



To: Co-Chairs and Board
Fr: Jim Cowen
Re: National Survey – Highlights and Analysis
Da: April 29, 2020

We hope this finds you healthy and safe. This is a scary and difficult period for everyone.

Main Takeaways

Over the past week, we conducted a massive nationwide survey of educators to ask their opinions on the basic options about how schools should come back from lost classroom instruction time once health authorities deem it safe to return to the classroom.

Participants prefer “business as usual” – beginning the next school year with the next grade’s instruction – although this is balanced by a widespread recognition that many students will require additional assistance. Hence, if states and districts want to explore more aggressive options – like extending the next school year – a substantial campaign is necessary to explain the need and develop proposals with support from educators.

Additionally, we learned that a substantial majority favor conducting an assessment to measure learning loss (or growth) upon returning to the classroom. This is especially significant in light of an increased anti-testing sentiment.

Our Purpose

As you know, the coronavirus has caused learning disruption on an unprecedented scale, jeopardizing student achievement for years to come.

Unfortunately, evidence shows that all students, but especially at-risk students, suffer learning loss over the summer. Of course, this loss will be even more pronounced as instruction is stopped for an additional period of two to three months (which is five months, when combined with the traditional summer).

COVID-19 has shined a bright light on inequity as more than 12 million students lacked an opportunity to learn online without access to Wi-Fi. Those students most in need of support will undoubtedly fall further behind, requiring additional assistance to ensure they can catch up.

So while many educators have continued working to meet the immediate needs of students – from technology access to nutrition – we want to begin a national discussion about how best to catch up from lost classroom instruction time once it is safe to return to the classroom.

Ultimately, our goal is to encourage states and school districts to acknowledge this learning loss and explain their plan for replacing it. Since every facet of our society and the global economy is changing because of this pandemic, traditional education must evolve as well.

The Survey

Beginning on April 16 and running for eight days, the Collaborative for Student Success conducted a voluntary online survey of 5,500+ education professionals from across the country. Every state in the country is represented with half of the states providing at least 50 responses.

A vast majority of participants were teachers (4,500; 81%). However, nearly 700 administrators also took the survey (12%). Approximately 250 policymakers and advocates participated; their opinions tended to agree, so we have combined their responses for this analysis.

The poll asked the opinion of teachers, administrators, policymakers, and education advocates to analyze four return-to-the-classroom options, suggest other alternatives, and express their reasoning about the best and worst options. The four basic options included extending the next school year, beginning the next school year where instruction stopped this school year, beginning the next school year as in any other year, and offering the opportunity to repeat the present grade. An addendum is also included highlighting additional ideas from teachers, administrators, policymakers and education advocates to combat the issue. Survey participants from across the country provided a wide variety of independent solutions as well as variations of the four proposed options in the survey.

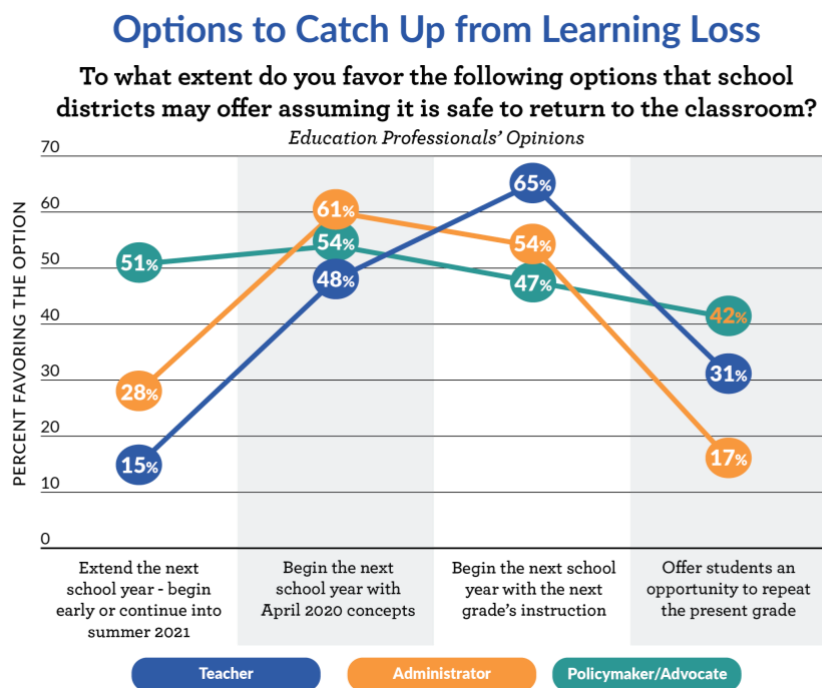
A preamble to the survey offered a link to more information about each of these options from some of the ideas' proponents: <https://forstudentsuccess.org/our-campaigns/catching-up/>. Consequently, 2,500+ unique visitors – nearly half of survey respondents – viewed this page to read more about the options. As a comparison, this is 700% more viewers than the Collaborative would attract during a regular week.

More about the participants

- 85% of respondents were White/Caucasian, 7% Hispanic/Latino, 6% Black/African American, 2% Asian Americans, and 4% other. Questionnaire responses did not significantly differ based on the race of the respondent.
- Approximately half of participants are parents with a child in a public school grades k-12 (48%), while 4% are parents with children in private or public charter schools. The remaining 47% are not parents with children in school.
- Respondents were asked to identify the ways in which COVID-19 has impacted their household. Answers included: 38% caring for children, 28% lost/reduced employment, 10% care for an individual who is not a child, 4% illness, 1% insecure housing.

Topline Findings: Basic Options Compared

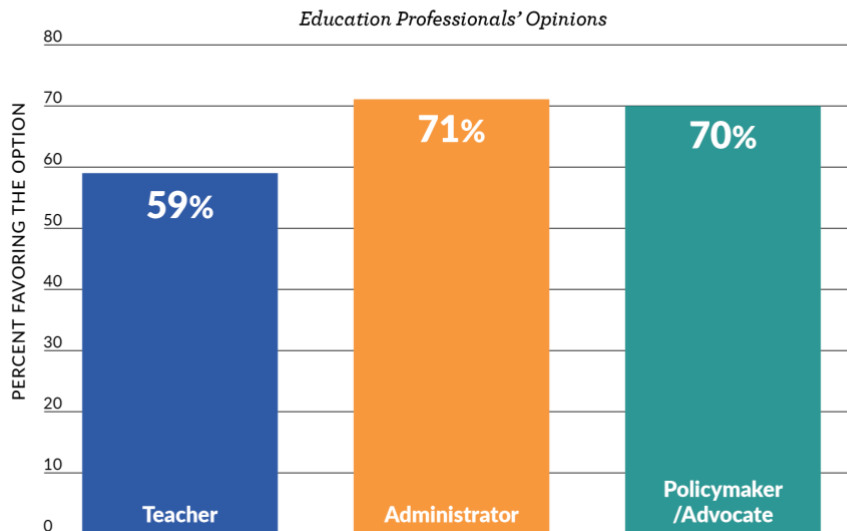
- Extend the next school year: Education advocates and policymakers want to extend the next school year by a margin of 51% support to 39% oppose, but teachers (15-77) and administrators (28-62) both oppose the idea.
- Begin next school year with April '20 concepts: Participants were split on the idea of picking up next year where classroom instruction was interrupted this year. Administrators preferred this approach (61-26) the most of the four options. Similarly, advocates/policymakers support it by a 54-34 margin and teachers agree 48-39.



- Start the 2020-2021 school year with instruction scheduled as in any other year: Teachers favor to resume the regularly scheduled instruction next year by a wide 65-23 margin. (However, in their open-ended responses, many of those same teachers call for a more targeted solution to helping the students most in need, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.) Both administrators and advocates/policymakers agreed by 54-36 and 47-41 margins, respectively.
- Advocates/policymakers believed that parents/students should have the opportunity to repeat this year's grades by a 42-35 margin, but administrators (17-66) and teachers (31-48) dislike the idea.
- Finally, a large majority of participants agreed that a high-quality assessment should be administered at the beginning of next year to help understand the amount of learning loss incurred: administrators 71-21, advocates/policymakers 70-23, and teachers 59-28. This is noteworthy in a time of increased anti-testing sentiment. The recognition that data is a powerful ally to helping right the ship is one that should be promoted.

Use an Assessment to Measure Learning Loss?

Do you favor using a high-quality assessment at the start of the 2020-2021 school year only to understand the extent of student learning loss or growth, but not to penalize students or schools?



Analysis and Recommendations

- Recent [studies warn](#) that learning loss from COVID-19 related school closures is inevitable. Ignoring this loss at the beginning of the next school year is both irresponsible and dangerous since student outcomes (especially in math) will likely crater and further widen the equity gap.
- It is particularly noteworthy that respondents overwhelmingly agree (by a 2-to-1 margin) that an **assessment is necessary** to measure learning loss (or gain) at the beginning of next year, yet most of these participants **still reject additional classroom time**. One respondent suggested, “we can fit 1.3 years of schooling into the one school year.”
- Although every state/district should be planning to address learning loss, this unprecedented emergency places enormous stress on districts to deal with more immediate challenges. We recommend a substantial public campaign to provide “air cover” and support for states to embrace more aggressive steps—including additional classroom instruction time. This campaign should:
 - A. Acknowledge the good work that educators and parents have done in the immediate response to this emergency and advance any newly installed remote learning infrastructure as a useful supplement to traditional “brick and mortar” schooling.
 - B. Explain the disastrous effects that the pending and unavoidable learning loss will have on students—despite the best efforts by schools and parents with online instruction.
 - C. Call for a diagnosis of how much learning was lost at each school. Note: Whatever assessment this is should be non-punitive and unrelated to state accountability requirements.
 - D. Acknowledge that students will have been impacted differently by the extended school closure. Instruction will need to be differentiated and flexible based on what each student knows and can do.
 - E. Build teacher/union buy-in and support for more aggressive student learning actions by addressing concerns over how they will be supported and compensated.
 - F. Put the onus on states/districts to develop a strategy to compensate for lost instruction time for those who need it.

Addendum: Respondents Offer Additional Details

Our survey also provided the opportunity for teachers, administrators, policymakers and education advocates to submit their own solutions for students and school districts. We highlighted an assortment of notable ideas below from stakeholders across the country. A majority of responses included variations of offering summer school opportunities, extending the school day, and providing additional help for teachers and staff. We also included other ideas that had not yet been considered or discussed among national experts.

Extending School:

- “I believe that we should extend the 20/21 school year and start the year with 9 weeks of reviewing and re-teaching what students missed while out.” – Administrator, North Carolina
- “Saturday session, after school sessions, lengthening the school day. These could be done in the first quarter to help kids catch up. What about a summer boot camp to do a meaningful and deep review.” – Advocate, Arizona
- “[Use] “Jump Start” programs the first three weeks of July for our most striving students, implement before/after school tutoring for students to help fill gaps, and finally - eliminate government-mandated testing to allow for more instructional time and as a bonus - free up more monies to be used in other ways to survive the COVID crisis and support children and families.” – Policymaker, Indiana
- “Start K-8 schools early in the fall to allow for time to assess students and do remediation. Offer after school programs to students who are struggling to catch up to peers and offer extended year programming to more students the following summer who might not otherwise have been considered for that option.” Policymaker, Maine
- “Extend EVERY school year by 20 instructional days. Remember, when we closed schools this Spring, most children, especially Black and Brown children were already behind (based on previous years' data). Most states were so anxious not to do standardized testing we jumped at the chance not to do it. As a result we didn't drive a stake in the ground where we were when we quit. eLearning didn't even hold our position much less advance it.” – Policymaker, South Carolina
- “I think a combination of Options 1 and 2 would be ideal, beginning the 2020-2021 school year with April 2020 concepts AND extending the 2020-2021 school year into summer 2021 to account for the extra instructional time. We would also likely need to lengthen the instructional day slightly (e.g., provide 5 more minutes per subject, per day) to account for the extra instructional days.” – Teacher, California
- “Extend the school day itself by 30 -60 minutes. That way it does not affect the entire year, but we could slowly regain the instructional time lost.” – Teacher, Florida
- “I think that students should be given a mandatory time period each day, like a study hall, wherein concepts from the end of the 2019-2020 school year are covered. This way missing concepts are integrated into the new school year rather than holding students back to review what was missed.” – Teacher, Oklahoma

Summer Options:

- “We will be offering "jump-start" programs for 3 weeks in July for 2-3 days per week if funding is available and social distancing requirements permit - and likely for the next several summers if needed and funding exists. Likewise, extended hours for targeted individual tutoring help before/after school. Again, depending on funding, which would include monies for transportation services so students lacking transportation can access the tutoring help; this will likely also need funding for daycare as many of our students provide childcare for younger siblings; therefore, childcare is necessary for these students to access before/after school tutoring sessions.” – Administrator, Indiana
- “Use summer to assess and diagnose students, and re-acclimate them to the school community, regularly but not necessarily intensely (ie just an elongation of the school year). This creates a readiness for academic rigor. And allows for designing and tailoring curriculum and instruction accordingly.” – Advocate, N/A
- “Offer summer school or tutor for those interested. Open school a week early with Reassessment as first goal to determine where to start.” – Policymaker, Maine
- “Summer school for at risk students, online classes in the summer for middle and high school kids to catch them up. Summer remediation, required reading and math packets for bridging years. Kids have already lost one month plus these 2 months of essentially no new concepts learned.” – Teacher, North Carolina
- “Offer an interim session this summer to "catch up" any deficits as an option for parents. Teachers could recommend students from their class to attend.” – Teacher, North Carolina

Additional Help:

- “Allow classroom teachers to individualize instruction for students to fill in gaps-based on each student’s need, with no pressure from end of year state testing requirements. It could take multiple years to ‘catch up.’ Extending learning opportunities for students into next summer, as needed, might be offered to individual students, based on their need.” – Administrator, Tennessee
- “Offer paid, high quality virtual training this summer for teachers regarding just-in-time supports for students with learning gaps and for digging deeply into high quality instructional material with a focus on effective differentiation. Then start the school year, when safe, with a focus on supporting students in engaging with grade level material.” – Advocate, Colorado
- “Support teachers in offering on the spot differentiation and support, perhaps through additional staff/ teacher support, moving towards grade level work as much as possible.” – Advocate, Michigan
- “Individualize the approach - assign an advisor, who actually has responsibility / accountability for connecting with students, to any student who appears to be struggling, academically or socially.” – Advocate, Minnesota
- “There are always students at different levels of development and attainment on the standards. Teachers' abilities to direct instruction to that level is already a professional skill. This is called differentiated instruction. It is easier to do when there are smaller groups of students. Give schools funding for aides and for hiring more teachers so that they can more easily do this instruction. Give them professional development in differentiated instruction (NOT just using computers which is a moot point for many many kids who will not get online or cannot).” – Policymaker, Indiana

- “Assess grade level readiness before beginning any curriculum. Offer 2 levels of classroom instruction, one beginning with missing reading, writing and math skills from this year that are necessary prerequisites for the new curriculum. Offer tutoring and additional homeschooling to attempt to catch those kids up enough to then gradually begin the next grade level material.” – Teacher, Florida
- “Collaboration between teachers and parents to work together and cover the content missed this year. We could have some parent assisted evening or Saturday classes. Parent assisted tutorials. We will need help... more adults to bring the students to where they need to be and cover the content while not falling farther behind. Our entire community will need to see this as investing in the future of our children.” – Teacher, Texas
- “Hire teacher assistants to help in all classrooms next school year to work with small groups to help students catch up.” – Teacher, Virginia

Other:

- “Have 20-21 be considered a transition year across the nation. A year where students can go back to the grade they were in but not repeat it all. Use it to finish the standards not taught and catch up on preexisting gaps as well as gaps caused by this disruption. Then when students move forward more will truly be on grade level. Enhanced instruction should be available for those without any learning gaps, if they exist.” – Administrator, Kansas
- “The fourth quarter is typically full of testing, field trips, fun end of year activities. For grades 3 and above they already taught all standards due to state testing getting ready to start. I think teachers will do what they always do, pretest readiness and teacher students where they are.” – Administrator, Ohio
- “States and districts should present parents with options to allow their children to repeat the present grade OR perhaps repeat only certain subjects if the parent anticipates their child will need additional instruction in a specific subject.” – Advocate, Texas
- “This is an opportunity to reinvest in the most underserved families. Where my children go to school, there are fine and can resume school next year with appropriate review, at the next grade level because they have had enriching experiences. This is not true with families struggling with poverty and now disproportionate impact from the virus.” – Advocate, Ohio
- “Offer/mandate after school tutoring to those children who are a grade level behind or have proven through pre-assessments that they have not mastered the necessary content that was taught via eLearning or was a missed concept due to it not being taught.” – Policymaker, Indiana
- “Prepare for another year of schooling remotely. Making sure every student has internet access that should be free for the family as a part of the students education. Students that have not been willing or able to engage in their studies should not be pushed forward. Parent workshops! Help the parents coach and support their students in their studies. Adding critical thinking curriculum to help students process information and learn how to think not what to think.” – Policymaker, Maine
- “Have all students return to the prior grade for 1 month, then move to their new grade. Several teachers either are not qualified or are not prepared with lessons to teach the classes the students were in the prior year, it makes more sense to have the students with the teachers they had last year when they finish the year at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year.” – Teacher, Florida

- “Offer a remediation elective course where students use the time to complete assignments for courses in which they may struggle. Offer free tutoring after school. Budget for remediation teachers and put struggling students in a mandatory remediation course as needed. Stagger the remediation though so students have 9 weeks of reading, 9 weeks of math, 9 weeks of science, etc. Each subject will be taught for the whole year but only in 9 week increments so at any given time, a student can be moved into a 9 week remediation course as their elective course.” – Teacher, New Mexico
- “Typically, the time after Spring Break is used to review for state testing anyway in preparation. There is very little new material introduced at that point, and what new material is to be introduced, I have been able to cover at home. On top of that, students tend to lose a lot over the summer break anyway, so realistically they will start off next year as they would have normally, confused and in need of some refreshing. I suggest using the first 3-4 weeks reviewing some of the things learned the previous year and then moving forward vigorously. I think we need to make things as normal as possible, so starting early or extending school would just add more to the chaos that is already present.” – Teacher, Texas
- “Let it go. Teachers are professionals who have always taken their students where they are and gotten them to where they need to be if the students are willing to put in the efforts and the parents provide the support. Students who have missed months of school in the past due to natural disasters have suffered no ill effects. They worked hard and it worked out. All children are different and learn at different paces. Some will suffer greatly due to this quarantine. Others will have flourished. Let the teachers administrate their tests and act on real information not supposition.” – Teacher, Washington
- “Maybe a month "term" with last year's class right at the beginning of the year. Focus on missed concepts and instruction students need for the next class/grade. Then move into the new classes/grade in late September and start right away.” – Teacher, Washington
- “Our district is doing distance learning. Therefore, in our case: a) A combination of new curriculum + built-in time into schedules for help for missing content. b) Optional (free) summer school programs paid for by the state.” – Teacher, Wyoming