CLERK OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
20 IRVING STREET
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01609

The School Committee will hold a virtual and/or in-person meeting:

on: **Thursday, October 5, 2023**
at: 5:00 p.m. Executive Session
6:00 p.m. Regular Session
in: Esther Howland Chamber, City Hall
virtual:
https://worcesterschools.zoom.us/j/82746440670?pwd=dmp4TnIxYThBdnhkZWQ1bm1hMjFFZz09
Also accessible by telephone, to dial in call: +1 301-715-8592 or +1 305-224-1968

ORDER OF BUSINESS

A. General Business Items taken in Executive Session

To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares – Successor Contract Negotiations – Educational Association of Worcester, Aides to the Physically Handicapped, Monitors and Drivers Unit.

To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares – Successor Contract Negotiations – Massachusetts Nurses Association for and on behalf of Worcester School Nurses.

B. Call to Order

C. Pledge of Allegiance/National Anthem

The National Anthem will be performed by Burncoat student, Nevaeh Agyeman Duah.

D. Roll Call

E. Consent Agenda

i. Approval of Minutes
ii. Approval of Donations
To consider approval of a donation of instruments, music stands, and other materials from Anna Maria College to benefit the students in the Burncoat High School Music Program.

iii. Notification of Personnel Records
iv. Initial Filing of Individual Recognitions
v. Notices of Interest to the District or to the Public

F. Item for Reconsideration

G. Held Item

H. Recognition

I. Public Comment

Rule 30 of the Rules of the Worcester School Committee: Any member of the public may address the Committee regarding any item before them for two (2) minutes. Those speaking will state their name, their residence, and the item on which they wish to speak for the record. Those speaking may do so in person or via remote participation. Those wishing to address the Committee in a language other than English are asked to notify the Clerk of the Committee in advance, so the Committee may be provided with an interpreter. Members of the Committee may not respond to the comments of the public at the meeting.

J. Public Petition

c&p 3-9 Public Petition

To consider adding physical education to all four quarters of the school year at Worcester East Middle School.

K. Report of the Superintendent

ros 3-15 Administration

(October 5, 2023)

From Here, Anywhere... Together: Student Academic Achievement Part 1

Marco Andrade, Ph.D.

Marie Morse, Ed.D.

L. Reports of the Standing Committees

M. Student Advisory Committee Items

N. Approval of Grants and other Finance Items

To consider approval of a grant from FC419 Innovation Pathways Support Grant in the amount of $50,000.00. The purpose of this grant is to provide designated Innovation Career Pathways with resources to support program implementation.

To consider approval of the DESE Building Capacity for High-Quality Instruction through EdTech grant in the amount of $55,500.00, which was awarded to the Department of Educational Technology and Digital Learning. The purpose of this grant is to provide funds for districts to adopt and/or expand capacity-building programming that builds collective expertise of educators to utilize technology to deliver high-quality instruction.

To consider a prior year payment to Easter Seals of Massachusetts in the amount of $135.00 for Independent Evaluation services provided in May 2023.

To consider a prior year payment to Cathy Mason in the amount of $603.54 for Independent Evaluation services provided in May 2023.

To consider a prior year payment to Jennifer Coady in the amount of $222.00 for work completed in May 2023.

To consider a prior year payment to Atlas Travel Agency, Inc., in the amount of

$299.79 to pay off the balance of an invoice from non-updated purchase order 10003970 for July travel.

To consider a prior year payment to EZ Pass in the amount of $8.50 for fees that were just received.

To consider a prior year payment to Cyntha Hanslik in the amount of $95.18 for an unanticipated translation in June 2023.

To consider a prior year payment to D&S Diversified in the amount of $3,530.00 for an invoice that was just received.

To consider a prior year payment to Favorite Healthcare in the amount of $1,444.80 for payment due on an unpaid invoice.

To consider a prior year payment to Formatron in the amount of $1,782.00 for an invoice that was just received.

To consider a prior year payment to Joseph Ewick in the amount of $915.00 for a field trip to Southwick Zoo in May 2023.

To consider a prior year payment to Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administration in the amount of $1,050.00 for an invoice that was just received.

To consider a prior year payment to Mailhot Technical Services in the amount of $440.00 for an invoice that was just received.

To consider a prior year payment to Midwest Musical Imports in the amount of $1,240.00 due to a grant being closed and unpaid invoices.

To consider a prior year payment to Perkins School for the Blind in the amount of $165.00 for an invoice that was just received.

To consider a prior year payment to Pocket Nurses in the amount of $2,687.97 for an invoice that was just received.

To consider a prior year payment to RFK Community Alliance in the amount of $9,628.84 for invoices canceled by the City Auditor during the close of the fiscal year.

To consider a prior year payment to Ride Rite in the amount of $3,200.00 for an invoice that was just received.

To consider a prior year payment to Robert Murphy in the amount of $125.00 for license renewal and a physical exam in April 2023.

To consider a prior year payment to Siemens in the amount of $1,257.00 for an invoice that was just received.

To consider a prior year payment to St. Stephen Parish in the amount of $6,676.82 for a water bill reimbursement from September 2022 through June 2023.

O. General Business

gb 3-163.1 Clancey
(June 6, 2023)
Response from Administration on: To work with Administration to organize a formal recognition for Seniors who graduated following summer school completion.

gb 3-225 Mailman
(September 26, 2023)
To request that Administration recommend the best plan to publicly monitor progress on the health of male students as it relates to their ability to participate in various programs throughout the district including areas such as attendance and achievement.

gb 3-226 Kamara
(September 27, 2023)
To review necessary supports with regards to staffing of school nurses during the school hours to ensure all schools are staffed with nurses so that no school is left without a school nurse, as so to ensure safety for all students.

gb 3-227 Johnson
(September 27, 2023)
To work with Claremont Academy School on a dedication, scholarship, or memorial in the name of Allen Jenkins.

gb 3-228 Johnson
(September 27, 2023)
To select a delegate and alternate for delegate assembly at the MASC conference in November 2024.

gb 3-229 Johnson
(September 27, 2023)
To look at and discuss the MASC resolutions and bylaws.

gb 3-230 Kamara
(September 27, 2023)
To consider the City's "Complete Streets Traffic" work done to guide the installation of speed bumps to consider roads near WPS school grounds for safety and security.

gb 3-217 Kamara
(September 28, 2023)
Request that the Student Handbook be amended to include language expressly discouraging students from sharing food on school properties due to the dangers of known/unknown food allergies and known/unknown pre-existing medical conditions.

gb 3-231 Administration
(September 28, 2023)
To consider approval of a three year lease agreement with Webster Square Shopping Center for additional parking spaces to serve staff at the Gates Lane School.

gb 3-232 McCullough
(October 3, 2023)
To request the Administration review and report back at the next committee meeting on the policy regarding alcohol usage in WPS buildings for special events with appropriate City licensure approval.

P. Announcements

Standing Committee Meeting Dates:

Teaching, Learning and Student Supports:

- October 10, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. in Room 410, Durkin Administration Building

Finance and Operations:

- October 24, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. in Room 410, Durkin Administration Building

Student Advisory Committee meets with School Committee:

- October 19, 2023

Q. Adjournment

E. Approval of Donations
Administration MEETING: 10-5-23
(September 19, 2023)

ITEM:
To consider approval of a donation of instruments, music stands, and other materials from Anna Maria College to benefit the students in the Burncoat High School Music Program.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:
Annex A (2 pages) contains a detailed inventory of the donation.

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Approve.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:
Approve.

Description	Quantity
Timpini Set	One Set of 4
Bass Drum	1
Xylophone	2
Drums	----
Toms	3
Little snare	1
Marching snares	3
Music Stands	15
Baritone Horn	1
Baritone Sax	1
Bass Clarinet	1
Cello	1
Clarinet	8
Drum Kits	11
Flute	2
French Horn	2
Mellophone	1
Tenor Sax	1

Trombone	2
Tuba, 3/4 scale, brass	1
Tumpet	3
Violin	18
Yamaha Drum Kit	7
Upright Bass	1
Marching Bass	4
Marching Snare	4
Marching Toms	1
Kick Drums	4
Marching Xylophone	1
Toms	2
Marching band uniforms	
Marching band hats	
Marching band shoes	

J. Public Petition
Okffen Cooper
(September 27, 2023)

ITEM: c&p 3-9
S.C. MEETING: 10-5-23

ITEM:
To consider adding physical education to all four quarters of the school year at Worcester East Middle School.

Okffen Cooper is a parent of a Worcester East Middle School student.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:
Annex A (1 page) contains Mr. Cooper's statement of intent to file this petition.

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

My name is Okffen Cooper and I would like to file the following petition to the Worcester School Committee:

To consider adding physical education to all four quarters of the school year at Worcester East Middle School.

Physical Education is a subject that is just as important as math and language and should be treated as such.

Intelligence and skill can only function at the peak of their capacity when the body is healthy and strong - by late President John F. Kennedy

We must fight obesity in every way we can.

K. Report of the Superintendent
Administration
(October 5, 2023)

ITEM: ros 3-15
S.C. MEETING: 10-5-23

ITEM:
From Here, Anywhere... Together: Student Academic Achievement Part 1
Marco Andrade, Ph.D.
Marie Morse, Ed.D.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:
Annex A (9 pages) contains the Report of the Superintendent.
Annex B (86 pages) contains the article, "The State of the American Student"
Annex C (22 pages) contains the article, "School Engagement Is More Than Just Talk"
Annex D (pages) contains the Powerpoint presentation.

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
To approve.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:
To approve.

Overview

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released the full school accountability results for the first time since the 2018-19 school year. These results are a broad indicator of school performance determined by student achievement (MCAS), progress made by English language learners (ACCESS), chronic absenteeism, dropout rates, completion of advanced coursework, and graduation rates. As a district, Worcester Public Schools (WPS) was classified as "not requiring assistance or intervention."

Our schools reflect state and national trends that have shown flat growth in academic assessments after declining scores during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nationally, research has found that the average eighth-grade student needs seven months to catch up on pre-pandemic reading levels and nine months to recover to pre-pandemic math levels, according to a study by the Center for Reinventing Public Education released mid-September 2023. A copy of that study has been provided with this report.

Throughout this report, we will outline the current state of our district. Part 1 is a review of the Superintendent's Student Goals, an overview of accountability results, and MCAS. Part 2 takes a closer look at MCAS results for various student groups, highlights the importance of engagement, and discusses actions to be taken in this school year.

----------PART 1----------

Overall Glows

- A total of 21 schools improved their accountability percentiles from 2022. The number of schools categorized as "requiring assistance or intervention" declined from 13 in 2019 to 10 in 2023.
- Science performance in grades 5 and 8 has improved (increases of one and four points respectively over SY22) while statewide results show a decline. In fact, in grade 8, the percentage of WPS students meeting or exceeding expectations now exceeds the percentage in SY19 (24% vs. 22%, respectively).
- In Mathematics, students have continued their upward pattern toward SY19 rates in grades 3-8 and at the state level. The percentage of WPS students meeting and exceeding expectations in grades 3-8 increased by one point from SY22 to SY23 and a total of nine percentage points since SY21.

Overall Grows

- MCAS results suggest that WPS students are largely following the trend of students statewide and nationally, with either no change or incremental increases or decreases. This is true for reading in grades 3-8. There were also declines in the percentage of grade 10 students meeting or exceeding expectations for ELA (-3 points), math (-1 point), and science (-3 points) from SY22 to SY23.
- Performance gaps continue to exist among several groups such as Hispanic/Latino students, English learners, and students with disabilities. The performance gap score difference has remained relatively stable over the last few school years suggesting that students are recovering to pre-pandemic levels of achievement at roughly the same rates.
- English learners in Grades 3-8 and high school had a decline in the percentage that met their annual progress toward English language proficiency targets. The decline was nearly 5 points for grades 3-8 and 12 points for high school grades. Approximately 3 of every 4 EL students who take the MCAS are at an English proficiency level of 1-3.

Results

SY23 Accountability

Ten district schools received an overall classification of "Requiring assistance or intervention." This represents a decline from 13 schools in 2019. Of the ten schools in 2023, six were identified as being among the lowest performing 10% of schools in the state. This is the fewest WPS schools in the lowest 10% since full or partial accountability determinations were made (starting in SY2018). Schools that are not in the lowest performing 10% may be identified for support based on the performance of various student groups or low participation. These are the top reasons for WPS schools being classified as "Requiring Assistance or Intervention:"

- Among the lowest performing 10% of schools
- Low student group performance: Asian, White, SWD, Low income, High needs
- Low participation rate

Table 1. Summary of Schools with Highest Increase in Accountability Percentile Scores

School	Accountability Percentile Percentage Point Increase
Chandler Magnet	19
Lincoln Street, Lake View, Nelson Place	16
Sullivan Middle, Clark Street, Chandler Elementary, UPCS	14
Heard Street	13
Canterbury Street, Goddard	10
Burncoat Middle, May Street	6
City View, Columbus Park, Grafton Street	5

A total of 21 schools improved their accountability percentiles from their 2022 results. Since 2019, 16 WPS schools have increased their accountability percentiles by 5 percentage points or more. The school with the strongest improvement was Chandler Magnet Elementary School, which increased by 19 percentage points. Summary information on accountability percentile scores is shown in the Table below.

Table 2. Summary of Accountability Percentile Scores

Accountability Percentile Score SUMMARY	SY19	SY22	SY23
Accountability percentile scores higher than 2019:	NA	20	21
Number of schools with a 5+ point gain since 2019:	NA	11	16
Number of schools with a 5+ point gain over prior year:	5	NA	12
Number of schools with percentile higher than 10 (by year):	34	35	39*
Number of schools with a percentile of 10 or less (by year):	10	9	6
Number of (new) schools that moved above the 10% threshold (by year):	0	3	4
Number of (new) schools that moved into the 10 or less category over prior year:	1	2	1

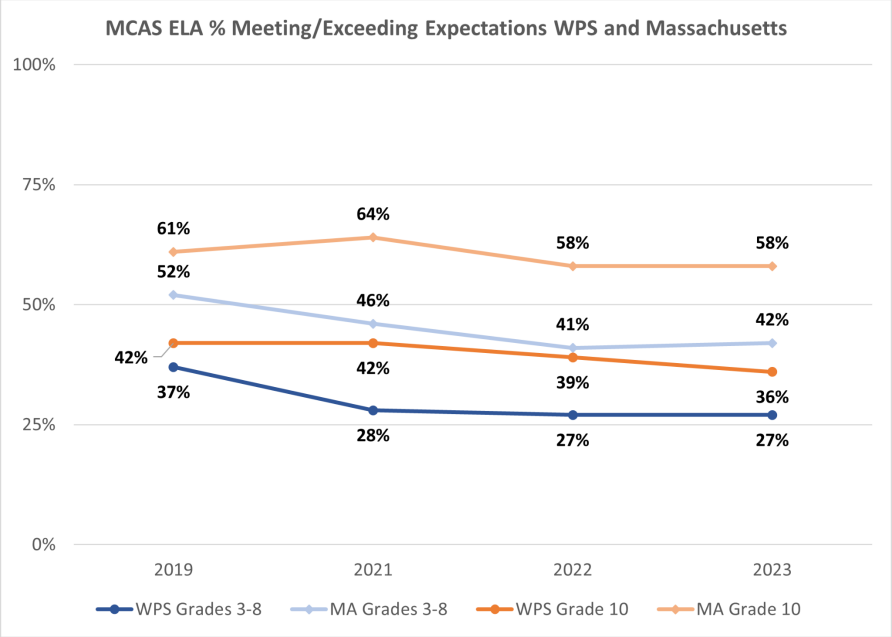
*La Familia new school

Grade-level Reading Performance

Reading performance has remained relatively unchanged in grades 3-8 since SY21 and has declined the past two years in grade 10 (see Figure 1). At the elementary level, Worcester had for a number of years used a curricular resource that was not based on the science of reading that has since

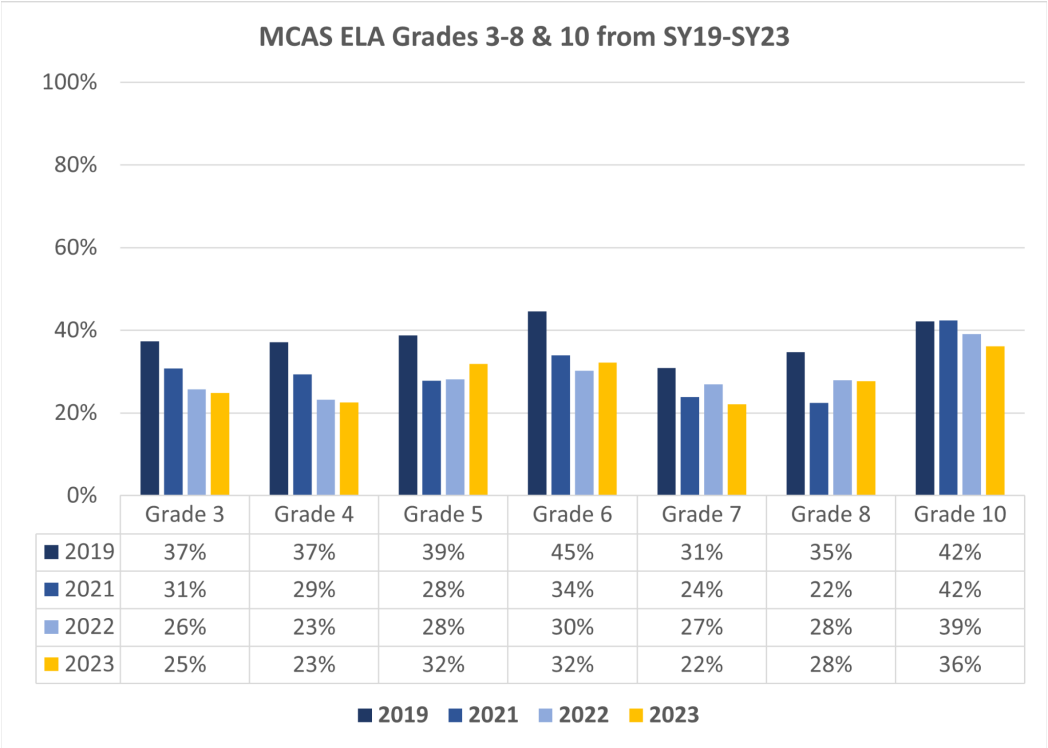
been replaced with an evidence- and science of reading-based curricular resource to start the 2024 school year.

Figure 1. Percentage of WPS and MA Students Meeting and Exceeding ELA Expectations in Grades 3-8 and Grade 10



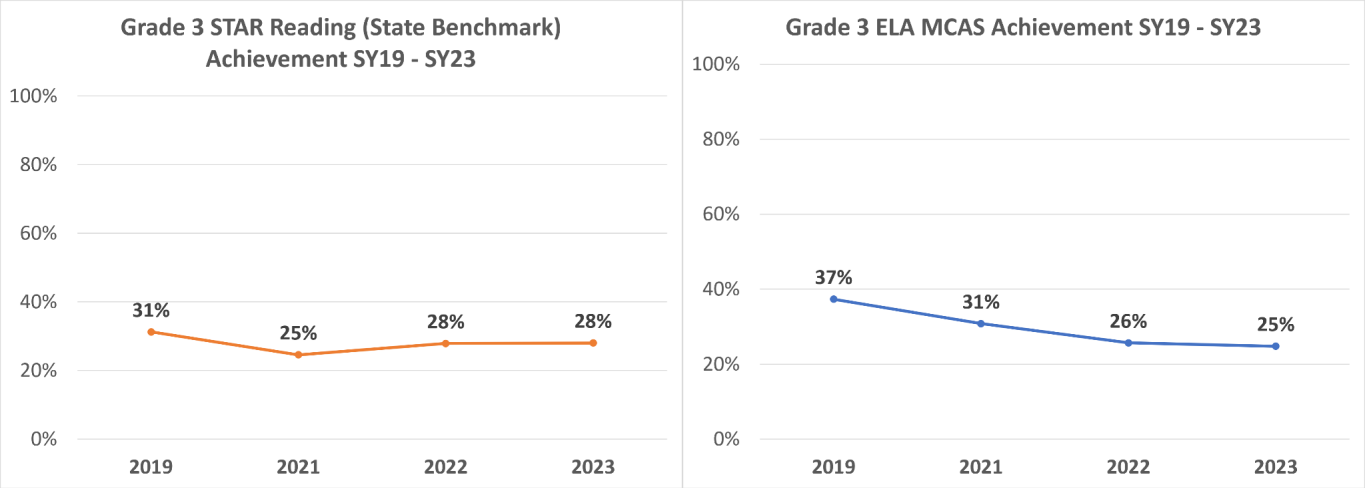
In the two school years since the return to school after the COVID shutdown, the rate of ELA performance decline has slowed to where most grade levels experienced little change from SY22 to SY23 (with the exception of grades 5, 7 and 10). This pattern is similar to that of students across Massachusetts, who experienced only incremental growth or decline in the last two academic years (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. MCAS ELA Percentage of Students Meeting and Exceeding Expectations, SY19 thru SY23



Of particular importance is the achievement of grade 3 students in English Language arts. Developmentally, students should begin to switch from "learning to read" to "reading to learn," and as such, any delays in reading ability at this point can have cascading effects on students' ability to access content in the classroom in later years. WPS assesses students' reading ability with both the STAR Reading assessment (reading comprehension) and the MCAS ELA assessment (reading, language, and writing). Figure 3 below shows that there was a drop in reading achievement from SY19 to SY21 with a relatively flat rate of achievement since. STAR is shown as a percentage of students at or above the state benchmark and MCAS is shown as the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations. WPS will use the end-of-year STAR Reading results to monitor the impact of the new curricular resource on student reading levels.

Figure 3. Reading achievement by Grade 3 students year over year on MCAS and STAR Reading



Secondary-level Student Performance

Grade 10 students have had a pattern of declining performance in ELA and Math since SY21. While the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations in Grade 10 ELA remained stable statewide from SY22 to SY23, Grade 10 students in WPS decreased by 3 percentage points.

Table 3. Cohort Data from 2018 to 2023 for Grades 10 and 8

Class of 2025	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10
ELA	38%	45%	NA	22%	Not Tested	36%
Math	29%	43%	NA	13%	Not Tested	26%
Class of 2027	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
ELA	36%	37%	NA	34%	27%	28%
Math	33%	32%	NA	20%	20%	19%

However, the cohort of students in Grade 10 (Class of '25), have experienced a bounceback from the declines in reading achievement they experienced in SY21 when these students were in Grade 8. Most recent Grade 8 students (Class of '27), however, have not demonstrated such a bounceback, instead

plateauing from SY22 to SY23. These trends are not uncommon, though, as performance challenges for secondary-level students have been observed on national assessments such as NAEP (as reported in a recent study by the Center for Reinventing Public Education that is attached to this report).

Secondary-level Student Engagement

Due to the sudden onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic, schooling was interrupted by the abrupt pivot to online learning, resulting in lower levels of achievement. As such, students are months behind grade level in reading.

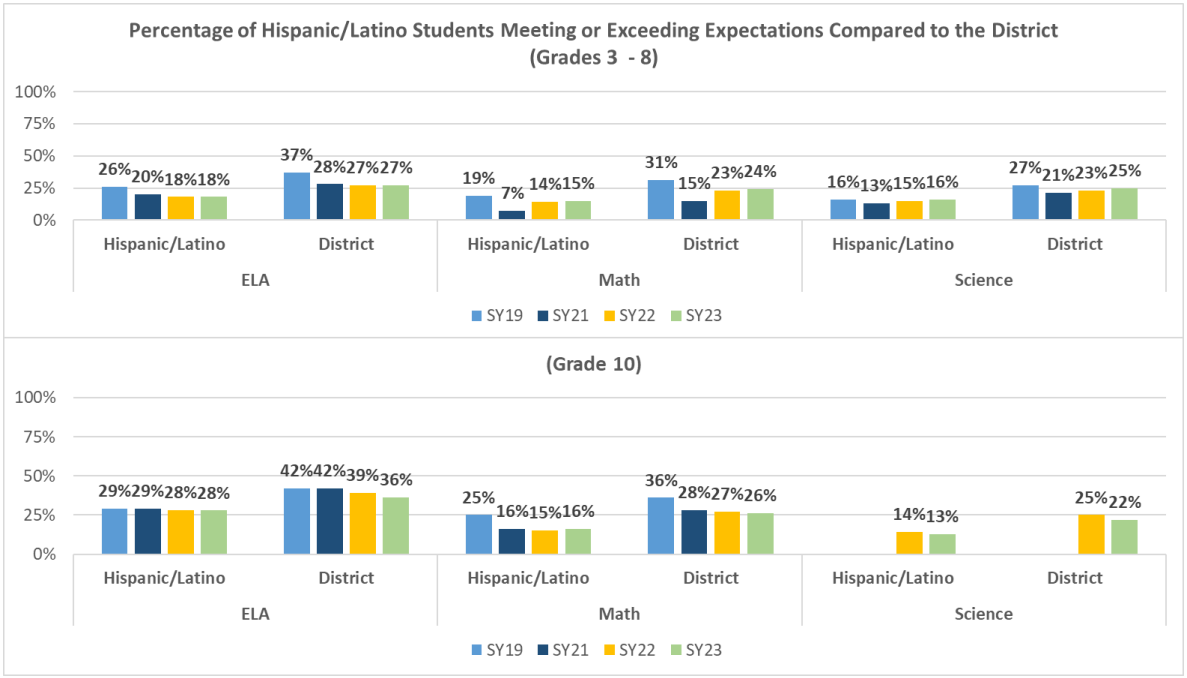
Another aspect of the student experience that may contribute to lower performance is their disengagement and lack of connectedness to school. Lack of student engagement pre-dates the pandemic, for example, in 2018 Gallup conducted a national poll of 5 million students in grades 5-12 in which 29% reported being "not engaged" and 24% indicated they were "actively disengaged" in learning (Hodges, 2018). Aligned to the national findings, Worcester secondary-level students reported that they do not find their academic experience engaging and have a low sense of belonging to their schools. On the annual culture and climate survey, most secondary-level students self-reported that they did not feel connected to an adult (26% for grades 6-8 and 21% for 9-12) and did not feel understood by people at their school (36% for grades 6-8 and 26% for 9-12). Overall, only 25% of students in grades 6-8 and 21% in grades 9-12 responded favorably to questions related to engagement–defined as how attentive and invested students are in their classes. This reflects a four percentage point decline for grades 6-8 from SY22 and an eight percentage point decline from SY22 for students in grades 9-12.

----------PART 2----------

Performance Gaps - Hispanic/Latino Students

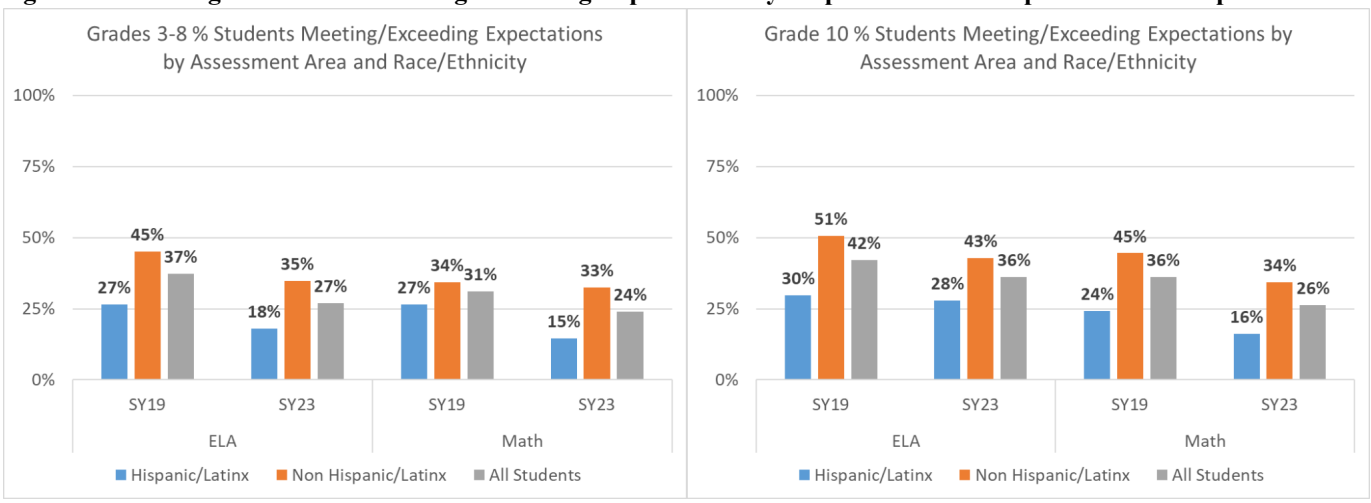
Overall, Asian, Multi-Race Non-Hispanic, and White students tend to exceed the district's rates of students meeting or exceeding expectations while Black/African American students tend to be within ± 3 percentage points of the district's total percentage. As a group, Hispanic/Latino student MCAS performance is significantly lower than their counterparts. Figure 4 shows that Hispanic/Latino students were, on average, nine percentage points below the district in ELA, Mathematics, and Science.

Figure 4. Percentage of Hispanic/Latino students meeting/exceeding expectations relative to all WPS students



Further analysis of the performance gap for Hispanic/Latino students shows that the proportion of Hispanic/Latino compared to Non-Hispanic students meeting and exceeding expectations has an average performance gap in SY19 around 13 percentage points in grades 3-8 and 21 percentage points in grade 10 (see Figure 5). In SY23, the average performance gap was 18 percentage points for students in grades 3-8 and 17 percentage points for students in grade 10. Regardless of the point change from SY19 to SY23, the overall performance gap is large.

Figure 5. Percentage of Students Meeting/Exceeding Expectations by Hispanic/Latino compared to non-Hispanic/Latino



Performance Gaps - Students Receiving Specialized Service

Performance gaps persist for students receiving specialized services (see Figure 6a). In all grades and subject areas, both students with disabilities (SWD) and English language learners (ELL) had significant performance gaps. Compared to the district average, the average performance gap for SWD across all subject tests and grades was 21 percentage points while the average performance gap for ELLs was 26 percentage points.

Figure 6a. Percentage of students meeting/exceeding expectations by specialized service group and grade level

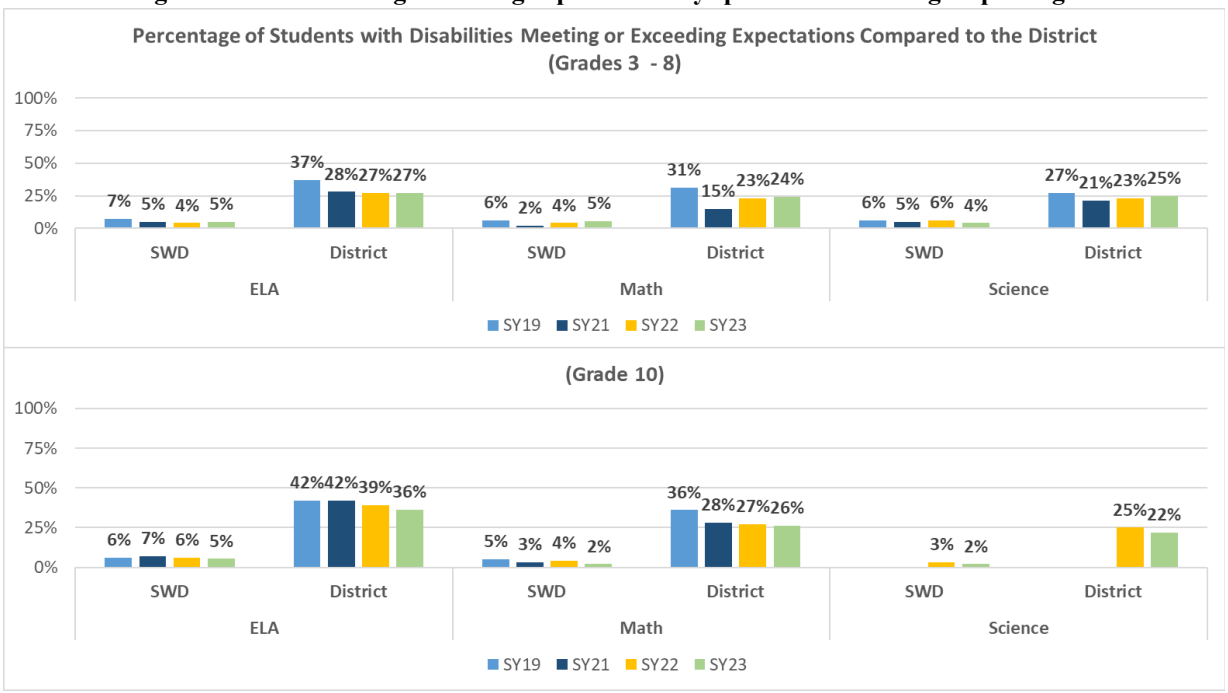
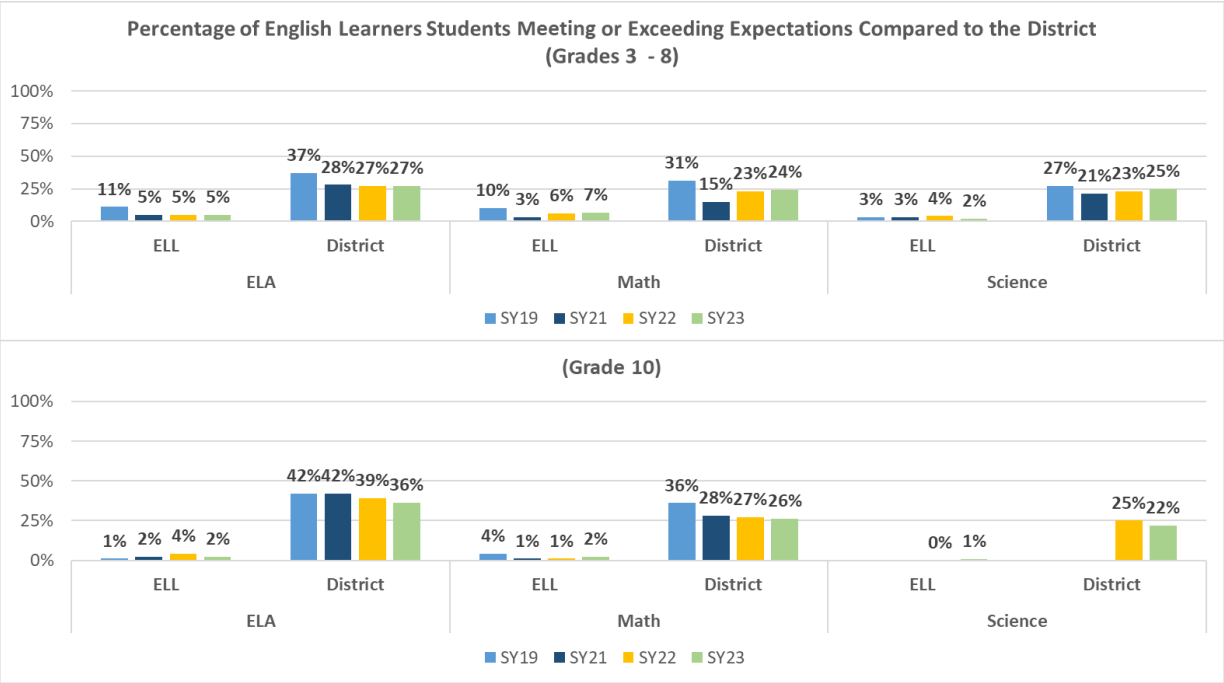


Figure 6b. Percentage of students meeting/exceeding expectations by specialized service group and grade level cont.



English Language Proficiency

English language learners (ELLs) complete the ACCESS for ELLs test in January-February each year. Results of this assessment are reported in the accountability system as students make progress toward English language proficiency. There were 7,000 students who received an ACCESS score with most students in grades K-5 and at an English Proficiency Level 3.

Table 4. Percentage of English Learners by SY23 ACCESS English Proficiency Level

Grade Span	Number Tested	Level 1 **Entering**	Level 2 **Emerging**	Level 3 **Developing**	Level 4 **Expanding**	Level 5 **Bridging**	Level 6 **Reaching**
Gr. K-5	4,168	28%	23%	31%	16%	2%	0%
Gr. 6-8	1,262	21%	29%	40%	10%	0%	0%
Gr. 9-12	1,570	22%	29%	40%	9%	0%	0%
District Count	7,000	1,764	1,756	2,444	919	108	9
District %	–	25%	25%	35%	13%	2%	0%

As a district, the percentage of ELL students who met their annual progress toward attaining English language proficiency targets declined from SY22 for both grades 3-8 and high school. For grades 3-8, there was a 4.7 point decline to 38.9% meeting their annual target. For high school grades there was a 12 point decline to a rate of 10.8% in SY23.

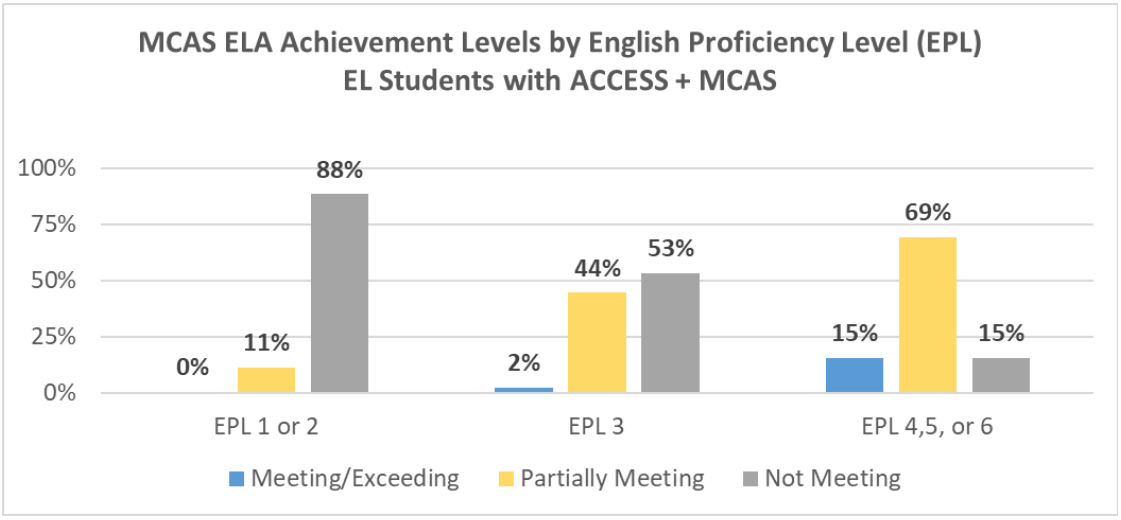
ELLs in grades 3-8 and high school also participate in MCAS. The counts of ELL students who took ACCESS and MCAS are in the Table below. Most students are at an English proficiency level of 3.

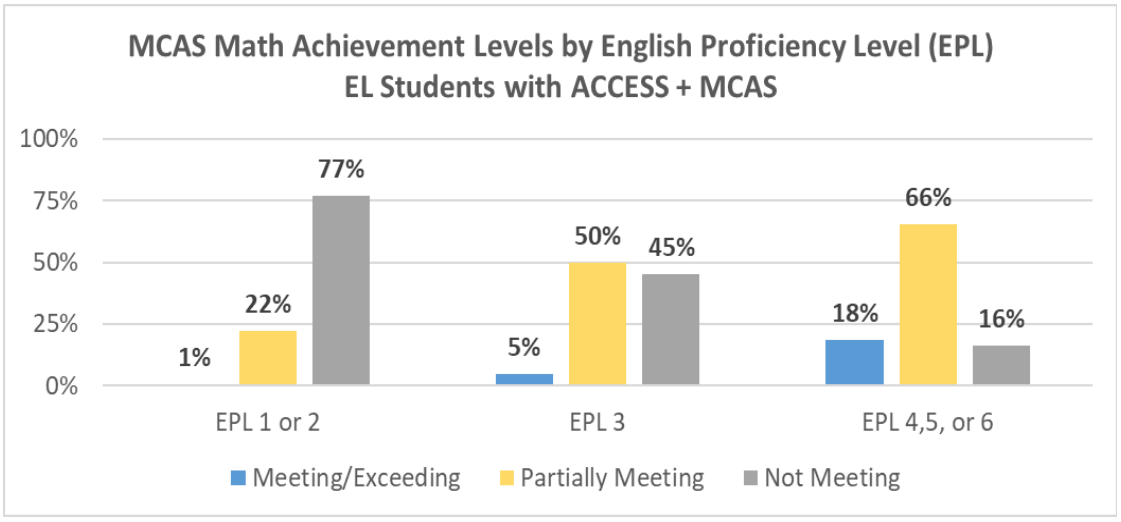
Table 5. Count of Students by English Proficiency Level

ELL English Proficiency	MCAS ELA Student Count	MCAS Math Student Count
EPL 1	402	396
EPL 2	721	714
EPL 3	1279	1276
EPL 4	646	644
EPL 5	87	87
EPL 6	9	9
Total	3144	3126

It can take six years on average for an ELL to achieve proficiency in the English language. It is also understood that around EPL 3 students possess a sufficient degree of English language knowledge to begin to access content in English. Figure 7 shows the percentage of ELLs meeting or exceeding expectations by English Proficiency Level. Similar to SY22 results, for WPS ELL students at EPL3 there is a shift in the percentage who score partially or meeting expectations. As the English language becomes more accessible to multilingual learners, their achievement is likely to increase.

Figure 7. MCAS Achievement by ELL Student EPLs on ACCESS for ELLs





Our Path Forward in SY24

The accountability results indicate that previously established areas of priority are correct, particularly student achievement in English Language Arts and closing performance gaps among our Hispanic/Latino student population, English language learners, and students with disabilities. The Worcester Public Schools is taking the following steps to improve student performance:

- To address the need for improvements in elementary-level literacy, WPS has begun using the Core Knowledge Language Amplify (CKLA) reading curriculum this year for students in Grades K-6, which is rooted in the evidence-based science of reading and has a curriculum in Spanish. WPS stopped using the Fountas and Pinnell reading curriculum at the end of 2022-23.

- WPS has launched the "Spark Plan" which is an incubator program designed to test and implement new teaching practices with a focus on hands-on learning and raising future-ready students. While "SPARK" does not have a specific focus on ELA, Math, or Science, it aims at improving the student and teacher experience more broadly. The efficacy of the SPARK will be assessed by MCAS performance and other accountability indicators.

- With the goal of minimizing performance gaps WPS has contracted with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to audit the district's multilingual education program. This audit will provide recommendations which will guide future work toward substantially improving outcomes for multilingual learners.

- A new model of district-based support has been implemented in SY24: Quadrant Teams, or "Q-Teams," each with an executive director, focus-instructional coaches, and specialized educators, who will spend more than 80% of their workdays in schools instead of district offices. These educators specialize in areas such as academics, educational technology, multilingual education, special education, mental health, and culture and climate.

In addition to these specific interventions, WPS has also implemented several other changes for SY24 that are believed will foster increased academic achievement for students:

- WPS launched the Family and Community Engagement Office earlier this year. The Office will continue to expand efforts to foster greater parental involvement in student learning and school culture, with a culturally and linguistically responsive focus to ensure families of all backgrounds are engaged.

- For the first time this year, all WPS schools will have at least one Wrap Around Coordinator to assist with wellness support and services for all students.

- The Early College Program has been expanded, which will allow more high school students to take courses in conjunction with local universities for college credit. The students also receive the experiences of attending college campuses and envisioning themselves in higher education.

- Ch. 74 career technical education offerings have been expanded with the opening of the new Doherty Memorial High School building. WPS continues to explore options to expand CTE programming.

CRPE
REINVENTING
PUBLIC EDUCATION

The State of the American Student

We are failing older students: Bold ideas to change course

Fall 2023

Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College
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Acknowledgments

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We are particularly indebted to the scholars who participated in our consensus panels and working groups. These cohorts united teams of experts to sift through hundreds of studies to assess what the research to date can tell us about what we know, don't know, and need to know about the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on students. Fourteen policy leaders, practitioners, and researchers contributed thoughtful and provocative essays with tangible solutions for a path forward. Our student panel provided a critical perspective and reality check on the report's data and analysis.

We are grateful for the support of our philanthropic partners: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Barr Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Oak Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, and Walton Family Foundation. They supported CRPE research and analysis that documented student needs, system responses, and emerging innovations during this extraordinary time of chaos, crisis, and opportunity in America's education system. Although we are thankful for the support and contributions of all those mentioned here, any omissions or errors are the authors' alone. More information about CRPE's work, including other extensive research reports, data, and resources, is available at www.crpe.org.

CRPE
REINVENTING
PUBLIC EDUCATION

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K-12 FAST FACTS

The body of this report focuses on older students impacted by the pandemic. We begin, however, with an update on the overall state of the American student. We include data specific to older students where possible. However, national data on this group of students is quite limited due to the assessments and reporting systems currently in place.

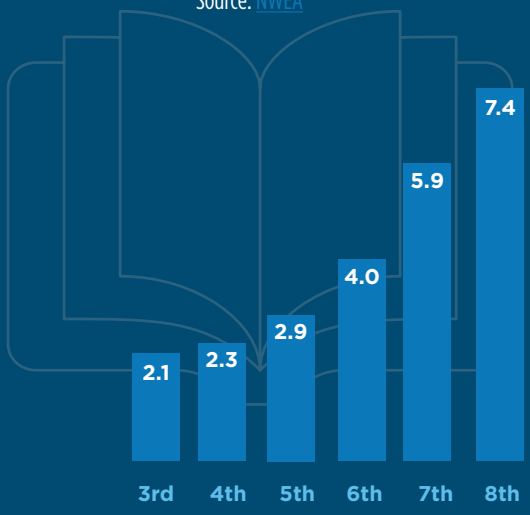
ACADEMICS

Reading

7.4
MONTHS

Number of months required for the average 8th-grader to catch up to pre-pandemic achievement levels in reading

Source: NWEA

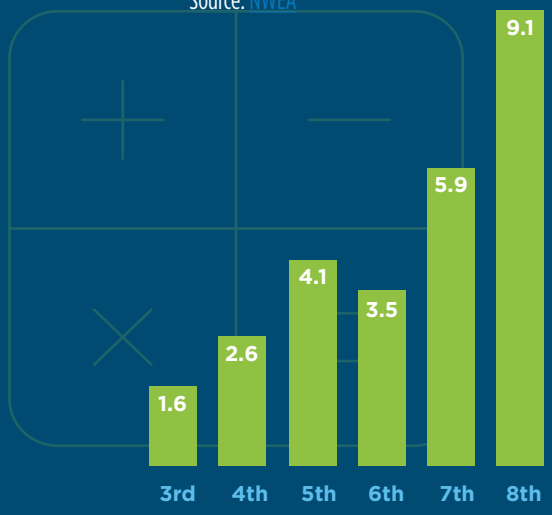


Math

9.1
MONTHS

Number of months needed to help the average 8th-grader catch up to pre-pandemic achievement levels in math

Source: NWEA



1990

The year the average math performance of American 13-year-olds was as low as the performance of 13-year-olds in 2023, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Source: Nation's Report Card

Number of points the average math scores for 13-year-old students dropped between 2020 and 2023, based on NAEP scores by race/ethnicity

- ↓6 White
- ↓13 Black
- ↓10 Hispanic
- ↓20 Native American

Source: Nation's Report Card

ACADEMICS

30%

Percentage of U.S. 8th-grade students in 2022 who performed below basic (the lowest of four performance categories) in reading on the NAEP exam

Source: Nation's Report Card

38%

Percentage of U.S. 8th-graders in 2022 who performed below basic (the lowest of four performance categories on the NAEP) in math

Source: Nation's Report Card

31 YEARS

Number of years since the average ACT score for the nation's graduating seniors was as low as the Class of 2022's average score of 19.8

Source: ACT

90%

Percentage of American parents in 2023 who believe their child is at or above grade level in math and/or reading

Source: Learning Heroes

50%

Percentage of students who started the 2022-23 school year below grade level, as reported by public schools

Source: Institute of Education Sciences

2%

Percentage of American students who received high-quality tutoring at school, according to parents

Source: USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research

ABSENTEEISM AND ENROLLMENT

16 MILLION

Estimated number of students who were chronically absent (missed more than 10% of school days) during 2021-22, the most recent year for which data is available

Source: Attendance Works

Percentage of public schools that reported increases in chronic absenteeism compared to a typical year before the pandemic

72%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

5%

Percentage of students who reported missing 5 or more days in a month in 2020

Source: Nation's Report Card

10%

Percentage of students who reported missing 5 or more days in a month in 2023

Source: Nation's Report Card

27%

Percentage of school districts that reported recent enrollment declines of 5% or more

Source: Rand Corporation

1.3 MILLION STUDENTS

Estimated decline in higher education enrollment between 2019 and 2023

Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center

STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND SUPPORTS

> 8 in 10

Public schools in May 2022 that reported stunted behavioral and social-emotional development in students due to the Covid-19 pandemic

Source: Institute of Education Sciences

60%

Percentage of public schools in May 2022 that reported increases in classroom disruptions from student misconduct

Source: Institute of Education Sciences

20%

Percentage of students in 2023 who graded their schools D or F in mental health supports, individualized instruction, and making them excited about learning

Source: Gallup

Executive Summary

We are failing the Covid generation. It's time to adjust course.

Three years after the start of the pandemic, Covid-19 is continuing to derail learning, but in more insidious and hidden ways. Things are far from normal, even though students are back in school.

As we reported in the first State of the American Student report in September 2022, pandemic school closures led to unprecedented academic setbacks for American students. They exacerbated preexisting inequalities and accelerated the youth mental health crisis. At the same time, we documented pandemic bright spots, innovations, and discoveries that could allow us to overcome the underlying rigidities, inequalities, and dysfunctions that have long plagued U.S. public education and that revealed themselves disastrously during the pandemic.

We called on state and local leaders to get serious about using data to identify students with the steepest learning losses and to track and publicly report on academic recovery efforts. One year later, several states are setting a new precedent for transparency and accountability, including Connecticut, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Virginia. Texas, Tennessee, and Colorado have launched admirable tutoring efforts. These are important starts, but more is needed to meet this moment.

In this second edition, we provide updates on the well-being of students, as well as indicators of the overall health of the system, including data on teachers, enrollment, and finances.

Although they were back in school this year, the kids are still not alright

- On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), math and reading scores for fourth and eighth grade students reached record lows in 2022. One-third of students in both grades can't read at even the "basic" achievement level—the lowest level on the test.
- 16 million students were chronically absent (i.e., missed more than 10% of school days) during the 2021-22 school year, twice as many as in previous years, according to Attendance Works.
- More than 8 in 10 public schools reported stunted behavioral and social-emotional development in their students because of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to the May 2022 IES Pulse survey. Nearly half reported an increase in threats of physical attacks among students.

Of the greatest concern are older students who have the least time to catch up

This year, we pay special attention to the state of students who are nearing graduation or have already graduated from high school. They have had the least time to get back on track and deserve our urgent attention. As of this writing, four graduating classes of high school students have been affected by the pandemic, approximately 13.5 million students. Although the peculiarities of our testing system mean we know less about these students than their younger counterparts, we do know too many are struggling academically, socially, and emotionally. Especially alarming indicators include:

- ACT college admission scores are the lowest since 1991 (19.8 average).
- It will take the average eighth grader 7.4 months to catch up to pre-pandemic levels in reading and 9.1 months in math, according to NWEA.
- While graduation rates are up, so is grade inflation, making it likely that many students exited the system unprepared for college and careers.
- 57% of teenage girls in the U.S. felt persistently sad or hopeless, and 30% seriously considered suicide, according to the CDC's 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report.
- Undergraduate enrollment at public universities and community colleges dropped 7% from 2019 to 2023, with enrollment in two-year colleges declining the most dramatically.

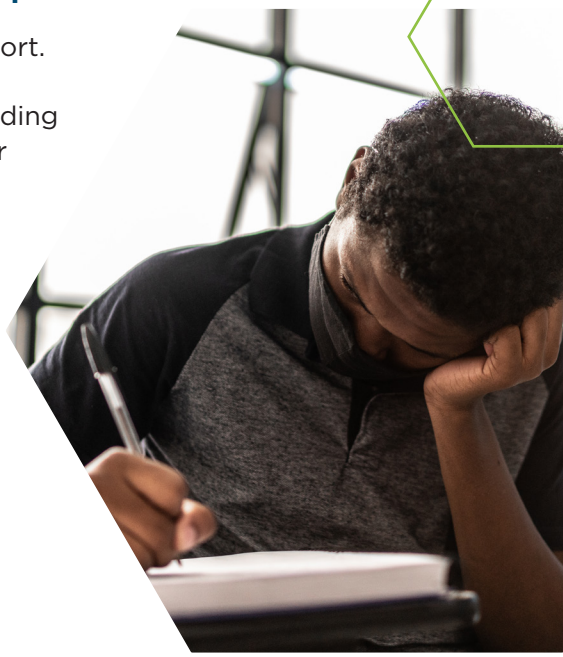
Inequities continue to grow. Although national data are scarce, state and local data on the state of older students are alarming. On just about every indicator (including NAEP scores, course grades, absenteeism, grade retention, and mental health challenges), the negative impacts of the pandemic are worse for more vulnerable students.

The traditional pathways to college and careers were already not working for too many students. The pandemic made everything worse.

Our K-12 education system leaves to chance almost every aspect of the transition from high school to college or careers. Most students are on their own to discover their interests and talents and to select a career pathway aligned to them. Few receive guidance on how to change careers and reenter training or postsecondary education programs when their interests and priorities shift. Not surprisingly, students and families are increasingly questioning the value of a high-tuition, four-year degree.

K-12 responses have been inadequate

Strategies for catching students up are falling short. Only two in 100 students are receiving the kind of high-impact tutoring that makes a difference, according to researchers at USC. One in 5 students graded their schools D or F in mental health supports, individualized instruction, and feeling excited about learning, according to Gallup's Spring 2023 survey. Teachers, who have a daily presence in the lives of young people, reported rates of stress that were nearly two times pre-pandemic levels. A recent report from CRPE found that not only did student learning regress during the pandemic, so did the quality of teaching and the ability for the school systems studied to simultaneously hold high instructional expectations and provide strong support for all students.



Why we must act now

The challenges are likely to get more difficult for at least four reasons. First, nearly $200 billion in federal pandemic relief funding will expire in January 2025, while student enrollment has plummeted, which means local schools will have less funding.

Second, this fiscal cliff will come on top of an already challenging environment for educators, which has worsened since the pandemic, including an uptick in teacher turnover in the 2022-23 school year and steep declines in the number of people training to become teachers.

Third, societal changes are ratcheting up the demands on the next generation of students. Employment opportunities will shift quickly, requiring adaptability and constant retooling. Automation (including AI) will affect everyone, but middle-class jobs will be harder to find, making it more difficult to overcome the disadvantages of poverty.

Fourth, most parents and the public are alarmingly unaware of the severity of these challenges, which makes it tougher for policymakers to respond with the necessary boldness. For example, a survey by Learning Heroes showed that about 90% of parents believe their child is performing at grade level or above, despite reams of data to the contrary.

There are some bright spots

Some schools, school systems, states, and postsecondary institutions are demonstrating what's possible when leaders are willing to rethink outdated approaches and center instruction and support on what students need most. The full report profiles schools that provide competency-based education to pregnant, parenting, and underserved students, that help students explore career interests and non-college options, and that offer AI-themed curricula, more project-based learning, and dual enrollment with local colleges, among other innovations. Colleges such as Arizona State University, City University of New York (CUNY), and New York University are rethinking how to better serve their students, while states such as Colorado and Virginia have bold plans to ensure that every high school student graduates with an associate degree and an industry-recognized credential—part of a deliberate strategy to blur the lines between high school and postsecondary success.

However, given the magnitude of the current crisis, we need many more such examples of hope and innovation. To that end, we asked 14 experts from various sectors and perspectives to weigh in with examples of what is possible and proposals for moving forward.

Addressing immediate recovery needs

- Jake Anders (Associate Professor, University College London) on researching Covid-19's long-term effects on educational and career trajectories
- Aimee Guidera (Virginia Secretary of Education) on high standards, innovation, and closing the "honesty gap"
- Kevin Huffman (CEO, Accelerate) on delivering more "high-impact tutoring"
- Thomas Kane (Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Education) on ensuring we have the right dosage of interventions
- Cara Pangelinan (Research Analyst, CRPE) on what students are telling us
- Keri Rodrigues (President, National Parents Union) on parents' demands for better, more accurate information
- Aaliyah Samuel (President and CEO, CASEL) on closing "relationship gaps"

Building better pathways to college and career

- David Adams (CEO, Urban Assembly) on organizing schools around real-world themes
- Robin Lake (Director, CRPE) on why it's the perfect time to redesign the New American High School
- Marie Mackintosh (President and CEO, EmployIndy) on modern apprenticeships and related efforts to make high school more relevant
- Kristie Patten (Counselor to the President, New York University) on what autistic students can teach us about focusing on assets, not deficits
- Jared Polis (Governor of Colorado) on blurring the lines between high school and postsecondary learning
- Joanne Vogel (Vice President of Student Services, Arizona State University) on redesigning everything, from dorm rules to instruction, to better support incoming students
- Chelsea Waite (Principal Researcher, CRPE) on how New England states are rethinking the "college for all" paradigm

Recommendations: We must adjust course

Positioning the "Covid generation" for success requires immediate action and an orientation toward the future. For starters, we urge local, state, and federal leaders to:

- **Offer transparency regarding the effectiveness of schools in ensuring that every child is on track to master core skills.** Otherwise, there's no urgency and little trust. Connecticut, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Virginia are leading the way.

- **Invest in a national youth intervention strategy** that develops, tests, and promotes new interventions (such as strengthening adult-student relationships) and innovative methods (such as AI technology) for struggling adolescents and young adults. Invest, too, in scaling already proven interventions, like high-quality tutoring and mentoring.
- **Invest in high school and college mastery programs** to ensure disruptions wrought by the pandemic and the youth mental health crisis do not derail any young person's aspirations. Community colleges that have lost enrollment in recent years might offer tuition-free (state and federally subsidized) gap-year programs that allow students to finish their high school degree and begin earning college credits or industry credentials. States, cities, and school districts could invest in outreach programs like CUNY Reconnect, as well as provide funding and flexibility to support working students while they complete their degrees.
- **Support research to track the Covid generation's progress.** The United Kingdom offers a good model and Gallup has a new poll that tracks student views on education, but more data is needed.

- **Rethink high school to career pathways.** We need to go beyond pilots for more career-relevant high schools that blur the lines among high school, college, and careers, taking cues from Colorado and Virginia. An essay by Colorado Governor Jared Polis shows how such a "blurring strategy" is central to his state's education and workforce approach. Two other promising approaches: New York City's Urban Assembly offers students multiple pathways to postsecondary success, and EmployIndy supports a modern apprenticeship program and other efforts to engage Indianapolis youth.
- **Invest in a New American High School.** As CRPE's Robin Lake argues in her essay, "Rather than seek to provide a comprehensive set of learning experiences under one roof, the New American High School would connect students to meaningful work in their communities and expert knowledge around the globe. It would support young people to do meaningful work that makes real contributions and leads to meaningful credentials in the adult world. Rather than sorting students into tracks or marshaling all of them toward a single objective, it would provide every student adult guidance and technological support to understand their own conception of a good life, as well as the support, connections, knowledge, and skills to pursue that life—and change course where necessary. It would prepare students to thrive, collaborate, and innovate in a rapidly changing world. Yes, students would still study Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Newton, but in a more relevant, contemporary context."

The students are counting on us to act. Jaylen Adams, a rising eighteen-year-old freshman at Columbia University, says it well: "Schools have kind of become social-political battlegrounds. I think the issue really needs to be redirected to students as a whole and what's best for them."

She's right.

Jaylen—and her millions of peers—deserve nothing less.

About this report

As we reported in our inaugural State of the American Student report in September 2022, the pandemic and related school closures led to unprecedented academic setbacks for American students. They exacerbated preexisting inequalities and accelerated the mental health crisis for young people. At the same time, we documented pandemic bright spots, innovations, and discoveries that could allow us to leapfrog the underlying rigidities, inequalities, and dysfunctions that have long plagued U.S. public education and that revealed themselves disastrously during the pandemic.

In this second edition, we again provide basic data on U.S. students' progress toward academic recovery and mental wellness, as well as indicators of the overall health of the system, including data on teachers, enrollment, and finances.

This year, however, we chose to pay special attention to students who are nearing graduation, or have already graduated, from high school. As of this writing, four graduating classes of high school students have been affected by the pandemic, approximately 13.5 million students. Some older students have bounced back quickly, but many have already left the system without receiving what they are owed. Millions of others are still in high school and getting short-changed. Although the peculiarities of our testing system mean that we know less about these students than their younger counterparts, we do know that too many are struggling—academically, socially, and emotionally.

Time is running out for this "Covid generation" of students, whom we need to be our future climate scientists, doctors, artists, policymakers, and community leaders. We not only owe them restitution for extended school closures and missed proms—we owe them a special sense of urgency, given how little time they have left before transitioning to the next phase of their lives.

The traditional pathways to college and career were already not working for too many of these students. The pandemic made everything worse. High school should be a place of strong and trusted adult-student relationships, but too often it is not. High school should be a place of intellectual challenge, but too often it is not. High school should be a place where students are prepared for life after graduation, but too often it is not. Societal and economic changes are ratcheting up the demands on the next generation of graduates, but most high schools have failed to respond. Indeed, although most parents and the public are unaware of the severity of the current challenges, they were already losing faith in the value of traditional high school and college pathways before the pandemic.

Fortunately, new solutions are emerging to meet the needs of this and future generations of young people. The essays and examples in this report, along with the perspectives of students who participated in discussions with us, suggest a path forward.

The authors point to the need to address "relationship loss" and the need for more engaging curriculum to address learning loss in high schools. They argue for more state and federal research and transparency on how young people are really doing, more emphasis on technology-enabled and high-quality tutoring for high schoolers, and a more permeable relationship between high schools, colleges, and careers. They call for more urgency and more student voices, all around.

Our essayists provide examples of what is possible: state-level investments and policy infrastructure for high school transformation and data transparency; city-based internships and industry partnerships; university efforts to bring high schoolers on college campuses; and schools that are shifting to a new definition of student success that focuses more on fulfillment and long-term happiness in careers than college as an end unto itself.

Immediate steps from the federal government and states should include greater transparency in data reporting; investment in research and development around innovative recuperation strategies; a federally subsidized "gap" year in community colleges; and a national initiative to make high schools more relevant, responsive to student needs, and future-ready.

OUR ESSAYIST-EXPERTS

Addressing immediate recovery needs

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Joanne Vogel *(Vice President of Student Services, Arizona State University)* **on redesigning everything, from dorm rules to instruction, to better support incoming students.**

Chelsea Waite *(Principal Researcher, CRPE)* **on how New England states are rethinking the "college for all" paradigm.**

Students are counting on us to act with urgency

ABOUT OUR STUDENT PANEL

We recruited 10 older students, including high schoolers nearing graduation and recent graduates enrolled in college, to ask about their recent experiences with leaving or preparing to leave the K-12 school system. In May 2023, we facilitated various discussions on 1) how their schools prepared them for the transition to life after high school, 2) their takes on current mental health trends among youth, 3) life as an American teenager, and 4) how artificial intelligence may impact their future education and careers.

The students interviewed for this report were thoughtful about the complex dynamics of their world. For example, They discussed the pressures of social media, but they also pointed out the benefits of having access to a wide array of social circles and perspectives. They reflected on the pandemic and school closures without bitterness, but also were clear that they and their peers are not fully prepared for college, are having difficulty staying motivated, and are experiencing lasting stress and anxiety.

What was most striking, though, was how much this group of students wanted to make clear that they have experienced all these problems for a long time. They want adults and people of power to finally listen to what they have been saying for many years. They want change. They want adults to focus squarely on their well-being, not on the myriad distractions that seem to consume school boards and state and federal policy debates these days.

Jaylen Adams, 18, a rising freshman at Columbia University, told us, "Schools have kind of become social-political battlegrounds. I think the issue really needs to be redirected to students as a whole and what's best for them. And I think a lot of that is mental health focus, but then a lot of that also is making sure students are getting honest curriculum, making sure they're being put in positions where they can have paid internships, making sure they're being put on track freshman year, making sure those postgraduate secondary pathways are also being well advertised within the school system as well."

We couldn't agree more. This second annual State of the American Student report is dedicated to the millions of students like Jaylen who are counting on us to act with boldness, with compassion, and, most of all, with urgency.

Robin Lake

Director, Center on Reinventing Public Education

I. Older students are running out of time to recover

"Take this seriously! Everything is at stake!" –Geoffrey Canada, CBS News

Too many students, especially those from historically and systemically marginalized communities, are likely leaving the K-12 system without the skills, knowledge, and habits they need to thrive in college, careers, and life.

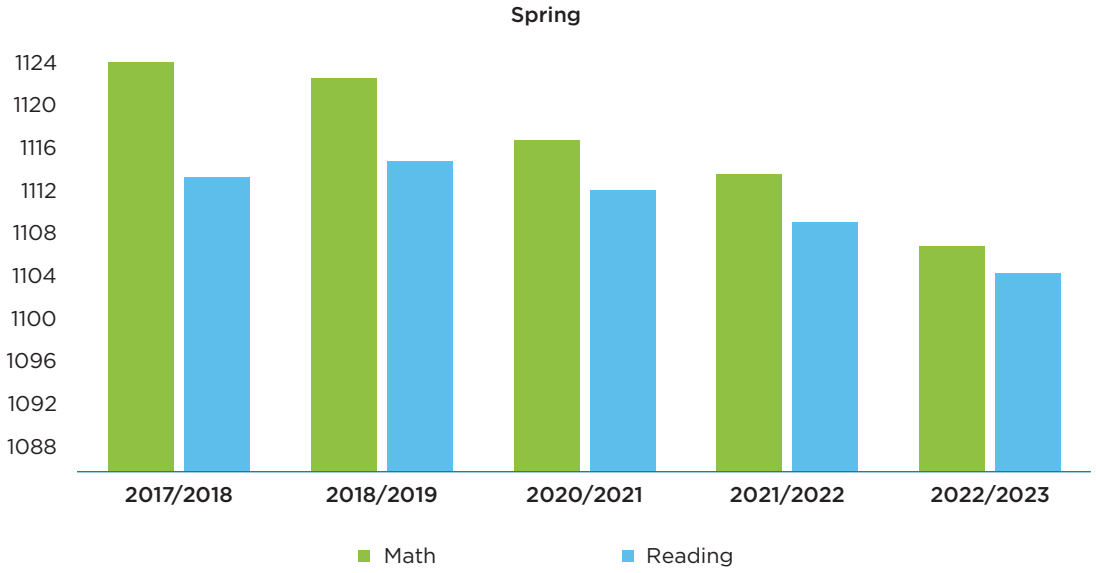
Declining high school academic performance and college preparedness

Multiple indicators of high school academic preparation show declines, especially among students from historically marginalized groups. A panel of experts recently convened by CRPE found that many indicators point to a decline in college readiness—one important indicator is course failure/course completion in high school.

"The older the student, the more lingering the impact," said Gene Kerns, chief academic officer of Renaissance, which administers the Star test. "The high school data is very alarming. If you're a junior in high school, you only have one more year. There's a time clock on this."

Evidence suggests sharp increases in high school course failure, although there is more mixed evidence about overall high school grades. In Houston, extremely high course failure rates (with more than 50% of high school students earning an "F" in one or more grades) persisted throughout 2020-21; North Carolina had similar increases. In Washington state, by contrast, course failure rates decreased a small amount, but "no credit" and "incomplete" rates jumped considerably.

Figure 1. Renaissance: tenth grade math and reading scores (median unified scaled scores)



Source: Renaissance.

While graduation rates are up, so is grade inflation, making it likely that many students exited the system unprepared for college and careers. Course failure and withdrawal rates have increased overall; at the same time, so has the percentage of students reporting high grades.

> *"High school, I think, was just a trailer, and I had not seen the movie coming. [High school] was a regular schedule and you had to go to school every single day, had to do the homework every single day and just show up. But in college when you transition, it is not the same. And high school did not prepare me for that. They didn't tell me that these are the necessary steps that you need to take to actually get through college." –Kesar Gaba, rising sophomore, Queens City College, New York*

One national study of ACT test takers found that the proportion of students reporting "A" GPAs had increased by almost 10 percentage points since 2021. This trend appears to have varied across states—administrative data from North Carolina shows grade declines of almost half a GPA point.

The Class of 2022 scored the lowest on the ACT college admissions test in more than 30 years. Their average score was 19.8 out of 36, marking the first time since 1991 that the average scores fell below 20 (this was not a representative sample, but it is the best available data on ACT scores). What's more, an increasing percentage of high school students (42%) failed to meet any of the subject-area benchmarks set by the ACT, showing a decline in preparedness for college-level coursework.

> *"We see rapidly growing numbers of seniors leaving high school without meeting college readiness benchmarks in any of the subjects we measure." –ACT CEO Janet Godwin*

Rising absenteeism, declining engagement

Students became much less engaged during the pandemic, were more likely to drop out, and/or stopped attending school consistently. This was particularly true for historically disadvantaged students and those farthest behind before the start of the pandemic.

In the District of Columbia, chronic absenteeism (10% or more days absent) increased from 29% pre-pandemic to 48% in 2021-22. During the 2020-21 school year in Detroit, attendance rates fell from 82% in 2018-19 to 68%, chronic absenteeism rose from 62% to 70% (and was higher for seniors), and over half of Detroit students missed 20% or more school days.

Students in schools that closed the longest were more likely to disengage from school, to drop out or stop attending school, and to experience anxiety and depression. At the same time, they were less likely to receive counseling and career support.

Recent research tends not to focus on these measures of student engagement. As a result, we cannot say for certain whether these reports of declines in engagement persist today, but multiple media reports and some qualitative studies describe ongoing concerns from teachers and district leaders about student engagement and disruptive behaviors.

Alarming inequities

Uneven and inadequate recovery efforts have exacerbated many preexisting inequalities. The bottom of the K in the K-shaped recovery represents kids who have always been left behind. The implications for racial and other equity gaps are staggering.

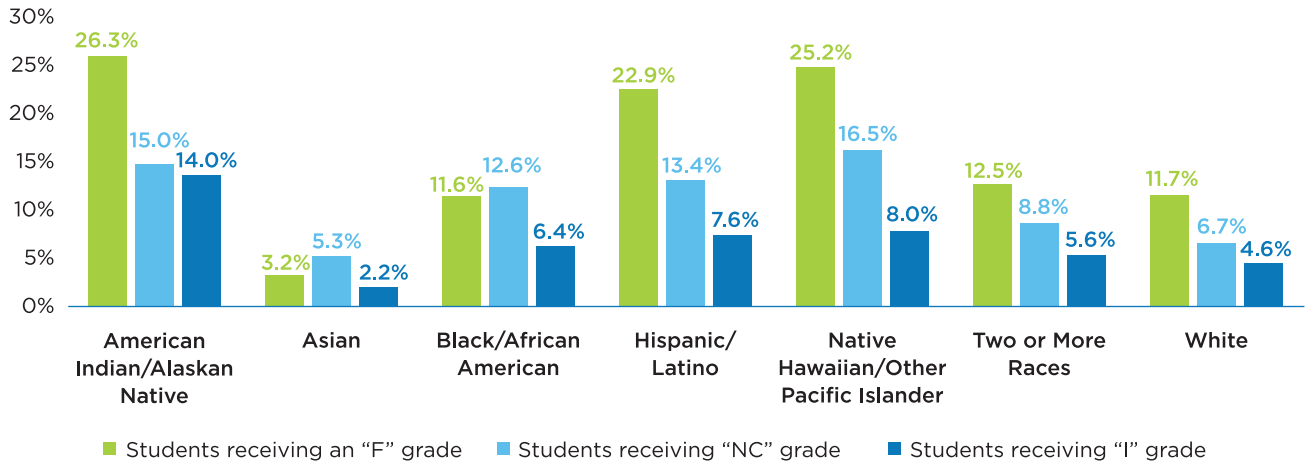
Students from historically marginalized groups have disproportionately experienced negative effects on college readiness. For instance, increases in high school course failure rates in Houston were much larger for Black and Hispanic/Latino students than for students from other racial/ethnic groups. Students with disabilities, English learners, or those who are economically disadvantaged also failed courses at higher rates than their peers, as did male students.

On just about every indicator, the negative impacts of the pandemic are worse for more vulnerable students. There is evidence of a greater degree of grade inflation for schools with higher proportions of low- and middle-income students. Chronic absenteeism rates in Ohio are up the most for Black students, Hispanic/Latino student, and students from other minoritized groups. Students of color are leaving higher education at the highest rates. Declines in two-year retention were largest for Hispanic/Latino students and Black males in an early-pandemic study of Chicago students.

Data from North Carolina show that students from historically marginalized groups generally experienced worse outcomes related to school absences, course grades, and grade retention. North Carolina middle schoolers were also more likely to miss substantial amounts of school and fail at least one course. However, they were not retained and continued on to the next grade, making it all the more essential that these students receive effective help in this and coming years.

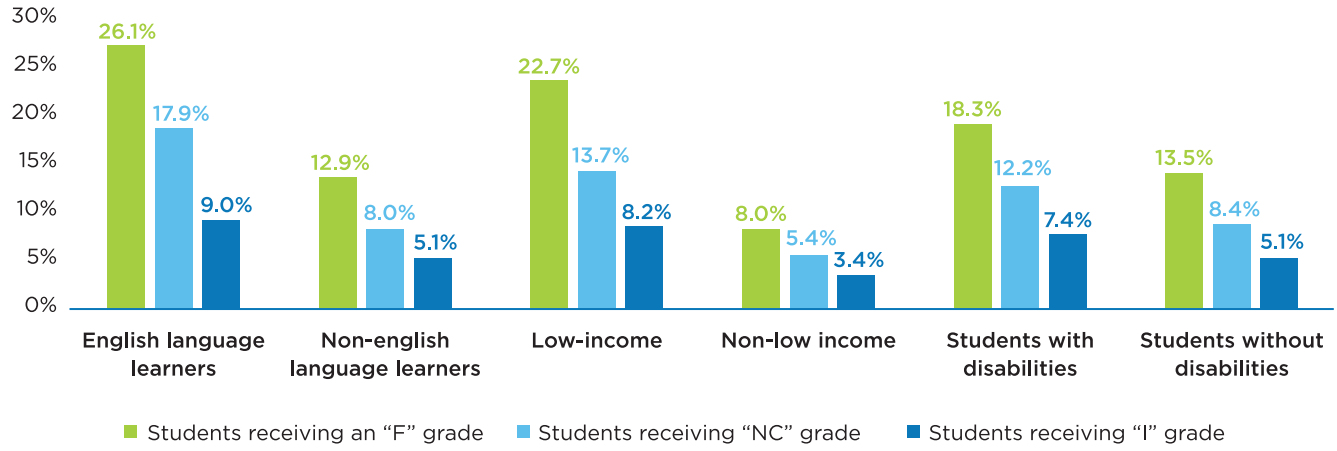
In Washington state, increases in "no credit" and "incomplete" high school grades were smaller for White students than for other racial groups, and changes were larger for English learners and students with disabilities. And in North Carolina, declines in course grades were greater for Black, Hispanic/Latino, low-income, and English learner students than for other groups.

Figure 2. Washington public high school students with a failing, no credit, or incomplete grade by race, August 2020-March 2021



Source: OSPI, Student Information, CEDARS, March 15, 2021.
Note: Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Figure 3. Washington public high school students with a failing, no credit, or incomplete grade by other student characteristics, August 2020-March 2021



Source: OSPI, Student Information, CEDARS, March 15, 2021.
Note: Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Social and emotional learning programs were far less common in high schools with majority Black student populations in 2021-22. There are also growing reasons to believe that students are not catching up academically at the same rates. Recent analysis by NWEA estimates that Black and Hispanic/Latino students need the most additional instruction to "catch back up" to what was already an inequitable pre-pandemic status quo, suggesting that recovery efforts may not be addressing negative pandemic effects for them as effectively as for White students.

Growing adolescent mental health challenges

The prolonged social isolation and stressors from the pandemic and school closures took its toll on America's youth. The effects will not diminish quickly.

As of April 2022, 70% of public schools reported that since the beginning of the pandemic, the percentage of students seeking mental health services at school had increased.

Throughout the pandemic, schools tried but often struggled to marshal the human and material resources needed to support increasing numbers of students facing mental health and social and emotional well-being challenges. This was especially true for rural schools and those enrolling large shares of students who live in poverty.

Although many school reopening plans prioritized young students over older ones, evidence suggests that adolescents

THE STUDENTS WITH THE LEAST TIME TO CATCH UP ARE ALSO THE STUDENTS WE KNOW THE LEAST ABOUT

There are serious holes in the research on older students and especially older students with disabilities and other complex learning contexts and needs. But what we do know is concerning.

CRPE's expert consensus panel report in 2022 found that the pandemic disrupted students' transition services and progress toward traditional graduation requirements, although the implications of these disruptions for students' postsecondary experiences are not yet known.

There is scant research on other special populations of students, such as English language learners, students who are homeless or in foster care, and students with more than one risk factor.

were more likely than their younger counterparts to experience negative mental health effects from school closures.

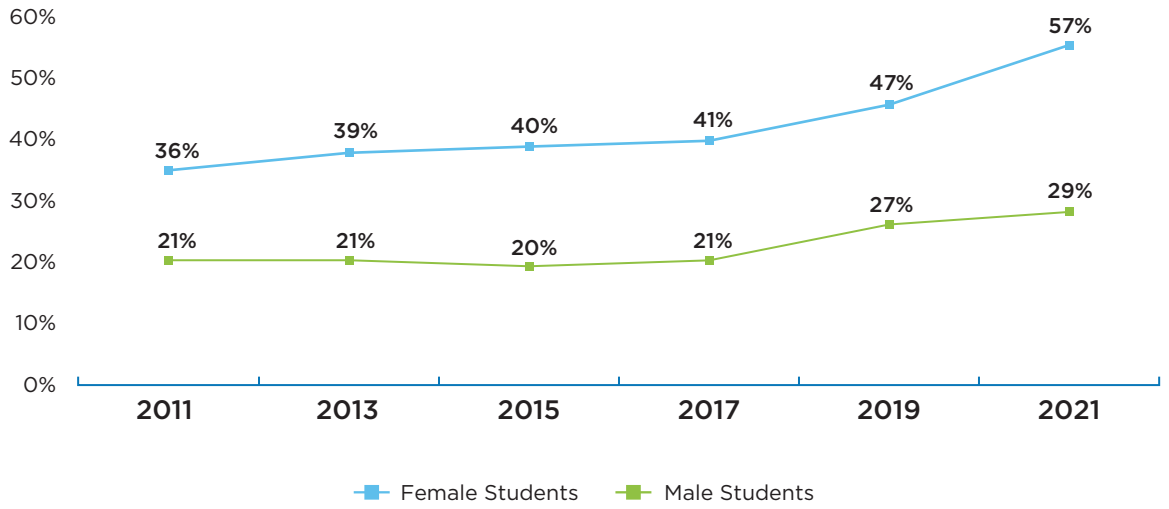
Teachers, who have a daily presence in the lives of young people, also reported rates of stress that were nearly two times pre-pandemic levels.

But as CRPE's expert panels have noted, adolescent mental health challenges, like depression and anxiety, have long been on the rise. A recent advisory from the Surgeon General noted that up to 95% of youth ages 13–17 report using a social media platform—more than a third say they use social media "almost constantly," a reality that may be contributing to increased mental health challenges among youth.

> *"A lot of emotions about feeling helpless, feeling depressed, feeling anxious about assignments, about classes, about the pressure that you have as a student to outperform and be competitive … have been definitely amplified through our experiences. This has been a problem for some time, [not] just because the pandemic happened." –Abigail Singh, rising freshman, Bennington College, Vermont*

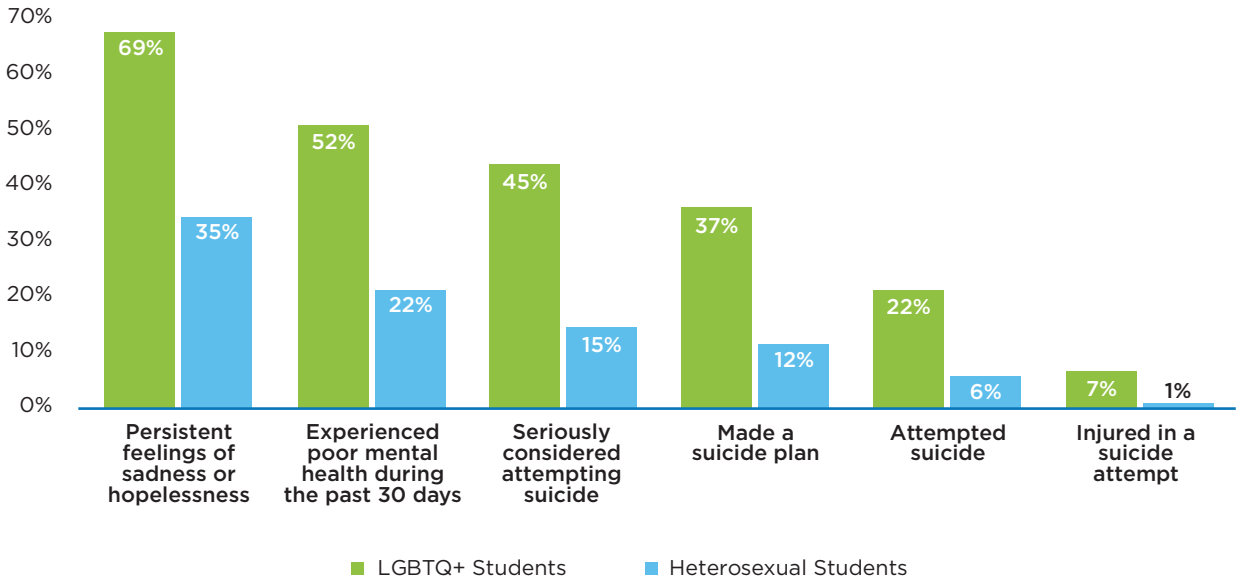
Mental health survey results are almost always worse for young women, LGBTQ+ youth, and students with disabilities (see Figures 4 and 5). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that emergency room visits due to suicide attempts among young women aged 12-17 were over 50% higher in the spring of 2021 compared to the same time in 2019. In a 2021 survey of more than 34,000 LGBTQ+ 13-24 year-olds, a shocking 45% reported that they seriously considered committing suicide in the previous year.

Figure 4. Persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness among U.S. high school students, by sex, 2011-2021



Source: CDC.

Figure 5. Mental health among U.S. high school students by sexual identity, 2021



Source: CDC.

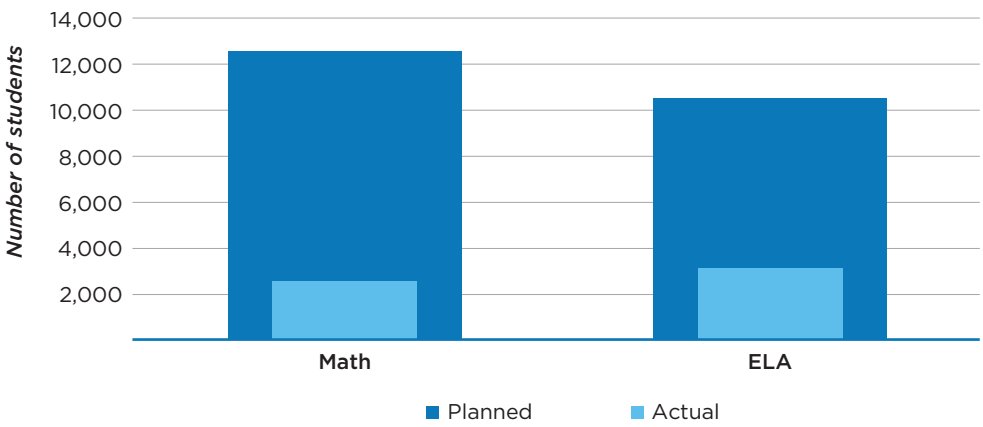
Inadequate K-12 responses

Strategies for catching students up are falling short. Time is running out for students about to leave the system.

> *"In the hardest-hit communities—where students fell behind by more than one and a half years in math—like Richmond, Va.; St. Louis; and New Haven, Conn.—schools would have had to teach 150% of a typical year's worth of material for three years in a row just to catch up. It is magical thinking to expect they will make this happen without a major increase in instructional time." –Researchers Tom Kane and Sean Reardon*

Tutoring is proving to be a massive—and obvious—missed opportunity. High-quality tutoring is the most effective known intervention to address learning gaps, yet only small numbers of students are receiving such tutoring. In one district studied by the Road to Recovery Project, just 2,500 students received tutoring in math during the 2021-22 school year out of 12,500 who qualified for it (see Figure 6). Only 2% of students are receiving the kind of high-impact tutoring that makes a difference, according to researchers at USC.

Figure 6. Tutoring participation in math and ELA fell short of planned participation in 2021-2022



Source: Road to Recovery Project.

The researchers wrote:

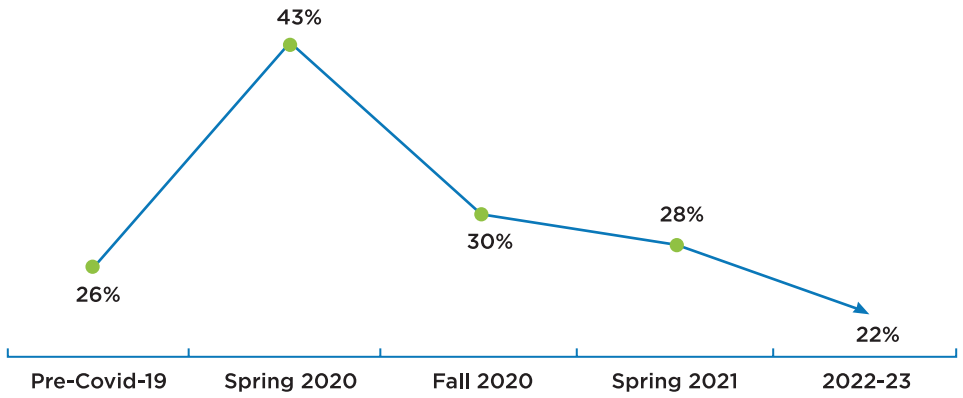
> *"The district in [Figure 6] is not alone. In another district we studied, only 30% of students who qualified for extra tutoring received it, with tutoring sessions that, on average, totaled 10 to 12 hours per year, rather than the planned 30 hours. Across the study, we did not find any district where the amount of intervention delivered reflected the original plan."*

Academic and mental health needs are overwhelming teacher capacity, and schools and school systems are far from their best right now. A recent report from CRPE found that not only did student learning regress during the pandemic, but so did the quality of teaching and the ability of the school systems studied to hold high instructional expectations while also providing strong support for all students. Teachers, who report higher stress levels, more difficulty coping, and less job satisfaction than other workers, are plowing ahead with their lessons, following their pre-pandemic pacing guides—knowingly, if heartbreakingly, leaving students behind.

> *"I don't think I'll live to see it." –Elementary school intervention specialist, part of CRPE and RAND Corporations' American School District Panel, on when she believes there will be a level playing field for students*

Waning adult-student relationships. High school should be a place of strong and trusted adult-student relationships, but it is not. Survey after survey shows that students do not believe adults in their schools know or care about their lives outside of school.

Figure 7. How many of your teachers make an effort to understand what your life is like outside of school? ("Many" or "all)



Source: Youth Truth Learning & Well-Being After Covid-19, a survey of secondary students.

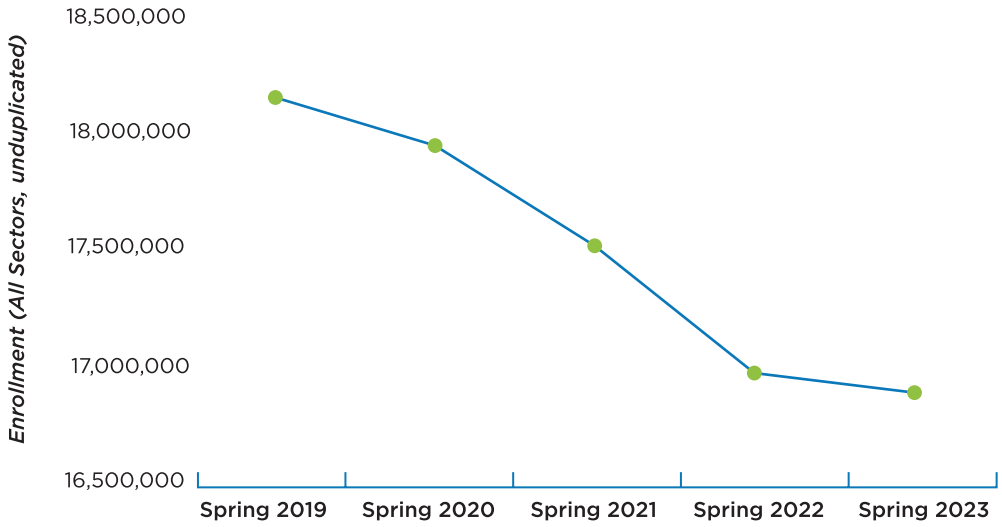
Postsecondary challenges

Students also are struggling after they leave the K-12 system. Students, especially underrepresented or minority students, are less likely to enroll in college and more likely to drop out since the start of the pandemic.

Undergraduate enrollment at public universities and community colleges dropped 7% from 2019 to 2023, with enrollment in two-year programs declining the most dramatically. The students least likely to enroll in a two- or four-year degree program tended to be from low-income families and historically marginalized communities. During the pandemic, students were also more likely to drop out of higher education programs.

Enrollment declines slowed in the 2022-23 school year, but enrollment has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 8. Higher education enrollment over time



Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, Term Enrollment Estimates Report, Spring 2023.

Some of this reduced enrollment is driven by declines in the youth population. But demographic declines throw into sharper relief the stories of students who aspire to attend college but find the process of enrolling and applying for financial aid difficult to navigate. Students often receive little help navigating the college enrollment process, as this AP story demonstrates vividly.

> *"In Jackson, Mia Woodard recalls sitting in her bedroom and trying to fill out a few online college applications. No one from her school had talked to her about the process, she said. As she scrolled through the forms, she was sure of her Social Security number and little else.*
>
> *'None of them even mentioned anything college-wise to me,' said Woodard, who is biracial and transferred high schools to escape race-related bullying. 'It might be because they didn't believe in me.'"*

For those who do enroll in college, many are floundering. College grades may have increased while course withdrawal rates increased. Lower-income students are more likely to struggle with access to digital tools, housing, and childcare. Students are often on their own to advocate for mental health or disability services when they get to campus.

National college completion rates have hovered around 62% for the past years, and it is more common to transfer from a four-year college to a two-year institution, even though the system as designed assumes students will follow the opposite path. More college students seem to be going backward rather than forward.

Indeed, the value of traditional high school and college pathways is on trial. The pandemic and the stalled recovery are revealing and exacerbating existing systemic flaws in how our country supports young people's transitions from high school to higher education and the workforce.

> *"There were a lot of us with the pandemic, we kind of had a do-it-yourself kind of attitude. Why do I want to put in all the money to get a piece of paper that really isn't going to help with what I'm doing right now?" –Grayson Hart, Jackson, TN on the value of college compared to entering the job market straight out of high school, without debt*

Our K-12 education system leaves to chance almost every aspect of this transition. Most students are on their own to discover their interests and talents, and to select a career pathway aligned to them. Few, if any, receive guidance in how to change careers and reenter training or postsecondary education programs when their interests and priorities shift.

> *"Have one-on-one talks with each student: see where they're at, see how they're feeling, what they wanna pursue … make sure they're feeling heard, they're feeling shown attention. And I feel like that's really helpful … being heard goes a long way." –Alejandro Blanco, 20, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, on the supports he wished high school offered*

Parents and students are questioning the value of higher education. Shifting economic demands are putting pressure on the system to change. Students and families are increasingly questioning the

value proposition of a high-tuition, four-year degree. Demographic changes mean there is likely no end in sight.

According to a pre-pandemic poll conducted by Populace, respondents ranked being prepared to enroll in college as their tenth highest priority for K-12 education. In post-Covid America, this is no longer the case. When given 57 priorities for children's K-12 education, Americans ranked college enrollment 47th.

A growing number of students aren't bothering with college at all; they're choosing different and, to them, more appealing pathways. For example, in contrast to lower college enrollment rates, the number of new apprentices in the U.S. has rebounded to near pre-pandemic levels, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Jaylen Adams, an 18-year-old freshman at Columbia University, described the challenge well. "A lot of my friends, either they don't like school or they really can't afford it." But her friends who tried to go straight into a career struggled to qualify for a high-wage job or to find jobs that were "as advertised." Instead, they're going straight into the career force, but not in a way that will give them economic mobility.

In interviews with CRPE researchers, Nokomis Regional High School students in rural Maine generally defined postgraduate success as being happy, rather than obtaining other common social markers of success, such as a college degree or a certain level of wealth.

Students believe the ability to choose different postsecondary pathways can lead to happiness and success. Some students said they were eager to continue pursuing their passions in college, such as higher-level learning, sports, or military training. In other words, they saw higher education as a means to continue doing the things that made them happy, rather than as a means of earning a degree and a potentially higher income in the working world. "For me, success means that I wake up in the morning excited for the day … I'll know it was a successful day if I learned something new," one student explained.

Students most interested in pursuing a career or trade after graduation viewed working right away, or bypassing college for a shorter stint of training for work, as a means to achieving happiness. Some students noted a passion for traveling, and they knew they had to make money to afford it. Others want to provide stability and security for their families as quickly as possible.

According to one student, "Success means I am not living a paycheck-to-paycheck life or struggling to provide for myself and the others around me. I've always been a person who puts the people around me ahead of others. And if I am struggling to do that, then I don't feel like I am as successful as I'd like to be."

That said, while very real challenges persist, it is still true—for now at least—that failure to follow traditional pathways can jeopardize financial aid and credit transfers, leaving students with debt that follows them for life. A lower rate of college graduates also impacts the economy, and failure to complete a degree can reduce lifetime earnings by as much as 75%, according to Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce.

II. Why we must act now

The challenges are likely to get more difficult for at least four reasons.

First, the looming fiscal cliff. If present trends continue, school systems will have higher costs and less funding to cover them in coming years. Inflation has driven up the cost of supplies and staff salaries. High interest rates intended to curb inflation mean that new loans used to finance school construction, repairs, or new technology purchases will be more expensive.

Nearly $200 billion in federal pandemic relief funding will expire in January 2025. In school districts around the country, enrollment has plummeted with little signs of bouncing back, further exacerbating financial challenges. This fiscal double whammy means that local schools will have less funding in future years unless states increase per-student spending, which seems unlikely, given their own fiscal pressures.

> *"We're actually calling 2024-25 'the bloodletting.' Public education has not seen [a fiscal cliff] of this magnitude at any time in the past, including the last recession." –Marguerite Roza, director, Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University*

Second, system burnout. Even more daunting, the fiscal cliff will come on top of an already exceptionally challenging environment for educators, which has worsened since the pandemic. By their own accounts, educators and system leaders have been struggling to address student needs and focus on instruction in the midst of staffing challenges, political fights, and overall fatigue and burnout.

Leaders in four out of the five school systems CRPE has been studying throughout the pandemic described higher levels of teacher burnout and a subsequent "erosion of professional expectations" among teachers. As one leader said, "I do think the first and foremost issue is, 'Do we have enough high-quality teachers in our schools to do this work?' And the answer is no right now for us."

Teacher shortages likely will worsen in coming years. A recent analysis by Chalkbeat showed that all 15 states in their study saw an uptick in teacher turnover in the 2022-23 school year. Even more concerning, perhaps, is that the number of people training to become teachers has fallen from a peak of 700,000 in 2009 to just over 400,000 in 2020.

> *"We are in an acutely serious and severe moment for the health of the teaching profession." –Matthew Kraft, Brown University researcher*

As a result, in many parts of the country, leaders will face public pressure to keep existing schools open and current staffing levels constant. Although the pandemic has made innovation more imperative than ever, it will be understandably difficult for school leaders trying to keep their heads above water to simultaneously brainstorm new approaches.

Third, societal changes are ratcheting up the demands on the next generation of graduates. As CRPE has written for several years, the education system and or students face unprecedented change and uncertainty. The most dire predictions are that artificial intelligence and automation, climate change, and other geopolitical forces will unleash massive disruption, growing inequality, and job loss. New jobs will be created to replace obsolete ones, but will favor skills—such as empathy and creativity—that only humans possess. Change and uncertainty will be the new normal. Employment opportunities will shift quickly, requiring adaptability and constant retooling. Automation will affect everyone, but middle-class jobs will be harder to find, making it harder to overcome the

disadvantages of poverty. The need will be greater than ever for talented innovators, entrepreneurs, and civic leaders. Public school attendance, high school graduation, and now a college degree have become de rigueur for anyone seeking a middle-class job. The jobs of the future will likely continue to increase these demands, and the question is whether our education system can keep up.

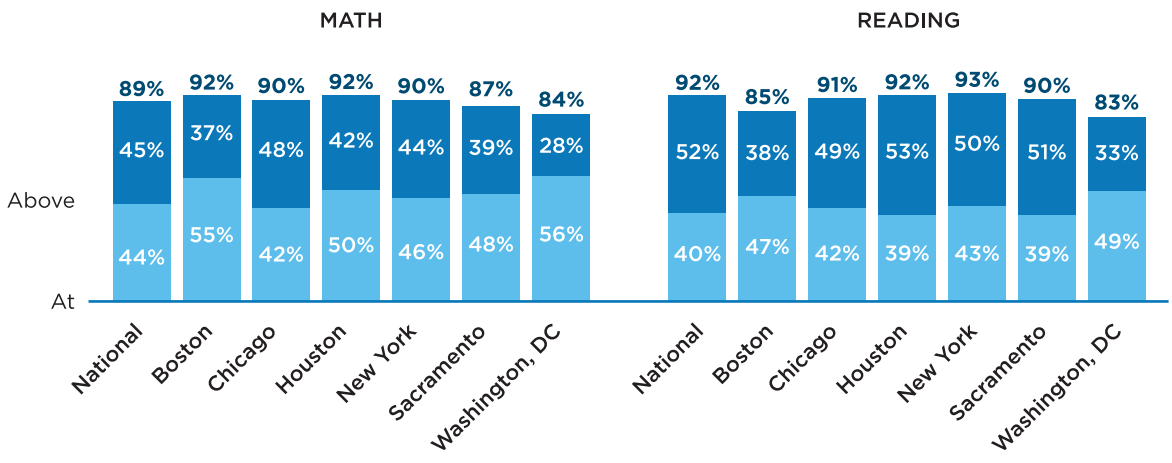
Persistent achievement gaps and high rates of student failure in higher education show how far our education system falls short of meeting even yesterday's challenges. Our education system is even less prepared for a more demanding and unpredictable tomorrow. It is no longer enough for students to stay in school and expect to enter a well-defined career. Graduates will need to understand the local economy well enough to both judge their own strengths and weaknesses and seek needed skills and experiences. For that to be possible, students will need common skills and understandings—literacy, numeracy, and basic knowledge of science, history, and civics. But the future education system will also need to broaden their opportunities for learning and growth, help them gain applied knowledge in areas where they have particular abilities and interests, and allow them to create customized educational and career pathways.

> *"I think just upholding the basic quality of education to be able to have equal education across student groups is something that also needs to be [focused] on. To make sure that everyone knows the same stuff, or at least the same basic concepts. I think that's something that school currently is failing at in part." –Arshia Papari, rising freshman, University of Texas at Austin*

Fourth, most parents and the public are unaware of the severity of these challenges. Policymakers continue to peddle the currency of denial. Politicians don't want to talk about how serious the learning gaps are, thus leaving parents in the dark. Grades and report cards do not reflect student subject mastery. Most governors have dodged the subject. As a result, parent surveys show a wide belief gap between what they perceive and what the data show.

According to one spring 2022 survey by researchers at the University of Southern California, less than one quarter (23%) of parents were interested in summer school, and just over a quarter were interested in tutoring (28%). Another survey by Learning Heroes reported that about 90% of parents believe their child is working at grade level or above (see Figure 9 below), despite reams of data to the contrary.

Figure 9. Percentage of parents who believe child is at/above grade level



Source: Learning Heroes.

For understandable reasons, schools and districts are largely doing what they have always done, despite the fact that it is not enough. As this report has noted, few are offering the interventions proven to be most effective in catching students up, instead choosing to spend precious federal funding on staff that will have to be laid off when the fiscal cliff appears.

All of this means it will get harder for schools and systems to sustain their existing initiatives—much less intensify their efforts or launch new ones—especially without sustained pressure from parents, the public, and other stakeholders. Without fundamental changes in how education systems operate and use resources, many students will receive less instruction and support two years from now than they do today.

That is, unless we stop doing what demonstrably doesn't work.

We all know the quote (attributed to Albert Einstein): "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results."

Abraham Lincoln's exhortation to Congress in 1862 is also familiar and relevant: "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, we must think anew and act anew."

Winston Churchill offers one more piece of timely wisdom: "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

It's time for the optimists to step up.

III. New solutions are emerging. We can address the needs of this generation–and future generations

The essays that accompany this report offer compelling ideas and examples of both what can happen immediately and in the long-term to transform the American high school:

- A greater urgency to address learning gaps before students graduate
- Laser-like focus on students most in need of urgent solutions
- More creative responses to meet student needs and preferences
- More emphasis on adult-student relationships
- Technology-enabled tutoring as a normal part of the school day
- More permeable relationships among high schools, colleges, and careers

These ideas are not far from what is happening in certain communities right now.

Some states are responding in urgent and innovative ways. Colorado and Virginia have bold plans to ensure every high school student graduates with an associate degree and an industry-recognized credential, part of a deliberate strategy to blur the lines between high school and postsecondary success. Colorado has multiple initiatives underway, including apprenticeship and "learn while you earn" models, early college high schools, and a zero-cost credential program where students can earn healthcare certifications at any community or technical college. Virginia has earmarked $100 million for Lab Schools, which will stimulate innovative approaches to teaching and learning; encourage greater collaboration among K-12, postsecondary, business, and other community partners; and develop model programs that can be replicated. The state is also exerting major effort to inform and engage parents with timely, honest, and actionable report cards. Red and blue states are both investing in SEL as part of Covid-19 recovery efforts, and 27 states have adopted SEL standards or competencies to guide pre-K through 12th-grade instruction.

SIX STATES ARE SETTING A NEW PRECEDENT FOR TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Last year, CRPE called for greater transparency from states around pandemic recovery. We called for clear indicators of successful recovery and regular reporting on progress. We called for individualized data and plans for students and families. Some states are making progress toward these goals, investing federal and state dollars into tracking real-time information and reporting beyond the initial pandemic crisis. These efforts help system leaders, businesses, community partners, and families know what's working, what's not working, and how to move into an era of long-term recovery.

Connecticut. In 2021, the state established the Center for Connecticut Education Research Collaboration (CCERC) with pandemic relief funds. CCERC has made significant strides in tracking and reporting on progress on pandemic initiatives that can help educators determine what to stop, start, and continue. Most recently, CCERC published findings from its Learner Engagement and Attendance Program evaluation, which found that the LEAP program resulted in up to 30-point decreases in student absenteeism rates within six months of the first home visit to families with chronically absent students.

CCERC is continuously monitoring and reporting progress toward pandemic recovery through a robust portfolio of research partnerships in the areas of learning acceleration, social and emotional learning, teachers and educators, and district improvements.

Indiana. In February 2023, the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) launched the Indiana GPS dashboard, a new tool that shows how Indiana students and schools are performing on various indicators of success, such as academic mastery, career and postsecondary readiness, communication and collaboration, work ethic, and civic, financial, and digital literacy. The dashboard allows users to view data disaggregated by student population across multiple indicators, such as third grade literacy, sixth grade math growth, graduation pathways completion, college and career credentials, and employment and enrollment. The dashboard also shows the state's goals and progress for each indicator, as well as the comparative national averages.

Louisiana. Louisiana's Comeback Plan asked all school systems to engage in a coordinated effort to join a statewide collective impact model grounded in three core areas: student attendance and well-being, recovery and acceleration, and professional learning.

The collaboration led to the new EPIC (Education Performance and Innovation Center) dashboard, which includes data on student achievement, school performance scores, graduation rates, and other important indicators for individual school systems. Stakeholders can view their school's academic recovery plan, how their pandemic funds are being spent, and their progress toward educational goals.

Mississippi. In July 2023, the Mississippi Department of Education, Mississippi State University Research and Curriculum Unit, and the software organization SAS launched the Mississippi Pandemic Education Recovery Dashboard to help leaders understand the statewide and local impact of the pandemic and their progress toward recovery. The organizations compared actual student-specific outcome data to their projected growth trajectory had the pandemic never happened. This disaggregated information is helping education leaders target their recovery efforts more strategically and design the appropriate evaluation plans to continue tracking students' progress.

North Carolina. The NC Strategic Dashboard Monitoring Tool shows how schools are progressing toward the state's education goals (e.g., eliminate opportunity gaps by 2025).

The dashboard, developed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and SAS, displays data on student access to high-quality learning opportunities, such as advanced coursework, digital resources, teacher diversity ratios, and suspension rates. It also shows data on student achievement and growth on state assessments in math, reading, science, and social studies. Moreover, it reveals data on how schools and districts use their financial and human resources, such as staffing information, per-pupil expenditures, teacher salaries, and teacher effectiveness. The dashboard lets users filter the data by student groups such as race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, and English learner status.

Virginia. The Virginia Visualization and Analytics Solution (VVAAS) dashboard is a powerful tool that is helping Virginia parents and educators understand how their students are performing and growing academically, as well as how they compare to their peers across the state and the nation. By providing individualized student reports and communication tools, the Virginia Department of Education has made a commitment to transparency and accountability for the public education system. The VVAAS dashboard also supports the state's vision to restore excellence and close achievement gaps by providing data-driven insights and guidance for improving student outcomes.

More states can use key data principles to drive evidence-based education recovery

The states highlighted here recognized early during the pandemic the importance of providing timely, accurate, and comprehensive data on student learning and well-being to inform decisions about how to accelerate pandemic recovery efforts.

Across many of these examples, the state education agencies engaged stakeholders in the design and development of their reporting tools, ensuring that they are actionable for the most important data users—students, families, community leaders, and educators. Other states should follow their lead and use data as a powerful ally in restoring trust, closing pernicious achievement gaps, and making up for pandemic learning losses.

New, promising school designs also are emerging

Nowell Academy in Providence, Rhode Island, is designed to provide high-quality, competency-based education to pregnant, parenting, and underserved students. The school has introduced several on-campus services, from day care to night school, to increase student attendance and maximize opportunities for them to learn and gain credits. Educators are rethinking traditional credit recovery opportunities through "transformative learning experiences," which are interdisciplinary classes that give students double credits in subjects (e.g., Nowell's food revolution class gives students history and science credits). Their improved attendance is largely attributed to their primary person model and the intentional community the school has built through adult-student relationships. Students meet regularly with a mentor for academic counseling and postsecondary planning, and participate in a range of community-building activities. Mentors also check in daily with students through phone calls and text messages to ensure students feel seen, known, and heard.

Effective use of technology can help support a more personalized approach. **Saga Education's** longstanding math tutoring partnership with Chicago Public Schools provides a great example of what is possible. Saga offers tutoring as part of a credit-bearing class, and the school system recognizes that tutoring offers as much or more value than the classes it replaces. The research supports this choice: a randomized control trial of 2,633 ninth and tenth graders, published by the National Bureau of Economic Research in 2021, found the program improved students' test scores and grades in math and non-math courses. There is much to be learned about which subjects and skills are most responsive to technology-enabled tutoring, but this and emerging large language model tutors like Khanmigo should cause us to more seriously consider the role of AI and machine learning combined with teacher-led instruction.

Nokomis Regional High School in rural Maine helps students explore postsecondary interests starting in ninth grade and develop a concrete plan by senior year, while **KIPP Academy Lynn Collegiate** in Massachusetts is expanding its own postsecondary counseling services to support a wider range of options, while staying committed to rigorous academic preparation so every student is college-ready, if not college-going. They are among schools in six New England states rethinking high school.

Seckinger High School in Gwinnett County, Georgia, is the district's first artificial intelligence-themed high school and is part of a broader district vision to foster excellence and a sense of belonging in every school. Once the school opens, students will receive a college preparatory curriculum that is taught through the lens of artificial intelligence. Students will also be able to pursue an education in developing artificial intelligence.

Indiana's Purdue Polytech High School is a public charter school network designed to prepare students for careers in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and math). The school uses hands-on and project-based learning, industry and higher ed partnerships, and a flexible and personalized approach. Students leave high school with college credit, in-demand industry credentials, and preferred admission to nine out of the 10 colleges at Purdue University.

Another Indiana charter school, **Geo Academies**, offers a College Immersion Program, a hyper-personalized, dual-enrollment program where high school students take college classes on the college campus of their choice beginning as early as the ninth grade. GEO pays for everything and provides the academic, social, and emotional supports so that kids learn real-life skills and grow the confidence necessary to earn college degrees—and a path to escaping poverty—before they graduate from high school. When they are on their high school campus, GEO students can engage in direct, teacher-led instruction, independent learning and practice, and teacher-assisted small group instruction.

Schools such as **Benito Juarez Community Academy**, serving Chicago high school students, have prioritized social and emotional learning (SEL) as a whole-school reform to help support students' well-being and academics, according to CASEL, which is working intensively with 20 mostly urban school districts (from Anchorage and Austin to Chicago and Cleveland) to integrate SEL and academics. Meanwhile, all of New York City's 1,500 schools are using SEL supports developed by the **Urban Assembly**, which is also running nearly two dozen schools organized around relevant and real-world themes, from healthcare to construction to the arts. Hands-on internships and apprenticeships are the norm.

Responsive, creative solutions are also happening at the college level. In New York City, the **CUNY Reconnect Initiative** set out to bring back students who had dropped out or paused their college education. A team of "navigators" connected with 10,000 former CUNY working-age adults with incomplete degrees and convinced 3,000 of them to come back to school as of the first semester of 2022. Black and Latina women disproportionately comprise the population of students with college credits but no degree. The goal is to help these New Yorkers advance their careers, improve their economic mobility, and aid the city's post-pandemic economy.

> *"We know the complicated web of factors that can discourage or prevent a person from returning to college. Working to help each individual successfully navigate this transition presents a game-changing proposition for York College and CUNY to promote access and opportunity across New York City." –CUNY Chancellor Felix Matos Rodríguez*

Arizona State University is accelerating its efforts to redesign everything, from buildings to instruction, to serve the diverse range of students on its campus. This is not only for the nearly 10,000 students who receive disability resources or accommodations, but for all students who will benefit from increased flexibility in instruction and assessment. University leaders are asking, "In what ways can we design approaches, activities, and measurement of learning *with* students? Instead of a test at the end of every course, what about allowing students to choose how to demonstrate mastery of material in a manner that best suits them? Instead of insisting that all students come back to class now that the pandemic is over, how do we serve the students for whom remote learning was a

godsend—those students who would rarely speak in class but were avid users of the chat function on Zoom?" These latest efforts are part of ASU's commitment to create a New American University.

New York University is flipping the script on how it educates autistic students, moving from a deficit model (what needs to be "fixed") to an asset-based model that affirms students' neurodiversity. Kristie Patten, the university's Counselor to the President, says, "We used to force students to ask for additional services, often at great expense to them. Now we say, 'You don't have to change. This is who you are. You are more than enough. How can we best support what YOU need to continue growing?'"

These institutions and states are showing what's possible when leaders are willing to rethink outdated approaches and center instruction and support on what students need most. But given the magnitude of the current crisis, these examples are much too few and far between. Many more public and private institutions must step up.

IV. We must adjust course

> *"This moment of disruption should be a moment of reinvention. It should be a moment when leaders rise up and say: Let's get beyond stale debates over charters, vouchers, gender neutral bathrooms and the like. We're going to rethink the nuts and bolts of how we teach in America." –"America Should Be in the Middle of a Schools Revolution," David Brooks, New York Times columnist*

We need immediate action to address the current and long-term learning and emotional needs of older students impacted by the pandemic. Specifically, states and the federal government can:

Provide transparency about how successfully schools are ensuring that every child is on track to master core skills. A high school degree needs to mean something again, but most governors and state chiefs are avoiding the subject of pandemic learning loss, mental health data, and other indicators of crisis. If pandemic recovery matters, states and districts must measure and report on it. Government officials must come clean with families. We call on advocates to push for such reporting. Every child should have a meaningful report saying whether they are on track for college and career success. Virginia's leadership in this area is encouraging (see Aimee Guidera's essay in this volume). Indiana's data hub provides transparency about high school, college, and workforce outcomes. Connecticut, Louisiana, Mississippi, and North Carolina also are bright spots.

Invest in a national youth intervention strategy that develops, tests, and promotes new interventions (such as strengthening adult-student relationships) and innovative methods (such as AI technology) for struggling adolescents and young adults. The teaching and learning crisis in this country warrants large-scale action and investment. Aaliyah Samuel offers useful insights about how to close the "relationship gaps" that contribute so significantly to learning loss. Kevin Huffman urges us to strengthen the role of high-impact tutoring, including the use of AI.

Invest in high school and college mastery programs to ensure disruptions wrought by the pandemic and the youth mental health crisis do not derail any young person's aspirations. Taking a break from college to support family or address mental health issues should not permanently jeopardize a student's chance of earning a credential. Students who need extra time to fill holes in academic skills, get help with applying to college, or explore alternative career pathways could, as Tom Kane and Sean Reardon have proposed, split their time among high schools, community colleges, and employers in a transition or gap year after high school.

Community colleges that have lost enrollment in recent years might offer tuition-free (state and federally subsidized) gap-year programs that allow students to finish their high school degree and begin earning college credits or industry credentials.

States, cities, and school districts could invest in outreach programs such as those by CUNY (Reconnect Initiative), as well as provide funding and flexibility to support working students while they complete their degrees. An essay by Joanne Vogel explains how Arizona State University is adjusting student supports and expanding inclusive learning practices to respond to the new challenges students are bringing to campus since the pandemic, while New York University's Kristie Patten spotlights how her institution is helping students capitalize on their neurodiversity.

Support research to track the Covid generation's progress. In this report, Jake Anders describes a long-term study in the United Kingdom tracking student outcomes. CRPE has commissioned several such studies on how older students have been affected by the pandemic, and a new Gallup poll is tracking student views on education, but more data is needed.

Business leaders, university presidents, foundations, and concerned citizens can:

Rethink high school-to-career pathways. We need to go beyond pilots for more career-relevant high schools that blur the lines among high school, college, and career. An essay by Colorado Governor Jared Polis shows how such a "blurring strategy" is central to his state's education and workforce approach. David Adams profiles how New York City's Urban Assembly is offering students multiple pathways to postsecondary success. Marie Mackintosh spotlights a modern apprenticeship program and other efforts to engage Indianapolis youth. An essay by our colleague Chelsea Waite draws from our work in New England to show how school systems are offering additional choices that go beyond the limited "college-or-bust" paradigm.

We will simply tinker around the edges of what students need and want if we fail to reimagine American high schools as more engaging, joyful, equitable, and relevant to college and career. Students want to see better attention to mental health supports, career relevancy, and a more dynamic, individualized, and relationship-rich learning environment. This is a big and long overdue endeavor. Now is the time. CRPE director Robin Lake describes what this might look like in her essay on the New American High School.

V. 14 experts look ahead

This is an all-hands-on-deck moment for the U.S. education system. Older students who have little or no time left, students with complex needs, minority students, and young students rising up through the system with unattended learning gaps are in dire need of solutions and fresh ideas. To that end, we asked experts from various sectors and perspectives to weigh in with examples of what is possible and proposals for moving forward.

Expert Voices

Addressing immediate recovery needs

Jake Anders (Associate Professor, University College London) on researching Covid-19's long-term effects on educational and career trajectories

Aimee Guidera (Virginia Secretary of Education) on high standards, innovation, and closing the "honesty gap"

Kevin Huffman (CEO, Accelerate) on delivering more "high-impact tutoring"

Thomas Kane (Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Education) on ensuring we have the right dosage of interventions

Cara Pangelinan (Research Analyst, CRPE) on what students are telling us

Keri Rodrigues (President, National Parents Union) on parents' demands for better, more accurate information

Aaliyah Samuel (President and CEO, CASEL) on closing the "relationship gaps"

Responding to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic for educational inequality in England

BY JAKE ANDERS

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON CENTRE FOR EDUCATION POLICY & EQUALISING OPPORTUNITIES, AND PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, COVID SOCIAL MOBILITY & OPPORTUNITIES STUDY (COSMO)

Our aim is to build the evidence base to understand the long-term effects on educational and career trajectories.

The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic are likely to be profound and long-lasting. We have already seen substantial short-term effects on young people's educational experiences, particularly for those from less advantaged backgrounds. It is vital that we fully understand these impacts, including the burden on ethnic minorities and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Amid the pandemic, a team across UCL and the Sutton Trust (a think tank with 25 years' experience researching social mobility), established the COVID Social Mobility and Opportunities study (COSMO for short) to play this vital role for England. Our aim is to build the evidence base to understand the pandemic's long-term effects on educational and career trajectories.

The study focuses on the experiences of a cohort of young people (those aged 14–15 at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic) for whom the disruption had a particularly acute impact at a crucial moment in their educations—with minimal time for catch-up before graduating from secondary school. In addition, this group's national age-16 examinations (known as GCSEs) were replaced with purely teacher-assessed grades, throwing their usual post-16 transition into further uncertainty.

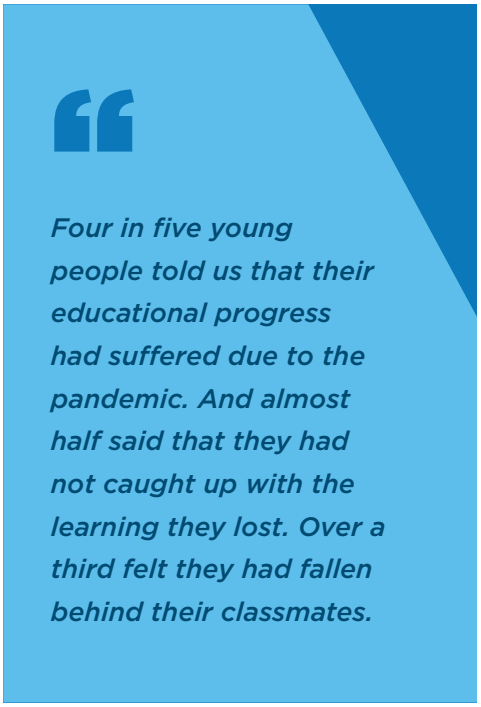
COSMO has recruited a representative sample of over 13,000 young people in 500 schools across England, over-sampling disadvantaged and ethnic minority groups and targeting other hard-to-reach groups. Young person and parent questionnaires—enhanced with educational administrative data—have collected rich data on young people's experiences of education and well-being in the aftermath of the pandemic, along with information on their post-16 education transitions. Key findings include:

Young people's educational experiences during Covid-19 lockdowns varied considerably. To take one example, we looked at live online lessons, perhaps emblematic of schooling during this period—but certainly not experienced universally. In the early pandemic, the most dramatic differences were

between the state and private sectors. State schools with more advantaged students caught up with the amount of live online lessons provided by private schools in the early 2021 lockdown. But schools with poorer students continued to lag, likely because they were tackling important welfare needs.

Young people from less advantaged homes were more likely to report barriers to learning at home. They were less likely to have a quiet space to focus on learning and more likely to use a mobile device or to share devices to carry out online activities. We also confirmed that those affected by these issues did indeed report spending less time on schoolwork during lockdowns.

The impacts on learning are widespread—and recognized. Four in five young people told us that their educational progress suffered due to the pandemic. Almost half said that they had not caught up with the learning they lost. Over a third felt they had fallen behind their classmates. This rises to almost half for those who attended schools with the most disadvantaged students.



Efforts to help students catch up have not reached as many as we might hope. This is perhaps unsurprising given that England's catch-up spending plans were estimated to be worth around £310 per pupil, vs. £1,830 in the United States. Almost half of young people in the cohort reported that they had received no specific catch-up learning at all. Despite the efforts of the government's National Tutoring Programme, which aimed to put one-on-one and small group tutoring at the heart of catch-up plans, only 27% of the sample reported receiving this type of assistance.

On a more positive note, there is encouraging evidence that those who did receive small group tutoring were more likely to be from less advantaged backgrounds. Those who took up tutoring also performed better in their teacher-assessed age-16 examinations, compared to similar individuals who were offered tutoring but did not take it.

We are not the only study across the world aiming to track the long-term implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for young people's life chances. For example, Generations, led by the Australian National University, is taking a similar approach to ours, tailored to their own context. Other researchers likely are working with similar aims, again with variations depending upon differences in their national contexts and education systems.

Hopefully, we are only at the start of the journey for COSMO. We plan to follow young people as they continue their transition into adult lives, checking in every couple of years or so. This builds on the UK's existing cohort studies, some of which are now following their members into retirement. About half of our cohort will make this transition via university, starting in autumn 2023. We will seek to learn about their academic preparation for higher education and how they are managing financially against a difficult economic backdrop, among other priorities. Our longer-term follow-ups will focus on experiences in the labor market, family formation, and all other aspects of adult life. Crucially, our research will allow us to understand how these experiences differ depending upon their experiences of the pandemic—and how this has mediated preexisting inequalities.

BY AIMEE GUIDERA

VIRGINIA SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

All hands on deck in Virginia to combine high standards with innovation

It's time to bring back the coffee cups!

When I first attended the annual meeting of the Education Commission of the States in the early 1990s, they were handing out coffee cups with an exhortation that "all kids can learn." I remember thinking, duh, of course they can. The standards movement was in full bloom at the time, and the statement seemed like a no-brainer.

No longer. The pandemic merely illuminated and exacerbated what has been happening in American education for years: the systematic dismantling of a culture of high expectations. Rather than continuing to work together to help all children meet these high standards, which had been the national focus for a few decades, too many state leaders have settled for moving the goalposts, lowering the standards, and pretending that everything was okay. It isn't.

COMBATING HISTORIC DECLINES WITH A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE, OPPORTUNITY, AND INNOVATION

On the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Virginia had a 13-point drop in fourth-grade reading since 2017 (the largest reading decline in the nation) and a 12-point drop in fourth-grade math (tied with Maryland as the largest math decline). Both declines are nearly three times the national average in learning loss, and they began before the pandemic as previous administrations lowered expectations across the board. The pandemic worsened everything, of course. As a result, we're on the verge of losing an entire generation of students.

This tragic reality has fueled our sense of urgency and commitment to change in Virginia. Nothing but boldness will suffice. We know that Virginia has excellent schools, but not every student and family has access to that excellence. We are relying on a much broader set of innovative solutions, and tapping into the expertise of educators and community partners to ensure that every student can attend a school that prepares them for success in life.

The pandemic merely illuminated and exacerbated what has been happening in American education for years: the systematic dismantling of a culture of high expectations.

For example, 19 (and counting) partnerships have applied to take advantage of the $100 million we have earmarked for Lab Schools, which will stimulate innovative approaches to teaching and learning; encourage greater collaboration among K-12, postsecondary, business and other community partners; and develop model programs that can be replicated. In Southwest Virginia, public schools, community colleges, and local hospitals are collaborating to develop a school to prepare students for careers in health care, which will help support these traditionally underserved communities. On the eastern shore, NASA, Virginia Space, the local community college, and aerospace companies are working with K-12 school districts to launch an aerospace-focused school as part of the goal to make the area the "space hub of the east coast." Efforts like these are breaking down the walls between education and work, blowing up the one-size-fits-all approach to education, and providing students, especially those who have been marginalized in the past, exposure to the careers of the future.

To help support and accelerate efforts such as these, we've created an Office of Innovation within the Virginia Department of Education. This office will not only catalog innovative approaches throughout Virginia, but also network and learn from them so we can replicate success in every corner of the commonwealth. Together with education stakeholders, we will continue to dive into the important and tough questions such as:

- Why doesn't the commonwealth have more Thomas Jefferson High Schools, the highly acclaimed STEM school, when the waiting list shows huge demand for many more?
- Why are colleges lowering admissions standards at the end of students' K-12 journeys, when it is much more effective (and fair) to focus on challenging them and preparing them from their earliest years? That's why we are rethinking gifted/talented and similar programs to provide historically underrepresented kids access to educational opportunities that some children have always had. In addition, the Virginia Literacy Act is revamping how we teach all students to read—ensuring that all instructional materials, professional development, licensure, and teacher prep are based in the science of reading by the 2024-25 school year.
- What can we learn from the new tutoring and mentoring partnerships among K-12, the Urban League, and historically Black colleges and universities in the Petersburg and Hampton Roads areas that can be scaled statewide and nationally?

EMPOWERING FAMILIES

Parents matter. They deserve to not only have a seat at the table, but to be at the head. We are proactively empowering parents with more actionable information and greater options for their child to access excellence.

Parents have inflated perceptions of student achievement. National research documents that 90% of parents believe their child is at or above grade level in reading and math. In reality, only 37% of students nationally perform at or above grade level in reading and math—a 53% gap between parent perception and reality. This is largely due to a lack of transparency around student proficiency and a dearth of effective communication with parents.

Therefore, Virginia is preparing data reports that tell the truth about where every student and school stands. This year, for the first time ever, schools sent every parent and teacher the same understandable, actionable academic proficiency report, showing a clear picture of how their students were performing and offering discussion topics to support student success. The Virginia Department of Education has also created a complementary online portal, Virginia's Visualization and Analytics Solution (VVAAS), which includes easy-to-read charts and tables showing a student's performance compared to their peers.

Thanks to a work group created in our latest legislative session, we are developing an online parent portal that will give parents quality information so they are informed champions and partners in their children's education. The State Board of Education is also revising our school accreditation system so that there is clear, easy-to-digest information about the academic proficiency and progress of students in every K-12 school in the commonwealth.

We are using data as a flashlight, not a hammer, to inform better decisions at kitchen tables, classrooms, school boards, and the State Capitol. A professional learning community of 25 school districts is helping us develop tools and supports to use this data effectively. Our goal is for every off-track student to have a personalized learning plan with a set of actions to address learning gaps. These plans will be developed and implemented in partnership with teachers, parents, and students. We'll also train teachers on how to communicate with parents and students about the steps to get a student to grade-level proficiency.

To combat the drastic impact of Covid-19 school closures on students' educational progress and address the earlier decline in proficiency, we provided $63 million in grants to help families access tutoring services this summer. We have also been increasing awareness of the Education Improvement Scholarship Tax Credit so that more families can afford to send their children to schools that can better meet their academic needs. In all this work, we are empowering parents—with better information and, when possible, financial support, while always ensuring that they are at the head of the table.

BREAKING DOWN SILOS TO PROVIDE MULTIPLE PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS FOR ALL VIRGINIA LEARNERS

We must also increase exposure, experience, and expertise in the world of work in high school and postsecondary education. To achieve this, Governor Youngkin has vowed to further blur the lines and increase coordination between K-12, higher education, and the workplace. Our goal is that every high school student graduates with an industry-recognized credential and/or an associate degree. We will do this by expanding career and technical education, launching lab schools, and accelerating dual-enrollment partnerships between high schools and community colleges.

Our colleges have an equally urgent focus on connecting learning with working. The business community, higher education, administration, and General Assembly are all committed to the Virginia Talent & Opportunity Program, which aims to ensure a paid work experience for every college student while in school. Fast Forward, a short-term workforce credential and training program in Virginia's community colleges, provides affordable opportunities for students to receive training and credentialing in high-demand industries like information technology, skilled trades, infrastructure, and healthcare. The Virginia Community College Board voted this past year to allow high school students to take advantage of this program as well. Additionally, our G3 program, a tuition assistance program for Virginia students, is aiding community college students in high-demand industries.

Virginia, like every other state in the country and every other country in the world, is competing for talent. Quality schools are the foundation and door-opener. The good news is that we know how to improve student success: with high expectations, great instruction, transparency, accountability, and a commitment to innovation. Given the setbacks of the past several years, however, we're now in an all-hands-on-deck moment in Virginia. By law, Governor Youngkin is limited to a single four-year term. We're not wasting a minute.

BY KEVIN HUFFMAN

CEO, ACCELERATE

The key role of tutoring in learning recovery—and much more

Tutoring—an old education practice that historically was only available to affluent kids—raced to the forefront of public consciousness in the last two years as a way to catch all kids up after the pandemic's learning disruptions.

There's strong evidence behind an intervention now called "high-impact tutoring," defined as individualized or small-group instruction during the school day, in alignment with core curriculum, for a substantial amount of time, several days a week, with a built-in mechanism for monitoring student progress. This kind of tutoring is delivering real results for students, especially when led by teachers or paraprofessionals, for students in the earliest grades, and for programs conducted in school (see sidebar on page 43).

The challenge is that high-impact tutoring is difficult to deliver at the scale and the pace that we need. Generous estimates suggest only about 1 in 10 of all U.S. students are getting effective tutoring support, while the real number is likely even lower. It is also especially difficult to reach high school students, who arguably should be our top priority given how little time they have to recover pandemic learning losses before graduation.

But there's reason for optimism: a growing number of tutoring providers are innovating new models, conducting research, and delivering results.

OVERCOMING IMPLEMENTATION HURDLES

For districts committed to developing their own programs, it is difficult to find and train qualified tutors; ensure the curricula are aligned; coordinate the communications between tutors and classroom teachers; and manage the program overall, especially in systems that already are stretched thin. Meanwhile, districts seeking to partner with providers have trouble finding those with both a strong evidence base and the capacity to reach all the kids in the district who could benefit—often thousands or tens of thousands. Historically, providers that offer tutoring at scale are essentially providing 24/7 homework help, which is not the same as high-impact tutoring.

Indeed, scaling quality programs is the biggest challenge, and the millions of students who are behind today can't wait decades for us to get it right. In order to solve it, we need to

> *High-impact tutoring is delivering real results for students, especially when led by teachers or paraprofessionals, for students in the earliest grades, and for programs conducted in school.*

figure out how to get more tutors into schools, how to align tutoring curricula with core curricula, how to help districts solve school-day scheduling challenges, and how to ensure costs are sustainable.

That's why we started Accelerate, a nonprofit determined to make high-impact tutoring a standard feature of American schools by:

- *Identifying and funding innovative, scalable tutoring models, including those that use technology and AI to reach more students.*
- *Funding rigorous evaluations of these models to gauge effectiveness of the programs.*
- *Supporting state departments of education in creating regulatory frameworks to encourage effective in-school tutoring. This could include creating preferred provider lists, statewide procurement for strong tutoring providers, and mandatory statewide data collection and analysis of tutoring in schools.*

Our ultimate goal is to embed tutoring into the regular school day, which is the most effective way to ensure all students from every background get the individualized support they need.

SUCCESSFUL INNOVATIONS AT ALL LEVELS, INCLUDING HIGH SCHOOL

Saga Education's longstanding math tutoring partnership with Chicago Public Schools provides a great example of what is possible. Saga offers tutoring as part of a credit-bearing class, and the school system recognizes that tutoring offers as much or more value than the classes it replaces. The research supports this choice: A randomized control trial of 2,633 ninth and tenth graders, published by the National Bureau of Economic Research in 2021, found the program improved students' math test scores and grades in math and non-math courses.

ENCOURAGING RESEARCH

A meta-analysis of 96 studies by J-PAL found that:

- Tutoring programs consistently lead to large improvements in learning outcomes for students, with an overall pooled effect size of 0.37 standard deviations (effect sizes greater than 0.3 standard deviations are considered to be large impacts). This translates to a student advancing from the 50th percentile to nearly the 66th percentile.
- Tutoring programs led by teacher or paraprofessional tutors are generally more effective than those using nonprofessional (volunteer) or parent tutors.
- The effects tend to be strongest among students in earlier grades, though a smaller set of programs at the secondary level were also found to be effective.
- Reading tutoring tends to be relatively more effective for students in preschool through first grade, while math tutoring tends to be more effective for students in second through fifth grade. Tutoring programs conducted during school tend to have more widespread benefits than those conducted after school or on demand. Many programs shown to have weaker effects used parents as tutors or took place in an after-school program. In these circumstances, it is difficult to ensure that tutoring actually occurs.

Early literacy is a priority, too, and scaling tutoring in early literacy has great potential. On Your Mark, an Accelerate grantee, offers synchronous tutoring via computer using high-quality instruction materials based on the science of reading. Using noise-canceling headphones, students get extra doses of phonics and other instruction without leaving their desks. In California, Accelerate is supporting Amira, a company that equips high school and college students with a AI-powered platform to tutor younger students in foundational literacy.

IMPACT OF AI

Tutoring models that use artificial intelligence are already here, and within a year or two we expect AI to become a useful tool to support—not replace—skilled educators in giving tutors feedback and helping to pinpoint individual students' learning gaps. Before now, it was difficult and costly to have

supervisors watch tutoring sessions and provide feedback to tutors. But video and transcript crawls via AI could mean a significant improvement in the quality of feedback to tutors. Groups like Schoolhouse, Carnegie Mellon, and Saga are already working on AI models for giving tutors feedback.

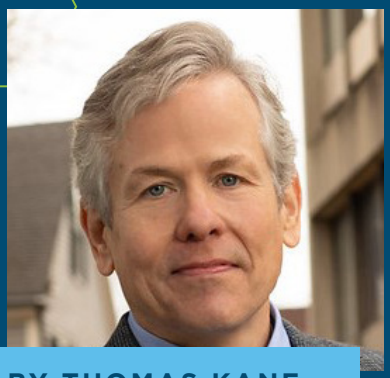
To address learning gaps, AI-enabled technologies can help tutors triangulate what students are learning in core classroom instruction, where an individual student has learning gaps, and what an appropriate tutoring intervention looks like. AI could dramatically reduce tutors' prep time for individual tutoring sessions, and lower the cost for school districts.

The high cost of tutoring is a key barrier for many school districts, and it's why Accelerate is also funding five states (Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Louisiana, and Ohio) that have embraced tutoring as a statewide priority, in the hopes that they will become models for other states to follow. Over the 2023-2024 school year, Accelerate will support each of these states in implementing evidence-based tutoring programs statewide, measuring their impacts on student outcomes, and develop plans for long-term sustainability.

> *If anything keeps me up at night, it is the concern that the education field, in our eagerness to move on to the next big thing—especially when federal Covid-19 relief funding runs out—will give up on tutoring before it has a chance to scale up and deliver the kinds of results we all want.*

States across the country are making strides toward ensuring all students have access to high-impact tutoring during the school day. There are so many reasons to be hopeful that this intervention can permanently change the American school system.

If anything keeps me up at night, it is the concern that the education field, in our eagerness to move on to the next big thing—especially when federal Covid-19 relief funding runs out—will give up on tutoring before it has a chance to scale up and deliver the kinds of results we all want. The key is to respond quickly to what works, and treat tutoring as an evidence-based, long-term solution. Tutoring is not a post-pandemic extra, but an evergreen must-have that should be a central part of today's American school day.



BY THOMAS KANE

PROFESSOR, HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

If 10% of students in any given district received "high-impact" tutoring, 30% received double periods of math, 75% attended summer school, and 100% went to school for two and a half weeks longer, they would recover half a year of learning.

Getting the intervention dosages right

The United States has a math crisis—and it's not just the students. It extends to those choosing how to spend federal pandemic relief dollars. Even when they choose the best prescriptions to make up for the pandemic's learning losses, they are using the wrong dosage. It's a multiplication problem.

The average student in the U.S. lost the equivalent of half a year of math instruction and a quarter of a year in reading. Many urban school districts that were closed for much of 2020-21, such as St. Louis and New Haven, lost one and a half years, but for simplicity's sake, let's start with the national average of half a year.

Let's complete a math exercise together, focusing on four interventions proven to help students catch up: high-dosage tutoring, an extra period of math instruction, six weeks of summer school, and an extended school year. Pre-pandemic research suggests that the first three types of interventions generate the equivalent of one year, half a year, and a quarter of the typical year's growth in math, respectively. Let's assume that students receive the same amount of instruction in each additional week of school as they do during the school year. As illustrated by the chart (see page 47), if 10% of students in any given district received "high-impact" tutoring, 30% received double periods of math, 75% attended summer school, and 100% went to school for two and a half weeks longer, they would recover half a year of learning.

Comparing Losses to Recovery Plans

Example: Suppose students lost 1 year.

INTERVENTION OPTIONS	% OF STUDENTS	EFFECT SIZE FROM RESEARCH	MULTIPLY % BY EFFECT SIZE
Tutors	10%	x 1 year	= .10 year
Double Math	30%	x .5 year	= .15 year
Summer School	75%	x .25 year	= .19 year
Extended School Year	100%	x 2.5/36 wk	= .07 year
Sum of expected effects			**= .50 year**

Would need to repeat for **two years** to replace one year.

Challenging? Yes. But doable.

INADEQUATE RESPONSES

Unfortunately, I know of no district coming close to this level of intervention. Nationally, only 2% of students are receiving high-impact tutoring, where they are receiving about three hours a week of tutoring for 36 weeks, or about 108 hours total. Most districts are providing only 15-20 hours and only for a small percentage of students, nowhere near the 10% in my catch-up assumption.

Summer school attendance has been 15% or 20% in many urban districts, light years behind my assumed 75%.

I don't have national data on the percentage of students receiving double doses of math, but I'm confident it is nowhere near 30%.

Further, very few school districts have extended their school year. The struggle in Richmond, Virginia illustrates the challenge. According to the Education Recovery Scorecard, students in third through eighth grade lost the equivalent of one and a half years of math and reading achievement between 2019 and 2022, more than any other district in Virginia. Starting in the spring of 2021, while schools were still closed, Superintendent Jason Kamras proposed a year-round calendar to help students catch up. Students would have one month off in the summer and four two-week breaks during the school year. Most students would still have 180 school days a year, but the district would select 5,000 students to receive up to 40 days of extra instruction during the breaks. His school board turned him down. Instead, they allowed him to pilot a longer school year in just two of the city's 54 schools. The two schools started this summer, and student attendance has been strong.

LEADERSHIP COUNTS

As illustrated in Richmond, part of the challenge has been the absence of political leadership. To undertake the major reforms that would be required to help students catch up, school district leaders need political air cover.

As a U.S. senator, Lamar Alexander helped push through the latest version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2015, which defined the federal role in K-12 education, returning significant power to the states. But states have largely declined the opportunity to lead, and the education reform effort in the U.S. has been rudderless. We're a long way from the era when governors such as Bill Clinton (Arkansas), Jim Hunt (North Carolina), brothers George W. Bush (Texas) and Jeb Bush (Florida), as well as Alexander himself (who then led Tennessee) used a combination of the bully pulpit, funding, and policies to push an unprecedented wave of state-led reforms in the 1980s and 1990s.

Only recently have leaders such as Governor Jared Polis in Colorado and Governor Glenn Youngkin in Virginia begun to make improving students' outcomes a centerpiece of their agendas, and not just a stage for culture wars.

There are some modest bright spots. Under Commissioner of Education Mike Morath's leadership, Texas required districts to provide an additional 30 hours a week of small-group instruction to students in the lowest achievement category. It's unlikely to be enough for many students, but it's a lot more than what other states are providing.

Many states, such as Tennessee and Colorado, have launched tutoring initiatives—again, a laudable move—but none of these programs have the dosage levels that will produce a meaningful impact.

> *States have largely declined the opportunity to lead, and the education reform effort in the U.S. has been rudderless.*

The federal government provided billions of additional dollars of pandemic-related support. When the American Rescue Plan passed in March of 2021, no one knew how large the achievement losses would be. And, wanting to preserve district flexibility, Congress only required districts to spend 20% of the money on academic catch-up (with a loose definition of what could count). The result was predictable. Much of the funding has gone to salary increases, HVAC systems, or additional school counselors. In the worst cases, states have allowed communities to use the federal funds to replace local tax revenues—a shell game that will help exactly zero children. In the end, only a small share of federal aid has been used to replace what students lost during the pandemic: instructional time.

LOOKING AHEAD

With a legal deadline to commit the funds by September 2024, school districts have one more year to spend their federal relief dollars. Given that budgets have been set and the 2023-24 school year is about to begin, it will be difficult for districts to scale up their plans for the coming school year. However, there is still time for districts to plan a major scale-up of summer learning for the summer of 2024. There's even some hope of continuing the effort beyond next summer. Although the American Rescue Plan law requires districts to commit the funds by next September, the federal Department of Education has the authority to allow districts to spend down those funds over the following year (the legal term is "liquidate"), as long as the contracts are signed and the funds are obligated by the deadline. The Biden administration should prioritize extending the spending deadline for programs that increase students' instructional time—tutoring programs, summer learning, after-school programs, school vacation academies, and salary increases associated with an extended school year.

Although there's still hope that districts will help younger students catch up, we cannot forget that four high school graduating classes—roughly 12 million students—have already started their postsecondary careers. The data suggest it's been a rough start. According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, community college enrollment declined by a staggering 20% between spring 2019 and spring 2023. The number of students seeking bachelor's degrees at public and private colleges declined by 6%.

We know remarkably little about what has driven the declines in postsecondary enrollment. Many have speculated that the hot labor market was to blame. However, there's little concrete evidence to confirm this. It is also possible that the decline was connected to the learning losses in K-12. For instance, especially in areas that spent much of the 2020-21 school year in remote instruction, the

high school graduating classes of 2020 and 2021 would have had a hard time meeting with their college counselors to explore their postsecondary options and get help with financial aid.

Moreover, students who fell behind in math or reading in eighth through 10th grades may not have had time to complete the advanced high school coursework expected of many science and engineering majors. According to the College Board, the number of students taking Advanced Placement exams in biology and calculus (both AB and BC) fell by 9% and 12%, respectively, while the number of students taking the chemistry exam declined by 21%. Even if college enrollment rates recover, such trends do not bode well for what may happen to the number of college students pursuing STEM degrees in the coming years.

STATE LEADERSHIP NEEDED

To resolve this question, we need more research on the relationship between achievement losses, school closures, and changes in postsecondary enrollment by high school. The answer is of more than academic interest as the pace of recovery in the postsecondary sector may well depend on recovery in elementary and secondary schools.

Because many students will not have caught up by the time the federal relief dollars are spent, we must begin discussing additional policies to continue the recovery following September 2024. Anything requiring a school board vote or state legislative action will take time to enact.

For one, states and cities should set aside resources for reaching out to recent high school graduates who never enrolled in college and offer assistance in exploring postsecondary options and applying for federal financial aid. It would be foolish to allow them to fall through the cracks, as the nation's future workforce needs will depend on their continued training and development.

In addition, states should ensure that future graduating classes have what they need before leaving high school. For instance, students who do not achieve proficiency on state tests at the end of eighth grade should receive additional help during ninth grade to ensure that they are on track for college and a career. States might consider offering students the option of a fifth year in high school or free tuition for their first year in community college, giving them a chance to fill in gaps in coursework they missed in high school as a result of pandemic achievement losses.

The academic recovery effort following the pandemic has been undersized from the beginning. Although the research community and federal and state regulators encouraged districts to focus on "evidence-based" solutions such as high-dosage tutoring and summer learning, districts were never given clear guidance on the dosages required or the share of students they should be serving. Moreover, the guidance that was provided—specifically, the 20% minimum spending on "academic recovery"—was downright misleading.

The future consequence for students—and for the nation's economy—if students fail to catch up will be dire. A conservative estimate of the loss in future earnings for those enrolled in public K-12 education during the 2020-21 school year is $900 billion. As the federal relief dollars are spent down, state and local leaders must step up. Today, there are two or three candidates seeking the mantle of "education governor." We need 50 of them.

BY CARA PANGELINAN

RESEARCH ANALYST, CENTER ON REINVENTING PUBLIC EDUCATION

We spoke with 10 older youth—that is, high schoolers nearing graduation or students who have already graduated—to get their perspective on the data in our report as well as on life as an American teenager.

Rising mental health, teenage life, and the age of AI: Voices of 10 youth

Kesar Gaba, a rising sophomore at Queens College, was in high school when the pandemic hit.

> ***"All I saw for two years was black screens on Zoom. It affected my mental health, it affected my relationships within my family, and it really overall affected the way I see the world."***

Arshia Papari, a rising freshman at the University of Texas at Austin, had a slightly different attitude toward online schooling compared to Kesar.

> ***"What the pandemic did for me was that it really opened me up to a new opportunity in schooling, but it also took away the ability for me to do any sort of in-person connections and have a real high school experience. But I think it's been a trade-off between the experiences you have during high school and also the convenience of online schooling."***

Many students had similar experiences during the pandemic. Whether they enjoyed online schooling or not, these stories have been published dozens of times in varying news outlets and reflected in student surveys. But older students in particular had less time to catch up before leaving the school system, creating concerns as to whether they had ample support emerging from the pandemic.

We at CRPE were interested in learning about these students' current hopes, fears, and ideas for how to strengthen the U.S. education system. To that end, we spoke with 10 older youth—that is, high schoolers nearing graduation or students who have already graduated—to get their perspective on the data in our report as well as on life as an American teenager, their take on rising mental illness rates among peers their age, and what it would take to change the current education system.

WHY THE KIDS ARE NOT ALL RIGHT

"If the world around you is giving you stimuli that the world is falling apart or the world's on fire, and that repeats every day on TikTok or on YouTube ... I think that's what's leading to the [rising mental health problems] trend of going up, up, up, and up." –Arshia Papari, rising freshman, The University of Texas at Austin

By now, it is common knowledge that students' mental illness rates are, and have been, worsening. The pandemic is often blamed. In reality, the pandemic is just part of a bigger picture. Students had concerns around their well-being and safety—both inside and outside of schools—long before Covid-19. The pandemic just created an opportunity to bring these issues to light.

"I feel like the pandemic gave us this gateway to just talk about [feelings of helplessness and depression] in a more normalized setting. This has been a problem for some time, but I don't think that it's just because the pandemic happened." –Abigail Singh, rising freshman, Bennington College, Vermont

Students had a lot to say about what they believe is contributing to these rising trends.

First and foremost, these students are concerned about their safety and security in schools, physically and emotionally. They named political and cultural tensions—Title IX scandals, bans on Pride flags, anti-trans legislation, and reckless gun violence, among others—as harmful to their well-being. Even if these events were not happening in their schools or didn't affect them directly, these issues still impact the mental health of the Covid generation.

Lazuli Clark, a transgender female student, remarked on how difficult it can be to focus on school when some policymakers are passing laws against her identity.

"Going to school is the least of people's concerns at this point for a lot of people. There are days where I'm like, oh yeah, I have to worry about my AP U.S. history project and yesterday another state basically made it so that I can never exist in that state. And it's like, how's anyone supposed to think about anything at all when there's all of that going on? Even if you're not directly impacted by it. Most people in my generation know somebody who's impacted in one way or the other."

Other students felt vulnerable in their own communities. Liv Birnstad, a recent graduate from a public charter school in Washington, D.C., explained how school resource officers (SROs) were meant to be replaced with mental health professionals in school buildings:

"But what ended up happening is they took [SROs] away and then didn't replace them [with mental health professionals]. And so now they're putting [SROs] back into schools because they thought that the problem was that we didn't have SROs. But the real problem is that we didn't have inter-community support. At my school we have school resource officers, but we also have a lot of police. And so a lot of students feel really uncomfortable receiving support at school because it feels like a really kind of carceral space."

Liv is not alone. Arivumani Srivastava, who attended a high school in rural Kentucky, described a similar initiative in his state as a "give-and-take" bill. After the Marshall County High School shooting, the bill mandated a mental health professional be present in schools, but also required a certain number of police officers on campuses. Similarly, Abigail Singh, a graduate of a charter school in Brooklyn, New York, described how it felt to go through scanners at school meant to check for weapons: "It just makes us all feel villainized."

The students made it clear that in-school mental health supports are not enough to improve their well-being. First, they need to feel safe enough to use these supports.

"If students aren't able to freely explore themselves in a safe and supported way in schools, then all they're doing is looking at a future where they'll have less guidance and probably equal, if not more scrutiny. And so it makes sense for me that they would be hopeless or sad." –Jaylen Adams, rising freshman, Columbia University, New York

"I feel like mental health is something that we're still growing in society. We're advocating on [it] because it is a really big issue that students face. And if it's not tackled, it just keeps becoming an issue and it could lead to more severe factors on a student's life. It's just something that needs to continue to be touched upon in a school setting." –Alejandro Blanco, rising sophomore, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

SOCIAL MEDIA: A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

We cannot underestimate the influence social media platforms and apps have on youth. For instance, Georgia's Brady Phan benefited from school closures. He used the free time during lockdown to reflect on his goals and double down on his academic aspirations. But he also saw how school closures adversely affected many of his peers, especially those who were drawn to influential people on social media.

While there is ample evidence of the harmful effects of social media, including the spread of misinformation, the students also highlighted the opportunities these platforms provide.

"A lot of these entrepreneurs [on social media] are saying that you should not go to college, that there's a lot of easier ways to make money. And especially during the pandemic where they're the most vulnerable–that's where I see them influence [youth] a lot. And that would maybe change [my peers'] minds about pursuing or excelling in an academic career." –Brady Phan, rising senior, DeKalb County School District, Georgia

"We saw a lot more people who were more radicalized [during the pandemic]. They'd fallen down certain rabbit holes because they were just like locked up on their own. And they also lost a lot of empathy because, well, we gain empathy by talking to people who are different from us. But if you're just alone for a year, a year and a half, two years, then you do tend to lose that sense of compassion for people who are different than you." –Maya Murali, rising senior, Lewisville Independent School District, Texas

While there is ample evidence of the harmful effects of social media, including the spread of misinformation, the students also highlighted the opportunities these platforms provide. Abigail Singh, for example, has an interest in social justice and wants to pursue a career in journalism. In her eyes, social media is a powerful tool for advocacy.

"Being someone with so many intersectional identities, it's hard to find a community where I feel represented and exist. And so social media is definitely somewhere where I feel like I've been given the platform to help other students like me." –Abigail Singh, rising freshman, Bennington College, Vermont

Liv sees a similar opportunity. As someone who attended a small school and identifies as Jewish and queer, she praised social media for helping connect her to like-minded peers. It is a "reminder that there's life outside of [school] … social media can kind of help you find your niche group when you don't have access at a school."

While there is cause to be wary of harmful users who can influence youth negatively, the benefits social media bestows are also notable. For teenagers like Abigail, Liv, and others who use these platforms to connect to one another and find community where they may not otherwise have the opportunity to do so, social media can be enlightening.

"I definitely think that social media helps in addition to the ways it harms. It definitely is harmful and I don't want to understate that, but I also really feel like that the way social media is reported about overshadows the good that it can do." –Arivumani Srivastava, rising sophomore, Pomona College, California

IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

Although youth have serious concerns about deteriorating mental health and social conflicts, they are also optimistic about how schooling can be improved. They are especially intrigued about the potential of AI and peer mentoring.

Similar to social media, students acknowledge how AI can be harmful for those that rely too much on technology like ChatGPT. Rather than dwelling on these concerns, however, students were more excited to share the possibilities it can offer.

"I think the education system as a whole is concerned more about how [ChatGPT] can be used for cheating and not really seeing it for what it can be, which is a really powerful tool." –Maya Murali, rising senior, Lewisville Independent School District, Texas

"I hope that things like ChatGPT and text-to-speech [tools] can continue to advance in a way that provides more accessibility for people. As someone who is not neurotypical, a lot of times I do benefit from different approaches to how lessons are taught, and it can be a lot of work for a teacher to have to create multiple different ways for something to be taught. So if we can find a way for artificial intelligence to be used in terms of accessibility, it'll be a lot less work on the behalf of the teacher and the student." –Lazuli Clark, rising senior, KIPP Academy Lynn Collegiate, Massachusetts

Other students also commented on how they use ChatGPT to compare their own writing to it, or as a jumping-off point for assignments. But they warned that AI cannot be the end-all be-all. As one student put it, "You still need to know what you're doing. You need to be able to think critically and be able to edit essays or whatever it's generating for you."

Students also want schools to provide more mentoring support and help navigating college and career pathways.

"[Having] a set structure in schools to just have one-on-one talks with each student: see where they're at, see how they're feeling, what they want to pursue. Just have that intensive nature to each student to make sure they're feeling heard, they're feeling shown attention. And I feel like that's really helpful, especially in a high school setting where there's a lot of kids and being heard goes a long way." –Alejandro Blanco, rising sophomore, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois

When we asked students what they found to be most helpful in considering postsecondary options, nearly all of them mentioned talking with an older peer or adult. For instance, Jaylen will be attending Columbia University this fall on a full scholarship. But she was no expert at the college application process. Instead, she relied on help from various college readiness programs to research the application, financial aid, and negotiation processes. Brady, who wants to study computer science at Georgia Tech, has been getting advice about the admissions process from his football coach (an alumni) and his uncle (a current student).

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

The students also spoke of the increasing external pressure they feel for their generation to attend college, rectify key issues like climate change, and generally "do well." If we put expectations like these onto youth, it's only fair that we also provide the necessary supports for them to succeed.

Bottom line: educators must listen to students now more than ever. As they are currently navigating the educational system, they have the best understanding of its strengths, and more importantly, what it still lacks. Older youth who were forced out of the education system during a global health crisis were especially vulnerable to its flaws. They deserve better. They want to be heard. And they expect adults to act on their advice.

"I'm on the DC State Board of Education, and they were so excited to have student members of the board. My first term, we couldn't get anything done. I'd ask [for help] at public meetings and instead of even saying no, they just would not respond. Everyone would just go silent for a minute and move on. I give 10 hours a week, I'm on two committees of the board, and they can't even listen to me." –Liv Birnstad, rising freshman, Harvard University, Massachusetts

"It feels like a lot more people want to hear what [students] say, but even though they hear what we say, that doesn't mean they take it into account at all. It really feels like they just said, 'Oh we listened to the kids but they're young, they're stupid, they don't know.' So we'll just add it as an appendix to what we're doing and then move on with what we think. And I guess that's just really infuriating to me because I feel like I'd rather just not be listened to than to be tokenized." –Arivumani Srivastava, rising sophomore, Pomona College, California

Student Voices

LIV BIRNSTAD, 18

Harvard University

Washington, DC

Liv Birnstad, a freshman at Harvard University, is a passionate advocate for education and social causes. Liv works with the Boston Debate League, coaching high school students in fundamental debate and writing skills. During high school, she served two terms on the D.C. State Board of Education where she advocated for student interests, and influenced educational policies. Liv was also a valued member of her high school's Queer and Trans Alliance, contributing to the creation of annual school-wide professional development sessions for teachers and staff that fostered inclusivity and understanding.

ABIGAIL SINGH, 17

Bennington College

Brooklyn, NY

Abigail Singh is a rising freshman at Bennington College in Vermont. She is studying writing and pursuing a journalism degree. She took part in a program on social change at Tufts University. She also created a high school club to help students connect to their liberal arts passions, and to generate a more diverse and inclusive environment for students to write about community and neighborhood issues through their school newspaper. She aims to be a voice that students like herself can look up to.

ARIVUMANI SRIVASTAVA, 19

Pomona College

Bowling Green, KY

Arivumani Srivastava is a rising sophomore at Pomona College from Bowling Green, Kentucky, majoring in economics. He also works as the development partner for the Kentucky Student Voice Team, where he cultivates and maintains funder and partner organization relationships for the education advocacy nonprofit. Arivumani aspires to improve quality education access across the nation and globally, travel the world, and try some good food along the way.

ALEJANDRO BLANCO, 20

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Chicago, IL

Alejandro Blanco is a rising junior majoring in advertising at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His hopes and endeavors are aimed at improving and inspiring the world through future advertisements and marketing campaigns on social media channels.

MAYA MURALI, 17

Hebron High School

Carrollton, TX

Maya Murali lives in Texas and is a senior at Hebron High School in the Lewsiville Independent School District. She is interested in studying environmental science next year in college, and she hopes to work in environmental policy one day. Outside of school, she serves as the communications team lead at the Sunrise Dallas Youth Hub, a movement of young climate justice activists.

Student Voices

ARSHIA PAPARI, 18

The University of Texas at Austin

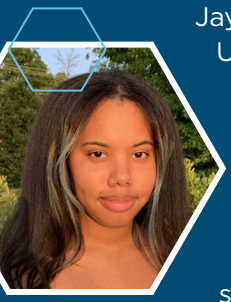
Allen, TX

Arshia Papari is a rising freshman at University of Texas at Austin majoring in government. With a passion for politics and policy, Arshia began his political journey in the summer of 2022; motivated by his own educational experiences, he led testimony at the Texas State Board Of Education for a censor- and fallacy-free social studies curriculum. Arshia continued these efforts throughout the 88th Texas legislative session, creating legislation to address these issues. Arshia continues his work in educational politics and policy, and is also continuing broader political actions with several legislative and political groups.

JAYLEN ADAMS, 18

Columbia University

Charlotte, NC



Jaylen Adams is a sophomore at Columbia University studying political science and creative writing. She is an executive fellow for Our Turn, an education reform nonprofit, where she works on storytelling, administrative work, and making schools into the places they were meant to be. In the next few years, she plans to apply to law school and perhaps pursue a master's degree.

KESAR GABA, 19

Queens College

Haryana, India

Kesar Gaba is currently a sophomore completing her bachelor's degree in psychology at Queens College. She loves reading books and writing poetry. She is also very dedicated to community service. She hopes to someday change how people view mental health and bring more awareness to the issue.

LAZULI CLARK, 17

KIPP Academy Lynn Collegiate

Lynn, MA

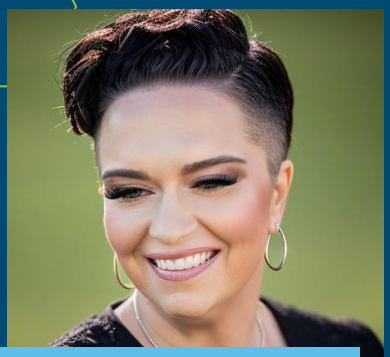
Lazuli Clark is a rising senior at KIPP Academy Lynn Collegiate in Massachusetts, where she projected to be the valedictorian. In the future she hopes to become a professional opera singer. She spent considerable time at Boston University's Tanglewood Institute and hopes to further involve herself in the music world as a student ambassador for the Handel and Haydn Society in 2023-24.

BRADY PHAN, 17

Clarkston High School

DeKalb, GA

Brady Phan is a senior at Clarkston High School in the DeKalb County School District in Georgia. He plans to attend college and pursue a bachelor's degree in computer science. His current extracurriculars include the Technology Student Association, Future Business Leaders of America, Coding Club, and Leaders of Tomorrow. He wants to inspire those around him to be better people and to leave an impact on the community.



BY KERI RODRIGUES

PRESIDENT, NATIONAL PARENTS UNION

Parents are sending a message loud and clear: we want better, more accurate information about our kids.

Listen to the parents

Parents have been kept in the dark about how far behind their kids are in school. The latest results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) are devastating for our students, including many who are just starting high school and don't have time to waste.

We all agree the stakes have never been higher. The Covid-19 pandemic widened educational and economic inequality.

As the mother of five boys who struggled during school closures, and as we continue to navigate today's education system, worries about their future trajectories are never far from my mind. As the president of the National Parents Union (NPU), I spent the last three years in constant communication with families nationwide. Parents are sending a message loud and clear: we want better, more accurate information about our kids.

NPU conducts a monthly nationwide poll of parents about their children's educational and life experiences and what it means for them long-term.

The more parents learn about the state of education, the more concerned they become and for good reason: the kids are not alright. Parents widely agree that America's education system is in despair.

- 81% of parents label it a major problem that students are still behind academically, according to the Nation's Report Card, including 34% who say it's a crisis.
- 76% of parents agree the mental health challenges among children is a major problem, including 34% who say it's a crisis.
- 71% of parents believe America's education system needs to be overhauled.

We want policymakers to acknowledge the pandemic's impact on our children's learning and development, and comprehensively address the challenges facing our education system to ensure students fully recover with pathways to economic mobility. Elected leaders and education decision-makers must move past culture wars, rhetoric, and finger-pointing with legislation and policies that reflect the reimagined experience parents want for their kids.

Policymakers can contribute to a more equitable, resilient education system with some practical solutions. These proposals are based on lessons learned over decades and innovative approaches developed during the pandemic. They are aligned with what parents want for their children.

FIRST, GIVE PARENTS A SEAT AT THE TABLE

Parents should be partners with schools from the beginning: participating in strategic planning, budgeting, leadership changes, and contract negotiations. It's not enough to ask them for permission after decisions have already been made. Only collaboratively can we create a path forward.

After our heroic leadership as facilitators of our own children's educations and powerful partners in school reopening and recovery, we expect to continue to be involved in decision-making and want a say in how education will be reimagined. Over the past few years, we established greater transparency and communication with policymakers about strategies for addressing today's challenges. We must continue to deepen these efforts.

After our heroic leadership as facilitators of our own children's educations and powerful partners in school reopening and recovery, we expect to continue to be involved in decision-making and want a say in how education will be reimagined.

As the clock runs down on billions in financial aid, we need to examine what is working and what isn't. We're looking at an abrupt funding stop and deep cuts beginning in the 2024-25 school year and our most vulnerable students will suffer when the fiscal cliff hits. This is the moment to rethink how we teach and finance education.

Parents want increased funding to support direct interventions, such as tutoring and academic support programs, as well as additional educational and mental health support.

ENTER A NEW AGE OF HONESTY AND TRANSPARENCY

Policymakers and educators need to welcome a new age of honesty and transparency with parents, families, and communities. Assessment data plays a critical role in driving student progress by providing educators with a clear picture of learning and identifying areas for additional interventions and investments.

- 54% of parents would like their child's teachers to discuss their child's performance and progress with them more often.

Data helps teachers individualize instruction and ensure all students reach their full potential. Tracking student progress over time allows educators to identify patterns in student learning and adjust instructional strategies as needed. We must also be flexible to change when plans do not yield the results our children deserve.

OFFER DIVERSE PATHWAYS

With all of its complex challenges, the pandemic also provided the opportunity to create more flexibility in the education system. It highlighted the limitations of traditional classroom-based learning and the need for alternative approaches. Now we are hungry for more options for remote learning, hybrid learning models, and other approaches that will accommodate the diverse needs of children and families.

- 84% of parents want to have a personalized pathway plan for their child, outlining classes they could take in K-12 to help them achieve their individual career or college goals.

Any expectation that families will continue to conform to an outdated school model holds us all back. The path forward is clear for parents.

- 58% of parents said K-12 schools should change the way they teach students reading and math to line up with what the newest research says is best practice.
- 57% say schools should do more to have school schedules and calendars reflect research on how and when kids learn best.
- 56% say schools should do more to provide opportunities for additional learning time, such as after-school or summer academic programs.

URGENT SUPPORT FOR TEENS

Our teens need more support to ensure they aren't simply pushed out before we've adequately prepared them to launch.

- 64% of parents say schools should do more to ensure college-bound students and students who choose different pathways have equally good opportunities to prepare for their future while in high school.

Many of our youth have lost out on important opportunities including internships, job shadowing, or other career-related experiences over the last several years. They struggle with depleted family resources and basic needs, preventing them from pursuing postsecondary education and training opportunities.

- More than two-thirds of American families (69%) support student loan relief as a tactic for economic mobility.

Will families still be willing to take on unending debt to pay for tuition in our colleges and universities as a good investment for our children in the future? Multiple recent surveys suggest they won't.

Increased access to alternative opportunities for students to gain valuable career experience—including virtual internships, work-based and skills-based learning opportunities, adult education programs, vocational training, and more—will help prepare students for the future.

PRIORITIZE MENTAL HEALTH

In addition to academic support, parents want policymakers to prioritize students' mental health and social-emotional well-being.

- 64% of parents believe policymakers need to prioritize addressing their children's mental health needs.

The pandemic took a toll on our students' mental health, increasing rates of anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns. We want to see more funding and long-term investments in school-based mental health and social-emotional resources.

NEEDED: TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

We must put an end to petty political fights, institutional racism, an antiquated status quo, and policies that prioritize adults over kids and instead collaboratively address the transformational changes our children and families need. NPU will continue to work with lawmakers on key priorities to improve the quality of life for families across the country. Now is the moment for elected leaders and education decision-makers to act with bold urgency and a renewed commitment to courageous conversations about how our nation's schools can truly change—systematically and thoroughly. Parents will be watching.

BY AALIYAH SAMUEL

PRESIDENT AND CEO, COLLABORATIVE FOR ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (CASEL)

While some U.S. politicians play politics with this issue, restricting what can be taught in American classrooms, other nations are coming to us for advice on the practices and policies that will help advance their students' overall well-being.

Closing the "relationship gap" is key to recovery

As I look at the impact of the pandemic on adolescents, two very different sets of data stand out. First, we have seen huge declines in teenagers' mental health. In October 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics declared a national emergency in child and adolescent mental health, pointing to soaring rates of depression, anxiety, trauma, loneliness, and suicidal thoughts. In March 2022, the Centers for Disease Control reported that more than 40 percent teenagers are "persistently sad or lonely;" a follow-up report in February 2023 found that number rises to 57% among teenage girls.

Meanwhile, school violence and behavior issues are up. In addition, an estimated 22% of students have been chronically absent (missing more than 10% of school) since the pandemic, while one to two million students have not returned to school at all, according to the U.S. Department of Education. Not surprisingly, the situation is worse for students who have been historically marginalized and underserved.

Second, and much more encouragingly, we have seen a huge surge in international interest in social and emotional learning (SEL), which supports students' academic achievement and mental wellness, according to an extensive body of research. While some U.S. politicians play politics with this issue, restricting what can be taught in American classrooms, other nations are coming to us for advice on the practices and policies that will help advance their students' overall well-being. Indeed, countries such as Australia, Israel, Portugal, and Spain are making SEL a national priority.

STRONG BUSINESS, FAMILY, AND EDUCATOR SUPPORT

Fortunately, a growing number of U.S. corporate leaders also get it. They tell us repeatedly that, while they can find employees with the right technical skills, many of these potential hires lack the key social and emotional skills that will help them thrive as team players in the workplace. Indeed, 92% of surveyed executives say skills such as problem-solving and communicating clearly are equally or more important than technical skills. One corporate leader told me his response to policymakers in a state that is eliminating culturally responsive teaching and other SEL-related efforts: "If you don't want SEL in your schools, you don't want my business in your state."

The business support is not surprising, given the close alignment between employability skills and the five cornerstones of SEL: self-awareness (understanding one's strengths and weaknesses); self-management (including organizational skills, self-discipline, initiative); social awareness (listening, empathy, understanding others' perspectives); relationship-building (communications, resolving conflict, teamwork); and responsible decision-making (problem-solving, analyzing the pros and cons of various choices).

Although we have heard some divisive narratives in media and politics, the data shows that the vast majority of students, families, and educators strongly support SEL: 93% of parents of K-12 students say it's at least somewhat important to them that their children's schools teach them to develop these life skills. Further, 86% of educators say they emphasize SEL in the classroom, 83% say it improves academic outcomes, and 84% say it boosts skills like collaboration, communication, and critical thinking.

> ***Taking a systems approach to SEL, teaching it not just as a one-off course in sixth period, but instead integrating it into everything they do.***

WHAT SCHOOLS ARE DOING

Educators are building on this strong support—not just to recover from the pandemic but to redesign education. Optimally, they're taking a systems approach to SEL, teaching it not just as a one-off course in sixth period, but instead integrating it into everything they do. They are strengthening school culture and climate by prioritizing the relationships among students and between students and adults (from teachers to custodians). They are focusing on the well-being of staff, who have suffered as well. They are integrating SEL with academics, so that students are learning teamwork during math class discussions and better understanding various perspectives when studying everything from the American Revolution to Shakespeare, among many examples.

For example, Benito Juarez Community Academy, serving high school students in the Pilsen community of Chicago, has committed to prioritizing both student and adult SEL and well-being. They've implemented a competency-based instructional model that gives staff time not only to focus on the academic progress of students but also their social and emotional development. Students have the opportunity to put their SEL into practice when they share insights and perspectives through student committees. The school has also used staff-wide professional learning time to focus on adult SEL, and partnered with families to create a series of parent and caregiver discussions on SEL.

Going forward, we should continue discussing academic loss, but we must also talk about the impact of relationship loss. This is true for all grades, but is particularly important now in high schools, where students' perception of teacher connection has declined to a new low, according to a survey by the nonprofit YouthTruth: less than a quarter of students say their teachers try to understand their lives outside of school, and less than half say there's an adult at school who they can talk to when they're having problems or feeling upset and stressed.

Unless we strengthen relationships, we won't close the learning gaps. SEL is not a distraction from academics, but a tool that can help us build relationships so we can get to academic recovery and success. Hundreds of independent studies confirm that SEL positively impacts academic achievement. And recent research out of Chicago found that fostering ninth graders' social and emotional development had a nearly identical impact on their academics as focusing specifically

on test-score growth did. When students have social and emotional skills paired with positive relationships that make them feel like part of a community, they want to come to school and learn.

Schools also are strengthening their partnerships with parents and families, a natural outcome of families being more actively engaged in their children's day-to-day learning during the pandemic. I experienced these challenges firsthand during the past two years, helping my middle schooler and eight-year-old navigate a changing world increasingly powered by digital media. And here comes artificial intelligence—the challenge of separating fact from fiction, good from bad, and making good choices just got a lot harder. Parents and teachers must help educate the next generation for digital citizenship.

Policymakers also have an important role to play. Out of the media glare, strong bipartisan support continues for evidence-based efforts to strengthen students' well-being—socially, emotionally, and academically. Red and blue states are both investing in SEL as part of COVID recovery efforts, and 27 states across the country have adopted SEL standards or competencies to guide pre-K-12 instruction. At the federal level, SEL is being embedded into key legislation, from the federal American Rescue Plan to the Safer Communities Act and bills addressing everything from mental health to opioid addiction. The long-term outcome: more students will succeed not only in school, but at work and in life as well.

Expert Voices

Building better pathways to college and careers

David Adams (CEO, Urban Assembly) on organizing schools around real-world themes

Robin Lake (Director, CRPE) on why it's the perfect time to design the New American High School

Marie Mackintosh (President and CEO, EmployIndy) on modern apprenticeships and related efforts to make high school more relevant

Kristie Patten (Counselor to the President, New York University) on what autistic students can teach us about focusing on assets, not deficits

Jared Polis (Governor of Colorado) on blurring the lines between high school and postsecondary learning

Joanne Vogel (Vice President of Student Services, Arizona State University) on redesigning everything, from dorm rules to instruction, to better support incoming students

Chelsea Waite (Principal Researcher, CRPE) on how New England states are rethinking the "college for all" paradigm

BY DAVID ADAMS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, URBAN ASSEMBLY

Instead of getting paralyzed by "recover from the pandemic," "improve graduation rates," or "increase college success," break the challenge into doable, bite-size pieces and make things work.

To boost postsecondary success, start by strengthening relationships

One of my favorite sayings is the Noah principle: "no more prizes for predicting rain; prizes only for building arks."

Given the catastrophic pandemic of the past few years, it would be easy to focus on the devastating floods that inundated our schools and communities. The huge learning losses were just one consequence. The connection losses were just as significant, if not more so.

These losses were particularly severe for adolescents, for whom peer relationships are central to identity development. They lost everyday interactions with their peers and the connections strengthened by cooperative learning techniques, extracurriculars, and clubs. That isolation, coupled with the loss of treasured high school rituals such as prom and graduation, contributed to a mental health crisis from which students are still recovering—a crisis of connection and belonging. The research is clear: trusting relationships with peers and teachers are key to learning, but students' connections were largely confined to their nuclear families during the pandemic.

Now it is up to us to help remedy the damage—not by looking backward at the flood but forward to the future.

As we move from observing the rain to building the ark(s), we must resist the temptation to "boil the ocean"—to think we must solve huge, seemingly intractable problems all at once. Instead of getting paralyzed by "recover from the pandemic," "improve graduation rates," or "increase college success," break the challenge into doable, bite-size pieces and make things work. Let's start by focusing on elevating the human connections that drive all learning. For the Urban Assembly, a school support agency in New York City, that means the following:

Rebuild caring student-adult relationships in schools. When children and young adults develop their social-emotional skills, experience positive environments in the classroom, and have high-quality interactions with adults and their peers, they learn how to be successful in life. Relationships are key to learning, whether that's a relationship to the curriculum, to their teachers, or even to a vision of themselves in the future.

These relationships can take many forms, from direct instruction of relationship skills to systems and structures that create a predictable and supportive school climate and culture. Whatever the form, it's important to see it as a fluid and individualized process. You can't assess a basketball team only by looking at the final score and skipping the game. Yes, the score is important, but if you want to understand how well the team plays, you've got to watch the game and all the dynamics of teamwork on display.

That's what it takes to understand student learning. For example, our Resilient Scholars Program (used in over 1,500 schools in New York City and more than 20 communities across the country) builds schools' understanding of the social-emotional processes that help support student success in school and beyond. It's not just about student work, just like it's not just about the box score. It's about the process, and the program helps make that process more visible to students and educators.

> *It's time to reimagine what it means to be well-educated. Yes, understanding the enduring themes in Shakespeare's plays will always lend insight into the human condition. But now, more than ever, we must help students connect those insights to the real world.*

Help leaders connect. At the Urban Assembly, we know that the answer to challenging times is community. That's why we created Principal Learning Communities, where school leaders share best practices around solving problems and mitigate the isolation of leadership. We are creating a causal cascade of care that extends from school leaders to teachers and school staff, and ultimately to students.

Offer students multiple pathways to postsecondary success. Not college for all, but postsecondary success for all, with relevant options for the broad diversity of learners. Some graduates will go on to two-year programs, others to four-year colleges, others straight into careers. Our vision is to offer meaningful choices and provide solid preparation that lets students take advantage of those opportunities.

To that end, we have radically reimagined postsecondary preparation. Our Early Career and College Awareness explicitly introduces ninth- and 10th-grade students to self-discovery exercises and helps them learn about and engage with various career opportunities and educational pathways. At the same time, our programs help school counselors to provide ongoing student support.

Make education more relevant and meaningful. It's time to reimagine what it means to be well-educated. Yes, understanding the enduring themes in Shakespeare's plays will always lend insight into the human condition. But now, more than ever, we must help students connect those insights to the real world. All of our 23 schools, which we support in partnership with the New York City Department of Education, are organized around themes and collaborations with dozens of public entities and private companies such as Cisco, Northwell, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

Hands-on internships and apprenticeships are the norm. For example, students at the Urban Assembly School for Collaborative Healthcare can earn their medical assistant and EMT certifications by completing internships at Brookdale Hospital and St. Barnabas. One out of every five students graduates with an industry-recognized certification in addition to their high school diploma, and every student has a postsecondary plan that includes college.

At the Urban Assembly School for Design and Construction, every student is enrolled in an architecture or design pathway where they develop cutting-edge thinking and modeling skills

that are in high demand from industries. Internships at the nonprofit Exploring the Arts and the Beam Center create real-world opportunities for students to practice what they've learned. As a result, 100% of students who graduate have a postsecondary plan, and 75% of those plans involve opportunities in art, architecture, engineering, and construction.

Urban Assembly schools, which serve all students, are designed to nurture students' individual interests, build connections with mentors who work in fields they aspire to join, and give students access to the sense of purpose that will sustain them in school and in life. When students contribute to solving real-world problems, they can honestly say, "I, too, have something worthy to offer."

Scale what works. Our social and emotional learning resources have been used in all public schools in New York City. Through Strong Resilient NYC, 1.2 million of the city's students have access to DESSA, a strength-based social and emotional learning feedback tool. Plus, a guided intervention program helps educators provide targeted, highly responsive support to each individual student.

As ark builders across the country help students recover from the pandemic, we need to embrace a bolder vision of schooling. School can be a central hub of our communities, a place of meaningful connections between students and adults, and a place that connects learning to the real world. That's our vision, and that's the future of learning.

BY ROBIN LAKE

DIRECTOR, CENTER ON REINVENTING PUBLIC EDUCATION

Launch a national initiative to create the New American High School

"High schools are launching pads, not destinations."
–Kevin Teasley, founder, GEO Academies

The American high school is broken. The pandemic underscored just how broken. American teens are—as a September 2023 Gallup poll shows—disengaged, stressed, and questioning the value of high school and college. At the same time, they are hungry to make a difference in the world and to use new technologies and ideas toward that end.

In 2013, Ted Sizer wrote a book called *The New American High School*. Large national foundations invested in smaller, more personalized high schools. The pandemic made clear it's past time to finally remake high school, but with an eye toward the future.

Rather than seek to provide a comprehensive set of learning experiences under one roof, the new American high school would connect students to meaningful work in their communities and to expert knowledge around the globe.

Rather than dumb down concepts or activities to make them easier for teenagers, it would support young people to do meaningful work that makes real contributions and leads to credentials that hold weight in the adult world.

Rather than sort students into tracks or marshaling all of them toward a single objective, it would provide every student adult guidance and technological support to understand their own conception of a good life, and provide them with the support, connections, knowledge, and skills to pursue that life—and to change course where necessary.

Rather than focus on a centuries-old curriculum and memorization, it would recognize the transformative forces of AI technology, climate change, and geopolitics and prepare students to thrive, collaborate, and innovate in a rapidly changing world. Yes, students would still study Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Newton, but in a more relevant, contemporary context.

Arizona State University's Michael Crow conceived something similar for the postsecondary world—the New American University. These institutions would be designed for access

Rather than seek to provide a comprehensive set of learning experiences under one roof, the new American high school would connect students to meaningful work in their communities and expert knowledge around the globe.

rather than exclusivity, and would develop knowledge that could improve student's communities and address global challenges.

New career and technical education (CTE) programs popping up across the country provide a great starting point. They're building tighter integrations between high school and postsecondary education, delivering industry-recognized credentials on the way to graduation, resourcing students through college via learn-and-earn programs, and developing students' social capital to strengthen their support circles and professional networks.

SEAMLESS AND PERMEABLE PATHWAYS

It is key that the New American High School does not place students into tracks or find them in dead-ends. Instead of "tracks," there should be a seamless and permeable set of pathways between high school, college, and career.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Design principles for the New American High School could include:

- Maximize each students' unique human potential
- Leverage community assets
- Seamlessly blend the high school experience with college and career
- Be future-oriented, preparing students to thrive in the realities of the future
- Place equity and ethics at the center of change

To provide a few examples:

Colorado's Homegrown Talent Initiative is a grant-funded program designed to help rural districts create career-relevant learning experiences aligned to the needs and aspirations of their local economies. Participating districts have redefined student graduation requirements, designed new courses, integrated career exploration into existing classes, and created new learning opportunities via internships with local industry and dual enrollment in local higher education institutions.

Seckinger High School in Gwinnett County, Georgia, is the district's first artificial intelligence-themed high school and is part of a broader district vision to foster excellence and a sense of belonging in every school. Once the school opens, students will receive a college preparatory curriculum that is taught through the lens of artificial intelligence. Students will also be able to pursue an education in developing artificial intelligence.

Indiana's Purdue Polytechnic High School is a public charter school network designed to prepare students for careers in the STEM fields. The school implements hands-on and project-based learning, industry and higher ed partnerships, and a flexible and personalized approach. Students leave high school with college credit, in-demand industry credentials, as well as preferred admission to nine out of the 10 colleges at Purdue University.

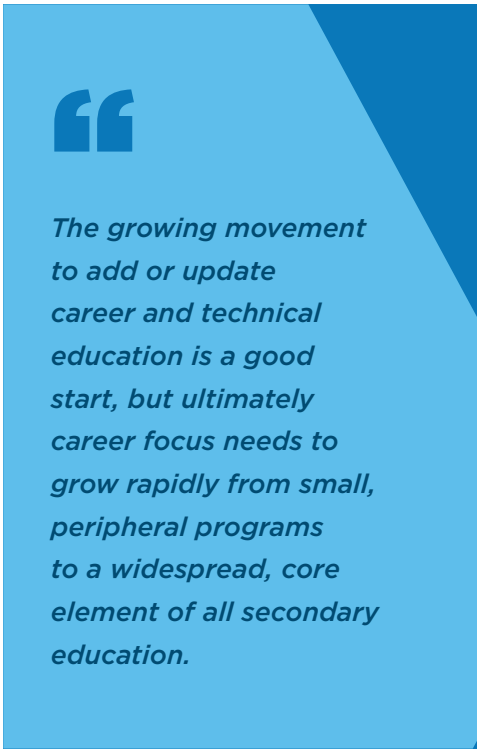
Another Indiana charter school, GEO Academies, offers a College Immersion Program, a hyper-personalized dual enrollment program where high school students take college classes on the college campus of their choice beginning as early as the ninth grade. GEO pays for everything and provides the academic, social, and emotional supports so that kids learn real-life skills and grow the confidence necessary to earn college degrees—and a path to escaping poverty—before they graduate from high school. When they are on the high school campus, GEO students can engage in direct, teacher-led instruction, independent learning and practice, and teacher-assisted small group instruction.

At the state level, Colorado, Delaware, Indiana, Louisiana, and Virginia are moving toward more coherent state-wide career pathways, using federal funds and industry partnerships to create a more permeable path between high school, college, and career. (Colorado Governor Jared Polis and Virginia Secretary of Education Aimee Guidera elaborate on their states' work in essays on pages 76 and 39, respectively.)

There is plenty of evidence that the current American high school is outdated and irrelevant. The best source of data is coming from students themselves. Adolescents report feeling isolated, bored, and disengaged in school. In this volume, we report plenty of evidence that they are calling for change and they are voting with their feet by failing to attend school or dropping out to get a job in larger numbers than ever.

Despite the very obvious need to update and refresh secondary education, high schools are notoriously resistant to change. Shifting existing curriculum, coursework, instructional strategies, counseling, industry partnerships, and teacher expertise are all onerous prospects. What's more, the old model of high school is hard-wired: core graduation course requirements are geared toward a "college for all" mentality. Do students intent on pursuing a career in music, for instance, really need to take calculus? Schedules do not easily shift to accommodate a student who must leave during the day for an apprenticeship. If a student wants to take an online pre-engineering course in place of a course offered by their high school, they must pay for it themselves.

Much of schools' inability to change stems from outdated state policy. State teacher licensing laws often prevent would-be teachers with industry expertise from teaching credit-earning classes. State graduation requirements often do not allow students to count industry credentials toward graduation. Funding models are outdated and assume high school students will receive all of their education in one building.



A NEW NATIONAL INITIATIVE

To overcome these and many other barriers, we need a new national initiative for the New American High School. We need more states to follow the lead of vanguard states such as Colorado and Virginia—and for these states to continue to push for lasting changes to the core aims and structures of their schools.

The growing movement to add or update career and technical education is a good start, but ultimately, career focus needs to grow rapidly from small, peripheral programs to a widespread, core element of all secondary education.

As the other essays in this report suggest, we need to start thinking, talking, and acting bigger. Career preparation in high school is essential for every student. At the very least, students should leave high school with a guarantee that they have mastered the core skills the business and non-profit sectors say they will need for the middle-class jobs of the future.

We can do this, but the business community, philanthropies, governors, and state school chiefs must lead. Here are some first steps that could make a real difference:

- Create a national council on the New American High School to set national goals and guide federal and state funding strategies
- Support more state- and district-level initiatives for business-education partnerships like Colorado, Louisiana, and Virginia have done
- Incentivize every state to collect data across states on long-term outcomes like Indiana has done

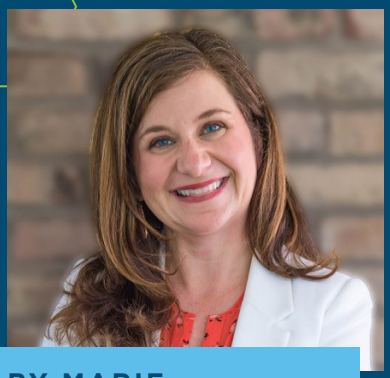
- Build a global network of schools and school districts that are committed to the New American High School
- Create a national research center on the New American High School to amass evidence on innovations, best practices, and policies to support schools and states that want to re-tool their high schools

Tinkering around the edges of American high schools won't ensure that every student graduates on a viable pathway to a family-sustaining career. We don't need to remake career and technical education—we need to remake high school.

Skeptics will understandably ask: how is this possible when school systems are struggling just to keep their heads above water, grappling with record levels of mental health and behavior challenges and declining achievement?

My response to the skeptics: high schools across the country began this transformation before or even during the pandemic. They did so because they know there is no alternative but to shift toward the future. They know they must catch kids up, but they also know that the best way to do so is to engage them in deep, meaningful, and relevant ways. With the right help from the federal government, states, businesses, and philanthropies, this is doable.

But the first step on any road to recovery is to admit that there's a problem. Given the reality of the past few years, can anyone really argue that the American high school has not reached its bottom?



BY MARIE MACKINTOSH

PRESIDENT AND CEO, EMPLOYINDY

Reengaging young people for the 21st century

The United States has an education problem—low and declining test scores, disengaged students, and growing teacher shortages, among other challenges. In Indiana, fewer high school students are pursuing postsecondary education or completing a credential or degree. This decline in postsecondary enrollment and educational attainment is sharpest for Black and Hispanic/Latino students, especially males.

We also have a skills gap problem—not enough people with the skills to handle the jobs of the future—and the pandemic has accelerated this misalignment in supply and demand. In Indianapolis alone, at last count, we needed 215,000 people with job-ready credentials to close our skills gap.

Traditional approaches aren't working. Communities like ours must become much more innovative if we wish to ensure a future of inclusive economic prosperity.

A CONTINUUM OF CAREER-CONNECTED LEARNING

EmployIndy, a quasi-governmental intermediary organization, is doing what we can. We work closely with businesses, K-12, postsecondary and higher education, city and state agencies, and philanthropic organizations to ensure all local residents earn a livable wage and that local employers have the skilled talent they need to grow. In order to make our vision a reality, we invest in what works: good jobs, talent connections, coaching and training, and career-connected learning.

We leverage a continuum of career-connected learning to ensure Indy's youth and young adults are positioned to meet the future needs of the local economy. This continuum includes a broad array of exploration, engagement, and experience opportunities. As part of this learning continuum, one of our most ambitious initiatives is a reinvented approach to apprenticeship, a job training model that dates back to the Middle Ages. Through the Modern Apprenticeship Program, which we operate with a sister intermediary, Ascend Indiana, we're preparing high school students for the jobs of the future. By blurring the lines between education and work, we're making learning more relevant for students. We're giving businesses a fresh approach to a time-tested model. And we're creating more pathways to prosperity for all students, with a particular focus on the underserved, underrepresented, and underprivileged in our community.

By blurring the lines between education and work, we're making learning more relevant for students. We're giving businesses a fresh approach to a time-tested model. And we're creating more pathways to prosperity for all students.

More than 40 participating local employers and 14 high schools have come together to co-develop talent, offering apprenticeships across seven industries with the highest student interest:

- Healthcare services
- Information technology
- Business operations
- Advanced manufacturing
- Construction
- Education
- Financial services

Specific jobs range from project coordinators and staff accountants to maintenance technicians and IT support.

High school students earn while they learn. As juniors, they spend two days a week on the job, which increases to three days as seniors. One year after graduation, young adults have earned a high school diploma, college credits, and industry credentials. They have built a professional network. And they have a choice for their next step—college, postsecondary training, or work. What parent wouldn't want that for their 18-year-old?

We're having an impact. We're helping diversify our workforce: about 88% of current apprentices are students of color, 60% are female, and one-third come from low-income households, doing jobs such as IT and accounting that historically have been dominated by white men. We're reducing employer turnover: 94% of Indiana employees say they would stay with their companies longer if they invested in learning. And we're having a positive return on investment: every $1 invested in apprenticeship returns $1.47.

SCALING WHAT WORKS

Our primary challenge now is to expand what's working. We've incubated success. Now we must scale it. Doing so will require all parties to adjust how they do business in the 21st century.

Employers need to play a much bigger, more well-defined role in this new system. They must co-create learning opportunities, advise on occupations and curriculum, become training companies for apprentices, and invest more time and treasure to ensure education and government partners are providing the most comprehensive education possible to young people. They need to engage their future workforce early, starting in middle school, and not wait until unprepared graduates fill out a job application.

High schools must continue to become more flexible, offering students more choices and pathways. They must work with their community partners to ensure all students are receiving the career-coaching support needed to make important decisions about their future. Graduation day must be seen as the starting line, not the endpoint.

Colleges and universities must become more adaptable, awarding credits for prior learning (including on the job) and working more closely with local employers on teaching applied skills. Clearly, there is a continued role for elite postsecondary programs, but we are equally committed to working with innovative community-focused institutions.

Government agencies must continue to broaden their measures of accountability to track not just high school graduation rates, college-going rates, or completion data, but more longitudinal and

actionable data that allow institutions to make informed and equitable decisions about the needs of their constituents.

Young people themselves must step up and benefit from the growing opportunities to take charge of their own learning. Of course, they need to learn math, science, and reading. But just as important, they need a career plan. And they need to master durable skills such as problem solving, teamwork, and conflict resolution that will help them in school–and in life.

Apprenticeships are just one of the gateways we're providing to young people to build skills and become future-ready. Working with multiple partners, we also support dropout prevention and recovery programs, administer career coaching and job training programs, and deliver a curriculum for young adults to learn durable skills in mindsets, self-management, learning strategies, social skills, workplace skills, and launching a career.

Our real success, however, will be when we're not needed anymore, when businesses and institutions are working together as a matter of course, and routinely engaging students with real-world, hands-on, and creative assignments.

Thanks to the leadership of Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett, we're also able to award college scholarships, provide completion grants, and connect teens to summer jobs, among other efforts. The City of Indianapolis has dedicated millions of dollars annually over the last five years to Indy Achieves, which works to ensure that every Indianapolis resident can pursue and complete a postsecondary credential or degree program. We empower residents to pursue careers that put them on a pathway to the middle class by removing barriers and providing a debt-free pathway to a better future. Mayor Hogsett also launched Project Indy as a critical first step in helping young people explore job opportunities and gain valuable experience and skills toward a future career. We've connected thousands of in-school and out-of-school youth in Marion County to summer jobs and work-based learning experiences.

One of our most innovative programs, YES Indy, invites out-of-school youth to play basketball at reengagement centers (RECs) as a first step in building the trust needed for them to reengage with school and work. The Indianapolis area has more than 30,000 such young people. It costs us about $12,500 each to reengage with them—a smart investment, considering it costs society three times more if they continue to stay out of school or work.

As an intermediary working with many stakeholders, we're a catalyst, a translator, and a funding go-between. We've made hopeful progress since our founding in 1983. Our real success, however, will be when we're not needed anymore, when businesses and institutions are working together as a matter of course, and routinely engaging students with real-world, hands-on, and creative assignments that help them become the lifelong learners every community needs.

BY KRISTIE PATTEN

COUNSELOR TO THE PRESIDENT, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

How we can flip the script on teaching neurodivergent university students—and the implications for all learners

Countless words have been written about the tragedy of Covid-19: the millions of lives lost, the steep declines in student learning, the trauma of extended isolation, and much more. All true.

But equally true is that the pandemic had at least one silver lining. If nothing else, it taught us that long-intractable institutions—like universities and public school systems—can change. Immediately, if necessary.

For years, advocates have been begging institutions to do things differently. The invariable response: "We can't. It's too hard. Be patient. Give us time." Then came Covid-19, and within 24 hours, everything changed. For example, online learning and work, long deemed challenging, became ubiquitous.

The secret was out. Even the most tradition-bound institutions could change when they had to. Let's make sure to take advantage of the best of these emergency measures and make them the new normal. It is a choice.

FROM A DEFICIT MODEL TO AN ASSET MODEL

Consider my institution, New York University. By listening to the disability community, we are working to change how we educate autistic and other neurodivergent students. We are trying to move from a deficit model to an asset-based model that is neurodiversity-affirming. We have a new Office of Disability Inclusive Culture that now works closely with our Moses Center for Student Accessibility, which provides accommodations and works to provide equal access to learning for students. The office is charged with looking beyond medical- or accommodations-based models toward faculty development, pedagogy, and organizational culture.

"Disability-inclusive culture" means that the work is community work. How do we impact and shift the attitudes of faculty, staff, and students? Instead of organizing our work around what students *cannot* do, we are working closely with

The pandemic had at least one silver lining. If nothing else, it taught us that long-intractable institutions—like universities and public school systems—can change. Immediately, if necessary.

staff and student self-advocates to show what students *can* do if we design universally for access and reduce stigma. We are collaborating so that our neurodivergent students can use their strengths and abilities on a path to future employment.

No one builds lives on their remediated weaknesses. We build our lives based on passions and strengths. Our job as educators is to make those journeys as joyous and productive as possible.

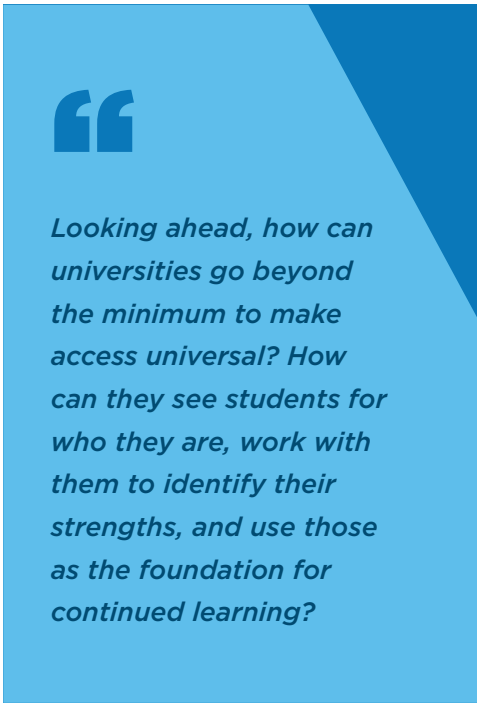
The old, and often still current, approach assumed autistic students needed to be "fixed." Students registered with offices of disability services for accommodations deemed reasonable. Often these accommodations were implemented universally during the pandemic. Lectures were taped or recorded for all. Students had to have these reasonable accommodations to succeed in the classroom, but that was the minimum.

Looking ahead, how can universities go beyond the minimum to make access universal? How can they see students for who they are, work with them to identify their strengths, and use those as the foundation for continued learning? What if universities adopted a posture that said, "You don't have to change. This is who you are. You are more than enough. How can we best support what *you* need to continue growing?"

A SYSTEMIC APPROACH

To that end, a group of NYU students, faculty, and staff from units across the university—from IT to instruction to campus safety—is meeting to systematically solve problems facing students, faculty, and staff. A starting place is making physical spaces more accessible, so our libraries now have sensory rooms that ensure quiet environments for studying. We are intentionally focusing on inclusive pedagogy and, in my former role as vice dean of academic affairs at NYU Steinhardt, have added mini-sessions at each monthly school-wide meeting to reach as many faculty as possible.

I teach a course on inclusion and access for undergraduates that gives students the option to attend in person, online, or fully asynchronously. Many neurodiverse students preferred learning online during the pandemic; we must respect that, even if hybrid teaching is much more challenging for educators. It won't be easy to figure out how to increase access, but the pandemic has taught us that it is possible. I can't very well teach my radical inclusion and disability justice course and insist that all my students show up in person.



In addition to having multiple means to engage with the material, students in this course have myriad ways to show what they know, including written assignments, oral presentations or works, artistic and musical expression, and multimedia demonstrations. These universally designed assignments capitalize on students' strengths and interests.

SMALL STEPS CAN MAKE AN IMPACT

Many faculty members are thinking about access and their own teaching and policies. Even the simplest fixes can have a major impact. For instance, faculty wonder why few students show up when we post a notice: "Office hours, 9-10 a.m., Mondays and Thursdays." Not surprisingly, many students would ask, "What's an office hour? Am I in trouble?" Now, I'm careful to reframe the offer: "I care about you. I want to understand you better. What issues is this class bringing up for you?

Please come see me. I'm in my office from 9:00-10:00 every Monday and Thursday. Or set up an appointment online." I use this language in my syllabus, the contract I have with students. I also start each class by letting students know they can move and do what they need to do to regulate their own attention.

We are taking advantage of more autistic peer-to-peer mentoring and support, which research finds is more valid and valuable (Buckley, Pellicano, and Remington 2021; Crompton et al., 2023). This includes a new NSF-funded project where I serve as co-principal investigator, through which several of our autistic college students at NYU are mentoring their autistic high school peers on STEM interests and pathways to college. This project just started, but already our autistic university mentors are enjoying being in leadership positions. They are using their strengths and abilities to guide their autistic peers and have indicated how they would have benefited from this type of mentorship as they struggled in the transition to college.

All of this work at NYU began a few years before Covid-19. But it gained momentum in the past few years and will continue to evolve. There is much work to do as universities think about access as well as student development. What it takes is the willingness to center the voice and expertise of students. Advocates can partner with institutions to identify innovative solutions and should be in more leadership positions to impact the change that needs to happen. But we must listen—students are the real experts in their own learning.

And universities must be bold. If Covid-19 taught higher education anything, it's that we must be willing to take risks and do what was once considered unthinkable. The payoff is worth it: students will thrive and flourish as institutions make these changes.

BY JARED POLIS

GOVERNOR OF COLORADO

Colorado's approach to blurring the lines for postsecondary and economic success

I've always believed that education is the closest thing we have to a silver bullet for life success. A quality education leads to greater personal earnings, better health outcomes, a stronger economy, and lower community crime rates, among many other benefits. For example, bachelor's and associate degree holders take home median weekly earnings of $1,334 and $963, respectively, compared to $809 for their peers with only a high school degree, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

But as the global economy rapidly evolves, we must rethink the way we educate students and our workforce. A fragmented approach—where high schools, postsecondary institutions, and employers all work in their own silos—shortchanges everyone.

We need to create more seamless pathways from school to careers. In Colorado, for example, 91.4% of jobs that can support a family of three require postsecondary education or some form of training or certification in high school beyond diploma requirements. Conventional four-year degrees alone cannot solve this problem, as more and more jobs value skills over a formal college diploma.

BLURRING THE LINES

In Colorado, we refer to breaking down silos as "blurring." Advanced degrees and credentials are now table stakes to participate in the modern economy, but accessing them usually requires students to persist through four years of high school work that often doesn't feel relevant to their futures. Then they proceed to postsecondary programs where they must take on debt, pay tuition, or forgo work while they pursue credentials. Blurring can make high school more relevant and credentials more attainable for all students.

While Colorado has seen one of the strongest economic recoveries in the country following the pandemic, employers across our state still struggle to find the right talent for their available jobs. One factor: we have historically asked students to make choices about their careers *after* leaving high school, often without the appropriate data needed to identify industry-specific needs or what kind of return on investment a particular pathway will afford.

> ***We have historically asked students to make choices about their careers** after **leaving high school, often without the appropriate data needed to identify industry-specific needs or what kind of return on investment a particular pathway will afford.***

That's why we have been laser-focused on blurring the lines between high school, higher education, and the workforce. Students and young professionals deserve more opportunities to gain skills. By increasing those opportunities, we can save people time and money, create a better-trained workforce, and better support our businesses.

Today, roughly 53% of high school graduates in Colorado earn college credit or industry credentials through dual and concurrent enrollment while in high school, saving them an estimated $53 million annually on tuition costs. A growing number also participate in apprenticeship and "learn while you earn" models.

Innovative intermediaries, such as CareerWise Colorado, are working between education and business to provide youth apprenticeship opportunities in industries such as banking, finance, health care, insurance and advanced manufacturing.

Additionally, Pathways in Technology Early College High School models (PTECH) provide students the opportunity to learn on the job while in high school, earn an associate degree and be first in line for those jobs following graduation.

However, more students can and should be participating in these opportunities. Our vision is that every student will graduate with a diploma in one hand and a certificate, degree, or meaningful job experience in the other.

That's why the Colorado Legislature created a task force that brought together partners from schools, postsecondary pathways, and industry. Its mission was to "develop and recommend policies, laws, and rules to support the equitable and sustainable expansion and alignment of programs that integrate secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning opportunities."[1]

This past year, the task force identified several impediments to the various pathways available to students: lack of awareness, confusion about program goals, affordability, and inadequate data on outcomes. Schools are already working to better target and maximize their resources, and the task force will present a final report with clear recommendations on how to scale this work by the end of 2023.

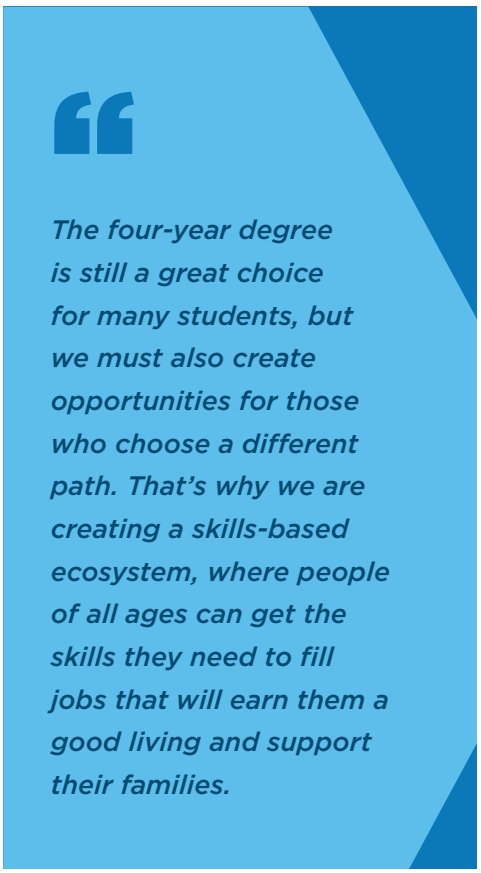
CURRENT STATE	FUTURE STATE
Slow to respond, siloed education and training systems	Single, nimble, agile education and training system responsive to evolving Colorado workforce needs
Focus on credential attainment	Focus on in-demand skill attainment
School-based learning	On-the-job and work-based learning
Financial constraints	Zero-cost and affordable education options
Academic advising	Career advising

Graphic from the Secondary, Postsecondary, and Work-Based Learning Integration Taskforce Interim Report

A SKILLS-BASED ECOSYSTEM

The four-year degree is still a great choice for many students, but we must also create opportunities for those who choose a different path. That's why we are creating a skills-based ecosystem, where people of all ages can get the skills they need to fill jobs that will earn them a good living and support their families.

To lead by example, we implemented skills-based hiring practices for our state workforce, and we expanded apprenticeship opportunities within state government, implementing best practices already in place at many major employers in the state. Colorado has removed or provided flexibility on degree requirements for most state jobs, such as entry-level positions, project management, IT and supervisory roles, replacing them with the opportunity to show experience and transferable skills. In the private sector, companies such as Google and Slalom Consulting now list degrees as optional for most positions in Colorado.



To ensure all students have access to these various pathways, Colorado has created a zero-cost credential program, making it completely free to pursue a number of healthcare certifications at any of our community and technical colleges. More than 1,000 students have taken advantage of this program, and we are working to expand it to other in-demand industries, such as early childhood and education, law enforcement, fire and forestry, skilled trades and green jobs. We also created a new state scholarship program that will provide eligible students who graduate in 2023-24 with $1,500 each to pursue higher education or postsecondary training.

We have also implemented a series of programs that help ensure our agencies, schools, and industry partners work together to break down silos and integrate our "blurring the lines" vision at a statewide level. In recent years, we've created other programs that encourage agencies, schools and businesses to collaborate in ways that offer students more opportunities to pursue credits and degrees. Those include expanded state apprenticeships, more scholarships for students in high-needs fields, and an $85 million grant program that helps businesses work with schools to grow their own talent.

All of this work creates a more integrated talent pipeline that serves students, professionals, and businesses alike. Blurring the lines means creating new opportunities, taking a bold new approach to training the workforce of tomorrow, and meeting Coloradans where they are—to help everyone achieve a successful future in a career that they love.

BY JOANNE VOGEL, Ph.D.

VICE PRESIDENT OF STUDENT SERVICES, ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY (ASU)

Incoming students are displaying behavior we might expect of younger adolescents, with difficulties managing their daily responsibilities, challenges resolving interpersonal conflicts, and troubling incidents of violence, vandalism, and even vigilantism

Meeting the moment

Higher education is under increased pressure to prove its value, and the pandemic presented us with an opportunity to reexamine outdated assumptions and approaches.

Opinion surveys capture part of the challenge. While the majority of Americans continue to trust in the value of higher education, the belief that colleges and universities have a positive effect on the country and local communities dropped from 69% in 2020 to 55% in 2022. This declining public trust, attributable to such factors as student debt and costs of attendance, underscores the work ahead. Here at ASU, as the New American University and a National Service University, we have centered the changing needs of students and their families as the pandemic pushed those needs to a new level.

WE'RE RESPONDING TO THE PANDEMIC IN SEVERAL IMPORTANT WAYS

Adjusting student support. The enforced isolation of the pandemic has delayed developmental milestones for many of our traditional-aged students, affecting their social development, emotional health, and cognitive readiness. Incoming students are displaying behavior we might expect of younger adolescents, with difficulties managing their daily responsibilities, challenges resolving interpersonal conflicts, and troubling incidents of violence, vandalism, and even vigilantism. Students who feel under-prepared for the learning environment may draw attention, albeit maladaptively, to their struggles.

We are testing several approaches to improve conduct, enhance safety, and promote success. In some of our residential settings, where we have noted an increase in property destruction, our community assistants and community directors will ask students to set some of their own rules. Do you want quiet hours? If so, when? How should our common areas look? Do we establish a type of neighborhood watch? What happens to students who don't abide by these expectations? Instead of rules imposed from above, students will be empowered to take the lead.

Another approach will be to increase the presence of our campus safety aides, students paid to circulate around campus and in the residential communities. They identify security risks (e.g., unlocked or propped doors, damage), and we have found their presence helps to deter problematic behavior. We are also moving toward the tightened access

controls that were more common during the pandemic, evaluating who needs access to what portions of the residential community or building.

To improve health, well-being, and student success, we are continuing some of the approaches that the pandemic forced on us while expanding other supports. Notably, we will continue using technology to increase access to services, resources, and care at the times convenient for students. We expect to see continued use of Zoom advising appointments, telehealth, telecounseling, and texting. We are also expanding the use of our chatbot, Sunny, to deliver information and interact with students. Sunny has the ability to refer students to the appropriate resources and alert our teams to students in distress.

Expanding inclusive and compassionate learning practices. We are accelerating our efforts to redesign everything, from buildings to instruction, to serve the diverse range of students. Not only the nearly 10,000 students who receive disability resources or accommodations from us, but all students will benefit from increased flexibility in instruction and assessment. Instead of a test at the end of every course, what about allowing students to choose how to demonstrate mastery of material? Instead of insisting that all students come back to class now that the pandemic is over, how do we serve the students for whom remote learning was a godsend—those students who would rarely speak in class but were avid users of the chat function on Zoom?

We are accelerating our efforts to redesign everything, from buildings to instruction, to serve the diverse range of students. Not only the nearly 10,000 students who receive disability resources or accommodations from us, but all students will benefit from increased flexibility in instruction and assessment.

Compassionate and inclusive learning strategies can benefit everyone, yet they have an especially marked effect on students with disabilities and others who were disproportionately affected during the pandemic. Requiring students to document a disability in order to receive accommodations favors those with means, access, and resources. Inclusive learning practices challenge us to deliver content in a variety of ways, allowing students to engage with the materials and express their comprehension through various mechanisms. If we want more students to succeed, compassionate and inclusive design should become the norm; thus, we are working closely with faculty to implement these practices.

Blurring the lines between K-12 and higher ed. Another way that higher education can capitalize on this moment is to blur our lines with K-12. When students can get a degree faster through dual enrollment or credits for passing scores on Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams, the financial and time investment may prove less daunting. Our ASU Preparatory Academy (ASU Prep; brick-and-mortar) and ASU Prep Digital offer ideal pathways for this kind of acceleration.

We can also move career exploration earlier in the educational journey, to middle school, helping students discover their interests and then mapping out possible choices and options. Knowing the relationship of a particular degree to a particular career will help connect the dots in meaningful ways. If students and their families understand that college increases the likelihood of a secure career, then we might have a chance to convince those critical of higher education that it still offers the most promising pathway for enhanced economic, social, physical, and emotional well-being.

This leap of faith requires that we address those students and their families who choose work over school for very immediate and understandable reasons. One solution that we offer students who tell

us they need to work: "Come work for us. We have no shortage of jobs on campus, plus you'll get a tuition benefit." This is a win-win for us and for them.

Prioritizing access. Despite the selectivity that many colleges maintain in order to increase their rankings, we must shift our focus to providing both accessible and excellent learning environments. Higher education has long needed to reconsider its admission requirements and allow students to demonstrate readiness in different ways—such as the test-optional admissions that increased significantly during the pandemic. Increased accessibility will help to ensure a diverse student population, contributing to a richer learning environment. We should also encourage and empower the return of students who needed to step away from their studies during the pandemic. Furthermore, at ASU we have contemplated next steps for two other types of students: 1) those whose learning loss or disruptions during the pandemic may have kept them out of higher education institutions, and 2) those who may have long ago given up on the idea of a college degree. Opportunities like Earned Admission provide a reasonable and attainable pathway for entry into higher education.

Last year's *State of the American Student* report observed, "A public education system built for rigidity and sameness collapsed in the face of uncertainty and highly varied needs." A higher education system built upon the same principles encounters a similar dilemma. We must consider what subjects are best taught in what ways for what learners. Students shouldn't feel forced to learn only in the ways that we find convenient but in ways they need, want, and can learn most effectively.

BY CHELSEA WAITE

PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER, CENTER ON REINVENTING PUBLIC EDUCATION

What the end of "college for all" means for high schools

CRPE's in-depth interviews with students and educators across six high schools in New England yielded a resounding message: the primary purpose of high school is not to prepare every student for college.

Instead, parents and students in wide-ranging circumstances describe happiness, fulfillment, and a "good life" as their priorities. "I just hope that she's happy, [that she finds] something that she enjoys doing and that she can just find her place," said a parent of a student in credit recovery. A parent of a straight-A student taking multiple AP courses said, "I want her to just pursue whatever makes her happy, honestly." A rural student said, "How I measure success isn't exactly in scores or numbers. It's more of, do I enjoy where I'm at in life, and is this where I saw myself going, and where can I go from here?"

Underneath these desires hum a host of economic and social pressures. "Success would mean for me that I am not living a paycheck-to-paycheck life, or I'm not struggling to provide for me and the others around me," said one student. A parent added, "Honestly, I think it's really hard for kids to settle on what they want to do right out of high school right now, given the state of our environment and our world and everything that's happening."

What leads to happiness and stability? Some students have told us about college plans, convinced that college is the path to "being my best self and earning my own money and doing a job that I enjoy." But others aren't so convinced that college will lead to success on their own terms. The reasons are varied: young people don't want to do more school; they'd prefer to avoid high-stakes tests and applications; they're concerned about finances; or, they would simply prefer to start earning money in a job they know rather than make a big bet on future opportunities they can't access yet.

Administrators in our study are also noticing a trend away from college as the agreed-upon best path out of high school. "At one point, people defined success by college," said an assistant superintendent. "And I think that people have come to realize now that that's not the ultimate measure of success."

Some students have told us about college plans, convinced that college is the path to "being my best self and earning my own money and doing a job that I enjoy." But others aren't so convinced that college will lead to success on their own terms.

LETTING GO OF "COLLEGE FOR ALL" ...

Our study's findings aren't an anomaly. Since the pandemic, Americans as a whole have deprioritized college prep as a key function for high schools.

In many ways, this shift is a good thing. Present and future workforce needs are changing rapidly, demanding continuous waves of learning. Meanwhile, college graduates even now aren't reliably showing proficiency in skills that employers value. CRPE and others have argued for years that the old "4+4" equation—four years of high school and four years of college—is increasingly outdated. That's especially true when average annual costs for a four-year degree top $35,000 and student debt is crushing adults across income levels, with few solutions in sight. Over the past decade, Gallup surveys have consistently found that three in four Americans do not believe college is affordable for everyone who needs it.

> *The challenge for high schools is how to make the shift beyond college for all, without reverting back to fundamentally inequitable patterns.*

... WITHOUT EXACERBATING INEQUITIES

The challenge for high schools is how to make the shift beyond college for all without reverting back to fundamentally inequitable patterns. While historically underrepresented groups have made notable gains in enrollment and graduation over the past decades, disparities persist along the lines of race and income. Those inequalities are cause for concern because evidence still shows that college can be a powerful engine of economic mobility. Students from low-income and high-income families who attend the same college, especially selective colleges, end up having similar earnings in adulthood. But students from families in the top 1% of income distribution are 77 times more likely to attend elite colleges than students from the poorest families. Taking into account persistent racial wealth gaps, this means that Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Indigenous learners face multiple structural barriers to economic mobility.

The push for K-12 schools to prepare all students to enroll in a four-year university represented a laudable effort to address this staggering inequality, but the problem hasn't been solved. In 2022, Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian Americans all ranked college prep as a much higher priority for high schools than White Americans did. In our study, one teacher from a Title I high school said, "I worry for every single student that leaves us, that they'll have the tools to make a real life for themselves, with choices." Could leaving "college for all" behind mean giving up on a commitment to equity?

The way through this conundrum is to reject the false choice between going to college or not. If the options are either "college" or "no college," then inevitably only some students—mainly those already advantaged—will get support toward a college degree. But if the options include many paths to family-sustaining careers, with further education and credentials at multiple points on each path, then many choices can be good choices.

High schools that internalize this mantra won't be any less committed to college readiness for all students, and they won't divide their students between kids who are college-bound and others who prefer to "work with their hands." Instead, they'll help every young person be ready for the adult world of work, aware of the trade-offs of choices they make, and academically prepared for higher education—when they choose it or need it.

WHAT HIGH SCHOOLS ARE LEARNING

No school we've studied has fully solved how to move beyond the traditional mindset while still avoiding the harm of low expectations, especially for historically underserved students. But some schools are approaching it in deliberate, thoughtful ways from which that others can learn.

At Nokomis Regional High School in rural Maine, educators believe that a wide range of college and non-degree options requires students to develop self-knowledge and articulate their own personal life values. Nokomis students explore postsecondary interests starting in ninth grade and develop a concrete plan by senior year. A critical new step is an interdisciplinary course called "The Good Life," which helps, according to one student, to define "your version of the good life and how are you going to achieve it." She also noted that comparing visions can help students expand their thinking about options. At Nokomis, as well as several other schools in our study, educators describe success as a viable postsecondary plan for every student, whether or not four-year college is part of it.

KIPP Academy Lynn Collegiate in Massachusetts was founded with the KIPP network's commitment to guarantee college access and success for underrepresented communities, especially students of color. The school has long focused on college prep courses, robust college counseling for every student, and ongoing support for students through their college years. But now, administrators are listening to students who don't yet feel ready to commit to college, and others who have dreams of entrepreneurship, beauty school, performance arts, and beyond. The school is expanding its own postsecondary counseling services to support a wider range of options, while staying committed to rigorous academic preparation so every student is at least college-ready, if not college-going.

THE HIGH SCHOOL EVERY STUDENT DESERVES

In these and other high schools across the country, the work ahead will be difficult. High schools have proven remarkably resistant to change, and past efforts to transform them have seen limited results at best.

Most critically, schools will need to maintain a laser focus on setting and maintaining high expectations for every student, even if the endgame for those expectations—traditionally, a bachelor's degree—is shifting. Students who don't choose college right away cannot be given an "easier" high school experience; they need a challenging one that maximizes their potential.

Doing this well means listening seriously to families about their goals and priorities, not telling them what's best. It also means exposing students to a far more diverse range of education, training, and work opportunities. Every student will need information and adult mentors to help them learn about their options, think through the trade-offs, and make an informed decision. They'll also need relationships with a diverse range of adults to gain a foothold in their careers. Schools can't do this alone: they will need help from employers and community partners. They also need their states to redesign policies on credit and seat time, since existing policies allow precious little flexibility for learning through internships and outside of school walls.

Skeptics who are hesitant to let go of the college-focused reform agenda need only think about the vibrant individuality of young people in their lives. In our study, one academically ambitious student dreams of being an opera singer, another student with a history of truancy aims to be a judge, and a third from a family of educators just wants to start working. They need their high schools to take them seriously. They each deserve an education that helps them to set and pursue goals that matter to them—and to adjust course when their interests or circumstances change.

A final word from Robin Lake

This, our second *State of the American Student* report, makes it plain: older students affected by Covid-19 are not receiving the recovery they deserve through the current efforts underway in K-12 and higher education—nor were they served well enough before the pandemic.

There is no shortage of proven solutions and ideas to help us shift course, but they require leadership, vision, determination, and most of all, urgency.

In the coming year, CRPE will continue to track and report on new evidence about promising new solutions, including a new knowledge hub focused on effective strategies for accelerating students in math attainment. We will also continue to conduct and commission needed research on the state of post-pandemic recovery via our Evidence Project and the American School District Panel, and we will launch a new policy institute on the future of learning.

We hope that next year's *State of the Student* tells a different story, one of marked progress on core learning and well-being benchmarks. But for that to happen, there must be a fundamental shift in strategy, a shift that harnesses creativity, ingenuity, and political will. That future is not in our hands, but in the hands of policymakers, advocates, and other change-makers. To quote Geoffrey Canada once more: "Take this seriously. Everything is at stake right now."

CRPE
REINVENTING PUBLIC EDUCATION

Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College
Arizona State University

The State of the American Student: Fall 2023
We are failing older students: Bold ideas to change course

GALLUP®

OCTOBER 25, 2018

School Engagement Is More Than Just Talk

BY **TIM HODGES**

It's rare for an educator to make it through an entire day without hearing the word "engagement." We want our students, teachers, parents and the entire school community to be engaged. But what does that really mean? What comes to mind when you think about an engaged school community? What difference does engagement make? And what can we actually do to build and sustain a culture of engagement?

Gallup's research team has been studying engagement for decades, having completed tens of millions of surveys and having conducted thousands of individual client research projects and several meta-analyses. All of this data may seem overwhelming, but in reality, it has led to several relatively simple actions that can be taken to improve engagement at your school.

To put it simply, engagement is a measurement of how involved, enthusiastic and committed one is to an organization. Whether you're a student, a teacher or a parent, this simple definition holds true. What is your psychological relationship with the school?

Vast amounts of research and discovery have led to some key conclusions that add rigor and "edge" to what is sometimes dismissed as a "soft" concept. While engagement is "nice to have," it's also necessary for thriving schools. A couple of highlights:

- Engaged students are 2.5 times more likely to say that they get excellent grades and do well in school, and they are 4.5 times more likely to be hopeful about the future than their actively disengaged peers.
- Employee engagement has been linked to a wide range of workplace outcomes. Specific to schools, teacher engagement has a strong relationship to both absenteeism and employee turnover, and is a key driver of student engagement.

The Disturbing Trend of Declining Student Engagement

Let's take a closer look at engagement with each group, starting with students. Engaged students are excited about what's happening at their school and about what they're learning. They contribute to the learning environment and are psychologically committed to their school. Engaged students feel safe at school, have strong relationships with teachers and other students, feel recognized on a regular basis, and are learning important things that connect them to a positive future.

Gallup has conducted more than 5 million surveys with students in grades five through 12 over the past several years. These students have come from every state and from a range of rural, suburban and urban school settings. Two key findings have received broad attention and are worth repeating here.

1. Almost half of students who responded to the survey are engaged with school (47%), with approximately one-fourth "not engaged" (29%) and the remainder "actively disengaged" (24%).

   A closer look at the data by grade level reveals a disturbing trend. Engagement is strong at the end of elementary school, with nearly three-quarters of fifth-graders (74%) reporting high levels of engagement. But similar surveys have shown a gradual and steady decline in engagement from fifth grade through about 10th grade, with approximately half of students in middle school reporting high levels of engagement and about one-third of high school students reporting the same.

2. Certain elements of engagement tend to be key drivers. In the early years of the research, Gallup discovered two items that had a powerful connection to engagement. Students who were able to "strongly agree" with the statements "My school is committed to building the strengths of each student" and "I have at least one teacher who makes me excited about the future" were 30 times as likely to be engaged at school when compared with students who strongly disagreed with the same items. A key to building a culture of student engagement is to have students who partner with caring adults to develop their potential.

Engaged students are 2.5 times more likely to say that they get excellent grades and do well in school, and they are 4.5 times more likely to be hopeful about the future than their actively disengaged peers.

The Potential for Engaging Our Nation's Teachers

An important driver of student engagement is the engagement of their teachers. Engaged teachers are loyal and psychologically committed to their employer. Their experience includes a valuable relationship with a caring principal who coaches them, offers meaningful recognition on a regular basis, and helps them learn and grow throughout their career. They are surrounded by committed coworkers who build trusting and often deep relationships. Engaged teachers give the discretionary effort needed to ensure that their students are successful.

Across the many millions of Gallup surveys on engagement, about one-third of employees are engaged (33%), while about half are not engaged (51%) and the remaining 16% are actively disengaged. Clearly, there is potential for growing engagement in the typical workplace. So, how are we doing on engaging our nation's teachers? Unfortunately, not much better than the typical workplace. Two notable takeaways:

1. While elementary school teachers tend to be more engaged than their peers at the secondary level, overall teacher engagement is quite similar to that of other professions, with just over 30% reporting high levels of engagement.

2. A study of the individual elements of teacher engagement reveals a key finding: When asked whether their opinions count, K-12 teachers' positive responses are consistently lower than those of employees in other professions.

School leaders need to do a much better job of soliciting teacher input early in the decision-making process to ensure that teachers are heard. This approach will not only lead to higher levels of teacher engagement, but will likely also lead to better decisions.

A Strong School Community Includes Engaged Parents

Engaging our students and teachers is a widely accepted approach to achieving school success. But great schools don't just focus on the people inside the building; they build a strong constituency in the community. This leads to the natural next step: engaging

parents.

Engaged parents are proud to be associated with their child's school and advocate for it in the community. They feel that the school delivers on its promises. Engaged parents often go so far as to say that the school is "perfect" for their child.

The relationship between a parent and their child's school may be similar to the relationship between a customer and a company they regularly interact with. How does parent engagement compare to customer engagement? Gallup marketplace research often finds that about 30% of customers are fully engaged with the organizations they patronize in the healthcare, hospitality, retail and financial services industries. As such, it's surprising to find that only about 20% of parents are fully engaged with their child's school.

School leaders need to prioritize parent engagement as they strategize and activate plans for school improvement. Doing so requires a focus on some key drivers of parent engagement, as follows:

1. School leadership. In many communities, a school's principal and leaders are as visible as politicians or business leaders. Strong school leaders embrace this role as they respond to community concerns and inspire the community to believe in the future of the school.

2. Academic standards. Parents want to know that the school is committed to helping their child perform well academically, regardless of whether their child is succeeding in honors courses or struggling to keep up in class. Parents seek appropriate amounts of homework and support to help their students achieve.

3. School environment. Parents seek a welcoming school environment in which their student is treated with respect and there is appropriate discipline. To put it simply, parents want to know that their child enjoys being at school.

4. Personalized learning. Engaged parents appreciate having a teacher who cares about their student enough to get to know their strengths, and who spends time developing their potential. They seek opportunities for their child to do what they

do best every day.

5. **Communication and involvement.** While most schools do a good job of communicating with parents in transactional ways about grades, weather dismissals or safety incidents, parents also seek communication about ways to get involved. They crave positive, specific feedback about their child and desire a true partnership with their child's teachers.

Building a culture of engagement for students, teachers and parents takes effort, but it is not out of reach. It requires systematic measurement of the culture with validated tools. When results become available, school leaders need to study the data in its proper context, looking at national benchmarks and data from previous years. They need to share the results and broaden the conversation to ensure that a variety of stakeholders are involved in the school improvement process. And perhaps most importantly, they must follow through. Conducting surveys of engagement is a great first step, but if school leaders don't act on the findings, it can actually undermine engagement further.

Successful school leaders understand that building a culture of engagement is not an event; it's a process that requires intentional and sustained effort. And while it is not always easy to create engagement, it is absolutely worth the investment.

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- Download *Leadership Perspectives on Public Education: The Gallup 2018 Survey of K-12 School District Superintendents*.

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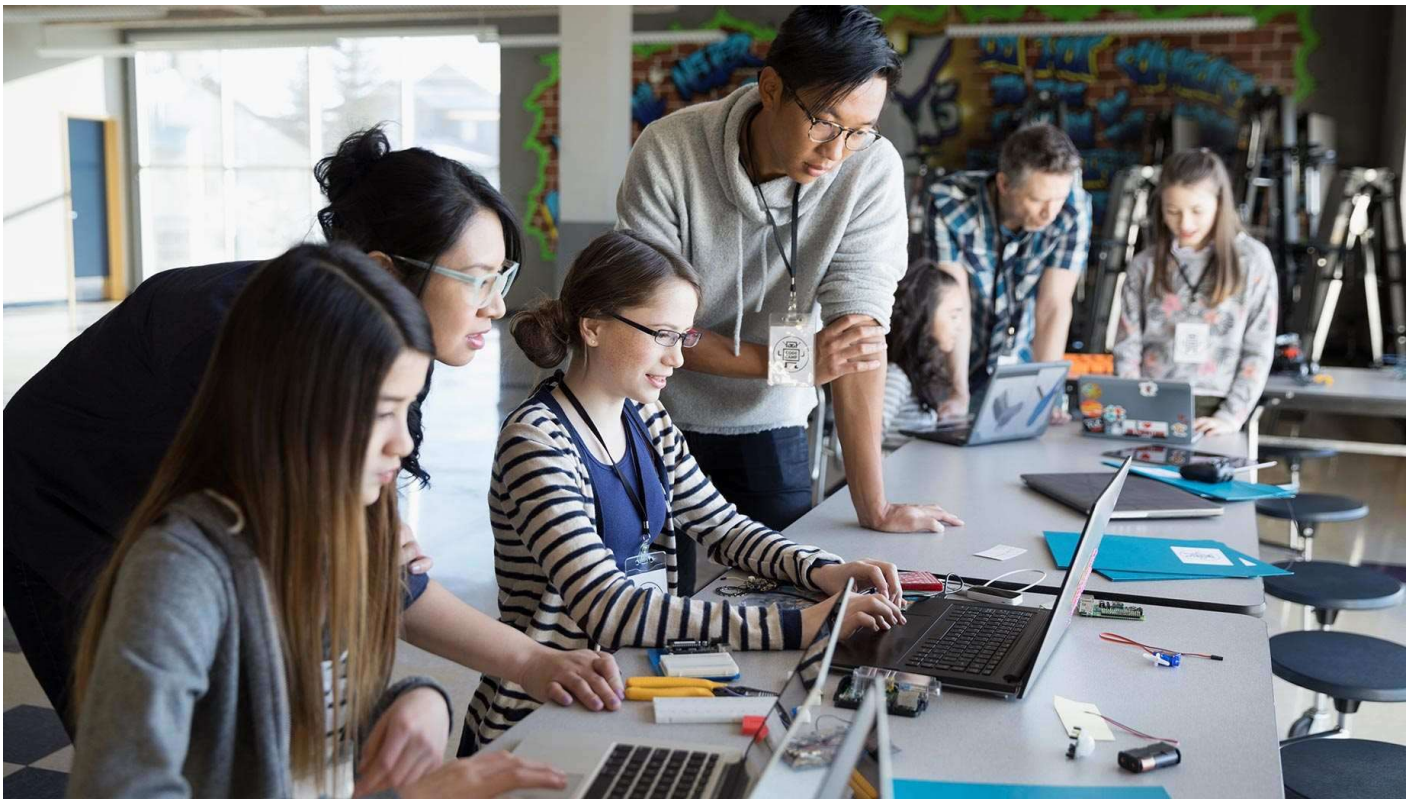
SEPTEMBER 28, 2018

Superintendents Say Engagement, Hope Best Measures of Success

BY VALERIE J. CALDERON AND **JEFFREY M. JONES**



Superintendents in U.S. public school districts are not as keen on the importance of standardized test scores as indicators of school success as they are about other measures. Nine in 10 of K-12 superintendents say students' engagement with school, hope for the future and graduation rates are very important measures of school effectiveness. Just one in 10 say standardized test scores are very important; 52% say they are somewhat important.

The 9% of superintendents describing standardized test scores as very important indicators of school effectiveness contrasts with 91% saying the same about student engagement, 90% about student hope for the future, and 89% about the rate of high school graduates.

How important do you think each of the following is for measuring the effectiveness of the public schools in your community?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important	Don't know/Does not apply
	%	%	%	%	%
How engaged students are with school	91	8	<1	0	<1
How hopeful students are about their future	90	9	<1	0	0
Percentage of students who graduate from high school	89	9	<1	0	2
Percentage of high school graduates who go to technical or trade school	52	45	2	<1	1
Percentage of high school graduates who go to college or community college	48	48	2	<1	2
Percentage of graduates who get jobs immediately after completing high school	33	55	9	1	2
Scores that students receive on standardized tests	9	52	32	7	0

These results are based on web interviews, conducted June 25-July 18, with 1,892 public school district superintendents in the U.S. as part of Gallup's 2018 Survey of K-12 School District Superintendents.

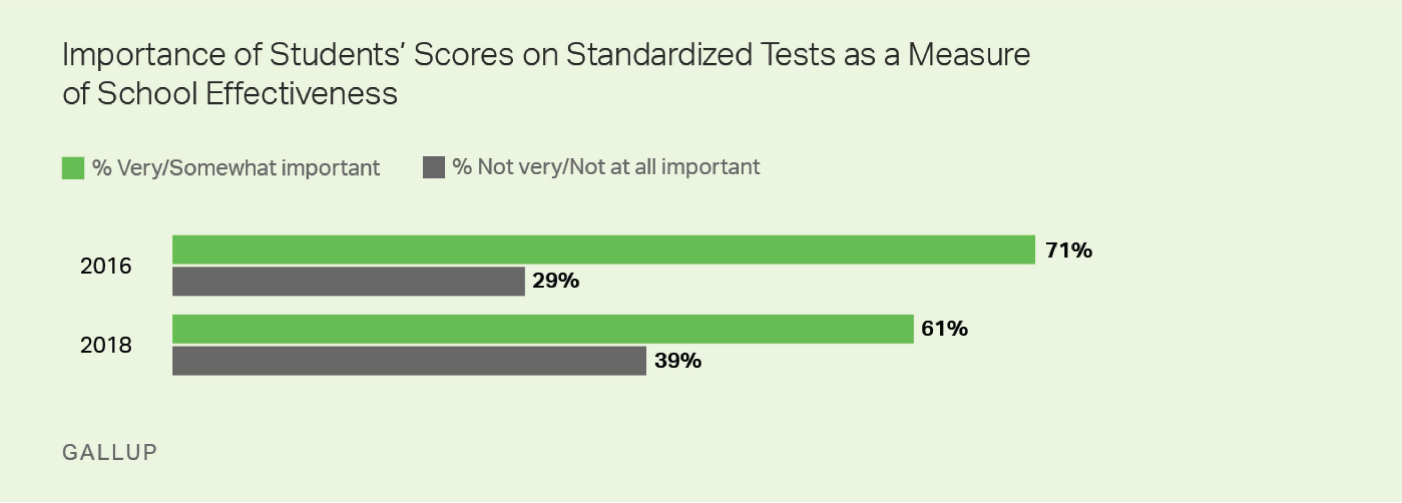
GALLUP

These results are based on web interviews, conducted June 25-July 18, with 1,892 public school district superintendents in the U.S. as part of Gallup's 2018 Survey of K-12 School District Superintendents.

Results of the 2018 K-12 superintendent survey emphasize the need for implementing and assessing nonacademic aspects of students' education experiences -- a perspective that is underscored by results from another study of parents, teachers, principals and superintendents. Members of each of these stakeholder groups agree it is necessary for schools to assess both academic and nonacademic factors, but there is much variance in the ways schools address and foster nonacademic skills, which may

contribute to the challenges in assessing them. Just one in 10 of teachers say the assessments used by their school to gauge nonacademic areas measure those skills "very well."

The question about the importance of various school effectiveness measures was asked of superintendents in 2016. Results of each survey show a large gap in importance between standardized test scores when compared with engagement, hope and graduation rates. The percentage of superintendents who say engagement and hope are very important measures has sneaked upward from the 2016 survey of these K-12 leaders, while the percentage who say standardized test scores are very or somewhat important edged downward. In 2016, 71% of superintendents indicated standardized test scores are very or somewhat important compared with 61% who say the same in 2018.



In 2018, 7% of superintendents say scores that students receive on standardized tests are not at all important. Notably, this makes standardized test scores the only school effectiveness measure among seven with a meaningful proportion of school district leaders saying it is not at all important.

Other Gallup research suggests the importance that superintendents ascribe to engagement and hope as measures of school effectiveness is well-placed. Many schools use the Gallup Student Poll to include nonacademic measures within their

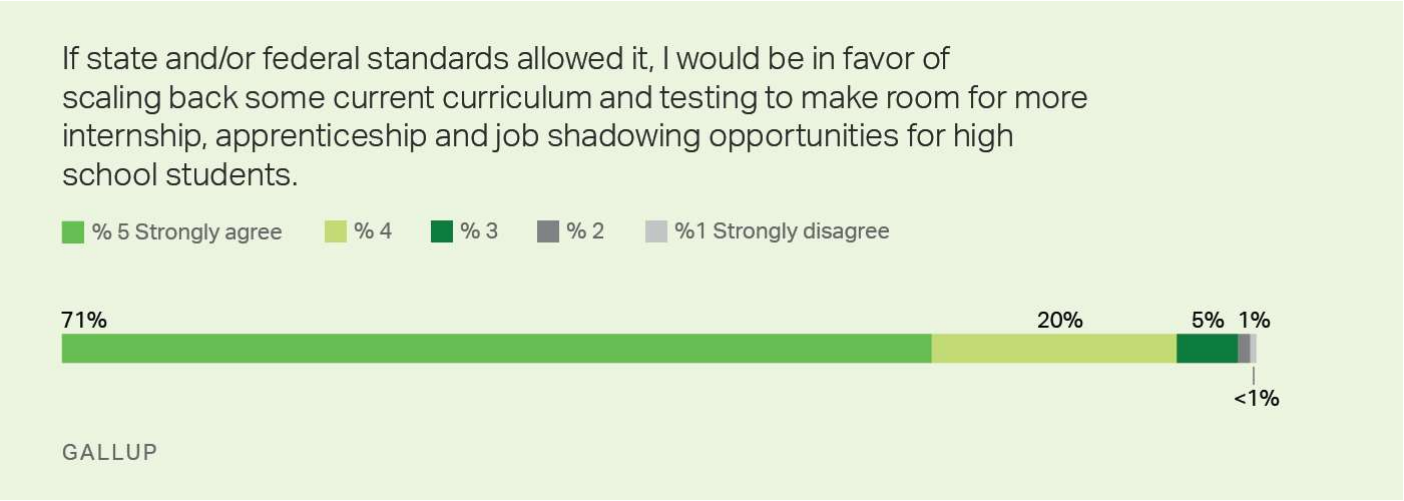
school success framework. The Gallup Student Poll is a web-based survey for students in grades five through 12 that measures engagement with school, hope for the future, entrepreneurial aspiration, and career and financial literacy.

Students who are engaged -- involved in and enthusiastic about school -- are more likely to be hopeful for the future and have better self-reported academic performance than their actively disengaged peers. Results from the Gallup Student Poll suggest that students become less engaged as they journey through school. For example, fifth-grade students are 1.8 times more likely than high school students to strongly agree they learned something interesting at school in the last week, and older students are less likely to strongly agree they have a teacher who makes them excited about the future. As students near graduation, they seem increasingly disinterested in their learning and apprehensive about their future.

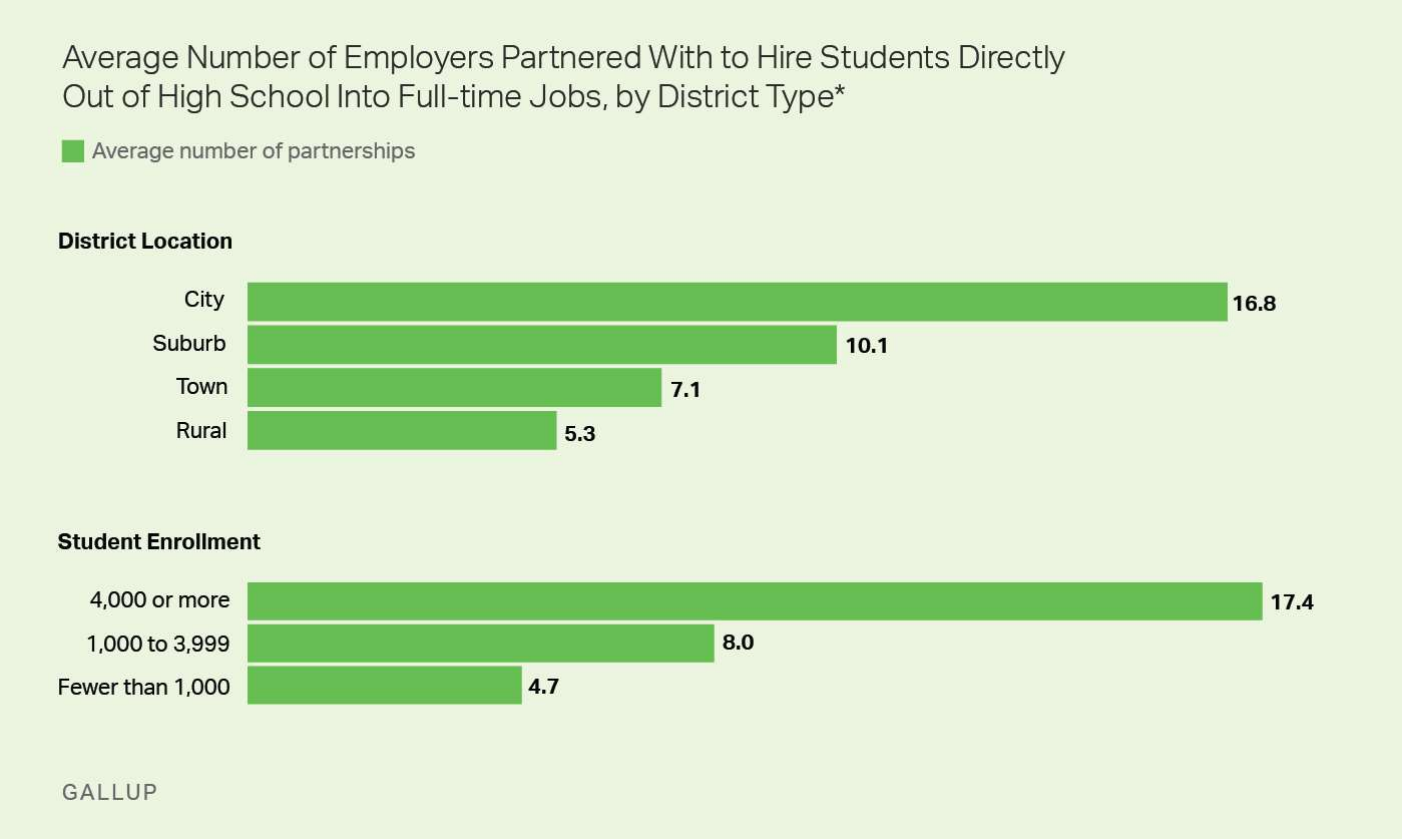
Blurring the Lines Between Education and Work

While nonacademic factors have been challenging for schools to address and assess, many superintendents indicate that they are mission critical in preparing students to be successful. Just 40% of K-12 superintendents strongly agree or agree that high school graduates in this country are well-prepared for success in the workforce, which includes 5% who strongly agree.

When asked about experiences that would be most helpful in improving student preparedness for the workforce, 69% of superintendents say job shadowing, internships and entrepreneurship opportunities would be most helpful, and nearly two-thirds (66%) say students need support building social and life skills, such as teamwork, communication and decision-making. Further, nine in 10 of superintendents (91%) strongly agree or agree they would be in favor of scaling back some current curriculum and testing to make room for more internships, apprenticeships and job shadowing opportunities for high school students.



Many K-12 superintendents say their district is currently embracing strategies that could provide nonacademic experiences that can help prepare students for the workforce. More than seven in 10 (73%) indicate that their school district partners with area employers to help promote career and vocational training; 35% say they have current partnerships with employers who recruit students directly out of high school. Districts have nine such partnerships on average, but there are differences between school districts in cities and those in other areas. Superintendents leading districts in cities have more than 16 such business partnerships on average to recruit students directly out of high school, while rural communities have just five such partnerships.



Boost Student Engagement and Hope for the Future

Superintendents are nearly unanimous in their opinion that engagement, hope and graduation rates are very important measures of school effectiveness, while just one in 10 say the same about standardized test scores. Other Gallup research suggests students become increasingly disengaged as they journey through school, creating a challenge for school districts as they try to create meaningful experiences that best prepare students for success in higher education and the workforce.

Students who are engaged -- involved in and enthusiastic about school -- are more likely to be hopeful for the future and have better self-reported

academic performance than their actively disengaged peers.

Some school districts are forging partnerships with area employers that can blur the lines between education and work. Such partnerships may provide students with opportunities to engage in job shadowing, internships and apprenticeships, while giving them a chance to practice needed social and life skills, such as communication and decision-making -- nonacademic skills that superintendents indicate would be most helpful for workforce preparedness.

Such strategic partnerships may have the added benefit of boosting student engagement with school and hope for the future by building interest in learning and excitement and energy for the future.

About the Study

Gallup developed this research study of K-12 superintendents of public school districts in the U.S. to understand opinions on important topics and policy issues facing education. Since 2013, Gallup has conducted the survey at least annually. The 2018 report addresses a variety of issues, including:

- the future of K-12 education
- challenges facing K-12 education
- evaluating effectiveness of the public schools
- student preparedness
- work partnerships
- combined work/higher education programs for high school graduates
- federal education policy
- school safety measures

Gallup can help you improve teacher and student outcomes:

- Become a strengths-based school, starting with practical steps for building an engaged and thriving culture.
- Download the full report, *Leadership Perspectives on Public Education: The Gallup 2018 Survey of K-12 School District Superintendents.*
- Learn why educators at all levels use CliftonStrengths to develop thriving students and schools by watching this video.

AUTHOR(S)

Jeffrey M. Jones, Ph.D., is a Senior Editor at Gallup.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2018

The Future of Education: K-12 Superintendents' Views

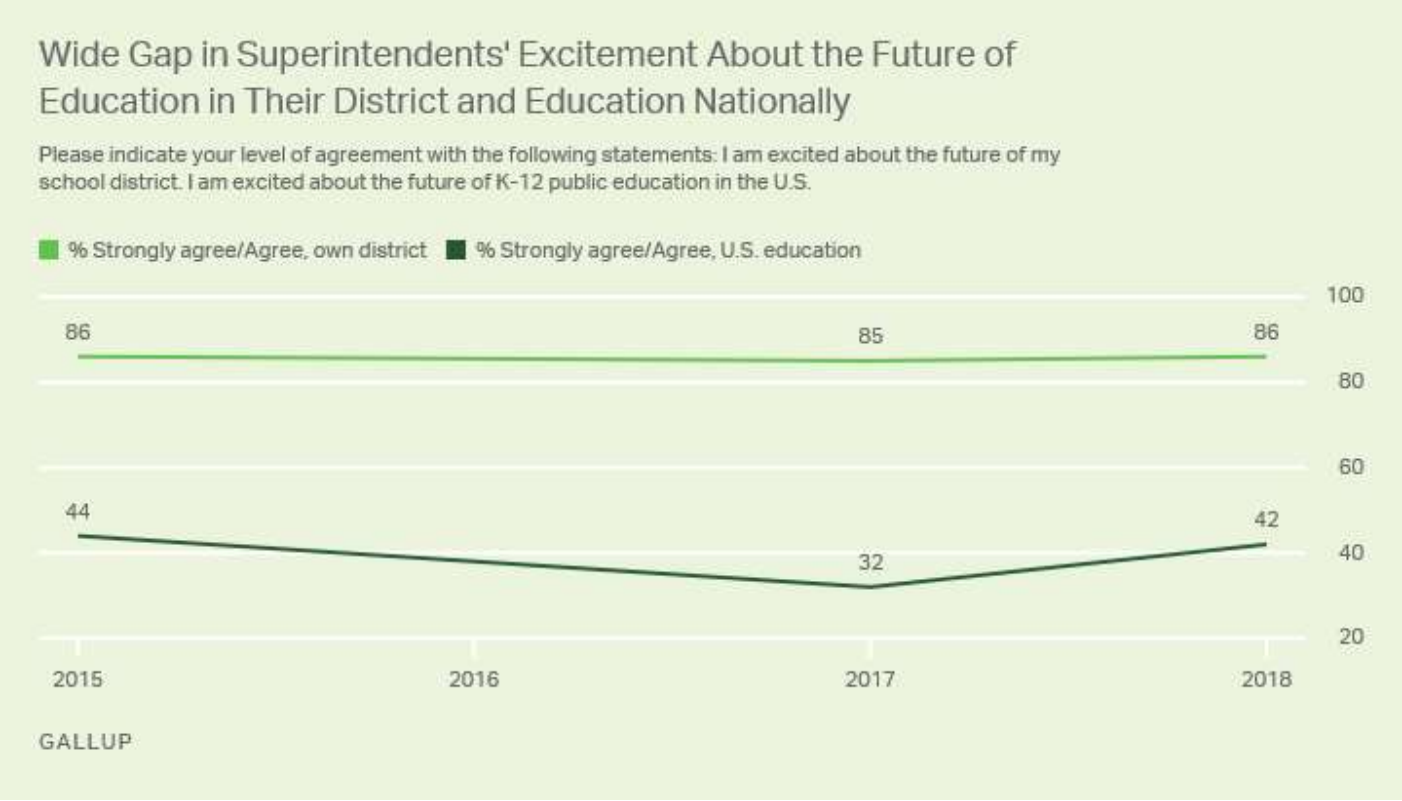
BY **JEFFREY M. JONES**

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- U.S. superintendents are mostly excited about the future
- They are critical of the federal government's handling of K-12 education policy
- Excitement about the future of U.S. education has rebounded this year

U.S. public school superintendents remain enthusiastic about the future of their school district, but they are much less excited about public education nationwide. Eighty-six percent of K-12 superintendents agree they are excited about the future of their district, including 53% who strongly agree. Only half as many, 42%, agree they are excited about the future of K-12 public education in the U.S.

These results are part of Gallup's 2018 Survey of K-12 School District Superintendents. The questions about the future of education have been asked twice before, in 2015 and 2017. Each survey has shown a wide gap in excitement about superintendents' own district and education nationally.



Such discrepancies are fairly common when respondents are asked to assess their own situation and the situation in the country more broadly, particularly in U.S. adults' evaluations of education. Evaluations of one's own situation are likely informed by the respondent's experiences -- and are situations they have some amount of control over to change if they are dissatisfied. In contrast, assessments of national conditions may rely mainly on (often unflattering) news reports or other indirect sources of information.

U.S. public school superintendents remain enthusiastic about the future of their school district, but they are much less excited about public education nationwide.

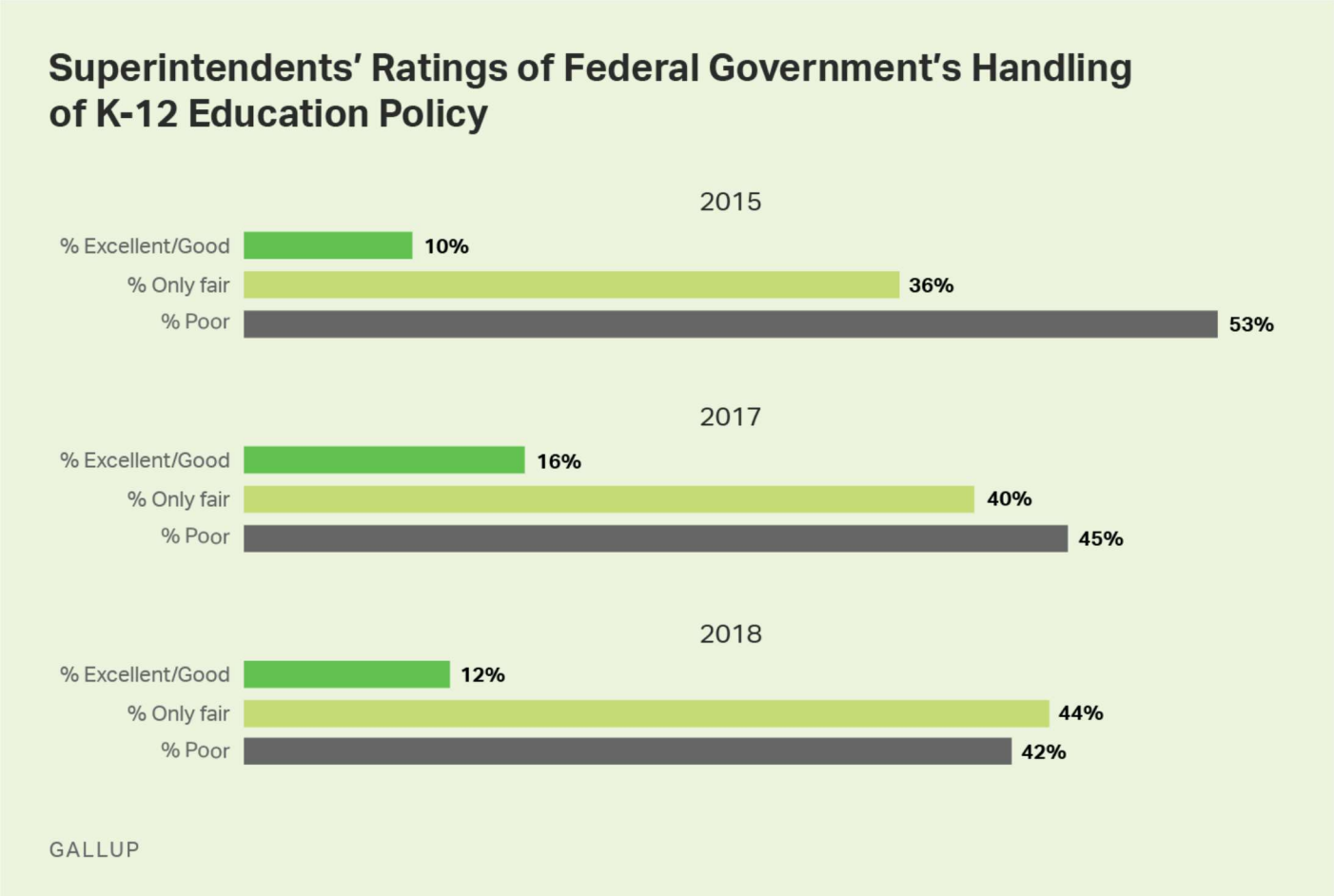
The gap in superintendents' ratings of their own district and education nationally is smaller this year than a year ago, because their opinions about the future of U.S. education have become more positive. In 2017, 32% agreed they were excited about the future of education nationally. This year, excitement levels about U.S. education have reverted back to where they were in 2015, when 44% agreed they were excited. The reasons for the more negative opinions in 2017 are unclear, although it is possible that uncertainty about the Trump administration's plans for education policy may have been a factor.

Superintendents in large school districts, based on student enrollment, are more likely than those in smaller districts to strongly agree they are excited about the future of their district. Sixty-five percent of superintendents overseeing districts of at least 4,000 students strongly agree they are excited about the future of their district, compared with 56% of those in districts with 1,000 to 3,999 students and just 49% of those in districts with fewer than 1,000 students.

Superintendents Critical of Government's Handling of K-12 Education Policy

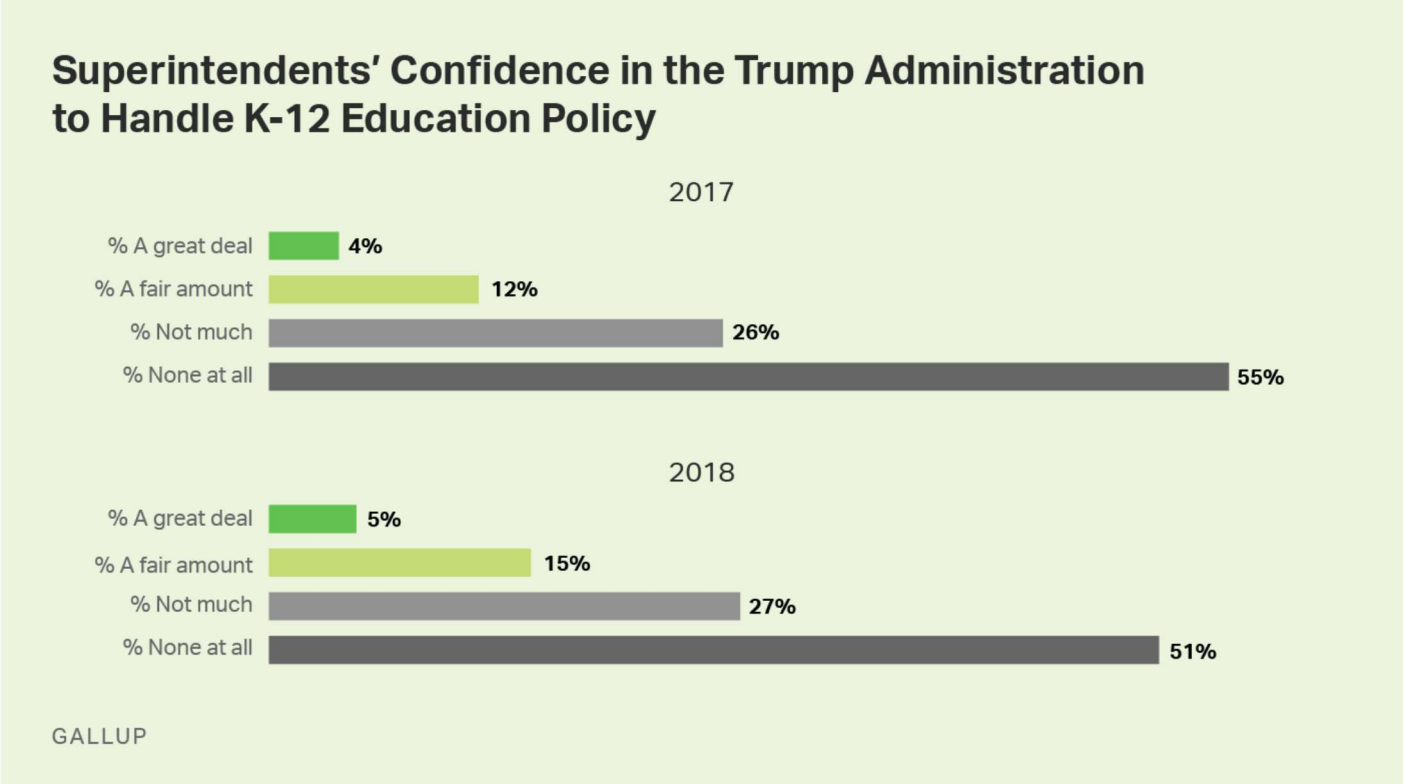
One reason superintendents may lack enthusiasm about the future of K-12 education in the U.S. is that they do not think the federal government is doing a good job handling education policy. Just 12% believe the government is doing an excellent or good job, while 44% think it is doing a fair job and 42% a poor one. These ratings were similarly

poor when Gallup asked the same questions in 2015, toward the end of the Obama administration, and in 2017, in the first year of the Trump administration. Slightly fewer have given a poor rating the past two years than did so in 2015.



Superintendents' frustration with federal education policy precedes the Trump administration, but they likely are not optimistic that things will get better during his term. A slim majority of superintendents, 51%, say they have "no confidence at all" in the Trump administration to handle K-12 education policy. Twenty-seven percent say they do not have much confidence in the administration, while one in five have either a great deal (5%) or a fair amount (15%) of confidence.

Slightly fewer superintendents this year than in 2017 say they have no confidence at all in the administration.



Discover What These Findings Mean for the Future of K-12

Superintendents face a number of challenges in their jobs, with finding and retaining talented teachers among the biggest -- but they remain very optimistic about what the future will bring to their district. They continue to be less positive about the future of education in the country as a whole, although their optimism has bounced back after declining a year ago. Superintendents remain concerned about the readiness of high school graduates for college and the workforce. Making positive strides in students' readiness for their postsecondary pursuits, and perhaps a fundamental reconsideration of federal education policy, could go a long way toward making superintendents more excited about the future of K-12 education nationwide.

About the Study

Gallup developed this research study of K-12 superintendents of public school districts in the U.S. to understand opinions on important topics and policy issues facing education. Since 2013, Gallup has conducted the survey at least annually. The 2018

report addresses a variety of issues, including:

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- federal education policy
- school safety measures

Download the full report, *Leadership Perspectives on Public Education: The Gallup 2018 Survey of K-12 School District Superintendents*.

Discover Gallup's education insights and advice to transform your school:

- Gain strategies to create thriving students and schools with courses for educators.
- Learn why educators at all levels use CliftonStrengths to develop thriving students and schools by watching this video.
- Hear insights into the economics of the teacher shortage, confidence in the labor market and the costs of employee turnover by registering for this webinar.

AUTHOR(S)

Jeffrey M. Jones, Ph.D., is a Senior Editor at Gallup.

RELEASE DATE: October 25, 2018

SOURCE: Gallup https://www.gallup.com/education/244022/school-engagement-talk.aspx

CONTACT: Gallup World Headquarters, 901 F Street, Washington, D.C., 20001, U.S.A

+1 202.715.3030

N. Approval of Grants and Other Finance Items
Administration MEETING: 10-5-23
(September 18, 2023)

ITEM:
To consider approval of a grant from FC419 Innovation Pathways Support Grant in the amount of $50,000.00. The purpose of this grant is to provide designated Innovation Career Pathways with resources to support program implementation.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:
Annex A (3 pages) contains the Grant Acceptance Form.

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Approve.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:
Approve.

Name of Grant:	FC419 Innovation Pathways Support
Type of Funder:	MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Awarded Amount:	$50,000
Grant Funding Period:	Upon execution through June 30, 2024
Project Title:	Innovation Career Pathways (ICP)
Program Coordinator:	Emily Lehman
Purpose:	The purpose of this targeted grant is to provide designated Innovation Career Pathways with resources to support program implementation.
Description of the program:	The Innovation Career Pathways program provides high school students with coursework and experience in a specific high-demand industry, such as information technology, engineering, healthcare, life sciences and advanced manufacturing.
Program location:	Worcester Technical High School
Outcomes and Measures:	ICP Program Director will be responsible for overseeing and supporting relevant staff and partners.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

GRANT AWARD NOTIFICATION (GAN)

1 Grant Recipient Number/Name: 0348 - Worcester
UEI: ZDFNGC6F65L3

2 Grant Title: FC 0419 - Innovation Career Pathways Support Grant (State/TAR)
Fund Code: 0419
DESE Project Staff: Elizabeth Bennett

3 Grant Award Project Description

Innovation Career Pathways Support

4 DESE Award Information

Grant Type: STATE FUNDS

- **CFDA #:**
- **FAIN:**
- **Is the award an R & D?:** No
- **Federal Award Date:** 7/1/2023

5 Sub-recipient Award Information

- **Grant Project Number:** 0419-000637-2024-0348
- **Grant Award Amount:** $50,000.00
- **Grant Project Duration (Period of Performance):** 7/14/2023 - 6/30/2024
- **Reimbursement Requests Close:** 8/25/2024
- **Final Expenditure Report (FER) Due:** 9/30/2024

6 Administrative Information

- DESE UEI: PUNALCFVXAL6
- UGG (2 CFR 200)
- 815 CMR 2.00: State grants, federal grant awards, federal subgrants and subsidies.
- DESE Request for Proposal (RFP): https://www.doe.mass.edu/grants/2024/0419/

7 Statutes

- **Authority:** https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FinalBudget
- **Program Title:** Innovation Career Pathways Support
- **CFDA #:**

8 Terms and Conditions of Award

- This grant is contingent upon the continuing availability of funds from the grant's funding source and the continuing eligibility of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and your town/agency to receive such funds.
- The grant may be terminated upon 30 days written notice by either party. In the event of such action, all remaining funds shall be returned in a timely fashion to the DESE agency and the grant closeout procedure must be followed.
- Fiscal and other reports relating to this grant must be submitted as required by the grant program.
- Expenditures cannot be charged to the grant prior to the sub-recipient grant start date. 34 CFR 76.708
- Recipients are required to report deviations from budget or project scope or objective and request prior approvals from DESE for budget and program plan revisions (amendments/revisions to grant within DESE grant sub-system).

Grant Award Notification Explanation

https://mass.egrantsmanagement.com/DocumentLibrary/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentGuid=105ecf84-6734-4578-aa75-051eda4259c6&inline=true

Worcester Technical High School

FC419 Innovation Career Pathways Support Grant Budget Summary

Expense	Amount
1. **Administrator Salaries**	
2. **Instructional/Professional Staff Salaries**	$19,500
300 Instructional Hours @65/hr	
3. **Support Staff Salaries**	
4. **Stipends**	
5. **Fringe Benefits**	
6. **Contractual Services**	$9,510
Consultant Services Career Development Education & College/Career Planning and Advising and Capstone Experience	
7. **Supplies and Materials**	$9,990
Supplies to support outreach, recruitment	
8. **Travel**	$3,500
After School Hours Buses	
9. **Other Costs**	$6,500
QCC Courses	
10. **Indirect Costs**	$1,000
City of Worcester 2%	
11. **Equipment**	
Grand Total	$50,000

N. Approval of Grants and Other Finance Items
Administration MEETING: 10-5-23
(September 26, 2023)

ITEM:
To consider approval of the DESE Building Capacity for High-Quality Instruction through EdTech grant in the amount of $55,500.00, which was awarded to the Department of Educational Technology and Digital Learning. The purpose of this grant is to provide funds for districts to adopt and/or expand capacity-building programming that builds collective expertise of educators to utilize technology to deliver high-quality instruction.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:
Annex A (3 pages) contains the Grant Acceptance Form.
Annex B (2 pages) contains the Worcester Award Letter.

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Approve.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:
Approve.

Grant Acceptance Form

Name of Grant:	Building Capacity for High-Quality Instruction through EdTech, Fund Code 124
Type of Funder:	Federal
Awarded Amount:	$55,500.00
Grant Funding Period:	Upon Approval through 6/30/2024
Project title:	Spark Plan
Program coordinator:	Sarah Kyriazis, Director of Educational Technology
Purpose:	To provide funds for districts to adopt/expand capacity-building programming that builds collective expertise of educators to utilize technology to deliver high-quality instruction
Description of the program:	The proposed programming, referred to as the "Spark Plan," builds upon the capacity-building professional learning program called "iTeachers." The "Spark Plan" aims to deepen instruction and create model teachers who exemplify best practices in blended learning/educational technology integration in service of the district's new Vision of a Learner Framework which includes skills and competencies so that all students are Empowered Individuals, Effective Communicators, Engaged Community Members, Curious Learners, and Problem Solvers. The Vision of a Learner has been collaboratively developed by the district to act as our Future Ready framework moving forward. The program is designed as a multi-year plan, with early adopters participating as a cohort and engaging in professional learning opportunities followed by classroom application.
Program location:	Wawecus Road School - will function as an incubation hub, providing opportunities for other schools to learn from its practices and experiences
Outcomes and Measures:	We aim to see an enhanced and joyful instructional environment where technology is seamlessly integrated, empowering educators to create engaging and inclusive learning experiences. We anticipate an improved student experience with enhanced critical thinking skills, and a sense of empowerment and ownership in their learning journeys. The programming seeks to create a positive and transformative impact on both educators and students, fostering a culture of innovation, equity, and excellence in education.

Wawecus Road School

Building Capacity for High-Quality Instruction through EdTech

Expense	Amount
1. **Administrator Salaries**	
2. **Instructional/Professional Staff Salaries**	
3. **Support Staff Salaries**	
4. **Stipends**	
Stipends of $1500 each for 37 teachers/professional staff	$55,500.00
5. **Fringe Benefits**	
6. **Contractual Services**	
7. **Supplies and Materials**	
8. **Travel**	
9. **Other Costs**	
10. **Indirect Costs**	
11. **Equipment**	
Grand Total	$55,500.00

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
STATE HOUSE BOSTON, MA 02133
(617) 725-4000

MAURA T. HEALEY
GOVERNOR

KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

September 14, 2023

Dear Superintendent Monarrez,

Congratulations! We are pleased to notify you that Worcester Public Schools has been awarded a Building Capacity for High-Quality Instruction through EdTech grant of $55,500.

We want to thank you for your commitment to providing meaningful and equitable learning experiences to your students and developing your educators through professional learning. Through this funding and your continued support, we hope to expand access to great educational opportunities in the Commonwealth.

You will be receiving further instructions from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on next steps, and please feel free to contact AJ Coté at andrea.j.coté@mass.gov if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

GOVERNOR MAURA T. HEALEY

LT. GOVERNOR KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL

N. Approval of Grants and Other Finance Items
Administration MEETING: 10-5-23
(September 18, 2023)

ITEM:
To consider a prior year payment to Easter Seals of Massachusetts in the amount of $135.00 for Independent Evaluation services provided in May 2023.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:
Annex A (1 page) contains the reason for the prior year payment request.
Annex B (1 page) contains the Easter Seals Invoice.

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Approve.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:
Approve.

WORCESTER
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dr. John E.Durkin Administration Building
20 Irving Street
Worcester, MA 01609-2493

Mary Meade-Montaque, Ed.D
Educational Consultant
montaquem@worcesterschools.net

Department of Special Education
P 508-799-3093 F 508-799-3045

Date: **September 14, 2023**

Attention: **School Committee**
Re: **Request to Consider Approval for Prior Fiscal Year Payment**

Reason for Request:

Independent Evaluation Invoices received after fiscal year closed.

The invoice enclosed for payment was received during this fiscal year, and as a result, I am submitting this statement for prior year payment to:

Easter Seals of MA
Amount: $135.00
Invoice # 108357

Cathy Mason
Amount: $603.54
Invoice # 000002

I have enclosed the invoice for your approval to release payment to: **Easter Seals of MA and Cathy Mason.**

Thank you,

Annie Azarloza
Chief Academic Support Officer

easterseals
Massachusetts

Empowering People with Disabilities

Invoice for Services Provided

Worcester Public Schools
Attention: Kay Seale
20 Irving Street
Worcester, MA 01609

Account #: 20018
Invoice #: 108357
Invoice Date: 5/31/2023
Due Date: 6/30/2023

DATE OF SERVICE	LOCATION	STAFF	PROCEDURE	UNITS	CHARGE
5/30/2023	Worcester Public Schools - Dwayne Johnson	Voelkerding, Kristi	Access Agency Consult	1.00	$135.00
	Worcester Public Schools - Dwayne Johnson Total				**$135.00**
				Grand Total	**$135.00**

RECEIVED
SEP 12 2023
By_____

18 Chestnut Street, Suite 200, Worcester, MA 01608
508-751-6342, Fax: 508-831-9768

04-2103867
Federal I.D. No

N. Approval of Grants and Other Finance Items
Administration MEETING: 10-5-23
(September 18, 2023)

ITEM:
To consider a prior year payment to Cathy Mason in the amount of $603.54 for Independent Evaluation services provided in May 2023.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:
Annex A (1 page) contains the reason for the prior year payment request.
Annex B (1 page) contains the Cathy Mason Invoice.

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Approve.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:
Approve.

WORCESTER
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dr. John E.Durkin Administration Building
20 Irving Street
Worcester, MA 01609-2493

Mary Meade-Montaque, Ed.D
Educational Consultant
montaquem@worcesterschools.net

Department of Special Education
P 508-799-3093 F 508-799-3045

Date: **September 14, 2023**

Attention: **School Committee**
Re: **Request to Consider Approval for Prior Fiscal Year Payment**

Reason for Request:

Independent Evaluation Invoices received after fiscal year closed.

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Amount: $135.00
Invoice # 108357

Cathy Mason
Amount: $603.54
Invoice # 000002

I have enclosed the invoice for your approval to release payment to: **Easter Seals of MA and Cathy Mason.**

Thank you,

Annie Azarloza
Chief Academic Support Officer

Cathy Mason
462 Boston St
Topsfield, MA 01983 United States

Invoice #000002

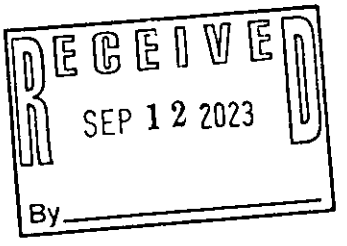
Issue date
Sep 8, 2023

Educational Evaluation - Mason Richards

Customer	Invoice Details	Payment
Worcester MA Public Schools berriosl@worcesterschools.net	PDF created September 14, 2023 $603.54 Service date May 23, 2023	Due September 15, 2023 $603.54

Items	Quantity	Price	Amount
1 hour parent interview	1	$86.22	$86.22
Evaluation	2	$86.22	$172.44
1 hour feedback	1	$86.22	$86.22
Report Writing	3	$86.22	$258.66
Subtotal			$603.54

Total Due $603.54



Pay online

To pay your invoice go to https://squareup.com/u/IpYReTQI
Or open the camera on your mobile device and place the QR code in the camera's view.

N. Approval of Grants and Other Finance Items
Administration MEETING: 10-5-23
(September 20, 2023)

ITEM:
To consider a prior year payment to Jennifer Coady in the amount of $222.00 for work completed in May 2023.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:
Annex A (1 page) contains a letter explaining the reason for needing a prior year payment.
Annex B (3 pages) contains Jennifer Coady's timesheets.

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Approve.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:
Approve.

September 18, 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

Jennifer Coady, TVI, submitted an overtime pay request to me as her Department Head, on May 23, 2023 in an email. I unfortunately missed this email, and neglected to pass the overtime request on to Lee Gibree for processing.

Please submit and process if you can, this was simple human error on my part.

Sincerely,

Nancy Sullivan

Nancy Sullivan, OT
Special Education Department Head for OT, PT, Vision Services and Lifeskills

WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
TIME SHEET
2022-2023

School: DAB

Grant/Program : **teacher salary line**

Time Sheet for the Period Ending: 5/26/23

FULL NAME		DATES/TIME	HOURS	RATE	TOTAL $
Coady, Jennifer vision Teacher		5/1/23 3:30-5:00	1.5 hour	$37.00	$ 55.50
		5/3/23 3:30-4:30	1 hours	$37.00	$37.00
		5/8/23 3:30-4:30	1 hours	$37.00	$37.00
		5/11/23 3:30-5:00	1.5 hour	$37.00	$55.50
		5/18/23 3:30-4:30	1 hour	$37.00	$37.00
			6 hours	$	total $222.00

I CERTIFY THAT THIS TIME SHEET IS CORRECT _____
Manager

Worcester Public Schools
Office of Governmental & Community Relations
Professional Development Workshop/Program
Please submit one form for each project.
This form must be attached to each time sheet

Workshop or Program Name: **DAB**
Person Coordinating Workshop/Program: **Jennifer Coady (Teacher)**
School: **DAB**
Grant Source:

Project	Time	Total
Please describe the professional development program/workshop.	***Please List Hours, Day and Time (e.g., Tues. Feb.25th 2-5pm)***	*Please list the total amount for the request. Please list the # of staff attending this session*
due to vision staff vacancies hours are needed to complete work and meet timelines This will continue through the end of the year		6 hrs x $37.00 hr =$222.00

I CERTIFY THAT THIS TIME SHEET IS CORRECT _____
Manager

Staff NAME: Jennifer Coady

Bill To:

Worcester Public Schools
Department of Special Ed
20 Irving St
Worcester MA, 01609

Date worked	hours Student or activity completed
5/1/23 1.5 hrs	330-5 consult with Donna before meeting about SC Report reading from outside district
5/3/23 1 hr	330-430 write arena report LS Parent phone call KM
5/8/23 1 hr	330-430 Write screening report LS
5/11/23 1.5	330-5 Braille quiz prep Zoe Hill Boomcards, CVI prep Nathaniel WU, spring CVI powerpoints prep
5/18/23 ~~1.5~~ **~~6.5~~ hours total**	330-430 AIM LIbrary consultation and paperwork for orders Zella Consult with MCB regarding summer school from Perkins, Zoe ,Kevin, Kaleb

N. Approval of Grants and Other Finance Items
Administration MEETING: 10-5-23
(September 21, 2023)

ITEM:
To consider a prior year payment to Atlas Travel Agency, Inc., in the amount of $299.79 to pay off the balance of an invoice from non-updated purchase order 10003970 for July travel.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:
Annex A (1 page) contains an inventory from the Atlas Travel Agency, Inc.

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Approve.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:
Approve.

Alpha Travel
AGENCY, INC.

490 Shrewsbury St, Suite #8
Worcester, MA 01604
Tel. (508) 753-2242
Fax (508) 757-8600

Sep 20,2023

To: Worcester Public Schools

Ref: San Diego Trip

CALSA Conference

Passenger; Anna Azarloza

INVOICE

Hotel Accommodation

The Westin San Diego Gaslam-

Jul 5th - $249.00 plus tax.....$299.79

TOTAL.....$299.79

This invoice represents an immediate tranter of funds for our agency to participating carriers upon issuance of tickets. Your prompt remittance will be appreciated.

O. General Business ITEM: gb 3-163.1
Clancey S.C. MEETING: 10-5-23
(June 6, 2023)

ITEM:
To work with Administration to organize a formal recognition for Seniors who graduated following summer school completion.

PRIOR ACTION:
6-15-23: To work with Administration to organize a formal recognition for Seniors who graduated following summer school completion. Mayor Petty made a motion to refer the item to the Administration. On a voice vote, the motion was approved.

BACKUP:
Annex A (1 page) contains the response from Administration.

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Refer to Administration

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:
Refer to Administration

WORCESTER
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Superintendent
Rachel H. Monárrez, PhD
Superintendent

P 508-799-3115
F 508-799-3119
E communications@worcesterschools.net

Dr. John E. Durkin
Administration Building
20 Irving Street
Worcester, MA 01609-2493

Date: September 29, 2023

Item: gb 3-163 Clancey
(June 6, 2023)
To work with Administration to organize a formal recognition for Seniors who graduated following summer school completion.

Attachment: n/a

Recommendation: Accept & File

Response:

The Administration reached out to all secondary schools that had Seniors in summer school to determine the number of students who may graduate at the completion of those courses. We maintained contact with each program lead as the students progressed through their courses. Students from Worcester Technical High School were the Seniors eligible for their diploma at the end of the summer session, so the location of the auditorium at WTHS was selected and programs/invitations were sent home to the students' families. Administration and the School Committee were invited to attend and celebrate these graduates with a celebration and reception that followed.

O. General Business — ITEM: gb 3-225
Mailman — S.C. MEETING: 10-5-23
(September 26, 2023)

ITEM:
To determine ways in which to publicly measure the health of our male students. Attendance and achievement, as an example, could impact accessibility to programs. Not a new phenomenon but one that deserves highlighting and tracking.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Refer to School and Student Performance

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

O. General Business
Kamara
(September 27, 2023)

ITEM: gb 3-226
S.C. MEETING: 10-5-23

ITEM:
To review necessary supports with regards to staffing of school nurses during the school hours to ensure all schools are staffed with nurses so that no school is left without a school nurse, as so to ensure safety for all students.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Refer to Administration

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

O. General Business — ITEM: gb 3-227
Johnson — S.C. MEETING: 10-5-23
(September 27, 2023)

ITEM:
To work with Claremont Academy School on a dedication, scholarship, or memorial in the name of Allen Jenkins.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Refer to Administration

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

O. General Business — ITEM: gb 3-228
Johnson — S.C. MEETING: 10-5-23
(September 27, 2023)

ITEM:
To select a delegate and alternate for delegate assembly at the MASC conference in November 2024.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Approve and file

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

O. General Business — ITEM: gb 3-229
Johnson — S.C. MEETING: 10-5-23
(September 27, 2023)

ITEM:
To look at and discuss the MASC resolutions and bylaws.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:
Annex A (4 pages) contains the MASC resolutions and bylaws.

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Approve and file

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

report of the resolutions committee

The members of the Resolutions Committee met on June 28, 2023 to consider resolutions proposed by member districts for consideration at the 2023 Annual Meeting of the Association. Members present were: Mildred Lefebvre (Chair), Holyoke; Beverly Hugo (Life Member); Barbara Davis (Life Member), Holbrook; Robin Zoll, Southeastern Reg. Voc. Tech.; Katherine Hubley, Quincy; Michael Boudreau and Maura Ryan, Hamden-Wilbraham, Stacey Rizzo (MASC President), Revere; Paul Schlichtman, Arlington; Humera Fasihuddin, Hadley; Robert Swartz, Gardner; Linda Woodland, Wachusett Regional; and Jessica Barnhill, Framingham. Beverley Griffin Dunne, Peabody/Essex Tech., participated remotely.

The following resolutions were moved forward by the Resolutions Committee and approved by the Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION 1: FULL, STABLE FUNDING FOR METCO

(Sponsored by the Arlington School Committee)

WHEREAS in 1966, the first 220 students rode buses from Boston neighborhoods to schools in seven suburbs; and

WHEREAS in 1968, the Massachusetts Legislature passed the Racial Imbalance Act, in which the Commonwealth accepted financial responsibility "for any town that wishes to enroll students from outside the district for the purpose of racial integration (subject to appropriation); and

WHEREAS in 1968, the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) assumed responsibility for implementing the provisions of the Racial Imbalance Act, providing support for students, families, and receiving districts; and

WHEREAS METCO's mission is to provide students with a strong academic foundation rich in cultural, educational, ethnic, socioeconomic, and racial diversity and foster the opportunity for children from Boston and from neighboring suburbs to develop a deeper understanding of each other in an integrated public school setting; and

WHEREAS Over the last half century, METCO has reached tens of thousands of students, supporting 3,100 families annually in 31 participating suburban school districts and 190 public schools, with graduation rates and college attainment far above state averages; and

WHEREAS METCO creates environments where students, parents and teachers of different backgrounds can appreciate diversity, find common ground through shared experiences, build lifelong inter-racial friendships, and strive toward the mutual goal of preparing young people to become global citizens; and

WHEREAS METCO districts have expressed an interest in welcoming more METCO students into their schools; and

WHEREAS METCO has been recognized as the nation's most successful school integration program in the United States; and

WHEREAS requiring METCO funding to be subject to appropriation results in METCO families and partner districts spending considerable time and energy to lobby for funding to maintain the current level of services;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls upon the Governor and the Legislature to create a stable funding structure to support METCO and its partner districts that fully funds the support provided by METCO, and the cost of providing services delivered by METCO's partner districts.

RESOLUTION 2: REGARDING INVESTIGATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION BIDDING PROCEDURES

(Sponsored by the Southeastern Vocational Technical School Committee)

WHEREAS school districts across the commonwealth are struggling with the problem of transportation services and the bidding and purchasing of these services; and

WHEREAS a stunning number of districts find that, after soliciting multiple bids, it is a frequent occurrence that only a single bidder submits a proposal; and

WHEREAS in light of the paucity of submissions, the single bidder is able to propose significant increases over previous years exacerbating not only financial matters, but also skepticism about the integrity of the bidding process.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the MA Association of School Committees prevail upon the Office of the State Auditor to investigate the bidding practices of school transportation providers, and to present such findings and recommendations as may be necessary to contain costs and make more efficient transportation services available for public schools.

RESOLUTION 3: REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION

(Sponsored by the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School Committee)

WHEREAS as outlined in M.G.L. Title XII c. 71, § 16C, the regional school district shall be subject to all laws pertaining to school transportation; and when the agreement provides for the furnishing of transportation by the regional school district, the regional school district shall be obliged to provide transportation for all school children in grades kindergarten through twelve and the commonwealth shall reimburse such district to the full extent of the amounts expended for such transportation, subject to appropriation; and

WHEREAS provided, however, that no reimbursement for transportation between school and home shall be made on account of any pupil who resides less than one and one-half miles from the school of attendance, measured by a commonly traveled route; and

WHEREAS the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has not consistently reimbursed regional transportation to the full extent of the amount expended for such transportation;

THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED that in such case where a pupil resides greater than one and one-half mile from the school of attendance, measured by a commonly traveled route, and the commonwealth reimbursement does not fully cover the amounts expended for such transportation, the regional school district may allow pupils to opt out of such transportation or may charge a fee that in aggregate may not exceed the differential between the amounts expended for furnishing transportation and the commonwealth reimbursement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the MASC encourage the Legislature to modify M.G.L. Title XII c. 71, § 16C, with the aforementioned proposed language (or alternative and remove the period) to provide regional districts the ability if so desired to charge a transportation fee that in aggregate cannot exceed the differential between the and that the Commonwealth reimbursement and the regional school district transportation expense for any pupil that resides greater than one and one-half mile from the school of attendance measured by a commonly traveled route. Pupils may opt out of transportation and not be subject to a transportation fee.

RESOLUTION 4: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

(Submitted by Division X; amended by the Resolutions Committee)

WHEREAS we are responsible for fostering equitable learning environments wherein all students, staff members, and families are treated with respect and their voice and presence valued regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, expression, religion, natural origin, culture, physical ability, or other status; and

WHEREAS we should always stand, speak out, and help educate against violence and injustice on the basis of prejudice or discrimination; and

WHEREAS we should provide inside and outside of the classroom support to continue efforts centered on equity, diversity, and inclusion, with a heightened awareness and focus on racial equity and to adopt proper speech and text to the furtherance of these objectives;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: that MASC recommends that all districts adopt the position of DEI coordinator to work towards an anti-racist school system.

RESOLUTION 5: MA SCHOOL BUILDING AUTHORITY

(Submitted by the Wachusett Regional School Committee)

WHEREAS the School Building assistance program is the oldest capital grant program operated by the Commonwealth, as established in MGL Chapter 70B section 1; and

WHEREAS the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) is charged to promote the thoughtful planning and construction of school facility space in order to ensure safe and adequate facilities for public schools, and to assist municipalities in meeting the cost thereof; and

WHEREAS the MSBA has improved the learning facilities of over 600,000 students across the Commonwealth by working with local communities to create affordable, sustainable, and energy efficient schools; and

WHEREAS the MSBA is limited in funding as stated in MGL 70B section 7, to $800,000,000 plus either the rate of growth in the dedicated sales tax revenue amount as defined in subsection a of section 35BB of chapter 10, or 4.5%; and

WHEREAS the MSBA has declared a pause on their Accelerated Repair Program and limits on their Core Projects due to rising costs and inflation, and the need to stay within the Annual Cap as referenced in the Memorandum of October 19, 2022 from the MSBA Deputy Treasurer and Executive Director; and

WHEREAS each year the Accelerated Repair Program is delayed results in an increase in application backlog among the Commonwealth's existing backlog of school building needs;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls upon the Massachusetts Legislature to amend MGL ch.70B, section 7 by removing the $800,000,000 cap; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls upon the Massachusetts School Building Authority to reinstate the Accelerated Repair program for 2024 applications; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls upon the Massachusetts Legislature to allow public preschools to be included in the Accelerated Repair Program and Core Program.

RESOLUTION 6: SCHOOL BUS STOP ARM SURVEILLANCE ACT AND ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES

(Submitted by the Peabody and Marlboro School Committees)

WHEREAS it is against the law in Massachusetts to pass a stopped school bus with the stop arm extended and flashing lights while student passengers embark and disembark the bus. Unless witnessed by a police officer, the penalties for passing a stopped school bus are minimal. The danger to the passengers is extraordinary, and can prove fatal; and

WHEREAS: a survey conducted in 2022 by the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) found that motorists illegally pass stopped school buses: "Throughout a 180-day school year, ... sample results point to more than 41.8 million violations per year among America's motoring public."; and

WHEREAS technological advances have now made possible digital video violation detection monitoring systems to detect drivers failing to stop for school buses; and

WHEREAS: penalties for passing a stopped school bus utilizing a digital video violation detection monitoring system

need to be commensurate with the same penalties imposed for said action if witnessed by a police officer;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls on the Massachusetts Legislature to enact legislation to pass into law the ability for cities and towns to install on all school buses live digital video detection monitoring systems for the purpose of enforcing violations against the owner of a motor vehicle whose vehicle failed to stop for a school bus when required to do so by law.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls on the Massachusetts Legislature to enact legislation raising the fine for passing a stopped school bus to a significant schedule of fines as penalty whether witnessed by a police officer or recorded by a digital video detection monitoring system.

RATIONALE: The significant safety concerns present when a vehicle passes a stopped school bus embarking or disembarking passengers are endangering our students in Massachusetts. Presently, unless witnessed by a police officer, the penalties for passing a school bus are minimal. If the registration plate of the offending vehicle is reported by the bus driver, there is a minimal fine.

Requiring a police officer to witness the violation prevents appropriate law enforcement action from taking place, especially for repeat offenders. Allowing the installation and utilization of digital video detection monitoring systems on school buses will allow for appropriate law enforcement action, provide for monitoring and data pertinent to this safety concern, and serve as a deterrent to drivers who are contributing to this safety issue. Protecting the safety of our students is a paramount concern.

RESOLUTION 7: RELATED TO MCAS

(Submitted by the Framingham School Committee)

WHEREAS access to a high-quality, publicly funded education is a guaranteed right written into the Massachusetts Constitution; and

WHEREAS an effective public education program meets the needs of students who present a variety of abilities and learning styles; and

WHEREAS a successful system of public education nurtures and supports students and offers opportunities for growth along a continuum that begins in preschool and extends through higher education; and

WHEREAS the goal of public education is to teach students how to be critical thinkers, engaged citizens and lifelong learners; and

WHEREAS the use of MCAS has restricted curriculum and narrowed the focus of education in our public schools; and

WHEREAS the use of MCAS has impacted student emotional wellbeing; and

WHEREAS MCAS testing has unjustly targeted communities with underfunded public schools for state takeovers that have failed to improve student performance by any measure; and

WHEREAS using MCAS testing as a high-school graduation requirement has prevented or delayed countless students from earning a diploma, either interrupting or derailing education or career plans;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

• that MASC urges Massachusetts to develop a wider, more consensus-built strategy for an evaluation system with meaningful input from legitimate stakeholders.

• that MASC urges the state Legislature to launch a comprehensive evaluation to investigate the extent of biases pertaining to MCAS testing and make these results public.

• that MASC urges Massachusetts to enact a moratorium on MCAS testing effective immediately.

• that MASC urges Massachusetts to develop an alternative to the high-stakes MCAS tests.

RESOLUTION 8: SAFE STORAGE OF FIREARMS

(Submitted by the Framingham School Committee)

WHEREAS the safety and well-being of our students, teachers, and staff is a top priority in schools and keeping them safe from the threat of gun violence should be the responsibility of all adult stakeholders at each of our school sites; and

WHEREAS in the United States, gun violence is the leading cause of death in children and teens; and

WHEREAS approximately 1200 children and teens die by gun suicide each year," and over 80 percent of children under age 18 who died by firearm suicide used a gun belonging to a family member; and

WHEREAS in incidents of gun violence on school grounds, up to 80 percent of shooters under the age of 18 obtained their guns from their own home or that of relatives or friends; and

WHEREAS an estimated 4.6 million American children live in households with at least one loaded, unlocked firearm and every year

WHEREAS research shows that secure firearm storage practices are associated with up to a 78 percent reduction in the risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries and up to an 85 percent reduction in the risk of unintentional firearm injuries among children and teens; and

WHEREAS evidence strongly suggests that secure firearm storage is an essential component to any effective strategy to keep schools and students safe; and

continued on page 28

Proposal to Amend the MASC By-laws

Resolutions will expire at the conclusion of the Delegate Assembly three years after their adoption. The MASC Legislative Committee shall provide a list of expiring resolutions to the membership no later than March 1st of the year in which they expire. Readoption of an expiring resolution can be accomplished under the method proscribed in ARTICLE IX, section 1. *(This proposal was submitted by the MASC Legislative Committee)*

RATIONALE:

- Permits three years of focus on resolutions which overlaps two legislative cycles.
- Provides an additional opportunity for school committees to become involved in the resolution process by championing resolutions which are set to expire.
- Allows the Association to affirm what's important to current membership by re-adoption.
- Clears expired, less relevant and no longer supported resolutions for new priorities.

Report of the Resolutions Committee continued from page 27

WHEREAS the US Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center recommends the importance of appropriate storage of weapons because many school attackers used firearms acquired from their homes; and

WHEREAS across the country, lawmakers, community members and local leaders are working together to implement public awareness campaigns, such as the Be SMART Program, which is endorsed by the National PTA and encourages secure gun storage practices and highlights the public safety risks of unsecured guns; and

WHEREAS secure storage of firearms is a legal requirement in Massachusetts pursuant to G.L. Chapter 140, sections 131L and 131C, and failure to comply with secure storage laws can lead to criminal prosecution, jail time, fines, and/or revocation of FID card or license, depending on the offense; and

WHEREAS the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends storing firearms unloaded and locked, with ammunition locked separately to reduce risks of injury to children; and

WHEREAS in order to continue with preventive measures to increase student and school safety we must act now;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that MASC recommends all districts to urge their Superintendent and staff to create an appropriate communication to parents and guardians that explains the importance of secure firearm storage to protect children and teens from unauthorized access to unsecured firearms, and their legal obligations consistent with Massachusetts safe storage law.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that MASC urges other communities to work with their local law enforcement agencies, health agencies and non-profit organizations to collaborate and increase efforts to inform District parents and guardians of their obligations regarding secure storage of firearms in their homes and vehicles.

O. General Business — ITEM: gb 3-230
Kamara — S.C. MEETING: 10-5-23
(September 27, 2023)

ITEM:
To consider the City's "Complete Streets Traffic" work done to guide the installation of speed bumps to consider roads near WPS school grounds for safety and security.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Refer to Finance and Operations

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

O. General Business ITEM: gb 3-217
Kamara S.C. MEETING: 10-5-23
(September 28, 2023)

ITEM:
To adopt a protocol if not already in place & to consider best practices in crafting a policy to ban the sharing of food among pupils in WPS.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Refer to Governance and Employee Issues

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

O. General Business
Administration
(September 27, 2023)

ITEM: gb 3-231
S.C. MEETING: 10-5-23

ITEM:
To consider approval of a three year lease agreement with Webster Square Shopping Center for additional parking spaces to serve staff at the Gates Lane School.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:
Annex A (1 page) contains the lease agreement terms and conditions.

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Approve

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:
Approve

Office of the Deputy Superintendent
Brian E. Allen.
Deputy Superintendent
Chief Operating Officer &
Chief Financial Officer

P 508-799-3401
E allenb@worcesterschools.net

Dr. John E. Durkin
Administration Building
20 Irving Street
Worcester, MA 01609-2493

Item: To approve a three year lease agreement with Webster Square Shopping Center to serve employees of Gates Lane School.

Agreement Terms:

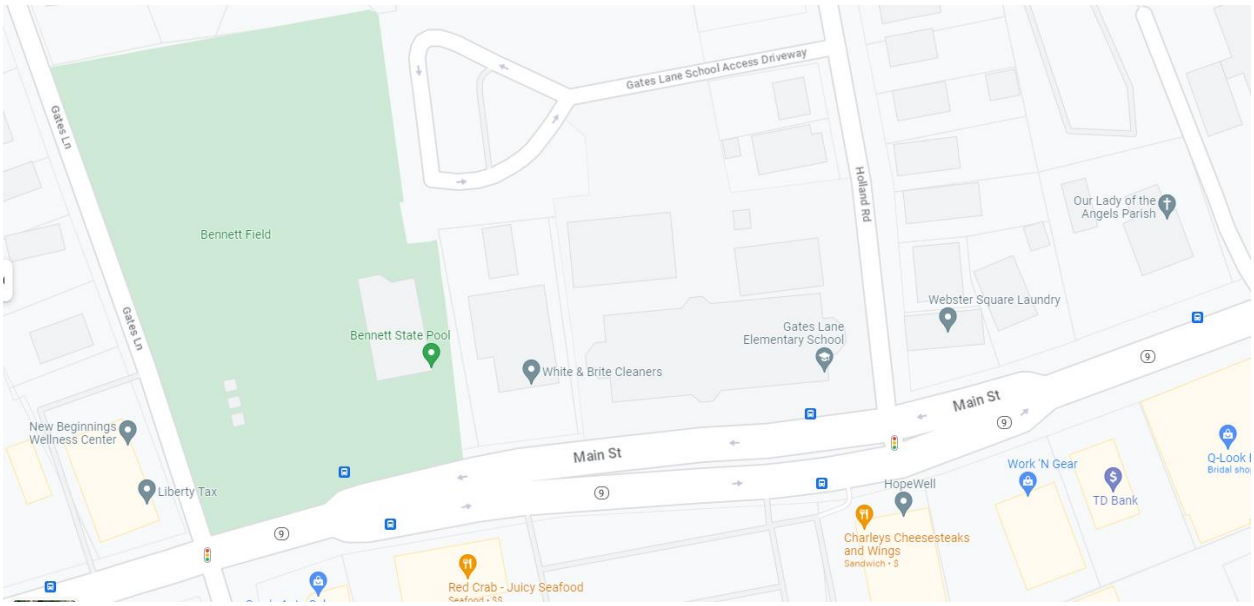
Licensee: Gates Lane School, 1238 Main St, Worcester, MA 01603

Licensor: Webster Square Shopping Center LLC, located at 68 Stafford Street, Worcester, MA, 01603.

Premise: Fourteen (14) parking spots within the parking lot.

Term: Three (3) consecutive years from September 1 through June 30, starting September 1, 2023.

Payment: for ten (10) months each year shall be $10,500.00. Licensee shall pay $75.00 per parking spot, a total of $1,050.00 per month, due on the first business day of each month.



O. General Business — ITEM: gb 3-232
McCullough — S.C. MEETING: 10-5-23
(October 3, 2023)

ITEM:
To request the Administration review and report back at the next committee meeting on the policy regarding alcohol usage in WPS buildings for special events with appropriate City licensure approval.

PRIOR ACTION:

BACKUP:

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:
Refer to Administration and report back at the next committee meeting.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION: