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Restarting and Reinventing School: Learning in the Time of COVID and Beyond

Priority 5: Redesign Schools for Stronger Relationships

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Across the United States, state education agencies and school districts face daunting challenges and difficult decisions for restarting schools as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. As state and district leaders prepare for what schooling will look like in 2020 and beyond, there is an opportunity to identify evidence-based policies and practices that will enable them to seize this moment to rethink school in ways that can transform learning opportunities for students and teachers alike.

Our current system took shape almost exactly a century ago, when school designs and funding were established to implement mass education on an assembly-line model organized to prepare students for their "places in life"—judgments that were enacted within contexts of deep-seated racial, ethnic, economic, and cultural prejudices. In a historical moment when we have more knowledge about human development and learning, when society and the economy demand a more challenging set of skills, and when—at least in our rhetoric—there is a greater social commitment to equitable education, it is time to use the huge disruptions caused by this pandemic to reinvent our systems of education. The question is: How we can harness these understandings as we necessarily redesign school? How can we transform what has not been working for children and for our society into a future that carries us forward into a more equitable future?

This section is part of a larger report, *Restarting and Reinventing School: Learning in the Time of COVID and Beyond*, that focuses on how policymakers as well as educators can support equitable, effective teaching and learning regardless of the medium through which that takes place. The full report provides an overarching framework to inform the restart of schools while also providing a long-term vision that can guide leaders toward new and enduring ways to address educational quality and inequity. It illustrates how policymakers and educators can:

1. Close the digital divide
2. Strengthen distance and blended learning
3. Assess what students need
4. Ensure supports for social and emotional learning
5. Redesign schools for stronger relationships
6. Emphasize authentic, culturally responsive learning
7. Provide expanded learning time
8. Establish community schools and wraparound supports
9. Prepare educators for reinventing schools
10. Leverage more adequate and equitable school funding

This section provides research, state and local examples, and policy recommendations for how policymakers and educators can redesign schools for stronger relationships. For the full report, go to http://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/restarting-reinventing-school-covid.

Priority 5: Redesign Schools for Stronger Relationships

Widespread school closures, social isolation, food scarcity, and parental unemployment brought about by the pandemic have destabilized children's support systems in a way that is traumatic to most children. When schools reopen—whether virtually, in person, or in a hybrid model—educators will need to address a wide range of learning needs, both social and emotional and academic, and these needs will remain in a future that promises to disrupt schooling further.

School designs that promote supportive, responsive relationships with caring adults provide the foundation for healthy development and learning and can mitigate the effects of adversity.[1] In addition, the latest international and U.S. guidance makes clear that safely reopening school buildings and resuming in-person learning requires a reduction in the number of people with whom school staff and students interact face-to-face—which can be accomplished through relationship-centered cohort designs (see "Cohorting"). Thus, this moment poses an opportunity to shift from the depersonalized structures of factory model schools inherited from the designs of a century ago to structures that allow students to be well known and allow teachers to care for students more effectively.

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Cohorting

CDC guidance notes that an important strategy for minimizing exposure to the virus is *cohorting*, or forming "pods." Cohorting forms groups of students, to the greatest extent possible with the same teachers or staff, that stay together throughout the school day. The guidance notes that, ideally, students and staff within a cohort would only have physical proximity with others in the same cohort. This practice decreases opportunities for exposure to or transmission of the virus; facilitates more efficient contact tracing in the event of a positive case; and allows for targeted testing, quarantine, and isolation of a single cohort instead of schoolwide closures in the event of a positive case or cluster of cases.

Cohorting can be done as part of a traditional model, with all students attending school in person, on a full-time basis, or as part of a hybrid school model (i.e., students attending in-person school on an alternating schedule). Cohorting is a commonly used strategy in many elementary schools, in which students have the same teacher and classmates during the entire day and often for the entire school year. In secondary schools, schools may keep a single cohort together in one classroom and have teachers rotate between cohorts, or have small cohorts move together in staggered passing schedules to other rooms they need to use (e.g., science labs) without allowing students to mix with others from distinctive cohorts. Schools may also assign student cohorts to specific days or weeks for in-person and online learning.

What Students Need

We know from the science of learning and development that warm, caring, supportive student–teacher relationships, as well as other child–adult relationships, are linked to better school performance and engagement, greater social competence, and increased ability to take on challenges.[2] However, the basic structures of the factory model system of education on which most U.S. schools are still based can undermine schools' efforts to support strong relationships.

These designs have been critiqued for their impersonal structures, fragmented curricula, segregated and unequal program options, and inability to respond effectively to different student needs.[3] Designs that follow the Prussian age grading model adopted in the early 1900s typically move students to another teacher each year, and in secondary schools, to another teacher every 45 or 50 minutes (with students seeing as many as seven or eight teachers daily). These models also assign counselors to attend to the personal needs of hundreds of students. Especially in large schools where thousands of students experience these kinds of fragmented encounters with adults, there is neither time nor opportunity for strong continuous relationships, personalization, or community building. In this model, teachers and counselors, despite their best efforts, are unable to know and attend to all of the personal needs of all of their students or their families. Students who experience adversity may have no one to turn to for support.

Enabling the development of relationship-centered schools so that they are the norm and not the exception will be more important now than ever before. Educators will need to provide children and youth a sense of physical and psychological safety in order for learning to occur, because fear and anxiety undermine children's cognitive capacity for learning.[4] Schools that have been designed to support caring and continuity in teachers' relationships with students—for example, by allowing teachers to loop with students for more than 1 year or to serve as advisors to a small group in secondary school—are more able to address trauma and strengthen achievement than is possible in traditional factory model schools.[5] In addition, school designs in which a team of teachers shares a group of students around whom they can plan a coherent, interdisciplinary curriculum and for whom they can be mutually accountable can personalize secondary education in ways that traditional fragmented scheduling does not allow.

Students who were already at higher levels of risk for poor outcomes can especially benefit from nurturing relationships with teachers and other adults as a means to increase student learning and support their development and wellness,[6] especially when these relationships are culturally sensitive and responsive.[7] Students learn best when they can connect their cultural contexts and experiences to what they are learning in school, when their teachers are responsive to their strengths and needs, and when their environment is "identity safe,"[8] reinforcing their value and belonging. (See also "Priority 6: Emphasize Authentic, Culturally Responsive Learning.") For these reasons, and because children develop through individual trajectories shaped by their unique traits and experiences, adults need to know them well to create productive learning opportunities.[9] This is especially important given the stress and trauma children are experiencing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and even more so for those children who were already experiencing systemic racism and living under adverse conditions prior to the pandemic.

One of the most important approaches to reduce risks of COVID-19 infection and transmission is to organize small cohorts of students that remain constant with a common set of continuous staff—such as homeroom-based cohorts and teaching teams that share students with extended block

schedules so they see fewer teachers each semester and remain together with the same teachers. Additionally, ensuring physical distancing will often require small class sizes and groupings. These approaches not only reduce the risk of disease transmission but also provide opportunities for teachers and staff to know students and their families well. When combined with intentional structures that enable greater continuity in relationships between students and teachers—such as looping teachers with their students from the previous year—schools can put into place designs that research has shown will strengthen students' academic success and ability to cope with trauma.

What Policymakers and Educators Can Do

With traditional structures of school having been upended during the pandemic, there is a need and opportunity for school, local, and state leaders to consider ways to organize children and adults that build strong relationships and also reduce risk of infection. This means small, stable cohorts and built-in time for school staff, teachers, students, and parents to connect and develop continuous relationships. Redesigning schools to support stronger relationships was and will always be important for children and youth to succeed, but times of crisis make it especially so.

Create structures that foster health and safety, as well as personalization and trust, among children and staff

Developing strong relationships can be difficult in schools where organizational structures minimize opportunities for personalized relationships that extend over time, as is often the case in many U.S. schools. Policymakers and school leaders can help schools put into place these structures that foster health and safety, personalization, and relational trust by both offering models of new designs and removing regulatory impediments enforcing antiquated notions of how time and staff are organized in schools, as described below.

Minimize transitions and maximize relationships. Whether in person or online, strengthening the relationships that students form with teachers as well as each other leads to greater comfort, engagement, and motivation to learn.[10] When teachers work with students over multiple years and come to know their students well, they can better support academic and social and emotional learning (SEL), connect with families, and attend to a range of needs. (For more implementation information, see "Priority 4: Ensure Supports for Social and Emotional Learning.")

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For this reason, some teachers and other experts are recommending that students return next year to their teacher from last year (a practice known as looping), staying with that teacher for at least the first quarter or—when plausible—for the entire year. Similarly, Chiefs for Change recommends that secondary school students return to small mentored groups when school reopens. The Connected Learning Model recommends encouraging teachers to hold office hours and schedule one-on-one check-ins with each student to provide a safe haven for students to discuss their

feelings and experiences. California has developed a set of essential questions for districts to consider when developing continuity of relationships and learning plans. Its reopening schools guidance emphasizes the importance of cohort groups.

Restructure schools to create small cohorts that reduce disease transmission and foster strong relationships. Organizing students and staff into small, stable cohorts across primary and secondary grades serves not only to minimize disease transmission but also to ease transitions, strengthen relationships, and enable more continuity between distance and in-person learning. This is relatively common and straightforward to put into place for preschool and elementary school students through **homeroom-based instructional models**. Students are assigned a consistent homeroom teacher, and when students return to in-person learning, they stay in their homeroom classes—avoiding contact with other groups—for class time, lunch, recess, and any special classes, such as art or library. It is important that teachers also work with only one cohort, so as not to create a vector of transmission between two or more groups. This approach has been used effectively by other countries, including Denmark and Taiwan.

Although less common in middle and high schools, models and examples exist for organizing older students and staff into **small cohorts through the house system, combined with block scheduling**.

The House System

The house system was a traditional feature of schools in England in the 19th century, when students were divided into subunits called "houses" to which teachers were also assigned. (Think of Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and Slytherin, the four houses at Harry Potter's Hogwarts.) American public schools have reintroduced the house system, a smaller learning community within a larger building, as a way to help students feel more connected and to develop a sense of belonging. Some schools that serve students who have had their education interrupted due to homelessness, mobility, or family circumstances also divide their students into smaller learning communities called "arenas" to provide them with a consistent set of experiences and relationships as well as the opportunity to personalize learning.

Although some houses in large comprehensive schools are 300 to 600 students, the ideal for the current context would be to identify much smaller cohorts of perhaps 80 to 120 students within such larger units that share the same set of teachers throughout the school day and school year, preferably in a dedicated space, separate from others. Where interdisciplinary courses are possible (e.g., humanities and math/science), cohorts might be as small as 40 to 60 students. This provides students with the opportunity to interact with the same set of teachers consistently so they can make stronger bonds and connections while running a much lower risk of infection than would be the case if they were in classes with other students outside the cohort. In this case, as well as the elementary case above, it is important for teachers not to be assigned across cohorts so that they do not then become vectors for transmission.

Some middle and high schools combine courses in interdisciplinary team block schedules in which teachers from two or more courses share a common group of students—such as a combined math and science course taught by one teacher alongside a combined English language arts and social studies course (often called humanities) taught by another teacher. Often these courses are

co-planned with other math or science or humanities teachers so that all teachers get the benefits of each other's disciplinary expertise, even as they are teaching smaller groups of students for longer blocks of time individually. Team block schedules can further reduce the total number of individuals with whom students and teachers interact while also fostering greater collaboration among teachers to coordinate curriculum.

The kind of cohort organization needed for safe schools may combine block scheduling with smaller learning communities. For example, Vista High School, a traditional large comprehensive high school serving the needs of a diverse small suburban and rural community north of San Diego, CA, combines block scheduling with a house system. The freshman class was broken into six houses of 100 to 130 students who shared a set of four teachers to cover core subjects and one special education teacher. Each house was located in a dedicated area of the Vista High School campus so teachers and students could have space to build stronger positive relationships (including relationships between students, between students and teachers, and between teachers within the house structure). Each team defined how spaces in and around their classroom and house could be used to meet the learning needs of students and reimagined how the grouping of students and grouping of teachers within that space and time could positively impact student learning.

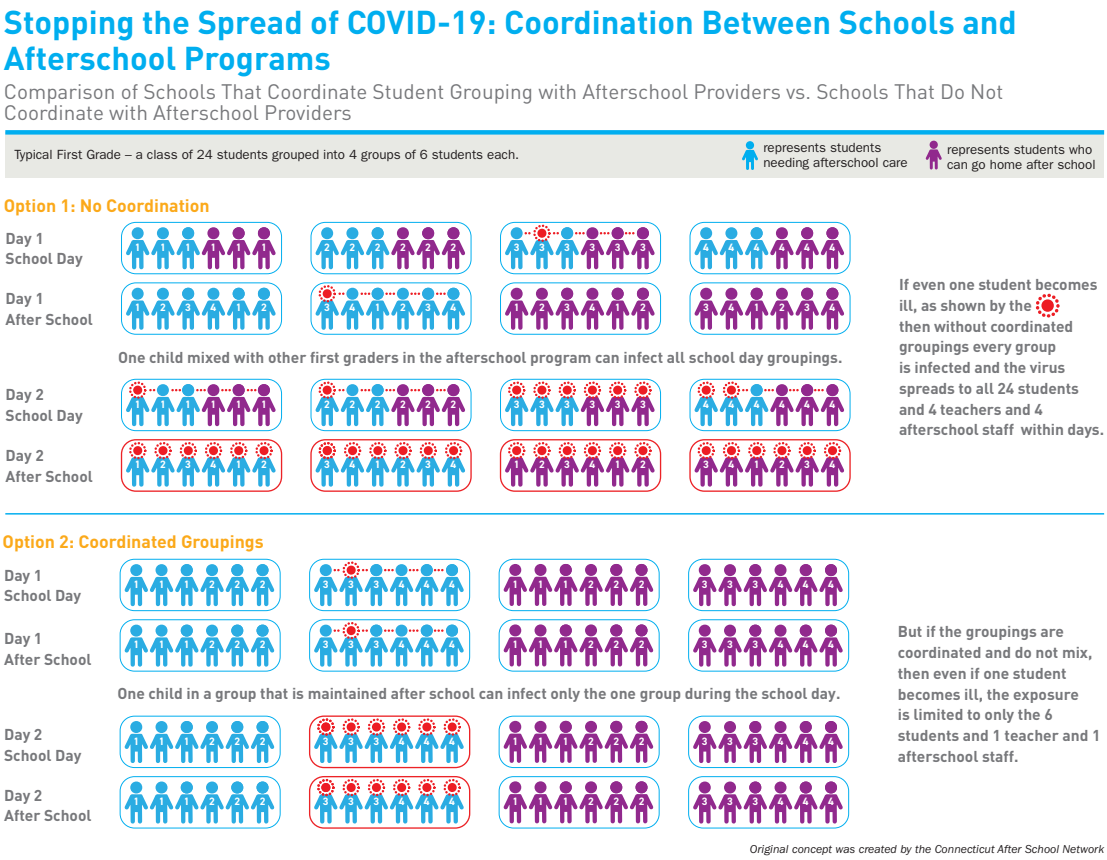
Hillsdale High School in the San Francisco Bay Area uses cohorts within a house system to help achieve personalization within a student body of nearly 1,500. Within the three houses, there are teams of subject matter teachers representing each of the core academic fields who share a group of about 110 to 120 heterogeneously grouped students. The school worked hard to eliminate tracking so that all students would experience a curriculum aimed at deeper learning and so that the groups would not become segregated. Each 9th-grade teacher also has a group of these students as an advisory class that continues through the end of their sophomore year, at which time the students graduate up to another team and advisory group for their junior and senior years.

Four teachers coordinate with one another in mostly adjacent classrooms as they teach those subjects. Teachers have time in their schedule both for joint curriculum planning and for separate meetings in which they talk about students they share, seeking to solve emerging problems and to share their insights about how to support each one. Hillsdale Principal Jeff Gilbert says, "You know every family, and you know every student. You stop dealing with them in these sort of large, abstract cohorts, in addition to allowing for much more individualized responses."[11]

A similar strategy is used at the Internationals High Schools that serve newcomers successfully. A team of four core content area teachers shares a group of about 80 to 100 students, with a counselor attached to the cohort, and loops with them from 9th to 10th grade. These personalized supports are especially important in some of the network schools, where as many as one third of students arrive as unaccompanied minors and struggle to manage housing, food, health care, and other basic supports, as well as learning the language and customs of a new country.

Importantly, in order to further reduce the risk of disease transmission as well as bolster continuity in relationships and learning, it is critical that schools, after-school programs, and community programs can work together to co-construct cohorts between school and extended learning programs. As the Connecticut After School Network illustrates, schools that coordinate student cohorts with extended learning providers greatly limit COVID-19 infection and transmission (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1
Coordination Between Schools and Extended Learning Programs Is Critical to Limiting the Spread of COVID-19



Source: Connecticut After School Alliance. (2020). *Stopping the Spread of COVID-19: Coordination Between Schools and Afterschool Programs*.

Strengthen partnerships with families

Out of necessity during the period of school closures, many schools and districts have found new strategies and routines for connecting with families by phone, email, and web-based platforms, creating much more frequent communication and supporting parents with everything from technology supports to partnership in the co-teaching activities they have undertaken.

These more robust connections with students' homes is something that should not be lost with school reopening. Families are critical to providing deeper knowledge of their children and greater alignment between home and school, especially as we move between in-person and distance learning. We know, too, that collaboration and relational trust between school and district staff and parents and caregivers is an essential ingredient to sustaining change and improvement. A multiyear study of Chicago elementary schools found that relational trust fostered open and honest conversation, built alignment toward a shared vision among staff and parents, and contributed to improvements taking hold more broadly across a school.[12]

Relational trust is fostered in stable school communities by skillful school leaders who nurture authentic parent engagement, grounded in partnerships with families, in order to promote student growth and capitalize on their cultural assets. Relational trust requires authentic listening and sharing power. Families are far more likely to partner with schools when the school's norms and values reflect their own experiences and when the school makes them feel welcome.

Schools can cultivate partnerships and trust with families by using multiple approaches to relationship building with families as part of the core approach to education. This may include planning teacher time for virtual home visits; student–teacher–parent conferences that are flexibly scheduled around parents' availability and designed to help teachers learn from parents about their children; outreach to involve families in school activities; and regular communication through positive phone calls home, emails, and text messages.[13] Importantly, schools that succeed in engaging families from diverse backgrounds embrace a philosophy of partnership in which power and responsibility are shared. It is important to recognize that in some communities in which trust has been violated—for instance, as a result of racial injustices or incidents of police brutality—relationships must be rebuilt through a proactive, authentic process that includes extensive listening and demonstrations that educators are trustworthy.

Parent–teacher home visits have been found to be a particularly effective strategy for engaging families and combating implicit bias, particularly in communities where educators and families differ by race, culture, and/or socioeconomic status.[14] A number of states and districts, including Oregon and Sacramento, CA, are already exploring and encouraging the use of virtual home visit techniques to stay connected with families during the protracted reopening period. Stand for Children Leadership Center recommends starting the school year with virtual home visits and has developed a page dedicated to virtual home visit resources, including a how-to guide.

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Cultivate supportive environments filled with emotional safety and belonging

Children learn when they feel safe and supported, and their learning is impaired when they are fearful or traumatized.[15] Thus, they need both supportive environments and well-developed abilities to manage stress and cope with both the results of the pandemic and evidence of racial injustice that are surfacing, as well as the inevitable conflicts and frustrations of school and life beyond school. Therefore, it is important that state and local leaders ensure that schools provide a positive learning environment that offers a measure of security and support that maximizes students' ability to learn social and emotional skills as well as academic content.

Dedicate time to creating opportunities for intentional community building. A supportive learning community encourages student agency and leadership in the context of a culturally responsive curriculum that values diverse experiences and involvement in the community. Such environments foster a sense of belonging and safety, with shared norms—which students have helped create—represented in all of the school's activities. School staff can learn about the strengths

and needs of students as well as their families' funds of knowledge through regular check-ins and class meetings, conferencing, student journaling, close observation of students and their work, and regular connections and outreach to parents. These practices can foster developmentally informed relationships among students, parents, and staff, which is arguably even more important now, when other avenues for connecting with peers and community are limited during the pandemic.

Design learning experiences that promote inclusion and reduce segregation. Students also need opportunities to form relationships across lines of socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic difference. As part of reopening and learning continuity plans, schools can promote equity and inclusion in learning experiences by creating cohorts that are socioeconomically, racially, and ethnically diverse.

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States and districts can support schools to eliminate tracking and exclusionary remediation practices. In a recent post, Halley Potter of the Century Foundation and Josh Starr of PDK International describe how well-intentioned proposals to automatically hold back large groups of children or place them in remedial groups pose a risk of exacerbating dropout rates and reinforcing academic tracking that separates students into different classes based on perceived ability levels. As they outline the decades of research on how tracking harms students by reducing achievement for those exposed to a low-level curriculum, they also describe strategies to catch students up without reinstituting segregative tracking systems. (See also "Priority 3: Assess What Students Need" and "Priority 7: Provide Expanded Learning Time" for more discussion of how this can be accomplished.)

To avoid tracking students in ways that become more segregative, teachers may need additional supports in the form of both curriculum tools and professional development to teach successfully in heterogeneous classes, and students may need additional time and supports to catch up on some skills. (See "Priority 7: Provide Expanded Learning Time.")

One more threat to equity is the recent emergence of learning pods clustered within wealthy neighborhoods, largely formed by well-resourced families to supplement distance or hybrid learning, which have the potential to exacerbate inequities and segregation. Districts and schools can promote equity by working with child care providers and families to connect with those in their inclusive school-based small cohort when forming learning pods and by providing strategies to make the groups more diverse. Schools can focus on implementing inclusive, heterogeneous learning settings and experiences that allow children to interact and learn across lines of racial, socioeconomic, linguistic, and other differences. (See "Priority 2: Strengthen Distance and Blended Learning" for additional examples of how to support equitable learning in out-of-school settings.)

Enact policies that support relationship-centered school designs

State and district leaders can remove impediments to new school designs that may exist in traditional formulas for staffing allocations and schedules and for collective bargaining agreements that assume traditional teaching assignment patterns. They can also provide supports for

relationship-centered school designs. These designs can be paired with policies that provide time and funding for collaboration and capacity building among staff as well as for staff outreach to students and parents, including home visits and regular check-ins. Features that have been consistently identified as critical to the success of student-centered schools[16] include:

- **structures that enable adults to know children well** and develop strong, personalized relationships, including advisors and advisory classes, looping, block scheduling, longer grade spans, and small learning communities;
- opportunities for **collaboration among school staff** to share knowledge about students and achieve a shared developmental approach, which can be achieved through interdisciplinary teaching teams and dedicated blocks for staff collaboration;
- **supports for outreach to families** to engage them in partnership around their children's education; and
- efforts to **preserve stability in school staffing** for both principals and teachers that support stronger trust, relationships, and continuous improvement.[17]

States and districts can encourage redesign of schools by rethinking staffing designs and ratios embedded in state and local policies and providing flexibility for local leaders to adopt new approaches to staffing that favor personalization across boundaries of grade levels, departments, and other traditional organizing features that have sometimes fragmented schools.

Allow for new designs that enable stronger teacher–student relationships and time for staff collaboration. Many approaches are possible in pursuing these goals. For example, in its guide *Preventing a Lost School Year*, Stand for Children has identified advisors for all students and grade-level staff teaming as two of its six essentials for motivating and supporting students. The group also recommends that English learners be assigned to advisory staff who speak their native language to the greatest extent possible and that staff who are assigned students with individualized education plans (IEPs) be well versed in their advisees' IEPs and be in regular communication with IEP case managers.

An Advisors for All how-to guide is based on the pioneering "Every Student Every Day" advising approach of Phoenix Union High School District in Arizona, where every student in the district's 21 high schools is "connected to a caring adult who monitors the teen's progress, attendance, and social-emotional well-being."[18] Prior to the pandemic, students connected with advisors daily, and when brick-and-mortar schooling closed in March 2020, the district recruited administrators and school board members into the advisory program to be able to reach out to all students at home for wellness check calls. District advisors documented their calls and either provided resources or connected families to other programs or community organizations for assistance meeting their needs.

Districts can partner with networks of schools that have demonstrated, at scale, how to successfully secure the necessary structures that allow schools to design for stronger relationships, deeper learning, and equity. Among those that work with schools around the country are Big Picture Learning, the Internationals Network for Public Schools, and New Tech Network.[19] A recent study shows how these three networks partner with districts to redesign schools for student-centered, deeper learning models by rethinking the structures governing how teachers are organized to work with students and with each other to support learning. This includes creating schools that allow for advisory systems, teacher teaming, and teacher looping, along with flexible schedules that provide ample time for teachers and students to engage in collaborative and applied learning.

To achieve this time for teacher collaboration as well as strong relationships with students, districts need to be willing to consider new approaches to scheduling; staffing allocations to schools; teacher assignments; and, sometimes, collective bargaining arrangements that may be grounded in factory model assumptions about how teachers do their work.

Another such network that partners with districts to redesign schools is the Institute for Student Achievement (ISA), a national nonprofit organization specializing in high school redesign that collaborates with school leaders and staff to implement ISA's research-based design principles. Supported by district policies enabling flexibility in staffing and school design, these principles guided Bronxdale High School in New York City—an inclusion high school serving high proportions of students with disabilities as well as students of color from low-income families—in reorganizing to develop community and relationships.[20] Among the school's strategies are:

- **small class sizes** (approximately 22 students per course) to create more opportunities for teacher support to students, particularly English learners and students with IEPs;
- **advisors** assigned to each student and advisory class two to three times per week;
- **teaching teams** in which staff work in community groups to develop shared norms and practices so that a cohort of interdisciplinary teachers (English, math, science, and social studies) teaches the same students;
- **explicit relationship building** leveraged through advisories and teaching teams;
- **attention to student voice and needs** through student engagement in research and "passion projects" on topics of concern and student leadership in advisories and clubs; and
- **outreach to families** that includes frequent communication with parents to engender a sense of belonging within the Bronxdale community.

Provide time, funding, and supports for outreach to students and families. State and district leaders can support schools to meaningfully partner with students and families by providing time, funding, and guidance for regular outreach, including home visits and regular check-ins (as described above). Enacting policies that provide teachers with dedicated time and compensation for home visits, for instance, is critical to the success and longevity of such initiatives. The Parent Teacher Home Visits Project is an inexpensive and easily replicable model for parent engagement, with a platform for connecting online, that has been shown to build trust, respect, and the capacity for cultural competency among parents and school staff. States and districts can leverage ESSA Title I, III, and IV and federal CARES Act funds to support training for family engagement, such as home visits, and outreach efforts. (See "Priority 10: Leverage More Adequate and Equitable School Funding" for more detail on how to leverage federal funding.)

Reopening guidance can also include recommended measures, such as expanded advisory or mentoring periods, mandatory communication teams, and regular virtual check-ins and home visits. In Louisiana, the state's Strong Start 2020 Plan states that schools will "implement a strategic communications plan to: connect with every student daily; provide feedback on student work at least weekly; and help families understand their role in supporting their child's continuous learning."[21]

Ensure greater stability of teacher and principal assignments. Research clearly indicates that organizational conditions such as low turnover among school staff and leadership promote higher achievement for students[22] and also promote relational conditions that are conducive to caring. Teacher turnover is reduced in settings that enable greater collaboration, professional learning, and engagement in decision-making—and where principals have longer tenures.[23] Principal turnover is a great concern given the critical role played by principals in leading long-term school improvement efforts, as schools plagued by turnover exhibit lower commitment to improvement.[24] Principal turnover leads to teacher turnover, which causes dissatisfaction and burnout and decreases the possibility of satisfying, caring relationships. This especially affects schools in high-poverty neighborhoods that have greater student mobility. Constant reshuffling of principals, common in many U.S. districts, is a policy that needs to be reexamined, as research increasingly suggests the value of maintaining effective principals in their schools.

Research clearly indicates that organizational conditions such as low turnover among school staff and leadership promote higher achievement for students and also promote relational conditions that are conducive to caring.

In sum, while it has long been important to redesign schools to support stronger, long-term relationships, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerates the urgency to do so. In this moment of crisis, state, district, and school leaders can leverage these insights from the science of learning and development to rethink century-old factory model assumptions in ways that can promote the health and success of the entire school community for generations to come.

Resources

- Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Roadmap for Returning to School (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning). This guide provides school leaders with whole-school, anti-racist SEL strategies centered on relationships and built on the existing strengths of a school community. Specifically, the guide provides concrete SEL critical actions with essential questions; actions as schools prepare, implement, and sustain their integrative SEL work; and tools to help them along the way.
- Preventing a Lost School Year: The Crucial Importance of Motivating Students & Engaging Families (Stand for Children Leadership Center). This guide identifies essentials for motivating and supporting students and for strong partnerships with families, including advisors for all, staff teaming, and virtual home visits, accompanied by tools and resources.
- The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships (Karen L. Mapp, Eyal Bergman, & the Institute for Educational Leadership). The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships (Version 2) was designed to help districts and schools chart a path toward effective family engagement efforts.
- Making Families Feel Welcome (Siegel, Esqueda, Berkowitz, Sullivan, Astor, & Benbenishty [2019], via Greater Good Science Center). This brief reflection activity for school staff lists methods for making students' families feel valued and respected.

- Family-School Partnerships (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning). This webpage provides a list of resources for starting, supporting, and strengthening family–school partnerships, from accessible blogs and videos to interviews with veteran researchers.
- Insights From Networks Video Feature (Learning Policy Institute). In these videos, school and district educators and network representatives share their insights on the strategies and practices to support designing schools to be student- and relationship-centered.
- Building a Positive School Climate (Learning Policy Institute). This brief focuses on state efforts to build a positive school climate and also provides policy considerations and resources for helping states and districts help schools improve their climate.
- Identity Safe Classrooms: Places to Belong and Learn (Dorothy M. Steele & Becki Cohn-Vargas). This website, based on a book of the same name, includes activities, practices, and resources for creating identity-safe classrooms.
- COVID-19 and Homelessness: Strategies for Schools, Early Learning Programs, and Higher Education Institutions (SchoolHouse Connection). This resource provides guides, checklists, and strategies for meeting the needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Endnotes

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