

REOPENING STRONGER

Remote Learning & Educational Equity

Many school districts across the state have announced that they will start the school year entirely online, and the results of The Education Trust–New York’s recent parent survey reveal that many parents — especially Black and Latinx parents and parents from low-income backgrounds — are not yet comfortable sending their children back to school fully in-person. The reality that many students will not be in traditional classrooms for the start of the school year underscores the need for the state to ensure that all students have the opportunity to experience rigorous, high-quality instruction whether school is in-person, remote, or blended.

Facing widening opportunity gaps in our education system, The New York Equity Coalition calls on state leaders to build on their strong framework for school reopening by taking specific steps to improve the quality of the remote and blended experience.

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Ensure that students have access to high-quality remote learning



Families should be confident that their school district has a strong remote learning plan in place and that it will be implemented effectively. State leaders can take two steps to help achieve this key objective:

- State certification that remote instruction plans provide meaningful opportunities for students:** Black and Latinx students and students from low-income backgrounds will likely disproportionately rely on remote and blended learning this fall, and the state should focus oversight on school districts

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where historically underserved groups of students are enrolled and will participate in remote learning. We recommend that the state take additional steps to determine whether each relevant district's plan adequately addresses the following essential elements:

- o Meeting specific minimum expectations established by the state for the amount of daily live instruction for all students by grade span, that is also recorded and made available to students online.
- o Providing specific attention to the academic and social-emotional needs of the students and communities who were underserved before the pandemic and experienced disproportionate unfinished instruction as a result of school closures, including addressing how time — both the way the school day is structured and the use of extended learning time — and staff will be deployed to meet students' needs remotely.
- o Addressing high-quality remote curriculum, assignments, and tasks, and teacher professional learning and planning time to support successful implementation.
- o Providing daily interaction with teachers, including feedback on assignments, and access to school counselors.
- o Implementing plans for monitoring student engagement and assessing student learning throughout the year and how this data will be used to support students and adjust curriculum and instructional strategies, with specific attention to students who did not successfully engage in remote learning during the spring school closures.
- o Knowing every student's and teacher's tablet, laptop, or other device and internet status and having a plan to ensure continuous technology access and support.
- o Providing specific attention to adequately meet the heightened needs of students with disabilities, English learners, and students experiencing homelessness.
- o Ensuring ongoing parent engagement remotely in shared decision-making through virtual school-based management team and district committee of stakeholders meetings.
- o Offering guidance for parents — in their home language and preferred method of communication — on what their child should be learning at each grade level.

If a district's plan for remote and hybrid learning does not meet each of these criteria, we ask that the state require specific changes to the plan.

- **Transparency for student engagement and support:** As the school year begins, we recommend that the state require transparency on key measures of student engagement and support — with disaggregated data released at least monthly — and require school districts with low performance on any of these measures for any group of students to make specific improvements. Measures would include:
 - o Average number of hours of live/synchronous instruction provided remotely per student, by elementary, middle, and high school grade spans.
 - o Average number of extended learning time hours provided to students.

- o Student attendance.
- o Student engagement and participation rates in remote/online instruction (e.g., class participation and use of office hours).
- o Share of students who have not engaged in remote/online instruction.
- o Share of students/teachers with a personal (not shared) device for remote learning.
- o Share of students/teachers with high-speed internet access at home for remote learning.
- o New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners screening, identification, placement, review and exit data.
- o Special needs screening, evaluation, and decertification data, provided separately for early childhood and school-age populations.
- o School meal distribution counts (including meals provided on-site, delivery, and pick-up).

2 Expand promising remote learning models



Despite the hard work of teachers, administrators, and support staff, school districts may not have the capacity to provide high-quality remote instruction to all students in all subject areas. Yet there are BOCES and school districts across the state that have high-quality remote instruction platforms and resources in specific content areas.

We recommend that the state identify these strong remote learning opportunities and rapidly bring them to scale so that more school districts can leverage existing remote learning opportunities to fill in the gaps in their own remote instruction programs and be prepared for future school closures. Additionally, remote learning can be an opportunity to provide advanced courses across school district lines and directly address course access disparities for Black and Latinx students.

3 Help schools assess student progress and identify needs



We recommend that the state provide tools for schools and districts to monitor the impact of all instruction — regardless of modality — and use this information to support educators and students. This should include, but not be limited to, making available diagnostic

assessments, common quarterly formative assessments in core content areas, and standards-aligned performance tasks with common rubrics. In addition, we recommend that the state issue guidance that provides resources and strategies for how districts and schools can use assessment results to make adjustments and support students.

4

Support all educators' transition to blended and remote learning



High-quality professional learning and ongoing support are essential to student success. The State Education Department and Board of Regents took an important step by securing \$20 million in new federal funding for professional support to implement effective practices in remote or hybrid teaching and learning. We recommend that the state also advise districts on how to bolster existing teacher mentorship programming and, building on the Master Teacher program and other initiatives, identify mentors who can provide assistance in remote teaching strategies, student support services (specifically for English learners and students with disabilities), and educator social-emotional awareness and professional support for any teacher who requests it.

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Help schools and community-based organizations support student learning



The recent poll findings show that wealthy families are much more likely to be seriously considering supplementing remote learning with private tutoring by joining “pods” with other families — another way the current crisis can widen opportunity gaps. We recommend that the state create a framework and identify school-aged child care funding, federal Title I funds, and other resources to support partnerships between schools and trusted community-based organizations to support accelerated student learning and enrichment, at no cost to families. This support should be focused on schools that serve a significant share of students from low-income backgrounds and can include addressing the specific needs of student groups including English learners. These partnerships can operate both remotely and in available, safe sites in the community.