

Meeting the Learning Needs of Historically Underserved Students During and After California School Closures

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School closures intended to slow the spread of the new coronavirus have been forcing California's public-school leaders to apply their crisis-management skills to the enormous task of delivering instruction to some 6.2 million students across the state who, for an indefinite period, must engage in some type of distance learning. Even under normal conditions, many of California's districts and schools struggle to adequately serve the full range of their highly diverse student populations. Today's extraordinary circumstances only add to the challenge. In doing so, they serve as a call to action for rethinking how to meet the learning needs of student groups that have been on the wrong side of long-standing opportunity gaps.

Sometimes referred to in California as students “at promise,”¹ these groups include, but are not limited to, students from low-income households, those who are unhoused, and those who are the responsibility of the foster care system. A disproportionate number are students of color.² For the 2018/19 school year, the California Department of

Education (CDE) reported more than 3.7 million California students belonging to one or more of these student groups.³

With school doors tightly shut for now, and perhaps still, or again, next school year, and with budgets likely to be reduced given the economic fallout of the current public health crisis, educators must figure out how to adequately serve these students. Among the students most in need of attention are those who may already have been facing poor academic outcomes prior to school closure, and those whose home and/or community circumstances do not easily lend themselves to distance learning, such as those with no adult and/or no safe, quiet space available to support distance learning.

1 In late 2019, California's governor signed legislation that removes from current and future state statutory language any reference to “at risk” youth, requiring instead use of the term “at promise” ([California AB 413, Chapter 800](#)). The change was intended to shift from a deficit frame for how youth are viewed and to one that focuses, instead, on their inherent strengths and potential. Yet, while all children and youth have promise, some student groups, including those that are the subject of this brief, have suffered from long-standing opportunity gaps that impeded their ability to realize that promise. This brief primarily refers to such groups — those that warrant a more specific focus during and after this period of distance learning — as “historically underserved.”

2 National Center for Children in Poverty. (n.d.). *California demographics of low-income children*. Bank Street Graduate School of Education. Retrieved May 15, 2020, from http://www.nccp.org/profiles/CA_profile_6.html

3 California Department of Education DataQuest. (n.d.). *2018-19 enrollment by subgroup for charter and non-charter schools*. <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/EnrCharterSub.aspx?cids=00&agglevel=state&year=2018-19>

Challenges of Reaching All Students Through Distance Learning

At its simplest, as defined by the CDE, *distance learning* is instruction that takes place while a teacher and a student are in different locations.⁴ It's possible, of course, to provide such instruction through independent learning, adopting or adapting the old "correspondence course" approach of using U.S. mail (or another form of delivery) to exchange paper-based lessons and homework. For various reasons, some California districts or schools may need to take this no-technology approach. But the more efficient and effective approach for engaging a class of students is through online instruction. Most, if not all, California districts and schools taking this latter approach have had to scramble to bridge the digital divide — the gap between those who have online access and those who don't.⁵

Family finances play a big role in which side of the divide students are on, with students from higher-income families having greater access, compared to those from lower-income families.⁶

Thus, with some 60 percent of California students considered to be socioeconomically disadvantaged,⁷ ensuring digital access for all students has been high on districts' and the CDE's must-do lists since early April.⁸

Important as it is, getting teachers and students online is only a first step toward ensuring the effectiveness of online distance learning. Teachers in schools that, prior to this spring's closures, had already adopted the use of digital technology as a standard or common instructional delivery method were in all likelihood better prepared to engage in distance learning. In districts and schools that had less experience with technology as an instructional tool, many teachers have needed additional support in shifting their instruction online, starting with learning how to fully utilize the digital tools available to them (e.g., how to use breakout rooms, post homework, share their screens). Those same teachers may also need help in thinking through how to take practices that have been effective for the traditional classroom setting and adapt them for an online environment.⁹

4 CDE. (n.d.). *Distance learning: Part of the COVID-19 guidance for K-12 schools published on March 17, 2020*. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/distancelearning.asp>

5 California Office of Governor. (2020, April 20). *Governor Newsom announces cross-sector partnerships to support distance learning and bridge the digital divide*. <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/04/20/governor-newsom-announces-cross-sector-partnerships-to-support-distance-learning-and-bridge-the-digital-divide/>

6 Anderson, M. & Kumar, M. (2019, May 7). *Digital divide persists even as lower-income Americans make gains in tech adoption*. Pew Research Center. <https://pewrsr.ch/2vK1Hlo>; A poll of 1,200 California families, conducted between March 25 and April 1, 2020, revealed that 38 percent of low-income families (and 29 percent of families of color) were concerned about access to distance learning because they didn't have reliable internet at home, and 50 percent of

low-income families (and 42 percent of families of color) reported lacking sufficient devices at home to access distance learning." (Education Trust-West. [2020, April]. *Education equity in crisis: The digital divide*. <https://west.edtrust.org/resource/education-equity-in-crisis-the-digital-divide/>; Education Trust-West. [2020]. *California parent poll: COVID-19 and school closures*. <https://west.edtrust.org/ca-parent-poll-covid-19-and-school-closures/>)

7 CDE DataQuest. (n.d.).

8 CDE. (2020, April 16). *State Superintendent Tony Thurmond announces task force to close digital divide* [News release]. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr20/yr20rel21.asp>

9 To understand how this sort of adaptation might work for English learner instruction, as an example, see Billings, E., & Lagunoff, R. (2020). *Supporting English Learners during school closures: Considerations for designing distance learning experiences*. WestEd. <https://www.wested.org/covid-19-resources/>

Consider the Wide Variation in Students' Home Circumstances

Frequently missing from but essential to planning and implementing distance learning is a consideration of what distance learning asks of students and their parents or guardians, and a consideration of how to support students whose home conditions are less than ideal for distance learning.

Whether conducted online or, in some instances, with no technology, distance learning presupposes that students have someone at home who can support their learning in multiple ways. For example, as is true even when schools are open, some students will need help to get up in time to start their school day. In a no-tech distance learning context, the school day may start with a scheduled time at which the student is expected to sit down and begin reviewing a learning packet picked up at school or mailed to them. In an online context, the school day starts based on the assignments a student is given and/or whenever a teacher has scheduled the first session.

Other ideal conditions for at-home learning include the availability of healthy meals; a safe, quiet place to learn; and an adult, or perhaps an older sibling, who can help if there are simple technology problems or if the learner needs additional academic support when the teacher is not available.

Yet students' home and family circumstances vary enormously. For some students, all of the ideal conditions for distance learning are in place; for others, none are in place. In normal times — when students come to a school building every day, rather than staying at home to learn — a student's challenging personal situations can be more easily mediated. For many students, going to school each day has ensured that, in addition to instruction,

they would receive supplemental academic support; social-emotional, health, and wellness support; and, perhaps most essential, breakfast and lunch.

Students' Needs Beyond Meals

An early post-closure step for districts and schools was to establish how to continue getting meals to students who need them. But other needs are not so easily addressed in a distance learning environment. Students who are unhoused rely on schools for some learning essentials beyond meals. Whether living in a shelter or on the street or moving from one friend's house to another, these students often depend on school to provide a safe, quiet place to learn. During this period of school closure, they likely have few alternatives, plus they may have no regular access to the internet, or even to an electric outlet for charging the computer their school may have given them. For students who live in a home with domestic violence or child abuse, the adults at school may well be among the few, or the only ones, with whom they have trusting, supportive relationships.

Less obvious, perhaps, are some other living situations that can impede students' abilities to do well in an online setting. For example, finding a quiet place to learn at home may be a struggle for students who live in exceptionally crowded conditions, such as when multiple families live in a house or an apartment intended for many fewer people. Students in the foster care system, who live in a group home, or even in some family homes, won't always have space to themselves or adequate support to meet their at-home learning needs.

Adequate space and support may be elusive for other students as well. In some cases, a parent, grandparent, or other guardian may be taking care of other, younger children in the home, or they may

have health problems, for example. In other cases, the adults at home may be working in essential services and have to leave each morning or evening for their jobs. Thus, they may be unable to keep their children on whatever schedules a teacher has established or to provide any form of learning support. In fact, in families where parents or guardians are still working, whether at home or elsewhere, older children may be expected to take care of younger siblings, which can undermine even the most dedicated student's ability to engage in distance learning. Rather than being under the care of adults at school, some children are now at home without any adult supervision for long stretches of the day while their caregivers are working.

Attend to the Throughline of Stress

All of these scenarios contribute to stress, which can affect students' ability to learn.¹⁰ Further complicating this issue is the fear that many individuals are experiencing in relation to the coronavirus. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the anxiety prompted by infectious disease outbreaks in general can be especially intense for children and teens.¹¹ For some students, fear of the coronavirus is especially intense because they have a family member whose job is considered to be essential, causing that adult to leave home and, thereby, risk exposure to the virus and the possibility of bringing it home to their

10 Hammond, Z., & Jackson, Y. (2015). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Corwin.

11 CDC. (2020). *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), Daily life & coping: Stress and coping*. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/dai-lylife-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.htm>

family. This is a particular factor for California children living in poverty. According to the California Employment Development Department, the majority of occupations that have been identified as essential in California during this period are low-wage positions, with earnings below the poverty line.¹²

Action During Early Months of School Closure

As teachers plan their instruction, including when and how to engage with students from a distance, they will want to be attuned to their students' personal circumstances. Not all adverse conditions in a student's life can be mitigated by a teacher or a school, but, whether students are in the classroom or participating in distance learning, it is always helpful for their teachers and other adults at school and in the district to understand as much as possible about what is going on in students' lives. In the current environment, teachers in particular can also take some common-sense steps to help their students feel safer, which allows students to better engage in learning.

Assure Students That Teachers Will Be a Consistent Source of Support

One important step is to assure students that their teacher is going to be a consistent presence in their lives as learners at home and that their teacher cares about them and remains committed to supporting each student as part of the class learning

12 Bohn, S., Mejia, M. C., & Lafortune, J. (2020, March 31). *Essential workers and COVID-19*. Public Policy Institute of California. <https://www.ppic.org/blog/essential-workers-and-covid-19/>

community. Some simple actions that send this message include:¹³

- » **Keeping in touch with students and families**, via phone, email, and/or social media used by students and their families (e.g., Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, Instagram). Postcards and letters can be used if other methods are not available.
- » **Creating opportunities for students to share how they are feeling and coping** with new and potentially stressful situations.
- » **Being flexible about students' attendance for online sessions and/or their ability to meet due dates**, because students may have more familial responsibilities during the quarantine, such as taking care of siblings who would otherwise be at school or in child care.

Provide Alternative Methods for Accessing Learning

At the district and school levels, administrators and other decision-makers have been working tirelessly to implement effective distance learning for all students, in alignment with the mid-March executive order issued by Governor Gavin Newsom. They have been charged with continuing the delivery of “high-quality educational opportunities to students to the extent feasible through, among other options, distance learning, and/or independent study.”¹⁴ This guidance has given districts significant flexibility in making local decisions about how to meet the needs of all of their students. As a result, some districts have

¹³ These suggestions are adapted, with permission, from Billings, E., & Lagunoff, R. (2020), p. 3.

¹⁴ CDE. (n.d.). *FAQs for 2019 novel coronavirus*. Retrieved April 8, 2020, from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/cdecovid-faq2019.asp>

developed innovative approaches to provide access to their hardest to reach students, such as those whose circumstances are described earlier in this brief.

For example, on March 12, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) announced a partnership with three local public broadcasting systems, PBS SoCal, KLCS-TV, and KCET, to provide a low-tech option for learning continuity. As of April 3, just two weeks later, approximately 170,000 households representing nearly 200,000 individuals had used this resource. Currently, all PBS stations in California and over 70 additional PBS stations across the country have adopted the programming schedule of grade-level-aligned educational television content that was developed by LAUSD.¹⁵

LAUSD's Public Broadcasting Schedule
PBS SoCal – Pre-K - 2nd grade, 5am to 5pm
KLCS-TV- Pre-K through 12 th grade, 6am. to 6pm (with additional educational programming in the evenings)
KCET 9 th - 12 th grade during their

Districts and their schools have deployed a range of learning opportunities, based on their available resources and their contexts, including paper work packets; learning plans and schedules, with suggested learning-support activities for caregivers; links on their websites to printable schedules and assignments; and access to existing online learning platforms that students already use at school. For example, San Diego Unified School District created an instructional resources continuity page on its district website with centralized resources for all students. Assignments are organized by grade and have consisted of a range of activities and resources,

¹⁵ John, A. (2020, April 4). How Peg Cat can be a math class during coronavirus school closures. *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-04-03/coronavirus-school-closures-pbs-television-learning>

including educational software, independent study units, and math problems-of-the-day.¹⁶

School districts are also continuing to acquire and distribute digital devices, build instructional capacity, and plan instruction to meet the needs of all students. State-level decision-makers and individual districts have purchased digital devices and engaged in partnerships with nonprofit organizations and private companies, with a goal of providing devices and internet access to all teachers and students.

Action Moving Forward

However well districts and schools may be doing in their efforts to continue instruction and to reach all students through distance learning over the final months of the 2019/20 school year, now is the time that many are shifting from emergency mode to planning mode — to chart a clear path forward, through the summer and into a new school year in which distance learning may or may not be a primary context for instruction.

For starters, districts must prepare for what is coming to be known as the “COVID slide,” a variation on the documented phenomenon of summer learning loss.¹⁷ According to a study conducted by the Student Growth Research Center, students will return to school this fall retaining about 70 percent of the reading gains and 50 percent of the mathematics gains they would have made and retained from a

typical school year followed by a typical summer off.¹⁸ Losses are likely to be most acute in the early grades, when students normally acquire basic skills, and among those students facing significant inequities, such as those in historically underserved populations.

Understand where you are

To guide to planning for the summer and fall, and to ensure that students in historically underserved groups receive the support they need, school districts must begin by assessing their performance during the crisis. While LCAP approval has been postponed until December 2020,¹⁹ as the year comes to a close, districts will be required to report to their communities, explaining “the changes to program offerings that the [local education agency] has made in response to school closures to address the COVID-19 emergency and the major impacts of such closures on students and families, which shall include, at minimum, a description of how the LEA is meeting the needs of unduplicated pupils.”²⁰ Among these pupils are those in the groups that are the focus of this brief.

A first step in the reporting process is to collect and analyze data about what changes were put into place, and the impact of those changes. As part

16 San Diego Unified School District. (n.d.). *Instructional continuity resources*. Retrieved May 15, 2020, from <https://sites.google.com/sandi.net/sdusdinstructionalcontinuity/home>

17 Zalaznick, M. (2020, April 20). How deep will the COVID-19 learning slide be? *District Administration*. <https://districtadministration.com/covid-19-summer-slide-learning-loss-nwea-reading-math-ela/>

18 Kuhfeld, M., & Tarasawa, B. (2020, April). *The COVID-19 slide: What summer learning loss can tell us about the potential impact of school closures on student academic achievement*. Northwest Education Association. <https://www.nwea.org/research/publication/the-covid-19-slide-what-summer-learning-loss-can-tell-us-about-the-potential-impact-of-school-closures-on-student-academic-achievement/>

19 CDE. (2020, April 28). *Changes to the LCAP process and timelines* [Executive order N-56-20]. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/lc/documents/tues2eolcapchanges.pdf>

20 CDE. (2020, April 28).

of this analysis, it is important for the district to collect and review a full range of data specifically related to the distance-learning experiences of its at-promise student groups. For example, a district may already have data showing which students participated in distance learning and the frequency of participation, but the district may not have data that tells why some students did not participate. As they collect and analyze their data, districts should consider the programmatic changes that were necessary, the types of instructional interactions that were offered, and the variability of both participation and experiences.

One way to categorize this information for analysis would be to look at technical readiness for distance learning, instructional readiness for distance learning, and engagement as separate domains.

- » **Technical readiness for distance learning** refers to having the physical infrastructure, resources, and support needed to provide the necessary devices, connectivity, and software to all staff and students. In considering readiness, an LEA might ask: What technology and support did we have before school closure, and how much do we have now? How many of our historically underserved students had access to devices and internet before school closure, and how many have access now? Where do we still have gaps, and how will we address them?
- » **Instructional readiness for distance learning** refers to staff's relative proficiency in planning instruction, collaborating with peers, and instructing students in both a virtual context (both synchronous and asynchronous) and a distance learning context in which a virtual approach is not possible (e.g., because of inadequate internet access). Some questions an LEA might ask are:

How many of our teachers and students already had the capacity (perhaps through training) to engage in distance learning? How many have gained this capacity through the switch to distance learning? What technology-based learning experiences were part of regular classroom instruction prior to this spring's school closures, and how are these being leveraged in the current learning context? What training and support for distance learning have we been able to provide so far during the school closures, and for whom? How are we supporting teachers to meet the needs of historically underserved student groups in a distance learning setting?

- » **Engagement** refers to the connections that the district (through its schools and teachers) has with students and families, connections that are always important but never more so than during stressful times, such as when districts might be making difficult decisions that will directly affect students (e.g., related to school closures and likely budget cuts). Some questions an LEA might ask are: Do we have systems that help us understand the needs of our students and families away from school, especially for historically underserved student groups? How did we reach out during the crisis, and which outreach strategies were most effective? Did students and families reach out to us for support? Who did we hear from, and what were their needs?

Before beginning planning work, take the time to understand your system. Identify where you were before this crisis began, where you are now, and investigate what you will need to improve in order to meet both your immediate and future needs. Undertake this process with an eye to how well you are supporting learning for all students, but pay special attention to those groups that have been

historically underserved and who also may face greater challenges during distance learning, due to conditions in their homes or communities.

Look to the future

Following are some suggestions, and related questions, to ensure that the needs of historically underserved students are addressed as districts and schools engage in planning for reopening school.

Planning

As schools and districts begin looking ahead, first to the summer and then to the next school year,

it is more important than ever that their planning be both flexible and grounded in an inquiry stance, beginning with what they have learned about gaps in their system and innovations that have emerged from this spring semester. In this time of uncertainty, districts have to plan for all possibilities. For example, what will instruction look like in a normal classroom setting, in a setting designed around social distancing, and if distance learning must be continued or reoccurs? Such plans should also explicitly consider the needs of historically underserved student populations and provide supplemental supports, where necessary, to address inequities.

Considerations for School District Planning for Next School Year

Following is a set of considerations and questions to help guide district planning for instruction in the coming school year.

Instruction

Wherever instruction takes place — in the classroom, at a distance, or through some combination — students will need additional supports to address academic needs that may have been amplified by the abrupt transition to distance learning. The needs and learning gaps that have been created will vary and will require a variety of responses.

As strategies are developed, consider what is needed to support historically underserved students to be better prepared as school reopens and for the remainder of the year.

- Develop a strategy to address student learning levels and needs.
 - » How are you planning for comprehensive universal screening — and at what point(s) — to determine districtwide learning gaps so that resources can be allocated appropriately when students return?
 - » How are you prioritizing historically underserved students as you redesign summer school to accommodate identified learning gaps?
- Embed supports into the school year.
 - » How are you thinking about inclusion and heterogeneous grouping as you develop schedules and structures for next year?
 - » How will you embed instructional intervention and acceleration for students in the school day? What extended-day opportunities will you include?
 - » Which evidence-based instruction and student engagement practices will you prioritize and implement?

- » How will you support teachers' and schools' use of trauma-informed practices to support the transition of students back to school?

Technology Infrastructure

- Continue to address gaps in the district's instructional technology infrastructure.
 - » How will you ensure that every individual has the tools and internet accessibility needed for online learning and is proficient in using them?
 - » If you have schools or communities where broad use of digital technology is not possible, how will you provide no-tech distance learning?
 - » What is your theory of action around using instructional technology, specifically about how it can best be used to serve the education needs of all students?
 - » What does successful implementation of instructional technology that meets the needs of all students look like?

Policies and Practices That Serve as Bridges or Barriers

- Look at any policies and practices that might serve as bridges or barriers for your historically underserved students as you move forward (e.g., homework, grading, home-school communication, parent-teacher conferences).
 - » What is the variability of instruction-related expectations across schools and classrooms (e.g., instructional minutes, teacher contact, engagement activities, assessment and grading)?
 - » How did your lesson planning and technology use practices help or hinder your distance learning efforts?

Ongoing Data Collection

- Identify information and data that would have been helpful for navigating the COVID-19 crisis, and develop infrastructure to collect and monitor those data going forward (e.g. student engagement, technology readiness).
 - » How can you use existing data systems to capture new types of data?
 - » Where do new data systems need to be developed or adopted?

Implementation

- Consider the change management that will be necessary to implement your plan.
 - » What types of resistance do you anticipate, and from whom?
 - » How will you assess and address school culture needs?
 - » How will you support school and district leaders with leadership behaviors to positively support change?
 - » What types of communication structures will be necessary to provide transparency and engender trust as you make decisions?

Professional Learning

The variation in districts' readiness for distance learning writ large — meaning the ability to provide effective instruction when teachers and students are not in the same place — is manifested, in part, by the wide-ranging readiness of districts, schools, and individuals to effectively use technology for training, for collaboration, and to support instruction. Once needs are assessed, professional learning plans will be needed for all levels of the system. Ideally, the plans themselves should be tailored to address, by group, the different levels of teachers' and other staff members' readiness, and the plans should be geared for implementation either in person or virtually. For example, a training for how to promote student engagement could be offered

in person, live but virtually (e.g., via webinars, Facebook Live), or asynchronously using self-paced video and/or online learning platforms.

- How will you determine what teachers and administrators already know, and what they still need to learn about the specific needs and circumstances of underserved students in your context?
- How will you engage teachers and administrators, in order to get input about professional learning needs prior to making decisions or spending resources?
- What existing resources do you have that can be leveraged to support differentiated professional learning needs? What resources (e.g., software, devices) may need to be updated or replaced?
- How will you prioritize the time and funding for training during the academic school year? What conversations will you need to have with bargaining units?
- How will you strengthen structures and processes to support peer collaboration and the monitoring of both your at-promise students and the differentiated support provided for them?

Engagement

The meaning and depth of engagement between home and school during school closures have been extremely varied. Examples of engagement include an exchange of student work between teachers and students, a weekly phone or video call to check on how students are doing, and virtual office hours with voluntary participation. Students' own engagement and participation in their education is often correlated to the relationships that they and their families have with the school, individual teachers, support providers, and even operational staff such as school secretaries or facilities managers.²¹ Trust

21 CDC. (2009). *School connectedness: Strategies for increasing protective factors among youth*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/pdf/connectedness.pdf>

between families and the school is key to developing partnerships focused on supporting student learning.

In *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, Zaretta Hammond writes that “most often, mistrust builds because a student or parent doesn’t feel acknowledged, affirmed, or cared for.”²² As districts begin the transition to the coming school year, schools need to take a close look at which students did or did not have full access to distance learning and who — students and/or their families — may be starting the next school year feeling that their needs were not met. Research conducted by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory and the U.S. Department of Education identifies communication and trust as important in the development of effective engagement with families from diverse backgrounds and cultures.²³ Time and effort will be needed to commu-

22 Hammond, Z. (2014). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*, p. 74. Corwin.

23 Mapp, K. L., & Kuttner, P. J. (2013). *Partners in education: A dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships*. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

nicate with and listen to students and their families or caregivers. For some, these conversations will simply affirm existing relationships; for others, the conversations will need to be used as part of a larger effort to help develop or rebuild trust.

- How can you create spaces to authentically engage students and caregivers?
- How can you update communication processes to exchange information in both directions?
- How can you partner with parents to identify the lessons they learned from their experiences with distance learning, and learn from them suggestions for improvement if distance learning were to recur?
- How can you build and/or strengthen external partnerships to provide services and resources to help meet family or caregiver needs that have surfaced or been created from this crisis?

An Opportunity for Change

No one knows what the next year or two will bring for education, but it seems likely that a return to normal remains a distant and possibly unrealistic goal. The current public health crisis has brought about school closures and has had major impacts on the economy that may result in deep budget cuts for education and other public systems. In doing so, it has highlighted many of the continuing and

entrenched systemic inequities in our society and in our education systems. But as learning organizations in every sense, schools have the opportunity to learn, to innovate, to change, to improve — even when budgets are tight. The information and questions in this planning brief are intended to support that change as we all move forward, particularly as that change is intended to meet the needs of our historically underserved students.

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