

## Understanding the Initial Educational Impacts of COVID-19 on Communities of Color

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Students of color have faced longstanding systemic educational inequalities that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from 2.1 million Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) students in grades 3 to 8 who took the MAP Growth assessments in reading and math were analyzed. Initial evidence from NWEA assessments indicates that students' math test scores decreased substantively relative to students testing in the prior school year. For example, 57% of students starting in 3rd grade made academic gains between winter 2020 and fall 2020 (during a period of school closures), relative to 79% of students between winter 2019 and fall 2019.

A key finding from this research was that approximately one in four students who tested last year were missing in the fall 2020 data, and that a higher percentage of missing test takers were Black or Latinx and attended schools serving a higher proportion of students living in poverty. In addition:

- Using math and reading test scores from 2.1 million BIPOC students in grades 3 to 8, we found that math achievement was significantly impacted in fall 2020 but reading achievement was mostly parallel to prior years.
- BIPOC students' math achievement during the pandemic dropped relative to a pre-pandemic national sample of same-grade students, particularly for students who were in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade in fall 2020.
- All student groups exhibited average test score gains during the fall 2019 to fall 2020 period, indicating that students were learning during the pandemic, however the rate of learning was lower than during the pre-pandemic period.
- Black, American Indian and Alaska Native, and Latinx students made 55-68% of typical learning gains in math and 73-86% of typical gains in reading during the pandemic, whereas Asian American students made between 88-100% of their typical gains in the two subjects.
- Male BIPOC students and BIPOC students attending high-poverty schools were the least likely to achieve typical learning gains during the pandemic.

School systems should use this period to fundamentally rethink how programs, policies, and opportunities are allocated to BIPOC students in post COVID recovery. Based on these findings, the following policy recommendations are offered:

- **Improve remote learning for BIPOC students:**
  - Ensure that *every* student has access to [broadband, electronic devices, and the technical support](#) necessary to access remote learning opportunities; this continues to be important as it is possible that some BIPOC students may remain remote in the 2021-2022 school year.
  - [Engage parents and families](#) through regular, well-timed communication that also allows families to communicate what they are seeing at home.

- Provide [professional development](#) for teachers and school leaders to support students and families in engaging with remote instruction effectively.
- **Extend learning time for BIPOC students:**
  - Offer engaging [summer school](#) or enrichment opportunities during the summer.
  - Provide [additional instructional time](#) by starting the 2021-22 school year early or extending the school day to include Saturdays.
  - Launch [high-quality tutoring programs](#) for BIPOC students tied to school curriculum and instruction.
- **Target federal resources to BIPOC students**
  - Distribute resources *equitably* across schools within and across districts; districts with higher concentrations of BIPOC students and low-income students should receive a higher per-pupil allocation than Whiter and wealthier districts; same is true for schools within a district.
  - Engage [community-based organizations](#) with a proven track record of serving BIPOC communities to help with identifying needs and deploying resources.
- **Address BIPOC students' academic, social, and emotional needs**
  - Evaluate [academic achievement and growth](#) regularly using valid, reliable, and comparable assessments to identify unfinished learning and learning acceleration.
  - Ensure we use multiple data points to help tell the whole picture. In some places, data has been used to underinvest when it should be used to target more resources into certain places. We have to use this information to restructure our investments so the communities that need more resources get them.
  - Celebrate BIPOC students' and communities' strengths and successes, especially those that do not show up in traditional measures of student or school performance.
  - Replicate best practices and successful interventions across schools and districts where BIPOC students are experiencing greater-than-average gains.
  - Deploy tools (i.e., surveys) that measure students' [social and emotional well-being](#).
  - [Screen regularly](#) for physical and mental health conditions; provide school medical staff (nurses) and counselors with training to identify and treat trauma, stress, depression and anxiety effectively.
  - Use federal funds to provide additional [mental health and counseling resources](#) to BIPOC students and families that have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. This will include grief group counseling, family, and/or individual therapy.

- Continue to [expand school meal programs](#) by reducing barriers for qualification, extending the hours and locations, and providing meals during non-traditional periods (e.g. weekends and summers).