

In Spring 2021, Newsela commissioned a research project with The EdWeek Research Center (EWRC) to explore the impact of the pandemic on student learning. The survey was administered online April 8th-21st 2021. A total of 790 educators responded (332 teachers working with students in grades 3-12, and 458 district leaders and principals). Key findings are detailed below.



## Key Findings

### District and school leaders view learning recovery as a long-term endeavor.

Forty-one percent of leaders are extending their recovery plans through the 2022-23 school year and beyond, with 23% making permanent changes. Only 24% are only planning through the 2021-22 school year.

### Supporting the whole child beyond academics ranks as top priority for educators.

The three most critical issues to work on in the next school year include mental health and overall well-being, curiosity and motivation to learn, and interactions with friends and peers. While standards-based skills is a concern it does not rise to the top, with district leaders and principals placing more emphasis on them than teachers.

## What students need to regain most next school year

	Total	District Leaders	Principals	Teachers
Mental health and overall well-being*	58%	64%	61%	47%
Curiosity and motivation to learn*	41%	33%	36%	56%
Interactions with friends and peers	33%	31%	31%	36%
Standards-based skills for ELA and/or math*	29%	34%	30%	20%
Relationships with teachers	26%	24%	29%	23%
Confidence	10%	9%	8%	14%
Access to services (like meals)	1%	2%	1%	2%

\*Difference is statistically significant

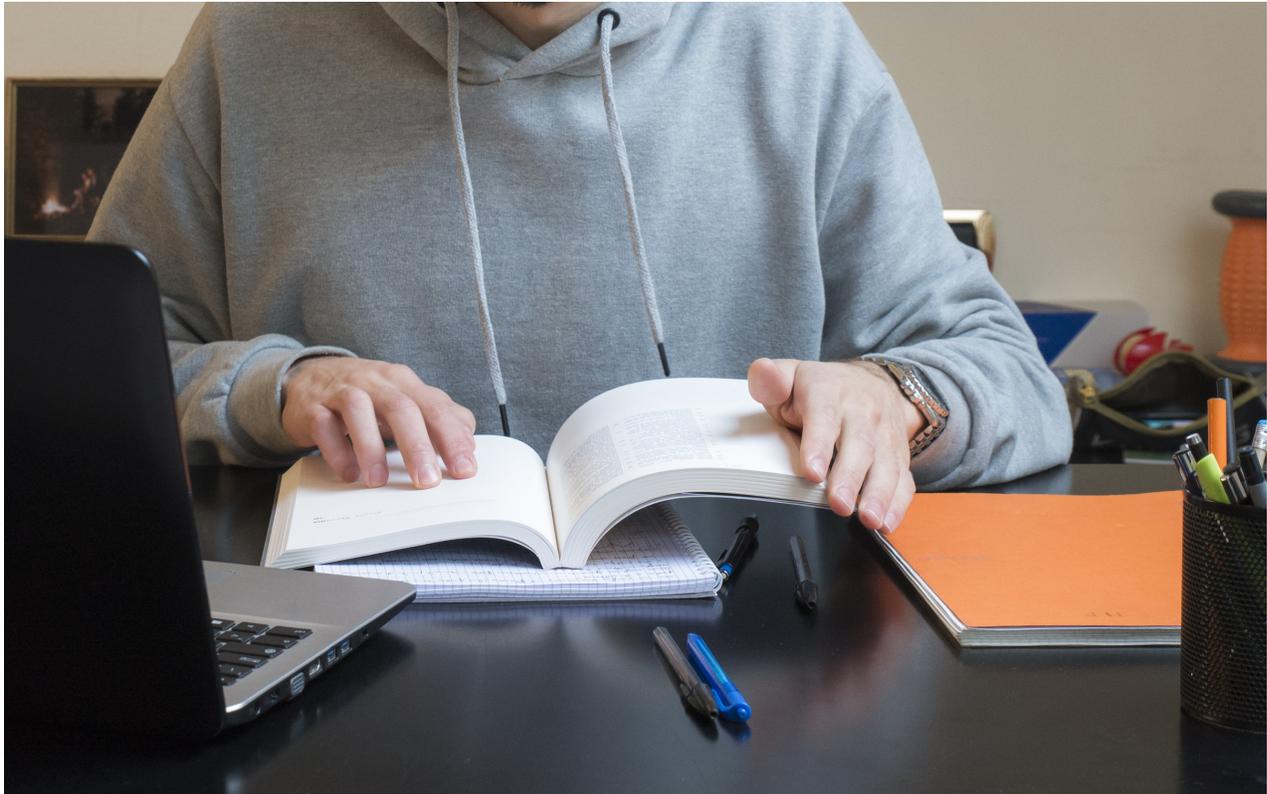
### There is widespread agreement that student engagement is key to learning recovery.

Ninety-five percent of educators believe student engagement is important to addressing learning loss (83% very important). Eighty-five percent of district and school leaders said student engagement factors significantly into their approach to learning loss. We surveyed educators to better understand what they perceive to be the most meaningful signs of student engagement. They most commonly pointed to student and teacher interactions. Attendance rates and assignment completion, indicators that have been widely cited as a measure of student engagement during the pandemic, were lower on the list and grades and test score improvements rounded out the bottom with less than 10% of respondents.



# Signs that meaningful student engagement is taking place

Students interact with one another around the content	43%
Students persist even when content is challenging	42%
Students are participating in class discussions	36%
Lower and higher performing students are equally challenged	35%
Students ask a lot of relevant questions	29%
Classroom is lively/noisy and it's not because students are off task	22%
Attendance rates are high/tardiness rates are low	22%
All/almost all students are on task during class	17%
Discipline problems are minimal	12%
Students discuss school-related content with others outside of class time	12%
Students go above and beyond class requirements	8%
Grades improve	8%
Test scores improve	8%
All/almost all projects/homework assignments are completed	5%
The classroom is quiet/focused	1%
Other	1%
All student eyes are on the teacher during class	0%



**Supporting students' social-emotional needs and teaching with high quality materials ranked as other top priorities for educators in addressing learning loss.**

Ninety-two percent say that SEL is important (69% very important) in addressing learning loss and 52% say that it is the most important factor. Ninety-two percent of educators also said teaching with high-quality instructional materials is important in addressing learning loss (64% very important).

**Student engagement closely tied to high-quality instructional materials**

A majority of educators (67%) believe that students being highly engaged most strongly signals that instructional material is high-quality. The other top responses were content is rigorous and aligned to standards (52%) and the program differentiates instruction (51%).

**The majority of educators are in agreement that we should focus on learning acceleration, but still include remediation tools as a priority to address learning loss.**

Seventy-five percent would prioritize just the content/standards students will need to be successful in the next grade and only 25% of educators would prioritize remediating most or all content and standards that were missed. Despite this view, self-paced computer tools that focus on skills practice/remediation were cited by district and school leaders as a top step they will be taking to address learning loss in the next school year. Ninety-three percent of district leaders and principals believe their reliance on self-paced computer interventions that offer remediation will be the same or higher in this upcoming school year and only 24% said they would not be using any to address learning loss.

**Principals and district leaders differ with teachers on the efficacy of these skills practice/remediation tools.**

Fifty-three percent of all educators think these types of tools are neutral or ineffective. District leaders and principals believe the tools are more effective than teachers do and teachers as a group believe the tools are more ineffective than effective. Forty-two percent of educators said moving forward with grade-level curriculum (but providing extra scaffolding and supports as necessary) is the most effective way to address learning loss and 60% of educators do not think there will be enough instructional time to cover the content and standards students missed during the COVID-19 disruption.



**Steps to address any learning loss resulting from the pandemic\***

**76%**

Moving forward with grade-level curriculum, but providing extra scaffolding and supports as necessary

Reconsider instructional content to ensure the teachers have more access to highly engaging, standards-aligned materials

**41%**

**36%**

Include more or any self-paced computer interventions that offer focused skills practice/remediations

Include digital content solutions that support teacher-led lessons

**34%**

\*Table shows four most common responses

**Though there is general consensus around accelerated learning, schools and districts differ in priorities based on location and income levels.**

The share of suburban (87%) and rural (74%) administrators that say their schools or districts will be moving forward with grade-level curriculum is higher than it is for urban education leaders (69%). Administrators in higher-poverty schools or districts are more likely to indicate they will be holding students back a grade level than those working in more affluent areas (10% vs. 4%, respectively). They are also more likely to say their schools and districts plan to reduce the pace of instruction (18% vs 11%).

### Effectiveness of self-paced computer interventions that offer remediation at driving student learning

	Somewhat/very ineffective	Neutral	Somewhat/very effective
All Educators	29%	24%	47%
District Leaders	21%	27%	52%
Principals	22%	23%	56%
Teachers	46%	22%	32%

#### The need to perform well on state assessments is deeply shaping efforts to address pandemic learning loss.

Eighty percent of district leaders and principals say state assessments play a role in their approach to addressing learning loss and 51% say they would change their recovery plan approach if their state assessments were waived this year. Just 3 percent of teachers, principals, and district leaders say assessing students more frequently is the key to making up for what students missed during the pandemic and only 8% of educators believe that improved test scores are a sign of meaningful student engagement.

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