

# Status of School Reopening and Remote Education in Fall 2020

## Summary

New state-specific projections from Stanford University suggest the spring 2020 school closures in response to Covid-19 could have cost New Mexico students four months to more than a year of learning—a steeper loss than previously predicted. While the data needed to more definitively determine the true extent of learning loss is not yet available, these estimates should serve as an alarm to educators and policymakers, who should not delay action to provide students with the time and resources needed to catch up.

The vast majority of students will remain in remote learning through the fall semester, an approach commonly agreed to be less effective than in-person instruction. New Mexico is one of seven states subject to statewide orders keeping schools partially closed to in-person instruction, and 24 school districts that were eligible to reopen this fall had not done so by the end of October. Forty-eight school districts did reopen to elementary students under various hybrid models in September and October, and some school boards voted to remain remote for the semester regardless of whether their districts met the state's reopening criteria, including Albuquerque and Las Cruces public schools.

*Ongoing assessments and interventions are needed to address potential learning loss due to pandemic*

Remote instruction improved this fall compared with the spring as the Public Education Department restored basic accountability measures, such as attendance requirements, grades, and minimum instructional hours. Yet it remains an inadequate substitute for in-person education. New Mexico middle and high school students are failing remote classes at high rates. School districts and teachers continue to report that they are unable to reach approximately 1 in 5 students. And social isolation poses serious mental health risk to students and families.

Even before the pandemic, large learning gaps existed among New Mexico's most at-risk students. To address Covid-19-related learning losses that could widen those gaps, the Legislature could consider a universal extension of the school calendar in FY22 through its existing K-5 Plus and extended learning programs at an incremental cost of \$138 million. School districts, meanwhile, should consider evidence-based strategies such as early-warning systems, high-dosage tutoring, and acceleration academies.

Finally, the state needs a full and transparent roadmap for getting kids back to school. Establishing the benchmarks communities must meet to pursue additional phases of reentry will allow districts to more effectively plan for reopening and give citizens clear targets for suppressing the virus. The academic, social, and economic costs of school closures are significant, and emerging evidence suggests that, with low community transmission and mitigation measures like universal masking, schools can reopen without becoming significant sources of Covid-19 infection. Again controlling the virus to levels that make it possible for more students to return to school should be a central project for the state and its citizens going forward.

LFC staff would like to acknowledge and thank Legislative Education Study Committee staff and Public Education Department staff for their thoughtful contributions to this report, particularly with districts' assurance documents. LFC staff would also like to thank the 3,191 teachers who responded to the LFC teacher survey, representing 55 districts and 7 charter schools; teachers and staff who participated in group forums; parents and teachers who participated in surveys and group forums; and superintendents who took valuable time to speak with LFC staff.

# Spotlight

Program Evaluation Unit  
Legislative Finance Committee  
October 28, 2020



NEW MEXICO  
LEGISLATIVE  
FINANCE  
COMMITTEE



## Covid-19 Will Likely Widen New Mexico's Existing Learning Gaps.

New state-specific projections from Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes suggest the spring 2020 school closures could have cost New Mexico students an estimated four months to more than a year of learning – an even steeper loss than a national study based on the same data predicted this spring.

These troubling estimates underscore the need for reliable assessment of all students and targeted interventions for those who have fallen the most behind. Unfortunately, in New Mexico quality assessment data that could identify those students and more definitively quantify Covid-19-related learning loss does not yet exist on a statewide level nor in some school districts. Schools nationwide were permitted to skip end-of-year assessments in the spring, and the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) made beginning-of-year fall assessments optional for school districts with some exceptions. Many districts chose to assess students, but both PED and districts question the reliability of the results because students appear to have received help from parents at home. Low completion rates relative to assessments administered in person may also skew the results by failing to capture the least engaged students.

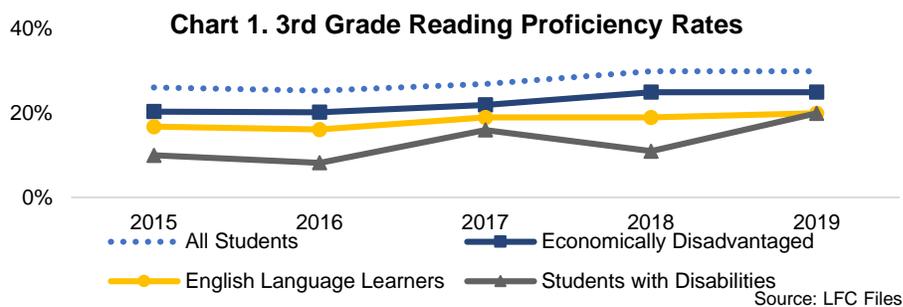
Even with these limitations, data LFC gathered from school districts and academic research indicate learning loss is likely occurring and is particularly pronounced for low-income students. Additionally, districts, teachers, and parents who participated in LFC focus groups and an LFC teacher survey report that sustaining student engagement in remote learning is difficult, particularly with no broad return to in-person learning in sight. This summer, an LFC report found decreased engagement in remote learning as the spring semester progressed. Waning engagement this fall could further exacerbate learning loss.

***Stanford researchers estimate spring closures to in-person learning could have caused more than a year of learning loss for some New Mexico students.*** A June 2020 LFC report cited estimates from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) that, at the time, projected students nationally would return to school in the fall three months (60 days) to a year (180 days) behind due to in-person school closures in spring 2020. Since then, NWEA partnered with Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) and, in October, provided state-specific estimates of learning loss related to the spring shutdown based on historic achievement data and academic regression during summer break. For New Mexico students, the results are slightly worse than the earlier national estimates. Researchers projected New Mexico's third through eighth-grade students would be an average of 98 school days behind in reading (range: 44 to 161) and 208 days behind in math (range: 102 to 381) this fall. In other words, the research indicates the average elementary and middle school student entered their new grade four months to more than a year behind where they would have been in core subjects absent the pandemic.



While these projections account only for the disruption to education last spring, a June 2020 McKinsey & Company report found that if schools delay in-person reopening until January 2021, as many districts in New Mexico have decided to do, students could suffer an additional three to 14 months of learning losses.

**Covid-19 related learning loss could compound existing achievement gaps.** Previous LFC analysis shows that, even before the pandemic, the average student in New Mexico entered kindergarten so far behind that they need extra learning time to reach grade-level proficiency. The need for extra time in school tends to be particularly significant for students who are English language learners, Native American, Black, Hispanic, or from economically disadvantaged families.

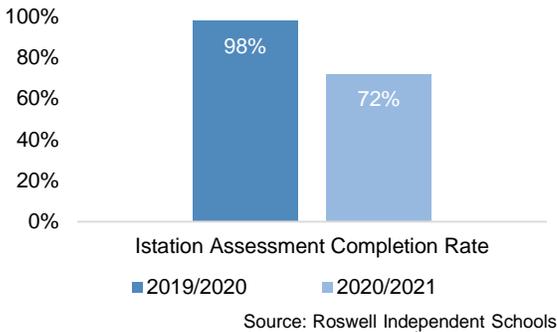


**The Public Education Department made fall 2020 assessments optional for many districts, eliminating the opportunity for statewide data collection to validate these projections.** When schools nationwide closed to in-person learning last spring, the U.S. Department of Education announced it would grant a waiver for states to skip federally mandated testing requirements for the year. PED further waived the requirement for all end-of-year testing. For the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, PED also provided flexibility for schools to not administer beginning-of-the-year formative assessments or report the results to the state. Specifically, PED’s September assessment calendar noted:

- The Preschool and Kindergarten Observation Tool is still required for Pre-K but optional for K.
- The Istation beginning-of-year test for K-2nd grade is optional for most districts to administer between August and October with some exceptions. The 11 districts awarded a “Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy” grant are required to administer the English language arts portion of the Istation, and the 88 schools in 44 districts designated as Reading Achievement Math & School Culture schools are required to administer both the English language arts and math Istation assessments. Additionally, districts that were awarded funding for K-5 Plus are required to administer Istation to K-2 and the Interim New Mexico Measures of Student Success and Achievement (I-MSSA) test to grades 3-5.



**Chart 2. Assessment Completion Rates Declined by 26% in Roswell Elementary Schools**



**Many districts opted to assess students remotely but found the results unreliable due to lower-than-usual completion rates and testing irregularities.** A number of school districts shared fall 2020 Istation data with the LFC, some of which showed comparable or better performance compared to the prior year. Unfortunately, PED and school districts believe the assessment data is not valid. In at least some districts, fewer students completed the remote fall assessments, reflecting an ongoing issue with engagement identified by LFC staff. In Roswell, for instance, 98 percent of students completed Istation assessments last year compared to only 72 percent this fall. This decline introduces a heavy selection bias, meaning the data underrepresents the least engaged students who will be most impacted by school closures making a year to year comparison less meaningful. Second, students may have received help on assessments from parents or other adult caregivers at home. As one superintendent told LFC staff, “We are finding that our engaged parents are doing very well in school, while we’re not sure how well their students are doing.”

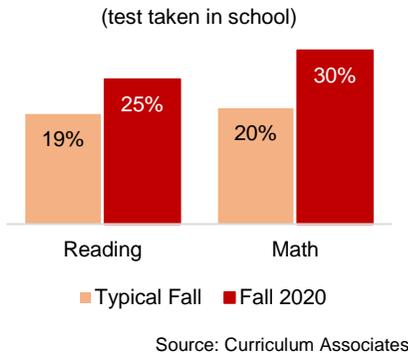
Despite these challenges, troubling indicators of learning loss are evident in some district data. Third graders in Roswell’s public schools started the 2020/2021 school year with lower reading comprehension levels than the 2019/2020 cohort and are so far making less progress, for instance. Notably, these data may underestimate the learning loss that is actually occurring because assessment completion rates in the district dropped significantly, as previously mentioned.

**Testing data outside of New Mexico provides support for these preliminary findings.** On October 1, administrators of Bourbonnais, a school district south of Chicago operating in a hybrid model, noted little change in their fall 2019 to fall 2020 assessment scores in reading for first through eighth grades, but worse scores across the board in math. “My suspicion is that kids are more likely to read at home,” Bourbonnais Assistant Superintendent Jim Duggan said. “They are much less likely to say, ‘I’m going to challenge myself with math problems or teach myself some new concepts in math.’”

On October 6, the Tennessee Department of Education reported that, based on information volunteered by 38 districts covering 30 thousand back-to-school assessment tests, third graders would be expected to experience a 50 percent decrease in reading proficiency and 65 percent decrease in math proficiency. As of the date of that report, more than 90 percent of Tennessee school districts were offering in-person learning.

On October 5, Curriculum Associates, a developer of curriculum and diagnostic assessments used by nearly 30 percent of kindergarten through eighth grade students across the country released an analysis of results from its fall diagnostic test. The company found that students who took the test in school were more unprepared, testing two or more grade levels below their current grade. The differences were especially stark in grades

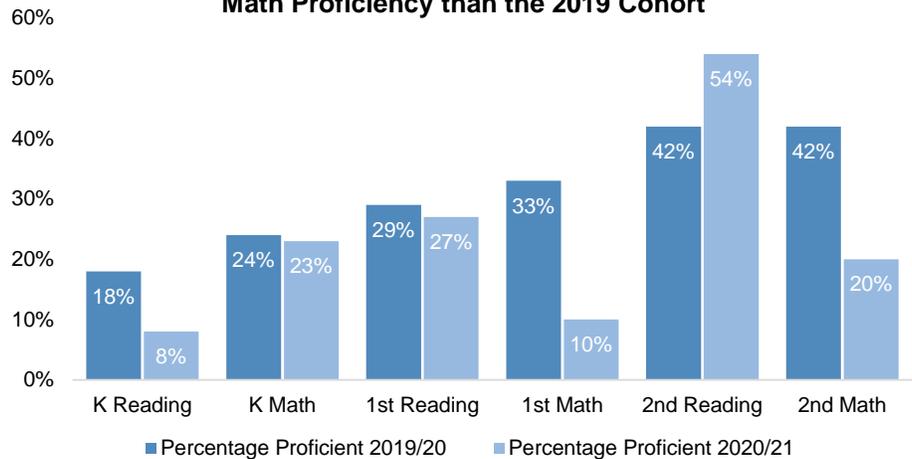
**Chart 3. Percent of students that tested two or more grade levels below on Curriculum Associates fall diagnostic tests (test taken in school)**



two through four and were worse in math than in reading. The company also found that students who took the fall diagnostic assessment at home showed an improvement over previous years. While company analysts could not definitively determine the cause of the disparity between at-home and in-school testing, they assumed students at home received parental support.

Cloudcroft Municipal Schools, where 80 percent of elementary students have returned to the classroom four days per week, was the only district LFC requested assessment data from that both provided it and assessed students in person. The results of its beginning-of-year Istation assessments primarily showed evidence of learning loss in math, consistent with national trends and Stanford’s projections of steeper declines in math. The results of the reading test showed mixed results, but overall, relatively little evidence of learning loss, while the math test showed significantly lower proficiency rates among first and second graders compared with 2019.

**Chart 4. Cloudcroft K-2 Students Started 2020 With Lower Math Proficiency than the 2019 Cohort**

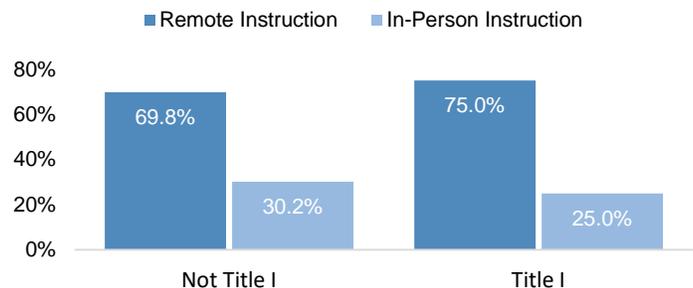


Source: Cloudcroft Independent Schools

**School closures to in-person learning – and the associated learning loss – are likely to have long-term and disparate impacts**

**Students at Title I schools, which qualify for special federal funds due to high numbers of low-income students, are more likely to be receiving remote instruction than students at non-Title I schools.** In an LFC teacher survey, administered between October 9 – 16, with 3,191 teachers responding, nearly two-thirds of teachers reported that they taught at a Title I school. Title I is a federal program that provides funding to schools where at least 40 percent of students are from low-income families<sup>1</sup>. Compared with teachers from non-Title I schools, teachers at Title I schools were more likely to report that they were teaching remotely. Among teachers at Title I schools, only 25 percent reported that they were teaching in-person, compared with 30 percent of teachers at non-Title I schools. This suggests that at-risk students in New Mexico are less likely to have access to the benefits of in-person instruction. PED should continue to monitor the

**Chart 5. Children at Title I Schools Are Significantly Less Likely to Be Receiving In-Person Instruction**



Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey



academic outcomes of students receiving different modes of instruction. Previous LFC and LESC program evaluations have found that students who attend virtual schools where students receive all of their instruction online produce poorer student outcomes.<sup>ii</sup> Furthermore, the ABDUL Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) reviewed the effectiveness of many different kinds of education technology interventions and found that students in online only courses tend to perform worse than students in in-person-only courses, but can benefit from some combination of in-person learning and remote learning with interactive lessons.<sup>iii iv</sup>

***Remote learning is likely to disproportionately impact low-income students academically.*** Data from Zearn, an online math instructional program used by over 43 thousand New Mexico students indicates that student progress decreased by 17 percent at the end of last school year relative to January 2020, with the drop disproportionately driven by low-income students. The data provides some evidence that the disruptions Covid-19 has caused to education will widen socioeconomic achievement gaps because of disparities in access to computers, home internet connections, and direct instruction from teachers.

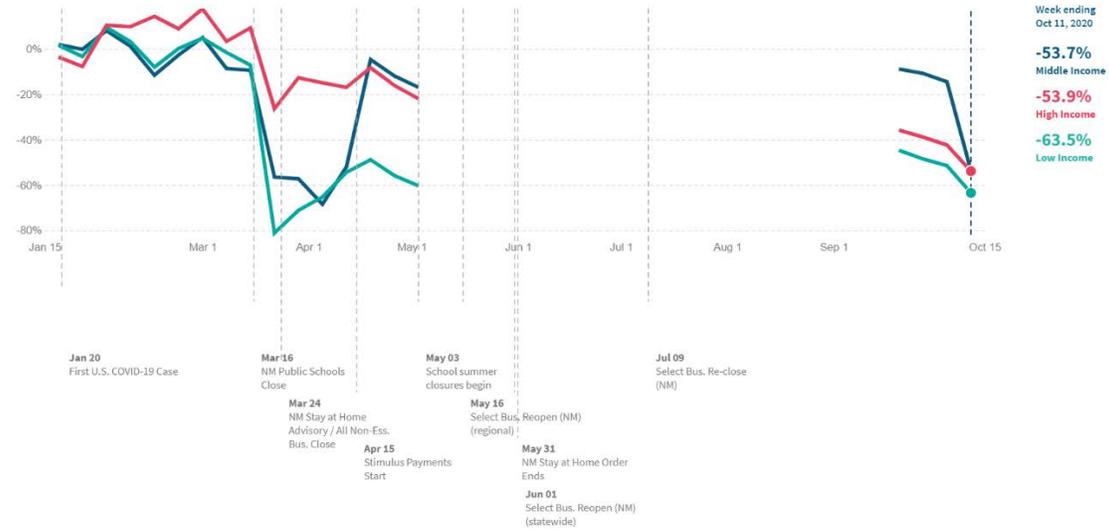
Researchers from Brown University and Harvard University analyzed data from Zearn to track online participation and progress in math both before and after schools closed. Their analysis found that in early May, student progress in math decreased by about half in classrooms located in low-income ZIP codes, by 9 percent in classrooms in high-income ZIP codes and not at all in classrooms in middle-income ZIP codes. This means low-income students were progressing through only about half the math curriculum they were prior to the pandemic. Since returning to school in the fall, online participation and progress in the math program continued to decline in New Mexico and are below national averages. Relative to January 2020, participation in New Mexico was down 41.6 percent compared with 12.1 percent nationally for the week ending October 25. Student progress was down 39 percent compared with 7.2 percent nationally. It is somewhat unclear whether indexing this year's data to last January is still appropriate, however, because schools that are still registered with Zearn but possibly not using the program this year continue to be included in the dataset.



**Figure 6. New Mexico Online Math Participation in Zearn Comparing Low, Middle, and High Income Students**

**Percent Change in Student Participation\***

In **New Mexico**, as of **October 11 2020**, students from middle income ZIP codes **decreased** participation in online math coursework by **53.7%** compared to January 2020.



\*Change in active students using an online math curriculum, indexed to Jan 6-Feb 2, 2020. This series is based on data from Zearn using online usage data from Zearn Math, a math program normally used in classrooms that combines hands-on instruction with digital lessons. Data is limited to schools using Zearn as a regular part of weekly teaching in the indexing period. Series ends on May 3rd, 2020 to coincide with the time when schools (nationally) began to end for the summer; the series will resume in September 2020 for the 2020-2021 academic year.  
 last updated: October 13, 2020 next update expected: October 26, 2020

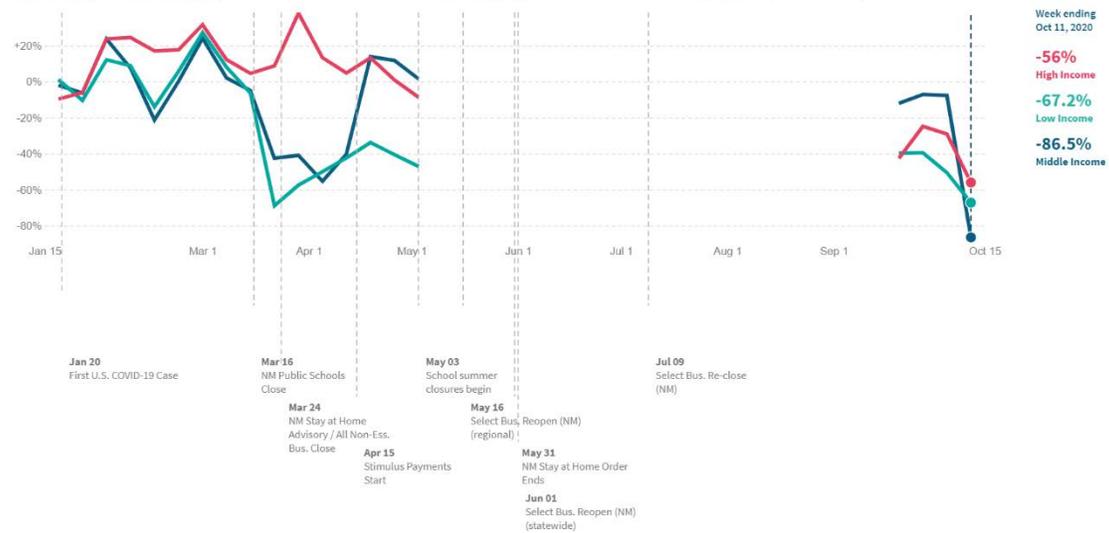
visit [tracktherecovery.org](https://tracktherecovery.org) to explore

Source: <https://tracktherecovery.org/> (Retrieved October 15, 2020)

**Figure 7. New Mexico Student Progress in Math on Zearn Comparing Low, Middle, and High Income Students**

**Percent Change in Student Math Progress\***

In **New Mexico**, as of **October 11 2020**, students from middle income ZIP codes **decreased** progress in online math coursework by **86.5%** compared to January 2020.



\*Change in student progress through online math curriculum, indexed to Jan 6-Feb 2, 2020. This series is based on data from Zearn using online usage data from Zearn Math, a math program normally used in classrooms that combines hands-on instruction with digital lessons. Data is limited to schools using Zearn as a regular part of weekly teaching in the indexing period. Series ends on May 3rd, 2020 to coincide with the time when schools (nationally) began to end for the summer; the series will resume in September 2020 for the 2020-2021 academic year.  
 last updated: October 13, 2020 next update expected: October 26, 2020

visit [tracktherecovery.org](https://tracktherecovery.org) to explore

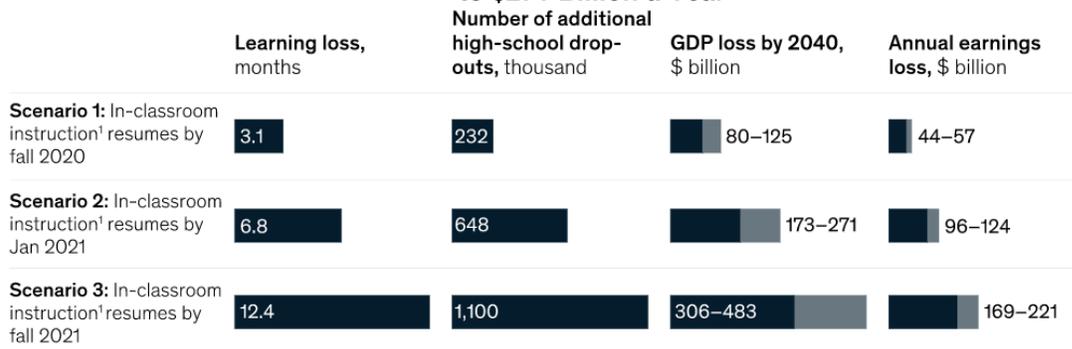
Source: <https://tracktherecovery.org/> (Retrieved October 15, 2020)



**School closures could increase high school dropout rates by up to 9 percent.** Covid-19 is disrupting many of the supports that can help vulnerable kids stay in school: academic engagement and achievement, strong relationships with caring adults, and supportive home environments. Under normal conditions, students who miss more than 10 days of school are 36 percent more likely to drop out. (Current annual dropout rates are 6.5 percent for Hispanic students, 5.5 percent for Black students, and 3.9 percent for white students.) In the wake of school closures following Hurricane Katrina (2005), Hurricane Maria (2017), and other natural disasters, 14 percent to 20 percent of students never returned to school. McKinsey & Company estimated that an additional 2 percent to 9 percent of high-school students nationally could drop out as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated school closures to in-person learning – 232 thousand ninth-to-11th graders in the mildest scenario to 1.1 million in the worst one.

A recent survey by EdWeek also indicates that high-school graduates from low-income families are almost twice as likely to have their post-high school plans disrupted by Covid-19.<sup>v</sup> With lower levels of learning and higher numbers of dropouts, students affected by COVID-19 could potentially be less productive than students from generations that did not experience a similar gap in learning. Furthermore, if other countries mitigate the impact of lost learning and the United States does not, American competitiveness will be hurt. By 2040, most of the current kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup>-grade cohort will be in the workforce. McKinsey & Company estimate a GDP loss of \$173 billion to \$271 billion a year – a 0.8 to 1.3 percent hit.

**Figure 8. McKinsey & Company Estimates Covid-19 Learning Loss Could Decrease GDP by up to \$271 Billion a Year**



<sup>1</sup>Or instruction as effective as in-classroom instruction.

Source: Dorn, E., Hancock, B., Sarakatsannis, J., & Viruleg, E. (2020, June). COVID-19 and student learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime. McKinsey & Company. Available: <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Industries/Public%20and%20Social%20Sector/Our%20Insights/COVID-19%20and%20student%20learning%20in%20the%20United%20States%20The%20hurt%20could%20last%20a%20lifetime/COVID-19-and-student-learning-in-the-United-States-FINAL.pdf>

## High-Quality Assessment and Extending the School Year Could Help Mitigate Learning Loss

**Assessment data that is standardized and comparable across time and school districts is needed to quantify learning loss statewide and identify potential disparities between districts, schools, and student groups.**

Researchers from Stanford and the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), whose learning loss projections LFC cited in its spring and fall Covid-19 education reports, note that rigorous, student-level learning assessments are necessary tools to mitigate the Covid-19 learning slide. The researchers recommend ongoing evaluation, assessment, and monitoring of student learning loss to determine areas of need and target resources to schools and students that are most impacted. Educators should aim to use strong diagnostic assessments and frequent progress checks, both of which should align with historical assessment trends to help policymakers identify and address new areas of need.

In its planning over the summer for remote learning, the Public Education Department developed a comprehensive, balanced assessment system including formative, interim, and summative assessments.<sup>vi</sup> The goal of the assessment system is to inform teachers on student competency and learning gaps, provide feedback to students and families, and provide insight into areas of need requiring broader support and policy action at the district and state levels. PED provided various formative and interim assessments – Istation, Cognia, College Board, and Dynamic Learning Maps – that were aligned to state content standards and summative assessments. The assessments were available to all New Mexico public schools at no cost.

LFC analysis of district reentry plans and a fall LFC teacher survey found many districts and teachers are using assessments to understand their students’ skills and needs. In a review of 81 district reentry plans, formally known as “assurance documents,” 85 percent reported that they had a plan to identify which students might be behind and 88 percent had a plan to assess students using formative or short-cycle assessments. However, how districts use assessments and the types they employ vary widely. For example, only 38 (47 percent) districts listed Istation and only five (6 percent) listed Cognia.

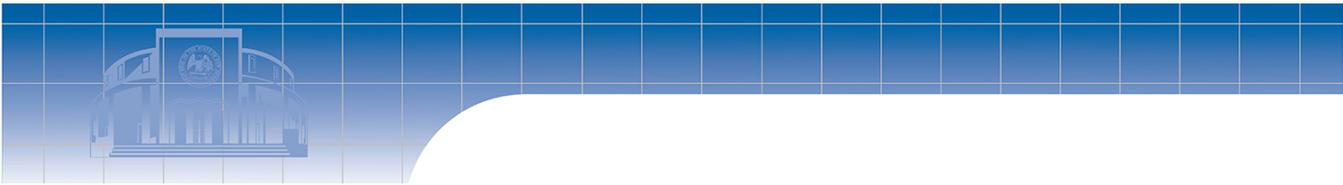
Additionally, as this report details, the utility of these assessments is limited when administered outside the classroom. PED was therefore reluctant to share the Istation data it has collected this year with LFC. Going forward, PED should determine how to best collect reliable assessment data under these unusual circumstances to inform instruction and statewide policy. The department should also consider providing technical support from its accountability bureau to help with data interpretation to address selection bias concerns. As an October 2020 report from the Aspen Institute on the challenges of testing this school year stated: “State standardized tests operate on a long planning and quality-control cycle, therefore, the time to act is now. Planning must begin almost immediately. Waiting until January or February will be too late to adapt testing systems to best understand and act on opportunity gaps and learning progress.”

**Table 9. NM School Districts Use of Assessments for Fall 2020**

Assessment	Percent
Istation	46.3%
Iready	8.5%
SAT	7.3%
Edgenuity	7.3%
Cognia	6.1%
Illuminate	6.1%
Maps	6.1%
Canvas	6.1%
NWEA	4.9%
ISIP	3.7%
Imagine	3.7%
Lexia	3.7%
ACT	3.7%
Edulastic	3.7%
CBMs	3.7%
IXL	3.7%
Achieve	2.4%
EOCs	2.4%
RTI	2.4%
MLSS	2.4%
Not listed	26.8%

Note: Percentages based on 81 school district assurance documents reviewed.

Source: New Mexico school district fall 2020 assurance documents



The Aspen Institute also recommended separating testing from accountability this school year and designing systems to collect contextual data on student access to the resources, tools, and experiences they need to learn. LFC reports and briefs since the start of the pandemic have attempted to collect such data on access to digital technology, types of instruction available to students, and engagement.

**To mitigate lost learning time, the Legislature could consider a universal extension of the school calendar for FY22 at an incremental cost of \$138 million.** Applying Stanford’s estimate of learning loss in New Mexico to all grade levels, a kindergartener in spring 2020 will have entered the first grade approximately 153 days behind where they should be. In the best-case scenario, that student will be in a school that offers the K-5 Plus extended school year program for their second through fifth-grade years, alleviating about two-thirds of that loss (100 of the 153 days) over the next four years. However, without some additional intervention, that first-grader will still likely not have enough time in the classroom to make up the other one-third of learning time. This lost time will potentially affect that student’s eventual SAT scores and even their success in graduating high-school or attending college.

Adding 25 extra days to the calendar for a first-grade student in the 2020-2021 school year for the remainder of their elementary years and 10 days for their middle and high school years, should provide enough time for them to catch up and even add a few extra days by the time they graduate high school.

**Table 10: Adding 25 Days to K-5 and 10 Days for Older Grade Should Make up Learning Time Lost Due to Covid-19-Related School Closures in Spring 2020**

	Grade												
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Days of Covid-19 related learning loss	COVID Closure - Spring 20	-153	-128	-103	-78	-53	-43	-33	-23	-13	-3	7	17
Potential extra days added to the school year			25	25	25	25	10	10	10	10	10	10	10

Source: Stanford CREDO, LFC files

The Legislature already funds a voluntary, evidence-based K-5 Plus program to create more learning time for at-risk students who enter school less prepared. By statute, the program extends the school year for a whole elementary school by 25 days, in which time the students stay with their existing teachers and have time to cover subjects they otherwise would not (Section 22-13D-2 NMSA 1978). Further, research shows that the 25 days should be added without breaks between the added days and the school year. For schools unwilling or unable to add 25 additional days to their class time, the Legislature has also offered funding under the extended learning time program (ELTP) for districts to add 10 days for all grades without the school-wide and same-teacher requirements.

Previous LFC research has detailed the benefits of extended learning time and K-5 Plus. In FY19, as part of the *Martinez-Yazzie* lawsuit, the 1st Judicial District Court indicated at-risk interventions like K-3 Plus (the precursor to K-5 Plus) and other extended learning time opportunities could close achievement gaps. However, in the last two fiscal years, many districts and charter schools have not voluntarily extended their school calendars, despite funding available to do so. Only 13 of the state’s 89 districts took advantage of K-5 Plus funding this school year, covering 11 percent of the elementary student population. Forty-six districts received funding for ELTP to serve 42 percent of the 6-12 population. Because education experts now expect all students, not just at-risk students, to be behind in their learning, the Legislature could consider a universal expansion of the school year beginning in FY22. Using existing K-5 Plus and Extended Learning Time funding factors, the Legislature could expect the cost of extending school for 25 days for kindergarten through fifth grades and 10 days for sixth through 12<sup>th</sup> grades to be approximately \$289.6 million in FY22. LFC estimates include continued funding for districts that implemented K-5 Plus and ELTP for elementary students in FY21.

An estimated \$151 million in recurring funding for K-5 Plus and extended learning will be available in FY22. The remainder of the cost to implement universal extended learning could come from the Public Education Reform Fund, which will reach an estimated \$158 million from reversions of prior years’ K-5 Plus and ELTP appropriations. Alternatively, the Legislature could reprioritize resources, like PED special program funds. With declining birth rates and a shrinking student population, the cost of universal extended learning may also decrease over time. Finally, the Legislature may want to consider providing the education secretary with some flexibility in implementing an extended school year, such as waivers for small districts.

**Districts and charters could also reprioritize existing calendar days to focus on learning loss.** In the past five years, LFC staff have outlined a number of ways in which districts could add days of instruction without extending the school year far into the summer. Districts can repurpose days set aside during the regular school year for extended breaks and early release times to full, regular classroom days. A 2018 LFC evaluation of extended learning time opportunities found many districts and charters – including three of the state’s five largest districts – have regular, sometimes weekly, early release days. If repurposed, the classroom hours gained could add up to most of the extended learning time necessary. The same holds true if schools were to add back a few days against breaks over the fall, spring, and holidays. The Texas Education Agency took a similar approach to address potential learning loss due to school closures in the spring. The Texas intersessional calendar option built in blocks of time during breaks for targeted student populations to attend for the specific purpose of remediation.

**Table 11. FY22 Cost to Extend the School Calendar in Response to Covid-19 Learning Loss**

FY21 unit cost	\$4,531.74
K-5 multiplier	0.3
ELTP multiplier	0.11
K-5 students	146,078
6-12 students	175,333
K-5 plus units	43,823
ELTP units*	20,091
FY22 K-5 Plus cost for K-5	\$198,596,255
FY22 ELTP cost for 6-12	\$91,048,140
Total Cost FY22	\$289,644,395
Est. Recurring Appropriation	\$151,290,000
<b>Incremental Cost</b>	<b>\$138,354,395</b>

\*Note: ELTP units include continued funding for districts that implemented K-5 Plus and ELTP for elementary students in FY21

Source: Staff analysis of LFC files



Under the **Attendance for Success Act**, schools must adopt tiered interventions for students who are missing school. Students with high rates of absenteeism may be referred to Engage NM, a program PED offered to all districts this school year to provide support for students who are not engaged in remote learning. When students continue to miss school even after interventions have been offered and after outreach to their families, including written notification, they are referred to the Children, Youth and Families Department. Districts are required to report CYFD referrals to PED.

***In addition to extended classroom time, districts should consider evidence-based strategies for making up learning loss such as early-warning systems, high-dosage tutoring, and acceleration academies.***

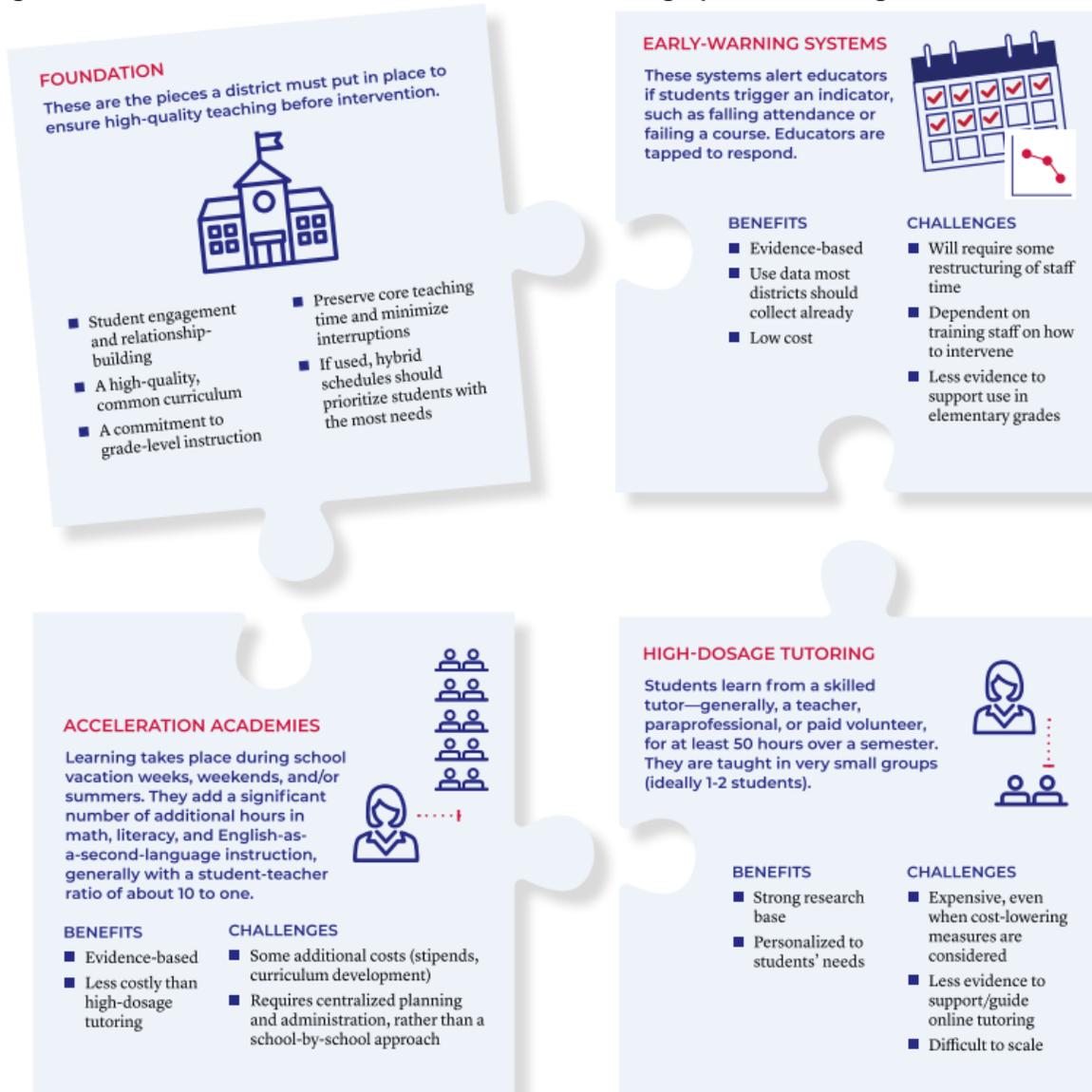
Interventions and services aimed at making up lost learning should be layered upon a solid academic foundation at school. This means that schools and districts should prioritize: teaching grade-level material for all students, a way to track each student’s whereabouts, a curriculum synced across schools and delivery methods (in-person and remote), plenty of uninterrupted teaching time, and schedules that benefit the students most likely to need additional help. In order to implement effective interventions, schools and districts must first identify the students who need extra help. Early-warning systems can track indicators like attendance, behavioral data, grades and assessment data throughout the year to identify students who are falling behind and need extra academic or social-emotional assistance, helping schools and districts. There is currently no statewide early-warning system; implementing such systems is a decision left to districts and schools. However, the Attendance for Success Act does require districts to report on attendance and truancy interventions.

Research indicates that one-on-one or one-to-two tutoring is one of the most effective ways to help struggling students, but could be cost prohibitive, particularly if district’s budgets are cut due to pandemic-related revenue declines. An effective alternative to high-dosage tutoring could be acceleration academies. Acceleration academies include extended learning time programs during spring or fall breaks or Saturdays with a targeted group of students. In these small group settings, teachers can use research-based strategies to improve students’ foundational skills.

Reentry plans submitted to the Public Education Department showed that at least some districts were already planning to implement similar strategies this school year using existing funding. For example, 61 percent of districts indicated they had a plan to provide individual tutoring to students, and 46 percent of districts reported they had a plan to provide other types of accelerated or focused learning opportunities to students who are behind. Cloudcroft Municipal Schools, for instance, planned to offer daily after-school tutoring to all students and hired a math coach. Cimarron Municipal Schools, which operates on a four-day school week, planned to use its 10 days of extended learning time for “Monday school” during the normal school year for students identified as needing remediation. Finally, an increase in at-risk units in the funding formula starting in FY19 was intended to provide additional resources to districts with large at-risk populations for programs such as tutoring and accelerated learning opportunities.



**Figure 12. Evidence-Based Recommendations for Making-up Lost Learning Due to Covid-19**



Source: Education Week (2020, August 19). Overcoming COVID-19 Learning Loss. Available: <https://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/reopening-schools/overcoming-covid-19-learning-loss.html?cmp=eml-eb-sub-srprmo-10072020&M=59713172&U%E2%80%A6>



## Remote Instruction Improved in the Fall but Remains an Inadequate Substitute for In-Person Learning

Schools closed to in-person learning abruptly last spring without time for teachers and administrators at the state or local level to plan for the transition to remote learning. As a result, the state waived basic standards like attendance and grading. Students lost five to eight weeks of in-class time, and many lacked access to technology to engage online. In an LFC survey, teachers reported less than half of students were actively participating at year’s end.

Remote instruction has undoubtedly improved this fall. The Public Education Department restored basic accountability measures, requiring schools to take and report attendance, to give students grades, and to provide required instructional hours. The department also recommended teachers provide more hours of direct or “synchronous” instruction than in the spring. Districts had time to prepare teachers and parents for remote learning and some adjusted their curriculums to focus on the essential skills and concepts students would need for grade-level work this year and next. As one district administrator told LFC, “School feels more like school.”

Yet despite substantial improvements, remote instruction remains an inadequate substitute for in-person learning. Teachers, superintendents, and parents who participated in LFC interviews or focus groups reported concerning levels of depression and anxiety among students due to isolation or the challenge of keeping up with schoolwork online. Additionally, establishing and sustaining student engagement is a challenge. Teachers who responded to a fall LFC survey reported being unable to reach 1 in 5 students, with 40 percent not consistently completing offline assignments. As another example, nearly a month into the school year, 1,428 students in the Carlsbad Municipal Schools had not logged on for remote learning a single time – roughly a quarter of the district’s enrollment.

***The time students spend in direct instruction varies around the state, with districts implementing a number of different remote learning models.***

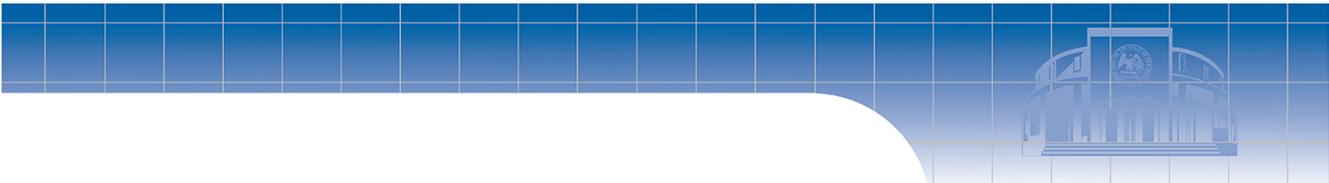
Following PED’s guidance, students should spend up to three hours per day in direct or “synchronous” instruction with teachers. Synchronous instruction refers to the time students and teachers are engaged in learning together in real time. Students are required to complete additional offline assignments, practice activities, or “asynchronous” work during the remainder of the school day. Sample schedules provided by Albuquerque Public Schools show students spend between one-and-a-half and three-and-a-half hours in direct instruction per day. Additionally, the district’s sample schedules block off 45 minutes of a teacher’s day for one-on-one or small group intervention; students who are struggling may receive extra time with their teachers during those periods.

**Remote Learning Models in New Mexico**

**Remote Instruction:** Teachers provide direct instruction via Zoom or another platform and students complete additional assignments offline.

**Virtual Instruction:** Students follow a self-paced online curriculum with no live instruction from teachers in their school district.

**Paper Packets:** Students pick up their schoolwork in paper form weekly with teachers available for phone, text, or online help.



**Figure 13. Albuquerque Public Schools Sample High School Schedule for Remote Learning for Academic Year 2020-21**

PERIOD	SAMPLE STUDENT		SAMPLE TEACHER	
	TUESDAY/THURS	WEDNESDAY/FRIDAY	TUESDAY/THURSDAY	WEDNESDAY/FRIDAY
1 7:30-8:15	45 min- Synchronous online	45 min- Asynchronous offline	45 min- Synchronous online	45 min-(Parent contact)*
2/3 8:20-9:50	45 min- Synchronous online	45 min- Synchronous online	45 min- Synchronous online	(3)Prep
	45 min- Asynchronous offline	45 min- Asynchronous offline	45 min-(Parent contact )*	
9:55-10:20	ADVISORY or Break 25 min- Synchronous online	AM BREAK	ADVISORY or Break 25 min- Synchronous online	35 min- (Lesson Planning)*
4/5 10:25-11:55	45 min- Synchronous online	45 min- Synchronous online	45 min- Synchronous online	45 min- Synchronous online
	45 min- Asynchronous offline	30 min- Asynchronous offline	45 min-( Student Intervention)*	45 min- (Student Intervention)*
Lunch 12:00-12:30				
6/7 12:35-2:05	45 min- Synchronous online	45 min- Synchronous online	(6)PLC	45 min- Synchronous online
	45 min- Asynchronous offline	45 min- Asynchronous offline		45 min- (Lesson Planning)*
			Office Hours* 2:10-2:25	
SYNCHRONOUS CLASS MEETING ONLINE		STUDENT WORKING OFFLINE	TEACHER WORKING OFFLINE	

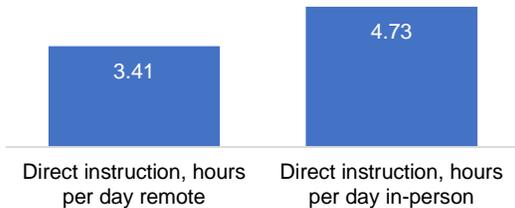
Some districts, including Rio Rancho, Roswell, and Carlsbad, have offered families a “virtual” schooling option, where students follow a self-paced curriculum and receive no direct instruction, though they do receive support from district staff. These districts also offer a remote option with direct instruction. Hobbs is delivering its core curriculum for all students through Edgenuity, another virtual platform. Students access a week’s worth of work at a time and complete it at their own pace, and teachers host daily Zoom meetings to check-in and help. Teachers also use Google classroom for electives that are not available on Edgenuity. Additionally, some districts with poor internet connectivity or which had not yet received devices for students offered instruction via paper packets, another entirely “asynchronous” model. According to LFC analysis of the remote learning plans submitted to PED, 44 percent of school districts made at least some instruction available in paper packets to families who needed it.

Additionally, teachers surveyed in the fall reported spending more time providing synchronous learning and more time planning than in the spring. However, teachers who are currently teaching in-person reported providing



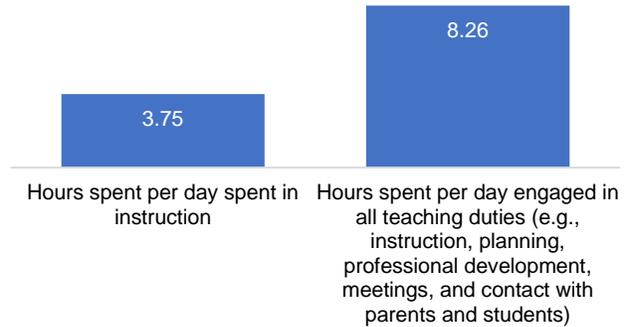
significantly more direct instruction than teachers who are currently teaching remotely. (There is asynchronous learning time even in the normal classroom.)

**Chart 14. Teachers Report Providing Significantly More Direct Instruction Than Independent Work for Students When Teaching In-Person**



Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

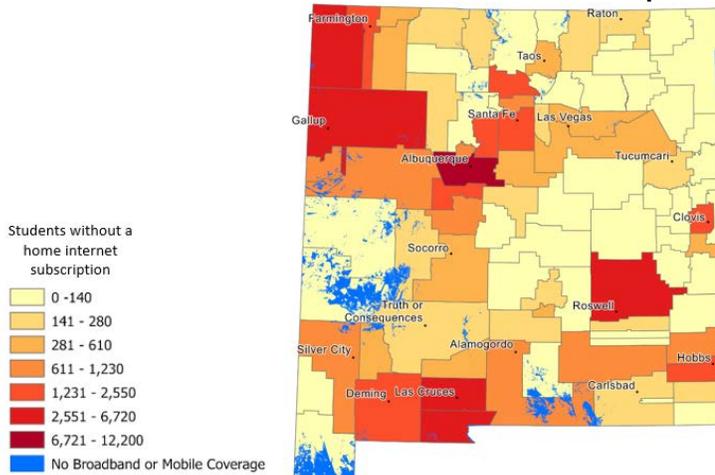
**Chart 15. Hours per day teachers are engaged in instruction and other duties**



Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

**Digital access and connectivity issues have improved, but thousands of New Mexico students likely still do not have access to a home computer or internet.** During the initial spring shutdown, the “digital divide” prevented some students from participating in remote learning. An August LFC analysis indicated that approximately 8 percent of students lived in a household without a computer and 21 percent lived in a household without an Internet subscription. The majority of those students were part of the Albuquerque, Gallup, and Central Consolidated school districts.

**Figure 16. Though New Mexico still has large coverage gaps, most students without home internet could be served via subsidized broadband or mobile hotspots**



Source: DoIT Broadband Project, March 2020 PSFA survey of districts and U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2018

In March, the state received \$108.6 million in CARES Act funding from the elementary and secondary school relief fund to distribute to districts and charters to broadly cover pandemic-related costs. With that funding, many districts purchased laptops, hotspots, and other digital and connectivity devices over the summer. Others partnered with their local internet service providers to offer free or low-cost home Internet connections to student. Albuquerque Public Schools reported early in the summer that they had purchased and distributed enough Chromebooks to provide one to every student in need.

However, immense pressure on the supply chain created a situation where some districts were still waiting to receive computers when the school year began. Low-quality Internet is

also an ongoing concern in some districts. In Roswell, for instance, a family survey conducted by the school district found that 43 percent of families had no Internet or, more commonly, poor connectivity, meaning it might take 20 minutes to upload an assignment.



Nevertheless, the districts that were able to purchase and distribute computers and provide Internet connectivity to student’s homes seem to have made a significant dent in the digital divide. A Public Schools Facilities Authority survey in September indicated that approximately 6 percent of students were still without home internet and 5 percent without a digital device. This is an improvement since the spring, but still represents 16 thousand to 19 thousand students. And in October, 51 school districts responded to an offer from PSFA for assistance in identifying solutions to connect students to high-speed Internet. The response was higher than the agency expected, partly because some districts that had previously indicated they’d connected all students found the solutions they’d implemented were not entirely functional.

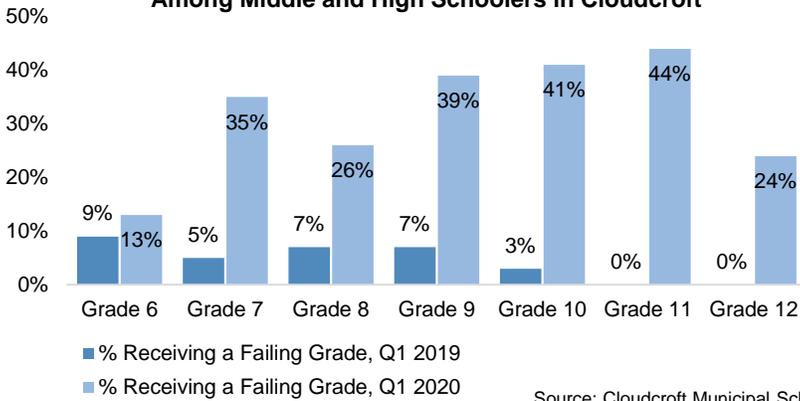
***The Legislature could amend statute to allow capital outlay funds to be used to establish Internet connections in students’ homes.*** Changing the definition of “education technology infrastructure” under Section 22-24-3 NMSA 1978 (Public School Capital Outlay) to include the physical hardware used to interconnect education technology equipment for school districts, school buildings, *and school children’s homes*, as determined by the Public School Capital Outlay Council (PSCOC) council, could help close the remaining connectivity gaps. Up to \$10 million of the public school capital outlay fund is available to the PSCOC for correcting deficiencies in education technology infrastructure. With nearly all schools and districts now connected to high-speed fiber-optic networks, connectivity needs have moved beyond the school building and into children’s homes. The expanded definition would allow the council to authorize home connectivity equipment in addition to that equipment used specifically for school buildings. Though the change would not solve connectivity problems this school year, it would help the state and school districts leverage Covid-19-related technology investments to expand learning opportunities in the future – even as soon as next school year.

## **New Mexico Students are Failing Classes at High Rates, Highlighting the Difficulty of Sustaining Meaningful Engagement in Remote Learning**

***Thirty-six percent of high school athletes are failing one or more class.*** The New Mexico High School Coaches Association recently surveyed coaches from 86 schools representing 8,703 student-athletes. They found that 36 percent of student-athletes had one or more failing grades. The high failure rate prompted the New Mexico Activities Association to waive the grading requirement for participation in fall sports. At the time, competition in several fall sports was allowed under the state’s public health orders.



**Chart 17. Failure Rates Increased Dramatically in Fall 2020 Among Middle and High Schoolers in Cloudcroft**



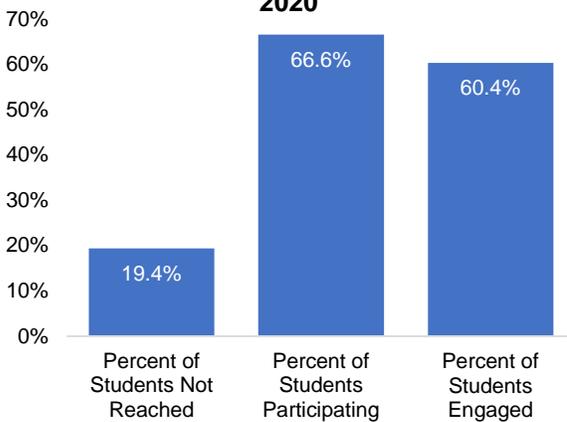
Source: Cloudcroft Municipal Schools

**The problem is not limited to athletes.** For example, Carlsbad reported that 40 percent of its students have at least one D or F, 60 percent of its special education students have at least one D or F, and 58 percent of students in poverty have at least one D or F. Cloudcroft also saw failure rates among its middle and high school students increase dramatically this year. In the first quarter of 2019, no juniors or seniors at Cloudcroft High School received an F grade. This year, 44 percent of juniors and 24 percent of seniors had at least one F. Three

districts that reported F grades to LFC – Deming, Hatch, and Hobbs – had failure rates above 70 percent in both their middle schools and high schools, meaning most students had at least one F grade. (A full inventory of first-quarter failure rates among middle and high school students from the districts that responded to LFC’s request is available in Appendix B.)

**Teachers who responded to LFC’s fall survey reported they have not been able to reach approximately 1 in 5 students.** Teachers also reported that 1 in 3 students are not regularly participating in live instruction and 2 in 5 students are not engaged in offline work, which roughly half of the school day is devoted to in many remote learning models.

**Chart 18. Student Engagement During School Closures in Fall 2020**



Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

Statewide attendance data for the first quarter was not available at the time of this report. Additionally, districts were given flexibility with their attendance policies to account for barriers students may face in participating in remote learning that are out of their control. It is, therefore, unclear how good a proxy formal attendance records will be for engagement because students do not necessarily have to participate in daily lessons to be marked present for the week.

**Engagement continues to be a concern with current learning models.** Aside from attendance, school districts are not required to report any measure of student engagement in remote learning to the Public Education Department. Neither do districts track indicators of engagement in any consistent way. Nevertheless, engagement data several districts shared with the LFC suggests middle and high school students are less consistently engaged in remote learning than elementary students. In Carlsbad, roughly a quarter of middle

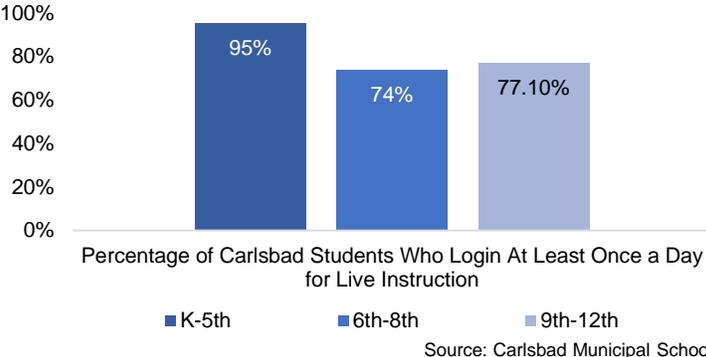


and high schoolers do not log in at least once a day for direct instruction, compared to only 5 percent of K-5 students. In Hobbs, where live Zoom calls with teachers supplement the instruction students are receiving through Edgenuity, rough data provided by the district in late September showed only 4 percent of secondary students participate in the Zoom calls compared to 36 percent of elementary students.

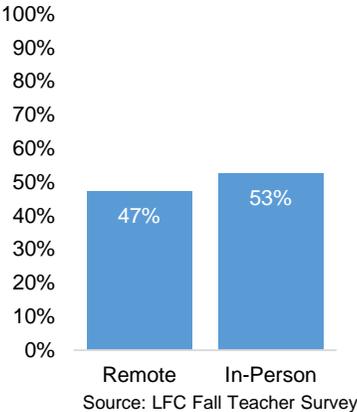
**Nearly 3,500 students are currently receiving academic coaching through a PED-sponsored program aimed at improving and sustaining engagement.** Starting last spring, PED contracted with the Graduation Alliance on a program called Engage NM<sup>vii</sup> to provide individualized coaching and support to disengaged students. Seventy-five school districts participated in the program and identified 7,429 youth for referral by the end of last school year. The program made 40 thousand outreach attempts to these students and offered over 11 thousand interventions. Fifty-three percent of all students the outreach team established contact with in spring of 2020 requested on-going support from the coaching team. Engage NM found that the top barrier to engagement was lack of structure and accountability. New Mexico contracted with the Graduation Alliance again this fall at a cost of roughly \$3.4 million for the school year<sup>viii</sup>. Engage NM received 13,761 referrals in fall of 2020 at a rate 2,500 per week as of October 20<sup>th</sup> ix. At this time, of the approximately 3,493 families engaged so far in the fall (25 percent of referrals), 2,794 are receiving support from an academic coach for the duration of the school year.

**In-person education and services are not consistently available to special education students across districts.** Students with disabilities are at higher risk of falling behind academically, missing developmental milestones, and experiencing social and behavioral regressions while schools are not open to in-person learning. In a September presentation to the Disabilities Subcommittee of the Legislature, an attorney with Disability Rights New Mexico testified that, for many students with disabilities, engaging in remote education requires constant supervision and assistance from a parent or caregiver. Additionally, these students often lack computer skills and become frustrated online, have difficulty paying attention, are primarily receiving instruction in general education classes online, and have communication deficits that make engaging online difficult or impossible. The Public Education Department has acknowledged the risks online learning poses to these students by allowing all school districts in the state to offer them in-person services as long as it is done within a 5:1 student-teacher ratio. Districts have taken advantage of this allowance unevenly, however, leading to disparities in services available to special education students district-to-district. Among the special education teachers who responded to LFC’s fall survey, 53 percent indicated they were teaching in-person while 47 percent were teaching remotely. Interviews with district superintendents and parents of special education students also revealed considerable variability in terms of

**Chart 19. Older Students in Carlsbad Participate in Remote Classes Less Frequently than Younger Students**



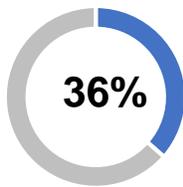
**Chart 20. Percent of SPED Teachers Reporting Teaching In-Person**





whether in-person services were available at all, how many hours students received per week, and how many students were accessing in-person learning.

**Chart 21. Teachers report that 36 percent of their students are experiencing social-emotional issues or require social-emotional health supports due to...**



### **Social Isolation Poses a Serious Mental Health Risk to Students and Families**

Isolation and loneliness put both our mental and physical health at risk. Even before Covid-19, America was beset with what former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy termed a “loneliness epidemic.” Research has linked loneliness to reduced life spans with an effect similar to smoking 15 cigarettes a day, according to Murthy. Covid-19 has further isolated Americans for nearly eight months, with little end in sight. In mid-July, a Kaiser Family Foundation poll found that 53 percent of American adults said their mental health had been negatively impacted by worry and stress related to the coronavirus. Women with children under 18 were among those most likely to report a deterioration of their mental health. The poll also found that 67 percent of parents with school-age children worried their kids would suffer socially and emotionally from the pandemic.

Most alarmingly, isolation is a risk-factor for suicidal ideation, raising the possibility that Covid-19 could worsen a building crisis among American teens. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, suicide is the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death overall in the U.S. but the second leading cause among 12 to 17 year olds.

***In roughly seven weeks in August and September, seven student-athletes in New Mexico died by suicide, and one additional student-athlete was hospitalized for a suicide attempt, according to the New Mexico Activities Association (NMAA).*** Over the last five years, 33 adolescents from 10 to 19 years old have died from suicide per year, or roughly 4.4 suicides per 7-week period. The recent deaths among student-athletes reported by NMAA represent a 60 percent increase over that rate. Other students may also have attempted or died by suicide during this time period. While school closures to in-person learning may not be the direct cause of these students’ deaths, students struggling with mental health issues can benefit from the social supports and services schools provide.

A number of districts provide behavioral healthcare to students through school-based health centers. While data on fall service delivery of school-based health centers is not yet available, reporting to the Department of Health (DOH) showed that all centers funded by the department are offering telehealth appointments, and 60 percent are offering on-site visits. This represents an improvement over the spring, when service delivery did drop after schools closed and telehealth capabilities among providers were more limited. Additionally, according to the Legislative Education Study Committee, PED and DOH recently received a five-year, \$10 million federal grant to improve access to mental health services in schools. The funds will be used to increase the number of providers in school districts based on income, substance abuse rates, student suicide rates, and student-provider ratios.



**PED required districts to include in their re-entry plans details on how they would support students' health and well-being.** LFC's review of re-entry plans found that 98 percent of districts planned to provide either social workers or counselors to students and staff. Sixty-three percent of districts adopted specific programs to promote social-emotional learning, and 46 percent adopted a school-wide social-emotional learning curriculum. Forty-eight percent of districts are partnering with community organizations to help address students' social-emotional needs.

**Chart 22. Social-Emotional Issues Reported by New Mexico Teachers in Fall 2020**



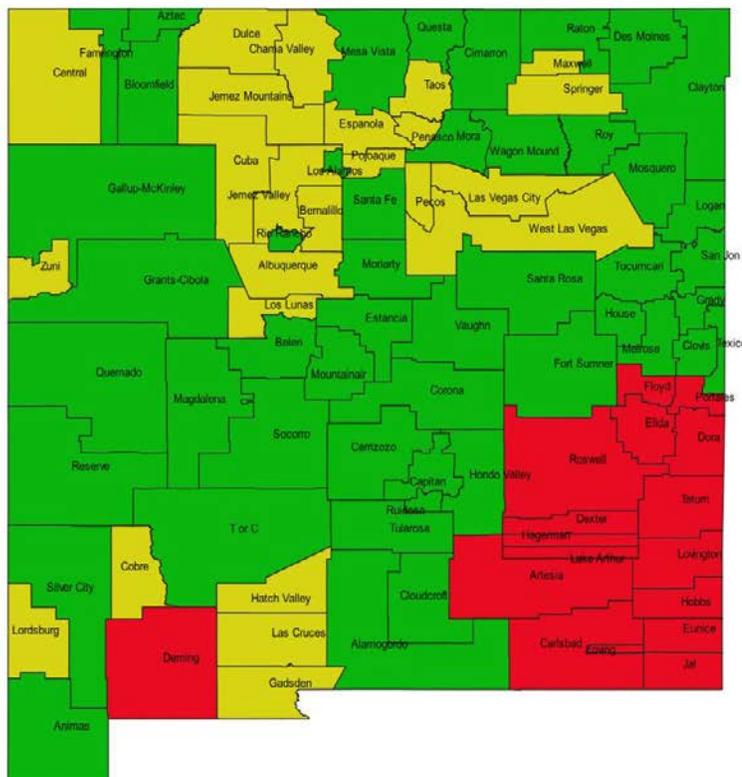
Note: Out of 3,191 survey responses, 2,636 (82.6 percent) teachers responded to the question, "What types of social-emotional health issues have you experienced with your students and what types of supports are needed to address them?" The 100 most frequent responses are displayed, whereas the frequency of responses range from 1092 to 40. Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey



## New Mexico’s Reentry Criteria – Among the Strictest in the Nation – and District-Level Decisions Will Keep Most Students in Remote Instruction Through the Fall Semester

On July 24, as Covid-19 infections spiked in New Mexico, the governor announced that all schools would start the year remotely, with any return to in-person learning postponed until after Labor Day. Though school districts were required to submit reentry plans to the Public Education Department in mid-July, the full set of conditions they would have to meet to reopen were not announced until late summer. On August 27, the state issued county-based gating criteria for schools requiring new daily case rates to drop below 8 per 100,000 residents and test positivity rates to drop below 5 percent. On

**Figure 23. New Mexico School District Reopening Status as of October**



- Districts that reopened to hybrid instruction in September or October
- Districts that were eligible to reopen but were still fully remote at the end of October
- Districts not yet eligible to reopen

September 3, the Public Education Department announced additional safety protocols districts would have to meet, including a new approach to student capacity limits and new requirements for air filtration and on-site personal protective equipment. After meeting all criteria, school districts could opt to open to kindergarten through fifth grade students at limited capacities.

Of the state’s 89 school districts, 48—just over half—reopened to in-person learning under various hybrid models in September and October, with a few fully returning to in-person learning under exceptions for the smallest districts. Those 48 districts serve 46,700 elementary students, roughly a

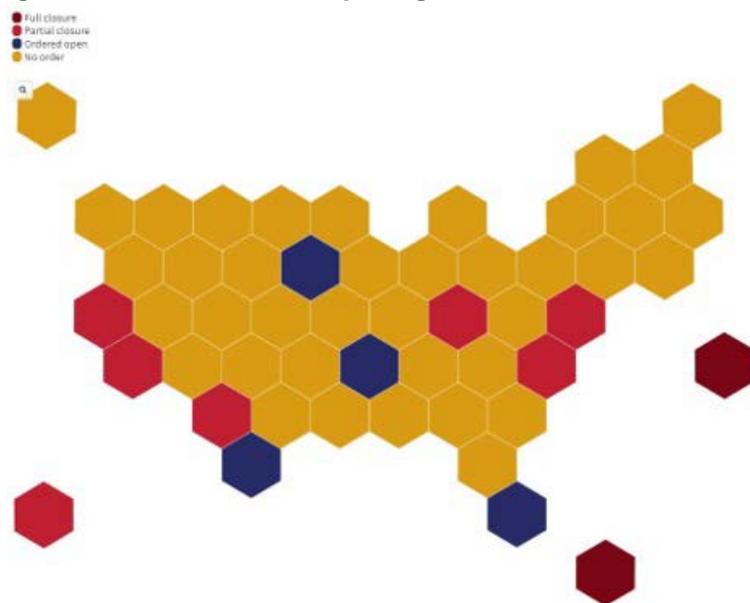
third of the public school elementary population. Another 24 districts serving roughly 68,300 elementary students met the Public Education Department's criteria for reopening to elementary students for hybrid instruction but had not reopened by the end of October or had chosen to remain remote for the fall semester. The remaining 17 districts, representing about 22,600 elementary students, never met the state's gating criteria for reopening due to high rates of Covid-19 transmission in their counties. The districts that chose to remain remote for the semester include the state's two largest, Albuquerque Public Schools and Las Cruces Public Schools.

All in all, this means that under the state's criteria, roughly 115,000 elementary students, or 84 percent of the kindergarten through fifth grade public school population, could have returned to some level of in-person learning this fall. Due to decision making at the district level, however, less than half of the eligible students were offered the option. While the exact number of students actually receiving in-person instruction statewide is not yet known, it's likely substantially less than the 46,700 whose schools did physically open due to families choosing to remain in remote learning.

**As of late October, New Mexico was one of only seven states subject to an order from the governor keeping schools partially closed to in-person instruction.** The governors of New Mexico, Hawaii, Oregon, California, West Virginia, North Carolina, and Delaware currently have public health orders in place keeping schools partially closed. Each state allows for various levels of reopening based on local public health conditions, but New Mexico's order appears to be one of the most restrictive because it only allows elementary students to return to school at limited capacities, with no path yet determined for middle and high school students' return. Each of the other states has established criteria that will allow middle and high schoolers to return to at least hybrid instruction and for elementary schools to return fully in-person. The gating criteria New Mexico does have in place, however, are more permissive than some of the other states and less permissive than others. The vast majority of the nation's governors, represented in yellow in Figure 24, have only issued guidance on school reentry, with reopening decisions largely delegated to districts or local authorities. (See Appendix C for reopening criteria in the other states with statewide orders for schools in place.)



**Figure 24. State School Reopening Orders as of Oct. 22, 2020**



Source: EdWeek



**According to districts, the timing of communication of reentry criteria delayed reopening in some areas and contributed to some district's decision to remain remote through the fall.** On June 29<sup>th</sup>, the Public Education Department released its initial reentry guidance<sup>x</sup>. At the time, the goal was for all schools to be able to start the school year in a hybrid model on August 3. PED also issued guidance to school districts and charters to submit reentry plans by July 15, detailing their approach to remote education in the fall.<sup>xi</sup> But as Covid-19 infections rose over the summer, the state switched gears. On July 24, the governor announced that in-person learning would be postponed until September 8.<sup>xii</sup>

Exactly which schools would be allowed to reopen and how remained unclear until September 3, however, when districts received the complete list of requirements they'd have to meet in order to open. PED released a final list of counties meeting gating criteria that day along with a Covid-19 “response toolkit,” which included new requirements for air filters in ventilation systems, and personal protective equipment schools would have to have on hand, among other things. Districts were supposed to sign a document agreeing to meet the requirements by noon the following day. PED also shifted its social distancing requirements, directing districts to allow no more than 50 percent of the students on a classroom roster to return to buildings at any given time regardless of roster size. Some districts had developed their hybrid plans to conform to the previous guidance of 50 percent of classroom capacity and six-feet of social distancing and could not quickly adapt. On September 8, some districts opened elementary schools for in-person classes while others had to postpone their plans. The changes delayed in-person learning in Rio Rancho by only a week, but delayed Farmington by more than a month.

Superintendents stated that changing guidance and difficult timelines for compliance were barriers to reopening in a September 15 letter to the education secretary<sup>xiii</sup>. While the superintendents noted their appreciation of the secretary’s frequent outreach and communication to districts, they requested superintendent representation and involvement in key decisions impacting the operation of schools going forward.

**Table 25. Timeline of State Guidance for School Reopening**

June 10	School Reentry Task Force releases Recommendations to the New Mexico Public Education Department
June 29	PED releases New Mexico Public Education Department <b>Reentry Guidance</b> (updated July 15), with the goal that all schools in the state will be able to start the school year utilizing a hybrid model of instruction beginning August 3.
June 29	PED issues guidance to districts for <b>Reentry Assurance Documents</b> , Plan for Prioritizing Additional Instructional Time, and Local Plan for Remote Learning, due July 15.
July 6	PED releases guidance for Career & Technical Education, Supporting Student Teachers in a Hybrid/Online Setting
July 8	PED releases guidance for Grading Policies; Formative Assessment and Identifying Learning Needs upon Reentry, and Instructional Acceleration
July 9	PED releases guidance for Graduation for Online Courses
July 9	PED provides rating rubric for district’s <b>Reentry Assurance Documents</b>
July 10	PED releases guidance for Virtual Classroom Considerations
July 13	PED releases guidance for Special Education Services
July 15	District’s <b>Reentry Assurance Documents</b> due to PED
July 20	PED releases guidance for Comprehensive Instructional Support Including Priority Standards



July 22	<b>Albuquerque Teachers Federation</b> (ATF) and Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) sign Memoranda of Understanding that APS will start schools in a remote model until September 7, giving employees the option to opt-out of teaching in-person until it is safe to do so.
July 24	The <b>governor postponed in-person learning from August 3 to after September 7</b> . Schools will start under a remote learning model during this time period, and in-person teaching will be prioritized for kindergarten through third-grade students for teachers with fewer than five students.
July 27	PED releases guidance for Remote Instruction and Instructional Hours, indicating that school schedules must meet instructional hour requirements of 5.5 hours for grades K–6 and 6 hours for grade 7–12.
July 28	PED releases guidance for Pre-K Programming During Reentry
July 29	PED releases guidance for Educator Evaluation, Teacher Licensure Waivers, Supporting Native American Students, and Supporting English Learners and Bilingual Multicultural Programming During Reentry
July 30	PED releases guidance on Attendance Policies
August 3	PED releases addendum to Reentry Guidance, which includes a “Phase in to Hybrid” approach.
August 3	<b>Schools could open under a remote model of instruction.</b>
August 4	PED releases memorandum regarding staff reporting during remote learning
August 5	PED releases information on NMPED Reentry Webinar Series
August 7	PED releases guidance for Schools on Tribal Lands
August 27	The governor announces <b>county gating criteria</b> for schools to <b>reopen under a hybrid model of instruction for kindergarten to fifth grade</b> . Only 38 of the state’s 89 school districts had approved plans.
September 3	PED releases <b>COVID-19 Response Toolkit</b> for New Mexico’s Public Elementary Schools
September 3	PED announces that school districts must meet county gating criteria and have approved assurance documents to reopen on September 8 under a hybrid model of instruction.
September 3	PED issues guidance to districts to assess HVAC configurations
September 4	Districts to complete assessment of HVAC configurations and report to PED
September 8	<b>Schools could open to in-person instruction under a hybrid model for PreK – fifth grade.</b>
September 11	PED releases guidance for librarians.
October 5	PED releases guidance for Classroom Math Materials Safety and Science Lab & Materials Safety

Source: NM PED (2020, October 5). Reentry District and School Guidance. Available: <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/reentry-district-and-school-guidance/>; Johns Hopkins University (2020, October 15). Coronavirus Resource Center. Available: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/state-timeline/new-confirmed-cases/new-mexico/61>.

**Though three of the state’s five largest school districts—Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, and Santa Fe—met all of the state’s requirements for in-person reopening starting September 8, only Rio Rancho moved forward.** The Rio Rancho school board called a special meeting September 4 to consider reopening and voted unanimously to implement the hybrid model mid-month. Though the board discussed the possibility of reopening September 8, they determined district leadership and schools needed more time to plan. The school boards for Albuquerque and Santa Fe, meanwhile, had voted to remain remote for the semester and the first quarter, respectively, before the state finalized its reentry requirements. Santa Fe has now begun to open to hybrid instruction for some students.

The variability among these districts indicates that state requirements have been only one factor in schools remaining closed to in-person instruction. When the Albuquerque Public Schools board voted 6-1 to remain fully virtual for the semester on August 19, members cited health and safety concerns from parents, teachers, and staff, and the need to offer students and families consistency. According to APS, nearly 5,000 teachers and staff had requested

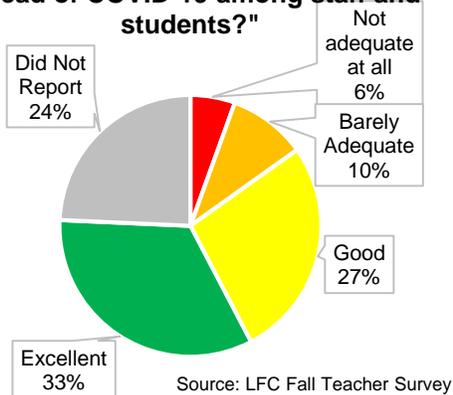
The **New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority** provides general liability insurance to most New Mexico public school districts and charter schools, including for Covid-19 related lawsuits. NMPSIA has clarified that teachers and school employees will not be held personally liable in any way for Covid-19-related litigation and that schools that follow public health orders and health and safety guidance in good faith should also have claims covered through NMPSIA insurance.



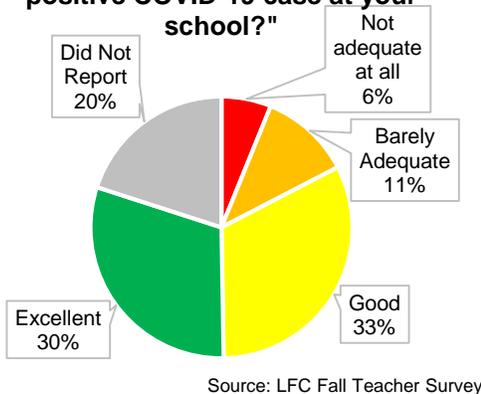
to remain remote if the district transitioned to a hybrid model, and 56 percent of respondents to a parent survey said they were “very uncomfortable” with their children returning to school in person.

In a September 15 board meeting, Superintendent Karen Trujillo of Las Cruces Public Schools, the second largest district in the state, recommended continuing remote learning due to last-minute changes to reopening requirements and the lack of a clear timeline or benchmarks for a broader reopening, including to older students. Trujillo told the board remote learning would at least provide students and families with consistency and remarked that several other districts in southern New Mexico – Deming, Gadsden, and Hatch – had also opted to remain remote. Opposition to reopening from the Las Cruces teacher’s union also appeared to contribute to the board’s decision. The union advocated remaining fully remote, including for special education and special needs students. Trujillo asked the board to allow limited in-person learning in small groups for some prekindergarten, special education, and at-risk students starting in mid-October, and the board followed her recommendation.

**Chart 26. Teachers Responses to "Are the health and safety precautions implemented by your school adequate to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among staff and students?"**



**Chart 27. Teachers Responses to the Question, "How adequate do you feel are the guidance and safety procedures for responding to a positive COVID-19 case at your school?"**



**The teachers LFC surveyed this fall are divided in their level of concern about teaching in-person, with 34 percent reporting that they are extremely concerned and 23 percent reporting that they are not at all concerned.** Teachers who are currently teaching in-person report being significantly less concerned about teaching in-person compared with teachers who are currently teaching remotely. Additionally, 60 percent felt the measures implemented by their school were either good or excellent, while 63 percent reported that the procedures for responding to a positive Covid-19 case at their school was either good or excellent. Many districts have internally surveyed their teachers and student’s parents regarding current instructional efforts, their concerns about returning to school, and technology needs. For example, an Albuquerque Public School’s teacher survey indicated that 50 percent of teachers agree that remote learning is going well for their students and 33 percent feel prepared for hybrid learning<sup>xiv</sup>.

**School Reopenings to Date Demonstrate That Health Risks can be Minimized with Cautious Reentry and Mitigation Measures, Especially for Younger Students**

Due to the unprecedented nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, there is no foolproof roadmap for safely reopening schools nor any universal agreement on the definition of “safe.” That said, evidence that has emerged from around the U.S., as well as from Europe and Asia, suggests that low-community transmission and mitigation measures like masks and increased ventilation can allow students to return to school without causing a surge in infections. On October 6, California Health Secretary Mark



Ghady said the state had yet to see a link between the return to in-person learning and increased community transmission of the coronavirus. California, like New Mexico, has county-based gating criteria that require local infection rates to drop below certain thresholds before schools open.

This does not mean Covid-19 cases have not or will not arise in schools. It simply means the risk can be managed so that it is not any higher in schools than in other parts of the community and so that schools do not become a source of increased transmission. Additionally, the risks may be particularly manageable in elementary schools because young children seem to transmit the virus less readily than teenagers or adults<sup>xv</sup>. Success, however, depends on many factors, including public health restrictions outside of schools and compliance among citizens with health directives.

***Emerging evidence from states that have gone back to school suggests schools that implement universal masking and other mitigation measures are not significant sources of Covid-19 infection.*** A national dashboard on school reopening recently launched by Brown University economist Emily Oster, the data firm Qualtrics, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the School Superintendents Association is using self-reported data from schools and school districts to track infection rates under different learning models and mitigation measures. For the week of September 28 to October 11, data from nearly 700 schools in 47 states serving nearly 300,000 students found an infection rate of 0.13 among students and 0.31 among staff, meaning in a school of 1,000 students, 1.3 students were and 2.4 staff were infected over a two-week period. The database does not provide information on whether these infections originated *in* schools or elsewhere in the community, however. Additionally, because the database depends on schools and districts that volunteer to participate and report their cases, it's not necessarily a nationally-representative sample. Still, the rates the researchers found appear consistent with states such as Texas that are reporting data on cases connected to schools, according to Oster. Over 95 percent of the schools represented in the dataset required students and staff to wear masks and complete health screens, 82 percent increased ventilation in school buildings, 74 percent kept students in fixed cohorts, 69 percent kept group sizes below 25, and 64 percent held some or all classes outdoors. If feasible, holding class outdoors seems a particularly promising strategy for minimizing health risks while reaping the benefits of face-to-face interaction, but according to LFC's review of district reentry plans, few New Mexico districts have considered this strategy.

***Several high-profile outbreaks associated with schools demonstrate the importance of community transmission rates and mitigation measures within schools.*** One of the clearest examples to date of a Covid-19 outbreak in school occurred last May in Jerusalem. When it fully reopened schools, Israel had successfully suppressed the virus, with a new daily case rate of just 1.5 per 100 thousand people and a test positivity rate of 1.4 percent. Rather than gradually bringing students back to school, as it had originally planned, the country quickly brought all students back at the same time it fully reopened its economy and political leaders encouraged citizens to go back to normal life. The Education Ministry had directed schools to take precautions, including



requiring face masks, opening windows to increase ventilation, and to keep students six feet apart. But with large class sizes, social distancing wasn't possible in many schools, and when a heat wave swept the country, schools closed windows, turned on the air conditioning, and allowed students to remove their masks. An outbreak that followed in a Jerusalem high school infected 154 students and 26 staff, and across the country, hundreds of smaller outbreaks closed schools and forced more than 22 thousand teachers and students into quarantine. The infections spread among families and contributed to a new surge of cases in Israel.

Such outcomes are not inevitable, though. A recent report by Public Health England found that infections and outbreaks were uncommon due to transmission in educational settings during a one-month summer term in England this June and that cases in students and staff usually originated elsewhere in the community.<sup>xvi</sup> A new study of fall reopenings in Spain similarly found minimal transmission within schools. Due to extensive contact tracing, researchers determined that 87 percent of infected individuals in schools did not infect anyone else in their class, 7 percent infected one other person, 4 percent infected two, and 1 percent infected three<sup>xvii</sup>. These studies underscore the importance of low community spread to minimizing the risk of introducing contagious cases into school as well as the importance of mitigation measures to reduce transmission risk when students or staff attend school without knowing they're infected. New York City, one of the first Covid-19 hotspots in the United States, provides early evidence that driving down community transmission and minimizing it when students return to school is possible, even in the United States. On October 19, the *New York Times* reported the public school system's random testing program had uncovered only 18 positives among staff and students out of 10,676 results returned during the first three weeks of in-person school this fall.

Conversely, early in-person reopenings in Georgia drove home the risk that exists when transmission rates are high and mitigation measures are not implemented. Multiple schools in Georgia closed again within days of reopening and sent thousands of teachers and students into quarantine. Masks were encouraged but not required in those schools and social distancing was not observed.

***Unlike much of the country, this summer many New Mexico communities suppressed the virus to levels on par with other countries that successfully reopened schools to in-person learning.*** Experts have cautioned that school reopening success stories from countries like Germany and South Korea may have limited applicability to the United States. Other countries that reopened schools have generally not experienced significant outbreaks in school settings, but almost all had significantly lower levels of community transmission, greater testing and contact tracing capacity than the United States, and more cohesive national shutdown strategies. Until recently, however, New Mexico was an outlier among U.S. states. On September 8, when the first schools were allowed to reopen, case rates in the state as a whole were within striking distance of other countries, as shown in Table 27, and



many counties had case and test positivity rates within the range of the countries depicted in the table.

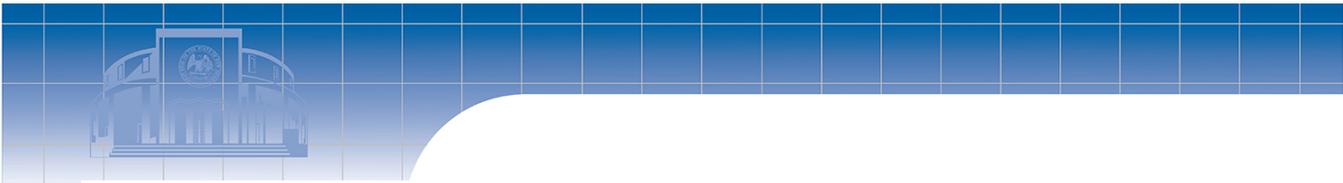
**Table 27: School Reopening: Key Metrics Compared to U.S. and New Mexico on Sept. 8, 2020**

Country	Date of reopening	Daily Cases Per 100,000 Population (7-day averages)	Positivity Rate (%)
United States	—	11.1	5.0
New Mexico <sup>1</sup>	—	4.9	2.1
Belgium	5/18/2020	2.5	2.1
Denmark	4/15/2020	3.6	6.2
France	5/11/2020	1.7	1.1
Germany	5/4/2020	1.4	2.4
Greece	6/1/2020	0.1	0.1
Israel	5/3/2020	1.5	1.4
Japan	4/24/2020	0.4	8.7
South Korea	6/8/2020	0.1	0.3
New Zealand	5/14/2020	0.0	0.0
Norway	4/20/2020	1.7	3.8
Switzerland	5/11/2020	0.7	1.3
Taiwan	2/25/2020	0.0	0.2
Vietnam	5/18/2020	0.0	0.0

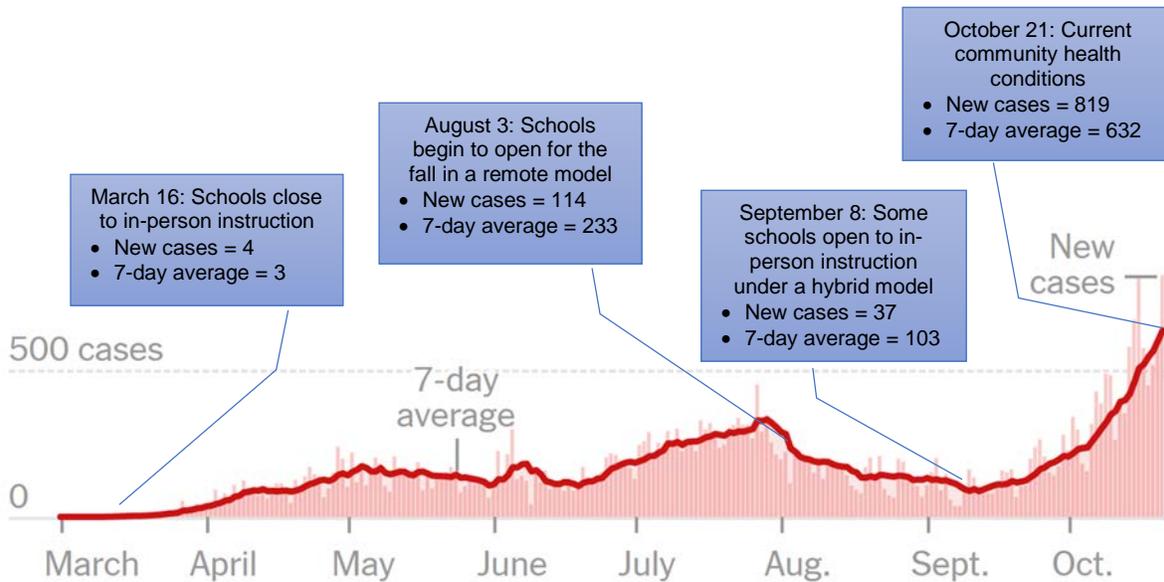
Note: New Mexico data as of Sept. 8 from the Department of Health's public dashboard. U.S. data as of Sept. 8 via the COVID Tracking Project.

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation. (2020, July 29). Available: <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/what-do-we-know-about-children-and-coronavirus-transmission/>

***Going forward, again controlling the virus to levels that make it possible for more students to physically return to school should be a central project for the state and its citizens.*** Since mid-September, infection rates have climbed in New Mexico, reaching record highs in October. The dramatic spike in Covid-19 cases does not appear to be linked to school reopenings. In fact, many counties saw a record surge despite schools remaining closed, including Bernalillo, Dona Ana, and Santa Fe, and in an October 19 press conference, Human Services Secretary Dr. David Scrase said the state had no evidence schools were driving increased transmission. Nevertheless, the heightened infection risk in the community obviously makes the expansion of in-person learning more difficult. With a vaccine and widespread vaccination still many months out, it is incumbent upon all New Mexicans to take precautions in everyday to create the conditions that will allow more students into the classroom.



**Chart 28. New Mexico Covid-19 Case Count and 7-day Average**



Source: New York Times (2020, October 22). Available: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/new-mexico-coronavirus-cases.html>

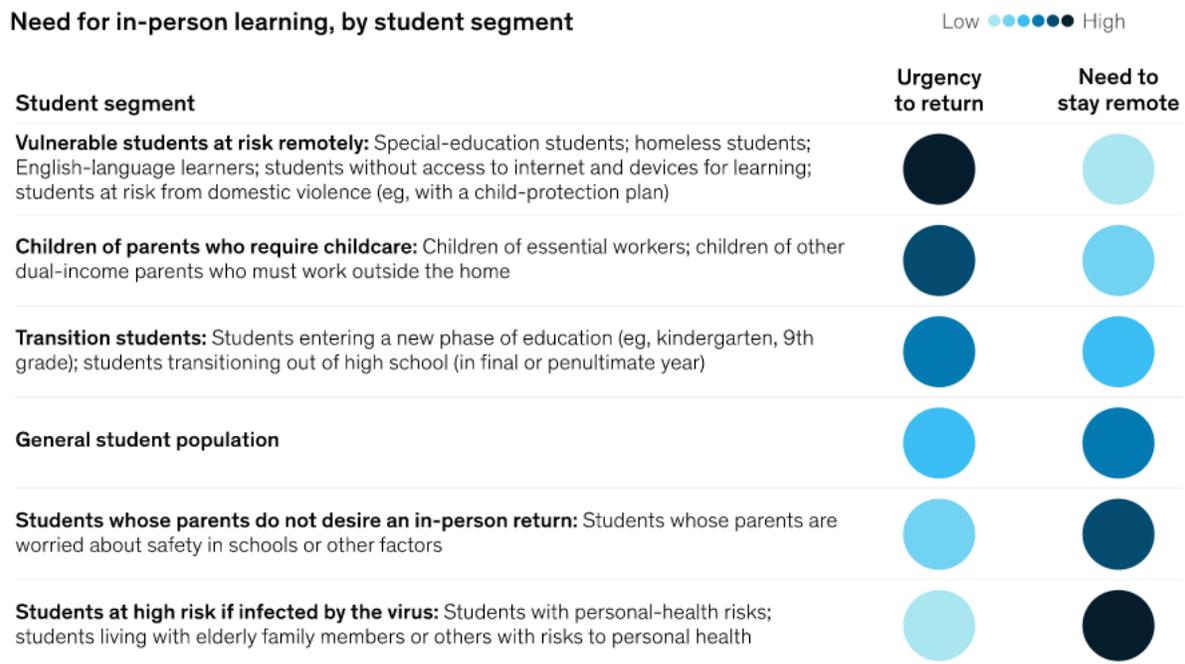
**State health and education officials have not publicly released a plan for allowing middle and high school students to return to school under a hybrid model, nor for full reentry of students of any age.** Most districts also did not provide a plan for full in-person reopening in the reentry plans they submitted to the Public Education Department. In interviews with LFC staff, some districts expressed hesitancy about planning for older students to return to school without clear guidelines from the state on the safety protocols they'd be required to follow, particularly given the issues the late rollout of the elementary requirements caused. With vaccines in development and each state now having turned in their initial immunization plans to the federal government, New Mexico needs a roadmap for physically reopening schools, and communities and school leaders need to know the criteria they will have to meet in order to bring students back to the classroom. Many open questions remain, including what gating criteria and safety protocols will apply to a full return for elementary students, a hybrid return for middle and high school students, and a full return for everyone; whether families will continue to have the option to remain in remote learning until a vaccine is available; whether or not New Mexico will mandate the Covid-19 vaccine upon return to school; and whether medically fragile staff and students will receive priority in vaccination.

**Reentry plans at the state and district level should prioritize the most at-risk students.** Certain groups of students have suffered greater setbacks and will continue to face more obstacles in remote-learning environments. As this report has detailed, remote learning is especially tough on students with learning disabilities, who face economic hardship, unstable home environments, or other challenges. Many of these students will struggle to thrive in a remote environment where they lack hands-on guidance, emotional support, and access to technology. Even when schools are mostly closed to in-

person instruction, there is a strong case to be made for creating a physical environment where these students can learn. Prioritizing the small number of students most in need of in-person instruction makes it possible to have smaller class sizes, which makes it easier for students to follow distancing and sanitation protocols that reduce the spread of the virus. During the first wave of Covid-19, that strategy enabled the United Kingdom to continue educating children of essential workers and those with child-protection plans or special needs in the classroom, without experiencing meaningful outbreaks in schools.



**Figure 29. The urgency to get back to the classroom varies by circumstance**



Source: Dorn, E., Panier, F., Probst, N., & Sarakatsannis, J. (2020, August 31). Back to school: A framework for remote and hybrid learning amid COVID-19. McKinsey & Company. Available: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/back-to-school-a-framework-for-remote-and-hybrid-learning-amid-covid-19>.

Remote learning is also particularly challenging for elementary-school students. Younger children need a level of guidance, social interaction, and tactile-learning opportunities that are difficult to replicate in an online classroom. They are also less able to focus on remote classes for long periods, so caregivers must take on the time-consuming task of actively helping them learn. In most cases, the task of childcare falls on women. The increased burden of unpaid childcare imposed by the pandemic is a major factor in women’s rising level of unemployment. Hybrid models that combine remote and in-person learning don’t fully address such issues.

School systems should therefore prioritize solutions that get these children back in the classroom full-time as soon as health conditions allow. New Mexico’s current reentry plan has taken disproportionate impacts into account by prioritizing reopening for elementary students, allowing small group instruction for special education students, and allowing small group instruction



for general education elementary children even in districts that have not yet met gating criteria. The state should consider whether those allowances are sufficient or could be expanded, and districts should consider whether their decisions to take advantage of those allowances—or not—are meeting their students' needs.



## Next Steps

Like the other states that have statewide orders in place that determine when and how schools can reopen to in-person instruction, New Mexico needs a complete and transparent roadmap for getting its kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students back in school. Such a roadmap would allow district leaders to plan more effectively for reentry and would give the community clear targets.

The state also needs a plan for determining where students stand academically after school closures and months of remote learning. While the Public Education Department has issued valuable guidance to districts on using assessments to identify and address students' needs, the lack of a consistent strategy across districts or mandatory reporting to the state means policymakers still lack a clear picture of the extent of the problem.

Finally, this uncertainty should not inhibit action to provide students with additional classroom time because students will suffer the longer solutions are delayed. The evidence available suggests it is highly likely learning loss has occurred and could be severe among at least some groups of students. Moreover, New Mexico students had considerable learning gaps even before the pandemic, and the funding the Legislature made available to address these gaps has been underutilized by school districts. The Legislature should consider options for addressing learning loss, such as a universal extension of the school year, during the 2021 session.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A. Review of Districts' Assurance Documents for Fall Reopening

**PED's guidance to districts in planning to return to school in the fall focused on remote or hybrid models of instruction.** On June 29, PED released its Reentry Guidance<sup>xviii</sup> which highlighted 3 modes of instruction depending on the public health conditions: Remote, hybrid, and full reentry. This was later amended on August 3 to include a phase in to hybrid model of instruction, which would allow grades PreK to fifth grade to return starting September 8, followed by middle school students and then high school students at a later return date that would be determined by public health officials based on health conditions.<sup>xix</sup> On June 29, PED also released guidance for district's reentry assurance documents. Districts were instructed to submit their reentry assurance documents to PED by July 15, outlining their plans for prioritizing additional instructional time, local plan for remote learning, social emotional supports, and family and community communication. Because future public health conditions were still unknown at the time, the assurance document guidance emphasized planning for instruction in a remote environment. In a review of district's assurance documents only 16 percent of districts proposed a plan for full in-person learning, while 84 percent of districts had a plan for a hybrid model of instruction, 89 percent of districts had a plan for virtual instruction, and 22 percent of districts planned to offer only a remote option for instruction. Only 28 percent of district's assurance documents reported plans to prioritize in-person instruction for students most at-risk of falling behind. However, 85 percent of the districts reported a plan to identify which students might be behind upon reentry and 91 percent had a plan to work with them to catch them up. In terms of intervention strategies to make up for lost learning, only 12 percent are planning to implement K-5+, 48 percent of districts are implementing extended learning time programs, 61 percent are planning to provide individual tutoring, and 46 percent reported other types of accelerated or focused learning opportunities. In order to address the social and emotional well-being of students during these challenging times, 98 percent of districts are providing social workers or counselors. Additionally, 63 of the districts are implementing a specific program to promote social-emotional learning, 46 percent are implementing school-wide social-emotional learning curriculum, and 48 percent are partnering with community organizations to address students' social-emotional needs.

**Table 30. Review of New Mexico School District Assurance Documents Approved by PED**

Topic	Item	Yes (%)	No (%)
A. Instructional Mode	1. Are school districts proposing a <b>full-in person learning option</b> for instruction?	13 (16%)	68 (84%)
	2. Are school districts proposing a <b>hybrid option</b> for instruction?	68 (84%)	13 (16%)
	3. Are school districts proposing a <b>virtual or remote option</b> for instruction for those who opt in?	72 (88.9%)	9 (11.1%)
	4. Are school districts proposing <b>only a virtual or remote</b> option for instruction?	18 (22.2%)	63 (77.8%)
	5. Are school districts <b>using different instructional strategies/programs</b> for students who opt-in for year-round remote instruction versus students who opt-in for a hybrid or in-person option?	20 (24.7%)	61 (75.3%)
B. Scheduling Strategy	6. Are school districts proposing <b>staggered schedules</b> (e.g., some students and staff start at earlier or later times)?	6 (7.4%)	75 (92.6%)
	7. Are school districts proposing <b>hybrid instruction in groups</b> (e.g., 2 days on and 2 days off; every other week, etc.)?	47 (58%)	34 (42%)
C. Who Receives In-Person Learning	8. Are school districts proposing in-person instruction for <b>special education students before a hybrid start for general ed</b> ?	32 (39.5%)	49 (60.5%)
	9. Are school districts <b>prioritizing</b> in-person instruction for students <b>most at-risk</b> of falling behind?	23 (28.4%)	58 (71.6%)

D. Social Distancing	10. Have school districts proposed using <b>outdoor spaces</b> for classrooms for in-person learning?	5 (6.2%)	76 (93.8%)
	11. Have school districts considered using <b>additional indoor spaces</b> for in-person learning (e.g., gyms, libraries, cafeterias, etc.)?	6 (7.4%)	75 (92.6%)
E. Identifying Learning Loss	12. Do school districts have a plan to <b>identify which students might be behind</b> ?	69 (85.2%)	12 (14.8%)
	13. Do school districts plan to <b>assess students</b> using formative or short-cycle assessments?	71 (87.7%)	10 (12.3%)
	14. If so, <b>which formative or short-cycle assessments</b> are being used?	NA	NA
	15. Do school districts have a <b>plan to work with students who might be behind</b> to catch them up?	74 (91.4%)	7 (8.6%)
	16. Does the school district have a plan to <b>monitor attendance</b> for virtual or remote instruction?	80 (98.8%)	1 (1.2%)
	17. Does the school district have a plan to <b>monitor student engagement</b> for virtual or remote instruction?	71 (87.7%)	10 (12.3%)
	18. Does the school district have a plan to <b>reengage students who are not participating</b> in virtual or remote instruction?	55 (67.9%)	26 (32.1%)
	19. Does the school district have a plan to <b>support and ensure graduation</b> for high school seniors?	80 (98.8%)	1 (1.2%)
	20. Does the school district have a plan to <b>monitor the mobility</b> of students that are not enrolling in the same school or district that they did last year?	0 (0%)	82 (100%)
F. Social-Emotional Learning	21. Are school districts providing <b>social workers or counselors</b> to students and staff?	79 (97.5%)	2 (2.5%)
	22. Are school districts following a <b>specific program to promote social-emotional learning</b> ?	51 (63%)	30 (37%)
	23. Are school districts adopting a <b>school-wide social-emotional learning curriculum</b> ?	37 (45.7%)	44 (54.3%)
	24. Are school districts partnering with <b>community organizations</b> to address students' social-emotional needs?	39 (48.1%)	42 (51.9%)
G. Online Content Delivery	25. Does the school district provide information on <b>specific virtual or online instructional materials or curriculum</b> ?	61 (75.3%)	20 (24.7%)
	26. Did the school district adopt <b>the online learning management system Canvas</b> for online content management, delivery, and assessment?	21 (25.9%)	60 (74.1%)
H. Online Connectivity	27. Does the district have a plan to <b>provide internet at home to students</b> , either through vouchers, mobile hotspots, or other initiatives?	77 (95.1%)	4 (4.9%)
	28. Does the district have a plan to <b>provide non-internet-based remote learning</b> (e.g., learning or paper packets)?	39 (48.1%)	42 (51.9%)
I. Extended Learning Opportunities	29. Does the district have a plan to provide <b>K-5+</b> ?	10 (12.3%)	71 (87.7%)
	30. Does the district have a plan to provide <b>extended learning time programs</b> ?	39 (48.1%)	42 (51.9%)
	31. Does the district have a plan to provide <b>individual tutoring programs</b> ?	49 (60.5%)	32 (39.5%)
	32. Does the district have a plan to provide <b>other types of accelerating or focused learning opportunities</b> to students who are behind?	37 (45.7%)	44 (54.3%)

NOTE: Percentages are based on 81 district assurance documents reviewed.

## Appendix B. Middle and High School Failure Rates

**Table 31. Middle and High School Failure Rates**

<b>District</b>	<b>Percent of High School Students with One F or More</b>	<b>Percent of Junior High Students with One F or More</b>
Artesia	41%	30%
Belen	35%	39%
Bloomfield	50%	75%
Cloudcroft	37%	24%
Clovis	46%	65%
Cobre	50%	65%
Corona	0%	0%
Deming	73%	72%
Des Moines	14%	7%
Dexter	58%	76%
Espanola	40%	50%
Floyd	59%	63%
Grady	27%	32%
Hagerman	52%	33%
Hatch	78%	79%
Hobbs	70%	70%
Hondo	58%	35%
House	11%	0%
Jemez Valley	55%	49%
Logan	33%	43%
Lovington	56%	66%
Mora	47%	54%
Pecos	36%	47%
Portales	35%	33%
Quemado	40%	20%
Rio Rancho	25%	29%
Roy	5%	0%
Socorro	53%	48%
Texico	23%	12%

Source: LFC survey of districts via New Mexico Superintendents Association (NMSA)

## Appendix C. School Reopening Gating Criteria in Other States

**Table 32: Criteria in States With Statewide Public Health Orders that Govern School Re-entry. Current as of Oct. 22, 2020**

Benchmark	State	Low Risk: Hybrid Instruction or Full Re-Entry	Moderate Risk: Hybrid Instruction	High Risk: Virtual Learning
New Daily Cases	Oregon	<1.4 per 100,000 for three consecutive weeks in the county  <4.3 per 100,000 over seven days for K-3, and for remote and rural school districts with <100 students	<1.4 per 100,000 for three consecutive weeks in the county  <4.3 per 100,000 over seven days for K-3, and for remote and rural school districts with <100 students	>1.4 per 100,000  >4.3 per 100,000 over seven days
	Delaware	<1.4 per 100,000 in the state. Meeting 2/3 green criteria at the state level allows full reopening.	1.4 – 14.3 per 100,000 in the state. Meeting 2/3 yellow criteria at state level allows hybrid opening.	>14.3 per 100,000. Meeting 2/3 red criteria at state level triggers full distance learning.
	West Virginia	<15 per 100,000, 7-day rolling average. Schools should follow stricter cohort and gathering protocols at various levels between 3 and 15 daily cases per 100,000 and consult with local health officials on mitigation measures.		>15 per 100,000, 7-day rolling average
	Hawaii	<4 per 100,000	<26 per 100,000 for elementary  <19 per 100,000 for secondary	>26 per 100,000
	California	<7 per 100,000		>7 per 100,000 in the county
Test Positivity Rate	Oregon	<5% in state and county	<5% in state and county	>5% in state or county
	Delaware	<3%	3% - 10%	>10%
	West Virginia	<5%		>5%
	California	<8%		>8%
Hospitalizations	Delaware	<10 daily per 100,000	10-25 daily per 100,000	>25 per 100,000

## Appendix D. Fall 2020 LFC Teacher Survey Results

LFC administered a fall teacher survey through the New Mexico Coalition of Educational Leaders, Teach Plus New Mexico, and direct contact with district superintendents from October 9 - 16. The survey had 3,191 respondents, approximately 14.2 percent of all teachers in New Mexico. Survey respondents represent 55 school districts and 7 state charter schools. The majority of teachers (98.4 percent) reported that they taught at a public school. Nearly two-of-three teachers (66.5 percent) reported that they taught at a Title I school. Due to different district representation of responses, the fall LFC teacher survey may not be directly comparable to spring teacher survey results. Response to the LFC fall teacher survey was low among Albuquerque teachers compared to the spring survey. Albuquerque Public Schools conducted their own teacher survey for which the results are available here: <https://sites.google.com/aps.edu/sapr/aps-dashboard>.

**Table 33. Grade Level Taught by Teachers**

Grade Level	Count	Percent
PreK	118	3.7%
Kindergarten	173	5.4%
1st grade	171	5.4%
2nd grade	193	6.0%
3rd grade	203	6.4%
4th grade	201	6.3%
5th grade	268	8.4%
6th grade	241	7.6%
7th grade	188	5.9%
8th grade	377	11.8%
9th grade	184	5.8%
10th grade	147	4.6%
11th grade	153	4.8%
12th grade	389	12.2%
Other	185	5.8%
Total	3191	100.0%

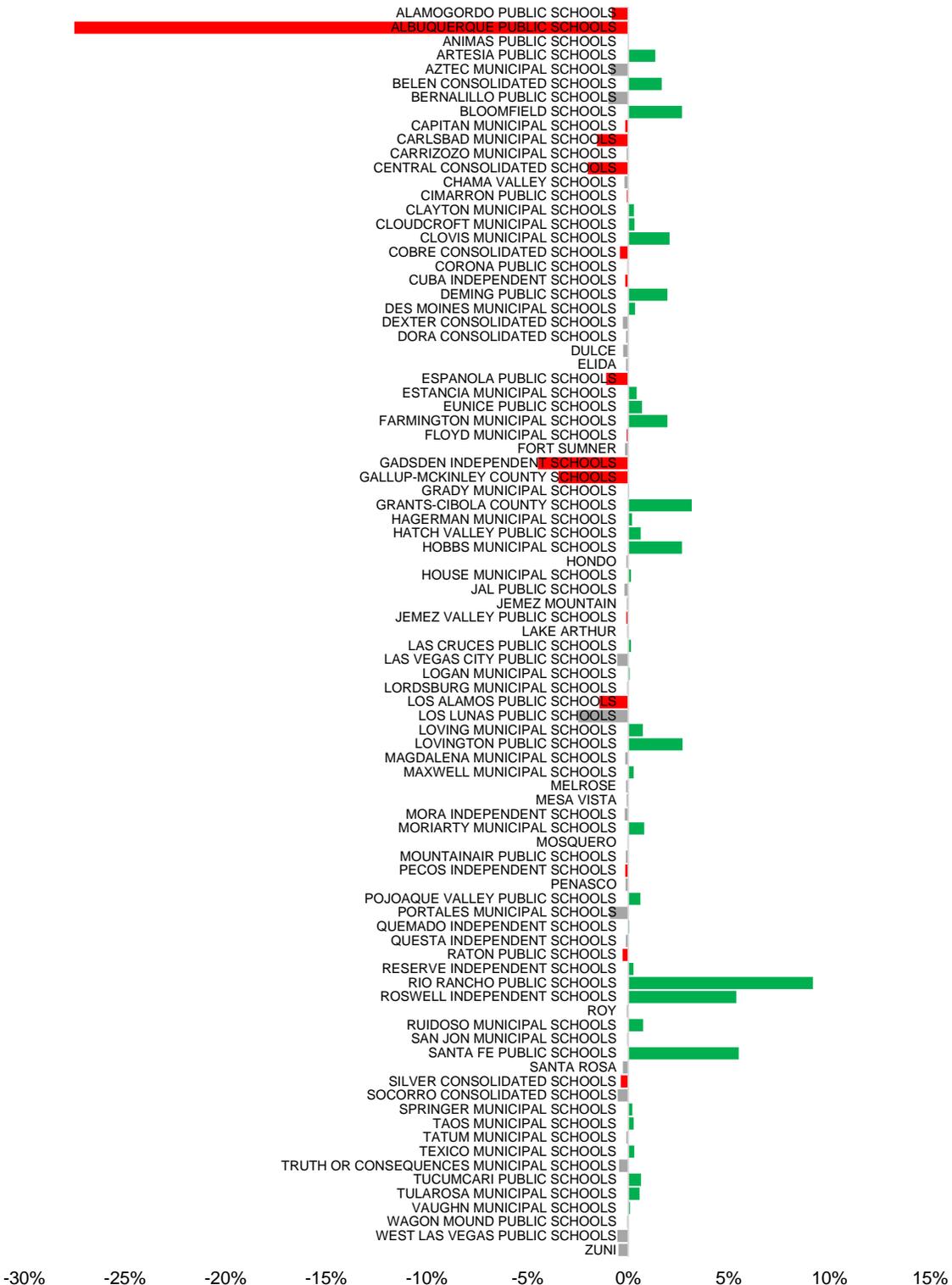
Note. If teachers taught multiple grade levels, highest grade level taught was selected.

**Table 34. Subject Taught by Teachers**

Subject Taught	Count	Percent
Elementary education	1034	32.4%
English language arts	333	10.4%
Math	296	9.3%
Science	251	7.9%
Social studies	217	6.8%
Art	75	2.4%
Music	90	2.8%
Physical education	95	3.0%
Special education	342	10.7%
Other	458	14.4%
Total	3191	100.0%

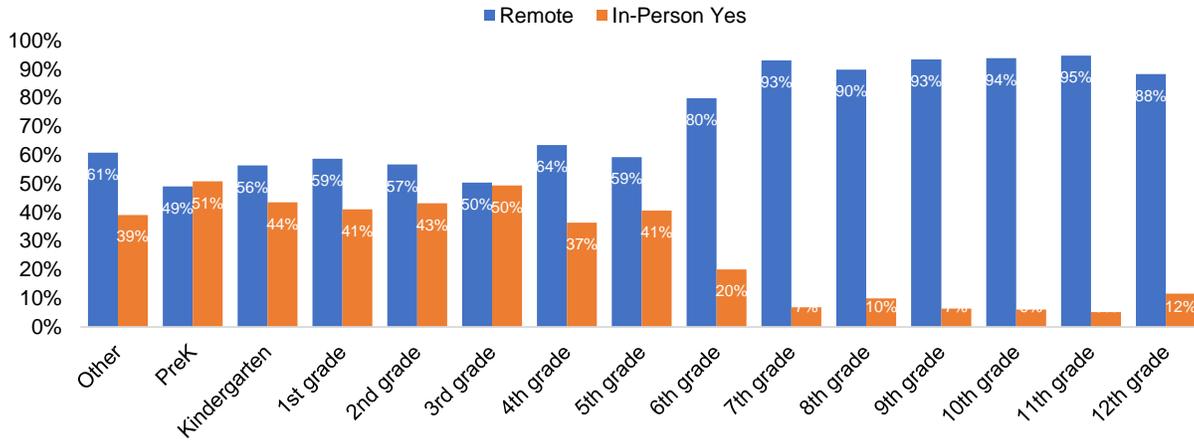
**Chart 35. Survey Representation Based on FTE**

■ Did Not Respond ■ Underrepresented ■ Overrepresented



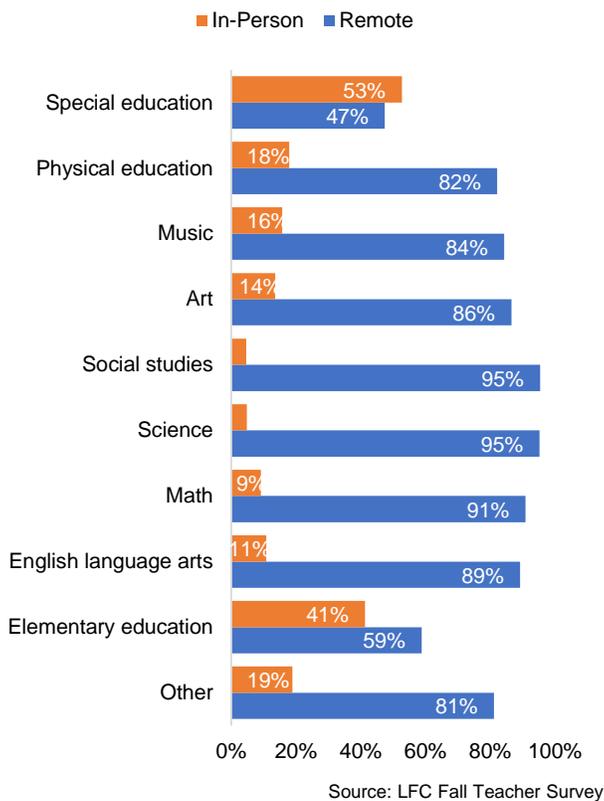
Source : LFC Teacher Survey

**Chart 36. Percent of Teachers Teaching In-Person Compared to Remotely by Grade Level**



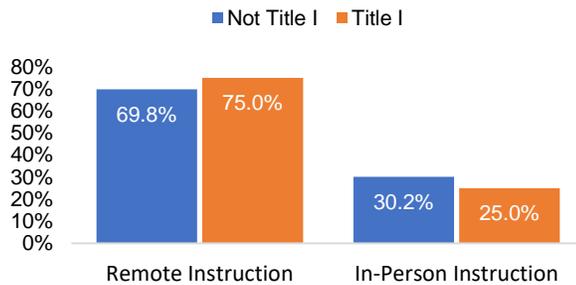
Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

**Chart 37. Percent of Teachers Teaching In-Person Compared to Remotely by Subject Area**



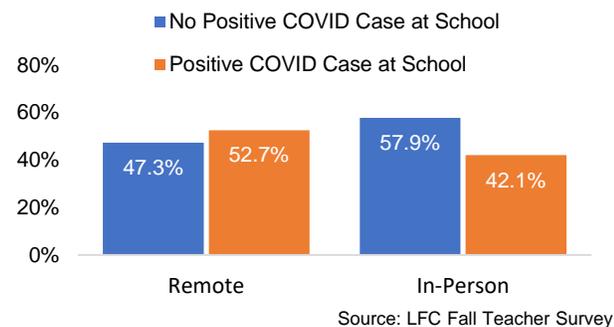
Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

**Chart 38. Children at Title I Schools Are Significantly Less Likely to Be Receiving In-Person Instruction**



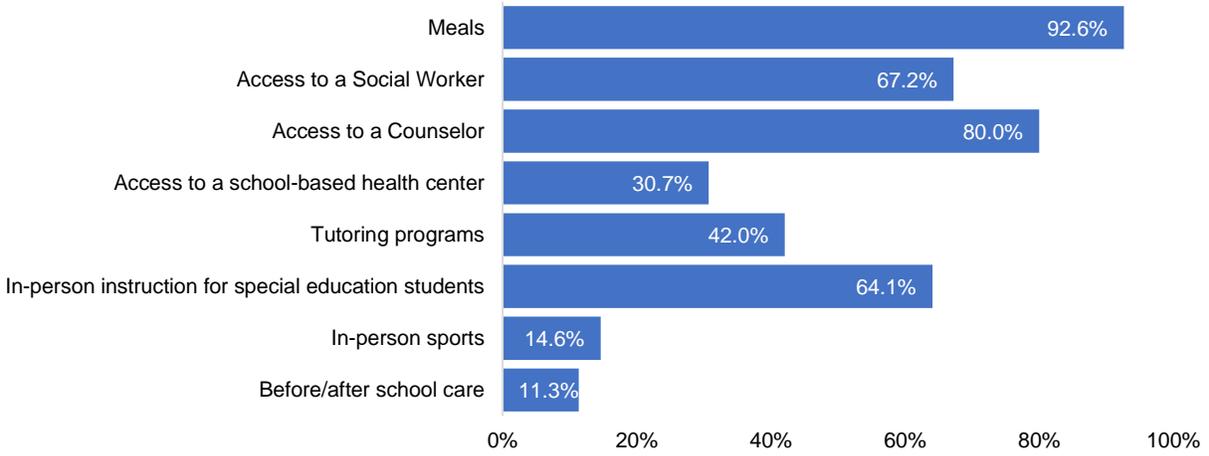
Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

**Chart 39. Percent of Teachers Reporting Positive COVID Case Among Students or Staff at Their School**



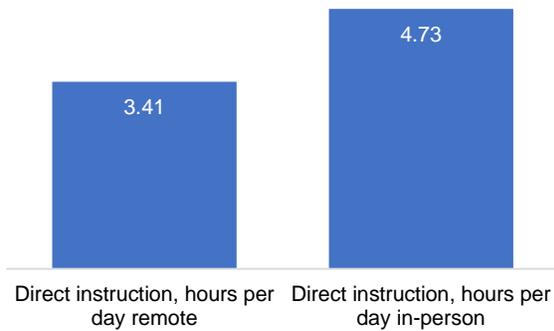
Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

**Chart 40. Services Provided During Fall 2020**



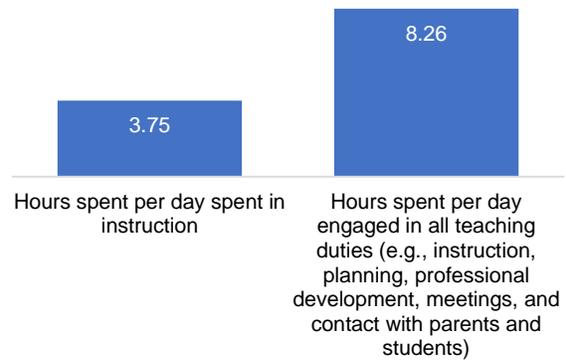
Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

**Chart 41. Teachers Report Providing Significantly More Direct Instruction Than Independent Work for Students When Teaching In-Person**



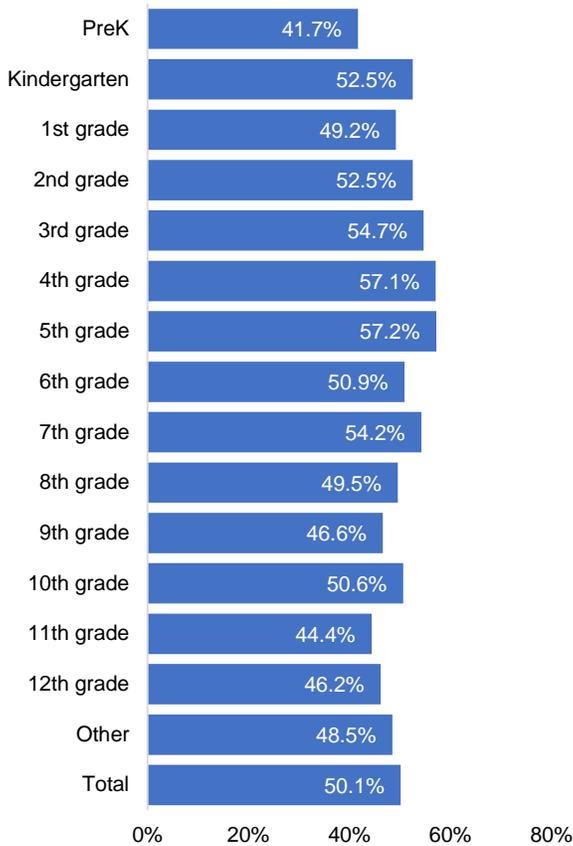
Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

**Chart 42. Hours per day teachers are engaged in instruction and other duties**



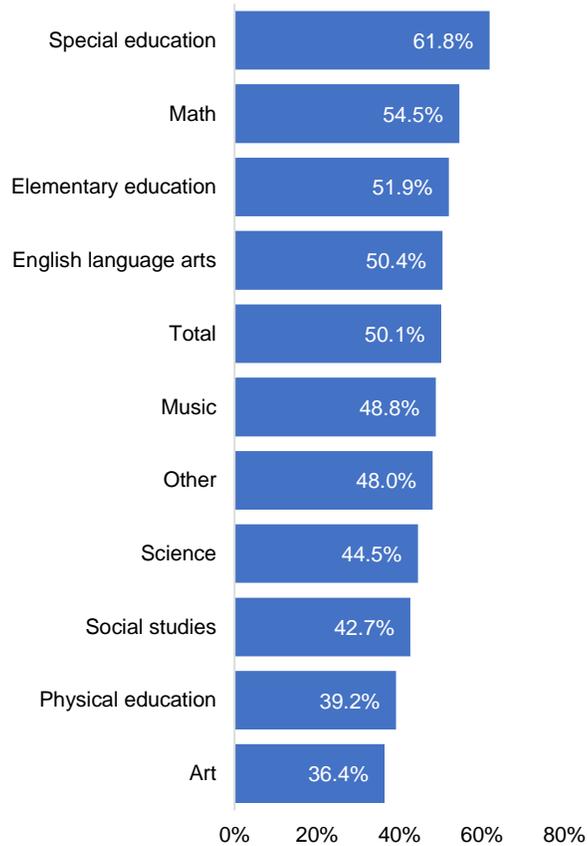
Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

**Chart 43. Percent of Students Who Teachers Report Are Behind Learning Standards By Grade Level**



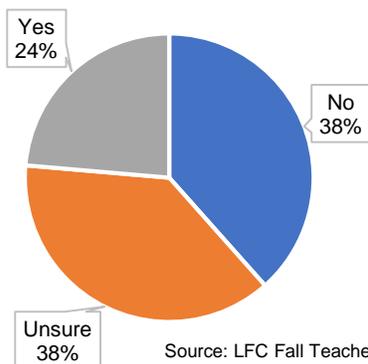
Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

**Chart 44. Percent of Students Who Teachers Report Are Behind Learning Standards By Subject Area**



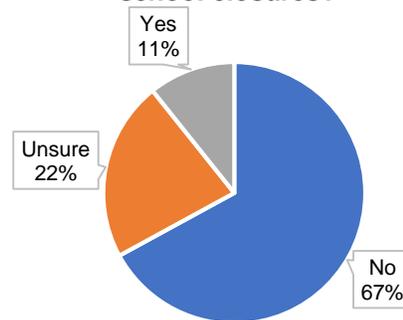
Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

**Chart 45. New Mexico Teachers response to, "Due to school closures, will you be able to finish teaching all of the required state standards by the end of the year?"**



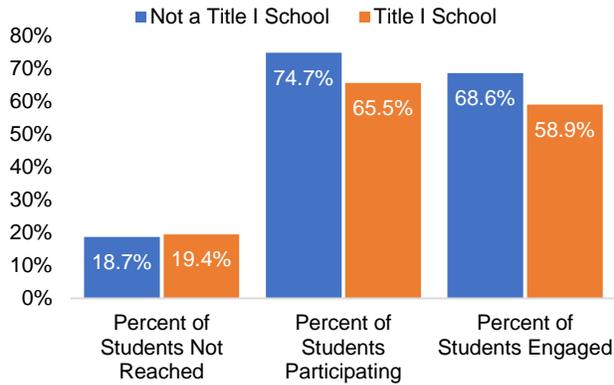
Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

**Chart 46. New Mexico Teachers response to, "Should schools or districts extend the school calendar in future years to make up for lost learning instructional time during school closures?"**



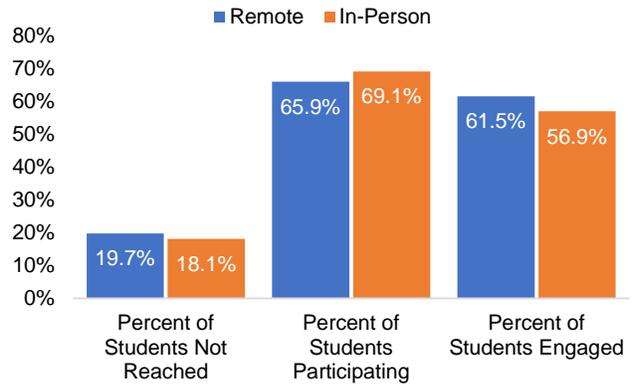
Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

**Chart 47. Student Engagement During School Closures Based on Title I Status**



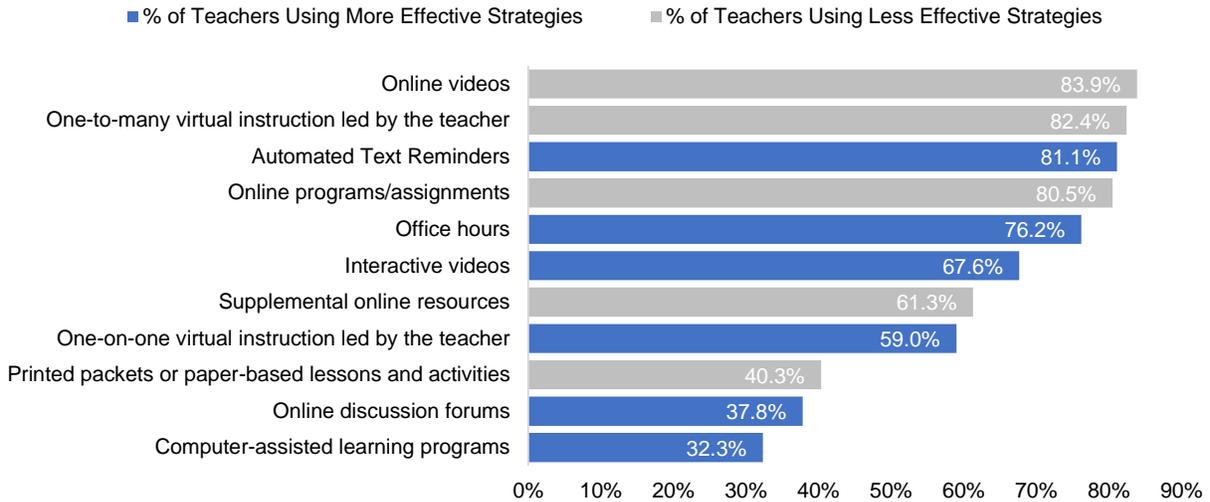
Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

**Chart 48. Student Engagement During School Closures Based on In-Person Status**



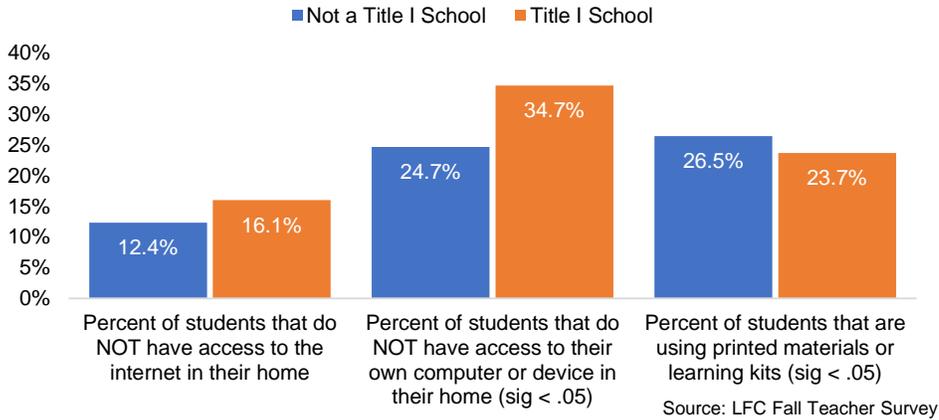
Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

**Chart 49. Percent of Teachers Reporting Engaging in Various Distance Learning Activities Fall 2020**

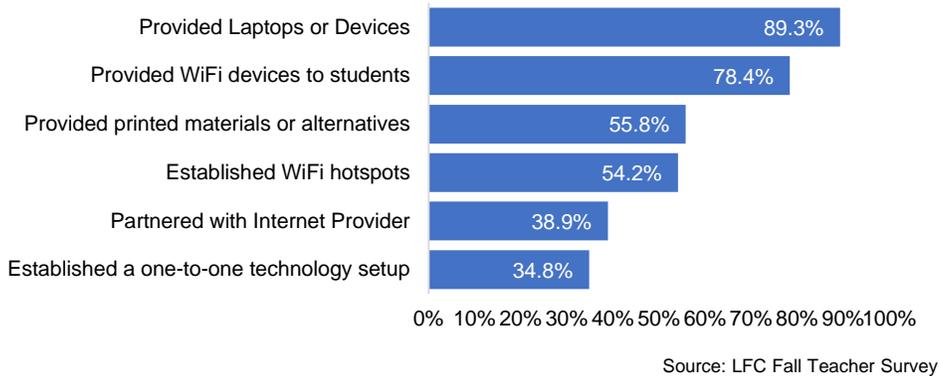


Source: LFC Fall Teacher Survey

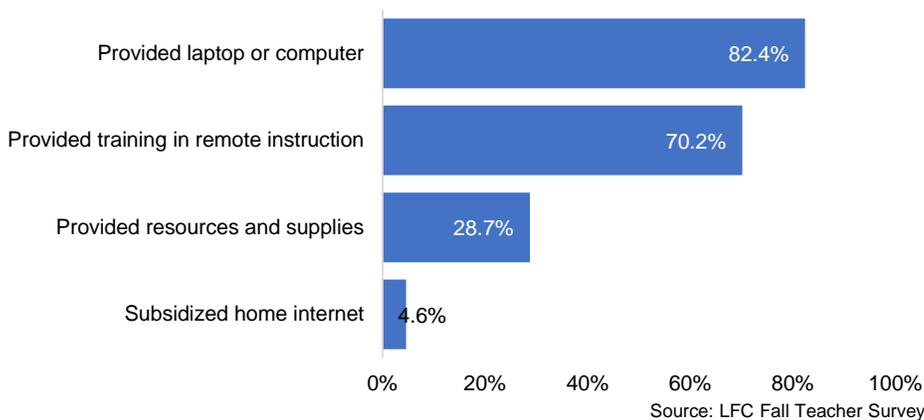
**Chart 50. Student Access to Technology Based on Title I Status**



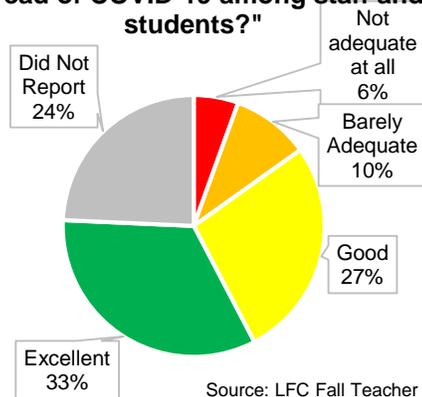
**Chart 51. Percent of Teachers Who Reported Various Efforts by Their District to Provide Access to the Internet or Computers to Engage in Distance Learning**



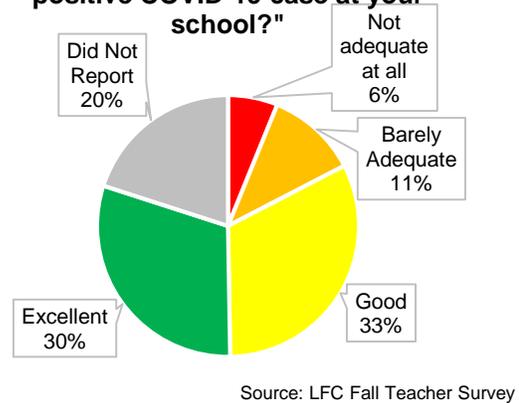
**Chart 52. Percent of Teachers Who Reported Various District Efforts to Support Teachers in Remote Instruction**



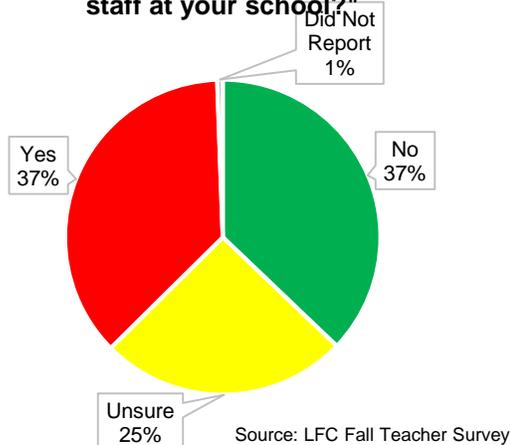
**Chart 53. Teachers Responses to the Question, "Are the health and safety precautions implemented by your school adequate to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among staff and students?"**



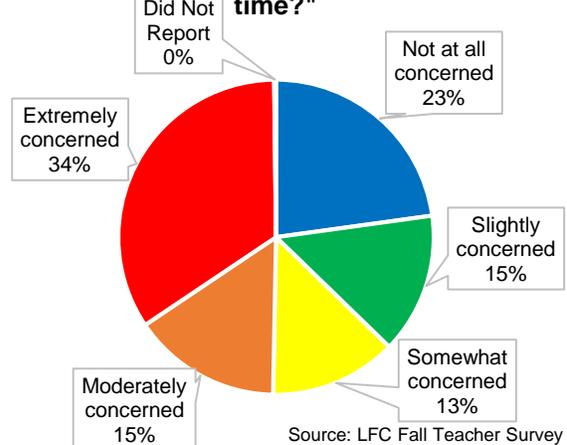
**Chart 54. Teachers Responses to the Question, "How adequate do you feel are the guidance and safety procedures for responding to a positive COVID-19 case at your school?"**



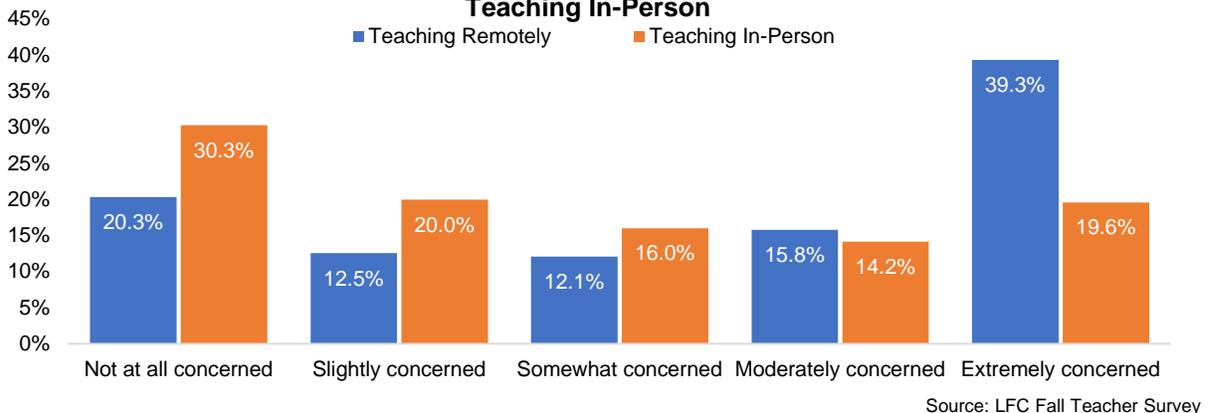
**Chart 55. Teachers Responses to the Question, "Has there been a positive COVID-19 case among students or staff at your school?"**



**Chart 56. Teachers Responses to the Question, "How concerned do you feel about teaching in-person at this time?"**



**Chart 57. Teachers Who Are Teaching Remotely Are Significantly More Concerned to About Teaching In-Person Compared to Teachers Currently Teaching In-Person**



---

## Appendix XX. REFERENCES

<sup>i</sup> U.S. Department of Education

<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html#:~:text=Schools%20in%20which%20children%20from,of%20the%20lowest%20Dachieving%20students.>

<sup>ii</sup> New Mexico Legislative Education Study Committee and Legislative Finance Committee (2017, December). Joint program evaluation: Financial responsibility, governance, and student outcomes of virtual charter schools. Available:

[https://www.nmlegis.gov/Entity/LFC/Documents/Program\\_Evaluation\\_Reports/Financial%20Responsibility,%20Governance,%20and%20Student%20Outcomes%20of%20Virtual%20Charter%20Schools.pdf](https://www.nmlegis.gov/Entity/LFC/Documents/Program_Evaluation_Reports/Financial%20Responsibility,%20Governance,%20and%20Student%20Outcomes%20of%20Virtual%20Charter%20Schools.pdf).

<sup>iii</sup> Reuter, H. & Troe, J. (2020, May 15). State and local policy responses to COVID-19: Lessons from evidence. Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab. Available: <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/blog/5-15-20/state-and-local-policy-responses-covid-19-lessons-evidence>.

<sup>iv</sup> J-PAL Evidence Review. 2019. “Will Technology Transform Education for the Better?” Cambridge, MA: Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab. Available: <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publication/education-technology-evidence-review.pdf>.

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/10/21/covid-19s-disproportionate-toll-on-class-of-2020.html>

<sup>vi</sup> New Mexico Public Education Department (2020, July 8). Reentry Guidance: Using Multiple Measures & Formative Practice to Identify Learning Needs. Available: [https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/NMPED\\_SupportDoc\\_FormativePracticeIdentifyLearningNeeds.pdf](https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/NMPED_SupportDoc_FormativePracticeIdentifyLearningNeeds.pdf).

<sup>vii</sup> Perea-Warniment, G., Sandoval, K., & Richards, R. (2020, June). ENGAGE New Mexico: A triage response to engaging and supporting students in remote learning during COVID-related school closures. New Mexico Public Education Department & Graduation Alliance. Available: <https://www.graduationalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/NMPED-GA-White-Paper-June-2020.pdf>.

<sup>viii</sup> State of New Mexico Emergency Determination Form (2020). 2020 Emergency Form 21-08.

<sup>ix</sup> Sena, J. (2020, October 21). Personal communication.

<sup>x</sup> New Mexico Public Education Department (2020, June 29). Reentry Guidance. Available: [https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/20NMPED\\_ReentryGuide.pdf](https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/20NMPED_ReentryGuide.pdf).

<sup>xi</sup> New Mexico Public Education Department (2020, June 29). Reentry assurances document, plan for prioritizing additional instructional time, and local plan for remote learning. Available: <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/reentry-district-and-school-guidance/>.

<sup>xii</sup> Legislative Education Study Committee (2020, July 24). Activity Report for Week Ending July 24, 2020.

<sup>xiii</sup> New Mexico School Superintendents Association (2020, September 15).

<sup>xiv</sup> Albuquerque Public Schools (Retrieved: 2020, October 23). APS Dashboard.

<sup>xv</sup> <https://www.aappublications.org/news/2020/10/14/covid19childcare101420>

<sup>xvi</sup> Ismail, S. A., Saliba, V., Bernal, J. L., Ramsay, M. E., & Ladhani, S. N. (2020, August 12). SARS-CoV-2 infection and transmission in educational settings: Cross-sectional analysis of clusters and outbreaks in England. *Public Health England*. Available:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/911267/School\\_Outbreaks\\_Analysis.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/911267/School_Outbreaks_Analysis.pdf).

<sup>xvii</sup> Catala, M., Cardona, P.J., et al (2020, October 2). Analysis and prediction of COVID-19 for EU-EFTA-UK and other countries. Report for the European Commission. [https://biocomsc.upc.edu/en/shared/20201002\\_report\\_136.pdf](https://biocomsc.upc.edu/en/shared/20201002_report_136.pdf)

<sup>xviii</sup> New Mexico Public Education Department (2020, June 29). New Mexico Public Education Department: Reentry Guidance. Available: [https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/20NMPED\\_ReentryGuide.pdf](https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/20NMPED_ReentryGuide.pdf).

<sup>xix</sup> New Mexico Public Education Department (2020, August 3). Instructional Models for Reentry: Reentry Guidance Addendum A. Available: [https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/20NMPED\\_ReentryGuide\\_AddendumA\\_InstructionalModels.pdf](https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/20NMPED_ReentryGuide_AddendumA_InstructionalModels.pdf).