# From impact to recovery: A timeline of COVID research



2020-21

2021-22

2022-23

2023-24

# **PATH TO RECOVERY**

Growth rates were lower than typical, and stark achievement gaps were apparent in reading and math by spring 2021.

Growth rates exceeded or were parallel to pre-COVID, and gaps narrowed modestly.

Growth rates fell short of prepandemic trends in most grades, and students remain a long way from recovery. Growth rates fell short of prepandemic trends in most grades, and the distance to recovery increased in the upper grades.

# **CONTEXT**

- Schools were remote some or most of the year
- High rates of virus for much of the school year
- Students and educators reported high rates of anxiety and mental health challenges
- Schools receive several rounds of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding
- Most schools return to inperson instruction but debates over mask/vaccination policies created additional tensions within communities
- · Schools faced major staffing issues
- High rates of chronic absenteeism
- Schools faced multiple implementation challenges in getting COVID recovery interventions off the ground
- Laws banning teaching about certain topics are passed in many states

- Schools/school boards were highly politicized
- Districts face significant pressure to spend down remaining ESSER funds before they expire
- Schools continue to face staffing shortages
- Teachers report higher rates of student disruptive behaviors
- Al tools, such as ChatGPT, are released and increasingly (mis) used by students

- ESSER funds are running out and many districts are facing looming fiscal cliff creating uncertainty around how to sustain recovery efforts without this funding source
- Continued challenges with student engagement and chronic absenteeism in school
- Declines in enrollment and funding challenges lead to increased school closures
- An increasing number of schools are considering cell phone bans during school hours to reduce disruptions



# Sources

# 2020-21

#### **Remote Instruction**

Hodgman, S., Rickles, J., Carminucci, J., & Garet, M. (2021, June). District approaches to instruction in 2020-21: Differencesin Instructional Modes and Instruction Time Across Contexts. <a href="https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/research-brief-covid-survey-differences-instructional-modes-june-2021">https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/research-brief-covid-survey-differences-instructional-modes-june-2021</a> 0.pdf

# **COVID** virus surges

The New York Times. (2020, March 3). Coronavirus in the U.S.: Latest map and case count. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/us/covid-cases.html

# Mental health challenges

Sparks, S. (2022, January 19). New research shows how bad the pandemic has been for Student Mental Health. Education Week. <a href="https://www.edweek.org/leadership/new-research-shows-how-bad-the-pandemic-has-been-for-student-mental-health/2022/01">https://www.edweek.org/leadership/new-research-shows-how-bad-the-pandemic-has-been-for-student-mental-health/2022/01</a>

# **ESSER funds initial distribution**

National Conference of State Legislatures. (2022, January). Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund Tracker. National Conference of State Legislatures. <a href="https://www.ncsl.org/in-dc/standing-committees/education/elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief-fund-tracker">https://www.ncsl.org/in-dc/standing-committees/education/elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief-fund-tracker</a>

# 2021-22

#### Debates about vaccinations policies

Hoffman, J. (2022, December 16). Opposition to school vaccine mandates has grown significantly, study finds. The New York Times. <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/16/health/vaccines-public-opinion.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/16/health/vaccines-public-opinion.html</a>

#### Legislation restricting what teachers can discuss

Gross, T. (2022, February 3). From slavery to socialism, new legislation restricts what teachers can discuss. NPR. https://www.npr.org/2022/02/03/1077878538/legislation-restricts-what-teachers-can-discuss

## Staffing issues

Seth Gershenson, S. H., Logan Booker, N. Z., Jack Malamud, C. F. K., Goulas, S., & Shah, S. (2022, February 22). How are staffing shortages affecting schools during the pandemic?. Brookings. <a href="https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-are-staffing-shortages-affecting-schools-during-the-pandemic/">https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-are-staffing-shortages-affecting-schools-during-the-pandemic/</a>

Schmitt, J., & deCourcy, K. (2022, December). The pandemic has exacerbated a long-standing national shortage of teachers. Economic Policy Institute. <a href="https://www.epi.org/publication/shortage-of-teachers/">https://www.epi.org/publication/shortage-of-teachers/</a>

#### Chronic absenteeism

Dee, T. (2024, January). Higher chronic absenteeism threatens academic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. PNAS. <a href="https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.2312249121">https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.2312249121</a>

# Struggles with COVID recovery interventions

Carbonari, M. V., Davison, M., DeArmond, M., Dewey, D., Dizon-Ross, E., Goldhaber, D., Hashim, A. K., Kane, T. J., McEachin, A., Morton, E., Patterson, T., & Staiger, D. O. (2022, December). The Challenges of Implementing Academic COVID Recovery Interventions: Evidence From the Road to Recovery Project. <a href="https://cepr.harvard.edu/sites/hwpi.harvard.edu/files/cepr/files/the\_challenges\_of\_implementing\_academic\_covid\_recovery.pdf?m=1677190353">https://cepr.harvard.edu/sites/hwpi.harvard.edu/files/cepr/files/the\_challenges\_of\_implementing\_academic\_covid\_recovery.pdf?m=1677190353</a>

# 2022-23

# School board politicization

Hetrick, C. (2023, March). The next battleground in U.S. politics? School Boards. USC Price School. <a href="https://priceschool.usc.edu/news/school-boards-politics-covid-racism/">https://priceschool.usc.edu/news/school-boards-politics-covid-racism/</a>

# **Spending down ESSER funds**

Council of Chief State School Officers. (n.d.). States leading: How state education agencies are leveraging the ESSER set-aside. Council of Chief State School Officers. https://learning.ccsso.org/states-leading-how-state-education-agencies-are-leveraging-the-esser-set-aside

#### **Continued staffing shortages**

National Center for Education Statistics. (2023, October). Most public schools face challenges in hiring teachers and other personnel entering the 2023-24 academic year. National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/press\_releases/10\_17\_2023.asp\_

# **Behavioral issues**

Jimenez, K. (2023, June). Behavior vs. books: US students are rowdier than ever post-COVID. How's a teacher to teach? USA Today. https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/education/2023/06/12/us-schools-see-behavioral-issues-climb-post-covid/70263874007/

## Al tools

Lin, L. (2024, May). A quarter of U.S. teachers say Al tools do more harm than good in K-12 Education. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/05/15/a-quarter-of-u-s-teachers-say-ai-tools-do-more-harm-than-good-in-k-12-education/

# 2023-24

# **ESSER funding cliff**

Lieberman, M. (2024, May). What New School spending data show about a coming fiscal cliff. Education Week. https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/what-new-school-spending-data-show-about-a-coming-fiscal-cliff/2024/05

Lonas, L. (2024, March). Schools stare down deadline as COVID-19 relief funds set to expire. The Hill. https://thehill.com/homenews/education/4524244-schools-deadline-covid-19-relief-funds-esser/

# Chronic absenteeism/engagement

Mervosh, S., & Paris, F. (2024, March). Why school absences have "exploded" almost everywhere.

The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/03/29/us/chronic-absences.html

#### School closures

Jacobson, L. (2024, January). Exclusive data: Thousands of schools at risk of closing due to enrollment loss.

The 74. https://www.the74million.org/article/exclusive-data-thousands-of-schools-at-risk-of-closing-due-to-enrollment-loss/

#### **Cell phone bans**

Prothero, A. (2024, June). States are cracking down on cellphones in schools. What that looks like. Education Week. <a href="https://www.edweek.org/technology/states-are-cracking-down-on-cellphones-in-schools-what-that-looks-like/2024/05">https://www.edweek.org/technology/states-are-cracking-down-on-cellphones-in-schools-what-that-looks-like/2024/05</a>

# nwea

© 2024 Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. NWEA is a registered trademark of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in the US and in other countries. The names of other companies and their products mentioned are the trademarked of their respective owners.