How Has the Pandemic Affected Students' Social-Emotional Well-Being? A Review of the Evidence to Date

Panel of Experts

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About this Series

This report is part of a series that aims to provide a definitive account of the best available evidence on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected America's students. The series is part of a broader effort, the Evidence Project, which brings together researchers and policymakers to advance solutions-oriented analysis of the K–12 response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Center on Reinventing Public Education compiled hundreds of studies and convened panels of experts to interpret what the data show. Three initial reports assess what we know to date about the pandemic's effects on students' **academic progress**, its effects on their **mental health and social-emotional well-being**, and its impact on **students with disabilities**. We will update these assessments and add more topics over the coming year as new data become available.

We aim to present a coherent baseline of what we know, don't know, and need to know at this stage of the pandemic. These reports are designed to help system leaders, community leaders, policymakers, researchers, philanthropies, the media, and others to define ambitious goals and clear metrics that ensure our education system meets every student's needs over the coming years.

The series of papers will culminate in the release of CRPE's first annual *Profile of the American Student*. The report will provide a rigorous and nuanced assessment of 1) how extensive student needs and inequities are across a variety of dimensions, 2) how student needs vary across different dimensions and what that implies for policy and practice, and 3) what promising solutions and innovations are emerging to meet students' needs.

In future years, these reports will track progress toward repaying every student the educational opportunities they are owed after this traumatic and disruptive period. Our goal is to provide an ongoing assessment of student needs and a look forward toward restitution and recovery.

I. Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic upended daily life for every family and school across the United States. But its impacts were not universal. The inequities that cut across classrooms and communities have contributed to broad disparities in the losses, trauma, and isolation that many students and educators have endured. In addition, the converging social events of 2020–21, including protests for racial justice, a contentious presidential election, and a riot at the Capitol, have challenged young people to make sense of a turbulent era that few adults may yet fully understand.

In June of 2021, the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) gathered a panel of eight experts in child development, adolescent mental health, and social-emotional learning to assess and reflect on new research exploring the pandemic's effects on student well-being, social-emotional development, and ability to learn. In this paper, our panel situates these findings in context and offers an agenda for researchers and practitioners to work from in the years ahead.

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A Shock to Student Lives

The pandemic affected the lives and social-emotional experiences of every student to some extent. Along with the unprecedented closures of schools across the country in March 2020, virtually all social activities ceased. Students were cut off from their teachers, with uneven access to live instruction and hands-on, collaborative learning. There were few opportunities to see friends in person or engage in extracurricular activities. At the same time, many students also were contending with the pandemic's frightening impacts on their family's health and welfare, such as illness, the death of a relative or neighbor, and economic hardship. Some students also took on new responsibilities to care for younger siblings or contribute to family finances.

The human losses and financial tolls were more commonly experienced by Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and indigenous students from lower-income communities. One survey found 41 percent of these young people reported providing care for someone else in their household and 62 percent reported being financially affected by the pandemic. These students also were more likely to be separated from in-person schooling for longer periods of time. In May 2021—some 14 months after the start of the pandemic—just 47 percent of high-minority school districts were operating fully in person compared to 61 percent of low-minority districts. In addition, chronic absenteeism is thought to have risen dramatically, especially among students of color, though attendance record-keeping was not consistent.

Not every student's experience was wholly negative. Some families transitioned to remote learning and work with relative ease—enjoying more unscheduled time together and even boosting their economic security during long months at home. Some students reported they preferred remote learning as a means to avoid social stresses or racial microaggressions they encountered at school. And some students undoubtedly developed resilience and thrived in ways that they would not have in the absence of the events of 2020 and 2021.

Fast-Moving Research in Tumultuous Times

Over the past year, researchers have worked faster than ever before to collect and analyze data on the experiences of young people. As a result, the field has a substantial account of the pandemic and its likely implications for youth. But students' experiences were vastly different from one another during this time, based on their proximity to illness and loss, gender and race, age, and length of school closures, among other factors. One of the biggest areas of concern is the extent to which contextual variations between those experiences will affect individual development over the longer term.

This leads to a note on the scope of this report. While the factors contributing to students' mental health and social-emotional development are expansive, our panel focused on the research exploring the effects of the pandemic and school closures on children and young people in grades K–12 in the U.S. We recognize that long-standing structural racism shaped the pandemic's impact in meaningful ways, and that a nationwide reckoning over that reality has affected student well-being and development. This review does include research that considers racism's effects in the context of the pandemic; however, far more can be examined and discussed than reflected here. We believe these issues should be considered in their full, complex, and essential breadth.

In addition, we acknowledge that the pandemic has taken a significant toll on adult caregivers and educators. Parents who may have been juggling their own fears of illness or economic hardship have had to step in as teachers to support young learners throughout the school day. Meanwhile, teachers were adapting instruction to fit often unfamiliar technological platforms while attempting to build and foster nurturing relationships with students they'd never met in person. A survey in late 2020 found that 78 percent of teachers reported frequent job-related stress and 27 percent said they were depressed, compared to average rates of 40 percent and 10 percent, respectively. While these adult issues are beyond the scope of this report, the well-being of families and educators should also be a significant area of focus as young people return to the classroom full-time.

What the Research Says So Far

Our main findings reveal widespread impacts on students' mental health, while the effects of the pandemic on social-emotional development are less understood. More than anything, our panel felt that the pandemic revealed how inadequately we serve students' mental health and social-emotional development in normal times.

The review also uncovered an urgent need for more effective social-emotional learning opportunities and innovative approaches to expand student supports. This calls for an integrated and responsive system of education and tailored supports, one that can flexibly meet each individual student's highly variable needs on an immense, post-pandemic scale.

To inform this recovery work, our panel summarized the main research findings to date, explored what those findings tell us about student mental health and social-emotional learning, and identified the pressing questions still in need of answers. Looking ahead, researchers should focus on how schools and leaders can partner with community-based sources of support and stability, how race factors into students' experiences and well-being, and how to more comprehensively define and measure school and student success.

II. Overview of Findings

What We Know

- A significant portion of young people, likely 30 to 40 percent, have experienced negative impacts on their mental or social-emotional health during the pandemic.

- Students who learned remotely for long periods of time and historically marginalized students were more likely to experience these negative effects.

- Rates of anxiety and attempted suicides, already on the rise pre-pandemic, appear to have increased among all students, especially among girls.

- While some students fared well initially, or even fared better when learning remotely than they did in person before the pandemic, these positive effects did not last. Negative effects for students increased over time.

- Schools and districts, especially in rural areas without a strong social-service infrastructure, lacked systems to track student well-being or strategies to address and improve it.

What We Don't Know

- Anecdotal evidence suggests that students with disabilities were disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Some families reported that their children went months without receiving their legally mandated therapies. Despite this, no surveys specifically examined the mental health and well-being of students with disabilities

- Most research efforts focused on adolescent students. We have little clear evidence on the pandemic's impact on the well-being of children ages 5 to 10.

- There is almost no systematic data that detailed the pandemic's impact on students' social-emotional development. Some students reported that they had gained skills in time management and self-direction. However, teachers reported a concerning lack of student motivation and engagement in learning.

What We Need to Know

- The ways in which a young person's unique surroundings, learning environment, and developmental stage shaped their experiences during the pandemic.

- Which combinations of supports and interventions will help students recover and regain their mental health, well-being, and age-appropriate social-emotional competencies, based on their highly varied experiences of the pandemic.

- What innovations and opportunities exist and emerged to provide a more comprehensive and robust continuum of support in schools.

- How to effectively coordinate and mobilize families, community members, and community-based organizations to support students outside school.

- How to measure and monitor mental health, well-being, and social-emotional learning opportunities and outcomes to inform decision-making.

Mental Health and Well-Being

Our panel reviewed the research on student mental health and well-being and social-emotional competencies during the pandemic with two major questions in mind. First, what were the reported effects of the pandemic on students? And second, what services and supports did students receive at or through their schools?

Findings on Effects of the Pandemic

The pandemic's initial effects on young people's mental health and well-being were first documented in surveys administered shortly after school closures began. In a nationally representative survey of 13- to 19-year-olds in April 2020, 36 percent reported that they were more concerned than usual about their own emotional health. Upwards of 40 percent reported negative effects on a host of cognitive and emotional health markers, including their ability to concentrate, make decisions, and feel happy. However, a separate study of 2,000 adolescents in five schools during the first two months of school closures did not find elevated markers of clinical depression or anxiety relative to 2019. In fact, reported rates were slightly lower overall—possibly related to relaxed schedules and lesser demands for academic performance.

Surveys of caregivers consistently uncovered broad concerns about their children's well-being. In a national survey in June 2020, 14 percent reported "worsening behavioral health" for their children. And a survey of more than 32,000 caregivers in Chicago found more frequent reports of negative concerns and behaviors, such as incidents of self-harm, suicidal ideation, expressions of loneliness, and less frequent reports of positive behaviors or expressions, such as making plans for the future and having positive peer relationships.

An analysis of emergency room visits among young people ages 11 to 21 found significantly higher rates of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts after the pandemic began, though the overall rate of suicides remained consistent with previous years. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that, among young people ages 12 to 17, the proportion of emergency room visits related to mental health increased by 31 percent in 2020 compared to 2019. The CDC also found dramatic increases in the number of suspected suicide attempts among girls ages 12 to 17. Compared to before the pandemic, suspected attempts were 27 percent higher in late summer 2020; by March 2021, a year after schools were first closed, that number was 51 percent higher.

Survey research also showed that the pandemic affected young people to different degrees and in different ways. Many young people, and even a plurality in some surveys, reported that their mental health and social-emotional conditions were unchanged. However, in surveys that considered differential impacts, negative effects were more pronounced for girls and for young people from marginalized groups, including immigrants, LGBTQ youth, young people of color, and those living in low-income households. Racism in schools predates the pandemic but remained unrelenting during the pandemic and shaped the experiences of young people. Anecdotal accounts suggest that some Black parents found that remote learning gave their children a break from the daily effects of racism, with some reporting that they may keep their children in homeschool or remote learning after the pandemic.

Survey findings shifted as time wore on. The pandemic surged over the summer, racial protests stemming from the murder of George Floyd took hold across the country, and debates about how to safely return to school dug in. As the fall set in, about half of students nationwide and most students in urban settings continued with remote learning. Surveys administered later in 2020 suggested that these events were taking an increasing toll on young people's well-being.

A fall 2020 survey found that, relative to the spring, more students felt they had been personally affected by the pandemic. The protests for racial justice also weighed on their minds. In a survey of students from low-income households and students of color, two-thirds reported "paying a great deal of attention" to the protests for racial justice that played out through the summer and fall of 2020. Students identified feeling "depressed, stressed, or anxious" as the primary obstacle to learning.

Remote learning itself emerged as a source of stress for some students. Survey results indicated that remote learning improved in the fall, with the share of students reporting that they learned "a lot" every day at 61 percent—back to pre-pandemic levels. Nonetheless, in a survey of educators and school leaders, teachers were asked to categorize possible sources of support as a "major" or "minor" need. A greater share—45 percent—identified "strategies to keep students engaged and motivated to learn remotely" as a major need compared to any other source of support. And in a survey of students at a large high school that offered remote and in-person

instruction, students who continued in remote learning reported greater declines in their social-emotional well-being. These declines were consistent across gender, race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, and were particularly notable in older youth.

Findings on School-Based Supports

After school buildings were abruptly closed, students reported a dramatic drop in their access to teachers, and sense of belonging in their school. During this time, most districts reported that they were attempting to continue to offer counseling and other sources of support for student well-being. However, student access to those supports varied widely. While larger, well-resourced districts had crisis teams at the ready, smaller districts, districts in rural and small-town locales, and those serving a large share of students living in poverty had fewer resources to support well-being.

Many students reported that they felt supported by teachers or resources in their schools. In surveys administered in six Tennessee districts, 96 percent of students reported that they felt their teacher cared about them. A national survey of more than 60,000 students found greater numbers reported having access to programs and services to help when they were feeling upset, stressed, or having problems: 43 percent, compared to 37 percent pre-pandemic. However, just 41 percent of students said there was an adult from school they could talk to about their problems during the pandemic, compared to 46 percent in 2019.

Social-Emotional Development and Learning

Limits on in-person learning also had an effect on school's opportunity to support students' social-emotional development.

In this discussion, we define as "social-emotional development" the broad set of competencies and skills that support student success in school and in life, such as persistence, self-awareness, skillful communication and collaboration with peers, and self-regulation. When we refer to "social-emotional learning" (SEL), we mean the learning activities, instruction, and experiences that are designed to help students practice and develop those competencies. While local definitions can vary, we share here the common understanding developed by CASEL, which is also sometimes referred to as "21st Century skills," in use at many districts:

> SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

Impacts on Social-Emotional Development

We found very little data that directly measured changes in students' social-emotional competencies during the pandemic. Hopefully, in time, data from student surveys that capture these competencies will fill in the picture.

To date, subjective assessments in educator surveys are our best sources of information. In a February 2021 survey of school district leaders, 77 percent reported that their students had fallen behind in their social-emotional development compared to two years earlier.

In a nationally representative survey of teachers in May 2020, 33 percent reported being concerned about students' social-emotional health, placing this worry second only to academic decline. Some 46 percent said they were spending "somewhat" or "much more" time giving students social-emotional support, and more than 60 percent had heard students express social-emotional concerns because of the pandemic.

A fall 2020 study of six Tennessee districts found that, while students felt supported by their teachers, many struggled with motivation and engagement. Three-quarters of K–12 students reported that being worried or stressed made it hard to do their best in school. Some 59 percent of elementary school teachers and 71 percent of high school teachers named "strategies to keep students engaged and motivated" as a major or moderate need.

Attendance data is another potential source of information about students' social-emotional development, though record-keeping and data collection has not been consistent during the pandemic. The Tennessee study found that rates of chronic absenteeism more than doubled for virtual students, from 12 percent in 2019–20 to 27 percent in 2020–21. In a nationally representative fall 2020 survey of educators, respondents reported that daily absence rates had more than doubled from the year before. Districts in Massachusetts and California also have reported elevated rates of chronic absenteeism.

Meanwhile, teachers' reports of student engagement, including activities that call on key social-emotional competencies, showed broad declines. For example, in the fall 2020 teacher survey, 67 percent reported student work habits, as evidenced by assignment completion rates, were "somewhat" or "much" worse than before. However, other anecdotal evidence suggests that some students benefited from more flexible and less distracting learning arrangements. Self-paced, independent learning models enabled some students to develop individual agency, self-advocacy, and time-management skills.

Opportunities for Social-Emotional Learning

School closures curtailed in-person opportunities for students to build relationships, work collaboratively with peers, and receive and act on feedback from teachers—all of which contribute to social-emotional development in youth. Educators and families attempted to at least partially restore these opportunities in the 2020–21 school year for students whose school remained hybrid or fully remote. Teachers scheduled regular check-ins with students, led virtual mindfulness exercises, and organized group projects online, while parents organized "pandemic pods" or other small in-person learning communities. Little is known yet about the effectiveness of these alternatives.

As part of an ongoing project looking at trends during the pandemic, CRPE studied how social-emotional learning and student well-being featured in the fall 2020 reopening plans of 477 school districts across the United States. Our report found that socialemot-ional learning was a notable priority: it was included in 66 percent of district plans overall, and 87 percent of plans in urban districts. However, those plans were more focused on safety than competency-focused

social-emotional learning. Overall, 47 percent of all plans mentioned safe and supportive environments, while 31 percent mentioned building social-emotional skills. In addition, just 7 percent of district plans include collecting data.

Overall, urban and suburban districts have been more likely to expand or add programs that support social-emotional learning. Some 56 percent of district leaders reported adding programs during the pandemic, according to the February 2021 survey. Among leaders of urban districts, that figure was 69 percent. Just 50 percent of rural district leaders reported adding social-emotional learning programs at their schools.

III. Implications for Post-Pandemic Recovery

Looking Ahead: Priorities for Research

All eyes are now focused on recovery, with federal relief funds on the way. The key will be to target those resources and schools' efforts to their most effective ends. For that, we need to know much more. Our panel identified four priorities for research and recovery: differences in student background and experiences, innovative approaches to promoting well-being, the roles of race and community assets, and new strategies for assessment.

Priority No. 1: Develop a deeper and more complex understanding of the differences among student experiences, including those of students at different developmental stages, with diverse backgrounds, or who experienced positive growth amid adversity.

Research has shown that, as children age, their mental health and well-being competencies and outcomes change. As such, the nature of these competencies and how we accurately measure them must be attuned to students' developmental stages. Yet studies from the last year did little to account for differences by age or the contexts in which children and young people live and learn. Young children in primary grades undoubtedly experienced remote learning and any personal negative impacts from the pandemic differently than middle or high school students. But many student surveys clustered children from middle and high schools together, and parent surveys failed to distinguish between families with adolescent or younger children.

These developmental differences will also shape how individual students experience the recovery period, including their response to different interventions and strategies to support them. Future research must take this into account.

Similarly, research from the past year offers only a very limited view of how the pandemic, measures to control it, and other concurrent social events—such as ongoing protests for social justice—affected children and young people from different backgrounds or communities, or those learning in different school settings. One panelist commented, "Most of the research is based on white, middle-class perspectives. The question that I'm interested in is, does it look the same for an immigrant Latino child to say that they are functioning well socially and emotionally? What about a kid in a rural community?"

Several studies disaggregate data based on student race, ethnicity, or economic status but few consider more complex intersections of identity and context. For example, no studies tried to understand how Black children in rural and urban communities experienced the year differently. Moreover, most of the reporting of results presented averages or focused on the most frequent experiences or responses. Few looked closely at the children whose experiences or responses were atypical. If they had, we may have a better understanding as to why some families are not eager to return to in-person classrooms.

Finally, the panel noted that the research focused on what children and young people lost this year. This narrative of loss, however, overlooked the complex ways that children react to adversity. Even amid personal hardship or tragedy, young people can and, and often do, grow, learn, and become stronger.

Framing student experiences in terms of what they lost "doesn't allow for the fact that children and adults discover their assets at times like this," said one panelist. "We need to think more in terms of the variation and adaptation to an unbelievable situation, and what young people and the adults working with them will discover going through something like this."

In addition, there were some initial benefits from school and workplace closures. At first, unsettling as sudden closures were, some families enjoyed new, slower schedules and increased opportunities to renew their connections. But over time, the closures became more stifling and their negative effects grew. Understanding how any experience can have complex, changing consequences for children is just as important to understand as how the same experience can have different implications for different children.

The panelists would like the field to dramatically advance understanding of how different student experiences can be, even given the same circumstances, and how an individual child's unique contexts at home and in school can shape the consequences of those experiences. In particular, they hope to see research on:

- How the **contexts surrounding young people** interact with children's identities, including their self-image and how others view them, as well as which resources and supports are available to support well-being and social-emotional development.

- The ways in which the **pandemic's challenges presented opportunities** for students to build resilience, coping strategies, independence, and agency, including the characteristics of students, families, communities, learning environments, and instructional approaches that accompany and predict such growth.

- How the pandemic's effects differed for children and young people at **different developmental stages**.

- How schools can best design strategies to **account for developmental as well as context variation** to support children in the coming year.

Priority No. 2: Identify innovations that can dramatically improve student social-emotional learning and help schools meet students' mental health needs.

All children and young people need opportunities for social-emotional learning and development. Just as physical education promotes healthy lifestyle choices with long-term health benefits, one panelist explained, social-emotional learning helps students build foundational skills to navigate life, such as self-knowledge, resilience, and collaborative problem-solving. Last year's experience made clear that social-emotional competencies are crucial—as developmental goals in their own right that support mental health and well-being and as important contributors to student success.

The pandemic also revealed just how many young people need mental health services to address serious concerns. School closures dramatically illustrated the extent to which students rely on their schools to access trusted relationships with adults and peers, as well as a broad array of mental health and social services. Yet for the most part, schools have not been given the resources or staff to provide an extensive continuum of support.

The panel noted an urgent need to better understand how schools and other providers can provide such support to every student at a much larger scale, without simply adding more counselors and social workers. In particular, they hope to see research on:

- **Technology** that supports personalized engagement, including which tools and supports educators need to effectively put it to use and strategies to implement such tools at scale.

- Whether and in what ways the **alternative learning environments** that emerged or expanded during the pandemic, such as pods and hybrid schedules, create opportunities for adults and peers to build deeper relationships, nurture social-emotional development, and foster youth agency.

- **Partnerships and funding models** that join schools with health care providers, community organizations, and other family and social support structures to provide the continuum of support.

- **Training and development** to ensure educators are prepared to work alongside counselors in helping meet student needs and serve as a powerful part of the "protective layers" of support that help children who are exposed to traumatic events.

Priority No. 3: Investigate ways to leverage community assets and acknowledge the role of race in communities and student experiences.

During the pandemic, many students spent their days learning at home or at a neighborhood site. The power and potential of these home- and community-based resources to support young people's well-being and social-emotional development was clear. Several panelists noted that communities rallied to support families and young people during the initial shutdowns and then, in several towns and cities, went on to create highly organized systems of learning and support.

A review by CRPE found that 36 percent of the largest U.S. cities operated or sponsored learning pods during the pandemic. For example, Tulsa's City of Learning coordinated, provided technical support, and publicized learning, enrichment, and social programs for city students through local schools and a network of more than 80 community partners.

Yet one panel member noted that the field has not consistently or systematically considered the potential for these resources to provide supportive structures for young people. One panelist lamented that even "[caregivers] have been relegated to a minor role in helping to develop educational experiences."

Panelists also noted the important role that race plays in influencing community culture and student identity, both of which are important assets and sources of stability and emotional strength for young people. They noted, as well, how enduring structural elements of racism embedded in the ecosystem undermine the best efforts to support students. Racism takes a well-established toll on mental health and well-being.

Engaging the ecosystem to support young people, particularly Black, Hispanic, and indigenous youth, is fertile ground for continued research. In particular the panel would like to see researchers explore:

- **New roles for caregivers** in supporting social-emotional development and learning, including the supports and teacher relationships families need to fully play this role.

- Strategies to **ensure all adults** in all learning settings understand and can apply existing knowledge of effective learning environments in their daily practice.

- Emergent **innovations in community-based programming** to support youth, including their origins, reach, and impact.

- Implementing non-stigmatizing approaches to **mental health intervention** at a large scale.

- The many **manifestations of racism** in communities and their impact on the well-being of students.

- Emergent school-based efforts to dislodge the **systems and policies that perpetuate racism** in local communities, including partnerships with families and community-based organizations.

Priority No. 4: Reimagine measurement.

Addressing the disruption and trauma that resulted from the pandemic will require comprehensive and varied approaches to supporting students academically, socially, and emotionally. These approaches must be informed by an understanding of each student's history, context, current needs, and hopes for the future. Moreover, this work must be carried out in a way that contributes to greater equity of opportunities for all students. It is hard to imagine that educators and others who support youth will be able to accomplish this ambitious set of goals without high-quality measurement tools. Such tools can be used to understand the contextual factors affecting students, monitor access to supportive learning opportunities, and track student progress.

Current assessment and data collection approaches used to monitor learning opportunities and outcomes are not up to the task. Large-scale assessments of academic achievement are limited to a small number of subjects—and even within those subjects, they measure a narrow range of skills. Further, they typically are not aligned with all students' sociocultural contexts and therefore offer limited information about student learning. Relatively few large-scale assessments have been validated for the purpose of measuring students' social-emotional competencies, and we also lack measures that would help us understand how students have coped with the many challenges they have encountered. Additionally, because remote learning is likely to remain in place at least some of the time for many students, assessments must accommodate both in-person and remote administration.

Simply measuring student learning is not sufficient. Without some effort to ensure that users of that student achievement data understand the factors that might have contributed to outcomes, we run the risk of misinterpretation and stigma, especially when disparities across subgroups are large. We cannot make sound decisions about interventions and support without accounting for the impact of students' circumstances. Data on learning must be accompanied by data on students' opportunities to learn through formal schooling as well as information on their broader sociocultural context.

A recent report on monitoring educational equity pointed out the need for multiple measures of outcomes and learning opportunities to understand and address disparities. And as one panelist noted, "The more completely we make the effort to understand (vs. assume) the variation in context children are experiencing, the more meaningful the interpretation we can give to the data we are reporting." In particular, the panelists want to see researchers and practitioners in the field develop:

- A framework and measures for **capturing information about opportunity to learn (OTL),** broadly defined to include access to high-quality instruction and supports, both in-person and remote, and both in and out of schools. Evidence regarding available academic and social-emotional learning opportunities is a crucial step to address differences in learning outcomes.

- **Measures of climate and relationships** in both in-person and remote contexts. As several panelists noted, supportive relationships and positive climate are crucial for student well-being, but commonly used measures of these constructs were developed primarily for in-person schooling.

- Systematic efforts to **document sociocultural context**, including exposure to racism and to stressors in the home.

- Developmentally and socioculturally appropriate **measures of student social-emotional learning and well-being** that can be used to guide schools' efforts to provide student supports.

- **Measures of educator well-being** to inform the provision of supports for educators.

- **Guidance for teachers** and other school personnel to use data on OTL, social-emotional learning, and well-being to effectively support students.

Conclusion

Students have been deeply affected by the pandemic, including by sudden—and in many cases—lengthy separations from their school communities. Recovering from this long-term crisis calls for a comprehensive approach. Schools must provide necessary mental health supports and opportunities to regain and enhance social-emotional competencies, while also working to connect student communities and caregivers to form a cohesive system of support at home and at school. Researchers should investigate and identify promising ways to build a strong, engaging, and interconnected system of education and supports that fosters the social-emotional development, mental health, and well-being that all students need to thrive.

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.