

Looking Back to Face What Is Ahead:

A research and policy presentation and conversation about teaching and learning during the pandemic

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July 19, 2021

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Speakers



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*Baldwin Union Free School District
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About the National Survey of Public Education's Response to COVID-19

- Purpose: Understand how districts across the country experienced and adapted to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- First survey in spring 2020
- Second survey in spring 2021



About the National Survey of Public Education's Response to COVID-19

- **Administration:** Late January–early April 2021
- **Sample:** AIR sent the survey to all superintendents of U.S. public school districts (about 13,000 districts).
- **Response:** The final sample included responses from 565 districts.
 - Responses from 46 states
 - Observed characteristics of the responding districts reflect average characteristics of the national district sample.

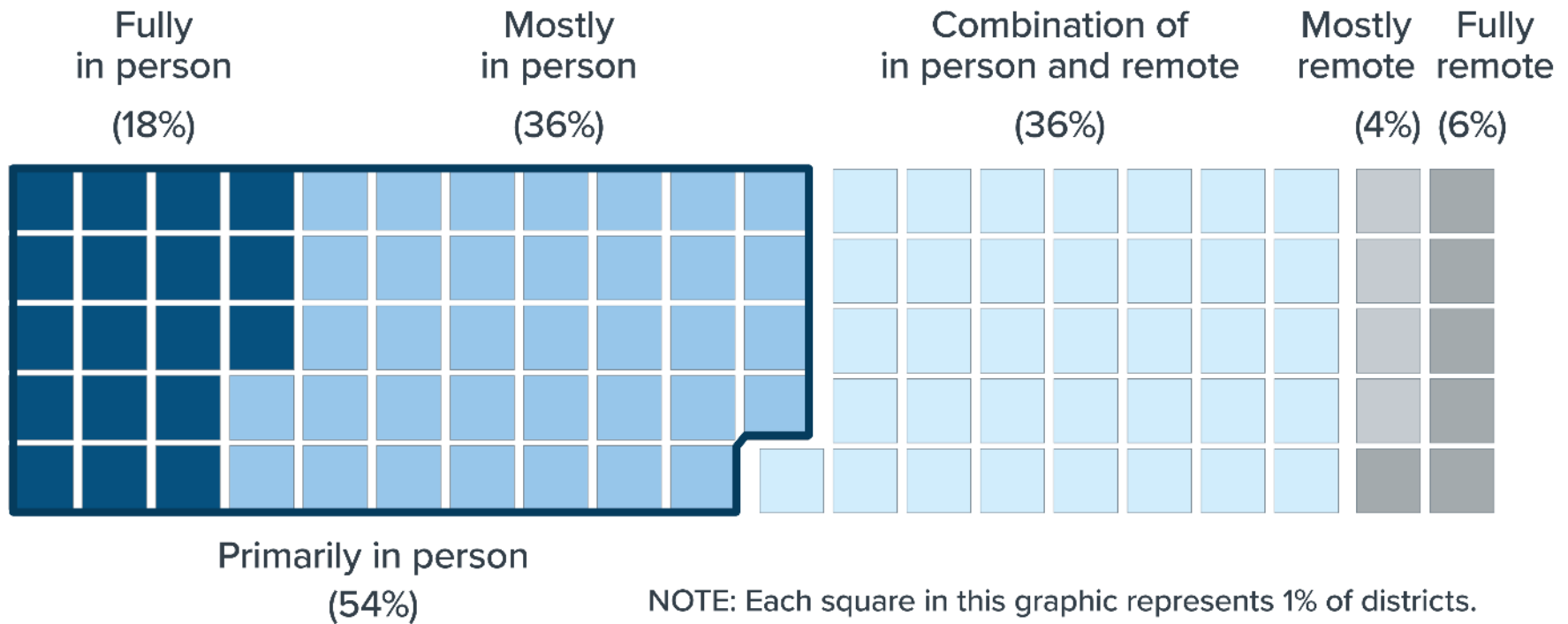
What have we learned?

- The results highlight disparities in educational opportunities that may have lasting effects on student outcomes and the need to minimize the effects of these disparities in the upcoming school year.
 - Use of in-person instruction differed widely across districts, especially by geographic location and key characteristics of the student population.
 - Districts with little to no in-person instruction reported more difficulties with attendance, enrollment loss, and student performance.

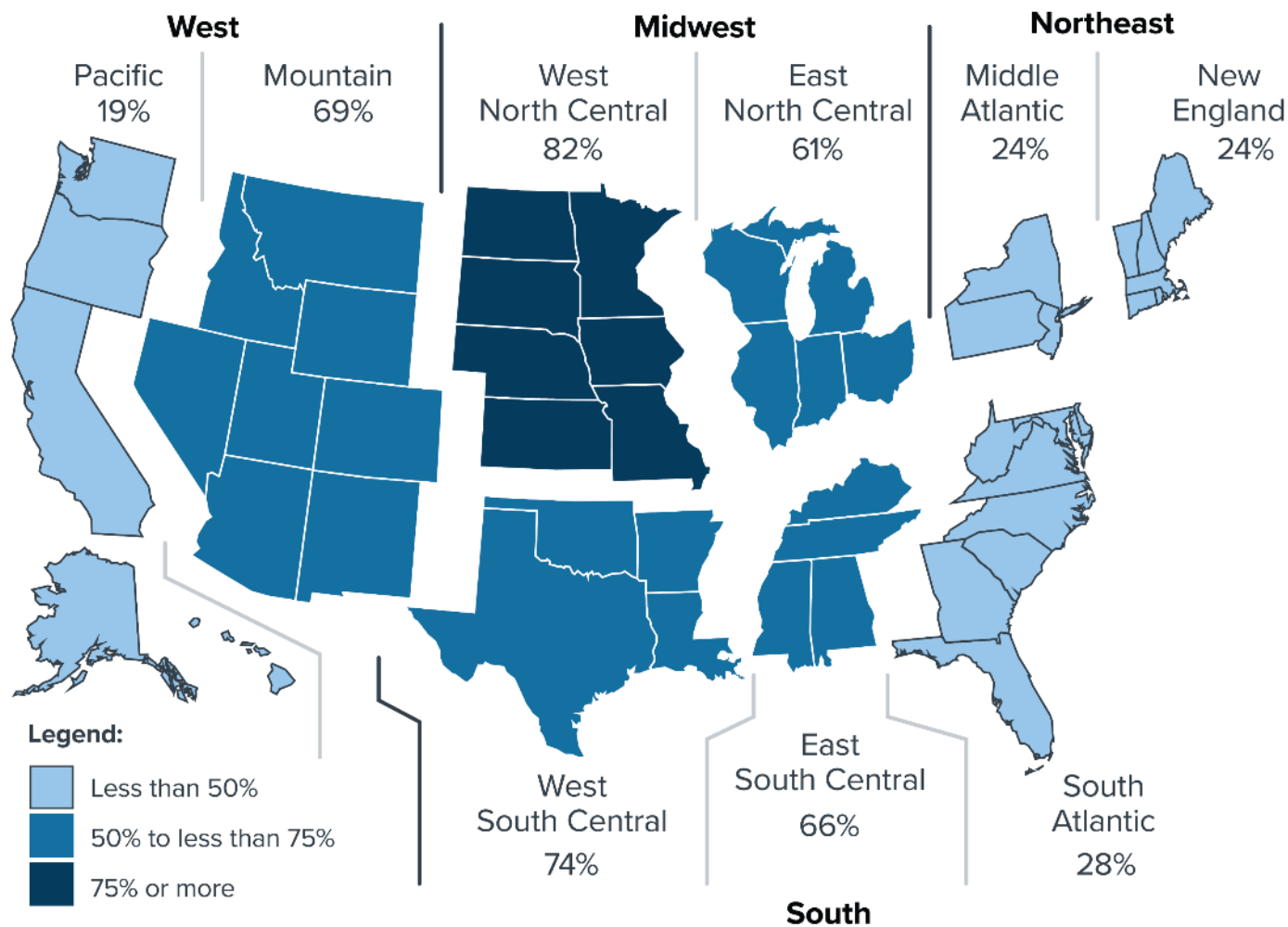
Findings: District Approaches to Instruction

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Most districts were neither fully in person nor fully remote in winter 2021.

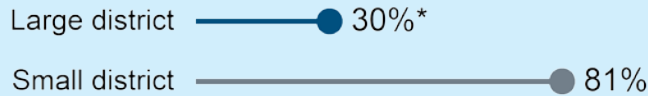


The prevalence of in-person instruction differed greatly by region, highlighting the variation in state and regional guidelines across the country.

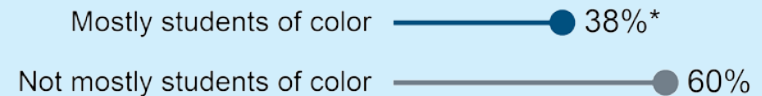
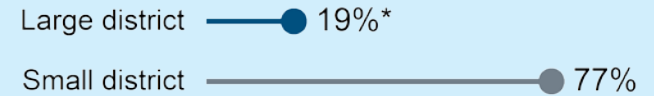


Instructional mode also differed significantly by district locale, size, racial composition, concentration of English learners, and historic achievement.

Grades K–2



Grades 9–12



Note. ELs is English learners. * indicates statistical significance at $p < 0.05$.

Commentary

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Findings: Instruction Time, Student Attendance, and Enrollment Loss

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Districts that provided more **in person instruction** expected more instructional time per day.

Average time districts expected students to spend on instructional activities per day

	Primarily in person	Not primarily in person
Grades K–2	6 hr 24 min	5 hr 18 min
Grades 3–5	6 hr 30 min	5 hr 24 min
Grades 6–8	6 hr 36 min	5 hr 48 min
Grades 9–12	6 hr 48 min	6 hr 0 min

Attendance rates were lower in districts that were not primarily in person compared to districts providing primarily in-person instruction.

- Differences in attendance by instructional mode were present for all grade bands (K–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–12).
- Differences in attendance by district size, poverty level, racial composition, and historic achievement were also present.

Attendance rates across all grade bands

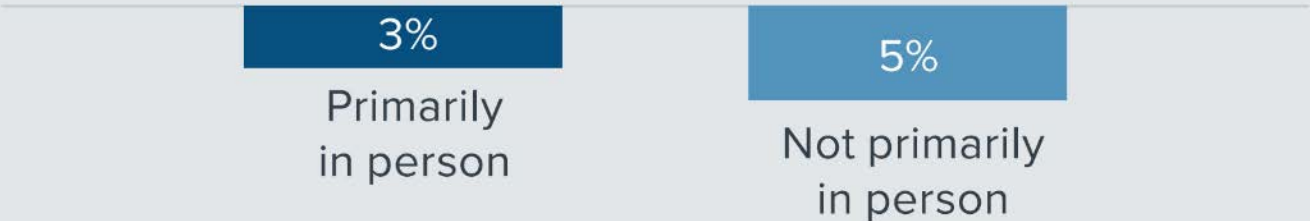


Enrollment loss was greater for districts that were not primarily in person.

- Differences in enrollment loss by instructional mode were present for all grade bands.
- Differences in enrollment loss by district size, racial composition, poverty level, and urbanicity were also present.

“We are concerned about the academic and social progress of the primary grade (K–2) students who left our district for homeschooling, private, or charter options. We expect most of them to return to our district in the fall of 2021; however, we are not aware of their needs at this time.”

Enrollment loss across all grade bands





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Findings: Instructional Challenges

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Two out of five district leaders said their teacher covered all the content they normally would in fall 2020 compared to fall 2019, with content coverage especially challenging for districts that were not primarily in person.

Percentage of district leaders that reported most or all teachers covered all the content they normally would

Grades K–5

Primarily in person 58%

Not primarily in person 22%

Grades 6–12

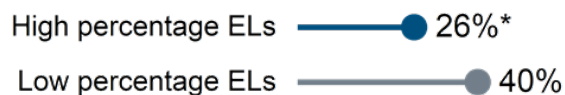
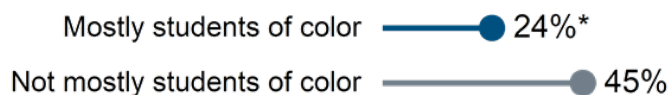
Primarily in person 60%

Not primarily in person 22%

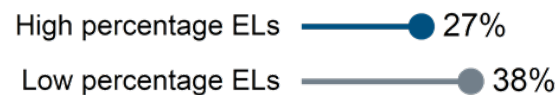
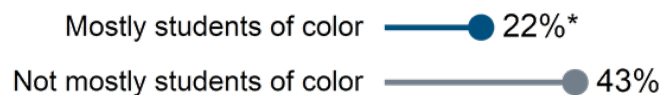
“Teachers were encouraged to focus on essential learning and skill development ... and focusing on student connections and wellness.”

Concerns about content coverage differed by district characteristics.

Grades K–5



Grades 6–12

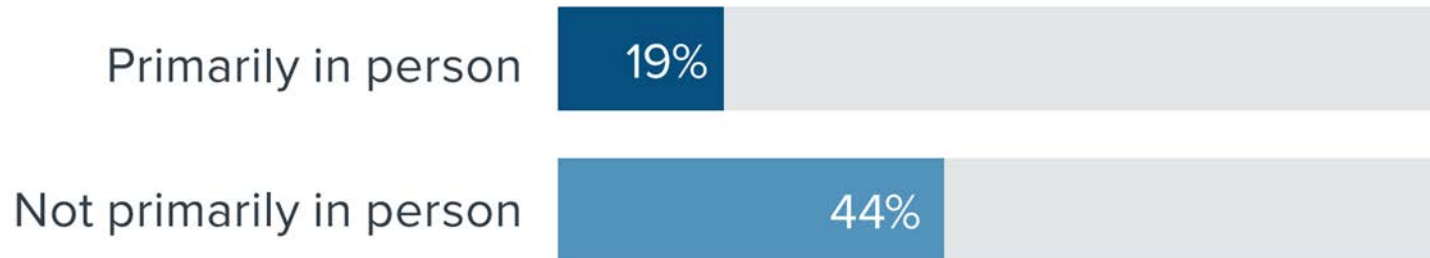


Note. ELs is English learners. * indicates statistical significance at $p < 0.05$.

Districts that were not primarily in person were more likely to report a substantial decrease in academic performance compared to districts providing primarily in-person instruction.

Percentage of district leaders that reported there was a substantial increase in the number of high school students receiving D's or F's

Grades 9–12



“We have many more [high school] students who have not passed classes and thus did not earn course credits required for graduation.”

Concerns about decreased academic performance differed by district characteristics.

Grades K–8: Substantial increase in students below grade level in math

City or suburb 17%

Town or rural 19%

Large district 30%

Small district 19%

High poverty 28%*

Low poverty 11%

Mostly students of color 34%*

Not mostly students of color 14%

High percentage ELs 26%

Low percentage ELs 17%

Low achieving 30%*

High achieving 13%

Grades 9–12: Substantial increase in students receiving D's or F's

City or suburb 38%

Town or rural 32%

Large district 45%*

Small district 21%

High poverty 38%

Low poverty 27%

Mostly students of color 44%*

Not mostly students of color 31%

High percentage ELs 37%

Low percentage ELs 36%

Low achieving 39%*

High achieving 25%

Note. ELs is English learners. * indicates statistical significance at $p < 0.05$.

Common challenges cited by districts were related to learning and instruction.

- Common challenges:
 - Measuring gaps in student learning
 - Addressing the needs of students who fell behind
- Promising practices:
 - Increased formative data collection.
 - Redesigned instruction to meet student needs.
 - Used supplemental programs to bring students back up to grade level.

“Using local benchmarks and continuous evaluation allows teachers and interventionists to meet students where they are with any potential learning loss.... The flexibility to forego state testing in favor of more accurate local benchmarks and learning targets provides teachers the time and data needed to help each student succeed and meet their goals.”

New Infographic and Briefs

AIR Advancing Education Improving Lives
National Survey of Public Education's Response to COVID-19

Schooling During 2020–21: Results from the National Survey of Public Education's Response to COVID-19

The American Institutes for Research launched a national survey at the end of January 2021 to better understand public school district experiences in 2020–21. The results presented below are based on survey responses from 568 district leaders in 48 states.

These findings highlight disparities in educational opportunities that may have lasting effects on student outcomes including academic achievement and social-emotional well-being. The results suggest that reporters are needed to monitor the effects of these disparities in school policies prepared to be flexible this year and COVID-19.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Percentage of districts providing each mode of instruction for all grades offered in Winter 2021

Mode	Percentage
Fully in person	40%
Mostly in person	39%
Combination of in-person and remote	15%
Mostly fully remote	2%
Fully remote	2%

Percentage of districts that were primarily in person in Winter 2021

Category	Percentage
All districts	50%
City or rural	34%
Town or rural	68%
Large district	76%
Small district	77%
High poverty	43%
Low poverty	47%
Mostly students of color	32%
Not mostly students of color	46%
High percentage EL	44%
Low percentage EL	52%
Low achievement	52%
High achievement	48%

Percentage of districts that were primarily in person in Winter 2021, by geographic region (grades K–12)

Region	Percentage
West	68%
Midwest	52%
East South Central	67%
Midwest	54%
South	38%
New England	39%

Schooling During 2020–21: Results from the National Survey of Public Education's Response to COVID-19

AIR Advancing Education Improving Lives
National Survey of Public Education's Response to COVID-19

District Approaches to Instruction in 2020–21: Differences in Instructional Modes and Instruction Time Across Contexts

Sarah Hodgson | Jordan Rickles | James Carmona | Mike Garet
JUNE 2021

RESEARCH BRIEF

In spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic led schools across the country to close their doors and transition to distance learning. One year later—in spring 2021—districts continued to adapt to the persistent and evolving challenges of schooling during the pandemic. With variations in state guidelines and community needs, the importance of understanding the education landscape across the United States is greater than ever.

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) launched two national surveys to better understand how school districts across the country have responded to the pandemic. The first *National Survey of Public Education's Response to COVID-19* was sent to leaders in approximately 2,500 school districts in May 2020 and received 753 responses. Results from the first survey appear in a collection of research briefs published between July 2020 and April 2021, which are available on the [public page](#). The second survey was sent to leaders in approximately 2,500 school districts in May 2020 and received 753 responses. Results from the first survey appear in a collection of research briefs published between July 2020 and April 2021, which are available on the [public page](#). The second survey was sent to the same sample of 2,500 leaders, as well as an additional 10,000 districts that were not included in the original survey sample. Administration took place in April 2021, with 565 districts responding from 48 states.¹

While the survey response rate is low, observed characteristics of the responding districts reflect average characteristics of the national district sample. In addition, our survey results on the prevalence of in-person instruction are consistent.

About This Brief

- This brief examines public school district approaches to instruction during the 2020–21 school year.
- District approaches to instruction (i.e., in-person, remote, or hybrid instruction) varied greatly across contexts, with stark contrasts in the prevalence of in-person instruction by geographic region as well as district locale, size, racial composition, concentration of English learners (ELs), and historic achievement.
- Expectations for instruction time also differed across contexts, with districts that provided more in-person instruction expecting more instructional time per day.
- These findings highlight disparities in educational opportunities that may have lasting effects on student outcomes, including academic achievement and social-emotional well-being. This suggests a need for supports that can minimize the effects of these disparities as school districts prepare to transition into the post-COVID era.

AIR Advancing Education Improving Lives
National Survey of Public Education's Response to COVID-19

Student Attendance and Enrollment Loss in 2020–21

James Carmona | Sarah Hodgson | Jordan Rickles | Mike Garet
JUNE 2021

RESEARCH BRIEF

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About This Brief

- This brief examines public school district attendance rates, attendance monitoring and outreach methods, and enrollment loss during the 2020–21 school year.
- Findings suggest that attendance rates have dropped compared with previous years, with lower attendance rates in districts that were not providing primarily in-person instruction, as well as high-poverty districts and districts serving mostly students of color. These districts, as well as those with lower achieving students, were also more likely to report substantially lower attendance in fall 2020 compared with fall 2019.
- Districts that were not providing primarily in-person instruction used a variety of nontraditional methods to monitor student attendance and to contact students who were chronically absent.
- Districts that were not providing primarily in-person instruction, high-poverty districts, and historically lower achieving districts reported higher rates of enrollment loss than their counterparts.

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National Survey of Public Education's Response to COVID-19

District Concerns About Academic Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Jordan Rickles | Sarah Hodgson | James Carmona | Mike Garet
JUNE 2021

RESEARCH BRIEF

In spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic led schools across the country to close their doors and transition to distance learning. One year later—in spring 2021—districts continued to adapt to the persistent and evolving challenges of schooling during the pandemic. With variations in state guidelines and community needs, the importance of understanding the education landscape across the United States is greater than ever.

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While the survey response rate is low, observed characteristics of the responding districts reflect average characteristics of the national district sample. In addition, our survey results on the prevalence of in-person instruction are consistent.

About This Brief

- This brief examines public school district leaders' concerns about student academic learning during the 2020–21 school year.
- About half of low-district leaders reported that their teachers covered all the content they normally would in fall 2020. Content coverage was especially challenging for districts that were not providing primarily in-person instruction in fall 2020 and for those serving mostly students of color.
- Fewer than one in five district leaders reported a substantial increase in the percentage of students in Grades K–8 performing below grade level in fall 2020 compared with fall 2019.
- About one-third of district leaders (34%) reported a substantial increase in the percentage of high school students receiving poor grades. This increase was more pronounced in districts serving mostly students of color and in districts that historically served students with lower achievement.
- About a quarter of district leaders reported that they had substantially increased their use of learning or supplemental instruction this year to address gaps in learning.
- These findings highlight concerns that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated disparities in student learning across districts and reinforces the importance of supporting districts most affected by the pandemic during the 2020–21 school year.



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Preview of District Interview Findings

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Quotes

“We can't just say, ‘We can't do anymore.’ ... We expect our students to be the best. And this is how far we're willing to go to make sure that'll happen.”

“Just because you have all these interventions doesn't mean you should use them all. You should use the ones that are giving you the most return on that investment. ...I want to make sure that if teachers are comfortable using it.”

Quotes

“I'm more concerned about the social, emotional issues that are going to come when we bring students back than I am about our academic performance. ... I need to build those supports this summer so that when they do return, they have the relationships.”

“It was important to staff to see my face and not just get a big, long email because it just doesn't ease the fear.”

“If I had a class that had a problem, I didn't send it out to the entire school, but to that class. We actually got rated fairly well by all the different groups on our communication strategies.”

Questions and Discussion

Follow the conversation on Twitter using #AIRCOVIDSurvey.



THANK YOU

QUESTIONS? EMAIL PERC@AIR.ORG

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