

Learning Loss Due to COVID-19 Pandemic

Summary

Though necessary to combat the spread of COVID-19, school closures and issues with remote learning will likely lead to New Mexico's children losing the equivalent of three months to an entire year of learning. This loss is expected to impact younger, at-risk children more. On March 13, 2020, the governor ordered schools to close for three weeks, starting on March 16, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 27, the governor extended school closures through the remainder of the school year. Along with this announcement, the Public Education Department (PED) waived requirements to make up instruction for the three weeks of closures and instead required schools to develop continuous (distance) learning plans for the remainder of the year. In response to New Mexico school closures, this policy spotlight seeks to document the transition to distance learning, determine the range of learning loss due to school closures, and recommend strategies to make up for these losses.

Children will need to catch up after the COVID-19 pandemic caused three months to a year of learning loss.

While the move to distance learning was unavoidable, the early closing of schools inherently exacerbated summer learning loss. Further, certain factors like differing access to the internet, computers, and parental engagement mean that at-risk children will likely start the upcoming school year farther behind than their more affluent peers.

To avoid further widening existing achievement gaps, safely reopening schools and making up lost-learning time must be a top priority for New Mexico. Guidelines from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention should make it possible to reopen schools, and some states have already opened their schools for summer school and fall in-person instruction. Although summer and extended learning programs could potentially help address learning loss, PED has canceled K-5 Plus extended school year programs for FY21, which would have added an additional 25 instructional days leading into the new school year for participating districts.

PED recently convened a reentry task force to develop guidelines for reopening in the fall, which must address unique challenges to reopen schools in New Mexico, including accommodating an older teacher workforce and accounting for the second-highest rate of infected children in the nation. However, strong guidance with an emphasis on addressing learning loss will help New Mexico mitigate the effects of lost learning time and ensure a COVID-19 slide does not exacerbate the existing achievement gap highlighted by the *Martinez and Yazzie v. New Mexico* consolidated education sufficiency lawsuits.

LFC staff would like to acknowledge and thank Legislative Education Study Committee staff and Public Education Department staff for their thoughtful contributions to this report, particularly with continuing learning plans. LFC staff would also like to thank the 4,170 teachers who responded to the LFC teacher survey, representing 73 districts and 15 charter schools, teachers and staff who participated in group forums, and parents who participated in interviews and group forums.

Spotlight

Program Evaluation Unit
Legislative Finance Committee
June 10, 2020



NEW MEXICO
LEGISLATIVE
FINANCE
COMMITTEE



Continuous Learning Plan (CLP): A school district's plan on how to meet the needs of supporting learning outside of normal educational practices.

New Mexico's Children Will Start the 2020-2021 School Year Three Months to a Year Behind

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, public schools closed for three weeks in March. Subsequently, PED provided guidance for continuous distance learning, encouraging districts to focus on previously taught materials (enrichment) and to plan to cut instructional time to a fraction of the normal school day. Districts submitted continuous learning plans (CLP) to PED.

In normal years, most students lose between one to two months of learning over the summer break (a phenomenon referred to as the summer slide.) Due to the unavoidable early school closures, however, students will lose substantially more learning time than normal, partly because of low student engagement.

School closures will exacerbate learning loss over the summer, leaving students three months to a year behind. Not considering the reduced time on task for younger children, learning loss will likely be greater for younger children. Researchers from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) examined data on the summer slide phenomenon, in which students, particularly those in low-income families, lose months of reading and math knowledge. Due to school closures and less time spent on instruction, this year's losses are likely greater than normal summer learning loss.

Using testing data to forecast how much further students would fall behind due to early school closures, NWEA projected students will return next year with only 70 percent of their typical gains in reading and less than 50 percent of the expected gains in math. In other words, instead of a usual one- to two-month loss in knowledge content, students could return to school in the fall three months to a year behind due to school closures.

The NWEA researchers note that, to help mitigate the potential slide, educators will need assessment data to guide curriculum and instruction, especially to target resources and support for students most impacted by the COVID-19 school closures. PED should work collaboratively across stakeholder groups to determine how to best collect and utilize formative assessment data to inform instruction.



Figure 1. Projected Learning Loss in Math and Reading Due to COVID-19 Slide
 Figure 1. Mathematics forecast

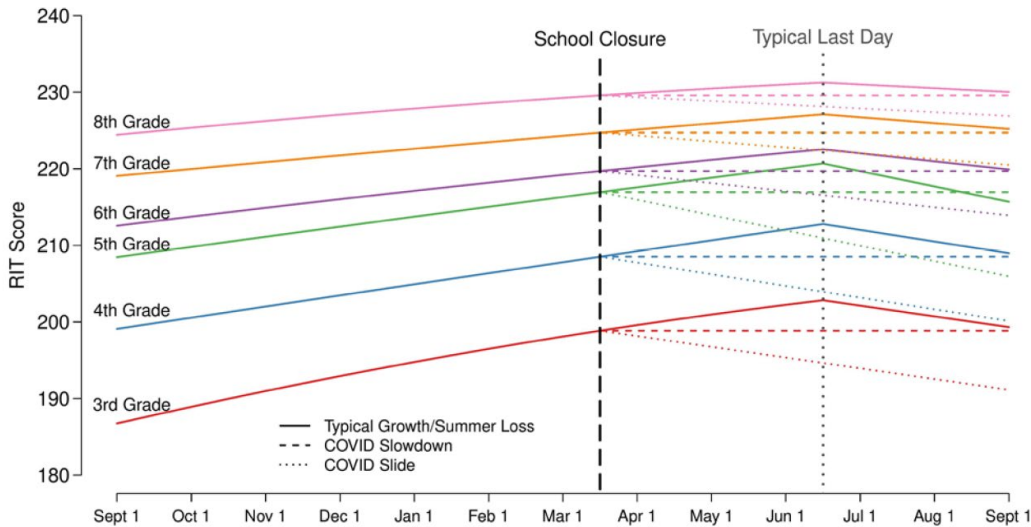
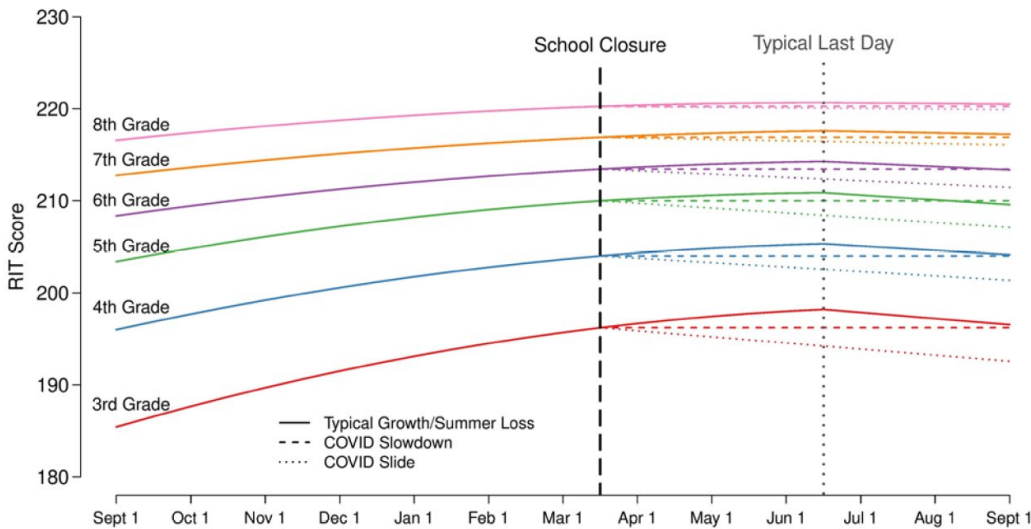


Figure 2. Reading forecast



Source: Kuhfeld, M. & Tarasawa, B. (2020). *The COVID-19 slide: What summer learning loss can tell us about the potential impact of school closures on student academic achievement.* NWEA.

McKinsey & Company found that if schools delay reopening until January 2021, students will suffer an additional three to 14 months of learning losses. McKinsey’s model also showed that these losses would hit low-income, black, and Hispanic students the hardest, and would exacerbate existing achievement gaps by 15 to 20 percent. Longer-term, the McKinsey study monetized the impact of lost learning, modeling that it would lead to increased high school drop-out rates and cost the average student between



\$61,000 to \$82,000 in lifetime earnings, or the equivalent of a year of full-time work, solely as a result of COVID-19–related learning losses.

Figure 2. Average Months of Learning Lost if Schools Resume In-Class Schooling in January, 2021



Note: Estimates based on income quintiles that top 2 income quintiles receive high-quality instruction. Includes 0.05 standard deviation reduction for black, Hispanic, and low-income students to account for recession impacts (~1 month of additional lost learning). Analysis on US Census 2018 data. Source: McKinsey & Company. Available: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-student-learning-in-the-united-states-the-hurt-could-last-a-lifetime>

Due to the pandemic, students lost instructional time. Previous LFC staff reports have highlighted the importance of *time on task* (time spent on instruction) as being essential to helping students learn and eliminating the achievement gap. Not factoring in the summer slide, or student engagement, all students lost at least five to eight weeks' worth of class-time instruction, with the youngest children losing the most. However, there is no consensus on the correct amount of time of virtual instruction to provide when it comes to virtual education.

During a regular school year, between March 16 and the end of the year, students would have attended approximately 8.5 weeks of in-person schooling, with a recommended 5.5 hours of instructional time for kindergarten through fifth grade and six hours a day for sixth through 12th grades. PED’s guidance to school districts in developing their CLPs was to provide direct instruction each day, ranging from 30 minutes for prekindergarten and kindergartners to three hours per day for middle and high school students. Under the CLPs, this equates to 6.9 percent of the recommended instructional time for prekindergarten to 38.1 percent for grades six through 12.

A review of remote learning guidance from state education agencies by the MIT Teaching Systems Lab noted a number of different strategies states used to ensure children were continuing to receive instruction. These strategies ranged from states like New Mexico and Kansas provided less instruction time among states that provided guidance to, Idaho who recommended a minimum of four hours a day, and Massachusetts recommended half the school day of direct instruction for all grade levels.

Although PED’s guidance recommended 30 minutes to three hours for maximum student commitment in terms of direct instruction each day, the guidance also noted that “additional reading time or storytelling is always encouraged” for elementary-aged students. Especially for younger children

New Mexico and Kansas recommended the lowest amount of instruction time among states that provided guidance.

Source: MIT Teaching Systems Lab

these additional activities would likely be dependent on a parent’s ability to assist the child in the activities.

Figure 3. PED Guidance to Parents on How Much Instructional Time to Expect

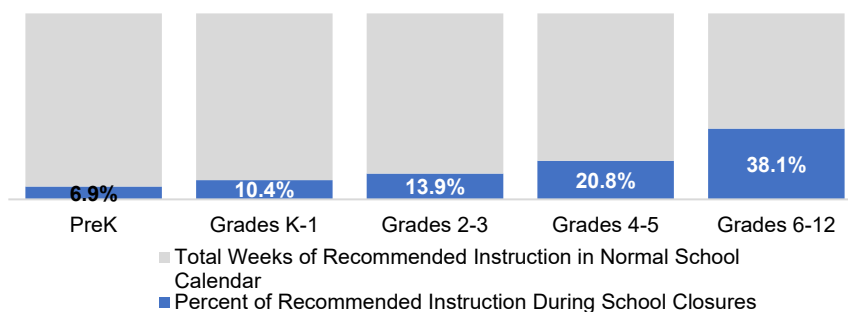
Q. How many hours of instruction should we expect each day?

Continuous learning focuses on critical standards and the skills needed for grade advancement. Our recommended guidelines for maximum student commitment in terms of direct instruction *each day* are as follows. Additional reading time or storytelling is always encouraged.

- Pre-K : 30 minutes
- Grades K-1: 45 minutes
- Grades 2-3: 60 minutes
- Grades 4-5: 90 minutes
- Grades 6-12: 30 minutes per teacher (3 hours max in a day)

Source: PED

Chart 1. Percent of Instructional Time During School Closures Compared With Normal Calendar



Source: LFC analysis of PED CLP guidance

More than half of students did not regularly participate in distance learning by year’s end. Among 4,170 New Mexico teachers from 73 school districts who responded to an LFC survey, teachers reported approximately 53.8 percent of students were actively participating in distance learning activities at the start of school closures, but participation dropped to 47.4 percent of students in the final weeks, indicating 6.4 percent of students stopped participating in distance learning throughout school closures.

Of additional concern, teachers reported they could not reach or contact approximately 22.1 percent of their students. Participation rates in New Mexico were consistent with a Reuters national survey of school superintendents. PED recognized this issue early on and contracted with Graduation Alliance, Inc. to reach up to 17.5 thousand disconnected youth through outreach counselors to attempt to reengage them.

Distance education might benefit from utilizing attendance requirements going forward. School districts provided plans to PED for

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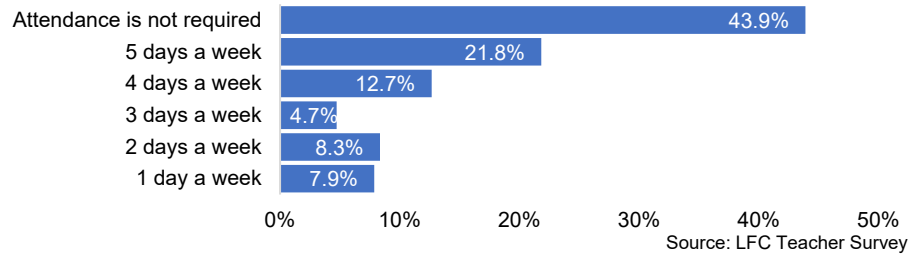
One in five students could not be contacted during the pandemic. Some districts identified this issue in board meetings. To address this problem, PED entered into a \$450 thousand contract with Graduation Alliance, Inc. to engage 17.5 thousand disconnected youth.

Source: LFC Teacher Survey



how teachers would check-in with students during school closures in their CLPs. Of the 89 school districts, only seven (7.9 percent) required student attendance during distance learning in their CLPs. About a third (37.1 percent) of school districts planned to monitor and gauge student attendance, and 13 (14.6 percent) school districts provided clear guidance regarding consequences or retention of students who do not attend or participate.

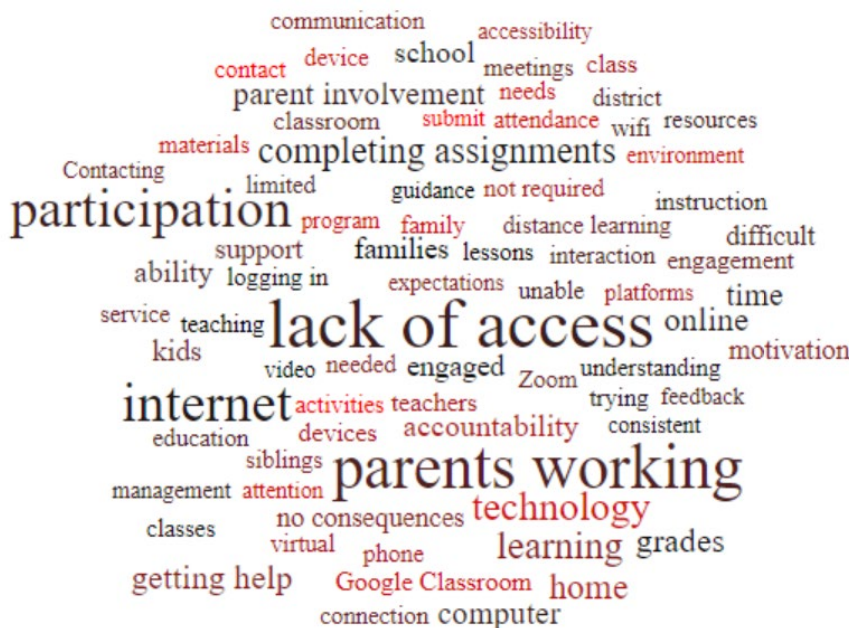
Chart 2. Days of Required Attendance as Reported by Teachers




Although PED’s CLP guidance focused on reinforcing content and keeping

students engaged, the LFC teacher survey indicated that engagement was better for teachers who had attendance requirements. Additionally, the LFC teacher survey, several teachers commented grades and attendance should be required moving forward to encourage student participation. In addition, when asked what the biggest challenges were to student participation in distance education during school closures, teachers most frequently cited lack of access to computers and the internet, parents working who could not help their children, inadequate internet connections, incomplete assignments, lack of parent involvement, inadequate technology, and inaccessibility to help.

Figure 4. Biggest Challenges to Distance Education as Identified by Teachers



Source: LFC Teacher Survey



New Mexico emphasized review rather than teaching new content during school closures. States generally took one of two directions in deciding whether schools should teach new content, or focus on previously taught content (enrichment). MIT researchers review of the research on online schooling and online learning suggests that interest-driven enrichment approaches may prove to be more generative for student learning and well-being than efforts to maintain progress on standards-aligned materials. With an interest-driven enrichment approach to remote learning, students could finish the quarantine period having developed valuable new life skills or personally-relevant knowledge, but are also likely to experience the equivalent of an extended period of summer learning loss, with particularly negative effects for students who struggle on standardized tests and other gatekeeping experiences. Ongoing evaluation, assessment, and monitoring of student learning loss is recommended to determine areas of need to make up potential lost learning and close achievement gaps due to school closures.

However, concentrating on previously learned material instead of new material may exacerbate learning loss and progress toward state standards. According to MIT's Teaching Systems Lab, a case can be made for addressing new material during remote learning, as it can lessen the need for later remediation. Instead of teaching new material, New Mexico's CLP guidance to school districts from PED emphasized review and a focus on, "the assets of home-based learning, rather than trying to recreate school." Other states, however, continued teaching new content. For example, Texas and Alabama sought to maximize the amount of instructional time for students, continue to focus on teaching critical standards, and supported student mastery of grade-level standards. Whether teaching new material or focusing on enrichment led to better outcomes is a research question that will likely be answered in coming months.

Closures also impacted non-instructional critical services at schools. Schools provide a number of services beyond education including meals and health services. A national Reuters survey found that three-quarters of districts said they were providing fewer meals than before the closure. Similarly, a PED survey found that 67% of students experiencing homelessness have needs for food. Students will often receive health services from school-based health clinics. The research organization Child Trends recently recommended permitting school-based health centers to remain open if schools are minimally staffed and allowing centers to pivot to a telehealth model and communicate new protocols and procedures with students and staff. According to the New Mexico Alliance for School-Based Health Care, 44 percent of school-based health centers (SBHC) were still offering on-site services. However, the majority of the state's school-based health centers have either closed or have reduced hours. Only 10 percent (six of 61) of school-based health centers report the ability to provide telehealth services. Strategies to communicate with staff and students varies by district, ranging from letters, door postings, websites, and social media. SBHCs indicated that community clinics filled the role of what they typically provided with a number of different strategies being used to communicate with staff and students ranging from letters, to door postings, to websites, to social media.

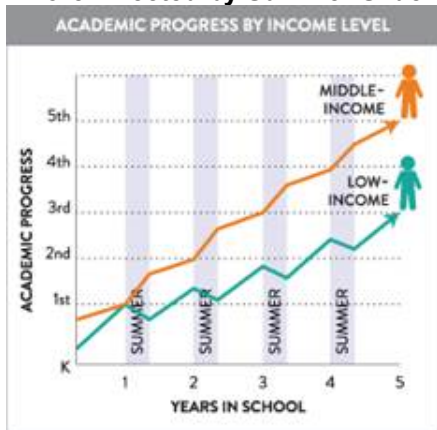
Differing Goals Among States in Remote Learning

MIT's Teaching Systems Lab found that some state's including Texas and Alabama set goals to continue forward progress by teaching new material.

By contrast, New Mexico's guidance was on reviewing previously learned material referred to as "enrichment".



Figure 5. Low-Income Students are More Affected by Summer Slide



Source: Education Week

Findings of a May 2020 New Mexico Teacher Survey

“Working at a Title 1 school, I know that many of the kids don’t have a lot at home. When I saw them everyday I could tell how they were doing. I knew that they at least had breakfast, lunch, and a snack each day. I could also look them over to see that they didn’t have any markings or anything different about them.” (Prekindergarten teacher)

“My special education students are not proficient enough to access many platforms used for distance learning. Some families did not get a school sponsored computer until the last two weeks and internet was spotty or unavailable for some. Some parents needed to be taught how to access the platforms with varying levels of success.” (12th grade teacher)

“English learning students struggled a lot because many of them simply did not understand anything. Please think about bilingual education for English learning students.” (7th grade teacher)

Source: LFC Teacher Survey

School Closures Impact Low-Income Children the Most Due to Limited Access to Technology and Existing Achievement Gaps

At-risk students, including children experiencing poverty and homelessness, English learners, and children with disabilities, are more likely to fall behind due to lost instructional time and are more likely to lose instructional time than their peers are. These students are less likely to have access to the internet and technology, have time for virtual instruction, and need one-on-one in-person instruction the most. A survey by the National Center for Education Statistics shows 34 percent of those surveyed nationally do not have internet because they are unable to afford it. The same survey shows 17 percent of children ages 3-18 live in households without a laptop or desktop computer. As such, schools must target resources and provide additional learning time for these students to catch up, which will be needed to address the *Martinez and Yazzie v. New Mexico* consolidated education sufficiency lawsuits.

Remote learning presents more challenges for at-risk students.

Even before the pandemic, LFC staff estimated low-income students face a 6,000-hour (100 days, 20 weeks, or four months) achievement gap by the sixth grade compared with their middle- and high-income peers. Some research indicates low-income students are more affected by the summer slide, widening this achievement gap over time. Despite efforts by some districts, many students still lack access to the internet or their own computers or devices and are reliant on the delivery and use of paper packets during school closures.

English learners also face heightened challenges in achieving academically during school closures and throughout the move to remote learning. For those students learning English remotely, they will likely experience a lack of native language support, such as not having consistent exposure to English spoken at home or not having a family member to practice vocabulary with. A Rand Corporation teacher and administrator survey reports only 44 percent of teachers had adequate guidance to address the needs of English learners during closures.

While 37 percent of teachers in the Rand Corporation survey reported feeling adequately guided to address the learning needs of disabled students, only 19 percent said the same regarding severely disabled students. Difficulties arise in balancing the responsibility of adequately providing learning supports for children with disabilities and limiting infection transmission through in-person instruction, which is often a precondition to implementing such supports.

Statewide access to educational technology is uneven.

Students without the internet at home are more likely to be students of color, from low-income families, or families with lower parental education levels. Without this access to technology, students’ ability to access and benefit from remote

instruction is severely limited. Teachers surveyed by LFC reported a lack of internet access, lack of computers, or difficulties with various online learning platforms could be compounding student learning loss.

A late March 2020 survey by the New Mexico Public School Facilities Authority (PSFA) found 21.8 percent of students did not have access to internet service at home and 31.9 percent of students did not have access to their own devices, such as a computer or smartphone. PSFA also found that 55 percent of students in Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools did not have access to the internet, and 50 percent did not have access to their own device at home.

The Albuquerque and Las Cruces school districts were able to order and provide laptops for all students who needed them and worked with private partners to offer free or low-priced internet. In their CLPs, 82 percent of school districts reported distributing laptops, tablets, or other forms of technology to students. To provide students access to the internet, 13.5 percent of districts provided Wi-Fi devices to students, 43.8 percent of districts established Wi-Fi hotspots at the school or in the community, and 53.9 percent of districts partnered with private or public sector companies to provide Wi-Fi or internet access in student's homes. With the rapid ramping up of purchasing and distributing computers, about one in five districts report they will now have a device for every student. School districts that provided printed materials were likely to have a higher proportion of Title I schools, while districts that provided computers and access to the internet were likely to have a lower proportion of Title I schools (see Appendix C).

Still, both the PSFA survey and the CLPs indicate a portion of districts were unable to provide home internet options (about half of districts) or Chromebooks or other learning devices (about a quarter of districts.) In the PSFA survey, many rural districts expressed concerns about their ability to provide internet access to their students, given the remoteness of the region.

The State Must Prioritize Safely Reopening Schools and Making Up Lost Learning Time

When the economy opens back up, more parents will need to work and may be unable to help stay home with students. COVID-19 will change how schools operate, and districts will need innovative solutions to provide instruction while keeping students and staff safe from virus spread. Despite these challenges, other states and countries are demonstrating that reopening safely is possible.

If the state employs best practices and leverages its newly acquired technology resources to mitigate learning loss in the months to come, the academic losses resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic could be temporary. The CDC has provided general guidance for safely reopening schools, but the state will need to provide guidance and options for districts sooner rather than later to allow

1 in 5 students does not have access to the internet at home.

Source: PSFA Survey

"The district has no plan to provide internet access or devices to students. Many of our students live in areas where internet access is not a possibility."

Source: PSFA Survey

Among BIE schools, 55 percent of students did not have access to the internet, and 50 percent did not have access to their own device at home.

Source: PSFA Survey



Findings of a May 2020 New Mexico Teacher Survey

“PLEASE develop ways to bring schools back to life! Public Education does NOT need to become the Amazon to brick and mortar schools!” (Kindergarten teacher)

“Distance learning asks parents and students to become the teachers. It will work for some students, but many students and parents need the brick and mortar schools in order to be successful and to learn in a safe and appropriate environment. When considering all the factors for shutting down schools, there will always be more pros for keeping them open for our students and their families. Schools are so much more than just a place to learn, please keep people’s mental and physical health in mind when making those decisions.” (5th grade teacher)

“Keeping students engaged has been tough. I feel there is no accountability. However, parents are extremely stressed with trying to work (whether traditional or work through the computer) and do school work with their kids. Distance learning in a perfect world should work more like ITV college classes in which they are teacher led and students can ask questions while they work. It should not fall to the parents or family members to teach.” (Kindergarten teacher)

Source: LFC Teacher Survey


them time to obtain resources and identify procedures to implement these best practices. Districts should also develop procedures for the fall around CDC guidance to ensure adequate time to train staff and purchase needed materials, such as personal protective equipment (PPE) should in-person classes be an option.

Other states are beginning to release guidance on reopening and some are planning to adjust school year calendars to try to make up for lost time. Some New Mexico school districts, including Albuquerque Public Schools are also examining in-person and blended (some in-person and some distance education) models. Due to emergency purchases, some districts now have enough laptops for most, if not all, of their students. After a return to school, districts could leverage these new laptops to provide evidence-based computer-based teaching and tutoring tools to augment classroom learning. Some districts have begun purchasing PPE and have been discussing potential procedures for returning to school in the fall. New Mexico has a strong opportunity to leverage these resources to get children back to learning safely and quickly.

Montana and Wyoming allowed their closure orders to expire before the end of the academic school year. They gave local districts the option to either offer traditional, in-person instruction or continue distance learning. North Dakota schools are allowed to open June 1 for summer programs. Permitted activities include childcare programs, summer school classes, and college admission testing.

CDC guidelines provide considerations for schools planning to reopen safely in the fall. Though a number of actions will need to be taken by schools, CDC has guidance and gating criteria that should allow for schools to safely reopen if applicable state and local orders allow it (see Appendix D). The CDC guidelines allow for school reopening with the following safeguards to protect children and employees at higher risk for severe illness.

- **Face Masks:** All staff must wear face coverings, and students are highly encouraged to wear face coverings.
- **Training and Education:** Schools must have adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors and post signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19. All staff must be trained in safety actions.
- **Social Distancing:** Schools must promote social distancing, which includes spacing desks at least six feet apart, limiting gatherings, restricting all nonessential visitors, and closing communal use spaces, including cafeterias. Schools must limit the sharing of toys, personal belongings, books, and other equipment. Arrival and drop-off times and locations should also be staggered, and seating on buses should be staggered to create social distance.
- **Increased Cleaning:** Schools must intensify cleaning, disinfectant, and ventilations.
- **Tracking symptoms:** Schools should check for signs of symptoms among students and staff daily and should plan for when a staff member, child, or visitor becomes sick.

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- **Contingency Plan:** Schools should have a closing plan in case of new outbreaks. This includes checking state and local health department notices daily about transmission in the area and adjusting operations accordingly. The school should maintain healthy operations, including flexible sick leave policies and maintaining a roster of trained back-up staff.

Following CDC guidance will also mean changes for other in-person aspects of public school including different procedures for meals, transportation, and extracurricular activities.

Although children in New Mexico's account for 13 percent of new COVID-19 infections (four times higher than the national average of 3.2 percent), other countries have been able to reopen schools safely while mitigating the spread of COVID-19. Currently, emerging evidence seems to suggest that children are not the primary drivers of the spread of COVID-19¹, however, more research will be needed to inform schools reopening. Recently the Learning Policy Institute released a report identifying practices being used in Denmark, China, Norway, Singapore, and Taiwan, which have reopened schools or avoided closing schools as of the time of this report. Strategies included phased-in approaches (starting some grades earlier than others), employing local school closures based on infection rates, and working closely with state and local health authorities. Health and safety practices largely reflect those put forth by CDC for reopening schools in the United States (e.g., monitoring health, social distancing, hygiene, and cleaning). Norway allowed daycare and preschools to reopen on April 20, grades one to four reopen on April 27, and grades five to ten continuing remote education. This strategy might help mitigate learning loss for younger children because younger children are less receptive to distance learning.

Other states and organizations are providing guidance on how to reopen schools safely this upcoming school year. As the world moves away from stay-at-home orders, people will have to employ best practices to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infections. According to the Imperial College of London, these include practicing social distancing, wearing face coverings, and cleaning facilities and equipment, along with testing and contact tracing.

The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) recently released a blueprint for returning to school. In the report, AEI identified four assumptions that policymakers should follow when planning to go back in the fall.

1. Schools will remain closed in the spring but will reopen in the fall (albeit with the potential of localized, 14-28 day rolling closures triggered by new outbreaks).
2. Reopened schools will need modifications based on guidance from national, state, and local health officials, which could include physical

¹ http://ncirs.org.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/NCIRS%20NSW%20Schools%20COVID_Summary_FINAL%20public_26%20April%202020.pdf



Intersessional Calendars Provide Flexibility and Address Learning Loss

- Earlier start date, long winter break and longer other breaks, and later end date.
- Built-in remote learning time and staggered in-person attendance.
- Recommended six weeks of breaks that can be used for remediation, acceleration, or enrichment, breaks required for COVID-19, bad weather make-up days.

Source: Texas Education Agency

3. Accommodations will be needed for teachers, administrators, school staff, and students who may be at heightened risk from COVID-19 due to their age or other health conditions.
4. A vaccine might not be available for 18 months or more, meaning that plans should take into account both the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) in their school calendar guidance clearly states schools must address learning loss: “As school systems prepare for the 2020-2021 school year, planning should be grounded in addressing lost instructional time from an extended COVID-19 closure at the end of the 2019-2020 school year.” TEA has provided districts three calendar options for school reopening scenarios: traditional calendar, COVID-19 Response Calendar, and intersessional calendar. PED could consider providing similar options to New Mexico school districts, but these plans should be developed and made available sooner rather than later to allow school districts adequate time to prepare for a return.

In the TEA plan, the traditional calendar starts and ends at the typical dates of the year and has traditional vacation time for Thanksgiving, winter break, and spring break. The COVID-19 response calendar is a traditional calendar with built-in time throughout the year or at the end of the year for “COVID-19 make-up days” much like weather-related make-up days. The intersessional calendar builds in blocks of time during breaks for targeted student populations to attend for the specific purpose of remediation. The calendar starts in early August and has longer breaks built around the traditional breaks. The intersessional blocks could also be used for whole-school instructional make-up days in the event of COVID-19 interruptions. Elementary schools would also be eligible for additional funding from the state. Participating elementary schools would receive half-day funding for each additional day after 180 days, up to 210 total days, to extend the school year by up to 30 days.

States and nations are taking innovative scheduling approaches in an effort to minimize infection risk. Austrian schools are developing a schedule where two groups of students attend school for five days every two weeks. Israel will use a “10-4” cycle in which students attend four consecutive days every two weeks in alternating schedules and use distance learning methods when they are not physically present. Models created at the Weizmann Institute in Israel predict the two-week cycle can reduce COVID-19’s reproduction number, or the average number of people infected by each infected person, to below one. If someone is infected, they would only make contact with other people outside their home for four days every two weeks instead of 10 days. Efforts will also be made to coordinate parent work schedules so that parents can be home with their children.

PED’s school reentry task force is still in the process of developing guidelines. The AEI report recommended states to launch a task force for reopening schools, which PED has established. However, in



May, *Education Week* noted New Mexico was one of nine states that had yet to make or delegate plans for school reopening in the fall. As of May 20, 2020, PED has virtually convened a school reentry task force to develop guidelines and considerations for opening schools in the fall. The task force includes school officials, school board members, union representatives, teachers, legislators, parents, and students from public, charter, tribal, and special schools of various sizes. Although PED should provide continued guidance and support to districts, this guidance should be released no later than June 30. Also, PED should direct school districts to review CDC guidance and start planning for implementation of that guidance. School districts will also need contingency plans on moving back to distance models temporarily based on local infection levels.

The state has a number of COVID-19 related resources to leverage.

New Mexico has made great strides in using data to inform reopening to this point and has a number of COVID-19 related resources to leverage in formulating plans to reopen. PED should leverage those resources available through DOH and HSD to continue data driven decision making regarding reopening schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, as noted in the AEI blueprint for reopening, it will be essential for school districts to leverage the resources available to them from local public health offices and also use data to make decisions. Los Alamos National Lab's (LANL) COVID-19 modeling effort provides New Mexico the capacity to model disease transmission resulting from reopening schools under different scenarios. The model can also estimate the impact of using different strategies (mask wearing, sporadic opening, etc). This in-state tool should be leveraged to help PED's school reentry task force develop evidence-based strategies and guidance on conditions for reopening schools.

New Mexico's Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) released health and safety guidance in early May for New Mexico childcare centers and early childhood professionals, allowing childcare centers to reopen. ECECD began distributing PPE to early childhood personnel in late April, which included face shields, surgical masks, gloves, and thermometers. PED should collaborate with ECECD to determine in-state best practices and lessons learned from reopening childcare centers and implementing CDC guidance. Sharing information on lessons learned and effective procedures should include practices around communicating disease spread and initiating contact tracing.

To address the economic and financial challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government enacted the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which includes a \$13.5 billion stabilization fund for school districts and a \$3 billion fund for governors to support state education systems. New Mexico will receive \$108.6 million from the stabilization fund, of which at least 90 percent will be distributed directly to schools for COVID-19 interventions and operational costs (incurred after March 13). PED may withhold and reallocate up to 10 percent of the stabilization fund for similar emergency purposes. New Mexico will also receive \$22.2 million from the governor's relief fund, a flexible funding source for the governor to address




various costs for K-12 schools, higher education institutions, early childhood programs, and other educational programs. These funds could be used by districts towards the added costs of safely reopening schools such as more buses to maintain social distancing, protective equipment for students and staff, and the daily cleaning of each school. Additionally, the CARES Act included \$307.5 million for the U.S. Secretary of Education to make grants to states with the highest coronavirus burden. The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) has announced \$180 million in these funds will be provided for public school programs to support educational technology, virtual learning and course access programs, and to develop new remote education models. PED has said it will apply for funding, which will be awarded on a discretionary basis by USDE.

Summer and extended learning programs could be an effective response to addressing potential learning loss, particularly for disadvantaged children more affected by the school closures.

Previous research has shown that summer learning programs and extended learning programs can help close achievement gaps and help address findings from the *Martinez and Yazzie v. New Mexico* consolidated education sufficiency lawsuits. Already established as effective, K-5 Plus adds 25 summer days of classroom time at participating elementary schools and the extended learning time programs adds 10 days of instructional time to the academic calendar of any schools that apply. Although PED recognized that many districts and charter schools across the state were planning to implement K-5 Plus or extended learning time programs or both programs for FY21, on May 20, PED announced it had made the difficult decision to cut K-5 Plus and extended learning programs leading into the 2020-2021 academic year. A week later, the department changed course, reporting it would accept applications for 10-day extended learning programs that start August 10 or later. It is possible that if school districts can provide innovative solutions to delivering 10-day extended learning programs, then they could also find innovative solutions to delivering content for 25-day K-5 Plus programs. These extended learning programs could be built into a year-round school model that could account for resurgences of the novel coronavirus and allow schools the flexibility to adjust their calendars accordingly.

Prior to the announcement of cutting the K-5 Plus program leading into the 2020-2021 academic year, Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) was developing a plan to offer some students an additional 25 days of instruction this summer through the K-5 Plus program. APS's plan notes the additional time would have allowed students to "recoup lost learning time." The district planned to provide 25 extra days of instruction to students at 11 schools. APS's K-5 Plus continuous learning proposal detailed the districts' plan to implement the program to fidelity – a school-wide program, with students staying with the same teacher during the regular school year. APS's plan provided proper educational technology to students and required daily student attendance, small group and large group virtual instruction, and assignments to be collected and graded. This plan allowed APS to gauge whether virtual or distance learning could be effective in a more restrictive environment where students would be expected to attend and assignments would be graded. Given



the ability of some districts to provide K-5 Plus programs safely, the state should consider supporting those innovative solutions.

PED is exploring best practices for accelerated learning.

Accelerated learning is an approach where schools work to identify gaps in learning and focus on filling the most critical gaps as the material comes up during the school year. Rather than focusing on remediation, accelerated learning ensures students receive current grade level material, and teachers fill in gaps leading to that material as the school year progresses. The New Teacher Project recently released a learning acceleration guide for leaders with five recommendations for accelerated learning.

1. Prioritize the most critical skills and knowledge for each subject area and grade level now;
2. Plan an approach to assessing students' unfinished learning;
3. Adapt the scope and sequence for each subject area and grade level to reflect where teachers might need to provide acceleration support;
4. Train teachers and leaders to diagnose students' unfinished learning;
5. Monitor students' progress on grade-appropriate assignments and adjust supports for teachers and leaders based on student results.

New Mexico will face some unique challenges in reopening. For example, CDC guidelines say adults 65 years and older are at a higher risk of developing serious complications from COVID-19 and should consider staying home. AEI conducted a 50 state comparison of teacher and principal workforce ages to determine state vulnerabilities. New Mexico and Maine were at the top of their most vulnerable teachers list, with 25 percent of New Mexico teachers over the age of 55. New Mexico's vulnerable principal percentage is 34 percent, also higher than the national average. Districts should identify at-risk staff and students and make plans to address each in the fall. The CDC considers older adults (65 or older) and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions to be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

New Mexico and Maine were at the top of the list of states with the most vulnerable teachers, with 25 percent of New Mexico teachers over the age of 55.

Source: American Enterprise Institute

PED is conducting a family survey that should help inform parent viewpoints.

Great Britain recently reopened schools with safety procedures in place, however according to the National Foundation for Educational Research, only about half of parents are expected to allow their children to return to schools if they had a choice. Even if a country or state can provide guidance that would reopen schools safely, learning about parent concerns and addressing those concerns through effective communication will be key to ensure student engagement in the fall. Even if the majority of parents believe the state can provide safe in-person options (either in a full-time or blended model), PED should consider providing support for those parents that have a distance learning preference through home-schooling or other options.



PED and Districts Should Plan on Using Best Practices for any Continued Distance Learning


Although in-person learning may be a possibility in the fall, there is the potential for continued remote learning in blended models (some in-person and some remote learning) or if winter brings increased disease spread. Given the difficulty in reaching students, the low proportion of student engagement for those who were contacted, and the fact that in-person instruction tends to be more effective than distance learning, school districts and PED will have to identify strategies to improve student engagement if distance learning continues. Previous research on distance education and the new availability for tools to accomplish distance education should inform policies.

While some districts have not been able to provide laptops or other learning devices to *all* students, over 20 percent of districts, including the state's two largest, report having enough for every student in the district to have a device. Many of these districts have acquired laptops specifically due to the pandemic, and, therefore, have new opportunities to use these laptops for enhanced programs that might supplement classroom time in the future.

However, providing laptops and internet access does not automatically lead to improved academic outcomes. MIT's J-PAL released a review of use of technology in education finding:

1. Supplying computers and internet alone generally does not improve academic outcomes;
2. Educational software such as computer assisted learning programs designed to help students develop particular skills have shown promise in learning outcome;
3. Technology-based nudges such as text reminders can help with outcomes though increasing engagement; and
4. Blended models of learning (some online and some in person) shows promise and are more effective than online learning alone.

Students in online-only classes typically perform worse academically than students in in-person classes. Though moving to online instruction was necessary due to the pandemic, research suggests students in online-only courses lack accountability and motivation to persist in the class and miss out on relationships and interactions with instructors and peers that can facilitate learning. Research has also found students in courses with both an in-person and online component perform academically similar to students in traditional face-to-face only courses.



A 2017 LFC and LESC program evaluation on New Mexico virtual schools found that virtual schools, schools where students receive all of their instruction online and are not required to attend classes at a physical location, produce poorer student outcomes. Students in New Mexico virtual schools experienced between 91 and 161 fewer days of learning than the average brick-and-mortar school student, despite serving fewer at-risk students. The evaluation also notes a lack of any type of virtual school definition or guidance in state statute. Though not a focus of the evaluation, LFC and LESC staff visited blended model schools, schools where students primarily attend school virtually but are also required to attend in-person classes weekly, and found blended model schools can produce strong academic outcomes. While we know that less time dedicated to instruction negatively impacts student learning, students will likely still see some gains in learning though at a lesser rate than students in brick-and-mortar schools given that the amount of time spent on time-on-task is still a factor even in a distance learning setting.

LFC staff highlight this research not to criticize PED and districts for moving to online, distance learning in light of the COVID-19 outbreak, but instead to highlight that online instruction likely aggravated learning losses more than a similar reduction in face-to-face instructional time would have. PED may also want to use LFC's findings about the superior outcomes of hybrid online and in-person instruction versus 100 percent online instruction in their contingency planning for any future school closure needs.

School districts should adopt computer-assisted learning programs with evidence of positive effects on academic achievement. Computer-assisted learning (CAL) programs, or software that students can use to develop and practice reading, math, and other skills, offers the most promise for improving academic achievement across a wide range of programs and settings. The most effective CAL programs allow students to watch digital instructional videos and proceed through exercises at their own pace, much like students would with a tutor. The programs also provide immediate feedback, letting students know when and why they've answered a problem incorrectly. For example, partnerships between the College Board and Khan Academy provided New Mexican students taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) with access to personalized SAT prep through the online learning platform. The PSAT/NMSQT is a standardized test administered by the College Board and cosponsored by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation in the United States. Approximately 3.5 million students take the PSAT/NMSQT each year nationally. APS lists Khan Academy as a recommended resource for parents during school closures, which offers adaptive practice that adjusts to the student's needs, interactive lessons, and diagnostic quizzes for student assessment.

“Our research on online learning shows that these programs do not do as well as face-to-face programs. And that’s assuming that students have access to them to begin with.” V. Darleen Opfer, Vice President and Director of RAND Education and Labor.

Source:

<https://www.rand.org/blog/2020/04/schools-pivot-online-in-wake-of-covid-19-gampa-with.html>



Students retain very little from watching instruction without interaction.

Source: Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab at MIT

PED should provide guidance regarding effective uses of technology and distance learning in its educational delivery.

Research by the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab at MIT and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory highlight effective uses of technology and practices that can be utilized in distance education, including CAL programs, synchronous interactions with instructors, interactive lessons, virtual tutoring, and automated messaging platforms. For example, simply requiring students to watch online educational videos is not likely to help students achieve academically. Students retain very little from watching instruction without interaction. To the extent possible, lessons should be interactive and teachers should monitor and reward active progress. Other strategies to support distance education efforts include goal setting combined with daily text reminders. School leaders could supplement distance education efforts by sending parents automated, actionable text reminders related to at-home learning activities.

LFC staff surveyed teachers about the types of distance learning activities they used while schools were closed to in-person instruction. Seventy-four percent of teachers reported the use of CAL programs; however, the three most commonly reported platforms in use by teachers were Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Khan Academy, two of which are not typically considered CAL technologies.

Other effective practices that teachers reported providing included interactive videos (56 percent), office hours (68 percent), one-on-one instruction (30 percent), and automated text or email reminders related to at-home learning activities (67 percent). However, teachers also reported engaging in less effective practices, including providing online videos (70 percent), online lectures (52 percent), and online programs and assignments (67 percent). PED should develop guidance and training for school districts and teachers to engage in more effective practices of distance education and integrating technology into instruction.

Few of PED's recommended supportive resources for distance learning are considered best practices for continued education.

Khan Academy and Amplify K-5 Remote Learning Resources are two of the few evidence-based resources recommended by PED for assistance in continued learning during school closures. Most other resources recommended by PED do not demonstrate a proven high level of effectiveness in student learning. Of the recommended web resources that provide student activities and content review, programs like *MidSchoolMath* or *Zearn* show promising results for student learning but are not considered evidence-based adaptive learning tools. Offering instruction through evidence-based online learning platforms can improve the effectiveness of distance learning.

The *Results First Clearinghouse Database* lists 11 online, web, or virtual programs for continued education that demonstrate sufficient evidence and methodological rigor to be considered effective and to positively impact student outcomes. Among the programs listed, *Achieve 3000 – Adolescent Literacy* and *Headsprout Early Reading* are CAL programs for developing



literacy skills, providing differentiated online instruction that accommodates student’s individual needs and abilities. *DreamBox Learning* and *Odyssey Math* also provide adaptive instruction and use data-driven assessment of student comprehension to improve math skills. Among the programs recommended by PED during school closures, many of them aim to improve subject comprehension and provide remote learning support to students. Still, PED should prioritize the use of effective best practices and programs to achieve these goals whenever possible. Existing evaluations of these programs show options are available for online learning that positively impact student learning outcomes.

Table 1. Online, Web, or Virtual Resources Recommended by Results First Clearinghouse

Program Name	RF Rating
ACT/SAT Test Preparation and Coaching Programs - Transition to College	Highest
Intelligent Tutoring for Structure Strategy (ITSS) - Adolescent Literacy	Highest
Achieve3000® - Adolescent Literacy	Second-Highest
Connect with Kids - Character Education	Second-Highest
DreamBox Learning - Elementary School Mathematics	Second-Highest
Headsprout® Early Reading - Early Childhood Education	Second-Highest
Odyssey® Math - Primary Mathematics	Second-Highest
Open Learning Initiative (OLI) - Supporting Postsecondary Success	Second-Highest
READ 180® - Adolescent Literacy	Second-Highest
Reading Plus® - Adolescent Literacy	Second-Highest
Technology Enhanced Elementary and Middle School Science (TEEMSS) - Science	Second-Highest

Source: Results First



Next Steps

Moving forward it is vitally important for PED to offer continued guidance and support to school districts and provide districts enough time to determine how they can safely reopen their schools for summer programs and the upcoming school year. PED's guidance should utilize resources including experts at the Department of Health, Human Services Department, and COVID-19 modeling group findings from LANL. PED's reentry task force should issue recommendations based on their findings. PED should avoid encouraging school districts to implement reopening models with 100 percent virtual instruction to the extent possible and instead provide school districts guidance on providing in-person instruction when possible and a blended model of instruction when necessary. PED should offer school districts options for reopening schools with an emphasis on safety and addressing lost instructional time. PED should offer guidance to school districts on having contingency plans in the event they will have to pivot to distance learning due to COVID-19 related issues. PED should also offer guidance to school districts on supporting parents that have a distance learning preference through home schooling or other options. PED should continue to offer guidance regarding effective uses of technology and distance learning in its educational delivery with an emphasis on improving student engagement in the event schools must pivot to distance learning or for students whose parents choose to keep them home.

School districts should begin initiating development of procedures for the fall around CDC guidance and gating criteria to ensure adequate time to train staff and purchase needed materials such as personal protective equipment (PPE) should in-person classes be an option. School districts should assume there will be at least some in person instruction and should provide as much in person instruction as possible as this has been found to be more effective than blended or distance learning models. School districts should also form procedures to implement contingency plans in case of new disease spread.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Agency Response

Dear Legislative Finance Committee members,

Please see the below email that I recently shared with LFC staff (addressed to LFC Program Evaluator Ryan Tolman) in response to the recent report entitled “Learning Loss Due to COVID-19 Pandemic.” As you’ll see in the email below, PED has significant concerns regarding the report’s methodology and conclusions. As a Department, we are fully open to feedback, constructive criticism, and the use of data to inform future efforts. We hope that future conversations and partnership with LFC staff on this matter may lead to a more productive process for reflecting on remote learning and creating future plans than we found from our review of this particular report. Please feel free to reach out with any clarifying questions that I or my staff may respond to on this topic.

Sincerely,

Ryan Stewart, Ed.L.D.
Secretary of Education
State of New Mexico

Hi Ryan,

Thank you for sending this report. I have had time to now give this a thorough read and have found many troubling issues with the report. They are listed below in no particular order.

- 1) The report clearly articulates the technology infrastructure challenges and inequities that abound in the state, yet criticizes PED for issuing guidance that acknowledged the limitations that these inequities impose. For example, PED feels that it would be inappropriate in the extreme to condition promotion to the next grade on a student participating in an online learning program when they do not have a digital device or connectivity in the home. Yet the report criticizes the department’s grading and attendance guidance as leading to lower student engagement without acknowledging that to do otherwise likely would have led to wildly inequitable consequences to students who did not have the type of access needed to participate to the fullest extent possible.

In fact, the MIT Teaching Systems Lab report that you cite in the report expressly calls out New Mexico’s alignment with the “emerging consensus that schools should make new accommodations to help seniors graduate.” The report notes, “*New Mexico recommends a competency-based approach to awarding credits, including opportunities for: “Passing a locally designed test, - Completing a locally designed series of assignments, - Achieving a set cut score on a college entrance exam, - Demonstrating applied work experience.”*

- 2) To my knowledge, there is no consensus, research-based right or wrong when it comes to amount of time of direct virtual instruction to provide for students at various grade levels, nor is there a consensus, research-based right or wrong when it comes to the focus of that instruction. Yet the report paints the picture that PED was derelict in its guidance relative to other states, stating that, “New Mexico provided the least amount of instruction time among states that provided guidance.”

This statement is factually inaccurate, as the MIT report from which the above statement is drawn clearly states the following:

“Kansas recommended limits that expand by grade band: “Pre-K : 30 minutes; Grades K-1: 45 minutes; Grades 2-3: 60 minutes; Grades 4-5: 90 minutes; Grades 6-12: 30 minutes per teacher (3 hours max in a day).” 15 These guidelines align with typical schedules followed by voluntary homeschool families. We did not find any guidance, even among states with the most ambitious rhetoric around maintaining forward progress, for trying to maintain typical, full-day, school schedules.”

New Mexico’s guidance precisely mirrors that of Kansas and thus we cannot be the lowest. Furthermore, this statement ignores the guidance that we encouraged districts to allow additional time for reading, storytelling, and other learning activities that did not involve students looking at a computer screen for what we felt would be a developmentally inappropriate length of time. Accounting for all of these, it would be more accurate to say that PED recommended less screen time spent on direct instruction than most other states and instead encouraged other forms of non screen-based learning and enrichment activities.

Further, The subtitle “PED guidance for the end of the 2019-2020 school year limited instructional time, with younger students losing the most time on task” is misleading. It was the health necessity to shift to remote learning that limited instructional time. As the quote above shows, no states sought to maintain typical full day schedules.

PED guidance suggested how the instructional time available could be used in developmentally appropriate ways. Reasonable people can disagree with whether our guidance – emphasizing less direct instruction on the screen and more time for reading, storytelling, and projects for younger children – is more or less academically advantageous and developmentally appropriate than guidance from other states. The report does not explore this nuance, and instead the connotation is that PED did not want children to be engaged in learning during this time.

- 3) The report notes the ineffectiveness of 100% virtual instruction and yet criticizes the department for not insisting that schools provide more of it. Given the LFC’s criticism of PED for not providing enough virtual direct instruction as outlined in point 2 above, it is telling that the LFC report notes findings such as:
 - a. “PED should avoid encouraging school districts to implement reopening models with 100 percent virtual instruction to the extent possible”
 - b. Online lectures are a “less effective” instructional practice
 - c. “Teachers surveyed by LFC reported...difficulties with various online learning platforms...”
 - d. “Despite efforts by some districts, many students still lack access to the internet or their own computers or devices.”
 - e. “Research suggests students in online-only courses lack accountability and motivation to persist in the class and miss out on relationships and interactions with instructors and peers that can facilitate learning”

LFC appears to be making the argument that PED caused undue harm to students’ learning by not pushing for enough online direct instruction while also making the argument that online instruction is ineffective, districts did not have the infrastructure to deliver it at scale, and teachers and students struggle to learn in this modality.

-
- 4) The descriptions of the decisions by APS and Deming regarding K-5 Plus are not consistent with the interactions our program staff had with those districts. I suggest that you get all parties on the phone at the same time to discuss this issue and better understand the timelines and rationales before characterizing the decisions in the manner described.
 - 5) The report suggests that PED does not support K-5 Plus. This is not true. We fully support K-5 Plus. We feel that from a public health and fiscal responsibility standpoint, it would be irresponsible to move forward with the program beginning this summer as is required by the way the law is currently structured. PED is fully supportive of working with the legislature to determine if there are legislatively needed changes to the existing law to allow for the integration of 25 days into the full calendar where the instruction can happen in person and hopefully during a time in which the virus has been more fully contained. We have directly stated this to LFC in numerous conversations, but this perspective is not represented in the narrative. Instead, the reports makes it seem as though PED is hostile to the program. This portrayal is particularly disappointing given the significant investments of time and resources PED spent on building up interest in K-5 Plus over the course of this year.
 - 6) Similar to point 1 above, the report criticizes PED’s attendance policies, noting that our “Attendance waivers further compound learning loss.” This suggests that our particular approach was more harmful to learning than other potential options. The report does not offer research to substantiate this claim. The report does note the difficulties faced by teachers and schools in ensuring sustained participation and engagement of all students during this abrupt shift. However, the report offers no data on how this impacted learning. Further, the report offers no comparison data on how other attendance policies did or did impact learning. At most, the report only has enough data to support a finding similar to what I wrote above - that teachers and schools struggled to ensure sustained participation and engagement of all students. There is simply not enough evidence to substantiate that our policies compounded the problem as is stated in the report, or that different policies would have mitigated the participation issue.

Furthermore, the teacher survey data referenced in this section is inappropriately used to draw declarative conclusions. For instance, the report states “the department’s recommendation that schools not require grading and attendance might have led to lower student engagement. In the LFC teacher survey, several teachers commented grades and attendance should be required moving forward to encourage student participation.” The opinion of several teachers (and it is unclear how many and what kinds of other opinions are offered on this topic) do not meet a high enough research bar on which to state that our policies are the cause of lower student engagement. There are undoubtedly many educators (not to mention students and parents) that would feel strongly that grading and attendance – given the infrastructure challenges in many communities – would have been inappropriate and/or infeasible to implement with little time to plan and to set expectations and systems for implementing these practices. We would agree that more research looking across states and analyzing the comparative impacts of different approaches would be helpful to understand the relative merits of differing approaches and to use that information for future planning. We disagree that enough data currently exists to lay blame on PED for compounding learning loss.

- 7) It is my understanding that many school-based health centers shifted their operations to local clinics once the school buildings closed in order to be more accessible to local communities. I do not have the most recent data on this, so I would suggest reaching out to DOH to better understand the extent to

which this happened and including it in the report. PED guidance was clear that these services should remain open. Better understanding of where and why this did or did not happen would be helpful to guide future planning.

- 8) Did PED do anything right? The report would suggest not. I could identify only one potential instance of PED doing something helpful (working with Graduation Alliance). This portrayal of PED during this time is inconsistent with much of the feedback we have received and continue to receive from various stakeholders in the field, and it would be interesting to examine the disconnect.

In general, I find this report to be devoid of a real examination of the challenges presented by the state's vast infrastructural challenges to deliver remote learning – especially with an abrupt shift that allowed for little planning or ramp up time. I also find it to be less of a research document that uses data in a rigorous way to outline the strengths and challenges of the approach, and more of blanket criticism of the department (again, devoid of a discussion of the relative merits of alternatives).

I hope that these considerations will be taken into account before the continued dissemination of these findings.

Sincerely,

Ryan Stewart, Ed.L.D.
Secretary of Education
State of New Mexico

Appendix B. Review of School Districts Continuous Learning Plans

Order	Rubric	"Yes"	"No"	"Yes" %	"No" %
1	Does the district/school provide additional support to assist seniors with fulfilling graduation requirements (e.g., adopting local determinations of competency, access to guidance counselors).	81	8	91.0%	9.0%
2	Is there evidence that school district's are working with local public institutions of higher education to ensure completion of dual credits ?	68	21	76.4%	23.6%
3	Is the professional development offered to teachers tailored to support implementing continuous learning plans ?	78	11	87.6%	12.4%
4	Is the district/school distributing Chromebooks , laptops, tablets, or other forms of technology to students that need them?	73	16	82.0%	18.0%
5	Does the district/school already have an established a one-to-one technology setup?	20	69	22.5%	77.5%
6	Is the district/school providing wi-fi devices to students who do not have home internet access?	12	77	13.5%	86.5%
7	Is the district/school providing wi-fi hotspots at the school or in the community to provide internet access to students?	39	50	43.8%	56.2%
8	Is the district/school partnering with private or public sector companies to provide wi-fi or internet access?	48	41	53.9%	46.1%
9	Is the district/school providing printed materials, learning kits, or alternatives to students who cannot access the internet?	64	25	71.9%	28.1%
10	Does the district/school require student attendance ?	7	82	7.9%	92.1%
11	Does the district/school have a plan to gauge student attendance ?	33	56	37.1%	62.9%
12	Does the district/school provide clear guidance regarding consequences or retention of students who do not attend or participate ?	13	76	14.6%	85.4%
13	Does the district/school provide a structured schedule to meet the PED guidelines on time spent on instruction?	21	68	23.6%	76.4%
14	Does the district/school explicitly direct that they will not be teaching new content ?	1	88	1.1%	98.9%
15	Does the district/school have a plan to address students who are falling behind ?	26	63	29.2%	70.8%
16	Does the district/school plan to fail students or hold them back a grade if they do not complete assignments or are failing?	11	78	12.4%	87.6%
17	Does the district/school have a plan to support students with a individualized education plan (IEP)?	84	5	94.4%	5.6%
18	Does the district/school have a plan to support English language learning students ?	52	37	58.4%	41.6%
19	Does the district/school have a plan to support migrant students ?	16	73	18.0%	82.0%
20	Does the district/school have a plan to support homeless students ?	23	66	25.8%	74.2%
21	Does the district/school have a plan to support Native American students ?	12	77	13.5%	86.5%
22	Does the district/school have a plan to support other at-risk student groups ?	13	76	14.6%	85.4%
23	Does the district/school have a plan to provide instruction and materials in Spanish or other home language?	27	62	30.3%	69.7%
24	Does the district/school have a plan to provide access to social workers or counselors to support student's social-emotional needs?	88	1	98.9%	1.1%
25	Does district/school plan to use community partnerships as a means to meet the social-emotional wellness of students?	21	68	23.6%	76.4%

Appendix C. Percent of Title I Schools within School Districts and Their Strategies of Providing Student's Access During School Closures

Figure 6. Percent of Title I Schools within Districts and Their Strategies to Provide Students Access

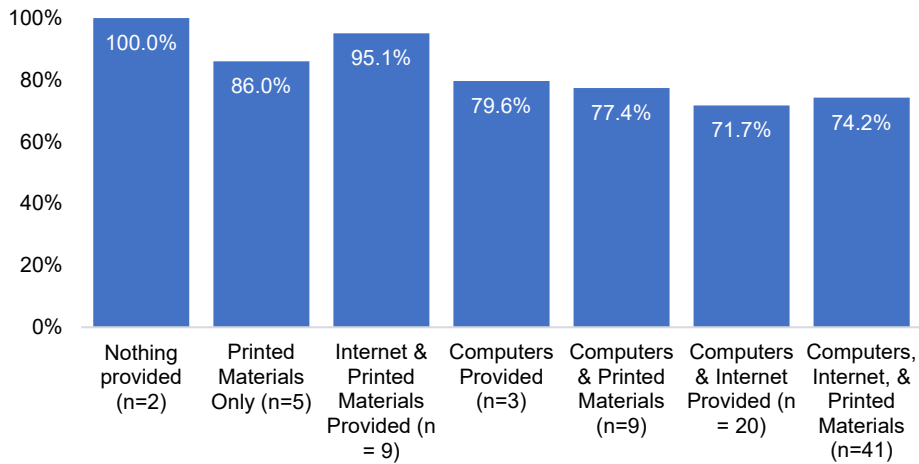
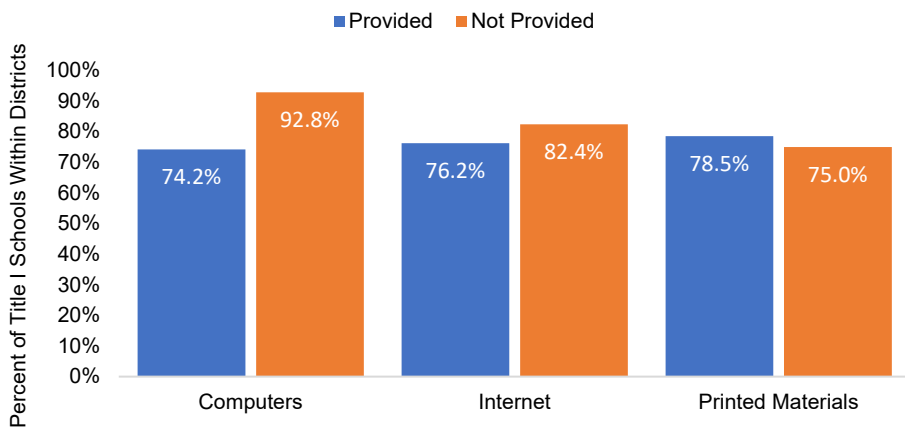


Figure 7. Percent of Title I Schools Within Districts and Strategies of Providing Access to Students



Source: LFC & LESC Analysis of District Continuous Learning Plans

Appendix D. CDC Decision Tree for Reopening Schools

SCHOOLS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



The purpose of this tool is to assist administrators in making (re)opening decisions regarding K-12 schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to check with state and local health officials and other partners to determine the most appropriate actions while adjusting to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community.

Should you consider opening?

- ✓ Will reopening be consistent with applicable state and local orders?
- ✓ Is the school ready to protect children and employees at higher risk for severe illness?
- ✓ Are you able to screen students and employees upon arrival for symptoms and history of exposure?

ANY NO



Are recommended health and safety actions in place?

- ✓ Promote healthy hygiene practices such as hand washing and employees wearing a cloth face covering, as feasible
- ✓ Intensify cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation
- ✓ Encourage social distancing through increased spacing, small groups and limited mixing between groups, if feasible
- ✓ Train all employees on health and safety protocols

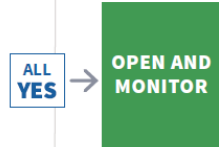
ANY NO



Is ongoing monitoring in place?

- ✓ Develop and implement procedures to check for signs and symptoms of students and employees daily upon arrival, as feasible
- ✓ Encourage anyone who is sick to stay home
- ✓ Plan for if students or employees get sick
- ✓ Regularly communicate and monitor developments with local authorities, employees, and families regarding cases, exposures, and updates to policies and procedures
- ✓ Monitor student and employee absences and have flexible leave policies and practices
- ✓ Be ready to consult with the local health authorities if there are cases in the facility or an increase in cases in the local area

ANY NO



cdc.gov/coronavirus

Appendix E. Recommendations for State Education Agencies on Guidance for Distance Education

Table 2. Recommendations for State Education Agencies on Guidance for Distance Education

<p>Recommendation 1: Continue to place issues of equity at the center of remote learning plans, with increased guidance for special populations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to reinforce equity considerations in policy guidance • Use guiding principles or reflections tools to evaluate digital divides, accessibility issues, and all elements of remote learning practice. • Emphasize the importance of providing a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to students with disabilities during school closures. Provide LEAs and schools more guidance on exactly how to do this at a distance. • Develop a plan for providing language development instruction for English learners appropriate to their level of English language proficiency. • State agencies should develop guidance on how to remotely ensure English learners continue to have equal access to academic grade-level content. • Consider how to support other vulnerable populations, such as children facing housing insecurity, children in foster care, and incarcerated students.
<p>Recommendation 2: Instructional guidance should acknowledge the challenges and constraints of home-based, distance learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider your guidance in regards to remote learning policy: whether to pursue only enrichment and review or to attempt to advance in new standards-aligned material. • Consider encouraging a stronger emphasis on asynchronous over synchronous learning. • Consider providing guidelines and recommendations for safe and appropriate synchronous video conferencing between teachers, caregivers, and/or students. • Share example schedules, lessons, and plans from across the state. • Consider generating sample units and schedules. • Consider addressing flexibility in graduation requirements and grading policies.
<p>Recommendation 3: Communicate information clearly with multiple target audiences in mind.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate key information into a small number of documents or webpages. • Consider a short video statement of key policies and values to personalize the work of the state education agency. • Consider creating a joint statement with key state-level stakeholders including teachers, principals, directors of special education or English learners services, parent-teacher associations, school board associations, superintendent associations, teacher associations, charter school associations, etc. • Recognize that addressing extended school closures is a multi-phase process. • Consider checklists and templates to help schools and districts attend to important issues. • Organize policy documents labelled by topic, and timestamp, and then archive outdated information. • Continue to collect feedback from students, parents, LEAs, and other key stakeholders.

Source: Justin Reich, et. al. (2020) Remote Learning Guidance from State Education Agencies during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A First Look. Retrieved from osf.io/k6zxy/

Appendix F. Best Practices for Distance Education and Use of Technology in the Classroom

Table 3. Best Practices for Distance Education and Use of Technology in the Classroom

Practice	Evidence	Recommendation
Educational software, or computer-assisted learning (CAL) programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students can advance through exercises at their own pace, allowing them to work incrementally until they have mastered the material. Shows promise in improving learning outcomes, particularly in math. Simply watching videos is insufficient, no matter how stimulating the content. 	Educational software that adapts instruction to meet student needs or that offers timely feedback to students and reports data on student performance to teachers can support teacher instruction during virtual education.
Interactive lessons with incentives to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online learning is more productive when platforms create interactive lessons and offer incentives to learn. Students in online only courses tend to perform worse than students in in-person-only courses. 	Engage students in video and online learning by creating assignments that ask students to engage with material and share their reactions through online discussions to increase the likelihood that students process the material.
Synchronous interaction with instructors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nonsynchronous online courses can lead to negative educational outcomes. Online courses with very little real-time interaction between teachers and students require students to be highly motivated and sufficiently self-disciplined to do most of their work on their own. 	Teachers should try to work regularly with their students in real time. Ideally, that would mean conducting class by videoconference at regular times. If that isn't possible, teachers might create opportunities for synchronous interaction through virtual office hours or by talking with students on the telephone, for example.
Virtual tutoring for struggling students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning occurs through interactions between teacher and student. Tutoring programs delivered virtually could be valuable to students who are struggling academically. 	Tutoring programs offering two-to-one support can help students get back on track when schools reopen and will help fight the widening of the achievement gap that is likely to result from school closures.
Messaging platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short, actionable directions and suggestions for engaging activities better equipped parents to support learning at home. Family engagement apps are a proven method of providing parents with behavioral nudges. Timely and specific reminders, like text message reminders about tasks required for matriculation can help students enroll in college at higher rates. 	Automated text messaging platforms may be an inexpensive way for districts to support both parents and students during school closures.

Source: Reuter, H. & Troe, J. (2020, May 15). State and local policy responses to COVID-19: Lessons from evidence. J-PAL Poverty Action Lab. Available: <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/blog/5-15-20/state-and-local-policy-responses-covid-19-lessons-evidence>;

Appendix G. LFC Teacher Survey Results

LFC administered a teacher survey through the New Mexico Coalition of Educational Leaders from May 26 – May 31. The survey had 4,170 respondents, approximately 18.6 percent of all teachers in New Mexico. Survey respondents represent 73 school districts and 15 state charter schools. The majority of teachers (97.8 percent) reported that they taught at a public school. Nearly two-of-three teachers (62.2 percent) reported that they taught at a Title I school. Most (91.4 percent) of the teachers taught on a 5 day schedule.

Table 4. Grade Level Taught by Teachers

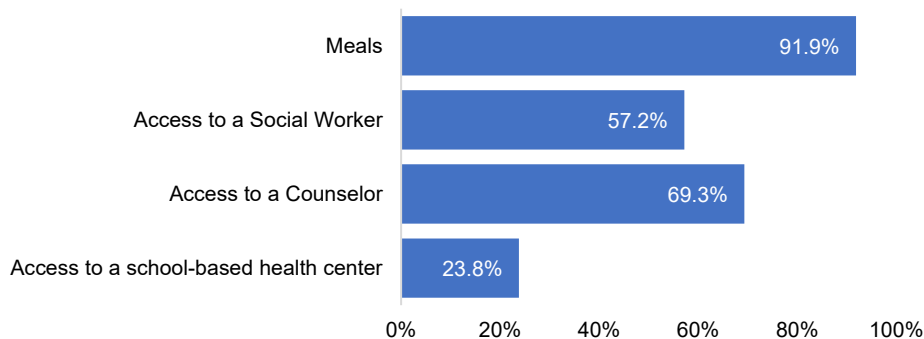
Grade Level	Count	Percent
PreK	63	1.5%
Kindergarten	171	4.1%
1st grade	316	7.6%
2nd grade	261	6.3%
3rd grade	275	6.6%
4th grade	292	7.0%
5th grade	260	6.2%
6th grade	542	13.0%
7th grade	260	6.2%
8th grade	219	5.3%
9th grade	424	10.2%
10th grade	200	4.8%
11th grade	177	4.2%
12th grade	148	3.5%
Did Not Report	63	1.5%
Total	4170	100.0%

Note. If teachers taught multiple grade levels, highest grade level taught was selected.

Table 5. Subject Taught by Teachers

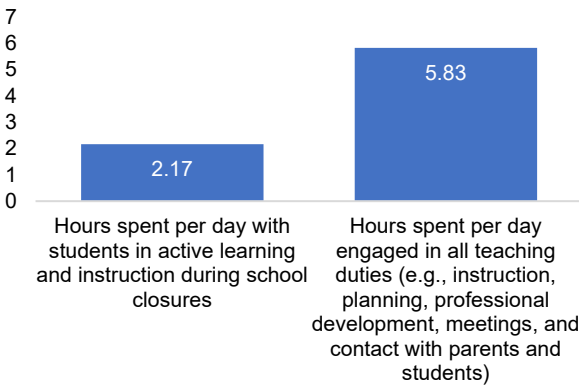
Subject Taught	Count	Percent
Elementary education	1477	35.4%
English language arts	396	9.5%
Math	331	7.9%
Science	257	6.2%
Social studies	250	6.0%
Art	67	1.6%
Music	102	2.4%
Physical education	107	2.6%
Special education	547	13.1%
Other	636	15.3%
Total	4170	100.0%

Chart 3. Services Provided During School Closures



Source: LFC Teacher Survey

Chart 4. Hours per day teachers are engaged in instruction and other duties



Source: LFC Teacher Survey

Chart 5. Are teachers working more or less during school closures compared to a normal school year?

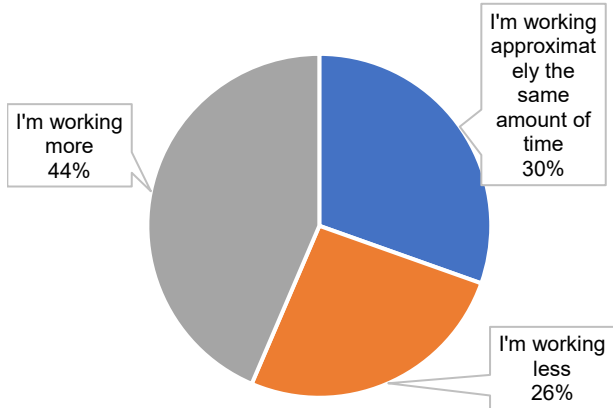


Chart 6. New Mexico Teachers response to, "Due to school closures, will you be able to finish teaching all of the required state standards by the end of the year?"

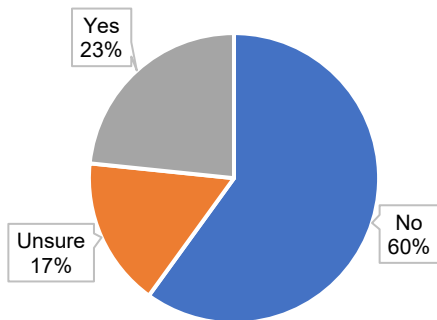


Chart 7. New Mexico Teachers response to, "Should schools or districts extend the school calendar in future years to make up for lost learning instructional time during school closures?"

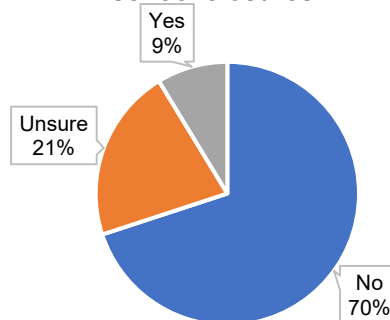
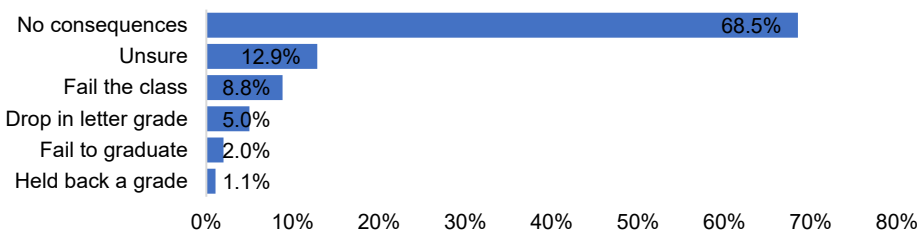


Chart 8. Percent of Teachers Who Reported Various Consequences for Students if They Did Not Participate or Complete Their Assignments



Source: LFC Teacher Survey

Chart 9. Student Engagement During School Closures Based on Attendance Policy

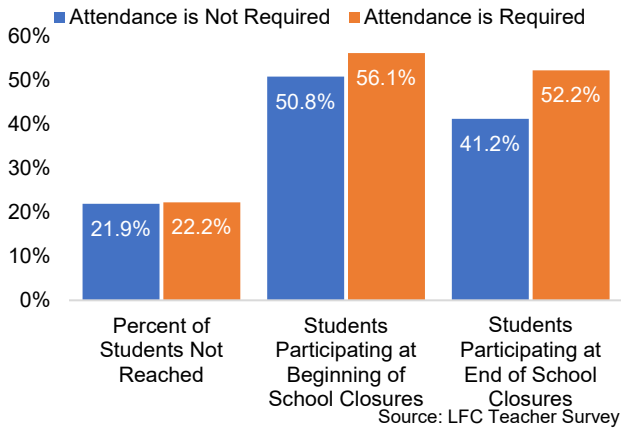


Chart 10. Student Engagement During School Closures Based on Title I Status

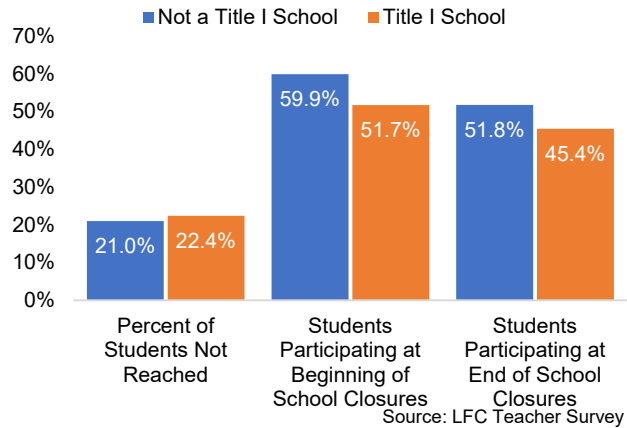
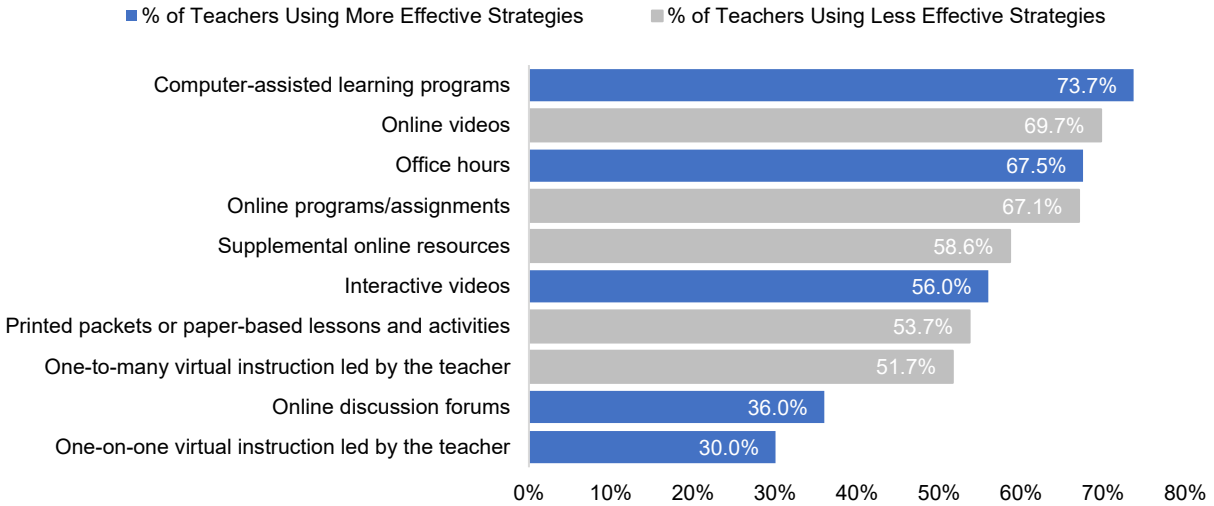


Table 6. Percent of Students Participating in Distance Learning by Subject Area

Subject Taught	Count	Percent of Students Not Reached	Percent of Students Participating at Beginning of School Closures	Percent of Students Participating at End of School Closures	Difference
Other	636	25.4%	51.3%	46.6%	4.7%
Elementary education	1477	18.1%	57.3%	49.6%	7.7%
English language arts	396	21.4%	54.9%	47.7%	7.4%
Math	331	21.5%	56.7%	49.0%	7.9%
Science	257	23.7%	52.9%	45.2%	8.0%
Social studies	250	26.1%	54.4%	48.5%	5.8%
Art	67	40.7%	46.2%	40.7%	5.4%
Music	102	33.9%	45.9%	38.6%	6.9%
Physical education	107	33.4%	44.3%	36.6%	7.7%
Special education	547	20.8%	49.1%	46.1%	3.0%
Total	4170	22.1%	53.8%	47.4%	6.4%

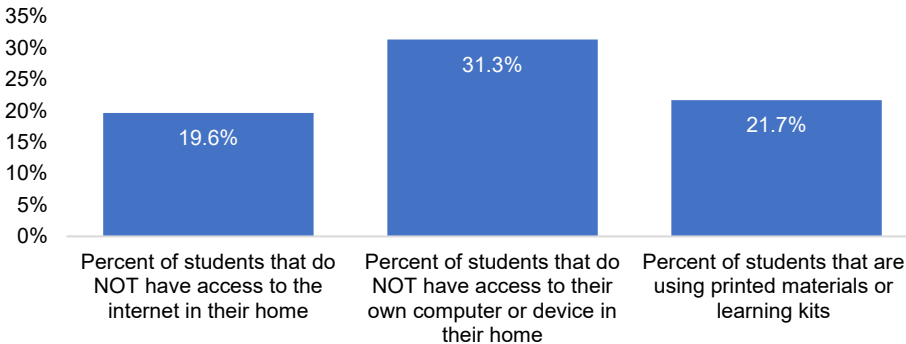
Source: LFC Teacher Survey

Chart 11. Percent of Teachers Reporting Engaging in Various Distance Learning Activities



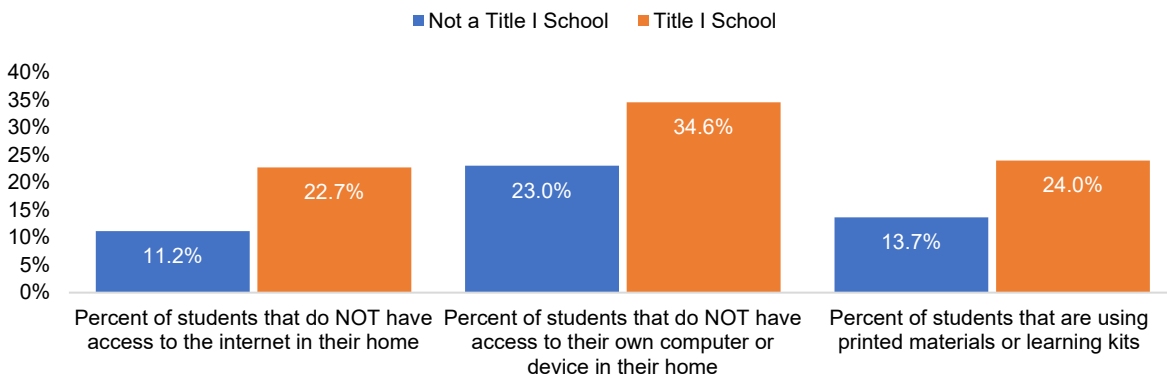
Source: LFC Teacher Survey

Chart 12. Student Access to Technology



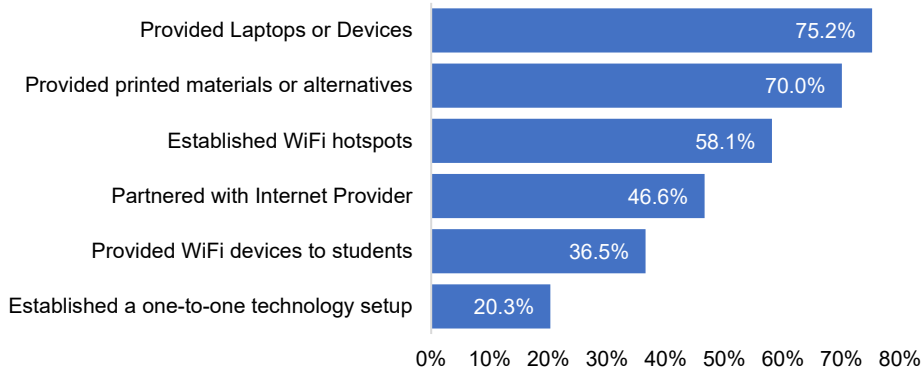
Source: LFC Teacher Survey

Chart 13. Student Access to Technology Based on Title I Status



Source: LFC Teacher Survey

Chart 14. Percent of Teachers Who Reported Various Efforts by Their District to Provide Access to the Internet or Computers to Engage in Distance Learning



Source: LFC Teacher Survey

Chart 15. Percent of Teachers Who Reported Various District Efforts to Support Teachers in Remote Instruction

