Distance Learning Strategies in California Schools

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Introduction

- The pandemic has disrupted K–12 education
- Students experienced learning loss in math and English Language Arts
- Black, Latino, low-income students, English Learners, and students without internet fell behind
- Students also faced mental health issues
- More schools re-opened, but many families are staying online
Data Sources

- PPIC survey of school districts
  - mid-November 2020 to mid-January 2021
  - 205 districts responded, serving half of K–12 student population
  - Respondents are more likely to be large, unified, urban districts
  - No difference in share of high-need students

- Learning Continuity Plans (LCPs)
  - 166 LCPs from respondent districts

- US Census Household Pulse Survey
  - April 2020 to December 2020
In this report we hope to understand:

- Districts’ distance learning experiences in spring 2020
- How districts managed instruction in the 2020–21 school year
- How districts addressed potential learning losses
- Financial constraints and priorities
The digital divide persists

Percent of students with internet always available, spring 2020–fall 2020

By parental education
- No BA
- BA plus

By family income
- Low income
- High income

By race/ethnicity
- Asian
- Black
- Latino
- White

% with internet always available
- Spring 2020
- Fall 2020

** indicates statistical significance.
In-person instruction is not equitably distributed

Instructional models in fall 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of districts</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>High-Black/Latino districts</th>
<th>High-EL districts</th>
<th>High-poverty districts</th>
<th>Rural districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open for all</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open for some</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote for all</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Most districts reported improvements since spring 2020

Compared to spring 2020, my district has improved in the following areas:

- Provision of internet and/or devices: 76%
- Instruction: 75%
- Contact with students and families: 70%
- Professional development: 63%
- Student attendance: 62%
- Support for students with disabilities: 57%
- Grading student work: 51%
Most districts improved instruction in fall 2020

- Most students in grades 1–12 received at least 3 hours of instructional activities
  - At 15% of districts, middle school students received 6+ hours
  - At 22% of districts, high school students received 6+ hours
  - 2020–21 budget acts require 6 hours for grades 4–12
- Most instruction was live
- Most districts (59%) focused on new material
- More efforts to align with ELA and math standards than science or ELD
Learning loss strategies varied by district

- Assessing student learning: 68%
- Small group instruction: 66%
- Access to curriculum and programs: 60% (All districts), 73% (High poverty districts, High Black/Latino districts)
- Address social emotional learning: 43% (All districts), 61% (High poverty districts)
- Providing tutoring programs: 42% (All districts), 50% (High Black/Latino districts)

Bar chart showing the percentage of districts using various learning strategies, with distinctions for all districts, high poverty districts, and high Black/Latino districts.
Most districts provided extra resources to English Learners

- Small group instruction
- Communicating in home language
- Extra time with ELD teacher/aide
- Extra student materials
- Extra family materials, translated
- Formative/diagnostic assessments for ELs

Overall and High EL comparison.
Federal support was critical to finance higher expenses

How were COVID related expenditures financed?

- COVID funds
- Cost savings from reduced operations
- District reserves
- Budget savings
- Cost cutting from other programs
- New revenue sources
- Deferred maintenance
- Reduced staff hours, salaries
- Other

% of districts
Policy Recommendations

- Sustain additional state and federal support
- Continue investments to close the digital divide
- Prioritize in-person instruction for English Learners, students with disabilities, and foster children
- Ensure funding and services to address mental health and enhance social-emotional learning
- Expand extended learning opportunities, particularly students in underserved communities
These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.