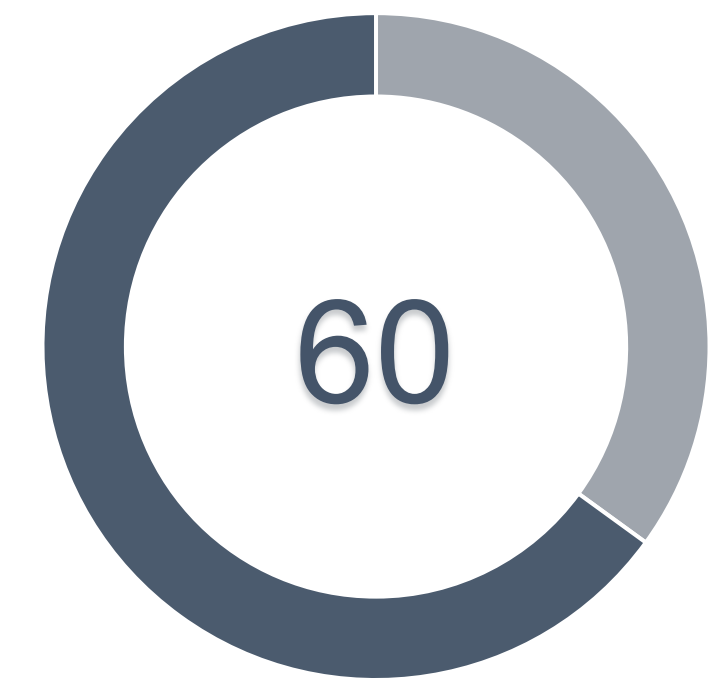
CGCS



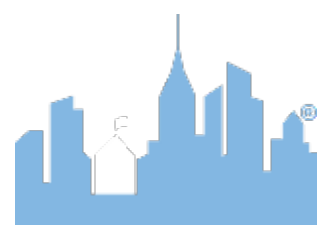
EdTrust



AASA



CCSSO

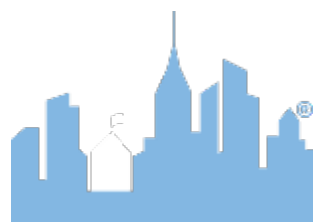


SCORING AND IMPACT

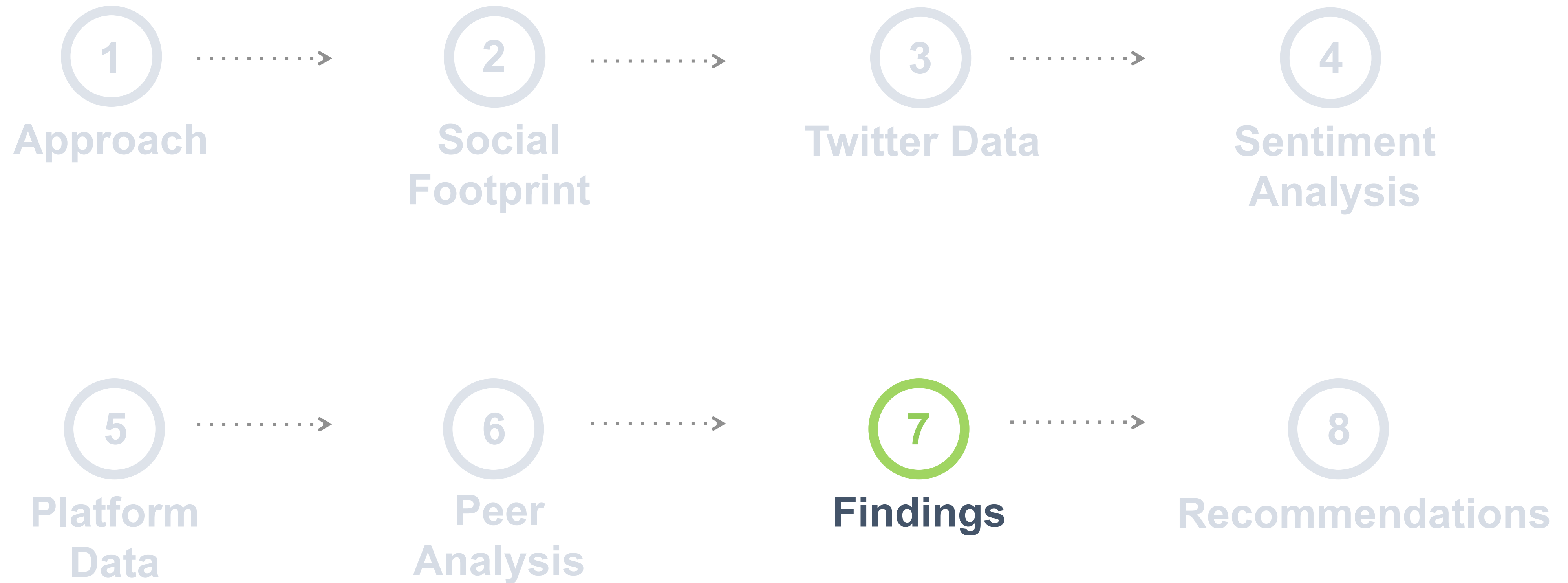
The Social Authority Score takes several factors into account to create an overall picture of an organization’s strength. Weighing into the final number, the system takes followers, postings, engagement, mentions, sentiment, and many other variables to create an objective metric. Once this number is known, it can be used as a measuring stick when comparing the overall power of the brand vs. its competitors, as well as an objective tool to track growth and success of branding efforts. Anything over 60 is considered a “good” score.

The Council of the Great City Schools had a Social Authority score (56) that came in last within the peer group. The Council had a largely positive sentiment, with a notably lower negative sentiment than its peers. With a large amount of neutral sentiment, there is room to continue to improve how people discuss The Council and its work online.

Moving forward, the scores indicate that there is room to grow. Some tweaks should help The Council of the Great City Schools trend upward, and a focus on the broader consistency of messaging and increased frequency of outreach can help the council increase scores while generating a meaningful outcome, both for the Council’s social networks, and for the overall goals of the organization.



FINDINGS



“SWOT” ANALYSIS



Strengths

The Council of the Great City Schools is an established voice with a solid reputation in the education community. There are some valuable influencers that follow CGCS on Twitter. CGCS elevates the voices of urban schools and engages with them on Twitter.



Weakness

CGCS does not utilize consistent hashtags and does not post very frequently. CGCS should consider establishing its own social voice, creating a stronger presence, and leading by example.



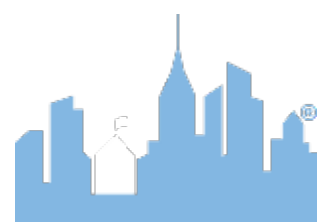
Opportunities

The opportunity exists for CGCS to leverage its influential followers and relationships with coalition schools to keep building its follower base. By growing all social channels, the organization can gain more exposure nationally within its target market. Because the education industry utilizes Twitter as its main tool, CGCS has an opportunity to shine.



Threats

The market is saturated with education content and ensuring one gets their message to the appropriate audience is the main challenge. CGCS should strategically expand its social footprint without stretching its resources too thin.

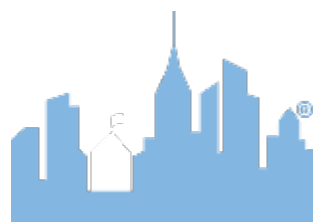


ROOM FOR GROWTH

CGCS has low amplification and moderate engagement.

Social Authority score was ranked last among peers.

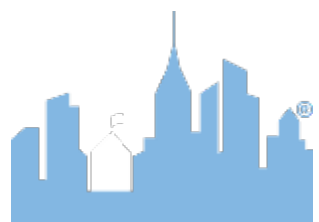
CGCS had largely positive or neutral sentiment.



OPPORTUNITY

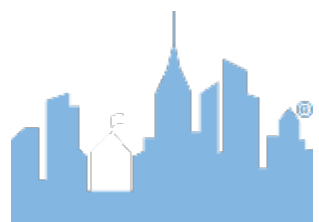
When comparing CGCS with its peers in terms of sentiment, followers, and social authority, EdTrust led the group.

As CGCS sets goals and executes new strategy for 2020, it can shape the narrative and position itself to gain traction in all metrics and improve its engaged follower count across platforms.



INSTAGRAM OPPORTUNITY

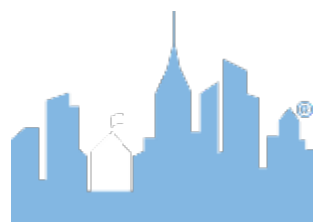
- All organizations compared have limited Instagram follower base, but some presence on the app.
- As part of its 2020 goals, CGCS should determine whether expanding its Instagram account is a worthwhile endeavor.
- With a focus on compelling content, CGCS can position itself as a thought leader on Instagram and compete strongly with its peer group.



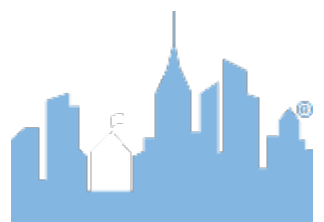
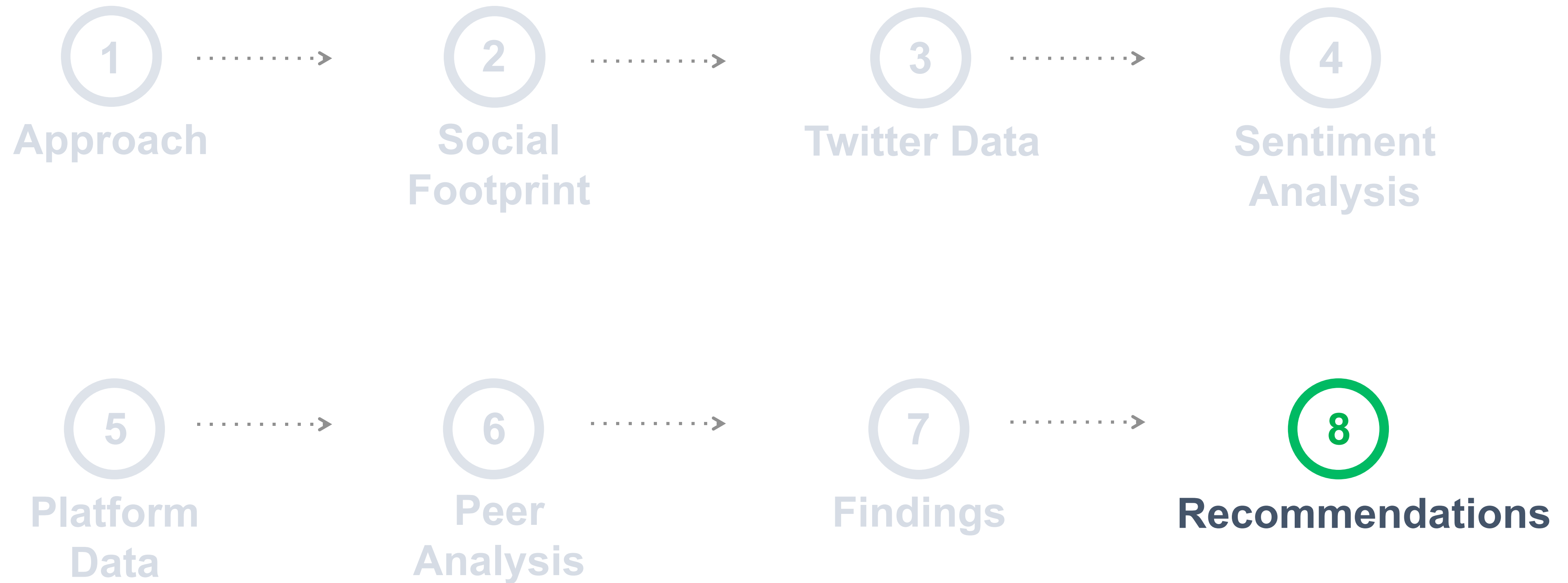
INFLUENCE

There is influence within CGCS' follower base and coalition schools and that can be leveraged to amplify the message and generate new followers to grow CGCS as a thought leader organically.

CGCS has an opportunity to grow its follower base and promote the good work it's doing by leveraging followers more and by organizing more coalition social campaigns.



RECOMMENDATIONS



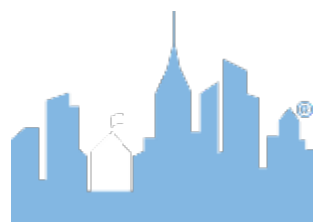
RECOMMENDATIONS

As The Council of the Great City Schools charts a strategy for growth on social media in 2020, we recommend focusing on three areas:

Influence

Engagement

Reach



ENHANCE SOCIAL FOOTPRINT



CREATE

Create consistent brand messaging and unique hashtags that focus on increasing followers, engagement, and amplification.



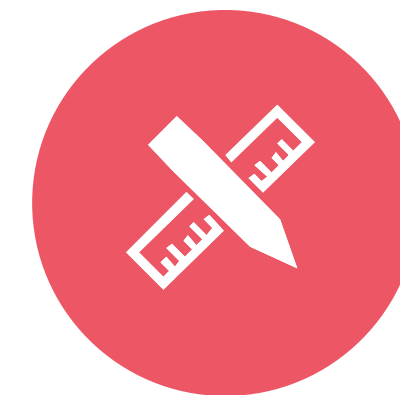
TRACK

Track messaging, mentions, and sentiment to ensure the desired message is being heard and that it resonates with the target audience. This is the key to future success.



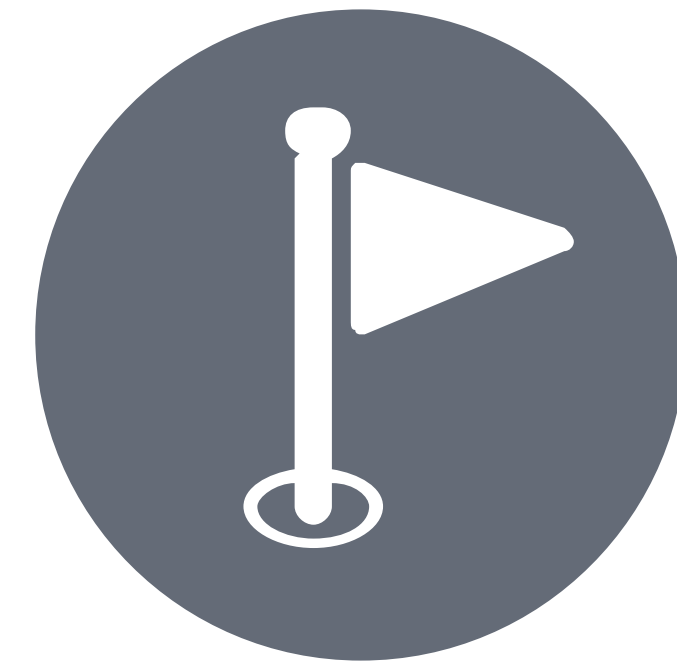
PLAN

Create a roadmap and schedule for desired milestones. Leverage future organizational events, themed months, and current events to maximize brand exposure.



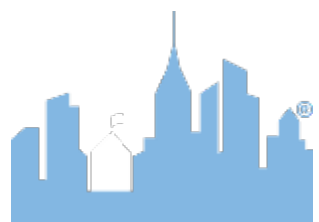
TOOLS

Utilize a myriad of tools to strategically build your profile online. Leverage influencers, data, analytics, and engage team members as well as highly-engaged followers to engage with target audiences.



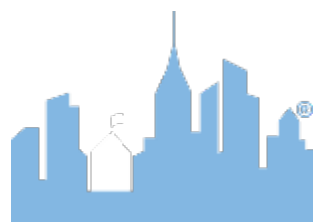
GOALS

Set goals and milestones for targeted outreach and compare benchmark report to current footprint regularly to determine what is working effectively.



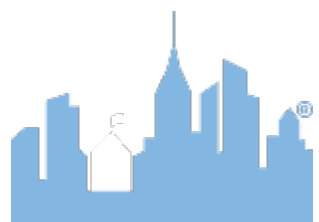
INCREASE ENGAGEMENT

- Take steps to develop a synergistic social and traditional public relations/ digital campaign, leveraging the same content across multiple mediums to help build CGCS' social authority.
- Create a comprehensive social messaging plan to promote your own organization as a resource.
- Prioritize building out a lower-performing account (Instagram) and focus on engagement.



LEVERAGE SOCIAL LISTENING

- Take steps to leverage social listening to drive successful engagement and message amplification in tandem with targeted content to various market segments to expand the message.
- Track hashtags to monitor social sentiment to position CGCS for opportunities and responses to any negative feedback.
- Identify target audiences and create and implement unique hashtags to ensure your message is getting in front of your target audience.
- Track the effectiveness and reach of your hashtag use and engage with your diverse follower base to grow your audience and build an engaged community.



EXECUTE INFLUENCER STRATEGY

Develop an influencer strategy/game plan to spread The Council of the Great City Schools' messages in a way that generates exposure, builds the follower base, and results in higher engagement and amplification. Identify, quantify, and engage micro, nano, and celebrity influencers and encourage the CGCS community to participate.

Nano

Identify nano influencers who have between 1.5k and 5k followers with larger engagement within areas of interest.

Micro

Identify micro influencers who have between 5k and 10k followers with high engagement within areas of interest.

Celebrity

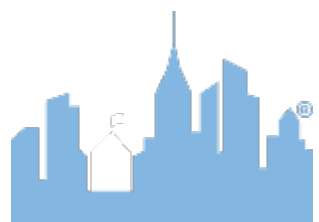
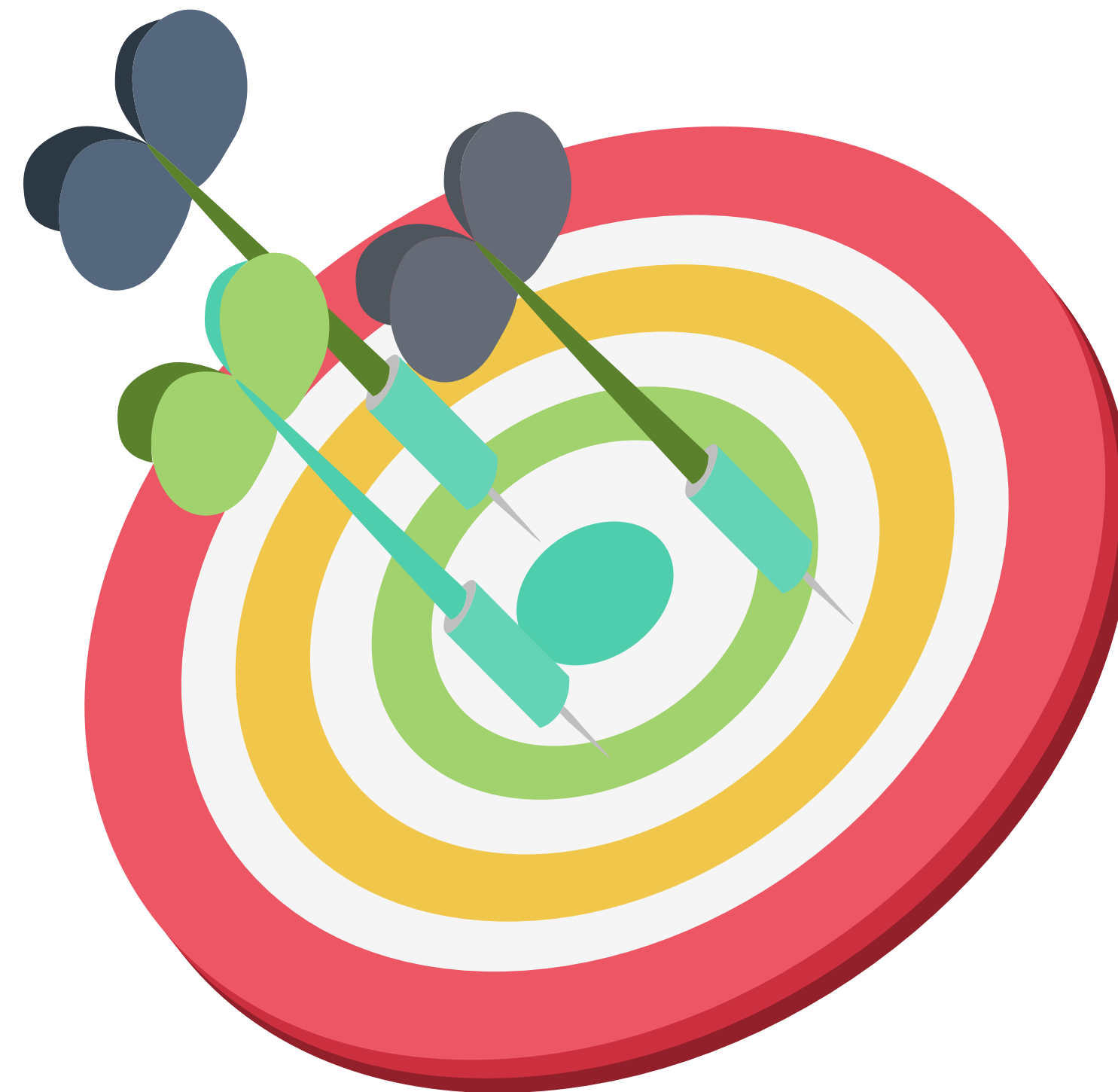
Identify celebrity influencers who have more than 10k followers (strong emphasis on those with 100k+) with high engagement within areas of interest. Set realistic expectations for celebrity involvement.

Followers

Engage celebrity/known followers by tagging them in posts/tweets.

Council Team

Engage the CGCS team as part of an influencer strategy and build out robust leadership profiles.

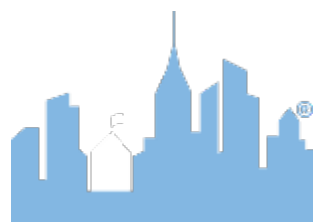


TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

As CGCS determines 2020 goals, it should consider implementing the recommendations outlined within the Social Pulse to strengthen the relationship between social media and executing the Council's overall mission.

Once execution of 2020 goals commences, CGCS should use metrics to track progress.

We suggest a follow-up social audit in the next 3-6 months to track progress, identify key learnings, and compare the new results to this benchmark report.





THANK YOU!

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT HATCHER DIGITAL

DIGITAL@THEHATCHERGROUP.COM



May 27, 2020

Tonya Harris
Director of Communications
Council of the Great City Schools
1331 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W., Ste 1100N
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Tonya,

This document represents a letter of agreement between The Hatcher Group, and the Council of the Great City Schools.

For the purposes of this agreement, The Hatcher Group is represented by Amy Buckley, Partner, and the Council of the Great City Schools is represented by Michael Casserly, Executive Director.

Scope of Work

Under the terms of this agreement, The Hatcher Group will provide digital strategy, content, and execution of a digital advocacy campaign for of the Council. The contract period is for May 29 through July 31, 2020. Specifically, Hatcher will:

- Hold a kickoff meeting with the Council to determine messaging, audience, and needs.
- Review website content created by the Council.
- Develop 10 social media posts for the Council's feeds promoting the action alert.
- Create email content for three messages to be sent to the Council's email list in constant contact, as well sending and monitoring of the email performance.
- Formulate and launch a Facebook ad campaign composed of two ad sets, including development of content, and monitoring of performance.
- Make a presentation to Council leadership and discuss the results compiled into a final report.

Compensation

For these services, The Hatcher Group will be paid a fixed fee of \$10,235 for 50-55 hours of work calculated based on the Hatcher Group's 2020 fully loaded rates and \$2,000 for digital ads associated with the campaign. A summary of the budget by staff is below in Exhibit A.

This fixed fee amount does not include any additional mutually agreed upon expenses, including travel and printing. The Hatcher Group will maintain and provide receipts for all expenses and receive prior approval for any expenses exceeding \$100.

The Hatcher Group will invoice The Council of the Great City Schools in two installments: \$5,100 at the signing of the contract and \$5,135 at the end of the project. Each invoice will also include additional approved expenses not part of the fixed fee.



Payment will be made within thirty (30) days of receipt of monthly invoices. All payments should be sent to:

The Hatcher Group
4340 East West Highway
Suite 912
Bethesda, MD 20814

Cancellation

It is understood that either party may cancel this agreement without cause with 10 days’ notice. If canceled, the Council of the Great City Schools agrees to pay The Hatcher Group for services rendered to-date based on The Hatcher Group’s 2019 fully loaded rates.

Out of Scope Work

All out of the scope work must be mutually agreed by both parties in writing prior to provision of said services.

Amy Buckley
Partner
The Hatcher Group

Michael Casserly
Executive Director
Council of the Great City Schools

Exhibit A: Budget Summary by Project Role

Name	Project Role	Hours	Total
Sami Ghani	Lead Digital Audit, Draft Review & Recommendations, Final Presentation	45	\$6,435
Robert Johnston	Client Lead & Review	7	\$1,800
	Staff time/budget		\$8,235
	Digital ads		\$2,000
	Total Budget		\$10,235



THE URBAN EDUCATOR



Urban Educator



2020-2021 School Year Kicks Off With Virtual Learning

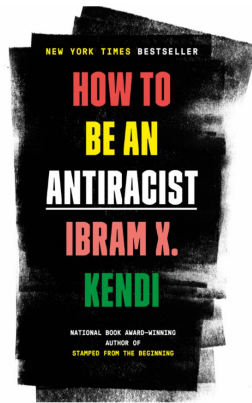
The nation's urban school districts kicked off the 2020-21 school year with most having students learning in a "distance," or remote, environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Starting school virtually is not what many districts hoped to be doing, but it's what they had to do in light of the COVID-19 pandemic," said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools. "They worked extremely hard to ensure families had the resources and support to navigate remote learning. This work included developing extensive reopening plans with input from parents, staff and community members; and distributing to homes thousands of computer devices and hotspots, all while continuing to plan, prepare and stay flexible to make sure students received a high-quality education, no matter the setting."

In the midst of a school year unlike any other, big-city school districts also launched new programs, policies, schools and technologies. Here's a roundup of what some

urban school districts are offering:

[Read More](#)



Virtual Fall Conference to Feature Bestselling Author

Ibram X. Kendi, a National Book Award-winning and *New York Times* bestselling author, will address urban educators at the Council of the Great City Schools' 64th Annual Virtual Fall Conference, Oct. 13-17.

[Read More](#)



LA School District Launches COVID-19 Testing and Tracing Program

Los Angeles Unified School District opened the school year with an extensive program aiming to do regular COVID-19 testing and contact tracing with all students and staff as well as families of those who test positive.

[Read More](#)



New Superintendent in Austin, Interim Leader Named in Toronto

Texas' Austin Independent School District recently selected Stephanie Elizalde to lead the 80,000-student school district. Elizalde is the district's first Latina superintendent and succeeds Paul Cruz, who left the district to become a professor at the University of Texas at Austin.

[Read More](#)

Back-to-School Message from the Chair of the Council



As someone who has been front-and-center as a policy-maker in urban public education for more than a dozen years, I thought I had seen quite a bit over the years.

[Read More](#)



Council Applauds Federal Judge's Decision to Block Education Department's Effort to Divert Money from Public to Private Schools

The Council of the Great City Schools applauded the recent decision by a federal judge in Washington state to temporarily block the U.S. Department of Education's plan to divert hundreds of millions of dollars Congress intended to support public schools grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic to private schools.

[Read More](#)



Legislative Column

Ignoring the Public-School Financial Crisis

In this election year, even the reopening of schools has become politicized. Yet the looming question of how schools will operate financially through the 2020-21 school year has been virtually ignored by our federal leaders.

[Read More](#)

Guilford County Student Creates His Own Classroom

A first-grader at North Carolina's Guilford County Schools in Greensboro transformed



his entire bedroom into a classroom to have a better learning environment during virtual learning.

[Read More](#)

Read more stories here

[Charlotte, Shelby County Schools Roll Out Meal Bundle Programs](#) | [Former Norfolk School Board Member Dies](#) | [Urban Teachers Receive Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching](#) | [Healthiest Schools in the Nation Recognized](#)

Upcoming Events



64th Annual Fall Conference

The Council of the Great City Schools is holding its 64th Annual Fall Conference virtually.

When:

October 13 - October 17, 2020

[Register Link](#)



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Secretary-Treasurer
Ashley Paz
Board Member, Fort Worth

A newsletter published by the Council of the Great City Schools, representing 76 of the nation's largest urban public school districts. [Click here](#) to learn more. All news items should be submitted to Tonya Harris (tharris@cgcs.org).