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School District Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Round 1, Districts' Initial Responses

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Key Points

- This report presents results from the first wave of AEI's COVID-19 Education Response Longitudinal Survey (C-ERLS), which documents how a nationally representative sample of public schools is responding to the ongoing epidemic.

- All schools and districts surveyed had closed by March 27, and 67 percent of school closures occurred between March 16 and 18.

- Eighty-two percent of public schools provided some type of meal service for students as of March 27. Roughly four in 10 public schools were in districts whose website described plans to provide devices and free or low-priced internet for students to access online educational platforms.

- By March 27, 43 percent of schools were in districts offering a type of remote education to students, and another 30 percent had planned, but not yet provided, educational content.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a breathtaking amount of change to the nation's schools in a matter of weeks. On March 11, Seattle Public Schools was the first major district to close schools.[1] The next day, Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine announced the first statewide school closure order effective March 17, beginning a cascade of similar orders. By March 20, 49 states had announced blanket school closures or recommend that districts close.[2]

With more than 50 million schoolchildren now staying home, schools and districts have had to reinvent how they deliver instruction and other essential services—and they are doing it at a remarkable pace. Rapidly evolving situations on the ground have left thousands of teachers, schools, and districts no choice but to work overtime to reengineer how they serve students, as soon as possible. In many respects, educators are trying to build the plane as it is going down the runway.

Accordingly, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) has developed the COVID-19 Education Response Longitudinal Survey (C-ERLS) to gauge how public school districts are adapting to provide education and other services for the duration of the pandemic response. C-ERLS is just one of several measurement tools that have been developed by a variety of organizations and research centers, each with specific strengths.

For example, the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) was the first to develop a publicly available online database tracking the responses to closure in 101 large public school districts and charter management organizations.[3] CRPE is expanding its database, eventually to a nationally representative sample with 400 districts, and highlighting unique approaches in a series of blog posts.[4] *Education Week* is tracking state-level responses and has discussed some results from its own representative survey.[5] AEI's C-ERLS adds new data to these rapidly deployed data-collection efforts to provide helpful and current information about educational services provided by a nationally representative group of public schools.

AEI's COVID-19 Education Response Longitudinal Survey

C-ERLS was developed quickly amid the pandemic with the intention of being rapid, reliable, representative, and repetitive. AEI's education policy team developed this instrument to gather data that paint an early picture of school and district efforts.

The first wave of data was collected on March 26 and 27. Information was gathered exclusively from school district websites (and pages linked to them) on the assumption that these sites are the centralized communication hub for most districts and that they yield current information with an assuredly high response rate. We selected a small representative sample of 250 public school districts so the data would reflect changes in the broader population of districts.[6] Knowing that districts' plans would evolve over coming weeks, we kept the survey effort manageable enough to collect data every seven to 10 days moving forward, to capture changes over time.

Each wave of C-ERLS data will be publicly available in a modified spreadsheet that masks the identity of small districts (those with six schools or fewer), and the entire dataset is available upon request.[7] The data from the first wave of collection and more details on the sample and survey instrument are available on the AEI website.[8]

Although the C-ERLS sample is at the district level, we gathered information about what those districts are offering across all their schools. Thus, we present results as percentages of all schools. These percentages indicate the proportion of public schools[9] whose districts are offering a given

program, platform, or service. Percentages at the district level are presented in Appendix B.

Note the variance for this survey, with a margin of error of 6.1 percent, is relatively large, and even modest differences in estimates may not be statistically significant. Specific variance estimates are not included in this report, but they will be included in future analyses.

Our sample includes information on 250 districts, or just under 2 percent of all regular school districts. Districts with more schools were more likely to be sampled, and the sample contains information on 10,289 schools, or 11 percent of all schools.[10]

C-ERLS was developed quickly amid the pandemic with the intention of being rapid, reliable, representative, and repetitive.

Findings

This report documents the basics of what public schools did in the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis.[11] It details how and when schools closed, the share of schools that continue offering meal services, how districts plan to address technological inequalities, and the types of educational services and instruction that schools offer.

Generally, we find that 100 percent of schools in the sample were closed by March 27, and 67 percent of closures occurred between March 16 and 18. At the time of our data collection, roughly 82 percent of schools were tentatively planning to reopen buildings later in the 2019–20 school year. Almost all—82 percent—of schools are providing meal services to students, mostly through school site pickup, but with some plan for delivery for 25 percent of schools. Around 40 percent of schools list plans for addressing students' technological limitations, through getting devices to students or arranging internet access to connect them.

In late March, the majority of schools were in districts whose websites did not describe an instructional plan that was then in place. More than four in 10 schools were offering some type of schoolwork, and about three in 10 were offering some

type of directed instruction. We discuss each of these areas in more detail in the following subsections.

Closures. On March 27, all districts and schools in our survey were closed in response to the pandemic.[12] We searched district websites to determine whether the district closed initially on its own authority (before the announcement of a state closure) or whether the district closed due to an order by the state. Forty-two percent of schools were closed by districts before statewide closures were announced, while the rest closed due to statewide closures.[13]

These closures—whether by states' or districts' initiative—happened rapidly, with 67 percent of closures taking effect between March 16 and 18. At the time we collected data, 82 percent of schools had a tentative date on their district website when buildings might be reopened this school year. Of course, much has changed during the past week: As of April 3, 10 states had announced schools would be closed for the remainder of the 2019–20 academic year, including 20 percent of schools in sampled districts.[14]

Food Service. One of the most immediate challenges districts faced at closure was providing meals to students, particularly students who qualify for and rely on free or reduced-priced school meals. By March 27, 82 percent of schools had plans on district websites for providing food to students during closures.

The majority of schools, 68 percent, have meals available for daily pickup at school sites. Forty-five percent of schools (including some offering daily pickup) offer multiple days to a week of meals at once for pickup at schools. Meal delivery to students' homes or on a schedule at school bus stops is provided for 25 percent of schools.

Technology Assistance. Ensuring that students have proper technology was another immediate challenge for districts choosing to turn to online learning platforms. Some students lack the devices or internet access that allows them to participate. In general, we find that districts recognize that they will need to provide some type of technological accommodations.

By March 27, a large number of districts[15] had established technology surveys to determine the extent of these two issues. Thirty-seven percent of schools are in districts whose websites mentioned a program to provide devices to students who did not already have them at home. Additionally, 46 percent of schools provided information on free or substantially discounted internet access. Additional details on technology provisions are in Appendix A.

Educational Programs. Not all the districts in our sample had posted concrete plans for providing some form of education to students. Some districts were still formulating plans, were in the midst of spring breaks or extended spring breaks, or were in states that decided to not offer educational programming until a later date.

Specifically, 27 percent of schools had no articulated plans on district websites, and another 30 percent had information on instructional plans that were not yet employed at the time our data were collected. (See Figure 1.) By March 27, 43 percent of schools were in districts that had some sort of education program or offering available. Note that individual schools may have offered resources through their school website, email, or direct contact, which would not be captured on district websites.

There was a wide spectrum of potential educational provisions in districts that had plans posted, ranging from basic materials to programs with more directed instruction. We classified instructional plans into five categories, defined by the increasing level of directed instruction they entail.

The first and most basic of these is voluntary supplemental content, in which districts provide links to outside educational content providers without clear direction on specific content students should work on. The second is instructional packets, in which districts or schools provide—either via hard copy or electronically—static, grade-appropriate packets or bundles of materials that students can complete at home.

The third and fourth categories include programs that use web-based platforms to enable asynchronous or synchronous directed instruction. Asynchronous directed instruction uses web-based platforms that allow districts or teachers to push out updated resources and assignments to students who are logged in to the platform and allow students to

Figure 1. Current Remote Instruction Offerings Posted on School District Websites, March 27, 2020
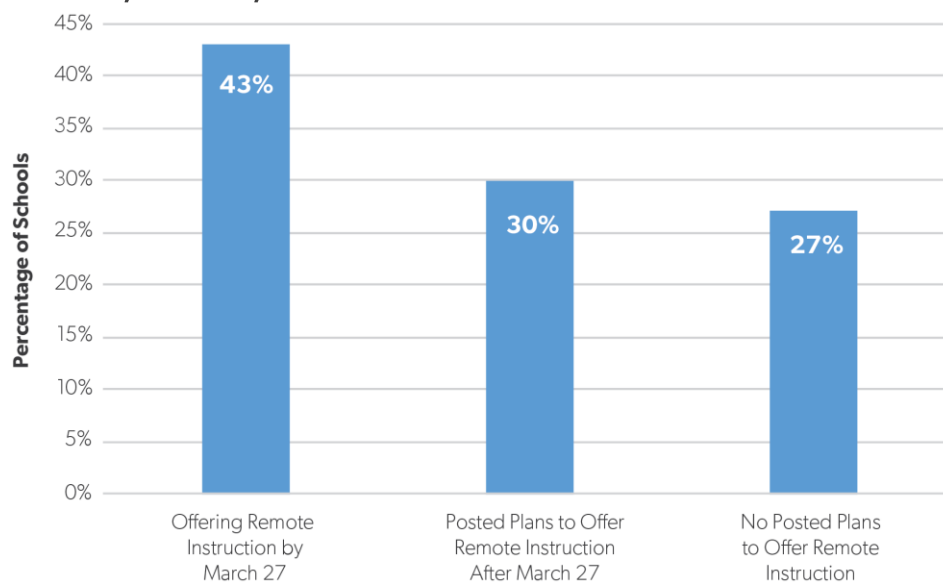
Note: Note: Remote instruction includes packets, asynchronous instruction, or synchronous instruction.
Source: Authors' calculations using C-ERLS first-wave data. For more information, visit American Enterprise Institute, "COVID-19 Education Response Longitudinal Survey (C-ERLS," April 7, 2020, https://www.aei.org/covid-19-education-response-longitudinal-survey-c-erls/.

return completed work. These could include sites by outside providers, such as Google Classroom, and district and school websites.[16] Synchronous directed instruction includes platforms that allow "live" (but not in-person) instruction to occur, in which students and teachers participate at the same time using conferencing systems such as Zoom or Google Hangouts. The fifth category is the possibility that schooling might be transferred to a separate independent virtual school, with its own independent and preexisting curriculum.

We looked for indications of whether students are broadly expected to participate or whether participation is recommended but essentially optional.[17] At the time data were collected, 68 percent of all schools were in districts where there was either no mention of expected participation or participation was expressly not expected.[18] The remainder included 18 percent of schools with expectations in place, 9 percent that expressed expectations would start by March 30, and 5 percent that expected participation by April 5.

Figure 2 displays nonexclusive percentages of different educational program offerings that were in place at the time of data collection. About 40 percent of schools are in districts that offer voluntary supplemental content for students to access. Few

districts, including just 6 percent of schools, offer only voluntary supplemental content and no more directed instruction.[19] (These data are not shown in Figure 2.)

Packets of resources were offered in 34 percent of schools. Of these schools, roughly half (16 percent of all schools) provided packets without a clear expectation that all students are required to participate, while the others expressed some expectation for student participation as of March 27.

A smaller portion of schools established web-based platforms for more directed asynchronous or synchronous instruction. Asynchronous platforms, which allow students to engage with teacher-posted material at their own pace, are offered by 28 percent of schools. Roughly a third of these (11 percent of all schools) offer asynchronous platforms without expecting participation from all students. Synchronous instruction, which allows students to engage directly with educators in real time, is much less common, with just 3 percent of schools offering education services using this format.

None of the districts in our survey explicitly offer an independent online virtual school as an educational platform for students.[20]

Instructional Programs Planned for After Our Data Collection. Some districts have plans for instructional programs that were not in place at the time of our data collection. This, of course, is expected given that some districts closed much earlier than others, and thus they have had more time to prepare and develop remote instruction. Indeed, approximately 27 percent of schools closed in the 10 days before we conducted the first wave of data collection.[21]

Fifty-one percent of schools are in districts either offering or planning to offer packets of material for students. Forty-four percent of schools

Figure 2. Current Remote Instruction Offerings by Participation Requirements, March 27, 2020
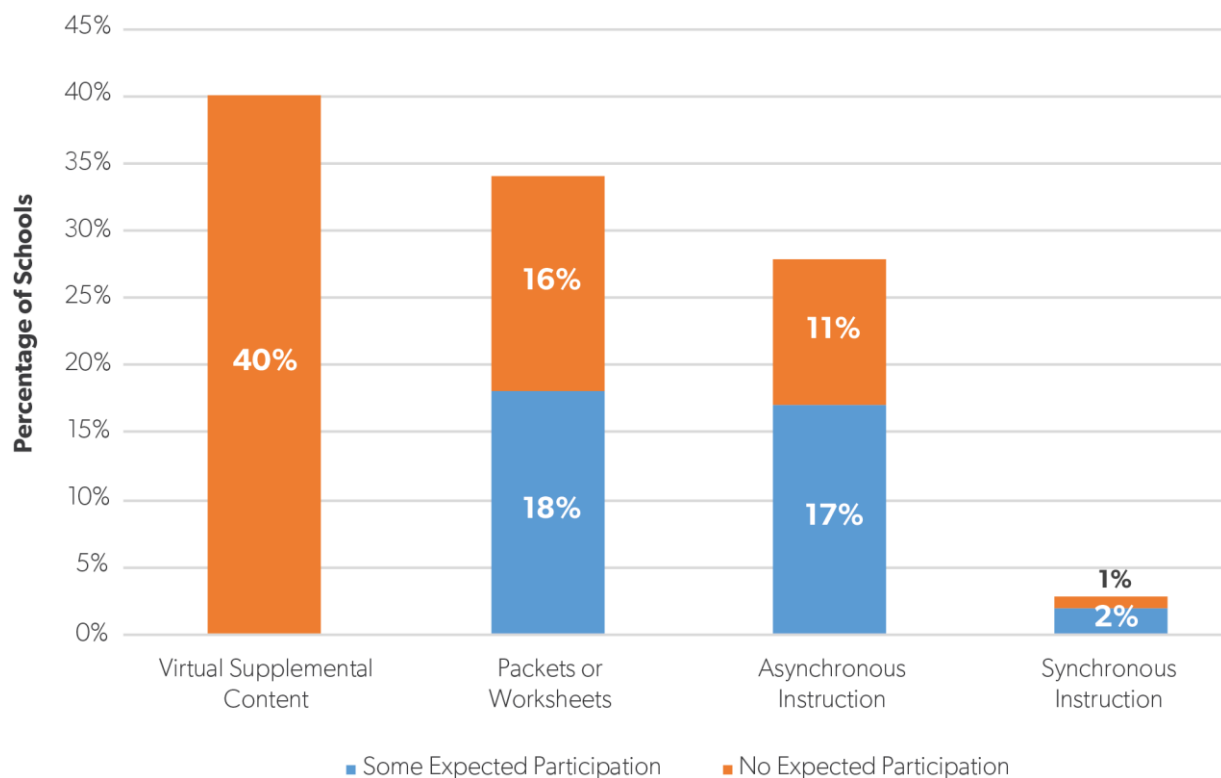
Source: Authors' calculations using C-ERLS first-wave data. For more information, visit American Enterprise Institute, "COVID-19 Education Response Longitudinal Survey (C-ERLS," April 7, 2020, https://www.aei.org/covid-19-education-response-longitudinal-survey-c-erls/.

are offering or planning to offer asynchronous platforms, and 6 percent are offering or planning to offer synchronous platforms. In coming waves, C-ERLS will gauge the expansions of these offerings.

Conclusion

Before March, few could have predicted the widespread disruption that COVID-19 would have on our nation's schools. In a matter of weeks, America's school district officials, teachers, administrators, and families are grappling with the unprecedented challenge of educating more than 50 million children from home. AEI's C-ERLS will document how districts are reorienting schools at this early juncture, with additional waves of data collected on the same sample of districts every seven to 10 days.

In the two weeks following the majority of closures, weeks when many districts were on or approaching spring break, more than four in 10 schools were in districts that enacted remote instruction. Given the timing and context, that proportion might be fairly viewed as a swift response.

As more plans are enacted and existing plans evolve, the more important question is whether the response of America's schools is a strong program of remote instruction. That question is of vital interest to the millions of educators, families, and students who depend on schools as fundamental institutions of daily life and community, even during a pandemic.

America's education system has never faced a situation like this. We hope C-ERLS will provide the public with a view on how the nation's public school systems adapt to the unprecedented challenge of shifting to remote instruction. In the weeks ahead, AEI will continue to update C-ERLS and report on the changes in the nation's public schools. The only thing certain now is that we have a long road ahead before America—and its schools—returns to something we consider normal.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix A. Additional Questions and Data Collection

The following sections describe additional information that we gathered during the first wave of C-ERLS data collection. Specifically, we present findings by school level and district size. In addition, we provide more details about specific technologies and internet accommodations used in schools. Lastly, we describe how schools are approaching their responsibilities to serve specific student populations, such as English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Do School Districts' Efforts Differ Across School Levels? Districts could differentiate the educational platforms they offer to elementary, middle, and high schools. For instance, middle and high schools may adopt synchronous or asynchronous platforms more easily than elementary schools do because older students are better able to log in to and negotiate more complex systems with less supervision at home. Therefore, C-ERLS disaggregates several data elements to capture districts whose programs differed across school level (elementary, middle, and high school).

Analysis of our first wave of data collection showed little difference across school levels. This may indeed reflect minimal differentiation, but in the first wave of data collection, our ability to capture these differences may have been compromised by default settings in the survey instrument.[22] At this time, we are not confident that the first wave of data collection reliably captured these differences and are thus not reporting any. In future data-collection waves, we will work to improve our ability to capture differences across levels and report more reliable estimates as we have them.

What Online Platforms Are Districts Using for Asynchronous and Synchronous Instruction? We gathered data on the specific types of asynchronous and synchronous platforms that schools are adopting to identify if certain platforms, programs, and methods are more common than others. This might provide helpful information for other educators and school leaders who are still determining the types of remote instruction they plan to offer.

Of schools offering asynchronous instruction, Google Classroom is, by far, the most common platform used. About 24 percent of all schools are in districts whose websites mentioned Google Classroom. The next most common platform is the schools' or districts' own websites, in use in 6 percent of schools. Canvas is the third most common platform, in use in 4 percent of schools. It is also common for districts to list three or more asynchronous platforms in tandem; specifically, 8 percent of schools are in districts using three or more asynchronous platforms.

In the districts we surveyed, a much smaller share of schools was offering synchronous instruction by March 27. But of those schools, Zoom is the most common platform, used in about three-quarters of the school districts that offer synchronous remote learning, while Google Hangouts is a distant second. However, these numbers are too small to be statistically significant.

Do Districts' Responses Vary by District Size? Districts of different sizes may be expected to have different capacities to employ specific educational services in response to COVID-19 closures. For instance, small districts might have limited resources or infrastructure to rapidly adjust to the pandemic. Similarly, large districts might be challenged to develop unified or piecemeal plans that provide services across all their schools. Therefore, we examined the responses of the 250 districts in our sample by three groups of size, measured by their number of schools.

We defined small districts as those with six or fewer operational schools. Medium districts have between 7 and 24 operational schools. Lastly, large districts are defined as having 25 or more operational schools. This divides our sample into three groups that are roughly equal in size: 35 percent of schools are in small districts, 35 percent of schools are in medium districts, and 30 percent of schools are in large districts.

Meals. The estimated percentage of small districts offering meals was lower than those of medium and large districts, but the differences were not statistically significant. An estimated 77 percent of small districts offered

meals by March 27, compared to 84 percent of both medium and large districts. However, small districts appear slightly *more* likely to provide meal delivery services, though again the differences were not statistically significant, with 31 percent of small districts delivering meals, compared to 26 percent and 18 percent of medium and large districts, respectively.[23]

Participation. We find that districts of differing size are roughly as likely to require participation in worksheets, packets, synchronous activities, or asynchronous activities. Twenty-four percent of small, medium, and large districts mention some expectation for participation in remote instruction activities.[24]

Additionally, we find that large districts are much more likely to list voluntary supplemental content on their district websites. Sixty-one percent of large districts listed voluntary supplemental content on their district websites by March 27, compared to 35 percent and 28 percent of medium and small districts, respectively.

Type of Instruction. We find that schools in small, medium, and large districts offer more directed methods of instruction at relatively similar rates. Districts of different sizes offer packets or worksheets at slightly different rates.[25] Of the 59 percent of schools in districts that mention packets or worksheets, 36 percent are small, 34 percent are medium, and 29 percent are large.

Of the 50 percent of schools in districts that mention asynchronous instruction, 28 percent of schools offer them in small districts, 32 percent in medium districts, and 39 percent in large districts. Too few districts offered synchronous instruction during the first wave of data collection to break out by size, but we plan to track this information in future weeks.

Technology and Internet Accommodations. As of 2016, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that 89 percent of US households had a computer and 82 percent had internet access.[26] Thirty-seven percent of schools in districts mentioned plans to provide devices to students who are otherwise unable to access online instruction. Thirty-one percent of schools are in districts that listed specific types of devices that would be provided to students. Of those that listed specific devices, the three most common were Chromebooks (in 55 percent of schools), generic laptops (21 percent), and iPads (5 percent). Additionally, some districts listed that they would provide more than one type of device. For example, 17 percent of schools offered both Chromebooks *and* iPads or laptops *and* iPads. The findings are expressed in Figure A1.

Figure A1. Types of Devices Offered in Schools with Any Device Accommodations
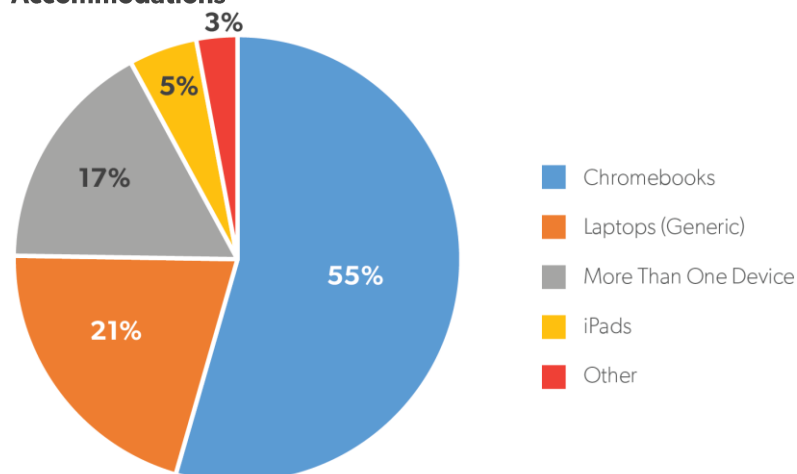
Note: These include schools with plans to offer devices any time, as reported on district websites on March 27, 2020.
Source: Authors' calculations using C-ERLS first-wave data. For more information, visit American Enterprise Institute, "COVID-19 Education Response Longitudinal Survey (C-ERLS)," April 7, 2020, https://www.aei.org/covid-19-education-response-longitudinal-survey-c-erls/.

Similarly, many districts recognize that students may not have internet access at home and thus are discussing and implementing plans to address this challenge. By March 27, approximately 46 percent of districts mentioned on their website the challenge of unequal access to internet. Of those districts, a quarter of them listed specific ways they would work to address this challenge. Of the methods discussed, the most common strategies were providing Wi-Fi hot spots to students, offering corporate discounts on Wi-Fi packages, or administering a survey to better determine students' specific technology needs.

ELLs and Special Education Students. Even in the middle of a pandemic, schools continue to have a responsibility to serve all students, including ELLs and those who participate in special education programs. Accordingly, we are interested in documenting how and if schools design plans to serve these specific types of students.

By March 27, 20 percent of schools were in districts that had mentioned the specific needs of students in special education programs. Of schools in districts that mentioned students with special needs, very few are in districts that stated that special education programs would be suspended. Only 11 percent of schools are in districts that reference the unique needs of ELL students.[27] In future data collection, we plan to capture more detail on potential ELL service suspension.

Appendix B. Comparing School- and District-Level Estimates

Table B1 presents the school- and district-weighted percentages for the main findings described in the report. Visit the AEI website for a detailed description of the methodology and weighting process.

Table B1. School- and District-Weighted Percentages

	School-Weighted Estimates	District-Weighted Estimates
Closures		
% Closed	100%	100%
% District Closed First	42%	43%
% Closed Between March 16 and 18	67%	67%
% Plans to Reopen	82%	76%
% Closed for Remainder of School Year	20%	21%
Food Services		
% Offering Meals	82%	74%
% Offering Daily Meal Pickup	68%	56%
% Offering Multiday Meal Pickup	45%	46%
% Offering Meal Delivery	25%	28%
Technology Assistance		
% Mentioning Device Support	37%	25%
% Mentioning Internet Support	46%	31%
Educational Programs		
% Offering Virtual Supplemental Content	40%	27%
% Currently Offering Packets	34%	34%
% Currently Offering Asynchronous Instruction	28%	19%
% Currently Offering Synchronous Instruction	3%	1%
Expectations of Participation		
% Not Expecting or Not Mentioning Expectations for Participation	68%	69%
% Some Expected Participation by March 27	18%	16%
% Some Expected Participation Starting Between March 27 and 30	9%	9%
% Some Expected Participation Starting After March 30	5%	6%

Source: Authors' calculations using C-ERLS first-wave data. For more information, visit American Enterprise Institute, "COVID-19 Education Response Longitudinal Survey (C-ERLS," April 7, 2020, https://www.aei.org/covid-19-education-response-longitudinal-survey-c-erls/.

Notes

1. Seattle Public Schools, "Closures," https://www.seattleschools.org/district/calendars/news/what_s_new/coronavirus_update/closures.

2. *Education Week*, "Map: Coronavirus and School Closures," April 3, 2020, https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/map-coronavirus-and-school-closures.html.

3. The Center on Reinventing Public Education is expanding its data, but it had 101 entries as of April 3, 2020. Center on Reinventing Public Education, "District Responses to COVID-19 School Closures," April 3, 2020, https://www.crpe.org/content/covid-19-school-closures.

4. Robin Lake, "The Latest from a Nationwide Survey: Districts Continue to Struggle Toward Online Learning," Center on Reinventing Public Education, March 28, 2020, https://www.crpe.org/thelens/latest-nationwide-survey-districts-continue-struggle-toward-online-learning.

5. *Education Week*, "Map: Coronavirus and School Closures"; and Benjamin Herold, "The Scramble to Move America's Schools Online," *Education Week*, Marcy 27, 2020, https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/03/26/the-scramble-to-move-americas-schools-online.html.

6. We selected 250 school districts randomly and proportional to size, with size defined as the number of operational schools in the district. The sampling frame consisted of regular school districts in all 50 states and DC with at least one operational school, as listed in the universe district file from the National Center for Education Statistics' Common Core of Data from the 2017–18 school year.

7. To request the latest data, contact Jessica Schurz at Jessica.Schurz@aei.org.

8. American Enterprise Institute, "COVID-19 Education Response Longitudinal Survey (C-ERLS)," April 7, 2020, https://www.aei.org/covid-19-education-response-longitudinal-survey-c-erls/.

9. Even more specifically, public schools in the sample reflect all schools in regular school districts in all 50 states and DC that had operational schools as reported in the 2017–18 district universe data file from the Common Core of Data, collected by the National Center for Education Statistics.

10. Percentages for school districts can be calculated with the weights available on the complete dataset, but not from the single-wave spreadsheets. Raw percentages computed from the single-wave spreadsheet yield estimates on the percentage for schools. Variance estimates require additional analysis using the complete dataset, which is available upon request.

11. This report has been updated to correct estimates in the original version. We identified errors in the original that stemmed from data that were recorded improperly for 21 of the 250 districts at the point of data collection.

12. One of the districts in our sample was very small, with one school that had fewer than 50 students, and it had no website. We know it was closed because its state had closed schools; however, no other information is available on this district, and all responses for it are coded as "not stated" but included in estimates.

13. We double-checked this surprisingly large percentage against state closure statements as reported by *Education Week*, "Map: Coronavirus and School Closures."

14. States planning to remain closed for the academic year at the time of writing include Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, New Mexico, Michigan, Oklahoma, Vermont, and Virginia.

15. In the first wave of our survey, we did not specifically capture the frequency of technology surveys, but we plan to in the next wave.

16. The distinction between packets and asynchronous platforms is that packets are single compilations of materials to be completed over time, whereas asynchronous platforms allow for continual updating and the transfer of work to and from students.

17. By "expected to participate," we do not mean schools would not accept common extenuating circumstances but that they communicated a general expectation for participation. Those without an expressed participation issued the platform as an option, with the hope of participation and the possibility of expected participation in the future.

18. After reviewing the first round of data collected, we are not confident we adequately distinguished between districts that did not state an expectation and those that stated they had no such expectation. We will attempt to sharpen our capture of this distinction in future rounds of data collection.

19. By "more directed educational programs," we mean asynchronous and synchronous platforms, which are more directed than voluntary supplemental content or packets.

20. One district mentioned EDmentum, which is an independent and fully accredited virtual school, although the district website did not make clear if its schools would actually be using the EDmentum curriculum. We will continue to track virtual school usage in future reports.

21. We did not distinguish voluntary supplemental content based on future plans because, in general, the content was available on the internet.

22. Our data-collection tool has a default setting that applies a district's response across all its schools, regardless of school level. Our data collectors are instructed to override the default setting if the district website explicitly outlines differing responses for elementary, middle, or high schools. Without a time-intensive review, we cannot determine whether the lack of differences reflects district plans or a failure to override the default option that applies a district's response across all levels. Therefore, we recommend caution when using data from this first wave to look across school levels.

23. These figures differ substantively from those published in the original version of this report. We previously estimated that 31 percent of small districts, 28 percent of medium districts, and 30 percent of large districts had meal delivery programs by March 27.

24. These figures differ substantively from those published in the original version of this report. We previously estimated that 28 percent of small districts, 25 percent of medium districts, and 37 percent of large districts mentioned some expectation for participation in remote instruction activities.

25. These figures differ substantively from those published in the original version of this report. We previously estimated that 35 percent of small districts, 33 percent of medium districts, and 33 percent of large districts offered packets or worksheets.

26. US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, "Table 702.60. Number and Percentage of Households with Computer and Internet Access, by State: 2016," https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_702.60.asp.

27. These figures differ substantively from those published in the original version of this report. We previously estimated that 18 percent schools mentioned both the specific needs of students in special education programs and ELL students.