

## Ongoing Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic on K-12 Education

### Lessons, Reflections, and Recommendations from Across Washington State

### Report Summary

#### Findings

##### **1. Students' well-being remains deeply affected**

- The pandemic has had a significant and widespread impact on the social, emotional, and behavioral well-being of students, leading to increased anxiety, depression, and behavioral issues. Left unaddressed, these impacts may follow students into adulthood, creating broader social ripple effects.
- Social isolation and increased internet use have impaired communication and social skills, resulting in social anxiety and difficulties in managing everyday social interactions and stress.
- There is a shortage of mental health providers in schools and communities, particularly in rural areas. As a result, students with mental health issues may face long waitlists for care.
- Standardized test scores have decreased, particularly for students from lower-income families, Black, Latino, and students with special needs.

##### **3. Equity gaps have widened**

- The pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing inequities in academic achievement and access to resources.
- Students from historically marginalized groups, including Black, Latino, Native American, and students with disabilities, have been disproportionately impacted.

##### **5. Educators and school staff face high stress and turnover**

- The pandemic has led to significant turnover and burnout among educators and school staff.
- School administrators are overwhelmed with crisis management and helping students meet basic needs, leaving little time for professional development or self-care.

##### **5. Community trust and civic infrastructure are critical for recovery**

- Where community engagement is strong, schools are better positioned to support recovery; where it is weak, inequities deepen.

##### **5. Funding and coordination are urgently needed**

- With the end of ESSER funds, interviewees emphasized the importance of a statewide strategy, additional resources, and stronger collaboration and coordination to address ongoing impacts.

## Recommendations

The ongoing impacts of the pandemic on K-12 education require urgent and coordinated action. By addressing the social, emotional, behavioral, and academic needs of students, and prioritizing equity, we can create a more resilient and supportive educational environment for all.

### **1. Develop statewide, locally adaptable initiatives for social, emotional, and behavioral recovery**

- Support peer-to-peer and youth-driven initiatives that improve mental health, develop skills in conflict resolution, and increase youth agency.
- Partner with local communities and community-based organizations to collaboratively identify and address students' needs.
- Emphasize approaches that strengthen belonging and build social cohesion.

### **2. Advance equity by implementing the *Equity Can't Wait* report**

- Use the "Equity Can't-Wait" report as a starting point to enable a more just, equitable, and culturally-responsive K-12 system that addresses the needs of specific groups and individuals, including English language learners and Black, Native American, Latino, and Pacific Islander students.
- Implement culturally responsive educational methods and recommit to digital equity.

### **3. Expand targeted academic interventions, such as tutoring, summer, and after-school programs**

- Expand tutoring that targets the students who need it most.
- Implement pre-college summer programs in math and writing for students enrolling in community and technical colleges and universities who need remedial help.

### **4. Support and retain a diverse, trauma-informed K-12 workforce**

- Provide funding for additional assistant principal positions to relieve principals' workload.
- Expand initiatives to address trauma and incorporate trauma awareness in programs and curricula for all staff that need it.
- Recruit and retain a diverse teacher pipeline and provide professional development opportunities.

### **5. Identify and scale promising practices**

- Organize forums for educators, administrators, and researchers to share and discuss what is working well.
- Identify and scale approaches that successfully address the social, emotional, and academic impacts of the pandemic.

### **6. More effectively engage with local communities and rebuild trust in the public school system**

- Develop a campaign to more effectively engage with local communities and rebuild trust in the public school system.
- Partner with state universities, community-based organizations, state agencies, and philanthropy to implement strategies to rebuild trust.