

School Reopening Trends Offer Districts the Opportunity to Start Planning Beyond the Pandemic

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Across the country, the tides are beginning to turn on school reopening. Relief funding, [policy guidance on safe reopening](#), declining cases, and increasing [vaccination rates](#) have cleared the way for students to safely return to classrooms.

School districts are largely responding. Our latest analysis finds that school buildings are reopening at numbers not seen since the pandemic began.

Our latest analysis of school district learning models from March 1 to March 13 finds that:

- Only 10.7 percent of all districts are still fully remote. A clear majority—57 percent—of the nation’s school districts report offering full-time in-person learning, the highest this number has been so far this school year.
- Over 50 percent of urban districts have expanded their offerings for at least some in-person learning since [our analysis](#) in December, yet these districts still lag behind in offering full-time in-person learning, with 32 percent still remote.
- In-person opportunities have increased across all grade levels, but middle and high school grades are still less likely to offer in-person opportunities.
- Of the districts that are not yet offering full-time in-person learning, 30 percent have announced phase-in plans over the next two months.

In-person learning will benefit many students, but surveys suggest that many may choose to continue learning remotely for a [variety of reasons](#) that go beyond in-person safety—reasons that must be addressed. But the return to classrooms is just one of many signs that our nation is beginning to move toward the recovery phase of this pandemic—a recovery that will undoubtedly take years.

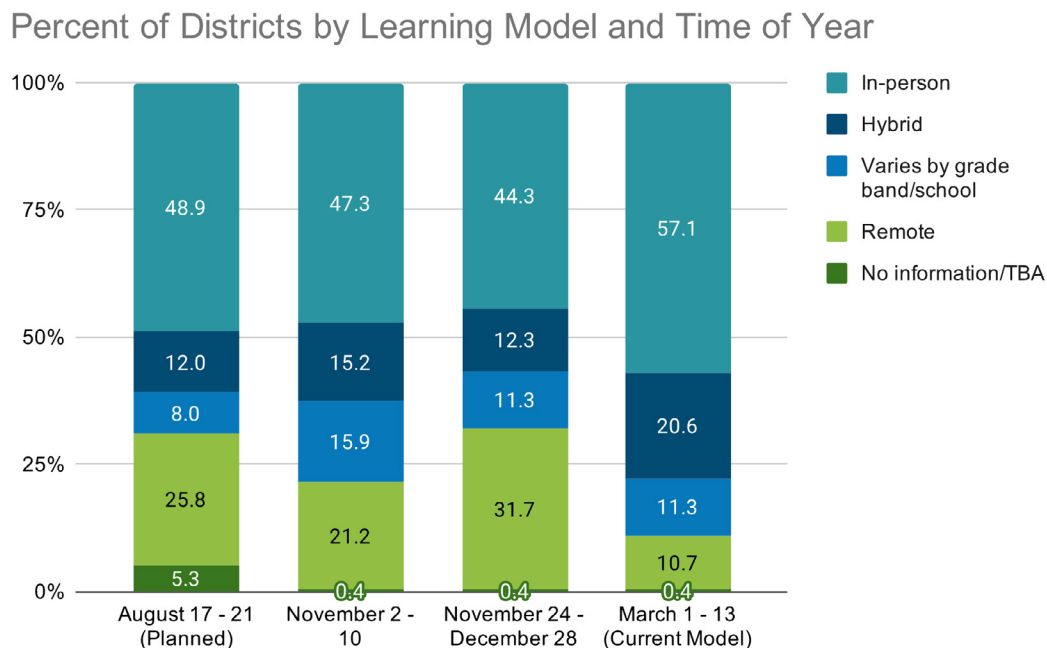
In-person learning is more widely available than at any point since the pandemic began

For the first time during the 2020–21 school year, a majority of school districts across the country are operating an in-person learning model—57 percent.¹ This is an increase of over 12

¹ Other school reopening trackers, such as the [Return to Learn Tracker](#), report similar but slightly different results from this time period. This could be related to different definitions of “hybrid” versus “in-person” learning that CRPE uses, and our smaller sample size. Please see our methodology and code definitions in the appendices to see how we defined and coded our sample of 477 school districts.

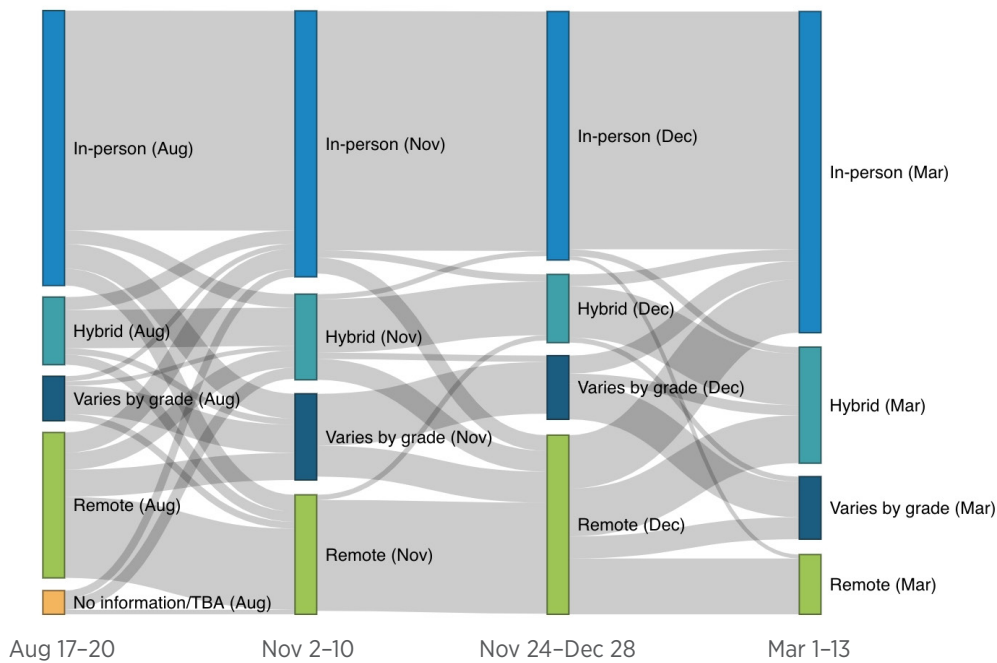
percentage points since our last analysis in December 2020 (figure 1). Fully remote learning models also decreased by over 20 percentage points since December, as many districts made the shift toward hybrid and fully in-person models.

Figure 1. In-Person Learning is Now the Model for Most School Districts



A closer look at districts' movement (figure 2) shows that 29 percent of districts that were fully remote in December shifted to fully in-person by March. Another 26 percent shifted from remote to hybrid. Perhaps surprisingly, there was less movement to increased in-person learning among school districts that were in a hybrid model or that had only some grade levels in-person in December. Only about half of districts that were in varied models shifted to either hybrid or in-person, and only 17 percent of hybrid districts moved to fully in-person models during the same time.

Figure 2. Most Movement among Learning Models between December and March Was from Remote Models to Increased In-Person Models

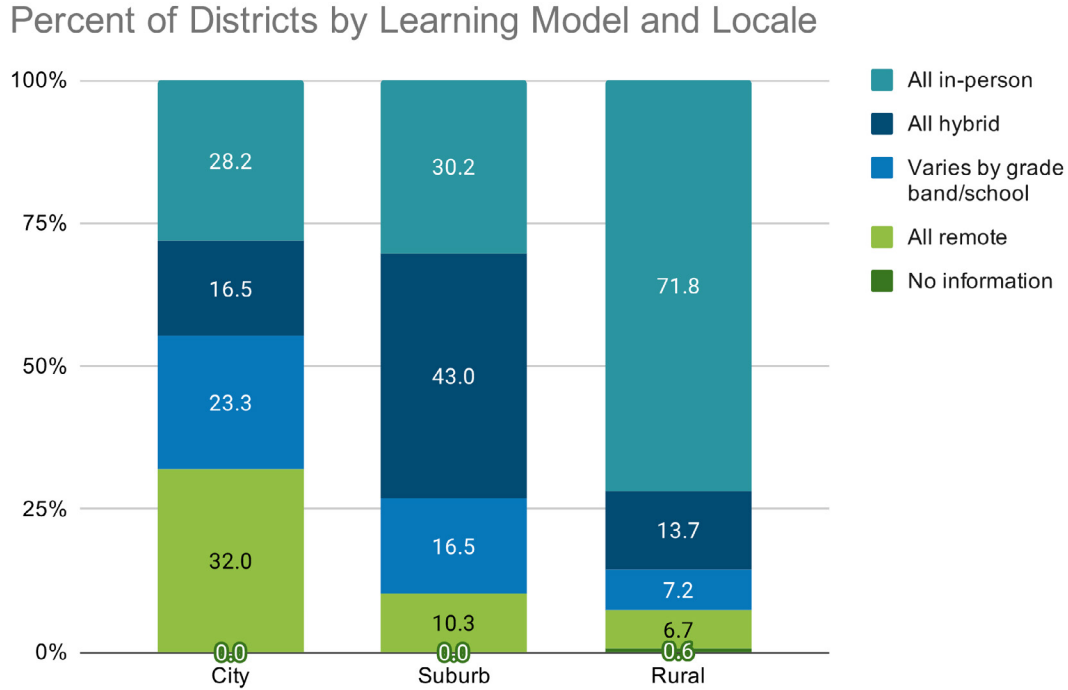


Remote learning is no longer the most common learning model in cities

The overall shift away from fully remote learning was mostly driven by changes in urban school districts’ learning models. In prior analyses, we found that urban school districts were far more likely to be in a remote model than other locales, probably because of the concentration of vulnerable communities, more challenging logistics of social distancing and student transportation, the added political spotlight larger cities experience, and often stronger teachers unions that have generally opposed reopening models.

This is still the case, with a plurality of urban districts still remote (figure 3). However, by early March, cities have largely moved away from full remote learning: 68 percent are offering some in-person learning for at least some students.

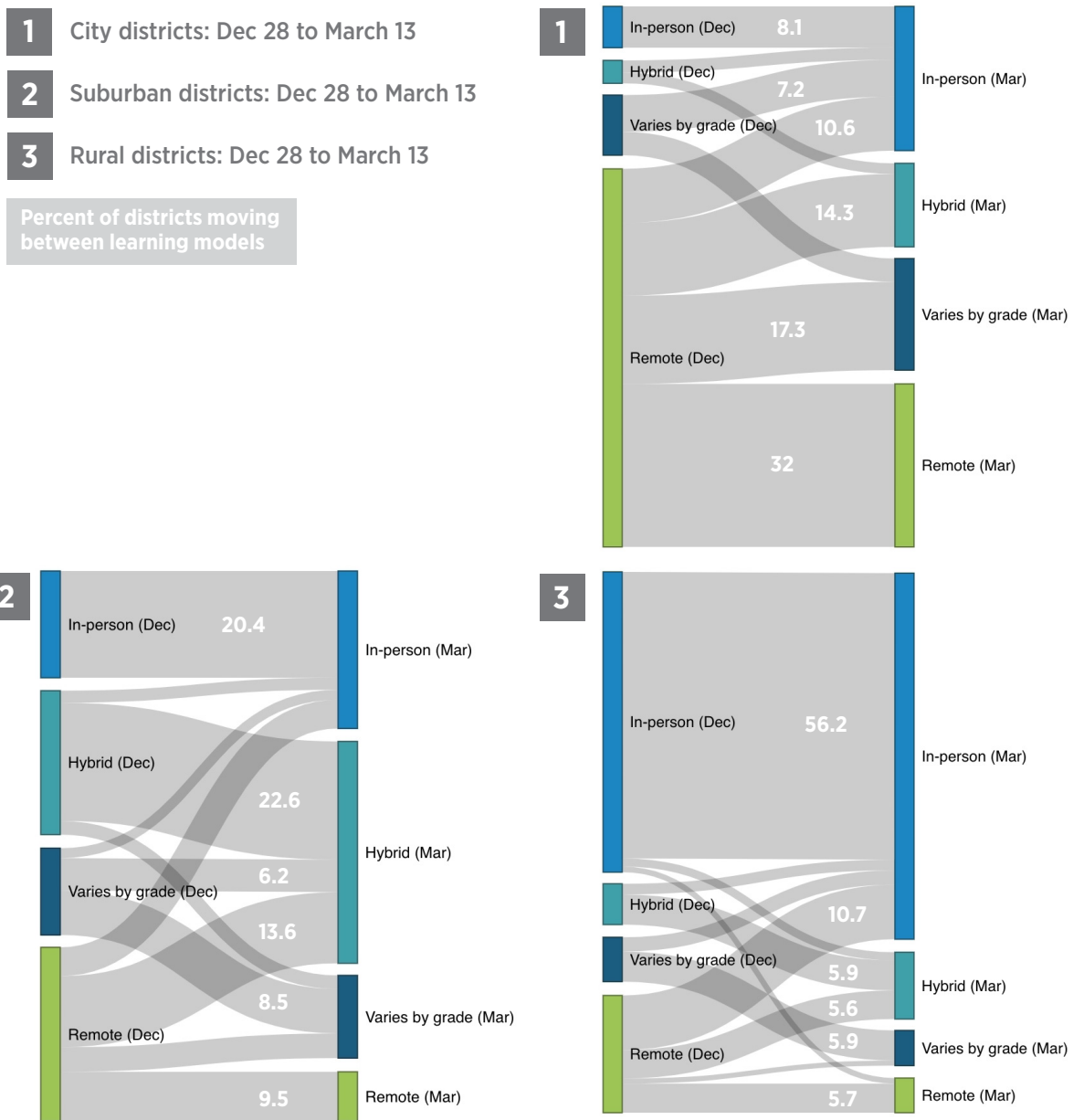
Figure 3. Learning Models Vary Widely across Different Locales



Between December and March, 52 percent of city school districts increased opportunities for in-person learning. As shown in figure 4, of the urban school districts that were fully remote in December, less than half still are. Instead, 17 percent of city school districts shifted from fully remote to adding at least some grades in-person (varies by grade band), 14 percent shifted from remote to a hybrid model, and about 10 percent shifted from fully remote to fully in-person.

Hybrid learning continues to be the most common model for suburban school districts, and fully in-person models are by far most common in rural districts. These districts also saw a general shift toward more in-person learning. Thirty-four percent of suburban districts and 23 percent of rural districts increased in-person learning between December and March.

Figure 4. Districts in All Locales Moved toward More In-Person Opportunities, Especially City Districts



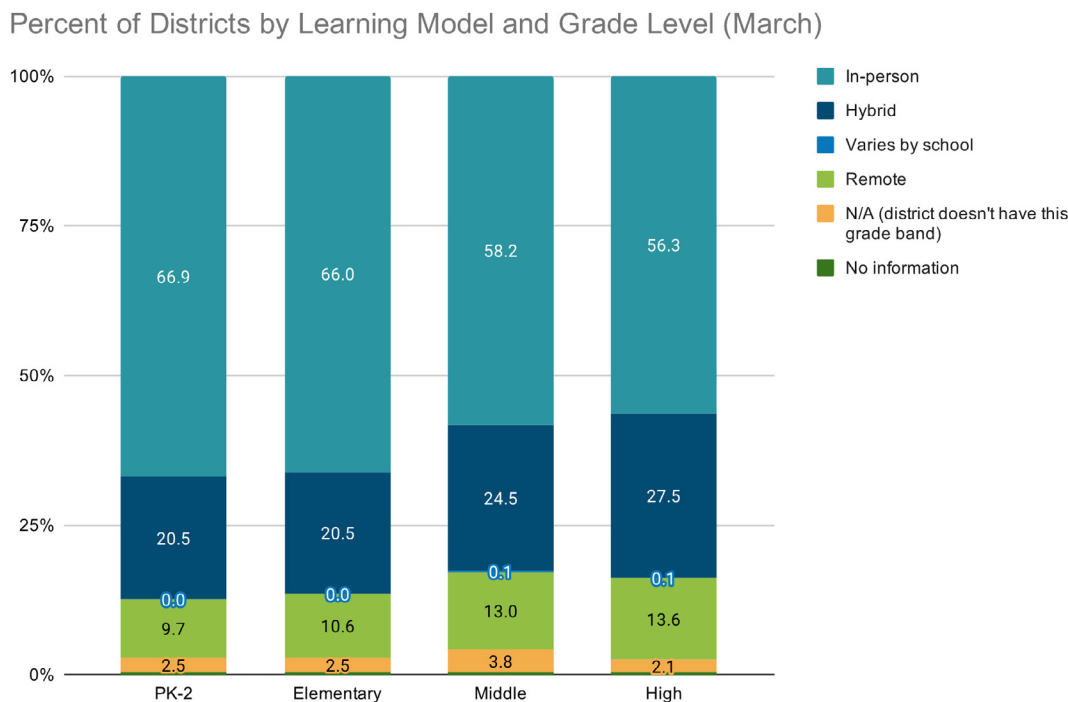
Note: Percentages do not add up to 100, as we only labeled the largest shifts.

Districts added in-person options across all grade spans, including high schools, but older grades still have less in-person opportunity

In prior analyses, we found elementary schools—especially the youngest grades—were most likely to be provided in-person opportunities. This is still the case, but school districts have expanded in-person learning options for all grade levels at similar rates over the past few months (figure 5). Fully remote learning for upper elementary grades (3-5), middle school

grades, and high school grades decreased by around 20 percent across the board, while fully in-person instruction increased by around 13 percent and hybrid instruction by between 6 and 8 percent across all grade levels.

Figure 5. In-Person Learning Is Still More Common for Elementary Grade Levels but Has Increased across All Grade Bands



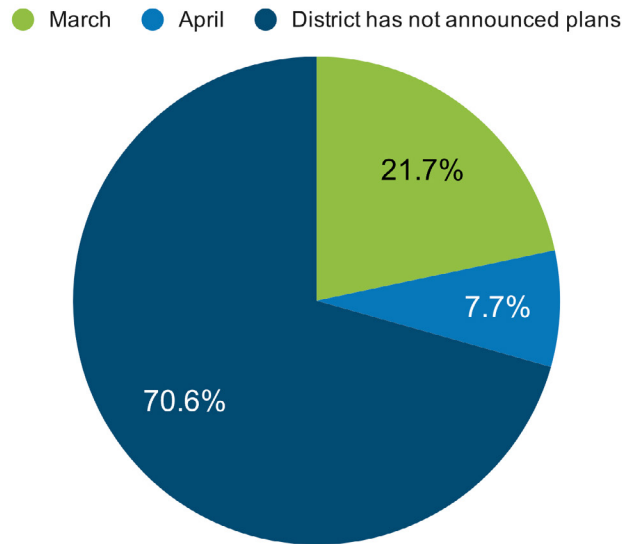
Many school districts plan to phase-in to more in-person learning over the next two months, but most have still not announced plans

In addition to current models, in this analysis we also tracked the plans school districts had announced for future phase-ins. As of early March, 30 percent of school districts currently operating either fully or partially remote are in the process or have announced specific plans to move more students to in-person learning before the end of the year (figure 6).

Of the 43 percent of school districts that are not currently operating fully in-person, about 70 percent have not yet announced specific plans to change their learning model. But 22 percent have announced plans to move more grade levels to in-person learning during the month of March, and another 8 percent plan to move some students back to the classroom in April. None of the districts in our sample had announced phase-in plans beyond April.

Figure 6. Most Fully or Partially Remote Districts Do Not Have Specific Plans to Phase-In More Students toward In-Person learning—Those That Do Will Shift In March or April

Remote and partially remote district plans to shift more students toward in-person learning

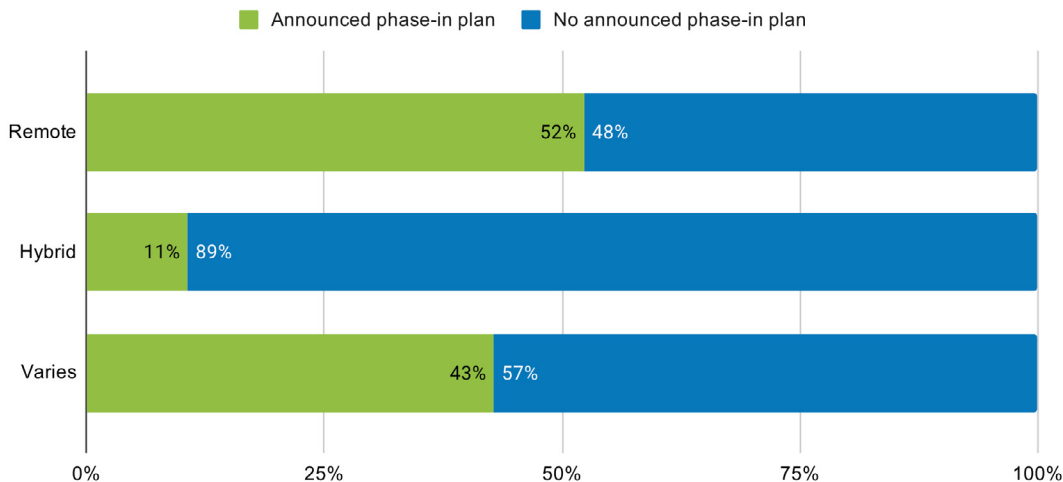


Note: This table includes data from the 43 percent of districts that are not already fully in-person.

On a closer look, we found that few school districts operating hybrid models have announced plans to move toward more in-person days. Over half of fully remote school districts (52 percent) had announced plans to move toward more in-person learning, and 43 percent of districts that have only some grade levels in-person have plans to add grades (figure 7). Only 11 percent of hybrid districts had announced plans to move to fully in-person. This may change with the Centers for Disease Control’s [recent easing](#) of its physical distancing recommendation for elementary school students from six feet to three feet; this guidance had initially led many districts to adopt hybrid models.

Figure 7. Districts That Are Currently Remote or In a Varied Model Are More Likely to Have Announced Phase-In Plans

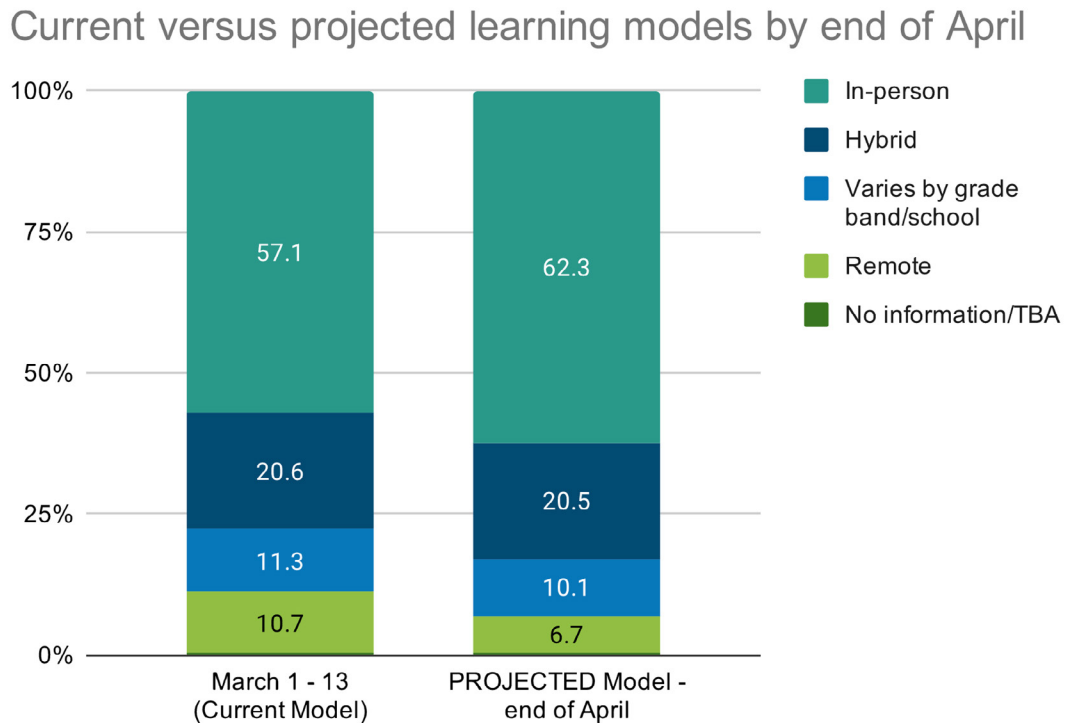
Plans to move toward more in-person vary by current learning model



Note: Percentages report the share of districts within each type of learning model, rather than from the full sample.

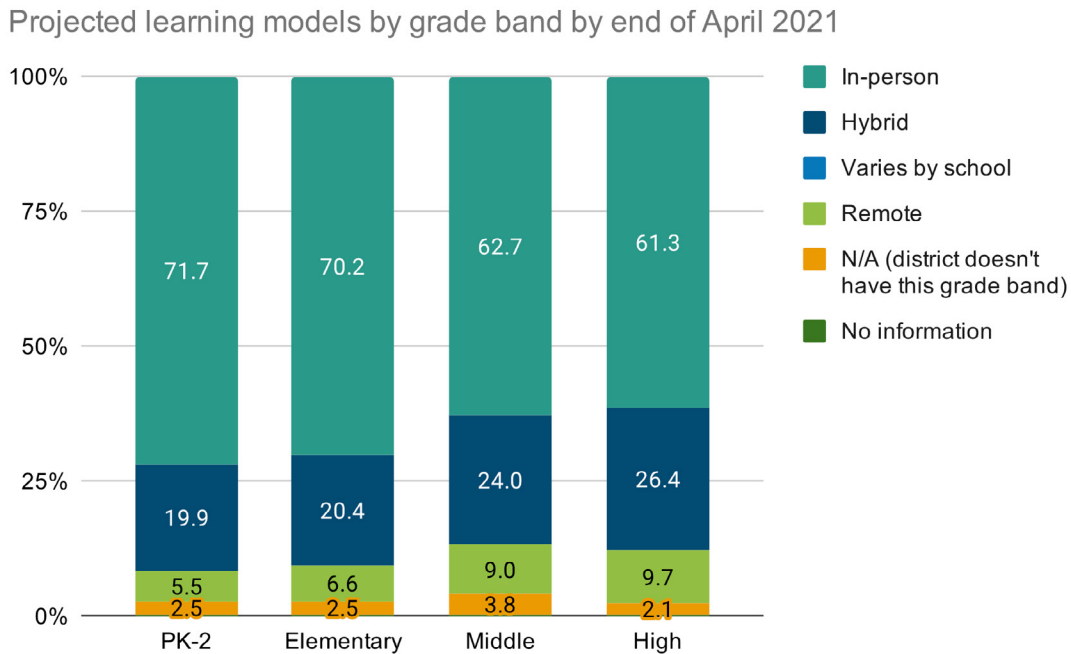
Given currently announced plans, by the end of April we would expect to see 5 percentage points more fully in-person districts in our sample, leaving just under 7 percent of school districts still fully remote (figure 8).

Figure 8. Projected Learning Models by the End of April Indicate 5 Percentage Points More In-Person Learning



In general, projected models reflect even phase-ins across grade bands: about a 4 percentage point reduction in fully remote learning and between a 4 and 5 percentage point increase in fully in-person learning for all grade bands (figure 9).

Figure 9. In-Person Learning Is Projected to Increase Evenly for All Grade Levels by the End of April



Of course, the only certainty of the past year is uncertainty, and these projections may quickly change if the course of the virus, vaccines, or politics shift.

The return to in-person learning is just one step toward recovery

Opening schools for in-person learning is by no means a simple process for school districts, which have been navigating shifting recommendations, continuity for students, and concerns from teachers and parents on both sides of the issue. But our most recent analysis demonstrates that most school buildings are moving back as quickly as circumstances allow. For many families who want in-person options, this may be a durable turning point in the pandemic.

It's important to note that offering in-person learning does not mean that all families will opt to be back in the building. In our November 2020 analysis we found that nearly 90 percent of the districts reported operating a virtual option regardless of primary district learning model; many families are choosing this option, especially those from [disproportionately impacted](#) and [historically marginalized](#) communities. The push to reopen schools should include efforts to engage and hopefully allay concerns for hesitant families while simultaneously strengthening current remote programs and offering alternative options, such as learning hubs. This push also can't eclipse the need to build trust with those same families and students, and pay close attention to the many reasons that some families have chosen to stay outside of school buildings, like creating safe and culturally affirming environments—needs that were present before the pandemic.

School systems, educators, students, and families have a long road ahead to recover from the disruption of the last year. As one superintendent recently [commented](#) to us, “The [academic] regression students are demonstrating and the social and emotional needs they now have is not going to be cured in a single year.” These multifaceted challenges will not be remedied by simply opening school buildings.

While this analysis is promising on the whole, many families in city school districts—which represent a larger student population than urban and rural districts—still have no in-person options, and even more students in middle and high school are unlikely to see the inside of a classroom this school year. Creating options for these students must continue to be a priority over the next few months and into the summer and next fall.

Relief funding will arrive over the next few months, offering a tremendous opportunity for our nation’s students. While districts must do everything they can to bring as many students as possible safely into buildings before this school year ends, these resources also allow districts to focus attention on assessing where students stand, academically and emotionally, and building the systems and supports that take them well beyond recovery.

Appendix A. Full Data Tables

		By percent poverty quartile					By locale (See note 2)		
		All	Quartile 1 (0 - 9.7% poverty)	Quartile 2 (9.7 - 15.8% poverty)	Quartile 3 (15.8 - 22.7% poverty)	Quartile 4 (22.7+% poverty)	City 12.6%	Rural 65.2%	Suburb 22.2%
		Weighted Percentage					Weighted Percentage		
Current Overall Learning Model March 1-13 (based on elementary, middle, and high school individual models)	All in-person	57.1	40.4	61.3	64.3	57.9	28.2	71.8	30.2
	All hybrid	20.6	23.1	24.6	17.4	17.0	16.5	13.7	43.0
	All remote	10.7	11.4	6.2	9.1	18.0	32.0	6.7	10.3
	Varies by grade band/school	11.3	25.1	7.9	9.2	7.0	23.3	7.2	16.5
	No information	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0
Overall Learning Model (Nov 24 - Dec 28)	All in-person	44.3	31.7	46.0	44.6	51.1	8.7	58.9	21.7
	All hybrid	12.3	15.3	14.6	7.9	10.6	5.2	8.2	28.2
	All remote	31.7	29.4	29.9	35.2	34.4	74.2	23.0	33.4
	Varies by grade band/school	11.3	23.5	9.5	12.4	3.9	11.9	9.3	16.7
	No information	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0
Change in overall learning model from December to March	More in-person	29.0	29.0	28.3	35.6	25.7	51.9	22.8	34.3
	More remote	3.1	4.8	2.0	2.8	4.0	1.4	3.0	4.6
	No change	67.9	66.2	69.6	61.6	70.3	46.7	74.2	61.1
PK-2 Learning Model	In-person	66.9	62.5	68.8	72.7	65.7	48.4	78.5	43.5
	Hybrid	20.5	22.4	25.8	17.9	17.1	22.7	13.4	40.1
	Remote	9.7	10.1	5.4	8.4	16.5	28.6	7.0	6.9
	Varies by school	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	No information	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0
	N/A (district doesn't have this grade band)	2.5	5.0	0.0	1.0	0.7	0.4	0.5	9.5
Elementary School Learning Model	In-person	66.0	60.9	68.8	71.9	63.9	45.4	78.3	41.6
	Hybrid	20.5	23.0	25.0	18.4	17.3	22.7	13.6	39.7
	Remote	10.6	11.1	6.2	8.7	18.0	31.6	7.0	9.2
	Varies by school	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0
	No information	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	N/A (district doesn't have this grade band)	2.5	5.0	0.0	1.0	0.7	0.4	0.5	9.5
Middle School Learning Model	In-person	58.2	47.3	59.6	68.0	59.2	30.7	72.8	31.2
	Hybrid	24.5	31.0	29.1	19.4	20.5	25.4	17.1	45.4
	Remote	13.0	17.4	8.4	9.7	19.5	43.8	7.4	12.2
	Varies by school	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
	No information	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0
	N/A (district doesn't have this grade band)	3.8	4.2	2.6	2.9	0.8	0.1	2.1	10.9
High School Learning Model	In-person	56.3	39.0	60.8	64.1	57.7	27.4	71.3	28.6
	Hybrid	27.5	40.2	29.3	21.3	22.0	26.1	19.2	52.9
	Remote	13.6	18.6	8.1	12.2	18.6	45.3	7.4	14.1
	Varies by school	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
	No information	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0
	N/A (district doesn't have this grade band)	2.1	2.1	1.5	2.4	1.7	1.3	1.6	4.0
District is phasing students in or has announced plans to phase-in	Yes	12.6	21.2	9.5	11.0	9.2	39.3	5.6	18.0
	No / No yet announced	30.3	38.3	29.1	24.6	32.9	32.5	22.5	51.8
	District is fully in-person	57.1	40.4	61.3	64.3	57.9	28.2	71.8	30.2
Phasing in / not phasing in by learning model	District is fully in-person	57.1	40.5	61.3	64.3	57.9	28.2	71.8	30.2
	District is hybrid and phasing in	2.2	3.5	1.5	1.5	0.6	0.8	1.1	6.1
	District is hybrid and not phasing in	18.4	19.6	23.1	15.9	16.5	15.7	12.6	36.9
	District is remote and phasing in	5.6	4.4	4.8	6.4	7.2	22.6	1.8	6.9
	District is remote and not phasing in	5.1	7.0	1.4	2.7	10.8	9.4	4.9	3.4
	District's learning model varies by grade/school and is phasing in	4.8	13.3	3.2	3.1	1.4	15.9	2.7	5.0
	District's learning model varies by grade/school and is not phasing in	6.4	11.8	4.7	6.1	5.6	7.4	4.5	11.5
No information	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	

Appendix A. Full Data Tables (cont.)

	By percent poverty quartile					By locale (See note 2)			
	All	Quartile 1 (0 - 9.7% poverty)	Quartile 2 (9.7 - 15.8% poverty)	Quartile 3 (15.8 - 22.7% poverty)	Quartile 4 (22.7+% poverty)	City 12.6%	Rural 65.2%	Suburb 22.2%	
	Weighted Percentage					Weighted Percentage			
Month of next phase-in	March	9.3	14.9	7.5	8.7	5.3	23.1	4.3	16.2
	April	3.3	6.3	2.0	2.3	3.8	16.1	1.3	1.8
	Beyond April	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	District is not phasing in / has not announced plans	30.3	38.3	29.1	24.6	32.9	32.5	22.5	51.8
	District is fully in-person	57.1	40.4	61.3	64.3	57.9	28.2	71.8	30.2
Projected Overall Learning Model End of April (based on elementary, middle, and high school individual models)	All in-person	62.3	53.3	65.4	68.0	61.0	41.5	75.6	35.2
	All hybrid	20.5	22.1	25.4	16.5	16.6	19.5	13.2	42.5
	All remote	6.7	7.4	1.6	3.9	15.5	19.7	5.2	4.0
	Varies by grade band/school	10.1	17.3	7.5	11.6	6.8	19.3	5.5	18.3
	No information	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0
Projected PK-2 Learning Model End of April	In-person	71.7	70.0	71.3	77.8	71.3	64.0	80.7	49.5
	Hybrid	19.9	18.2	27.1	17.7	16.5	21.5	13.1	39.1
	Remote	5.5	6.8	1.6	3.5	11.5	14.2	5.1	1.9
	Varies by school	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	No information	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0
	N/A (district doesn't have this grade band)	2.5	5.0	0.0	1.0	0.7	0.4	0.5	9.5
Projected Elementary School Learning Model End of April	In-person	70.2	68.1	71.3	77.3	67.0	57.3	80.3	47.8
	Hybrid	20.4	19.8	27.1	18.2	16.7	23.0	13.3	39.8
	Remote	6.6	7.1	1.6	3.5	15.6	19.3	5.4	2.9
	Varies by school	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	No information	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0
	N/A (district doesn't have this grade band)	2.5	5.0	0.0	1.0	0.7	0.4	0.5	9.5
Projected Middle School Learning Model End of April	In-person	62.7	57.4	63.4	70.6	62.7	44.7	75.3	36.3
	Hybrid	24.0	27.1	30.1	19.9	19.9	26.4	16.6	44.5
	Remote	9.0	11.3	3.6	6.6	16.6	28.8	5.5	8.0
	Varies by school	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
	No information	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0
	N/A (district doesn't have this grade band)	3.8	4.2	2.6	2.9	0.8	0.1	2.1	10.9
Projected High School Learning Model End of April	In-person	61.3	51.7	64.9	66.9	60.2	42.4	74.3	34.0
	Hybrid	26.4	34.7	30.1	20.7	21.2	26.8	17.4	52.5
	Remote	9.7	11.4	3.2	10.1	16.8	29.5	6.1	9.3
	Varies by school	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
	No information	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0
	N/A (district doesn't have this grade band)	2.1	2.1	1.5	2.4	1.7	1.3	1.6	4.0

Appendix B. Code Definitions

Variable label	Variable values	Definitions	Examples
Current learning model for the youngest students (K-2) Code for any in-person learning happening between grades K-2	Hybrid	Hybrid = Schools use a combination of in-person and virtual/remote instruction Code for any in-person learning happening between grades K-2	Hybrid = Grades K-1 are hybrid, grade 2 is remote Some students will be in person in mornings, and remote in the afternoons, and will switch with the other students. Students move in smaller cohort groups, and will be in-person two days/week and remote 3 days/week
	In-person	In-person = School use only in-person instruction (no virtual/remote instruction) OR 4-day/week model. Code for any in-person learning happening between grades K-2	In-person: Grades K-2 are in-person; grades K-1 are in-person, grades 2 is remote The district offers a full-time in-person model, but students can opt for a remote option if they prefer District is using a "4-day week" model, with one day for remote intervention or independent work. All students are on the same schedule. There is no 'cohorting' of students.
	Remote	Remote = Schools use only virtual/remote instruction (no in-person instruction) Code for any in-person learning happening between grades K-2	Remote = No students between grades K-2 have an in-person learning All students are learning via remote instruction, or only a small group of students (i.e. special populations) may be learning in-person.
	Varies by school	Varies by School = District explicitly delegates the choice of learning model (in-person, remote, hybrid) to each school, rather than a district-wide decision. This is a RARE occurrence.	Varies by school: DO NOT COUNT examples of individual schools that have had to close due to COVID-19 cases; this is counted as a remote contingency. We are coding for the district-wide plan for the 'default' for most schools.
	No information	No information = No information about COVID-19 plans.	
Current learning model for elementary students grades 3 and up Code for the model that grades 3 - 5 are in	Hybrid	Hybrid = Schools use a combination of in-person and virtual/remote instruction Code for the model that grades 3 - 5 are in. If model varies within elementary grades, code for third grade.	Some students will be in person in mornings, and remote in the afternoons, and will switch with the other students. Students move in smaller cohort groups, and will be in-person two days/week and remote 3 days/week
	In-person	In-person = School use only in-person instruction (no virtual/remote instruction) OR 4-day/week model. Code for the model that grades 3 - 5 are in. If model varies within elementary grades, code for third grade.	The district offers a full-time in-person model, but students can opt for a remote option if they prefer District is using a "4-day week" model, with one day for remote intervention or independent work. All students are on the same schedule. There is no 'cohorting' of students.
	Remote	Remote = Schools use only virtual/remote instruction (no in-person instruction) Code for the model that grades 3 - 5 are in	All students are learning via remote instruction, or only a small group of students (i.e. special populations) may be learning in-person.
	Varies by school	Varies by School = District explicitly delegates the choice of learning model (in-person, remote, hybrid) to each school, rather than a district-wide decision. This is a RARE occurrence.	Varies by school: DO NOT COUNT examples of individual schools that have had to close due to COVID-19 cases; this is counted as a remote contingency. We are coding for the district-wide plan for the 'default' for most schools.
	No information	No information = No information about COVID-19 plans.	
Current learning model for middle school grades	Hybrid	Hybrid = Schools use a combination of in-person and virtual/remote instruction Code for the model that grades 6-8 are in. If model varies within middle school grades, or middle school grades vary, code for 7th grade	Some students will be in person in mornings, and remote in the afternoons, and will switch with the other students. Students move in smaller cohort groups, and will be in-person two days/week and remote 3 days/week
	In-person	In-person = School use only in-person instruction (no virtual/remote instruction) Code for the model that grades 6-8 are in. If model varies within middle school grades, or middle school grades vary, code for 7th grade	The district offers a full-time in-person model, but students can opt for a remote option if they prefer OR, district is in-person 4 days/week, with one day remote.
	Remote	Remote = Schools use only virtual/remote instruction (no in-person instruction) Code for the model that grades 6-8 are in. If model varies within middle school grades, or middle school grades vary, code for 7th grade	All students are learning via remote instruction, or only a small group of students (i.e. special populations) may be learning in-person.
	Varies by school	Varies by School = District explicitly delegates the choice of learning model (in-person, remote, hybrid) to each school, rather than a district-wide decision. This is a RARE occurrence.	Varies by school: DO NOT COUNT examples of individual schools that have had to close due to COVID-19 cases; this is counted as a remote contingency. We are coding for the district-wide plan for the 'default' for most schools.
	No information	No information = No information about COVID-19 related to Fall 2020 can be found	

Appendix B. Code Definitions (cont.)

Current learning model for high school students	Hybrid	Hybrid = Schools use a combination of in-person and virtual/remote instruction Code for the model for grades 9-12. If model varies within high-school grades, code for the model for grade 10.	Some students will be in person in mornings, and remote in the afternoons, and will switch with the other students. Students move in smaller cohort groups, and will be in-person two days/week and remote 3 days/week
	In-person	In-person = School use only in-person instruction (no virtual/remote instruction) Code for the model for grades 9-12. If model varies within high-school grades, code for the model for grade 10.	The district offers a full-time in-person model, but students can opt for a remote option if they prefer OR, district is in-person 4 days/week, with one day remote.
	Remote	Remote = Schools use only virtual/remote instruction (no in-person instruction) Code for the model for grades 9-12. If model varies within high-school grades, code for the model for grade 10.	All students are learning via remote instruction, or only a small group of students (i.e. special populations) may be learning in-person.
	Varies by school	Varies by School = District explicitly delegates the choice of learning model (in-person, remote, hybrid) to each school, rather than a district-wide decision. This is a RARE occurrence.	Varies by school: DO NOT COUNT examples of individual schools that have had to close due to COVID-19 cases; this is counted as a remote contingency. We are coding for the district-wide plan for the 'default' for most schools.
	No information	No information = No information about COVID-19 related to Fall 2020 can be found	
	Is the district in the process, or planning for a process to phase some or more students to a level of in-person learning?	Yes	District has announced moving some or more students into school buildings
No		District is already fully in-person, or has not announced any plans to phase in.	District is fully remote, and has no tentative or official dates to move any students in-person District is fully in-person
No information			
If yes, what month is the district planning next level of phase-in?	March	Next phase-in will be sometime during March	
	April	Next phase-in will be sometime during April	
	Beyond April	Next phase-in will be sometime after April	
	N/A	District is already fully in-person, is not phasing in, or has not announced tentative or final plans.	Answered "no" for prior code
If yes, what grade levels will be phased in?	Youngest students	District has announced tentative or final plans to phase the youngest grades of elementary back to the classroom. i.e. K-1, Pre-K-2, etc. Any grade levels under third grade.	
	EL	Grade levels including 3 and above	
	MS	Any grade levels including grades 6-8	
	HS	Any grade levels including grades 9-12	
	EL&MS	Grade levels spanning K-8	
	MS&HS	Grade levels spanning 6-12	
All		District has announced tentative or final plans to phase all students back in-person	District will move all grade levels to a hybrid model on March 15 District will move K-5 in-person March 15, 6-8 in-person March 22, and 9-12 in-person on April 8. DO NOT count examples where the district has only announced dates for K-8, but has no date yet for highschool.
	Other	District is using a model for phasing-in that is not dependent on grade level - i.e. academic need.	Pittsburgh is phasing in-person based on student academic need, based on attendance, participation, and other factors. The district has developed 4 categories.
	N/A	District is already fully in-person, or is not phasing in.	

Appendix C. Methodology

1. Description of the Project

The COVID-19 response database tracks how a nationally representative group of school districts are responding to the pandemic on an ongoing basis. The goal of this effort is to capture a national portrait of school district practices. Our sample includes 477 school districts, sampled and weighed to reflect a representative cross-section of school districts across the United States.

Prior analyses have tracked how these school districts provided remote instruction during the spring 2020 school closures, and how school districts planned for fall 2020 reopening. For this iteration of the project, we collected and coded publicly available information about each school district's current operating model, and district announcements on future reopening plans for any grade levels.

We merged the coded data with descriptive information on each district—such as percent of poverty in the school district, racial demographics, and locale description—from the National Center on Education Statistics Common Core of Data.

This project is a collaboration with the RAND Corporation, and stems from the ongoing American School District Panel project, a project intended to build a nationally representative panel of American School Districts.

2. Sources Accessed for Information

For each school district, we coded the indicators based on publicly available information. Primary sources were the school district website, local news reports, and social media (district Facebook pages or Twitter, YouTube). In this analysis, we found only one school district with no publicly available information on their current operating model. We coded this district as “no information.” For all other school districts in the sample, school reopening information was typically centered on the district website, or referenced on local news.

However, school districts continue to rapidly shift their operating models as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves in each community, and information captured earlier in the coding cycle may no longer be accurate at the time of publication. This analysis is meant as a snapshot of district practices between March 1 and March 13, 2021.

We gathered descriptive information from the school districts (enrollment, racial demographics, percent of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch, locale code) from the National Center for Education Statistics, based on 2016 data.

We also categorized districts based on the percent of families in poverty in the surrounding community. This data was provided by [Market Data Retrieval](#) (MDR), and their data guide offers the following information on sourcing: “The poverty data is sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates program, which provides annual estimates of income and poverty statistics for all states, counties, and school districts. The poverty percentage identifies districts and public schools by the actual percentage of children in the district that come from families below the poverty line. The poverty line is determined by a formula (Orshansky Indicator) based on family income and size. The poverty percentage field was calculated by MDR by creating a ratio of the children in a district from families below the poverty line to all children in the district.” (MDR Data Dictionary, 2020).

3. Coder Training

The team of analysts collecting and coding information participated in several training and norming activities, including: (1) all coders reviewed a codebook outlining definitions for codes in the various fields of interest and coding sample districts as a group, (2) all coders reviewed information from districts, then coded a common sample of four districts, then met to discuss alignment and misalignment, (3) coders participated in sessions in which they discussed coding questions and further aligned on code definitions.

4. Data Collection Timeline

We collected all data on the 477 districts between November 24 and December 28, 2020. We coded for the current operation of school districts during that time period, rather than any planned changes to come.

5. Code Definitions

Appendix B is the codebook used for this round of coding. For all indicators, codes were based only on publicly available information, and when there was no information available, were coded “no information.”

We coded school districts by learning model for each grade band (elementary, middle, high-school), and used these grade-band codes to create an overall district indicator of full in-person, full-hybrid, full-remote, or varies by grade band. As school district grade bands vary, and many districts have only the youngest grades (PreK–2) in person, we coded elementary school as the model for 3rd grade students, and middle school as the model for 7th grade students, if there was variation.

For the indicator on changes to operating plans from August to the current operating model, we compared whether districts overall were allowing more or fewer students for in-person instruction than they planned for in late August. We coded this based on the changes in the overall district plans, including variations by grade bands, but were unable to account for prioritization for some small groups of students, such as students with disabilities, in this indicator. For example:

- If, in December, a school district planned to begin with a hybrid model for all students, and phased to elementary in-person and middle and high school hybrid (varies by grade band), this would be coded as “more in-person”
- If, in December, a school district operated fully remote, and is currently operating with only some small groups of the most vulnerable students in-person, with all other students remote, this would still be coded as “no change.”

6. Explanation of the Sample and Sample Calibration

The Sample

The national sample includes two groups of districts.

Group 1 includes 399 districts and is a stratified random sample from a sample of 1,200 school districts. The 1,200 school districts represent the recruitment sample for the RAND-led American School District Panel project, a project intended to build a nationally representative panel of American School Districts. The sample of 399 districts is stratified by school location and includes 200 small-town and rural districts and 199 suburban and urban districts.

Group 2 includes the 82 urban districts CRPE began collecting district response data in March 2020. CRPE updated data on these districts weekly from March 28 through July 31, 2020. Data from this group was taken from the last update of this set on July 29, 2020.

Because 3 of the 82 large urban districts also appear among the 399 districts, and one is in Canada, the total national sample includes 477 U.S. school districts.

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Calibration and Sample Weights

Excluding the duplicates, we combined the Group 1 and Group 2 districts and then calibrated to reflect the national population of school districts along 10 factors:

- Total enrollment in the district split into three groups: Small [0-800], medium [800-3000] and Large [3000+]
- Total number of schools in the district split into three groups: 1, [2-5], and [6+]
- Per-pupil expenditure on instructional materials
- Current expenditure dollar range code represents per-student current expenditures within ranges and are maintained on district (except Supervisory Union) and public school records
- Percentage of minority students in the district split into four groups [0-15 percent], [15-25 percent], [25-50 percent], and [50 percent+]
- Percentage of poverty-level students in the district split into four groups [0-10 percent], [10-15 percent], [15-25 percent], and [25 percent+]
- Percentage of students in the district eligible for free or reduced-price lunch split into four groups [0-25 percent], [25-50 percent], [50-75 percent], and [75 percent+]
- The specific level of instruction in the school district, Elementary, Secondary or Unified
- The percentage of special education students in the district split into three groups [0-12 percent], [12-17 percent], and [17 percent+]
- Bilingual Education Indicator that indicates if Bilingual Education is offered [Yes/No]

About the Center on Reinventing Public Education

CRPE is a nonpartisan research and policy analysis center at the University of Washington Bothell. We develop, test, and support bold, evidence-based, systemwide solutions to address the most urgent problems in K-12 public education across the country. Our mission is to reinvent the education delivery model, in partnership with education leaders, to prepare all American students to solve tomorrow's challenges. Since 1993 CRPE's research, analysis, and insights have informed public debates and innovative policies that enable schools to thrive. Our work is supported by multiple foundations, contracts, and the U.S. Department of Education.