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Report as of October 15, 2020

Although the start of each school year is unique, we all may agree that the 2020-2021 school year is definitely unlike one most of us have ever experienced. After an abrupt halt to the 2019-20 school year, everyone hoped for the new school year to return to "status quo" so we could restart, pick up the pieces and trudge forward.

Clearly that is not our reality. Instead we are all facing some form of a cobbled together hybrid educational delivery model. We aren't even sharing a common set of circumstances as each school district has defined what their delivery model looks like for the children. Undoubtedly parents have been and are comparing what their neighboring districts are/are not doing.

During the upcoming months the Educational arm of the Advocacy team will begin to examine the impact the pandemic has had on our students and those areas where equity, and lack of equity, exists. Additionally, we will look for data that provides information for parents to understand the implications remote learning and hybrid models are having on students. It is important to note that outcome studies are just beginning and there is not a great deal of accumulated data to draw any definitive outcomes so this will be an ongoing process.

Here are some highlights of findings starting to take center stage:

- EQUITY (defined here as impacting all students):
    - Overall current data supports the point that across the nation there was a lack of strategy, resources and preparedness to deliver instruction to students via alternative methods
    - Even prior to the pandemic, there was a lack of information related to the overall effectiveness of online education
    - Overall, teachers were did not have adequate training in the tools they were asked to use to deliver remote and hybrid models of instruction
    - There has been a more generalized appreciation for the role of school and teachers and the role of public schools in the lives of families, especially from a childcare and social/emotional perspective
    - Mental health implications for students
        - Schools provide 57% of the mental health services for students
    - Remote, alternative learning and online instruction has likely affected both students learning and teaching
        - To deliver remote and online instruction successfully requires appropriate resources and students having experience with these methods

- INEQUITY (defined here as impacting a certain subset of students):
    - Overall, the lack of time in school will likely widening of student achievement gaps:
        - This will the felt in many areas, specifically by those students who require special accommodations, supports and resources
    - Students living in poverty and students of color are being disproportionately impacted

- 17 - 25 percent of these students do not have access to the technology needed
- Higher percentage of these populations are impacted by the virus itself and/or are experiencing higher level of social and economic impacts as these families tend to have jobs that cannot be done from home
  - Mental health implications for students of color
    - Of the 57% of mental health services provided by schools, higher numbers of these students receive 100% of their mental health services from the schools they attend.
  - Remote, alternative learning and online instruction has further highlighted the "digital divide" students of color as they lack the necessary resources - the devices themselves (computers, laptops, tablets, internet connectivity)

A report from the Brookings Institute has a selection of proposed actions that can be taken that are worth noting and tracking as we move forward. In summary these are as follows:

1. Leverage public schools: Put public schools at the center of education systems given their essential role in equalizing opportunity across dimensions within society;
2. A laser focus on the instructional core: Emphasize the instructional core, the heart of the teaching and learning process.
3. Harness education technology: Deploy education technology to power up schools long term in a way that meets the teaching and learning needs of students and educators; otherwise, technology risks becoming a costly distraction.
4. Parent engagement: Forge stronger, more trusting relationships between parents and teachers.
5. An iterative approach: Embrace the principles of improvement science required to evaluate, course correct, document, and scale new approaches that can help power up schools over time.

As we move forward into the school year, we hope to see more data related to the alternate delivery models used so we may provide additional information.

Information from the following articles are referenced in this report and are attached to provide additional information:

https://www.edutopia.org/article/covid-19s-impact-students-academic-and-mental-well-being

https://www.brookings.edu/research/beyond-reopening-schools-how-education-can-emerge-stronger-than-before-covid-19/

https://www.epi.org/publication/the-consequences-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-for-education-performance-and-equity-in-the-united-states-what-can-we-learn-from-pre-pandemic-research-to-inform-relief-recovery-and-rebuilding/