



# EDUCATIONAL RECOVERY NOW

LA's Children and Schools Need a  
Comprehensive Plan





The most consistent finding throughout the country is that household income combined with parent education are the strongest predictors of how well our children will do in school. This means that, in many cases, our schools are reproducing patterns of inequity. The question today is how do we change that? How do we approach the pandemic and recovery as an opportunity to rethink how we are serving students and meeting the goal of equity? We cannot undo the past, but we can recover in a way that is truly different than the inequitable system we should leave behind.”

Pedro A. Noguera, Ph.D.

Emery Stoops and Joyce King Dean of the  
USC Rossier School of Education

Dear reader,

The refrain that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated stark conditions of inequity in our schools cannot be repeated enough. Early information about the impact on students in Los Angeles and across the country is making clear that we have a big task ahead to address the loss, trauma, and pain that has occurred over the last year. As a mother of an LAUSD third grader, I am hopeful about the reopening of Los Angeles schools, but we cannot simply pick up where we left off. Reopening alone does not address the recovery needed. It isn't about making up but making whole, because that is what our children deserve most.

If we want to ensure our most vulnerable children and future generations recover and never experience a pandemic in the same way again, we must ensure our system provides them with a quality education and skills to truly lead opportunity-filled lives. I know first-hand the transformative power of education and its ability to break cycles of poverty. My family came to Los Angeles undocumented from Mexico when I was 4-years-old, and I was the first in my family to attend high school and the first to graduate college. I also know the odds I overcame and I don't know if I could have made it while simultaneously trying to survive a pandemic that hit families like mine the hardest.

We hope this is the beginning of an on-going public conversation on how we address the unprecedented educational impacts of the pandemic. It is also a call to action for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and all education systems to develop a comprehensive educational recovery plan now. We must first acknowledge the learning loss and trauma students have experienced and do more to assess where our children are to best address their social, emotional, mental and academic needs. We believe that an honest and transparent assessment of our children can yield informed, effective and comprehensive strategies.

This report solely focuses on LAUSD, but we would be remiss not to acknowledge the need for charter schools to conduct their own assessments and implement bold plans for the educational recovery of their students. The pandemic does not discriminate on school type. Every school system must do the work to ensure their students are supported and fully equipped to recover and lead opportunity-filled lives.

Recovery cannot happen *to* the students, families and staff of Los Angeles; but must be done *with* them. We hope this report uplifts their experiences from the last year and inspires urgent action that is inclusive of the necessary components we outline. We believe in the opportunity to recover better together and look forward to supporting a collective effort for educational recovery now.

In partnership,



Dr. Ana Ponce  
*Executive Director*  
*Great Public Schools Now*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Equity cannot become the new education ‘buzzword’ and our communities need leaders who can act quickly to address the inequities further exacerbated by COVID. In order to enact equity, we must, individually and collectively act to counter injustice and inequity- this means differentiation and the distribution of resources based on the needs of our most vulnerable students who have been historically marginalized and oppressed, especially English learners.”

Magaly Lavadenz, Ph.D.  
Distinguished Professor,  
Loyola Marymount University  
and Executive Director, Center  
for Equity for English Learners

## **Los Angeles is in an unprecedented educational crisis.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted the livelihoods, health, education, childcare, and financial stability of millions. Students in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) are experiencing the painful loss of connection with their peers, teachers and school staff, and serious loss of learning that will have life-long consequences if not addressed.

The purpose of this report is twofold: to start a public conversation on the impacts of a year without in-person instruction on our students, particularly those with the highest needs; and to call on LAUSD to develop a comprehensive educational recovery plan with measurable action steps to avoid irreparable long-term harm to a generation of children.

We detail the impact of the pandemic on students to date, based on publicly available data, so that we can appropriately assess this crisis, understand the stakes and surface suggestions for necessary components in the district’s recovery plan.

# A YEAR OF SCHOOL CLOSURES CREATED A CRISIS

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a disruption to our school system on a level never seen. On March 13, 2020, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) closed schools. Since then, LAUSD leaders, teachers, and school staff have undertaken the Herculean task of moving education online for almost half a million students - the second largest school district in the country. They have fed our community, distributed devices for a strong majority of students, and many have figured out some strategies to engage students in the virtual classroom. This report seeks to recognize that important progress that our school staff have undertaken, many at great personal toll, as they personally weather the challenges of the pandemic.

Despite such tremendous efforts by educators and parents, our students need more.

It may be a long time before we know the full extent of the pandemic's impact, but even the limited data available makes clear that huge numbers of students will need expanded academic and social-emotional support.

## Important progress was made in responding to the crisis from spring through fall...

- When the pandemic hit in March 2020, LAUSD moved instruction online for almost half a million students, while building out infrastructure and tools to support over

30,000 educators and thousands of school staff to transition to distance learning.

- LAUSD has fed families millions of meals, set up COVID-19 testing at scale for staff and students, and is moving to vaccinate 25,000 elementary teachers and school staff by the end of March 2021.

## ...but the impact of the pandemic and school closures have already had a devastating impact on children in Los Angeles.

- **Huge numbers of students missed out on three months of learning in the spring.** About 40% of LAUSD middle and high schoolers were disengaged or absent from classes in spring 2020.<sup>1</sup> These numbers are likely even higher for elementary students who had even higher rates of absence, but whose engagement is not adequately captured in the system.
- **Many continued to be disengaged through the fall.** Over 13,000 middle and high school students were consistently disengaged in fall 2020. An additional 56,000 did not actively participate on a daily basis.<sup>2</sup>
- **Two out of every three students are falling behind in literacy and math.** Fewer young students of color are on target to learn how

<sup>1</sup>Megan Besecker and Andrew Thomas, "Fall 2020 Schoology Usage Update: Student engagement online between August 18 and October 31", Los Angeles Unified Independent Analysis Unit, January 2021.

<sup>2</sup>Megan Besecker and Andrew Thomas, "Fall 2020 Schoology Usage Update: Student engagement online between August 18 and October 31", Los Angeles Unified Independent Analysis Unit, January 2021.

<sup>3</sup>Los Angeles Unified, "Board of vEducation Meeting December 15, 2020, Superintendent's Report, Distance Learning Update." Los Angeles Unified Board of Education, Chief Academic Officer, December 15, 2020.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

to read compared to this same time last year (2019-20 school year).<sup>3</sup>

- ***The closures have deepened and accelerated existing inequities.*** Across all academic progress indicators above, students of color, low-income students, English learners, foster youth, students with disabilities and homeless students have been set back further than their more advantaged peers.
- ***Huge numbers of high school students are at risk of not graduating.*** If high school students are not supported to catch up quickly, as of March 2021,<sup>4</sup> 20% of the class of 2021, 43% of the class of 2022, 37% of the class of 2023, and 30% of the class of 2024 will not

graduate. That is to say that within the next four years alone, 40,000 current LAUSD high school students or more are at-risk and could potentially not earn their high school diploma.

Children are resilient, but the long-term impacts could be devastating unless LAUSD takes fast and effective action right now.

<sup>3</sup>Los Angeles Unified, "Board of Education Meeting March 9, 2021, Superintendent's Report, Distance Learning Update." Los Angeles Unified Board of Education, Chief Academic Officer, March 9, 2021.



# THE LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THIS PANDEMIC ON OUR STUDENTS ARE TOO STARK TO IGNORE

The levels of learning loss students have experienced will have long-term consequences if not addressed as a true educational emergency. Researchers estimate that students on average can lose five to nine months of learning by the end of the school year, with students of color losing more, likely six to 12 months.<sup>5</sup> Recovery of 2019-20 losses could take years. Researchers also estimate that the average K-12 student could lose up to \$82,000 in lifetime earnings because of learning loss from this last year. We know from studies of natural disasters, such as the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan and Hurricane Katrina, that learning losses are likely to compound over time. Withdrawing or disengaging from the school system in K-12 will lead to the greatest long-term impacts on students.

Learning loss is only one part of the equation. Mental health experts are extremely concerned about the impact of school closures and limited face-to-face interaction on children's mental health.<sup>6</sup> Children are suffering from loneliness and isolation and are likely to experience high rates of depression and anxiety during and after social isolation ends. Children are resilient; but we cannot rely on their resilience for full educational recovery. The challenges created by a year of social distancing, learning online disconnected from peers and a school community, and learning loss are too great for any child — even with the most profound support of their family — to heal and make-up on their own.



Educational recovery involves a complex set of coordinated educational, operational and public health strategies. No school system can do it alone nor should they be expected to. The full educational recovery of Los Angeles students must be a collective effort. To launch and lead this effort, LAUSD must develop a comprehensive educational recovery plan. This plan must not only ensure the needs of students are assessed and addressed but should also facilitate an opportunity for others to engage. Through its plan, others in the Los Angeles community can rally in support to fill gaps the LAUSD can't meet on its own.

<sup>5</sup>Emma Dorn, Bryan Hancock, Jimmy Sarakatsannis, and Ellen Viruleg, "COVID-19 and learning loss-- disparities grow and students need help", McKinsey & Company, December 8, 2020. Note: Researchers estimated the economic impact of learning disruption caused by school closures by projecting learning loss onto the National Assessment of Education Progress and its relationship with the U.S. GDP and earnings. Researchers accounted for the effects of an economic recession on academic outcomes. The calculation of average lifetime earnings lost assumes a 40-year work life with an average salary in 2020 dollars, 2% inflation, and 4.4% wage growth.

<sup>6</sup>Sammy Weale, "Prioritize play when schools reopen, say mental health experts", The Guardian, May 7, 2020.

# NECESSARY COMPONENTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL RECOVERY PLAN

As LAUSD develops its plan, we suggest the following:

1

## **LEARN FROM OTHER DISTRICTS' BEST PRACTICES.**

There is a lot to learn from school districts across the country that have already reopened and launched recovery efforts. One resource for LAUSD to use is the framework for recovery and reopening developed by the researchers and expert panelists at University of Washington's Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE). This **framework** covers a broad set of promising practices from districts across the country, from clear and inclusive communications to tailoring educational services for high-need students.

2

## **PRIORITIZE HEALING, MENTAL HEALTH, AND CONNECTEDNESS.**

Our students have been through a lot over the last year and it is critical that the district prioritizes their emotional well-being when developing its recovery plan. LAUSD should consider a universal screening system for students upon their return to school so the district can understand the social, emotional and mental health needs of its students. This understanding is necessary to provide students with the appropriate support.

3

## **IMPLEMENT A BOLD LEARNING PLAN THAT DIFFERENTIATES FOR STUDENTS' NEEDS.**

LAUSD has already indicated that it is exploring extending the 2021-22 school year and investing heavily to provide additional support to students, particularly at the elementary school level through its Primary Promise program. In addition to these important interventions, we hope the district will also consider a variety of important strategies detailed later in the report, including identifying where students are academically by the beginning of the 2021-22 school year through assessments, grades and engagement data; establishing key academic and social-emotional learning goals for all; and sharing those data and plans with the public.

4

## **FOCUS ON LEARNING ACCELERATION RATHER THAN TRADITIONAL REMEDIATION.**

Building up foundational skills and helping students master past concepts is important and typical in remediation, which focuses on filling learning gaps. But researchers and practitioners are finding that a more effective approach is focusing on ways to prepare students for success at their grade-level.

5

**PRIORITIZE LIVE TIME WITH TEACHERS.**

Research shows that synchronous learning time with teachers is what students need most to build their academic and social-emotional skills. The answer is more time with teachers and that time needs to be structured appropriately, especially for early learners, so any time spent on synchronous platforms like Zoom is productive and interactive for both teachers and students.

6

**INCORPORATE EXPANDED LEARNING TIME OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM.**

Beyond time with teachers, students need one-on-one support to catch up or sustain academic progress especially when schools are seeking to close learning gaps for large numbers of students. Access to additional academic opportunities that extend the amount of time students have with trained adults can be very effective in closing learning gaps, especially when those strategies are grounded in evidence-based approaches.

7

**FORGE A NEW AND DEEPER PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES.**

The transition to online learning in the home evolved an already essential partnership between parents and schools. During distance learning, parents and caregivers have become co-educators with teachers as they often guide their children through Zoom lessons and support them during asynchronous learning time. As LAUSD develops its comprehensive recovery plan, it should build off the foundation of deeper collaboration with parents that was facilitated over the last year to further strengthen and formalize its partnership with families.

8

**LEVERAGE EXTERNAL PARTNERS TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SERVICES TO OUR HIGHEST NEED STUDENTS.**

Nonprofit organizations throughout Los Angeles provide a wide array of services to students including after-school and summer programs, tutoring, college and career access guidance, mental health and social emotional support, opportunities to engage in the arts, STEM, advocacy and other areas, in addition to training and advocacy for families. We believe a coordinated effort between LAUSD, nonprofits, philanthropy, the City of LA and other cities within LAUSD will lead to the strongest possible education recovery outcome for our children.

9

**MAKE SURE ALL STUDENTS ARE CONNECTED.**

Low-income families in cyber-redlined communities are burdened with internet dropping, bandwidth for multi-student homes is insufficient, and the expense of the internet is an insuperable barrier for many. Broadband internet for low-income families who are without reliable and quality internet access is essential. Consider how LAUSD can replicate Chicago Connected. LAUSD can partner with philanthropy and nonprofits today to provide broadband internet to those who need it most.

## SUMMARY CONCLUSION

An unprecedented crisis requires an unprecedented response. We must respond to this educational emergency with urgency. We must face the reality of the pandemic's impact on children to date, immediately take all steps we can to reduce any more harm and invest to build out the system of integrated academic and socioemotional supports that our students need to recover.

The good news is that we largely know what is necessary and effective. We are fortunate to draw upon a tremendous body of research that points clearly at proven approaches, as well as promising

practices from other districts navigating identical challenges. As LAUSD enters a new stage of its response to the pandemic in reopening in spring 2021 and planning toward the school year of 2021-22, it is a particularly important time to work side-by-side with the community on the road to a better academic year ahead. Recovery cannot happen *to* the students, families and staff of Los Angeles; but must be done *with* them.

Our students need educational recovery now. LAUSD, it's time for a comprehensive plan.





# THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON LOS ANGELES STUDENTS

When schools shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, LAUSD was tasked with moving instruction online for almost half a million students. About one in three LAUSD families did not have broadband internet or a computer at home when schools closed.<sup>7</sup> The district did its best to purchase computers and hotspots, but many students still had to wait weeks just to access their online learning; some waited months.

We may not know the full impact of this last year on our students for another year or more, but the preliminary data we have paints an alarming picture. This section summarizes available student data from public LAUSD reports through March 16, 2021. In order to effectively plan for full recovery for our students, understanding the scope and depth of the impact is imperative.

While attendance and engagement has improved since spring 2020, many students are still not actively engaging and large gaps across race, income, and student need persist. Though limited, the assessment data published so far shows that most students in the district have experienced learning loss, and school closures have deepened and accelerated existing inequities. Students in

## HOW LAUSD DEFINES ENGAGEMENT

**Active engagement** - Students who participated asynchronously that day by submitting an assignment, assessment, or posted to a discussion board.

**Passive engagement** - Student logged in or viewed content but did not complete assignments or post.

**No activity** - Student did not complete any action in the district's learning system.

*This report defines low engagement as students who are passive or not active at all.*

the younger grades and those with the highest needs are experiencing the greatest learning losses.

As set forth in Board President Kelly Gonez's resolution passed on August 25, 2020, "**Providing a High-Quality Distance Learning Program for Every Student,**" LAUSD leadership is required to provide in-depth report measures to monitor the quality of education students are receiving in the district's distance learning program.<sup>8</sup> The following section analyzes and cites data from these monthly LAUSD staff reports to the Board of Education. These reports regularly include attendance and engagement, academic progress, and distance learning program updates. They are publicly available on the Board of Education website.

<sup>7</sup>Hernan Galperin, "COVID-19 and the distance learning gap", USC Annenberg Research Network on International Communication, Connected Cities and Inclusive Growth (CCIG) Policy Brief #5, April 2020.

<sup>8</sup>Los Angeles Unified, "Board of Education Meeting August 25, 2020, Regular Meeting Minutes." Los Angeles Unified Board of Education, August 25, 2020.

# ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT WAS SEVERELY LOW AFTER SCHOOLS CLOSED IN THE SPRING, IMPROVED IN THE FALL, BUT CHALLENGES REMAIN

## Huge numbers of students missed out on learning in the spring.

Given the myriad of challenges and barriers to accessing their education, many students were absent from online learning in the spring. The LAUSD Independent Analysis Unit reports that in any given week between March and May 2020, two out of five middle and high school students were absent every day from the district's online learning program, Schoology. In that same report,

## 64% of middle and high schoolers — were not actively engaging online on a daily basis.

of the students that did log on, only 36% actively engaged in online learning daily.<sup>9</sup> This means that a large percentage of the district — 64% of middle and high schoolers — were not actively engaging online on a daily basis.<sup>10</sup> Very few elementary students logged on to the District's platform in the spring with some being entirely absent for the last several months of school.

Students who have been historically underserved by our schools—Black and Latino students, English learners, and students with disabilities—were the most disengaged. Weekly participation by Black and Latino students was 10-20 percentage points lower than their White and Asian peers. Less than

half of all English learners and half of students with disabilities participated online each week.

Unfortunately, these trends only continue and exacerbate historic rates of chronic absenteeism among students of color. In 2019-20, Black, Latino, Native American, and Pacific Islander students had the highest chronic absenteeism rates in LAUSD and in Los Angeles County.<sup>11,12</sup> One in four Black students were chronically absent, which means they missed 15 days or more of school. Foster youth, students experiencing homelessness, and students with disabilities also have higher absentee rates. As we detail later in the report, there is a strong body of research showing that chronic absenteeism and other risk factors strongly predict whether students will ultimately drop out of school.

Although LAUSD improved access and connectivity in the fall semester by providing computers and hotspots, they never publicly shared any effort to assess the impact of the spring 2020 semester on students. **The consequence of moving into the fall semester without an understanding of students' academic and social-emotional standing after several months of missed learning time in the spring is that the district missed a major opportunity to establish a concrete plan to address engagement problems and the learning losses accumulated from the spring.**

<sup>9</sup>Megan Besecker and Andrew Thomas, "Student Engagement Online During School Closures: An analysis of LAUSD secondary students' Schoology activity from March 16 to May 22, 2020", Los Angeles Unified Independent Analysis Unit, July 2020.

<sup>10</sup>Besecker and Thomas, "Student Engagement Online During School Closures: March 16 to May 22, 2020", Los Angeles Unified, Independent Analysis Unit.

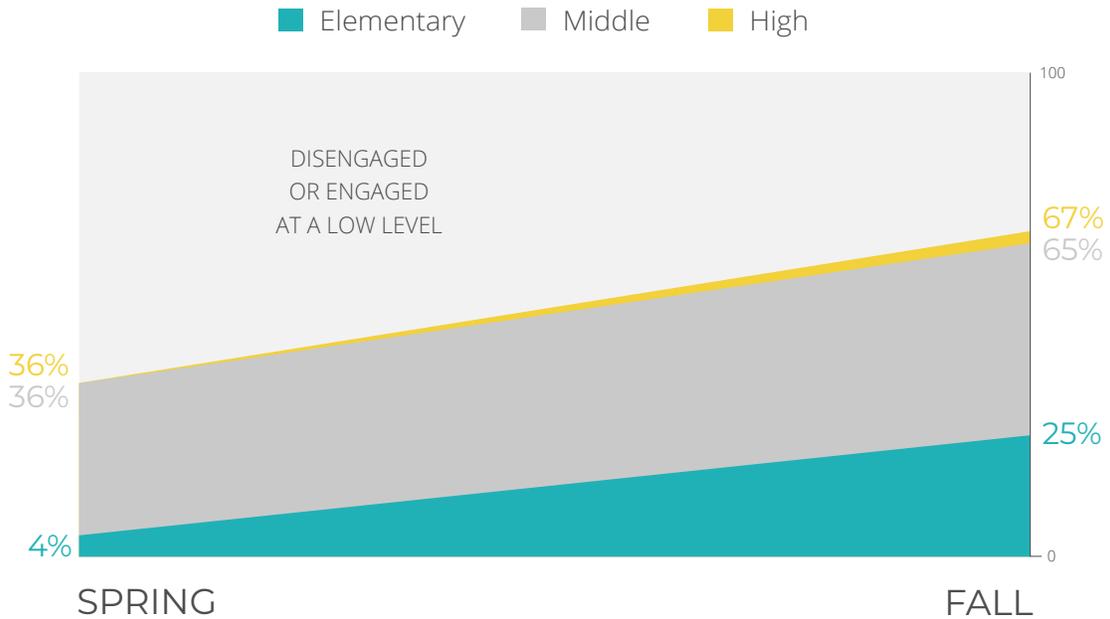
<sup>11</sup>California Department of Education, "Dashboard Chronic Absenteeism Indicator," CDE, retrieved March 2021.

<sup>12</sup>Manuel Pastor and Gary Segura, "No Going Back: Policies for an equitable and inclusive Los Angeles", USC Dornsife Equity Research Institute, UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, Committee for Greater LA, September 2020.

Figure 1

## DAILY ENGAGEMENT INCREASED BETWEEN THE SPRING AND FALL, BUT MORE THAN A THIRD OF STUDENTS WERE STILL NOT ACTIVELY ENGAGED

Average daily engagement on Schoology in spring and fall 2020, LAUSD



Source: LAUSD Independent Analysis Unit, *Fall 2020 Schoology usage update: Student engagement online between August 18 and October 31*, January 2021 and *Student engagement online during school facilities closures: An analysis of L.A. Unified secondary students' Schoology activity* from March 16 to May 22, 2020, July 2020.

### Engagement problems persisted in the fall.

In the fall, attendance and daily online activity increased, but more than one-third of students were still not actively engaged. About 90% of middle and 86% of high school students were attending school everyday<sup>13</sup> and between 93-94% were logging onto Schoology on a daily basis in the fall.<sup>14</sup> Attendance and daily online activity rates for elementary students were lower with about 87% attending school everyday and 81% logging onto Schoology on a daily basis.

Daily active engagement increased from 36% in the spring to between 65-67% for middle and high school students in the fall (see Figure 1).<sup>15</sup> However, this still indicates that more than one-third of students were not actively engaging on a daily basis as of October. In a district the size of Los Angeles Unified, that means several thousand students did not engage in any online coursework. There were stark gaps in engagement in the fall along lines of income, race/ethnicity, and student need. Only six in 10 middle school students from low-income households were actively engaged online daily by October, compared to eight in 10

<sup>13</sup>Los Angeles Unified, "Board of Education Committee of the Whole Meeting, November 17, 2020, Distance Learning Update", Los Angeles Unified Board of Education Meeting, November 17, 2020.

<sup>14</sup>Megan Besecker and Andrew Thomas, "Student Engagement Online During School Closures: An analysis of LAUSD secondary students' Schoology activity from March 16 to May 22, 2020", Los Angeles Unified Independent Analysis Unit, July 2020.

<sup>15</sup>Megan Besecker and Andrew Thomas, "Fall 2020 Schoology Usage Update: Student engagement online between August 18 and October 31", Los Angeles Unified, Independent Analysis Unit, January 2021.

middle school students from non-low-income households (see Figure 2). There were similar but smaller gaps for high school students with 65% of low-income high schoolers and 74% of non-low-income high schoolers actively engaged.<sup>16</sup>

Black and Latino students were significantly less likely to engage at all online compared to their non-Black and Latino peers. Forty-two percent of Black middle school students and 38% of Latino middle school students had low engagement or did not engage at all on a daily basis. This is compared to only 17% of Asian middle school students and 21% of White middle school students that had low or no engagement (see Figure 3).<sup>17</sup> There were similar gaps by race/ethnicity for high school students. This means approximately

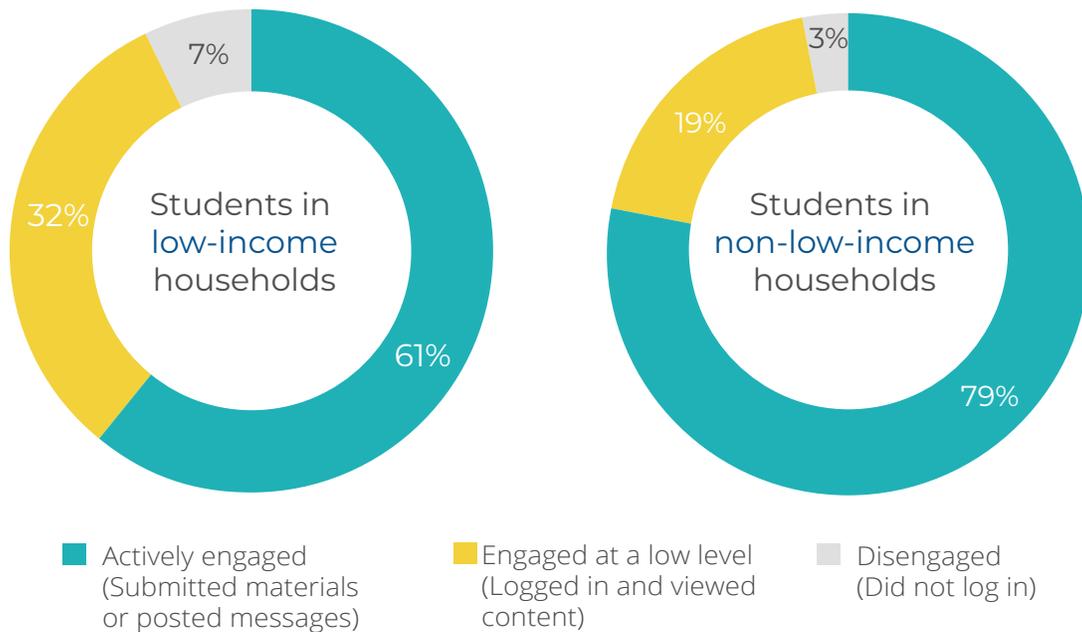
192,555 Latino students and 20,872 Black students were not actively engaging online in the fall; and 43,917 Latino students and 7,099 Black students were completely disengaged on a daily basis by October.

There were also low rates of active engagement among students with disabilities, English learners, students experiencing homelessness, and foster youth in the fall. Only about half of students with disabilities and English learners in middle and high school were actively engaging online daily. Similarly, about half of students in the district's homeless program and about half in foster care were actively engaged online. Students in the homeless program *and* in foster care had the lowest daily active engagement.<sup>18</sup>

Figure 2

## LAUSD'S LOW-INCOME STUDENTS WERE LESS ENGAGED ON A DAILY BASIS

Average daily engagement on Schoology in fall 2020 by income status, middle schools, LAUSD



Source: Los Angeles Unified Independent Analysis Unit, *Fall 2020 Schoology usage update: Student engagement online between August 18 and October 31*, January 2021.

<sup>16</sup>Besecker and Thomas, "Fall 2020 Schoology Usage Update". Los Angeles Unified, Independent Analysis Unit.

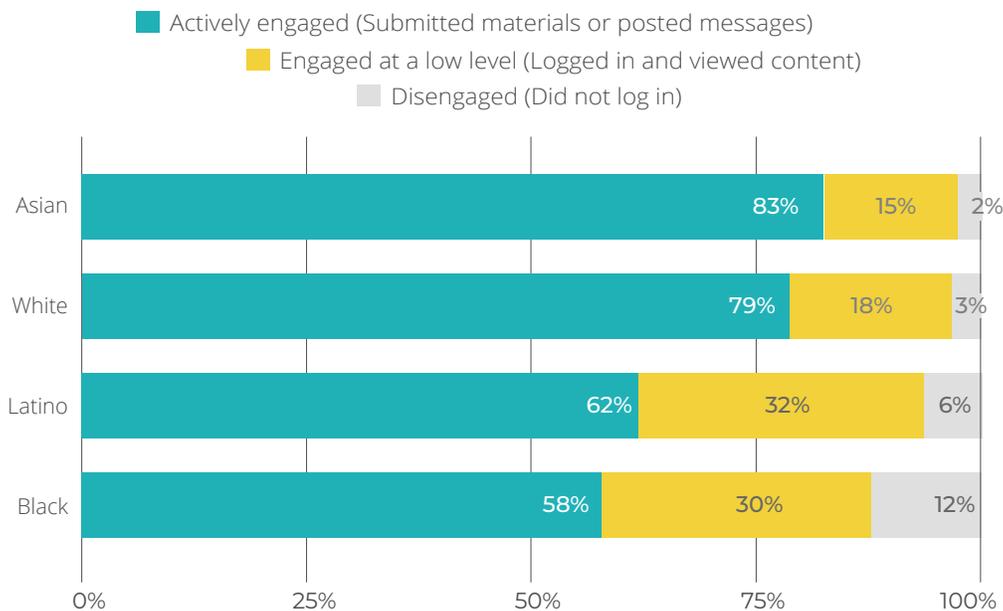
<sup>17</sup>Besecker and Thomas, "Fall 2020 Schoology Usage Update". Los Angeles Unified, Independent Analysis Unit.

<sup>18</sup>Besecker and Thomas, "Fall 2020 Schoology Usage Update". Los Angeles Unified, Independent Analysis Unit.

Figure 3

## BLACK AND LATINO STUDENTS WERE LESS ENGAGED ON A DAILY BASIS

Average daily engagement on Schoology in fall 2020 by race/ethnicity, middle schools, LAUSD



Source: Los Angeles Unified Independent Analysis Unit, *Fall 2020 Schoology usage update: Student engagement online between August 18 and October 31*, January 2021.

### One year into the pandemic, thousands of students are still regularly disengaged.

As of fall 2020, attendance data from the monthly LAUSD Distance Learning Update indicates that, on average, approximately 20,000 students (between 4-8% of all students depending on grade level) were missing three or more days a class on a weekly basis (see Figure 4).<sup>19</sup> Almost a year into distance learning, the same attendance measure from January and February 2021 indicates attendance continues to be a challenge for students in LAUSD. The average number of students missing three or more days of class slightly increased to almost 23,000 students. The students at highest risk are those that have missed entire weeks of school. Though the average percentage of students that are missing that much class is smaller (between 1-3%), in a district the size of LAUSD,

that represents almost 9,000 students that are missing entire weeks of class in winter semester.

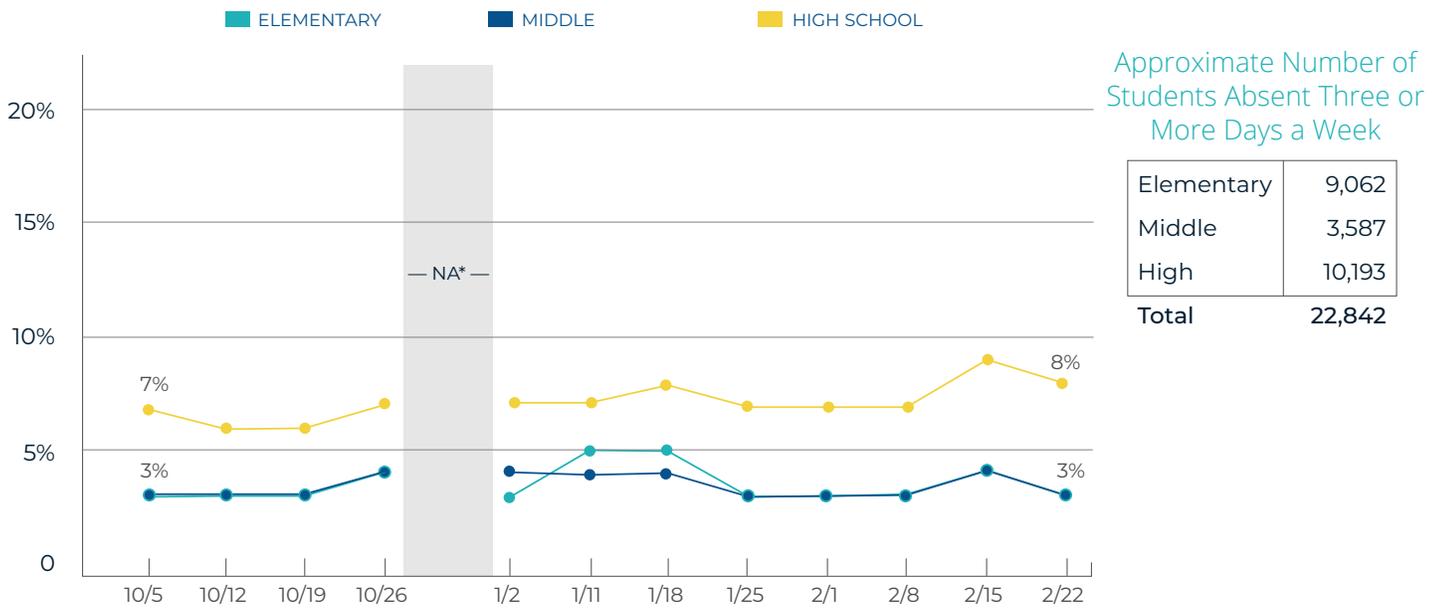
It is important to note that only a “click” in the District’s online platform, Schoology, is necessary for LAUSD to count that student as engaged. This “click” criteria is not a perfect measure of how students engage in distance learning but even with that limited threshold for engagement, the gaps in engagement between student groups still indicate disparities in opportunities to learn. Not only have LAUSD students had less access to time with teachers than many students across the state, the highest need students faced the most barriers to actively engaging online and the majority did not have access to effective interventions throughout the year. The direct result was less time learning and interacting with their teacher and peers.

<sup>19</sup>Los Angeles Unified, “Board of Education Meeting March 16, 2021, Superintendent’s Report, Distance Learning Update.” Los Angeles Unified Board of Education, Chief Academic Officer, March 16, 2021.

Figure 4

## THOUSANDS OF LAUSD STUDENTS ARE STILL REGULARLY ABSENT

Percent of students absent three or more days a week, 2020-21, LAUSD



Source: Los Angeles Unified Board of Education, *Distance learning update*, December 15, 2021; Los Angeles Unified Board of Education, *Distance learning update: Superintendent's report*, March 16, 2021.

\*Note: Attendance data was only published for the following weeks: 10/5/2020 through 11/2/2020 and 1/11/2021 through 2/22/2021. Attendance data is unknown for weeks 11/9/2020 through 12/21/2021.



# MANY STUDENTS HAVE EXPERIENCED LEARNING LOSS DUE TO CLOSURES, WHICH HAVE DEEPENED AND ACCELERATED INEQUITIES IN LAUSD AND NATIONALLY

While LAUSD was incrementally improving in the years prior to the pandemic, large gaps between disadvantaged and more advantaged students have persisted.

Before the pandemic, LAUSD was making incremental strides in improving academic achievement for students. Between 2016-17 and 2018-19, the percentage of students on grade-level in English increased from 40% to 44% and the percentage of students on grade-level in math increased from 30% to 33% across all grade levels.<sup>20</sup> This incremental growth is comparable to the upward trajectory of all school districts, particularly unified districts, across the state. Graduation rates have also been slowly rising steadily since 2016,<sup>21</sup> though the graduation requirement lowered in LAUSD in 2015 allowing students to count passing classes toward graduation with a “D” or better.<sup>22</sup>

Incremental growth was taking place in reading and math proficiency, but major gaps still lingered. In 2018-19, only four in 10 Latino students and three in 10 Black students were on grade-level in English. And only three in 10 Latino students and two in 10 Black students were on grade-level in math. Less than one in 10 English learners and two in 10 students with disabilities were on grade-level in English.<sup>23</sup>

There are limitations to this year’s academic progress data.

Board President Kelly Gonez’s requirement to regularly report on the quality of the distance learning to the public provides some of the data needed to understand learning loss for students in LAUSD. Invaluable data is provided, but it is only a snapshot of results and does not provide sufficient information to truly measure the extent of learning loss and to what extent it is impacting students and schools. Beyond greater data transparency in the district, LAUSD should ensure higher participation in assessments in order to fully understand academic progress for all learners, especially historically underserved student groups such as students experiencing homelessness and foster youth.

Nevertheless, the following results from early reading checks for elementary students (i.e., DIBELS in Figure 5), reading and math diagnostics for middle and high schoolers (i.e., Renaissance diagnostic results in Figure 6), and course grades

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**Without additional support, there is a 90% chance that a struggling reader in first grade will remain a struggling reader.**

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<sup>20</sup>California Department of Education, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19.

<sup>21</sup>California Department of Education, Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates & Outcomes, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19.

<sup>22</sup>Adolfo Guzman-Lopez, “‘D’ grade may get LAUSD students out of high school, but not into 4-year college”, NPR KPCC, June 11, 2015.

<sup>23</sup>California Department of Education, CAASPP, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19.

(see Figure 7) provide an important preliminary finding that students are losing learning at alarming rates in LAUSD.

### One year into the pandemic, fewer young students are on target to learn how to read.

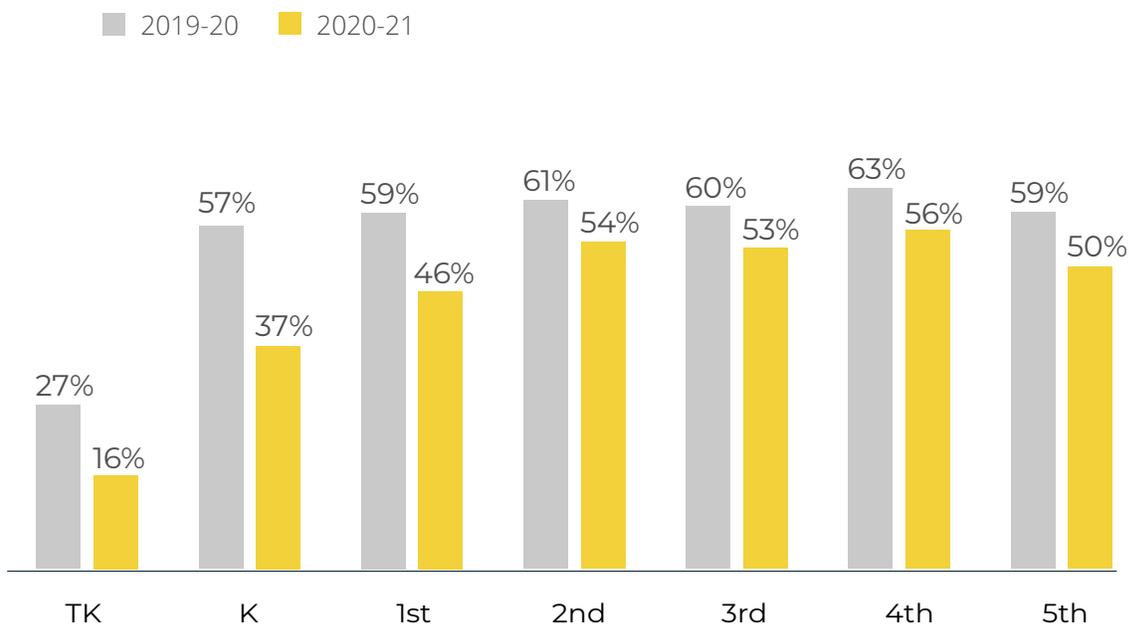
According to early literacy assessment results from the beginning of the 2020-21 academic year, 49% of students in grades K-5 were on track in early reading skills, compared to 59% at the beginning of the 2019-20 academic year, just before the pandemic.<sup>24</sup> When K-5 students were tested again in the middle of the 2020-21 academic year,

results remained stagnant with 49% on track. Students in kindergarten and first grade suffered the biggest learning losses, with the percentage of students not on track increasing by 13- 20% (see Figure 5). Literacy skills in those early grades are critical for students to learn how to read. Without additional support, there is a 90% chance that a struggling reader in first grade will remain a struggling reader.<sup>25, 26</sup>

Figure 5

## STUDENTS IN KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE EXPERIENCED THE BIGGEST LEARNING LOSSES

Percent of TK-5 students at/above benchmark on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment, LAUSD



Source: Los Angeles Unified Board of Education, *Distance learning update: Superintendent's report*, March 16, 2021.

<sup>24</sup>Los Angeles Unified, "Distance Learning Update", Los Angeles Unified Board of Education Meeting, Superintendent's Report, March 9, 2021.

<sup>25</sup>Amplify, COVID-19 means more students not learning to read, February 2021.

<sup>26</sup>In this study, a struggling reader was defined as a student who scored in the bottom quartile of reading comprehension test (ITBS Reading Comprehension subtest) at the end of first grade.

## The impact of the school closures and distance learning on middle and high schoolers is severe.

To understand the impact of distance learning on middle and high schoolers, two important measures are provided by LAUSD: students' progress toward reading and doing math on grade level (measured by the Renaissance or STAR assessment) and whether students are passing the classes they need to advance to the next grade and eventually graduate.

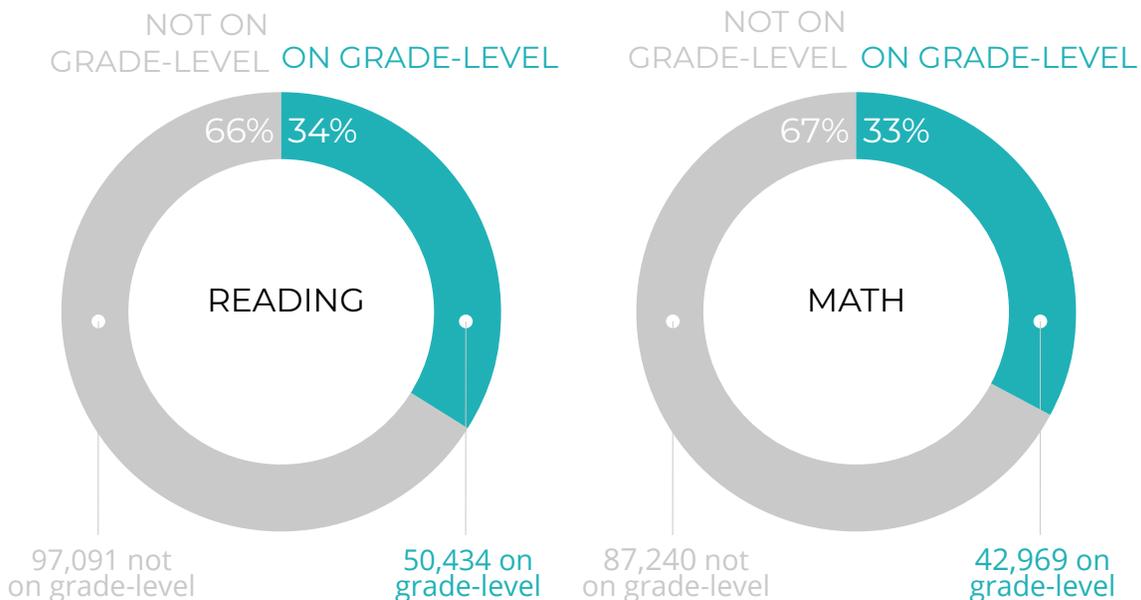
According to LAUSD's interim assessment results from the fall, 66% of secondary students are not on grade-level in reading and 67% are not on grade-level in math (see Figure 6).<sup>27</sup> The

results from this assessment called Renaissance (or STAR) show that the majority of students who took the exam are not on grade-level, but it is important to note that only between 60 and 70% of secondary students took the exam. This means that for about one third of secondary students, we don't have this critical data. Not only did an insufficient number of students take the exam, LAUSD did not provide this assessment in the prior school year, making it difficult to measure the extent of learning loss from this important assessment. Nevertheless, from the students' results we do have and knowing that thousands of students did not take the exam, we can conclude that the majority of secondary students are not on track to meet their academic goals.

Figure 6

### ONLY 1 IN 3 MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE ON GRADE-LEVEL IN READING AND MATH

Percent of middle and high school students on grade-level, STAR reading and math, fall 2020, LAUSD



Source: Los Angeles Unified Board of Education, *Distance learning update*, December 15, 2020.

Note: 148,335 middle and high school students were tested in reading and 130,209 were tested in math. Between 60-70% of middle and high school students took the STAR Reading and Math assessments in fall 2020.

<sup>27</sup>Los Angeles Unified, "Distance Learning Update", Los Angeles Unified Board of Education Meeting, December 15, 2020.

Information about whether students are on track to pass their classes, on the other hand, is a very important measure for understanding the impact of distance learning on students. According to the latest course completion data, the percentage of LAUSD high school students that will not graduate is increasing. High school students are considered on track to graduate in LAUSD when they pass all required A-G courses with a D or better by their graduation year. Among current high school seniors (Class of 2021), 20% are missing anywhere between one to five or more classes they need to graduate by June of 2021.<sup>28</sup>

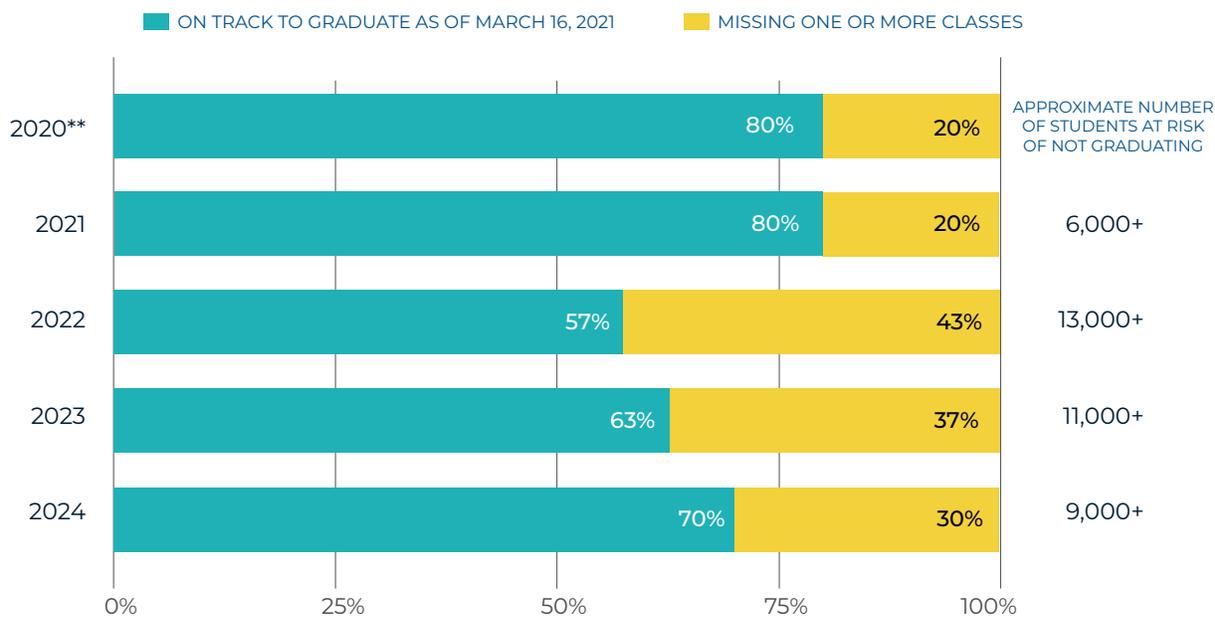
Unless they recover credits this semester, they will not graduate on time. Even fewer students will be eligible to apply to four-year universities in California.

If high school students are not supported to catch up quickly, 20% of the class of 2021, 43% of the class of 2022, 37% of the class of 2023, and 30% of the class of 2024 will not graduate.<sup>29</sup> **That is to say that over the course of the next four years, 40,000 current LAUSD high school students or more are at risk and could potentially not earn their high school diploma.**

Figure 7

## LAUSD HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES MAY BE IN A GRADUATION CRISIS WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT INTERVENTION

Percent of students that are on track to graduate\* over the next four years, LAUSD



Source: Los Angeles Unified Board of Education, *Distance learning update: Superintendent's report*, March 16, 2021.

\*On track to graduate in Los Angeles Unified is defined as having a D or better on all A-G courses by their graduation year. For example, 20% of the Class of 2021 is missing one to two or five or more classes they need to graduate by May of 2021. Unless they recover credits now, they will not graduate on time.

\*\*Actual class of 2019-20 graduation rate.

<sup>28</sup>Los Angeles Unified, "Distance Learning Update", Los Angeles Unified Board of Education Meeting, Superintendent's Report, March 9, 2021.

<sup>29</sup>Los Angeles Unified, "Distance Learning Update", Los Angeles Unified Board of Education Meeting, Superintendent's Report, March 9, 2021.

# STUDENTS WITH THE HIGHEST NEEDS ARE EXPERIENCING LEARNING LOSS THAT WILL LIKELY WIDEN EXISTING GAPS

Given limited data, we do not yet know the full impact of school closures on learning for students of color in LAUSD. The district has yet to publish interim assessment data that shows how students of color across all grade levels are faring. When more complete academic progress data is released it will be possible to explore the full extent of learning loss experienced by students. Multiple California and national studies based on recent half-year interim assessments are showing widespread learning loss disproportionately impacting Black, Latino, low-income students, English learners, students with disabilities, foster youth, and homeless students.<sup>30,31,32</sup> We also know that low-income students and students of color in LAUSD are struggling with and disengaging from online learning. The district saw a surge in the percentage of students receiving Ds and Fs in fall 2020, with students of color and students from low-income households experiencing the highest number of failing grades.<sup>33</sup> The pandemic and school closures are likely to only exacerbate existing inequities.

**While all K-5 students have fallen behind, the COVID-related reading losses disproportionately impact younger Black and Latino students.**

According to early literacy assessment results from the fall, Black and Latino K-5 students fell the furthest behind with only 43% of Black students and 44% of Latino students on track in early

reading skills this year (see Figure 8). LAUSD saw the largest drop in reading proficiency for Latino students, who represent the majority of district enrollment. The results point to evidence of the disproportionate effects school closures have had on young children of color.



Addressing inequities requires a clear focus on student learning and social-emotional supports linked to student learning. With this focus comes the opportunity to integrate current evidence and create meaningful learning opportunities for teachers to rethink practice. The system should not return to its ‘former self’. Policy can send a clear message of change, but teachers need time and support to translate ideas into practice.”

Patricia E. Burch, Ph.D.  
Professor, Co-Director, Center on Education, Policy, Equity and Governance, USC Rossier

<sup>30</sup>Stanford University Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO), Estimates of learning loss in the 2019-2020 school year, October 2020.

<sup>31</sup>Curriculum Associates, National data quantifies impact of COVID learning loss; raises questions about at-home testing, October 2020.

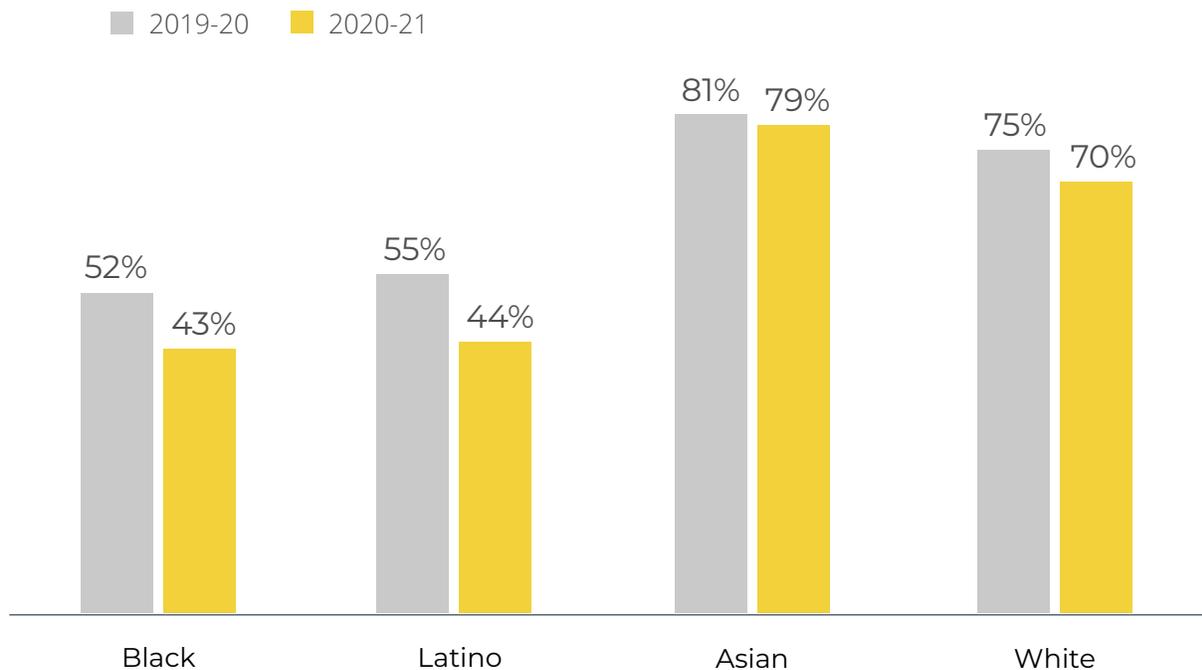
<sup>32</sup>Amplify, COVID-19 means more students not learning to read, February 2021.

<sup>33</sup>Los Angeles Unified, “Additional time for students to increase proficiency--fall 2020 grades”, Division of Instruction, Interoffice Correspondence, December 14, 2020.

Figure 8

## FEWER YOUNG BLACK AND LATINO STUDENTS IN LAUSD ARE ON TRACK TO LEARN TO READ

Percent of TK-5 students at/above benchmark on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment, LAUSD



Source: Los Angeles Unified Board of Education, *Distance learning update: Superintendent's report*, March 16, 2021.

Note: The DIBELS assessment was administered to 213,745 TK-5 students in 2019-20 middle of the year (MOY) and 200,476 TK-5 students in 2020-21 MOY. The participation rate, which indicates what percentage of LAUSD TK-5 students took the assessment, was not published.

### The vast majority of high-need middle and high school students are not on track.

According to the interim assessment results from the fall, more than 90% of students with disabilities and more than 94% of English learners in middle and high school are not on grade-level in reading and math. Many students experiencing homelessness and foster youth are also falling behind with more than 80% of students experiencing homeless and more than 78% of foster

youth in middle and high school not on grade-level in reading and math (see Figure 9).<sup>34</sup>

Given that we know that these students had the lowest participation and engagement rates in the spring and fall, these results are not surprising. Teachers have also expressed that they need more training to know how to support students with disabilities and students experiencing homelessness, in particular.<sup>35</sup>

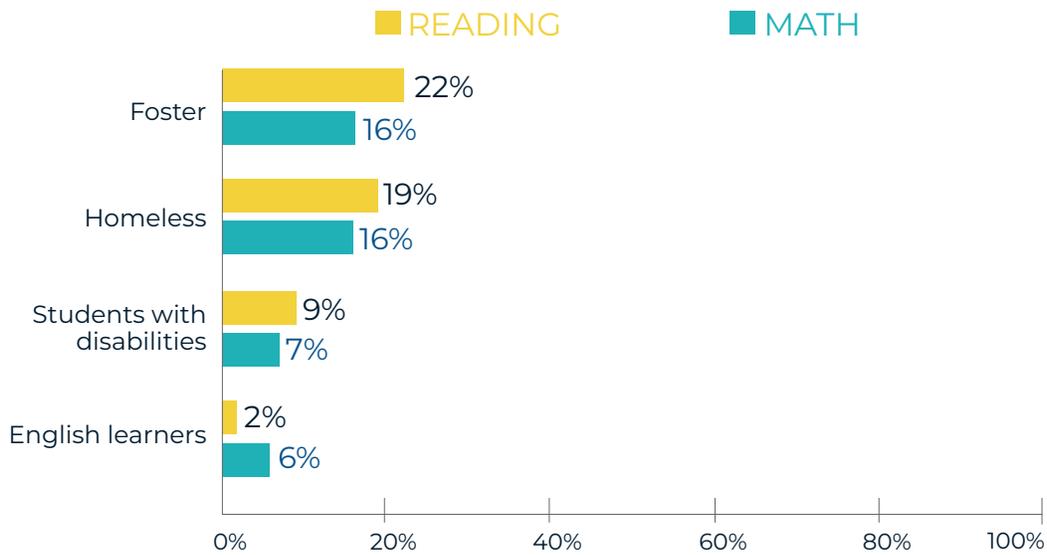
<sup>34</sup>Los Angeles Unified, "Distance Learning Update", Los Angeles Unified Board of Education Meeting, December 15, 2020.

<sup>35</sup>Educators for Excellence Los Angeles and USC Rossier School of Education, "Voices from the Virtual Classroom: A survey of Los Angeles educators", December 2020.

Figure 9

## MOST STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND ENGLISH LEARNERS ARE NOT ON GRADE-LEVEL IN READING AND MATH

Percent of middle and high school students on grade-level by student group, STAR reading and math, fall 2020, LAUSD



Source: Los Angeles Unified Board of Education, *Distance learning update*, December 15, 2020.

### LAUSD students receive less instructional time.

While the “right” amount of time doing synchronous instruction online with teachers has been a contentious issue during distance learning, one reality is clear: LAUSD students receive less live time with their teachers. Zoom fatigue is real for adults and children. Yet, structured, synchronous time with teachers is highly recommended for students even in the early grades given the circumstances of the pandemic.<sup>36</sup> Districts across the state and country have taken different approaches to how the school day is structured, but compared to its large district peers in California, LAUSD has the least number of synchronous instructional minutes at all grade levels (see Figure 10). For example, high school students in Long Beach are getting twice as much time with their teacher every week. The amount of time students

have with teachers on a weekly basis during distance learning is simply determined by what school district they live in.

#### WHAT IS “SYNCHRONOUS” INSTRUCTION?

**Synchronous instruction** refers to any type of learning in which the student and teacher are learning at the same time, in the same “place” (virtual or in-person), going through the learning process together. This type of learning can mean small-group instruction, lecture, and other learning styles. But the key is that the student(s) and teacher(s) are going through the learning process together.

**Asynchronous instruction** refers to learning that is not taking place at the same time. Students can be learning at the same pace, at a different pace, on similar or different content, and could be learning online or in-person. In the current context, asynchronous instruction in LAUSD often refers to the time students are spending without their teachers completing assignments, assessments, doing independent work or even working with peers.

<sup>36</sup>Benjamin Cottingham, “Improving Distance Education in Early Grades”, Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), December, 2020.

Figure 10

## OF THE FIVE LARGEST DISTRICTS IN CALIFORNIA, LAUSD PROVIDED THE LEAST AMOUNT OF SYNCHRONOUS TIME WITH TEACHERS

Average number of daily synchronous instruction minutes by district, fall 2020

DISTRICT	ELEMENTARY	MIDDLE AND HIGH
Long Beach Unified	255	300
San Diego Unified	240	240
Fresno Unified	195	195
Elk Grove Unified	156	241
Los Angeles Unified	114	138

Source: LAUSD-UTLA, 2020-21 distance learning sideletter, August 2020; SDUSD and San Diego Education Association tentative letter, July 2020; Fresno Unified, A strategic plan for reopening schools 2020-2021; Long Beach Unified, COVID-19 pandemic school opening & safety plan, February 2021; Elk Grove Unified, Distance learning FAQs, full distance learning schedules.



# WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT ON STUDENT CONNECTEDNESS AND WELLBEING?

There is very little information about the true impact of the pandemic and social isolation on Los Angeles students. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported tracking signs of increased mental health problems for school-aged children nationwide,<sup>37</sup> local data on mental health needs of our students is not publicly available. We have some insights from LAUSD's school experience survey for understanding the social and emotional experience of students in the 2020-21 school year. This section will summarize national data and insights from LAUSD's survey.

## School closures and online learning hurt students' mental health.

A survey of more than 10,000 high school students across the U.S. found that students learning remotely reported higher rates of stress and worry than their peers who returned to school

in-person.<sup>38</sup> Eighty-four percent of remote students reported exhaustion, headaches, insomnia, or other stress-related ailments.<sup>39</sup> Across the country there have been alarming spikes in depression among children and their parents. Beginning in April 2020, the proportion of children's mental health-related hospital Emergency Department (ED) visits increased and remained elevated through October.<sup>40</sup>

Several national surveys confirm that students are experiencing heightened stress, anxiety and depression. According to a nationally representative survey of high school students, more than one in four youth reported an increase in losing sleep because of worry, feeling unhappy or depressed, feeling constantly under strain, or experiencing a loss of confidence.<sup>41</sup> In another survey, 42% of teens reported increased loneliness.<sup>42</sup> In another, 65% of students surveyed, most of whom were students of color, said their mental health worsened.<sup>43</sup>

Figure 11

### LAUSD SCHOOL EXPERIENCE SURVEY, STUDENT RESPONSE RATES 2020-21

ELEMENTARY	MIDDLE	HIGH
82%	73%	59%

Source: Los Angeles Unified, *Fall 2020 School Experience Survey*, 2020-21.

<sup>37</sup>Rebecca Leeb, Rebecca Bitsko, Lakshmi Radhakrishnan, Pedro Martinez, Rashid Njai, and Kristin Holland, "Mental health-related emergency department visits among children aged <18 years during the COVID-19 pandemic-- United States, January 1- October, 2020", *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 69 (November 2020): 1675-1680.

<sup>38</sup>Erin Einhorn, "Remote students are more stressed than their peers in the classroom, study shows", *NBC News*, February 15, 2021.

<sup>39</sup>Erin Einhorn, "Remote students are more stressed than their peers in the classroom, study shows", *NBC News*, February 15, 2021.

<sup>40</sup>Rebecca Leeb, Rebecca Bitsko, Lakshmi Radhakrishnan, Pedro Martinez, Rashid Njai, and Kristin Holland, "Mental health-related emergency department visits among children aged <18 years during the COVID-19 pandemic-- United States, January 1- October, 2020", *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 69 (November 2020): 1675-1680.

<sup>41</sup>Max Margolius, Alicia Doyle Lynch, Elizabeth Puffall Jones, and Michelle Hynes, "The State of Young People during COVID-19: Findings from a nationally representative survey of high school youth", *America's Promise Alliance*, June 11, 2020.

<sup>42</sup>Common Sense Media, "SurveyMonkey Poll: How teens are coping and connecting in the time of the coronavirus", 2020. 43Our Turn, "COVID-19 Student Impact Report", May 2020.

<sup>43</sup>Our Turn, "COVID-19 Student Impact Report", May 2020.

Across California, families with children in schools are reporting increased stress and an increase in mental health referrals in Los Angeles County. Kids Data recently released findings from the *Family Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic* questionnaire, revealing that over half of all participating California caregivers agreed that helping their child(ren) with their education, including remote school work, increased stress and tension in the home.<sup>44</sup> The Los Angeles Department of Mental Health (DMH) recognized the potential impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of students and families, and shifted resources to provide tele-mental health services during the pandemic.<sup>45</sup> At the July 2020 Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors meeting, DMH reported that its regional team was designated the central referral point for school districts to refer families and children in need of mental health services during the pandemic. DMH shared that 120 referrals were received from school districts within the first month of the system implementation. However, ongoing data on referrals received was not included in subsequent reports by DMH to the Board or made accessible on the DMH or LAUSD websites.

### Findings from LAUSD's Fall 2020 School Experience Survey.

LAUSD's survey data shows students have had many positive experiences with their schools in their distance learning, although challenges exist with students feeling connected to their peers and teachers at this time.<sup>46</sup> The vast majority of students report feeling happy about the school they are attending online (see Figure 12). They report that teachers care if they are absent, and most feel like they are part of their school. However, one of the major concerns surfaced from the

survey is student connectedness. Acknowledging that there are limits to what can be accomplished in an online classroom, it is important to know the state of student wellbeing and connectedness when they return to in-person instruction.

While the majority of LAUSD students expressed feeling happy with their school this year, survey findings also indicate low levels of social connection with peers and teachers during remote learning (except at the elementary school level). High school students are most disconnected, with only 30% reporting they feel connected to their peers. Elementary school students, on the contrary, report higher levels of engagement throughout, a trend that's consistent with prior years but still worth further exploration by district staff. Comparing this year's results to prior years is difficult given missing data for 2019-20, but student connectedness was at least 10% lower across all grade-levels, particularly for student-reported levels of closeness to people at school.<sup>47</sup>



It's essential for the district to prioritize creating a long-term measurement plan to document the impact of the pandemic on students so that interventions and supports can be targeted to those who need them most."

Morgan Polikoff, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, Co-Director,  
Center on Education, Policy, Equity  
and Governance, USC Rossier

<sup>44</sup>Kids Data, "Child and Family Well-Being During the COVID-19 Pandemic", February, 2021.

<sup>45</sup>Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, *Board Meetings, Quarterly progress update on the Los Angeles County Community Schools Initiative*, July 20, 2020.

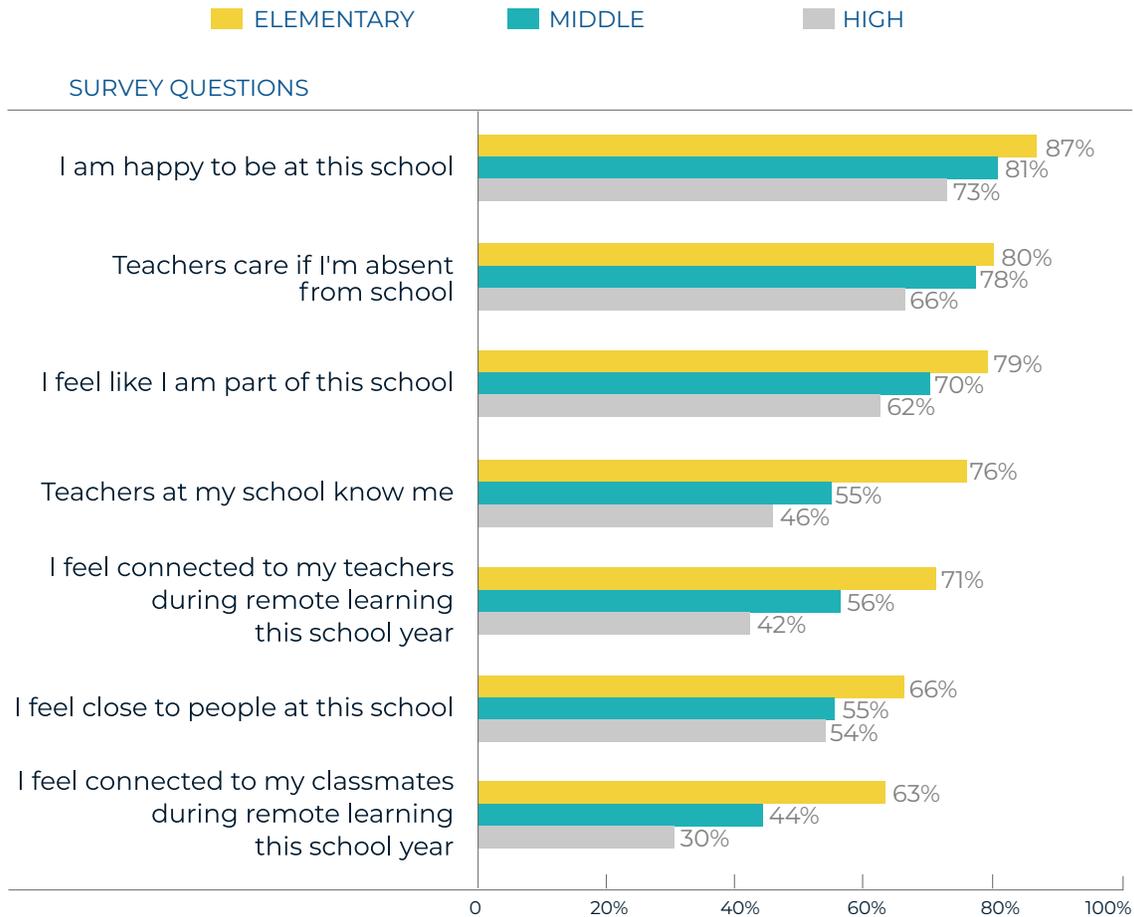
<sup>46</sup>Los Angeles Unified, *School Experience Survey, 2020-21*.

<sup>47</sup>Los Angeles Unified, *School Experience Survey, 2020-21*.

Figure 12

## MANY LAUSD STUDENTS FEEL HAPPY WITH THEIR SCHOOL, BUT DISCONNECTED FROM THEIR PEERS AND TEACHERS DURING REMOTE LEARNING

Percent of students that agree or strongly agree, LAUSD School Experience Survey questions on school connectedness, fall 2020



Source: Los Angeles Unified, Fall 2020 School Experience Survey, 2020-21.

### The impact of the pandemic on Los Angeles students is becoming clear.

A year of school closures has disrupted our school system and disproportionately impacted our most vulnerable students. LAUSD must implement and be fully transparent with on-going assessments to fully understand and inform their strategies for a comprehensive educational recovery for our students. Through the publication of on-going assessment data, we can learn more about the full extent of the pandemic's impact.

The data shared in this report is not intended to shame or blame the district, but rather to surface the needs of our students so we can collectively rally to support their full educational recovery now. We recognize LAUSD could not control the pandemic, but district leaders and staff are the only ones positioned to lead a bold and effective plan to change the academic futures of Los Angeles students.



# A YEAR OF SCHOOL CLOSURE CREATES THE NEED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL RECOVERY PLAN

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A more central focus on student basic needs (e.g., food, safety, housing, health) and improved neighborhood conditions are foundational to student social and emotional health and well being as schools reopen and school systems prioritize learning acceleration strategies.”

Joseph Bishop, Ph.D.  
Director, UCLA Center for the  
Transformation of Schools

The following section provides a summary of the consequences for students without substantial and effective interventions, and expert approaches on how to effectively recover. Los Angeles students have endured so much that their only chance for a full recovery depends on a comprehensive plan developed and implemented by LAUSD.

After a year of isolation, trauma, and missed learning time, we simply cannot allow a return to the same strategies and systems in place before the pandemic. The data demonstrates the extensive and disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on our students. We also know from the historic opportunity gaps in schools that our pre-pandemic educational system wasn't working equitably for all students. The data underscores how the pandemic has exacerbated those pre-existing inequities. Therefore, we need a focused, bold and comprehensive approach that acknowledges the impacts and outlines strategies responsive to the impacts.

# THE LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THIS PANDEMIC ON OUR STUDENTS ARE TOO STARK TO IGNORE

## Experts and pediatricians have a clear message: prioritize wellbeing and connectedness.

Mental health experts are extremely concerned about the impact of school closures and limited face-to-face interaction on childrens' mental health.<sup>48</sup> Children are suffering from loneliness and isolation and are likely to experience high rates of depression and anxiety during and after social isolation ends. One UCLA study of previous pandemics found that children who experienced quarantine or social isolation were five times more likely to need mental health interventions than those who did not.<sup>49</sup>

## Attendance and disengagement are strong early indicators for dropping out.

Every missed day of school increases a student's likelihood of dropping out of school. For most students who drop out, the pathway is permanent. As educators well know, when a student disengages -- stops showing up to class, completing assignments or participating, and consistently is performing poorly on tests or misbehaving -- that student is at a high risk for dropping out.<sup>50</sup> When students disengage in elementary school, they are frequently absent and less focused. This results in academic frustration and low performance that only intensifies with each year. By middle and high school, students are failing courses and falling be-

hind on credits, making it increasingly impossible to catch up. The long-term consequences are grave; only about 30% of students who drop out will re-enroll in school. Of those that re-enroll, a mere 18% end up graduating from high school.<sup>51</sup> That is to say that out of 100 students that drop out, only five will re-enroll and graduate high school.

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## Two out of every five middle and high school students were absent every day from LAUSD's online learning last spring.<sup>52</sup>

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## Less instructional time means less learning.

There has been much debate in the education community about the extent of learning loss and what can be done to address it. The latest data is clearly showing that the impacts are profound. Although there are pockets of schools or even entire student groups, such as White and more affluent students, who may not be experiencing significant losses this year, multiple studies based on recent half-year interim assessments are showing widespread learning loss across many school systems that it is disproportionately impacting Black, Latino, low-income students, English learners, student with disabilities, foster youth, and home-

<sup>48</sup>Sammy Weale, "Prioritize play when schools reopen, say mental health experts", The Guardian, May 7, 2020.

<sup>49</sup>Ginny Sprang and Miriam Silman. "Posttraumatic stress disorder in parents and youth after health-related disasters." Disaster medicine and public health preparedness 7, no. 1 (2013): 105-110.

<sup>50</sup>Robert Balfanz, Liza Herzog, and Douglas J. Mac Iver, "Preventing student disengagement and keeping students on the graduation path in urban middle-grades schools: Early identification and effective interventions." Educational Psychologist 42, no. 4 (2007): 223-235.

<sup>51</sup>Bethann Berliner, Vanessa X. Barrat, Anthony B. Fong, and Paul B. Shirk. "Reenrollment of high school dropouts in a large, urban school district." Issues & Answers 56 (2008): 1-36.

<sup>52</sup>Besecker and Thomas, "Student Engagement Online During School Closures: March 16 to May 22, 2020", Los Angeles Unified, Independent Analysis Unit.

## A UCLA STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF ISOLATION IN AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTEXT<sup>i</sup>

The impact of social isolation during a pandemic seems like a unique challenge, but it has happened before. UCLA studied the mental health and social impact of previous infectious disease related isolation, including H1N1, SARS, and avian flu. The study focused on parents and children who were socially isolated. Over 30% said their child needed mental health services following social isolation because of their experience during that pandemic. Parents reported several mental health disorders, including acute stress disorder (16.7%), adjustment disorder (16.7%), grief (16.75%), and PTSD (6.2%). Children who had experienced social isolation were much more likely to show signs of PTSD than children who were not socially isolated.

Beyond this one study, a meta-analysis of the full body of research on the potential mental health impact of the health-related disasters or crisis paints a stark picture of what our students could be experiencing and what they will need to fully recover.<sup>ii</sup> Based on preliminary data and historical research, the potential impacts of social isolation are: clinginess, irritability, distraction, fear of asking questions about the pandemic, loneliness, anxiety and depression, as well as more serious mental health disorders.

<sup>i</sup>Sprang and Silman, "Posttraumatic stress disorder in parents and youth after health-related disasters".

<sup>ii</sup>Loades, M., Chatburn, E., Higson-Sweeney, N., Reynolds, S., Shafran, R., Brigden, A., Linney, C., McManus, M., Borwick, C., and Crawley, E., "Rapid systematic review: The impact of social isolation on the mental health of children and adolescents in the context of COVID-19.", *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* (November 2020).

less students.<sup>53,54,55</sup> PACE conducted one of the most recent studies of interim assessment data across 18 California school districts (not including LAUSD) and found that:<sup>56</sup>

- **There has been significant learning loss in both English Language Arts (ELA) and math, with students in earlier grades (K-5) most affected.**
- **The equity impact is severe with certain student groups, especially low-income students and English language learners (ELLs), falling behind in greater numbers compared to others.**

Studies being conducted across the country are showing mixed results for students overall, but many of the most vulnerable students are missing from school and therefore excluded entirely from the assessment data. That means we likely have not captured the full scope of the loss that

has taken place. Students are not receptacles of information. We don't simply pour in information, it sticks, and they regurgitate. Learning is iterative, and children are resilient. Measuring learning loss is not an attempt to treat students like cogs in a machine that aren't working, but it is important to know what skills and learning our students couldn't do this year because of the multiple factors stacked against student success in the pandemic.

LAUSD is not alone in experiencing learning loss for its students. Students in every district across the country are impacted. However, in order to address these impacts effectively and equitably, we must better understand and measure which students and schools face bigger challenges, identify disproportionate impacts for different grade levels and subjects, and select the best strategies to address those specific areas.

<sup>53</sup>Stanford University Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO), Estimates of learning loss in the 2019-2020 school year, October 2020.

<sup>54</sup>Curriculum Associates, National data quantifies impact of COVID learning loss; raises questions about at-home testing, October 2020.

<sup>55</sup>Amplify, COVID-19 means more students not learning to read, February 2021.

<sup>56</sup>Libby Pier, Heather Hough, Michael Christian, Noah Bookman, Britt Wilkenfeld, Rick Miller, "COVID-19 and the educational equity crisis: Evidence on learning loss from the CORE data collaborative", Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), January 25, 2021.

## Implications of learning loss for the long-term.

The levels of learning loss students have experienced will have long-term consequences if not addressed as a true educational emergency. Researchers estimate that students on average can lose five to nine months of learning by the end of the school year, with students of color losing more, likely six to 12 months.<sup>57</sup> Recovery of 2019-20 losses could take years. Researchers estimate that the average K-12 student could lose up to \$82,000 in lifetime earnings because of learning loss. We know from studies of natural disasters, such as the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan and Hurricane Katrina, that learning losses are likely to compound over time. Withdrawing or disengaging from the school system in K-12 will lead to the greatest long-term impacts on students.

Children are resilient but we cannot rely on their resilience for full educational recovery. The challenges created by a year of social distancing, learning online disconnected from peers and a school community, and learning loss are too great for any child -- even with the most profound support of their family -- to heal and make up on their own. Recovery from this pandemic is also too much for any one teacher and one school to figure out on their own. The pathway forward requires collective action, transparent assessment, responsive strategies and a strong vision with disciplined implementation.

## Child resilience is not enough to make-up for a year of school closure.

The consequences of relying on children's resilience are also too great. We cannot afford to gamble the future of a generation of students on their own resources and capacity. We must identify their individualized needs and develop systemic

approaches for meeting those needs. LAUSD is responsible for the future of its students. It must assess the pandemic's impacts and examine its systems to develop and implement an educational recovery plan that is responsive to the needs of its students at this moment. LAUSD does not bear the full responsibility but it is our designated educational leader and as such, it must articulate the plan for our children's full educational recovery.



<sup>57</sup>Emma Dorn, Bryan Hancock, Jimmy Sarakatsannis, and Ellen Viruleg, "COVID-19 and learning loss-- disparities grow and students need help", McKinsey & Company, December 8, 2020. Researchers estimated the economic impact of learning disruption caused by school closures by projecting learning loss onto the National Assessment of Education Progress and its relationship with the U.S. GDP and earnings. Researchers accounted for the effects of an economic recession on academic outcomes. The calculation of average lifetime earnings lost assumes a 40-year work life with an average salary in 2020 dollars, 2% inflation, and 4.4% wage growth.



# NECESSARY COMPONENTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL RECOVERY PLAN

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Educational recovery involves a complex set of coordinated educational, operational and public health strategies. No school system can do it alone nor should they be expected to. The full educational recovery of Los Angeles students must be a collective effort. To launch and lead this effort, LAUSD must develop a comprehensive educational recovery plan. An educational recovery plan not only ensures the needs of students are assessed and addressed but it also facilitates an opportunity for others to engage. Through its plan, others in the Los Angeles community can rally in support to fill gaps LAUSD can't meet on its own.

As LAUSD develops its plan, we suggest the following as necessary components of a comprehensive educational recovery plan.

## 1 Learn from other districts' best practices.

There is a lot to learn from school districts across the country that have already reopened and launched recovery efforts. One resource for LAUSD to use is the framework for recovery and reopening developed by the researchers and expert panelists at University of Washington's Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE). The

team at CRPE reviewed the plans of over 100 districts from across the country in order to highlight promising best practices for education recovery. They developed **a framework for addressing seven key areas that all school systems are facing due to COVID-19.**

- Clear, inclusive and regular communication
- Structured and meaningful 2020-21 learning plan
- Clear fall reopening plan, including social-emotional and mental health supports
- Effective resource allocation
- Educational services for vulnerable populations
- Support for staff
- Health and safety measures in place

Our recommendation is that LAUSD develop a comprehensive recovery plan that addresses all seven areas in the CRPE framework.

## **2 Prioritize healing, mental health and connectedness.**

Our students have been through a lot over the last year and it is critical that the district prioritizes their emotional well-being when developing its recovery plan. LAUSD should consider a universal screening system for students upon their return to schools so the district can understand the social, emotional and mental health needs of its students. This understanding is necessary to provide students with the appropriate support. We also recommend extensive training for principals, teachers and staff on trauma-informed practices, social-emotional learning, and on identifying the markers of emotional distress to help our students navigate the upcoming year.

As students come back to school, we hope the district will prioritize play (particularly for younger students) and students remaking social connections. It is critical that the district address discipline challenges that may arise from resocialization in a restorative rather than punitive way. This means assessing existing discipline policies and practices. It also requires all school staff to learn how to distinguish behaviors to provide the appropriate support. Simply put, we can't allow our children to be disproportionately punished because school staff lack the appropriate training. No child is prepared to reenter the dynamics of in-person instruction after a year of isolated learning online. All schools must be prepared to support them and articulate a strategy for doing so.

## **3 Implement a bold learning plan that differentiates for students' needs.**

LAUSD has already indicated that it is exploring extending the school year next year and investing heavily to provide additional support to students, particularly at the elementary school level through its Primary Promise program. In addition to these important interventions, we hope the district will also consider the following actions to help students fully recover educationally:

- Commit to bringing students back to school in-person full-time for the start of the 2021-22 school year if it is deemed safe to do so by public health officials.

- Identify where students are academically by the beginning of the 2021-22 school year through assessments, grades and engagement data and establish key academic and social-emotional learning goals for all students.

- Develop flexible annual and daily school calendars to meet the district's key academic and social-emotional learning goals for all students.

- Create individual learning plans for students who fell the furthest behind to ensure they receive the personalized services needed to make up for what they lost after a year of school closure. Particular focus should be paid to students who are homeless, in foster care, special education or are English Learners.

- Invest heavily in training and support for principals, teachers and support staff to help them best support their students who will have a wider range of needs as a result of pandemic school closures.

- Closely review LAUSD instructional materials to ensure schools are offering a rigorous and culturally responsive instructional program.

## **4 Focus on learning acceleration rather than traditional remediation.**

Building up foundational skills and helping students master past concepts is important and typical in remediation, which refers to efforts to fill in gaps in learning. But researchers and practitioners are finding that a more effective approach is finding ways to prepare students for success on

their grade level.<sup>58</sup> That is, rather than having students who are behind go back and study the work from before, educators should give students access to materials on their grade level, but provide a lot of strategic support to do work at that level. LAUSD leaders may be aware of the benefits of this approach, but how can it be embedded into district instructional plans, training, and ultimately in classroom practice this year?

### **5 Prioritize live time with teachers.**

Research shows that synchronous learning time with educators is what students need most to build their academic and social-emotional skills.<sup>59</sup> The answer is more time with teachers and that time needs to be structured appropriately, especially for early learners, so that time spent on synchronous platforms like Zoom is productive and interactive for both teachers and students.<sup>60</sup>

The structure and effectiveness of live time with teachers and ensuring that asynchronous, independent student time is spent well are both keys to mitigating further losses and addressing the gaps students have already incurred. The strategies discussed in the following paragraphs are key, but it is important to learn about the most effective and evidence-based practices to spend the tremendous amount of time that is needed to address the scale of learning loss in Los Angeles.

### **6 Incorporate expanded learning time outside the classroom.**

Beyond time with teachers, students need one-on-one support to catch up or sustain academic progress especially when schools are seeking to close learning gaps for large numbers of students. Expanding students' learning time with teachers is key and should be the first line ap-

proach. Meaning, time with tutors, even good ones, cannot replace the value of high-quality, on-grade-level instruction with teachers. Nevertheless, research shows that access to additional academic opportunity that extends the amount of time students have with trained adults can be very effective in closing learning gaps, especially when those strategies are grounded in evidence-based approaches.<sup>61</sup> Strategies tried throughout the country include small group instruction with educators, intersessions that focus adult capacity on students that are falling behind, after school live time with teachers and weekend interventions, and "high-dosage" tutoring with well trained staff. Comprehensive approaches that involve sustained time with consistent adults are key. Tutoring once or twice a week may not be enough for the thousands of students who are falling behind. Researchers and practitioners recommend "high-dosage" tutoring, which is generally defined as one-on-one tutoring or tutoring in very small groups (2-3 students) at least three times a week, or for about 50 hours over a semester.<sup>62</sup>

### **7 Forge a new and deeper partnership with families.**

The school closures and transition to online learning in many ways strengthened the relationship between parents and schools in LAUSD schools. Parents and caregivers became co-educators with teachers as they often guided their children through Zoom lessons and supported them during asynchronous learning time. As LAUSD develops its comprehensive recovery plan, it should build off the foundation of deeper collaboration with parents that was facilitated over the last year to further strengthen its partnership with families. We have known for a long time that family engagement leads to improved learning outcomes,

<sup>59</sup>Jeannie Myung, H. Alix Gallagher, Benjamin Cottingham, Angela Gong, Hayin Kimner, Joe Witte, Kevin Gee, Heather Hough, "Supporting learning in the COVID-19 context: Research guide to distance and blended instruction", Policy Analysis for California Education, Stanford University July 2020.

<sup>60</sup>Benjamin Cottingham, "Improving distance education in the early grades", Policy Analysis for California Education, Stanford University, December 2020.

<sup>61</sup>Anna Maier, Julia Daniel, Jeannie Oakes, and Livia Lam, "Community schools as an effective school improvement strategy: A review of the evidence", Learning Policy Institute, December 2017.

<sup>62</sup>Roland G. Fryer Jr. and Meghan Howard-Noveck, "High-dosage tutoring and reading achievement: Evidence from New York City", Journal of Labor Economics 38, no. 2 (2020): 421-452.

higher attendance, and better behavior for students.<sup>63,64</sup> Now is the time for LAUSD to truly prioritize family engagement as it reimagines what is possible for public schools post pandemic.

We hope that LAUSD's education recovery plan will include clear strategies to help schools become more welcoming and responsive to parents. The plan should help administrators, teachers and support staff work more effectively with parents as a unified instructional team serving students. Some of the key ways to engage parents as co-educators for the district to consider in its recovery plan include: understandable and relatable communication, ongoing dialogue and relationship-building, encouraging and building parents' capacity in supporting their children's learning, and creating opportunities for parents to have a meaningful voice in decision-making. Moving forward with recovery, LAUSD must seize the moment to acculturate schools towards the long-term benefit of engaging and valuing parents as equal partners - with power to make a difference in their children's education.

### **8 Leverage external partners to provide additional services to our highest need students.**

As the district develops its comprehensive recovery plan, we encourage LAUSD to work closely with external partners (nonprofits and other government agencies) to help ensure students receive the support they need to lead opportunity-filled lives. Nonprofit organizations throughout Los Angeles provide a wide array of services to students including after-school and summer programs, tutoring, college and career access guidance, mental health and social emotional support, opportunities to engage in the arts, STEM, advocacy and other areas, in addition to training

and advocacy for families. The City of Los Angeles and other cities within LAUSD's boundaries also provide services to youth throughout the year. We believe a coordinated effort between LAUSD, nonprofits, philanthropy, the City of LA and other cities within LAUSD will lead to the strongest possible education recovery outcome for our children. LAUSD must lead the educational recovery of our children but the effort can have the greatest impact on our students if other partners are included and leveraged in the work.

### **9 Make sure all students are connected.**

We acknowledge LAUSD's \$100M investment for student learning and connectivity at the onset of the pandemic, but we know firsthand that gaps continue to persist. Low-income families in cyber-redlined communities are burdened with internet dropping, bandwidth for multi-student homes is insufficient, and the expense of the internet is an insuperable barrier for many. For others who can afford to pay for it, high quality internet is often unavailable in their community. Providing broadband internet to low-income families who are without reliable and quality internet access is essential. Consider how LAUSD can replicate Chicago Connected. LAUSD can partner with philanthropy and nonprofits today to provide broadband internet to those who need it most. The internet is a powerful platform that can change the trajectory of lives - for our students, the internet is access to college applications, financial aid, and other critical resources that directly impact their quality of life. Our students need reliable and quality internet access to fully recover as well as lead opportunity-filled lives.

<sup>63</sup>Ann Henderson and Karen Mapp, "A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement. Annual Synthesis, 2002", Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, (2002).

<sup>64</sup>William Jeynes, "The relationship between parental involvement and urban secondary school student academic achievement: A meta-analysis", Urban Education 42, no. 1 (2007): 82-110.



# CONCLUSION

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An unprecedented crisis requires an unprecedented response. We must respond to this educational emergency with urgency. We must face the reality of the pandemic's impact on children to date, immediately take all steps we can to reduce more harm and invest to build out the system of integrated academic and socioemotional supports that students need to recover.

The pandemic has accelerated disparities, but the reality is that before the pandemic, our system wasn't working for many of the most vulnerable students. Now is a chance to not just rebuild, but to reimagine and reinvent a better and more equitable system. Many of the supports that we suggest are ones that veteran educators and researchers have long advocated, from universal screening of social-emotional wellbeing to individualized education plans for every student.

The good news is that we largely know what is necessary and effective. We are fortunate to draw upon a tremendous body of research that points clearly at proven approaches, as well as promising practices from other districts navigating identical challenges. We must have the will to do

what's necessary and right by our kids, and the persistence and discipline to see through effective implementation.

Families are depending on LAUSD, on each of us and the collective "us" to do right by Los Angeles children. We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to rise to the occasion and prove our commitment to all children. LAUSD can't ensure the recovery of all children on its own but it can lead the recovery effort through a comprehensive plan. A plan led by LAUSD has the ability to dramatically change the educational trajectory of Los Angeles students despite this unprecedented pandemic. Let's start the educational recovery now. It's time.



# METHODOLOGY

## Data Sources

The following publicly available presentations, reports and data files were obtained from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD):

- LAUSD Independent Analysis Unit, *Fall 2020 schoology usage update: Student engagement online between August 18 and October 31*, January 2021.
- LAUSD Independent Analysis Unit, *Student engagement online during school facilities closures: An analysis of L.A. Unified secondary students' schoology activity from March 16 to May 22, 2020*, July 2020.
- LAUSD Board of Education, *Distance learning data review: Superintendent's report*, October 6, 2021.
- LAUSD Division of Instruction, *Additional time for students to increase proficiency-- fall 2020 grades, Interoffice correspondence*, December 14, 2020.
- LAUSD Board of Education, *Distance learning data review: Superintendent's report*, October 6, 2020.
- LAUSD Board of Education, *Distance learning update: Committee of the Whole*, November 17, 2020.
- LAUSD Board of Education, *Distance learning update*, December 15, 2020.
- LAUSD Board of Education, *Distance learning update: Superintendent's report*, February 9, 2021.
- LAUSD Board of Education, *Distance learning update: Superintendent's report*, March 9, 2021.
- LAUSD Board of Education, *Distance learning update: Superintendent's report*, March 16, 2021.
- LAUSD, Research and Reporting Branch, *Fall 2020 School Experience Survey*, 2020-21.
- LAUSD, Office of the Chief Strategy Officer, *Learning Continuity and Attendance Plan*, 2020-21.

The following publicly available presentations, reports and data files were obtained from the California Department of Education (CDE):

- Public Schools and Districts Directory, 2019-20
- California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) Research Files, 2016-17 - 2018-19
- Enrollment by School, 2019-20
- Chronic Absenteeism Indicator Data, 2016-17 - 2018-19

The following publicly available presentations, reports and data files were obtained from the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH):

- DMH report to the Los Angeles County Supervisors, Quarterly progress update on the Los Angeles County Community Schools Initiative, July 20, 2020.

**Note:** Students reported as African American by LAUSD and the CDE are referenced as Black throughout the report and Hispanic students are referenced as Latino.

## Daily Schoology Engagement

Schoology was the primary online course management system LAUSD students used to communicate with their teachers, access class materials, and complete class assignments. We obtained fall and spring 2020 daily engagement data from two reports published by LAUSD's Independent Analysis Unit (IAU) and applied IAU's definitions of Schoology activity:

- Active engagement: Students who participated asynchronously that day by submitting an assignment, assessment, or posting to a discussion board.
- Passive engagement: Students who logged in or viewed content but did not complete assignments or post.
- No activity: Students who did not complete any action in Schoology.

We analyzed daily active engagement by income status, race/ethnicity, and student group. To compare engagement rates between low-income and non-low-income students, we calculated the number and percentage of non-low-income students by using the total number of students reported in IAU's report on fall 2020 Schoology usage (we subtracted the number of low-income students from the total number of students). To calculate the total number of students not actively engaging online and the total number of students that were completely disengaged in the fall by race/ethnicity, we similarly used the total number of students reported and applied appropriate percentages.

## Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism

Using chronic absenteeism data from the California Department of Education, we report the CDE-calculated percentage of students missing 15 days of school or more in LAUSD and Los Angeles County in 2019-20. We report these percentages by race/ethnicity and student group (foster youth, students experiencing homelessness and students with disabilities).

To identify and calculate the percentage of students absent three or more days a week during the 2020-21 school year, we obtained weekly attendance from distance learning update presentations from LAUSD Board of Education meetings. Attendance data was published for the weeks of October 5, 2020 through November 2, 2020 and January 11, 2021 through February 22, 2021. LAUSD reported the percentage of students attending once a week, at least three times a week, and daily for those weeks. We used the percentage of students attending at least three times a week to determine the percentage of students that were absent three times or more a week. In a distance learning update to the LAUSD Board of Education on October 6, 2020, LAUSD defined chronic absence as three or more absences per 25 days of instruction.

## TK-5 Early Literacy Results

To assess learning loss among students in grades TK-5, we obtained Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS) benchmark aggregate data from Los Angeles Unified Board of Education meeting presentations. Data was reported by LAUSD in overall percent proficiency for the entire school district and reported by some student subgroups. The percentage of students participating in this assessment was not publicly reported by the district. Reporting the aggregate data without making publicly available the data and research files presents limitations in reporting this data and analyzing learning loss.

## STAR Reading and Math Results

To assess learning loss among middle and high school students, we obtained STAR (otherwise known as Renaissance) reading and math assessment data from Los Angeles Unified Board of Education meeting presentations. We reported these results out for all students and by student group -- foster youth, homeless, students with disabilities, and English learners. LAUSD provided a range for the percentage of students participating in this assessment (between 60-70%). Reporting the aggregate data without making publicly available the data and research files presents limitations in reporting this data and analyzing learning loss.

## High School Graduation Rates

LAUSD high school graduation rates were published and shared in a distance learning update to the Los Angeles Unified Board of Education on March 16, 2021. The graduation rate for the class of 2020 was obtained from the California Department of Education DataQuest, four-year cohort graduation rates and outcomes. The graduation rates for classes 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024 were shared in the March 16th presentation. This was reported as the percentage of students that completed their A-G courses with a D or better. We used the total number of students for each class from 2019-20 enrollment the CDE files and percentages provided in the presentation to determine the approximate number of students at-risk of not graduating because they were missing one or more classes needed to graduate.

## LAUSD School Experience Survey Results

The School Experience Survey is an annual survey administered to all LAUSD schools. It provides schools with feedback from teachers, students, and parents. The district administered the survey this past fall 2020 and achieved strong student response rates-- 82% for elementary, 73% for middle, and 59% for high school students. We obtained the student survey question results on school connectedness to assess how connected students felt during distance learning.

## Synchronous Instructional Minutes

We compared the number of daily synchronous instructional minutes LAUSD provided in the fall with the four other largest districts in the state: Long Beach Unified, San Diego Unified, Fresno Unified, and Elk Grove Unified. We obtained these instructional minutes from either a district's COVID-19 re-opening plan or their agreement with their teachers' union (see sources below). When districts allotted different numbers of synchronous minutes depending on the day of the week, we took the average across the week. For example, Fresno Unified allotted 180 minutes on Mondays and 210 minutes on Tuesdays through Fridays. The average across the week was 195 minutes.

Source: LAUSD-UTLA, *2020-21 Distance learning sideletter*, August 2020; SDUSD and San Diego Education Association *tentative letter*, July 2020; Fresno Unified, *A strategic plan for reopening schools 2020-2021*; Long Beach Unified, *COVID-19 pandemic school opening & safety plan*, February 2021; Elk Grove Unified, *Distance learning FAQs, full distance learning schedules*.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



This report would not be possible without the research and writing of Jeimee Estrada-Miller and Jennifer Monica Perla. For their help in planning, dissemination, release, and communications support of the report, we would like to thank Josh McCarty, Lisa Cohen, Patricia Perez, and Maricela Cueva and the hardworking team at GoodFolk. We would like to acknowledge the researchers who contributed their thoughts and expertise on educational recovery: Dean Pedro Noguera, Dr. Joseph Bishop, Dr. Patricia E. Burch, Dr. Magaly Lavadenz, and Dr. Morgan Polikoff. Finally, we want to express our deep respect and appreciation to all of the educators and organizations that have stepped up over the last year to help Los Angeles children and families in this unprecedented moment.



# ABOUT GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS NOW

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At GPSN, we work urgently to ensure a great public school for every student. We invest in organizations and initiatives that operate or advocate for quality public schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). We help people understand the state of public education in Los Angeles and surface policy ideas and actions to improve our school system. We bring together the community to push for transformative change and hold our public education system accountable for giving every child a great public school education.

## Our Vision and Mission

Great Public Schools Now envisions a great public school for every student in Los Angeles. Guided by this vision, our mission is to invest in schools, organizations and initiatives that catalyze excellence in public education, convene leaders and uplift public understanding to advocate for great public schools.