Serving America’s Most Vulnerable Students During Coronavirus Closures

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An on-demand archive of this webinar will be available at www.edweek.org/go/webinar in less than 24 hrs.
Examples of Vulnerable Students

▪ Students from low-income families
▪ Homeless students
▪ Youth in foster care
▪ Students with disabilities
▪ Immigrant students and emerging bilinguals
Addressing Equity During Closures

What, if anything, is your district doing to address equity during the Coronavirus closures? Select all that apply.

- Pickup/delivery of free/reduced-priced meals: 93%
- Devices to all who need them: 75%
- Online tutoring: 63%
- Online/phone therapy: 58%
- Home internet access to all who need it: 41%
- District health services available: 31%
- Emergency assistance for families: 21%
- Other, please specify: 14%
- Nothing
Less Student-Teacher Interaction in Higher-Poverty Districts

Since your school closed due to Coronavirus, how often have you interacted with the majority of your students?

- MORE THAN 75%
  - Never: 6%
  - At least once: 15%
  - Weekly: 46%
  - At least once a day: 33%

- 51 TO 75%
  - Never: 7%
  - At least once: 20%
  - Weekly: 43%
  - At least once a day: 30%

- 26 TO 50%
  - Never: 5%
  - At least once: 9%
  - Weekly: 47%
  - At least once a day: 39%

- DISTRICT ENROLLMENT IS LESS THAN 25%
  - Never: 33%
  - At least once: 33%
  - Weekly: 56%
  - At least once a day: 0%
More Students MIA in Higher-Poverty Districts

What percentage of your students are essentially “truant” during Coronavirus closures (MIA, not logging in, not making contact with you, etc.)?

- 12%: 25% or less of district students are from low-income families
- 21%: 26-50%
- 25%: 51-75%
- 32%: More than 75%
Homelessness is on the Rise Among K-12 Students and 3-5 Year-Olds

Number of Homeless Students in the U.S.

- 2015-16: 1,307,656
- 2016-17: 1,358,077
- 2017-18: 1,508,265
Foster Children: Coronavirus Challenges

- 440,000 at any given time, about 690,000 annually
- Calls to child abuse hotlines down—children are out of sight of mandatory reporters
- New foster families can’t be added—home inspections aren’t possible
- Situations in current families can be more difficult with everyone cooped up, stressed
Coronavirus Closures: Students With Disabilities

- There are about 7 million students with disabilities in the US

- Challenge: Following IEPs when in-person instruction isn’t possible

- US Secretary of Education may waive sections of IDEA to provide flexibility during the closures

- Families may struggle to do the job of multiple staff who may have helped their children at school
Immigrant Students & Emerging Bilinguals

- About 5 million English learners in the US

- Less likely to have been assigned homework using digital resources prior to the closures—so may be less accustomed to them

- Teachers have had less PD on digital learning

- Digital resources used in schools aren’t necessarily designed for emerging bilinguals

- Language barriers, especially for non-English or non-Spanish speakers’
Steve Sandoval
Executive Director of Special Services, Westminster Public Schools, Westminster, Colo.
2016 Education Week Leader To Learn From
Read about his work

Johnnye Waller
Assistant Superintendent, Auxiliary Services/Student Services Director, Lee County Schools, Sanford, N.C.
2020 Education Week Leader To Learn From
Read about her work
Lee County Schools
Sanford, North Carolina

How We are Serving Some of Our Most Vulnerable Students...those who are experiencing homelessness.
What are we seeing?

- Trauma - fear - lack of understanding - uncertainty - hope
- Students who are feeling isolated
- They are missing the safety and security of their school environment
- Parents are concerned for their jobs and what happens if they become unemployed
- Siblings becoming caretakers for one another
- Families who were sheltered in place due to COVID-19 and then lost their home during the severe weather Lee County experienced on April 13
What are Lee County Schools doing to help?

- Teachers, social workers, and counselors are contacting each and every student to check on their physical and emotional well being.
- Serving hot meals three days per week with social workers delivering to students who are experiencing homelessness.
- Partnering with community resources to provide meals when LCS food hubs are non-operational.
- Providing laptops and mifi’s.
- Providing instructional packets.
- Purchasing books and art supplies.
- Home visits to students in crisis.
- Providing a shelter for an unsheltered family.
- Continuously monitoring the community for students who may be at risk.
What is happening for our Project Lift-off students?

- Weekly virtual meetings - will include social/emotional as well as academic support. Variety of activities will be incorporated in these meetings, including Escape Rooms
- Project Lift-off staff member assigned to each student to maintain contact
- Staff parade by the homes of each student
Leading Special Education in Tough Times: A Five Week Perspective

Steve Sandoval, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Special Services
IDEA Purpose

To ensure that all students with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living.
Four Priorities for Special Educators

1. Focus on the safety, health and welfare of students and staff members in your community.

2. Provide FAPE - Deliver services to as many students as you reasonably can in the best way you know how.

3. Document your efforts and make sure documentation is focused, consistent, detailed and demonstrates a good faith effort to provide good services.

4. Compliance during the pandemic -- IDEA was not built for this.

Source: Council of Administrators of Special Education (March 2020)

Webinar Link
Rumblings at the Federal Level

• Education Secretary, Betsy DeVos, has 30 days from CARES Act enactment (March 27, 2020) to submit a report flexibilities and/or waivers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Stay tuned.

• National entities, like the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) are asking for “temporary and targeted flexibilities” in:
  • Timelines
  • Procedures
  • Fiscal Management
Leading Change: Ten Ponderings

1. Abraham Maslow was right!
2. Put on your oxygen mask first
3. Lead with confidence, not fear or trepidation
4. Take inventory of assets and deficits, then act
5. Communicate clearly and often
6. Access is a lifeline for students… focus here
7. Remove barriers, allowing teachers to create
8. Everyone contributes
9. Make many deposits to emotional bank accounts
10. Be patient and kind—we will get better at this!
“Those who wish to sing, always find a song.”

– Swedish Proverb

Contact Information

Steve Sandoval, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Special Services
Westminster Public Schools, CO
ssandoval@mywps.org
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Working Together to Address the Crisis

Communities In Schools

In schools to help kids stay in school.
The State of Our Students

- Long-term learning loss
- Increased food insecurity
- More housing instability
- Unaddressed health issues
- Greater levels of anxiety & trauma
- Growing educational & social inequities
Responding in the Moment

- Deliveries of food and supplies
- Access to educational materials
- Online tutoring
- Connection to community resources
- Tele-counseling
- Professional development for school teams
Long-Term Solutions

- Increased funding for Title I of Every Student Succeeds Act
- Additional dollars for E-Rate program (telecommunications and internet)
- Greater support for youth-serving organizations providing wrap-around services
- Emergency funding to the Corporation for National and Community Service
- Increased support for afterschool and summer learning programs
- Emergency assistance loans to 501(c)(3) non-profits
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Suggested Reading From Education Week:

**A Colorado Leader Taps Teacher Specialists to Serve All Students**
Steve Sandoval devised an instructional framework that deploys teachers in the Adams County 50 district in Westminster, Colo., in smart ways to ensure that students who are gifted, in special education, or are English-learners get targeted help on the skills they need.

**Creating a Foothold for the Most Vulnerable Students**
Johnnye Waller, the student services director for North Carolina’s Lee County Schools, helps students facing homelessness gain a solid footing for the school year. Her summer enrichment program pairs basic necessities with academic supports and exciting field trips.