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## SEVEN WAYS RESEARCH CAN GUIDE SCHOOLS' RECOVERY FROM THE CORONAVIRUS



When the coronavirus pandemic struck the health and economic systems of the world, it also dealt a blow to schools, which were forced to turn immediately to remote instruction in an environment of uncertainty and fear. Most students likely saw their academic learning **drop** considerably, with pre-existing racial and socioeconomic inequities leading to more severe consequences for some students than for others. As schools reopen for the fall, the uncertainty and inequities remain, as educators struggle to choose from an array of choices that all seem less than ideal.

In order to offer guidance at this difficult time, a group of more than 500 education researchers with diverse positions and backgrounds have issued a consensus statement on how research might inform policymaking and practice during the pandemic. The project was organized by professors Katharine Strunk and Douglas Harris, of Michigan State University and Tulane University, respectively. Harris is an NEPC Fellow, and the project's leadership team included NEPC Director and CU Boulder professor Kevin Welner, as well as NEPC Fellows Patricia Gándara (UCLA) and Anthony Rolle (University of Rhode Island). The statement can be read in full [here](#) and has seven takeaways, paraphrased as follows:

- 1. The federal government needs to provide funding to prevent budget cuts resulting from the economic downturn caused by the pandemic.** Research is clear that **money matters** when it comes to education. While state and local government cannot typically borrow money to make up for operational shortfalls, and cannot be expected to raise taxes during a downturn, the **federal government can and should** ensure schools have more money—not less—since COVID has been accompanied by a host of unanticipated expenses, from devices to personal protective equipment.
- 2. Make sure every student has Wi-Fi.** This doesn't mean moving permanently and fully to online education, which has **thus far been a failure**. Rather, it means ensuring that everyone can participate meaningfully when schools are forced to close to slow the

spread of the virus.

3. **Head off inequities by targeting resources to those with the greatest needs.** Students with higher levels of need may include children with disabilities, emerging bilinguals, students of color, and low-income and homeless families. Social-emotional and academic needs should both be taken into account.
4. **Provide the most personalized and engaging instruction possible.** Research suggests that online instruction is more likely to be engaging if it includes frequent, direct, and meaningful contact between students and teachers, and synchronous and asynchronous learning. Due to developmental differences, online learning is most difficult for younger children, who should be prioritized if only some students are able to safely return to campus.
5. **Extended, enriched learning time should be the first line of attack when it comes to fighting learning loss.** Tutoring, summer school, before and after school programs and other forms of extended learning time can help students catch up. Retention in grade should only be used very rarely and as a last resort, as there is *evidence* that it typically has harmful long-term effects.
6. **Schools should custom tailor supports that promote social emotional, physical, and family well-being.** Health risks, school closures, and the economic downturn have created trauma for many students. Schools should offer wraparound services to meet the needs of students and their families.
7. **We should do everything possible to support and avoid laying off teachers, but if it does become necessary, equity is important.** For instance, teachers who work with emerging bilinguals, students from low-income families, and students with disabilities should be last on the list if layoffs are required. During this difficult time, teachers also need new and additional supports on subjects such as communicating with parents on helping to teach children at home, or developing lessons that work both in person and online.

## NEPC Resources on Curriculum and Teaching

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