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Research
Association**IDRA****Learning
Goes On****A COVID-19 Resource for Education**

June 26, 2020 Edition

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More resources and trainings for teachers, school administrators, families and communities are on our [Learning Goes On website](#) .

Note: We will not publish an edition of Learning Goes On next week. Enjoy the holiday!

Policy Update

State Reopening Guidance Must Prioritize Equity

Schools will reopen in some form or fashion for the upcoming 2020-21 school year. Students will be starting their fall semesters in virtual classrooms, hybrid arrangements and some even in-person.

In many states, education leaders and lawmakers claim that schools will be safe to welcome students back in person in the fall despite the [rising numbers of COVID-19 cases](#) since shut-down orders were lifted in late May and early June. The Centers for Disease Control issued [health guidance for schools](#), though states will largely determine how to distribute personal protective equipment and to which districts.

State Education Agency Guidance to Schools

Several southern states have issued guidance on reopening for the 2020-21 school year, including [Arkansas](#), [Florida](#), [Georgia](#), [Mississippi](#), [North Carolina](#), [South Carolina](#), [Tennessee](#), and [Virginia](#). Guidance addresses adaptive scheduling models, such as [intersessional calendars](#), new assessment options and dates to gauge students' learning progress - or loss - since the pandemic prompted school closures, and resources for parents and families who plan to continue home-based learning.

Many of the state plans focus on building "hybrid" or "blended" models of instruction for the upcoming school year that include a combination of in-person and remote learning. In Texas, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is in the process of developing [guidance for both distance-learning and in-person instruction](#). TEA used the current state statutes for the Virtual School Networks to form two tracks for continued at-home instruction: synchronous and asynchronous instruction.

Synchronous instruction requires a two-way, real-time instructional interaction between teachers and students through virtual platforms. Asynchronous instruction offers a self-guided format and occurs remotely "out of sync" with real-time interaction between teachers and students. This format focuses more on students' daily engagement with instructional content as opposed to real-time instruction from the teacher. (See IDRA's resource [Ensuring Equity in Online Learning - Considerations in Response to COVID-19's Impact on Schooling](#).)

At the same time, budgetary shortfalls due to COVID-19 across the region will impact reopening challenges. This may prompt cuts in education that rival the Great Recession in 2008 and that may fall hardest on marginalized student groups. (See IDRA's analysis: [Without Intervention, COVID-19-Induced Budgetary Shortfalls Will Fall Hardest on Marginalized Students in the South](#).)

Equity Concerns for School Reopening Guidance

After nearly four full months of the pandemic, we have seen how the consequences of COVID-19 exacerbate our existing social and economic inequities along racial and class lines. The virus has [disproportionately infected and harmed Black and Latino communities](#) that are more likely to have limited access health insurance, hold essential worker jobs that increase their exposure, and experience inconsistent internet connectivity for resources and information. Reopening schools could exacerbate similar disparities.

Students of essential workers, those with limited access to virtual learning, and whose families have limited childcare options may go back to school in-person, while families with multiple internet devices and/or the income and time flexibility to conduct home-based instruction may keep kids home. Without careful and clear guidance, these different learning arrangements could exacerbate serious health and academic inequities among students.

How School Districts and Communities Can Plan Safe Learning Environments

To plan for safe learning environments, school district leaders must engage everyone in the school community - teachers, families and, most importantly, students. Last week's [Learning Goes On policy update](#) spotlighted the importance of community engagement in schools' plans to reopen. In addition, IDRA makes the following recommendations that were informed in part by panelists during our recent IDRA webinar, "Nurturing Students' Hearts and Minds" that is available for viewing on-demand.

Districts will need to prepare to **address the mental health and well-being of students and staff** to create safe learning environments. This includes reallocating resources to hire and support counselors and social workers, and incorporating trauma-informed, restorative practices throughout the school day, such as time for reflection, conversation circles and meditation.

Districts can **end or limit their agreements with police departments** to avoid harmful disciplinary consequences for students. Such steps will affirm to students and families their district's intention to meaningfully invest in people and non-harmful approaches that create safe schools. [See our sample school district resolution and related resources.](#)

Districts must **support teachers to adapt to the multiple instructional models** that students will learn through in the upcoming school year. Several organizations provide free and low cost training: [IDRA](#) , [International Society for Technology in Education \(ISTE\)](#), [Texas Computer Education Association \(TCEA\)](#), [Google for Education](#) , [Microsoft Teams for Education](#) . (Also see IDRA's [Best Practices for Online Instruction in the Wake of COVID-19](#) .)

State and district leaders must **address the digital divide** to ensure equitable educational access. This can be achieved through city and state initiatives, intentional business partnerships and additional state support for technological capacity (connectivity and devices).

Districts should **adopt ethnic studies curricula** to promote culturally-relevant instructional content and practices, which deepens student engagement. See IDRA's support services for [Mexican American Studies](#) and [African American Studies](#).

Teachers can **co-construct curriculum with students and families**. The [IDRA EAC-South](#) provides training and assistance in culturally-relevant pedagogy and student engagement to serve students in the U.S. South.

Teacher preparation programs must **incorporate an equity approach** to their pre-service teacher training curriculum and practicum experiences.

Schools must **educate students to know their rights** in all facets of their life, including their legal, health and political rights. Youth advocacy in critical moments in time has changed society for the better.

Policy guidance to reopen schools continues to develop rapidly as the upcoming school year approaches. It is a complicated task, but guidance must account for the multitude of needs that students and staff will bring to their virtual and in-person classrooms. We cannot afford for equity to get lost in the shuffle.

Considerations for Reopening Schools

The start of next school year will be unlike any other. Students will have spent the previous six months navigating the trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic, the hypervisibility of Black people dying at the hands of the police, and a multitude of other social, emotional, political and economic challenges. Schools will have to address the immediate needs of students and staff in order to create safe learning environments that account for students' physical, emotional, mental and academic well-being.

Below, see highlights from our panelists in this week's webinar, "Nurturing Students' Hearts and Minds," which is part of our school reopening webinar series. You can [watch the webinar recording](#) and register for the [upcoming sessions](#).



There are so many factors that our schools support in terms of a child's life that to simply close schools is not just a matter of converting to online education, which is its own challenge, but how do we support all of those children and families in desperate situations?"

Dr. Cherise Rohr-Allegrini
Epidemiologist





I think about the students and what their experiences are like. It is important for us to lift up their voices as well in this conversation. Many adults are experiencing a lot of mental health issues associated with health or socioeconomic issues, but our students feel all of that as well."

Hon. Marisa Pérez-Díaz,
Texas State Board of Education



Students are going to come back to school with very strong opinions on social issues. We need compassion and empathy from teachers now more than ever... We have to be sensitive to and respect student voice and opinion, because, if we are not, it is very possible that students will walk out on our style of education and learning."

Gylon Jackson
Black Lives Matter - San Antonio



Mental health support will have to be a priority. We don't know what type of trauma our students have suffered... The idea of students going through this current pandemic demands that schools proactively address students' mental well-being to serve the whole child.

Hon. Aicha Davis,
Texas State Board of Education





What kind of flexibility do schools need to be able to help students come back and help them with any kind of learning they may have to catch up on and not penalize them or put so much stress on them that it just compounds any kind of trauma that a student or family may be feeling?"

Lisa Marie Gómez
San Antonio Chamber of Commerce
and My Brother's Keeper San Antonio



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Free School Reopening Webinar Series



School Reopening Webinar Series
free webinars

<https://idra.news/WebinarSeries>



Student Perspectives on a Changing School Climate - School Reopening Webinar Series

Took place June 16, 2020. Recording is available.

What does the future hold for school re-openings, mental health and student emotional well-being in the wake of a myriad of issues facing today's youth? Our student panelist s

will help us understand the needs of their peers on issues, such as COVID-19, school safety, immigration, and the Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements.

Featuring student advocates for equity in public education:

- Juliana Cruz, senior, Dallas ISD
- Taylor Ellingberb-McCloud, senior, Dallas ISD
- Melanie Harrell, recent graduate, San Antonio ISD
- Gracie Hernandez, recent graduate, Northside ISD
- Kennedy Kearns, senior, Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD
- Dejjia Nunn, sophomore, Judson ISD
- Lena Ramos, freshman, Northside ISD
- Gisselle Reyes, senior, Dallas ISD
- Lola Sánchez, recent graduate, San Antonio ISD
- Clarissa Tavera, junior, San Antonio ISD

Moderator: Ana Ramón, IDRA Deputy Director of Advocacy

GET INFO & WATCH RECORDING

Nurturing Students' Hearts and Minds

- School Reopening Webinar Series

Took place June 23, 2020. Recording is available

Our panel of advocates and practitioners discuss the needs of students on issues such as COVID-19, school safety, immigration, and the Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements that schools will need to prepare for as they reopen.

Featuring:

- *Dr. Cherise Rohr-Allegrini, Licensed Epidemiologist*
- *Hon. Aicha Davis, State Board of Education*
- *Hon. Marisa Pérez-Díaz, State Board of Education*
- *Lisa Marie Gomez, San Antonio Chamber of Commerce and My Brother's Keeper - San Antonio*
- *Gylon Jackson, Black Lives Matter - San Antonio*

Moderator: Dr. Chloe Latham Sikes, Deputy Director of Policy

GET INFO & WATCH RECORDING

Partnering with Families to Reopen and Reimagine Schools

- School Reopening Webinar Series

July 15, 2020, 11:30a-1:00p cdt

Connecting with families will be vital for educators as they welcome students back in a world changed by COVID-19 and social movements. Hear from parents, grandparents and

caregivers sharing their concerns and questions about reopening schools and students' emotional wellbeing. Moderated by Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed., IDRA Family Engagement Coordinator .

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Getting Schools Ready to Support Students Facing a New World of Challenges

- School Reopening Webinar Series

Date changed to: July 22, 2020, at 2:00 to 3:30 cdt

Districts are working hard to develop back-to-school plans that meet the needs of all learners. They also must consider how to address the socio-emotional needs of students. Moderated by Dr. Paula Johnson, Director, IDRA EAC-*South*, this panel of student advocates and educational leaders will discuss policy recommendations for district decision-makers on reopening schools that embrace restorative justice, ethnic studies and culturally responsive practices.

[REGISTER NOW](#)

More Webinars on Equitable Practices for Online Learning

These free webinar recordings are available for viewing at your convenience.

- * Equitable Practices for Teaching Online
- * Digital Divide: Connectivity, Infrastructure and Devices
- * Tools & Tips to Alleviate the Homework Gap
- * Facilitating Online Math Sessions
- * PBL at Home & Across the Curriculum
- * ELAR Series
 - * Journal Writing About the Present for the Future - ELAR Webinar Part 1
 - * From Journaling to Personal Narratives - ELAR Webinar Part 2
 - * From Journaling and Personal Narratives to Letter Writing - ELAR Webinar Part 3
- * Chief Science Officer Students Determined to Promote STEM Despite School Closures
- * Teaching Science in Virtual Learning Environments
- * How a School District Tackled the Digital Divide
- * Teacher, Parent and Student Perspectives on Using Google Classroom Effectively

[SEE WEBINAR HUB](#)

Overview of IDRA's Learning Goes On Initiative

During this COVID-19 crisis, IDRA has played a crucial role in supporting schools, districts and educators as they continue student learning from a distance.

[SEE HIGHLIGHTS FLIER](#)

Learning Goes On...
When schools closed due to COVID-19, IDRA immediately responded to educators and families so students could continue learning.

Tech Mentors in South Texas Colonias
IDRA launched a partnership with the Department of Community Services and CSAP in the State to connect living in low-income, Spanish-speaking families migrant workers' communities.

Bilingual Books to Young Children
IDRA provided 11,000 bilingual storybooks to families and low school districts for monthly digital story events on young learners.

Bridal Portal for Immigrant Families
IDRA launched a bilingual online portal for immigrant families on education in the United States to explore options with the Immigrant Education in San Antonio.

STEM Student Leadership
IDRA supported our Texas State Science Office districts as they launched new events to engage their youth in STEM-focused school closures.

In under four months, IDRA produced...

- 30 toolkits to over 1,000 people with policy updates and resources for education practice and family engagement (15 English, 15 Spanish) as of June 2020
- 18 bilingual policy updates
- 14 webinars on equitable practices for online learning with 900 views to date
- 10 bilingual videos on the education system for immigrant families
- 6 publications and podcast episodes on equity in online learning
- Online data map on college response to COVID-19
- New bilingual news dashboard
- Virtual interactive community of participants in the IDRA Virtual Health Professionals, the IDRA Texas Chief Science Officers Program and Education CAREV
- Launched bilingual survey for students, educators, parents to assess about how distance learning impacts education during school closures.
- Held a virtual meeting with education agency leaders representing five states - Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, South Carolina & Tennessee - engaging with families in the middle of a pandemic.
- Issued responses to calls for COVID-19 responses that include trauma-informed responses.
- Provided input to the San Antonio Express-News on the exclusion of DACA students in the CARES Act and other federal COVID-19 assistance.
- Filed 11 new claims on COVID-19 education impact.
- Provided recommendations to U.S. Congressional members and state officials in the U.S. South about equitable use and distribution of future COVID-19 emergency education relief funds for schools and students.
- Reported on equity concerns for English learners in response to COVID-19.
- Assessed how, without intervention, COVID-19-induced budget cuts would fall hardest on marginalized students in the U.S. South.
- Advised officials that COVID-19 does not change civil rights protections for students.
- Created resources on moving away from school policing.

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We welcome donations to support education during this COVID-19 crisis.



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The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent private non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring educational opportunity for every child. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs.

IDRA works hand-in-hand with hundreds of thousands of educators and families each year in communities and classrooms around the country. All our work rests on an unwavering commitment to creating self-renewing schools that value and promote the success of students of all backgrounds.