

— TOP TAKEAWAYS —

COVID and Education

DISTANCE LEARNING HAS NOT WORKED WELL

- Public districts have been slow to implement live online instruction, with fewer than one in two even managing it before the end of the school year.
- Often, misplaced concerns about equity or union work rules prevented teachers from developing ways to deliver live instruction to their students.
- Even where distance learning has been implemented, it did not work well for all students, and was frustrating to many parents.
- Schools were much quicker to focus on and deliver social services, like free meals, to students than actual education. We must re-center education, not social services, as the primary purpose of the public school system.

FLEXIBILITY AND MULTIPLE OPTIONS WILL HELP EVERYONE

- Unproductive turf wars that curtail parent choices must end. All school systems, whether public, private, or virtual, must work together during this challenging time to support learning.
- School choice options, like homeschooling, education savings accounts, and virtual charter schools that have mastered delivering instruction online, should be available to all parents.
- Already-existing school choice programs, many of which are income-restricted, should at minimum be modified to reflect families' post-COVID financial situations. Ideally, they should be expanded to accept all students and families who need flexibility during this time.
- States will be looking at budget shortfalls and districts will need to tighten their belts in the upcoming school year. School choice programs, which often achieve equal or better academic and life outcome results for students than do public schools for a fraction of the per-pupil cost, should be part of the budget solution.

PROTECT ALL SCHOOLS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

- Private schools serve a valuable role in our education system, providing independent and diverse curricula from public schools, often with salubrious results for students, families, and neighborhoods. Many private schools are in danger of closure due to the economic contraction, as many families are no longer able to afford tuition.
- If even 10 percent of current private school students are forced to return to the public school system, it could spell financial catastrophe for state budgets. It benefits everyone to keep private schools in business.
- Any bailouts for the education system must help our private school sector survive without sacrificing its independent character.

COVID COULD SPARK AN EDUCATION REVOLUTION

- Surveys show many more parents are looking into homeschooling, especially with the frustrations of distance learning and the fact that many school districts may not resume normal classes in the fall.
- If millions choose to exercise school choice, whether through formal homeschooling or through a program like education savings accounts, it could cause an earthquake in the public school system that has felt empowered to ignore the wishes of parents.
- Many parents are seeing the curriculum their children are being taught for the first time, leading to dissatisfaction with some of the narratives being pushed on students about climate change, racism, sexuality, and other hot-button cultural topics.
- Whether students attend a traditional public school, a charter school, a private school, or are learning at home, parents—not educational “experts,” politicians, or bureaucrats—should be in charge of what and how their children learn. If this difficult moment produces a silver lining, it will be parents taking back control over their children’s educations.

Click [here](#) to read the full policy focus and learn more about the effects of COVID on education.