CCSA | California Charter Schools Association

2020

PORTRAIT OF THE MOVEMENT

The Transition to Distance Learning Amid COVID-19

foreword

By CCSA's CEO
myrna castrejón

Times of crisis reveal the true character of people and organizations. It is not an exaggeration to say that public schools, particularly in California, certainly faced crises in recent years. Under this pressure the "true character" of California's public charter school movement revealed itself. Charter schools have more flexibility in how they spend their money and how they hire, which is meant to encourage innovation. This flexibility, and the innovation it leads to, make charters uniquely well-equipped to battle complex challenges. **In this paper, we posit that one of charter schools' greatest values lies in their ability to focus on equity and quality by harnessing their innate flexibility and innovative problem-solving.**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, California's charter school leaders and educators worked around-the-clock to find the best solutions to questions that do not have perfect answers. Teachers struggled to reach their students to ensure that they are providing as much support as they can, sometimes even conducting home visits or providing counseling and emotional support to increase engagement. Parents formed peer groups to help each other through distance learning and keep their learning communities strong. Administrators did all they could to ensure that the nutritional needs of our most vulnerable students were met. Staff worked to overcome the technological hurdles that many families faced in getting connected to their online classrooms. Everyone was exhausted, and urgency fatigue was real.

The December 2020 explosion of COVID-19 cases across the state only complicated matters. We must stop the spread of this deadly disease. At the same time, we must redouble our efforts to engage our students. As I write this, we are entering the 10th month of the pandemic, I am proud of the work our schools have done to remain flexible and prepared for the unknown road ahead. They know we must stem this learning loss and get our children back into the classroom as soon and as safely as possible.

Just as charter schools led the way to transition to distance learning and served their students from home during the stay-at-home order, I expect that they will excel at returning to the classroom. CCSA will continue to support their efforts and help schools across the network share their experiences to uplift all of California's students.

executive summary

The innovative ways charter schools across the state responded to COVID-19 provide a clear example of the value of charter schools. Experts worry that the pandemic and remote learning could have severe, long-lasting implications for students – especially historically underserved students.[i] To mitigate these effects, schools can learn from how charters across the state used their flexibility to adapt, create, and persevere to serve all students.

To combat these challenges, "bright spot" charter schools profiled in this report (Springs Charter Schools, Rocketship Public Schools, Ednovate Public Schools, and CORE Butte) used best practices like offering personalized support/instruction, realigning staff roles, and focusing on relationships to meet the unique needs of their students. To encourage these types of practices and foster innovation moving forward, this paper concludes with recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

Given These Findings, We Recommend:

> Policy makers should protect the autonomy of charter schools and distribute resources equitably;

> Practitioners and researchers should identify, codify, and share best practices from charter schools;

> Researchers should conduct mixed-method studies on quality remote learning and quantify the value of school choice during the pandemic.

This Report Shows How California Charter Schools

> Began quality distance learning more rapidly than other public schools;

> Acted quickly to ensure underserved students had access to the technology they needed to fully participate in distance learning;

> Employed effective student engagement and academic tracking strategies;

> Addressed the social, emotional, and physical needs of their students.

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introduction

In this report, we show how the California charter school movement remained resolute in the face of challenges while keeping equity and quality at the forefront. We use the events of spring 2020 to illustrate how charter schools rose to the challenge of continuing to educate students during a global health crisis. To tell this story, we begin by building off our last Portrait of the Movement to discuss persistent equity issues in all of California's schools and explain how COVID-19 represents a unique impediment to eliminating opportunity gaps. We then demonstrate the unique value of charter schools by showing how schools:

Embraced distance learning to ensure that existing gaps do not grow wider.

Dealt with disparities in access to technology.

Kept students engaged and found new and creative ways to track student progress.

Addressed the social and emotional needs of their most vulnerable students.

We use survey data and interviews to demonstrate charter schools' efficacy in their response to these seemingly insurmountable obstacles. We conclude by summarizing key takeaways from charter schools' responses to the pandemic and looking ahead to the future. We recommend how the charter movement, other public schools, policy makers, and researchers can use these lessons to help improve public education for all students.

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portrait of california charter schools

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charter schools in California are
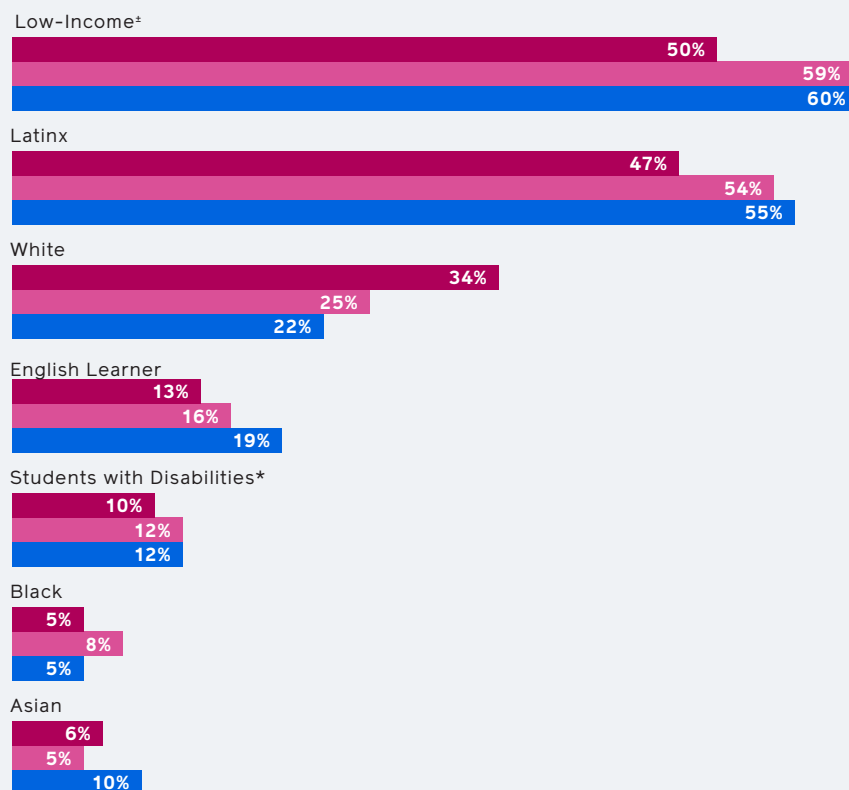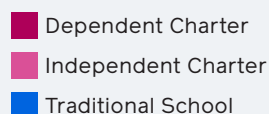# public, free, and open to all

1,310
California Charter
Schools

2019-2020

675,374
California Charter
Students

</div>

Charter schools vary in terms of student demographics, grade span, geography, instructional model, and management model.

Since their inception, charter schools in California have come to increasingly resemble the communities they serve – particularly independent charter schools (See Figure 1). Compared to traditional public schools (TPS), independent charter schools served a larger proportion of Black students and a similar proportion of low-income± and Latinx students during the 2019-20 school year. However, charter schools (both independent and dependent) served a smaller proportion of English learners and Asian students than TPS.

Independent charter schools represent about three of four charter schools in the state and are afforded more flexibility and autonomy than their dependent counterparts. The degree to which schools control their governance, staffing, and budget depends largely on a school's autonomy. Dependent charter schools tend to function more like TPS, though they often have specialized programming. Given the differences between these types of charter schools, Figure 1 compares student demographics at dependent and independent charter schools, as well as TPS.

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Figure 1
2019-20 Student
Demographics
by School Type

- Dependent Charter
- Independent Charter
- Traditional School

Low-Income‡
Dependent Charter: 50%
Independent Charter: 59%
Traditional School: 60%

Latinx
Dependent Charter: 47%
Independent Charter: 54%
Traditional School: 55%

White
Dependent Charter: 34%
Independent Charter: 25%
Traditional School: 22%

English Learner
Dependent Charter: 13%
Independent Charter: 16%
Traditional School: 19%

Students with Disabilities*
Dependent Charter: 10%
Independent Charter: 12%
Traditional School: 12%

Black
Dependent Charter: 5%
Independent Charter: 8%
Traditional School: 5%

Asian
Dependent Charter: 6%
Independent Charter: 5%
Traditional School: 10%

Represents 2019 Test-Takers

Similar to how charter schools vary by autonomy, there are other important differences between California charter schools. Following the passage of AB 406 in 2018, all California charter schools are non-profit, but charters differ by instructional delivery method, management model, and whether they have Dashboard Alternative Status (DASS). The majority (76%) of California charter schools are classroom-based. The 310 nonclassroom-based schools employ a variety of models ranging from fully virtual or homeschool to site-based for four days of the week and independent study for one. As shown in Figure 3, nonclassroom-based schools are also much more likely than classroom-based schools to serve expanded grade spans, for example K-12 or 6-12. In fact, the majority, or 71% of nonclassroom-based charter schools were multi-grade compared to only 10% of classroom-based charter schools.

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Regardless of autonomy or site type, charter schools also differ by organizational structure. Schools can be either freestanding (single-site), part of a Charter Management Organization (CMO) with a common philosophy and centralized operational/governance approach, or they can belong to a Network, which is similar to a CMO but without the centralized governance/operations. Finally, 10% of both charter schools and TPS had "DASS" designation in 2019-20. These schools serve mostly high-risk students and are subject to different accountability metrics.

Figure 2: 2019-20 Charter School Characteristics

		School Count	Percent of Schools
Site Type	Nonclassroom-Based	310	24%
	Classroom-Based	1,000	76%
Autonomy	Independent	963	74%
	Semi-Independent	33	3%
	Dependent	314	24%
Management Model	Freestanding	599	46%
	CMO	557	43%
	Network	154	12%
DASS Status	Non-DASS	1,177	90%
	DASS	133	10%

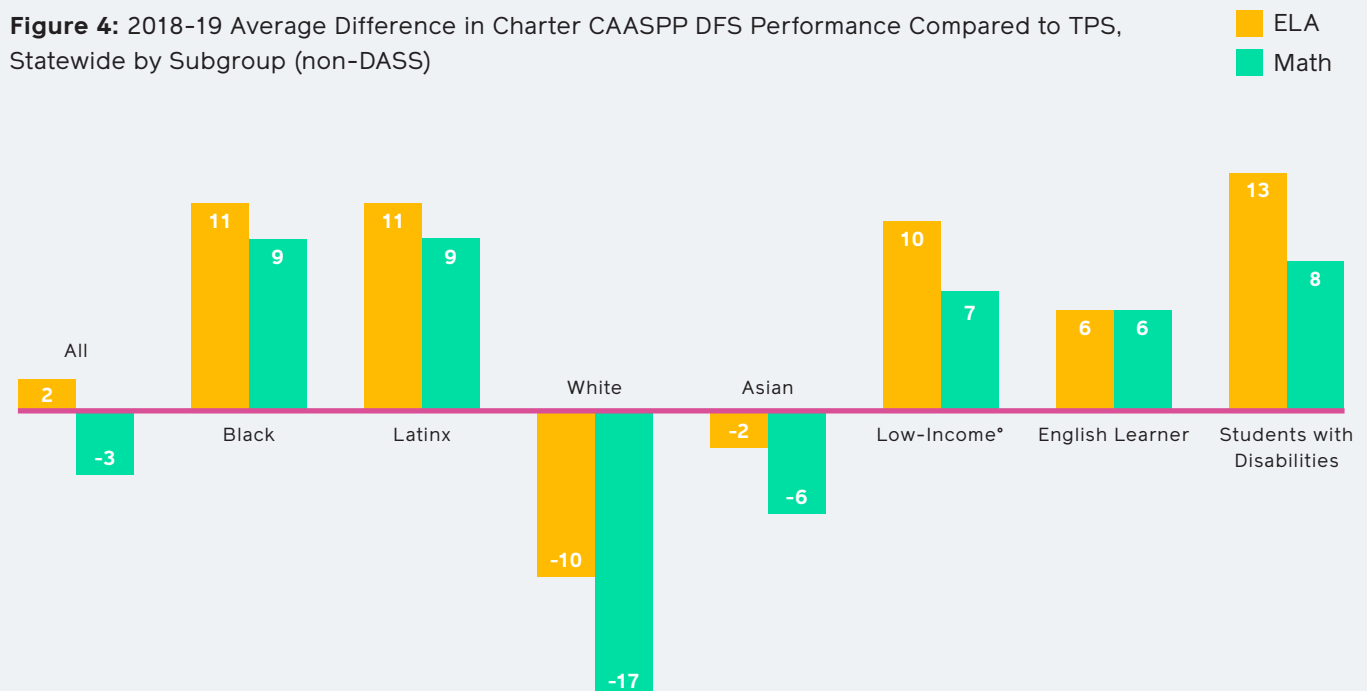**Figure 3:** Percent of Charter Schools by Grade Span and Site Type, 2019-20

	Elementary	Middle	High	Multi-Grade
Classroom-Based	54%	14%	22%	10%
Nonclassroom-Based	11%	1%	27%	71%

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Opportunity gaps persist in California public schools

In last year's Portrait of the Movement, we highlighted that, despite some bright spots, public schools – both traditional and charter – had further to go in ensuring all students had access to a high-quality education. While we all have work to do, charter schools outperformed TPS on state tests in English Language Arts (ELA) Distance from Standard (DFS) with all students and most major subgroups (Figure 4). In Math, charters slightly underperformed with all students, White students, and Asian students, but outperformed with all other subgroups shown. For example, in Figure 4 below Black students in charter schools outperformed their TPS counterparts by 11 points in ELA and 9 points in Math. The outperformance trends hold true with other historically underserved subgroups including low-income°, English learners, Latinx students, and students with disabilities.

Figure 4: 2018-19 Average Difference in Charter CAASPP DFS Performance Compared to TPS, Statewide by Subgroup (non-DASS)

Legend: ELA, Math

Subgroup	ELA	Math
All	2	-3
Black	11	9
Latinx	11	9
White	-10	-17
Asian	-2	-6
Low-Income°	10	7
English Learner	6	6
Students with Disabilities	13	8

Figure 5
2018-19
Percent of Students Considered "Prepared" on the College/Career Indicator (Non-DASS)

- Charter
- Traditional

All Students
46%
53%

Latinx
48%
44%

Black
30%
31%

White
42%
63%

Asian
72%
78%

Low-Income°
43%
44%

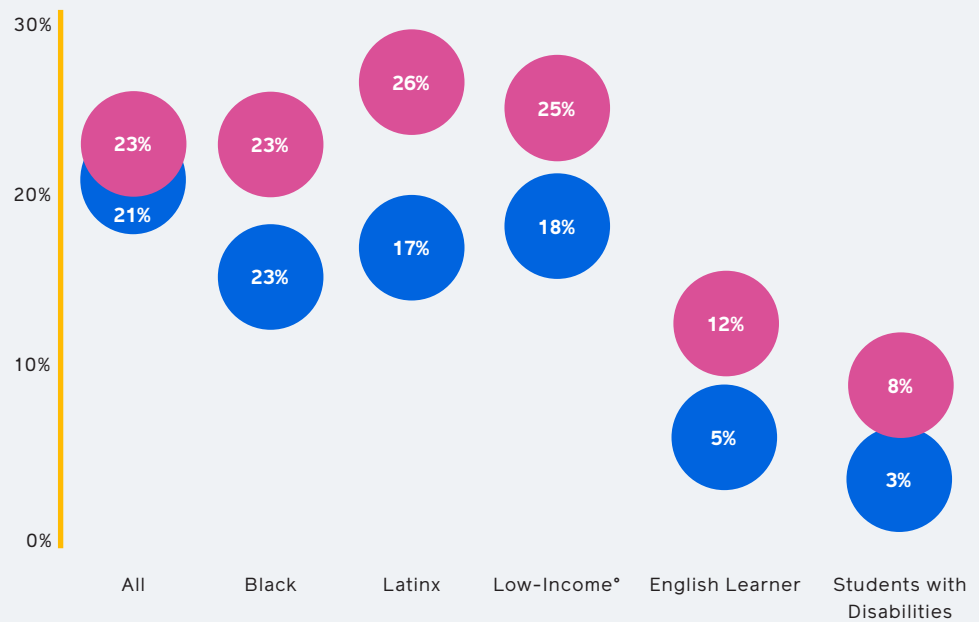English Learner
25%
21%

Students with Disabilities
16%
13%
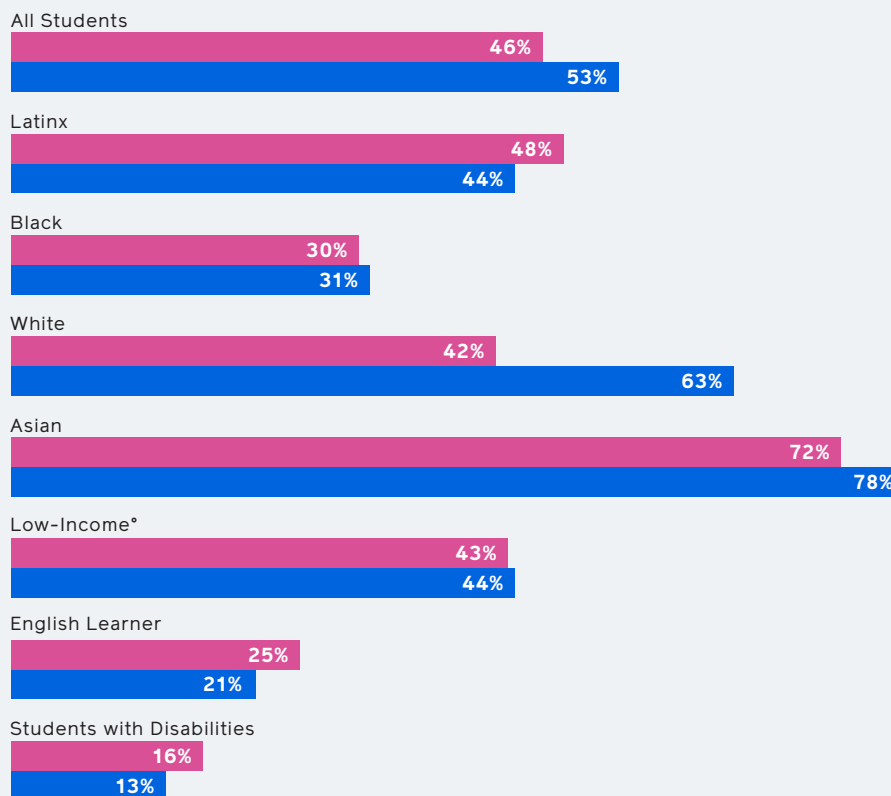
Similarly, on the CA Dashboard College/Career Indicator (CCI), which measures college/career readiness, there were large gaps in preparedness between student subgroups, with White and Asian students more likely to be "prepared" than other subgroups. Charter school students with disabilities, English learners, and Latinx students were, on average, more prepared for college/career than their counterparts at TPS. However, White and Asian students were more likely to be prepared for college/career at TPS. In addition to college/career preparation, access to a University of California/California State University (UC/CSU) also varied by subgroup.

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As shown in Figure 6, charter schools had higher rates of UC/CSU enrollment with all subgroups shown than TPS in 2018. Charters were especially successful at getting Black, Latinx, and low–income° students into these universities.

Figure 6
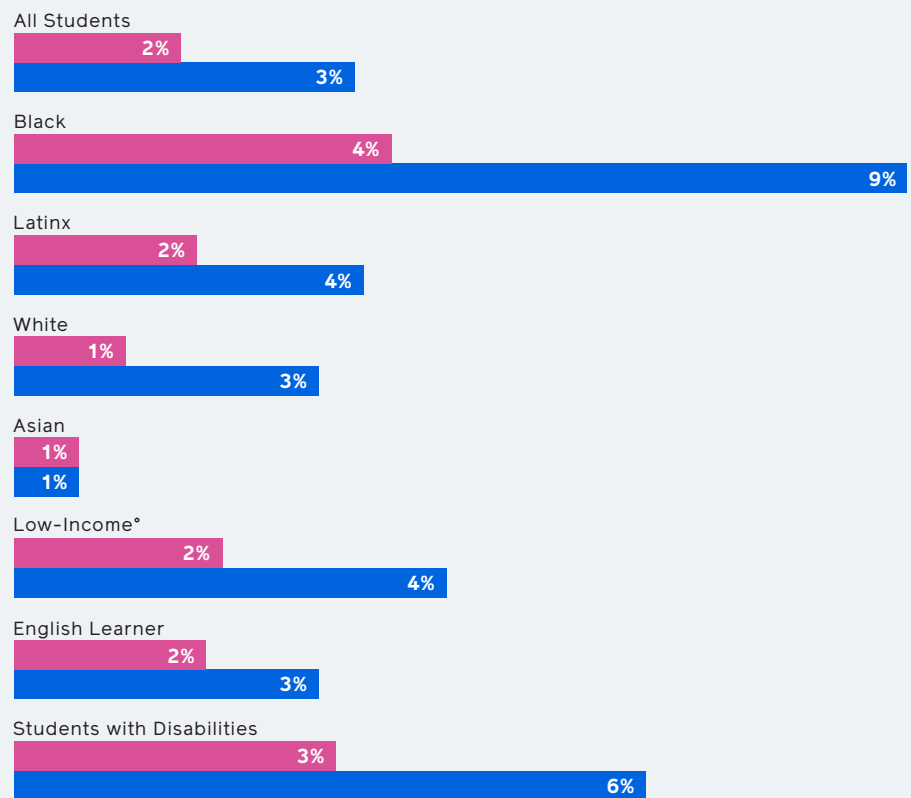2017-18 Statewide UC/CSU College Going Rates (Non-DASS)

- Charter
- Traditional

	All	Black	Latinx	Low-Income°	English Learner	Students with Disabilities
Charter	23%	23%	26%	25%	12%	8%
Traditional	21%	23%	17%	18%	5%	3%

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It is well-documented in research that Black students and students with disabilities are suspended at disproportionate rates.[ii] Disparities in suspension rates persist, with Black students and students with disabilities being suspended at much higher rates than White and Asian students. However, charter schools were less likely than TPS to suspend students – especially Black students and students with disabilities.

Figure 7
2018-19 Suspension Rates Statewide and by Subgroup (Non-DASS)

■ Charter
■ Traditional

All Students
Charter: 2%
Traditional: 3%

Black
Charter: 4%
Traditional: 9%

Latinx
Charter: 2%
Traditional: 4%

White
Charter: 1%
Traditional: 3%

Asian
Charter: 1%
Traditional: 1%

Low-Income°
Charter: 2%
Traditional: 4%

English Learner
Charter: 2%
Traditional: 3%

Students with Disabilities
Charter: 3%
Traditional: 6%

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COVID-19 represents a unique equity challenge.

Since the publication of the 2019 Portrait of the Movement, a lot has changed in education. With students participating in distance learning, many experts worry that opportunity gaps could widen due to disparate access to high-quality, engaging instruction, technology, and social/emotional support.[iii] Students of color, low-income students, English learners, students with disabilities, and rural students are among the subsets of students that could be most severely impacted.

Looking back at existing research on disruptions to student learning, we can gain insight into what the long-lasting, severe, and inequitable impacts of this pandemic would be without concerted efforts by educators, parents, law makers, and communities. For example, previous researchers looking at the impacts of interruptions in learning due to unexcused absences, weather, and teacher strikes found that missing school had long-lasting impacts on students' test scores, especially in math and in earlier grades, graduation rates, college enrollment, and even future employment.[iv]

Due to these equity concerns, this year's Portrait of the Movement will focus on the ways that California charter schools harnessed their flexibility and innovative thinking to keep students learning and growing during distance learning. Moving forward, we hope that all schools, both traditional public and public charter, can learn from the strategies charter schools throughout the state used to help mitigate learning loss, narrow the digital divide, keep students engaged, and support students socially and emotionally during spring 2020.

methods

This mixed methods report combines data from literature review, survey results, and qualitative interviews with school leaders. In April 2020, CCSA surveyed its member schools on distance learning. The survey received 179 responses on behalf of 409 charter schools (31% of all California charters). Compared to charter schools statewide, survey respondents were significantly more likely be from independent charter schools, belong to a CMO/ Network, employ a classroom-based model, serve elementary grades, and to serve a historically underserved student population (See appendix b for more information on surveyed schools).

In addition to the Distance Learning Survey, CCSA's Los Angeles Local Advocacy Team sent out a weekly survey to Los Angeles-area member schools from March 20 to August 17, 2020.

CCSA interviewed representatives from four charter schools/CMOs. These schools are not representative of all CA charter schools but do represent four very different schools/systems in terms of instructional model, grades served, geographic location, and student demographics.

Bright Spot Charter Schools & Networks:

Springs Charter Schools
Location: Southern CA
Model: Nonclassroom-Based
Grades Served: K-12
2019-20 Enrollment: 9,189
2019-20 Student Demographics:
55% Low-Income[±], 14% Students with Disabilities

Rocketship Public Schools
Location: Bay Area
Model: Classroom-Based
Grades Served: K-5
2019-20 Enrollment: 6,782
2019-20 Student Demographics:
76% Low-Income[±], 55% English Learners

Ednovate Public Schools
Location: Los Angeles
Model: Classroom-Based
Grades Served: 9-12
2019-20 Enrollment: 1,779
2019-20 Student Demographics:
84% Low-Income[±], 98% Students of Color

CORE Butte
Location: Chico
Model: Nonclassroom-Based
Grades Served: K-12
2019-20 Enrollment: 841
2019-20 Student Demographics:
42% Low-Income[±], 15% Students with Disabilities, 7% Homeless

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how california's charter schools mitigated learning loss

THE PROBLEM
statewide learning loss

Figure 8
Proportion of Student
Subgroups Meeting State
Math Standards, 2018-2019

Number of every 10 students
meeting standards

7.6 Asian

5.6 White

2.9 Latinx

2.8 Low-Income°

2.0 Black

1.3 Students with Disabilities

1.2 English Learner

The academic impacts of COVID-19 could be severe and long lasting.

When schools closed for shelter-in-place during March 2020, many wondered whether students would stagnate or worse, regress academically.[v] Experts warned the average student could begin the 2020-21 academic year having lost **up to a third** of their projected progress from the last school year in reading and **up to half** of their projected progress in math.[vi]

Other estimates were even more concerning and estimated the average student lost between 0.75 and 1.3 years of progress in mathematics (depending on the state).[vii] While it is yet to be seen how California students will be impacted, local projections are troubling.

For example, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) estimated nine out of 10 students returned to school in the fall of 2020 having experienced "severe" learning loss.[viii] LAUSD expected that for every day of school missed, students would need **three or more days** to make up for the lost time.[ix] It could therefore take students months, or even years, to get back on track.

Underserved students were more likely to experience learning loss.

Access to educational opportunities varies by **race/ethnicity, income, and ability**. In 2018-19, test scores varied greatly by student subgroups (See Figure 8). For example, eight out of 10 Asian students met state standards in math compared to only one in 10 English learners.

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Access to high-quality distance learning was similarly unequal between student groups. In **high-income zip codes**, researchers did not see any decline in math progress from March to late April 2020. In contrast, student progress decreased by 33% in **middle-income zip codes** and 50% in **low-income zip codes** (See Figure 9).[x]

Learning loss also varied by **race/ethnicity**, with the average student projected to fall 7 months behind, and Latinx and Black students projected to fall 9 and 10 months behind, respectively.[xi]

English learners were especially vulnerable to learning loss, as they needed practice speaking with teachers and classmates. Nearly half of surveyed California parents of English learners said their child was not receiving adequate support during distance learning.[xii] These discrepancies are especially concerning given that time spent without quality instruction can have long-lasting impacts on students, especially underserved students', likelihood of graduating, going to college, and getting/keeping a high-paying job as an adult.[xiii]

Figure 9
Student Progress in Math from March–Late April 2020[vi]

High-Income Zip Codes
0% (No Change)

Middle-Income Zip Codes
-33%

Low-Income Zip Codes
-50%

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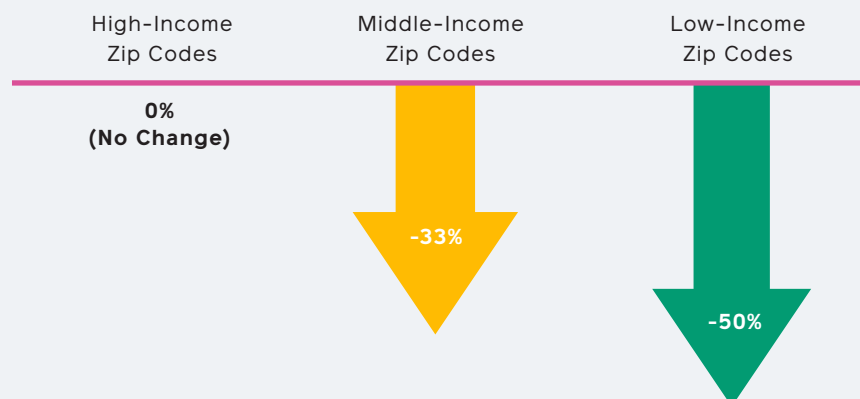
THE RESPONSE

how charters avoided learning loss

Charter schools used their flexibility and innovation to quickly design and implement quality distance learning programs.

For many educators, transitioning from in-person instruction to distance learning in spring 2020 was daunting.[xiv] They had to quickly develop strategies for keeping students engaged and motivated, monitor progress, and provide support remotely. As previously stated, charter schools have **more flexibility in staffing and spending** than traditional public schools, which can make it easier to adapt to changing circumstances and implement new models, strategies, and curricula. The pandemic put this theory to the test.

Using results from the distance learning survey, CCSA compared the start dates of charter schools that responded to our survey to district start dates compiled by CalMatters, a nonprofit investigative media organization. We found that, on average, **surveyed charter schools were quicker than districts** to launch distance learning in the spring of 2020.

It took California districts **an average of 14 school days** to begin distance learning.[xv] In contrast, it took **an average of four school days** for surveyed charter schools to implement distance learning programs. (See Figure 10). Some larger districts had substantially longer delays. For example, the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) did not start remote instruction until April 27 — nearly a month and a half after they and many other California schools closed for shelter-in-place on March 16.[xvi]

Using LAUSD's projections cited earlier in this report, it will take SDUSD students at least 90 school days to make up for lost time.[xvii] SDUSD's delayed remote learning launch also illustrates another trend, where districts serving a higher percentage of low-income‡ students were **slower**, on average, to launch distance learning than their more affluent peers. Specifically, on average, districts that began distance learning **within two weeks of closures** were only **39% low-income‡**, while charters that began remote learning within two weeks were **57% low-income‡**.

Figure 10: Distance Learning Calendar   ■ Charter Schools Closed   ■ District Schools Closed

MARCH 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13 Charter and District Schools Closed	14
15	16	17	18	19	20 Average Charter Start Date	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	Apr 1	2	3 Average District Start Date	4

BRIGHT SPOT
Springs Charter Schools

Helping keep students learning amid the pandemic.

Some charter schools went above and beyond, using their flexibility and innovating to meet student needs. Springs Charter Schools, a network of six nonclassroom-based charter schools serving students in Riverside and San Diego counties, were well-positioned to support their students during remote learning.

With nearly 10,000 students attending mostly nonclassroom-based independent study programs in Southern California, Springs knows how to provide quality remote instruction at scale. Using their expertise in online learning, Springs worked quickly and strategically to create, implement, and share resources, professional development, and even live lessons with students and educators around the world.

QUICK FACTS

6 nonclassroom-based public charter K-12 schools.

Served nearly 10,000 students of whom 18% were students with disabilities in 2020.

1 of 10 charter schools in the country to receive the National Alliance's *2020 Above and Beyond Award.*

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1

BEST PRACTICE
Innovate

Within just three weeks of launching distance learning, Springs created Open Classroom, a public and free community service to help parents navigate quality resources for remote learning. Open Classroom offered **highly-curated, grade-specific content aligned to Common Core State Standards**, as well as **live classes** four days per week.

Springs staff also helped educators at both traditional public schools and other charter schools transition to remote learning by **working with small school districts**, offering advice and best practices on community panels, and participating in the Riverside County taskforce on returning to schools.

Within Springs, staff acted quickly to **train teachers** on how to provide quality remote learning. During the first week of shelter-in-place, Springs produced an **online, on-demand training schedule for teachers** that focused on delivering remote learning. To create these professional development sessions, they gathered their staff experts and resources from external sources to put on webinars that are still available to Springs teachers, as well as any educators who sign up for Open Classroom.

2

BEST PRACTICE
Personalized support and instruction

Personalized learning has always been core to Springs' model. To ensure that each student got the specific support they needed, Springs had an **Assistant Classroom Educator (ACE)** in each online classroom. In addition to supporting remote instruction, ACE's also set up meetings with individual students and small groups based on student achievement and growth data to provide intervention and support. Vivian Price, Assistant Superintendent of Education at Springs, noticed that school sites that leveraged their ACE's to provide more frequent 1:1 and small group support to students saw more growth in ELA and math than sites that did not leverage their ACE's as much. She also noted that small group instruction was especially valuable for Springs' English learners.

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Price stressed that, "It's not engaging to have every teacher just lecture to you as you're staring into the camera." Instead, Springs trained their teachers to provide **flipped classrooms**. Under this model, a teacher shares a recording of a lecture ahead of time, and students use classroom time for conversation, small group discussion, and other engaging activities.
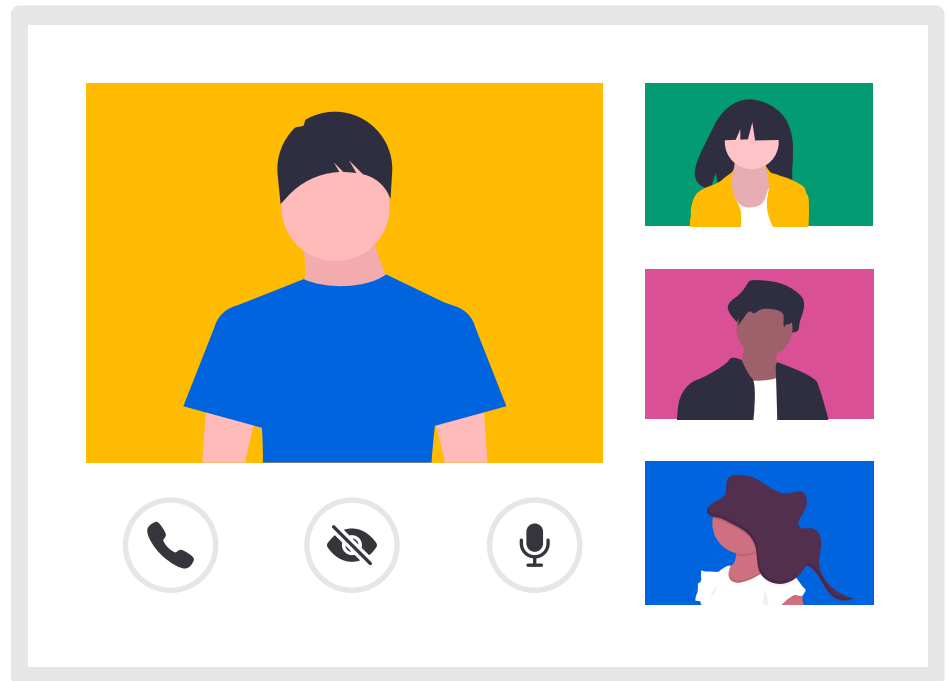
Outcomes

Clearly, educators and parents value Springs' expertise in personalized and distance learning. Over 6,000 people from **across the country**, as well as **around the world —** as far away as France, Australia, India, Poland, Japan, and Afghanistan — signed up for Springs' **Open Classroom**.[xviii] Springs also used internal assessments to track student progress and see if learning loss occurred. Educators found that several Springs Charter School sites **actually grew** in math and ELA with every subgroup during distance learning in the spring of 2020.

how california's charter schools adapted to narrow the digital divide

THE PROBLEM
the digital divide

Lack of access to devices and internet was a key barrier to implementing distance learning for public schools.

As most teachers now know, to fully engage in high-quality remote learning, students need adequate internet connection and a device (tablet, laptop, or Chromebook). Yet, 1.5 million K-12 students in California — 25% of all students — did not have satisfactory **internet**, and 1.1 million students — 17% of all students — did not have access to a **device**.[xix]

In the spring of 2020, this was an **important barrier** in efforts to launch distance learning and keep students engaged for both charter public schools and traditional public schools.

Many teachers grappled with how to engage students virtually, and 75% of teachers reported that students' lack of access to technology and high-speed internet was a "serious obstacle to effective implementation of remote learning."[xx] It was no surprise then that a survey of Los Angeles families found that students were more engaged in distance learning when they had access to a computer and reliable internet.[xxi]

Technology access was a greater a barrier for rural, low-income, and students of color.

Like other inequities in the education system, the lack of access to devices and internet was not a problem that was experienced equally by students attending both charter public schools and traditional public

schools. Students in **rural areas** were less likely than students in **urban areas** to live in a household with an internet subscription.[xxii] Access also varied by income. A spring 2020 survey of California parents found that 50% of **low-income families** did not have a device needed for students to participate in remote learning.[xxiii]

Regardless of family income, **students of color** were less likely than their **White** counterparts to have access to devices and internet. A study of households with a K-12 student in LA County found that, even after controlling for income, Black and Latinx students were significantly less likely to live in a home with a computer and internet connection.[xxiv] Nationally, 35% of Native American, 30% of Black and 26% of Latinx students were not connected to the internet compared to 18% of White students (Figure 11).[xxv]

Figure 11
Percentage of Households with Adequate Connectivity Nationally[vii]

82% White

74% Latinx

70% Black

65% Native American
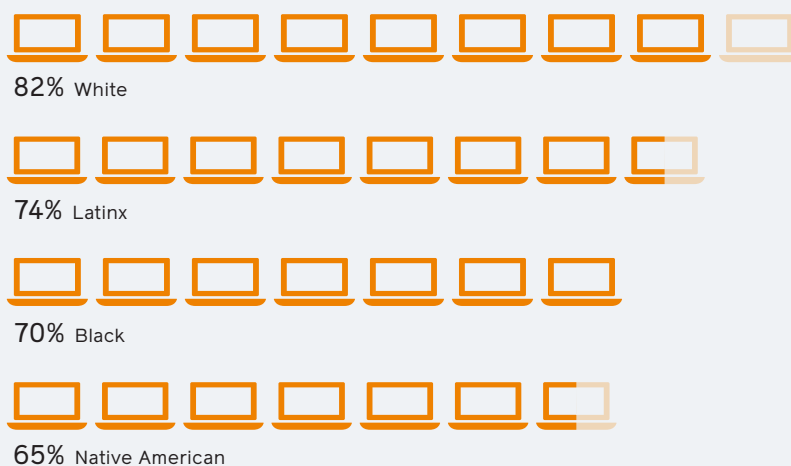
THE RESPONSE

how charters adapted to bridge the divide

Charter schools used their ingenuity to quickly provide devices and internet to students and implement quality distance learning programs.

During the spring transition to distance learning, California's public schools faced an enormous challenge in quickly providing students with devices and internet. As previously stated, charter schools have more flexibility and autonomy than traditional public schools and are held accountable for student outcomes. That flexibility allowed some charter public schools to **reallocate funds** to get students **access to devices and connectivity**.[xxvi]

In CCSA's survey of 31% of charter schools, we found that by early April 2020, just a few weeks after schools transitioned to remote learning, over half of CCSA survey respondents had already provided internet and/or devices to students. However, 30% of respondents still had students without devices, and the majority of respondents had students who still lacked internet access.

CCSA believes there is **more work to be done** to ensure that all students have access, but we can learn from the creativity of charter schools in the Golden State.

What follows are **several examples** of how charter schools acted quickly and strategically to provide students with internet and devices:

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Collegiate Charter High School

Los Angeles, CA

In March, Collegiate acted immediately to avoid any lost learning time. Staff delivered laptops to every student who needed them within 72 hours of implementing its distance learning program. Collegiate's operations staff worked with families to navigate barriers to technology access. The result: Each student had logged on and began receiving remote instruction in just three days.

Scholarship Prep Charter Schools

Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego Counties

By early April when schools were surveyed, Scholarship Prep had already provided over 700 Chromebooks and 55 hot spots to its students who attend one of three schools in Santa Ana, Oceanside, and Wilmington near Long Beach.

St. Hope Public Schools

Sacramento, CA

St. Hope ensured each one of its families had access to the internet within just one week. This charter network operates three schools serving 1,091 students, 78% of whom are low-income[±] and 57% are Black.

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BRIGHT SPOT

Rocketship Public Schools

Leveraging relationships and collaboration to bridge the divide.

When Rocketship Public Schools first learned they would need to close their schools due to shelter-in-place, getting students access to the internet and devices they needed to access remote learning was top of mind.

Four of Rocketship's 13 Bay Area campuses are in the Alum Rock Union Elementary School District (ARUSD) which is located in San Jose, California. In ARUSD, 26% of students of color and 36% of low-income students do not have internet at home.[xxvii]

For its part, Rocketship **immediately distributed resources** and helped their charter public school students and families gain access to devices and internet (See Figure 12).

QUICK FACTS

13 classroom-based public charter K-5 schools.

Served nearly 7,000 students of whom 76% were low income and 55% were English learners in 2020.

High quality schools based on CCSA's Similar Students Rank (SSR) with all schools performing in the top 30% of schools in state in 2019.

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Figure 12
Timeline of Rocketship's
Spring 2020 Pandemic
Response

MARCH 3 — Daily COVID-19 Task Force Begins

Nationwide School Leader Training — MARCH 13

MARCH 16 — Distributed Food for Families, Distance Learning Begins

Launched CareCorps — MARCH 25

APRIL 2 — Launched Family Relief Fund, Released Distance Learning Launchpad

Launched Live Teaching — APRIL 15

APRIL 30 — Distributed Relief Funds

↑80% Student Participation — MAY

MAY 29 — Rocketeers Began Rallying for Racial Justice

1

BEST PRACTICE

Strong relationships to support families and staff

On March 13, the day Rocketship first learned that schools would close, staff moved swiftly to distribute every Chromebook they had to students and launched impromptu trainings on how to use platforms like Google Classroom and Zoom.

Rocketship found that building and maintaining strong relationships with students' families was key to ensuring that students had access to online learning. Staff conducted **virtual home visits with families** to check on their needs and teach them about how to use tools like Zoom. They also used **"parent camps"** at the beginning of the school year as an opportunity to teach families about the digital tools their kids would use frequently during distance learning.

For ongoing support, Rocketship created a Distance Learning Launchpad for families with resources on how to get free internet or hotspots, keep their children safe online, and find free, quality online learning programs.

2

BEST PRACTICE

Collaboration

Through partnerships, Rocketship helped students and families gain access to the technology and devices they needed to engage in distance learning. Rocketship worked to build partnerships with **community organizations, telecommunications companies, and government programs**. For example, Rocketship partnered with the City of San Jose Library to provide 150 additional hot spots to students. They also partnered with telecommunications companies to help set up internet or hot spots for students.

Outcomes

The charter school network provided **5,600 Chromebooks** and sent learning materials home with students **before** remote instruction began in March 2020.[xxviii] As a result, about 95% of Rocketship students had devices by mid-May. Rocketship also purchased an **additional** 5,000 Chromebooks this summer to ensure that new students started the year off with technology and internet. With the devices and internet connection they needed to participate in live lessons, attendance was between 98-99% during the first week of the 2020-21 school year, which is **even higher** than typical in-person rates.
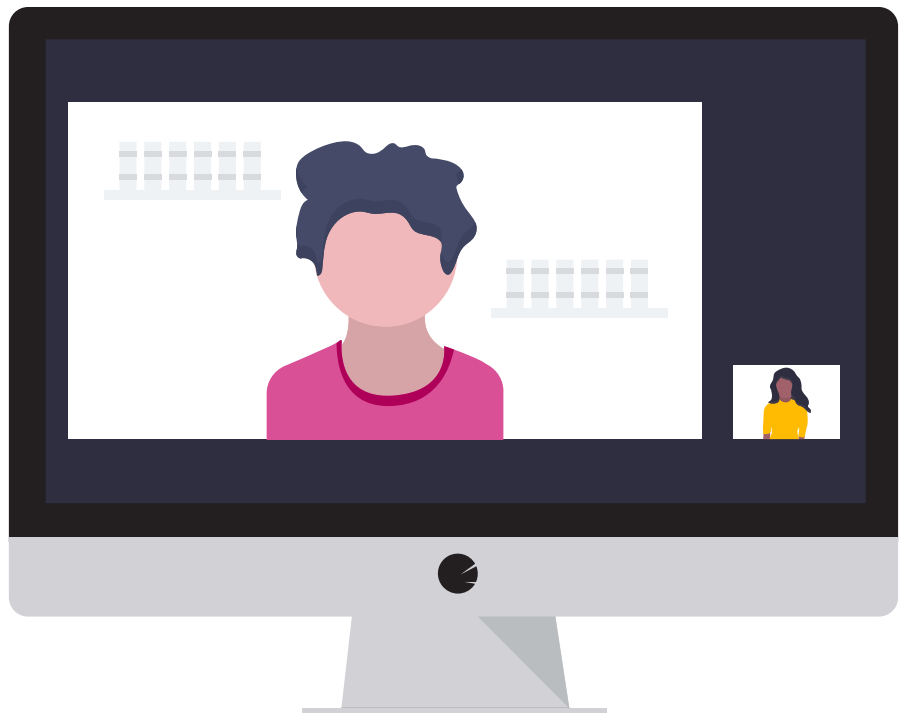
how california's charter schools engaged students in remote learning
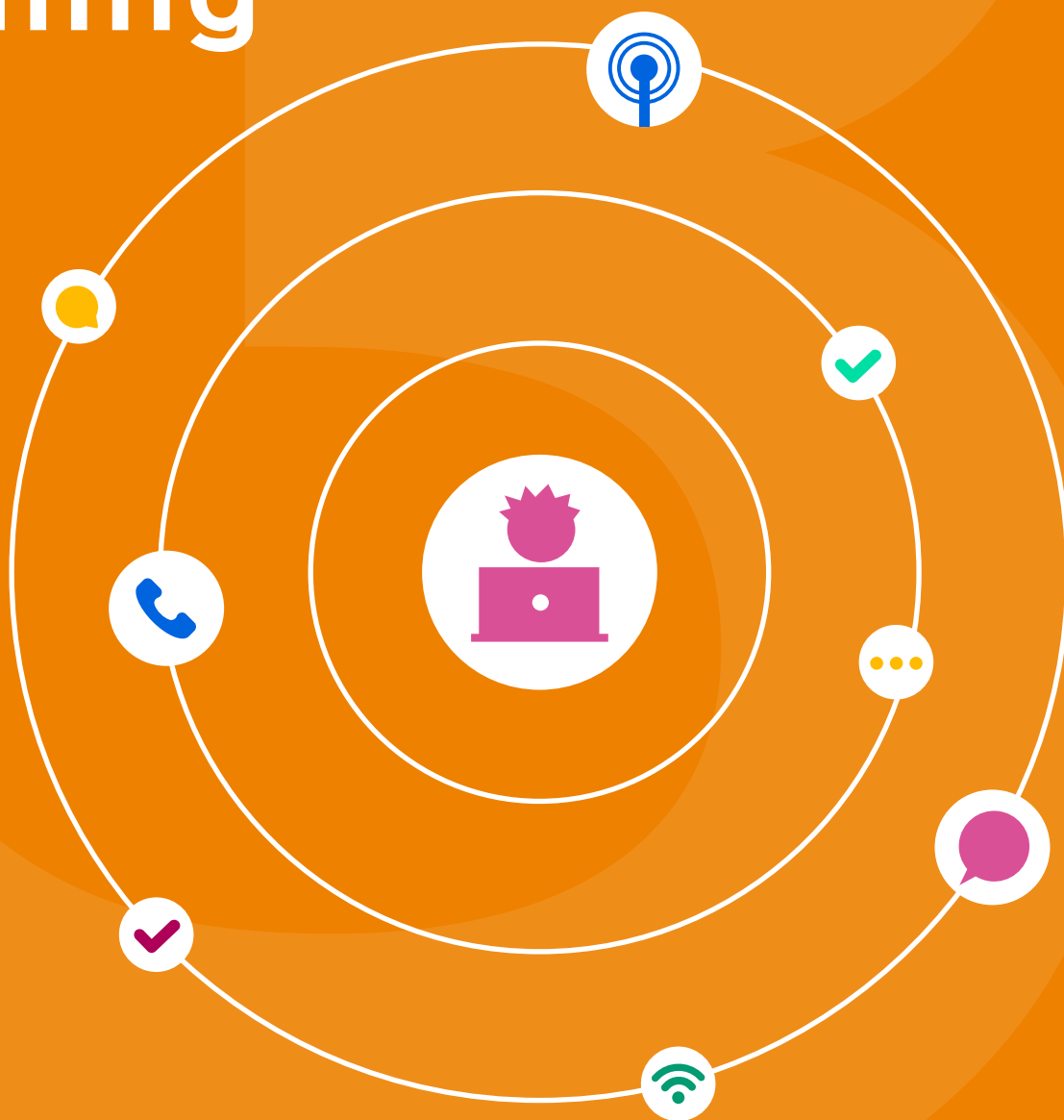
online disengagement

With students at home, many educators struggled to monitor student engagement and track progress.

An increasing number of experts agree that it is difficult to deliver content virtually – especially to kids. During the start of school closures for shelter-in-place in spring 2020, many educators scrambled to track down students who had not yet signed on to remote learning to help ensure they did not fall behind. **Absences increased dramatically** in many schools and districts.[xxix] For example, from March 16 to May 22, an average of 40% of middle and high school students in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) were absent.[xxx] To monitor absences, and more generally how students were adapting to remote learning, schools and districts needed to quickly create new systems for tracking students' attendance, engagement, and academic progress in a virtual setting.

Continuing with the LAUSD example, once the district began tracking attendance and participation in distance learning, they found that of the 60% of students who were present, only about a third actively participated in remote learning by logging into Schoology, LAUSD's remote learning platform.[xxxi] With insights like these, schools and districts could reach out to disengaged students to learn more about what supports they needed and help them get back on track.

Underserved students were more likely to fall through the cracks.

Districts serving a large concentration of historically **underserved students** were **less likely** to enact requirements around student engagement and tracking.[xxxii]

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Nationally, **wealthy districts** were **twice as likely** as low- and middle-income districts to require live teaching during remote learning.[xxxiii] Access to engaging remote learning and requirements around tracking also varied by urbanicity. **Rural school districts** were **less likely** than their urban/ suburban counterparts to expect teachers to take attendance, check-in with students regularly, and require progress monitoring.[xxxiv]

Turning back to California, in LAUSD, Black and Latinx students were seven times more likely than White students to have had no interaction with teachers after schools closed for shelter-in-place and were three times less likely to have received remote instruction every day.[xxxv]

English learners and students with disabilities were also more likely to disengage from remote learning during spring 2020. In LAUSD, while only 13% of secondary students were English learners and only 13% were students with disabilities, 30% of the nearly 6,000 secondary students who had not yet (by the end of April) logged on to any remote learning were English learners and 41% were students with disabilities (See Figure 13).[xxxvi]

Figure 13
LAUSD Secondary Student Population and Population of Students Who Did Not Log Onto Remote Learning by Subgroup, April 2020 [x]

■ Students with Disabilities
■ English Learners

41%
30%
13%

Share of
Secondary Students

Share of Students Who
Had Not Logged On

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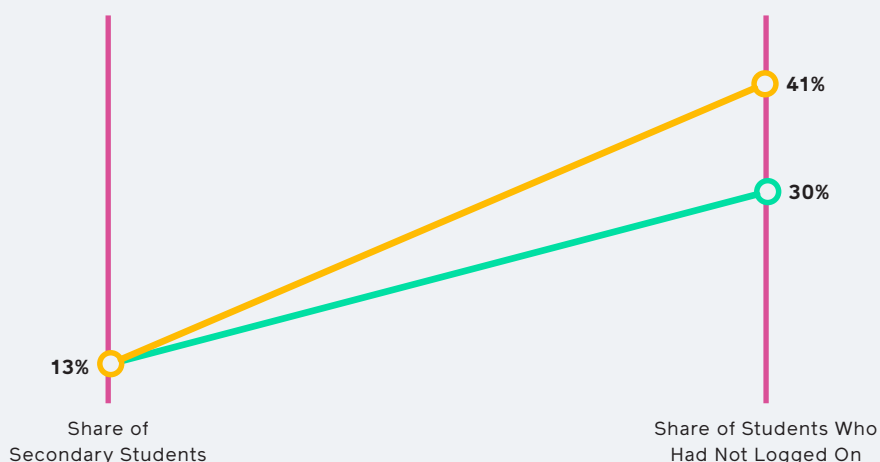
how charter schools engaged students

Charter schools were flexible and innovative in their efforts to keep students engaged and track progress.

For many educators, transitioning from in-person instruction to remote learning in spring 2020 was daunting.[xxxvii] They had to quickly develop strategies to keep students engaged and motivated, monitor progress, and provide support from a distance. As previously stated, charter schools have more **flexibility in staffing and spending** than traditional public schools, which can make it easier to adapt to changing circumstances and implement new models, strategies, and curricula. Many charter schools used this flexibility to implement **creative strategies** for engaging students in remote learning.

Several school leaders who responded to CCSA's April 2020 Distance Learning Survey cited student engagement as a key challenge to remote learning implementation. School leaders voiced concern that many students were unable to focus on academics with distractions at home and/or without a designated workspace.

Surveyed leaders found that younger students had a hard time focusing and older students were often disengaged or absent. Despite these challenges, we found that in early April, **most charter schools**, 63%, were in contact with all their students, and **almost all**, 90%, of surveyed schools were in contact with at least 90% of their students.

Some surveyed school leaders also struggled to track student learning. One leader wrote that one of the biggest challenges was, "Not knowing what has been accomplished or received. We can see if kids log on but not for how long…" To combat this lack of information on academic progress and engagement, the majority, 73%, of surveyed schools continued to assess their students (See Figure 14).

Figure 14
7 out of 10 (73%) of CCSA Survery Respondents Reported They Were Continuing to Assess Their Students
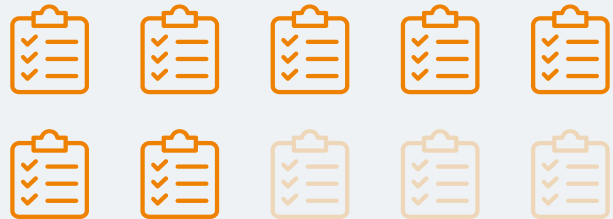
Schools reported using **state assessments** like Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments (ICAs) and Assessment Blocks (IABs), as well as internal assessments like iReady, NWEA, and Lexia to better comprehend how remote learning impacted student progress. For example, ISANA Academies implemented new measures to increase participation and the validity of their internal assessments. In the spring, they conducted a **parent training series** on the importance of assessments, how to set up them up for your child, and why you should not help your child answer questions. They also **broke up the assessments** over multiple days to make sure students did not get overwhelmed and to make them more age appropriate. This also helped ensure that they were assessing students' critical thinking skills rather than their familiarity with technology.

BRIGHT SPOT

Ednovate Charter Schools

Acting swiftly and strategically to keep students engaged.

When COVID hit, Ednovate teachers and administrators worried about supporting their students. Ednovate's six high schools in the Los Angeles area serve predominately **low-income students of color**, many of whom had parents who lost their jobs during the pandemic, could not access unemployment due to being undocumented, and/or did not have the personal experience or resources to help their kids navigate the college admissions process. Ednovate students typically boast a 99% college acceptance rate, but as Jesse Noonan, Ednovate's Chief Academic Officer, explained, "We were concerned about our kids applying to college and whether they would still go based on the circumstances their families were facing."

QUICK FACTS

6 public charter high schools in the Los Angeles area.

98% students of color and 84% low-income students in 2019-20.

65% of USC Hybrid High graduates went to a University of California or California State University in 2018.

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1

BEST PRACTICE
Maintain and track contact with students

Ednovate maintained **consistent** communication with students throughout the day to ensure students were engaged and had the resources and support they needed. At the beginning of every school day, Ednovate students took an **advisory survey** that asked what they were working on that day, how they were doing, if they had any concerns, and whether they would like a one-on-one check-in with their advisor. Students then attended **advisory meetings**, and advisors took attendance. This gave Ednovate staff a complete list of attendance by 10:30am each morning. Knowing which students were absent so early in the day allowed staff to **call families** of absent students to help them troubleshoot technology issues or understand what work they were responsible for that day.

To get a high-level picture of student engagement, Ednovate created a **virtual learning dashboard**, which tracked the percentage of students that had devices and internet, attendance, work completion, and the percentage of students with a "C" or better in all classes. Prior to the pandemic, Ednovate did not track **work completion**, but staff found this to be an **important indicator** of engagement after realizing that several students were going to advisory but not completing their assignments.

2

BEST PRACTICE
Realign staff roles to meet students' needs

During the initial transition to remote learning, Ednovate leadership realized that they could leverage staff who were no longer able to do the jobs they were hired to do, (i.e. staff who work on school safety) to increase engagement during remote learning. As a result, school leadership **realigned the roles** of these employees, and they began making frequent phone calls to students who were absent, disengaged, and/or who needed resources or support.

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Outcomes

By acting **swiftly and strategically** to keep students engaged in remote learning, Ednovate was able to maintain **96% average daily attendance** throughout the spring. They **acted immediately** to avoid disengagement and learning loss during the initial transition to remote learning. They used Monday, March 16, 2020 — the first day of closures — for make-up work and for students to check in with their advisors, and then they launched remote instruction on Tuesday, March 17, 2020. They even found that their virtual pre-ACT testing administration had **higher attendance** in 2020 than in previous years during in-person testing. Lastly, **98%** of Ednovate high school seniors were **accepted** to a four-year college or university last academic year.

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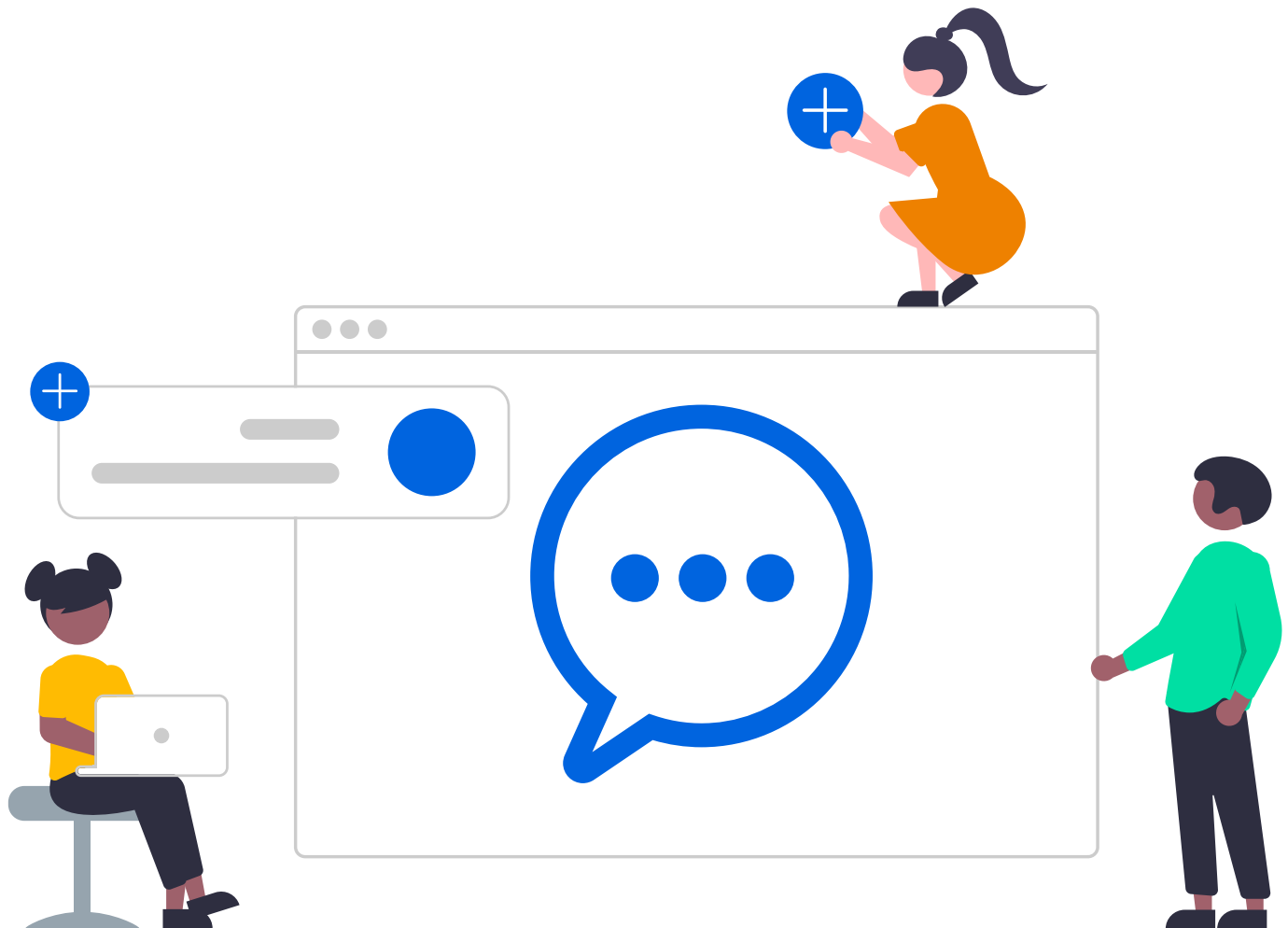
how california's charter schools supported students' social and emotional needs

THE PROBLEM
social and emotional distress

Many students suffered emotionally and/or socially during spring 2020.

The pandemic disrupted life as we knew it during spring 2020, and many students felt this change deeply. The stress of the pandemic, remote learning, and parental job loss increased the need for student mental health services.[xxxviii] In fact, 32% of students who did not receive mental health services prior to the pandemic reported that they needed help in the spring of 2020.[xxxix] California students reported feeling **lonely, bored, overwhelmed, and anxious** when surveyed in the spring after transitioning to distance learning. About a quarter (23%) of surveyed California K-12 students rated their mental wellness state at three or less out of 10, a level that, by the California Association of School Counselors' standards, requires **immediate action**.[xl]

Without school-based health clinics and/or access to private spaces for virtual counseling, many of these students could not get the support they needed. In March 2020, between 60-70% of school-based health clinics were closed, cutting off access to hundreds of thousands of California's students.[xli] The longer students were out of school, the more likely they were to suffer emotionally, with elementary and middle school students **more likely** to experience negative impacts.[xlii] That being said, teens were also hit hard by the pandemic. The majority of teens (7 out of 10) reported struggling with their mental health during spring 2020 – over 50% had anxiety, 45% felt exceedingly stressed, and 43% were depressed.[xliii]

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Figure 15

CA students' self-reported mental wellness on a scale of 1-10 (low mental wellness to high mental wellness) prior to and during the pandemic [vii]

- Pre-Pandemic
- Spring 2020
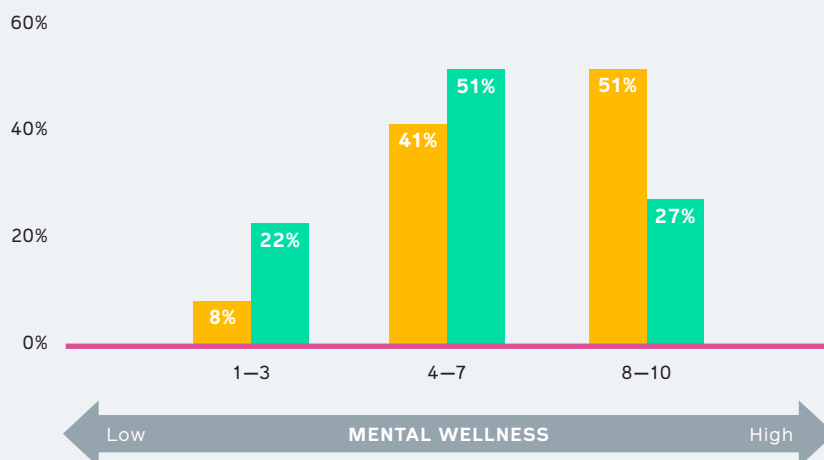
The pandemic disproportionately harmed the social and emotional well-being of historically underserved students.

The psychological and economic impacts of the pandemic were generally felt more acutely by historically underserved students and their families. In the spring, Black and Latinx adults and children were dying from COVID at **double the rate** of White adults in some places.[xliv] It was therefore more likely that Black and Latinx students would be directly impacted by COVID. These students, especially Latinx students whose parents did not go to college, were also **more likely** to have a parent who lost their job during shelter-in-place.[xlv]

With job losses and uncertainty came **unprecedented levels of child hunger**. 14% of California families with children reporting having insufficient food during the spring of 2020.[xlvi] Again, the likelihood of experiencing hunger varied by race/ethnicity, as Black families were **five times more likely** than White families to lack access to food during the spring.[xlvii]

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Students with disabilities felt the impacts of the pandemic in a variety of ways. Students with neurological and learning differences can find change and inconsistency stressful, and many struggled to adapt to remote learning.[xlviii] Distance learning had some positive impacts for students with autism spectrum disorders, as online learning can be more visually supportive, organized, repetitive, and content-focused.[xlix] Even when this was the case, many of these students still depended on mental, occupational, and/or physical therapy at school but were **unable to access these services** during the spring.[l]

how charter schools supported students

Charter schools' flexibility allowed them to stay attuned to and address students' social, emotional and physical needs.

In California, charter schools are required to provide low-income[±] students with at least one free or reduced-price meal each school day, but they have the flexibility to implement food services programs that meet the specific nutritional needs of their students.[li] This **flexibility** was key to ensuring that students **did not go hungry** during the pandemic.

In March 2020, CCSA created a map of all the schools (both charter and traditional public) **distributing free food** for students. Over the course of the spring and summer, CCSA's Los Angeles Local Advocacy Team surveyed its member schools regularly about meal provision. In this survey, Green Dot Public Schools estimated that they served over 800,000 meals during the campus closures in the spring 2020 and even after school ended in the summer (See Figure 16).

Figure 16

Green Dot Public Schools Estimated Total Number of Meals Served During the 2019-20 Academic Year and Summer

Date	Meals
3/23	22,255
4/17	117,645
4/17	170,475
4/17	478,253
4/17	654,439
7/18	711,557
7/30	803,969

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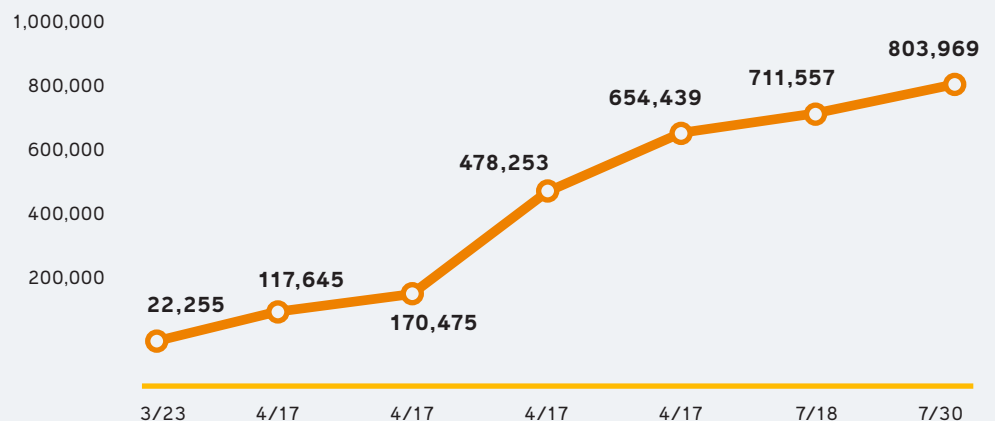
In just one week, (the week of April 20,) Alliance College-Ready Public Schools served roughly 67,500 meals. Several charter schools, like Arts in Community Charter Schools in East Los Angeles, went above and beyond to provide meals to their students and their surrounding communities. Staff who had less work during remote learning, like janitorial staff, prepared and delivered meals to families who did not want to leave the house, community members who got infected with COVID, and seniors with disabilities living nearby.[lii]

In addition to meal provision, charter schools **created new systems** for assessing students' needs and helping them during this challenging time. Schools like Rocketship and Ednovate launched "Care Corps," a group of staff responsible for supporting students and families. Care Corps staff reached out to students and families through a brief survey, reviewed responses, and followed up directly with families in need to help connect them to services and resources including mental health services, domestic violence assistance, and unemployment services. Rocketship staff even created a how-to guide for other schools looking to launch a Care Corps program.

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BRIGHT SPOT
CORE Butte Charter School

Supporting the whole student during times of loss and uncertainty.

CORE Butte is a nonclassroom-based K–12 charter school based in Northern California, offering a Personalized Learning Program to families who homeschool their children. The school includes a K–8 Home Study Program for students in Chico and Paradise, as well as a High School Program for teenagers in Chico.

Two years ago, CORE Butte families and educators living in Paradise lost everything when the Camp Fire ripped through the mountain community. The charter school lost its Paradise campus and 250 CORE Butte students and 12 staff members lost their homes.

Following this tragedy, the charter school **adopted a robust approach** to address the social and emotional well-being of their students moving forward.

When Mary Cox, Executive Director of CORE Butte, first learned her school would have to pause in-person learning in the spring of 2020 due to COVID, she once again worried about the mental health of her students. She feared another shutdown – this time due to the global pandemic – would bring back all the feelings from the Camp Fire. She also worried about the social isolation of her students. "It was really important to us to that we build a way for students to feel connected to their school community," she explained.

CORE Butte is able to do just that using the following best practices.

QUICK FACTS

Nonclassroom-based K–12 charter school serving over 800 students.

42% low-income students, 15% students with disabilities, 7% homeless students.

Dispite the disruption from the Camp Fire in Paradise, 97% of students graduated in 2019.

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1
BEST PRACTICE
Offer personalized support and instruction

After the Camp Fire, CORE Butte implemented a **tiered system of support** and created a new role of Camp Fire Counselor, who was specifically hired to help students work through traumas. During shelter-in-place, the Camp Fire counselor was booked solid and was extremely busy supporting her students.

CORE Butte also had two school psychologists and two social-emotional learning coordinators who taught mindfulness. Under the tiered system of support, as students moved up the tiers, which means they were identified as higher-risk, they received **more direct supports**. With this system already in place during spring 2020, CORE Butte administered **daily "pulse point" surveys** to students to better assess students' needs. They found that several students who seemed fine on their Zoom calls were in actuality, struggling. With that information, a school psychologist would then reach out to those students to provide them with individual counseling and support. CORE Butte also supported its staff in this same way and had them fill out a weekly survey.

2
BEST PRACTICE
Foster strong relationships with students, families, and staff

Cox emphasized the importance of building and nurturing strong relationships with students, families, and staff to support students' social and emotional well-being. Even though CORE Butte serves roughly 800 students, staff know each student's unique story and background. To mitigate social isolation in the spring, **staff thought deeply** about which students had similar interests, paired them together, and fostered an online relationship between them. According to Cox, "a lot of it comes down to trust and really knowing your student, what helps them get through things, and what and motivates them… We found what makes each student tick and focused on that."

Teachers also **doubled down** on their relationships with parents. CORE Butte already had strong relationships with its parents since under their model, parents are either the primary educators, (with the assistance of a credentialed teacher) or are highly engaged (in the case of high school students).

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During the spring, CORE Butte **deepened these relationships**, especially with high school parents, by working to support parents of disengaged students and communicating with parents about meal services, supplies, and supports over their **ParentSquare portal.**[liii]

Outcomes

By personalizing supports and instruction and concentrating on relationships, CORE Butte supported its students and staff academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. They were on spring break when shelter-in-place started, and they were able to launch remote learning the day students returned from break. Once remote learning began, the vast majority of students stayed **fully engaged**, which likely **improved** their social and emotional well-being and kept them **progressing** academically. CORE Butte's work to provide social and emotional support not only benefited their own students but also school districts and charter schools **throughout Butte County**. Cox discussed the "hours and hours and hours" spent supporting Butte County public school students, "We knew that, that was our gift to give, our expertise, and to be a part of a greater community, that was our role."

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conclusion

How charter schools met the moment: lessons from "Bright Spot" schools

Throughout this report, we highlighted "bright spot" charter schools who went above and beyond to serve their students. In speaking with these schools, several themes emerged.

Here are some best practices that all schools can learn from as they navigate unforeseen circumstances like the transition to remote learning and as they begin to re-think what education could look like after many students return to in-person schooling.

React and adapt

All our "bright spot" schools made adjustments in the fall of 2020 based on their experiences in the spring. In this rapidly changing environment, school leaders stressed the importance of adapting quickly to improve student learning and respond to unforeseen challenges.

Offer personalized support and instruction

Just as every student learns differently, every student was affected by the pandemic in different ways. "Bright spot" schools found that offering personalized instruction and support was key to successful remote learning. Small group or 1:1 interactions with teachers, mental health providers, and other members of staff helped increase student engagement, improve learning, and decrease feelings of isolation.

Foster strong relationships to support families and staff

"Bright spot" schools emphasized the importance of building meaningful relationships with students' families during this time. Once schools established trust with families, they could identify and provide necessary resources and support. Families are key partners in remote learning, and schools found creative ways to engage them as partners in their child's learning. Schools also stressed the importance of maintaining strong relationships with and supporting teachers and staff.

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Maintain and track contact with students

"Bright spot" schools all implemented systems for sustaining and tracking contact with students. This allowed schools to track attendance, engagement, and social and emotional well-being, as well as answer questions from students, and identify any needs in real time.

Innovate

"Bright spot" schools found new and creative ways to engage students, help them learn, and problem-solve during remote learning. Schools stressed the importance of maximizing live instructional time by finding novel ways to make synchronous learning time interactive, engaging, and productive. "Bright spot" schools created high-quality online learning resources to share with educators, families, and students across the state.

Find opportunities for collaboration

Schools found value in partnerships with other schools (charter and TPS), community organizations, and businesses. As they adapted to remote learning, schools identified creative ways to tap into existing resources and forge connections that helped students and families. Charter schools also used remote learning as an opportunity to share innovative practices with both other charter and traditional public schools. Moving forward, all schools can benefit from increased collaboration within the charter school sector, between charter schools and TPS, and between charter schools and external partners.

Realign staff roles to meet students' needs

Schools found that pre-COVID roles and responsibilities no longer always make the most sense strategically. They instead found creative ways to leverage staff to meet new and unforeseen challenges including food scarcity, disparate technology access, student dis-engagement, and social/emotional distress.

recommendations

To ensure all California students have access to a high-quality education, CCSA recommends the following for policy makers, advocates, practitioners, and researchers:

To improve equity and academic quality in public education moving forward, we should protect the autonomy of charter schools and learn from the innovative ways they served all students during the pandemic.

POLICY

Protect the autonomy of charter schools

As we saw in the spring of 2020, charter schools were able to quickly pivot and provide high-quality instruction at a distance largely thanks to their autonomy and flexibility. Instead of limiting charter school autonomy, legislators and advocates should preserve autonomy and hold schools accountable for student outcomes. As we work to re-open schools, these flexibilities will be crucial to ensuring a successful transition to in-person instruction.

POLICY

Distribute resources equitably

The ways in which students experienced the pandemic varied dramatically depending on their age, location, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, disability status, and/or status as LGBTQIA+. Charter schools serve a high proportion of historically underserved students who did not have access to educational alternatives like learning pods, private tutors, or microschooling during the pandemic. To combat these inequities, schools serving historically underserved students should receive equitable funding and resources to diminish the disproportionate effects of the pandemic on their students.

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"Schools like ours are the experts in the industry right now and yet we're the ones getting attacked politically… When the pandemic hit, I had phone calls from local school districts across Butte County asking for help… I was on the phone for hours and hours with all sorts of different charter schools, districts, Superintendents, telling them what the key to success was for high-quality distance learning…. I think that our community 100% thinks that CORE Butte knows what's going on, knows how to do it, knows how to do it well, and relied on us during this time…"

MARY COX
CORE BUTTE

PRACTICE

Identify, codify, and share best practices from charter schools

We can learn a great deal from the proven strategies "bright spot" schools highlighted in this report used to support their students and increase academic progress during the pandemic. We must now look ahead to the post-pandemic world and think deeply about how lessons learned from this time can help inform and improve public education moving forward.

RESEARCH

Conduct mixed-method studies on quality remote learning

Quantitative and qualitative data can help us gain insight into what worked (and did not work) during remote instruction. For example, which schools saw improvements on internal assessments and/or saw opportunity gaps narrow during remote learning? What, if anything, did those schools do differently to ensure that their students continued to learn? How can these best practices improve educational equity and quality in a post-COVID world?

RESEARCH

Quantify school choice during the pandemic

As the saying goes, parents vote with their feet. To better understand how parents and students experienced the pandemic, we must use enrollment data to determine how remote learning impacted where parents enrolled their children during the spring and fall of 2020 and beyond. What, if any, changes occurred in enrollment based on charter status, delivery model, school size, etc.? If there were changes, will they endure after the pandemic ends?

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appendix a

Definition of key terms

LOW INCOME

±**Low-income** (California Department of Education "CDE" Definition)
Students who qualify for the federal Free/Reduced Price Lunch
program.

°**Low-income** (CDE Definition)
Students who received the designation of socioeconomically
disadvantaged. These are students who qualify for the federal
Free/Reduced Price Lunch program or whose parents did not
receive a high school diploma.

MANAGEMENT MODEL   (CCSA Definition)

CMO School
School that is part of a charter management organization (CMO),
which is an organization that operates three or more schools linked
by a common philosophy and centralized governance or operations.

Network School
School that is part of a Network, which is a group of schools linked
by a common philosophy but not centralized governance or operations.
Networks are also entities that would otherwise fit definition of CMO
but have fewer than three schools.

Freestanding
Freestanding schools include both start-up single-site schools and
traditional district schools that have converted to charter schools
that are not part of a network or CMO affiliation.

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AUTONOMY   (CCSA Definition)

Autonomous/Independent Charter Schools
Schools that appoint their board of directors, do not use the local
school district's collective bargaining agreement, are directly funded
and are likely to be incorporated as a 501(c)3.

Non-Autonomous/Dependent Charter Schools
Schools that either have the majority of their board appointed by
their authorizer or are under a school district's collective bargaining
agreement, are indirectly funded, and are not incorporated as a 501(c)3.

Semi-Autonomous/Semi-Independent Charter Schools
Schools that appoint their own board and are incorporated as a 501(c)3.
In addition to these characteristics, a semi-autonomous charter school
either uses their authorizing district's collective bargaining agreement
and is directly funded or is indirectly funded and does not use the
district's collective bargaining agreement.

SITE TYPE   (CDE Definition)

Nonclassroom Based
Schools where less than 80% of instructional time is offered at the
school site when students are, "engaged in educational activities
required of those pupils and are under immediate supervision and
control of an employee of the charter school who possesses a valid
teaching certificate" (EC 47612.5).

Classroom-based
Schools where at least 80% of instructional time is offered
at the school site.

DASS SCHOOLS   (CDE DEFINITION)

Specific school types are automatically placed into DASS or are considered Alternative Schools that are: Continuation, County or District Community Day, Opportunity, County Community, Juvenile Court, California Education Authority, Division of Juvenile Justice, or County-Run Special Education Schools. In addition, any district-operated special education schools that have at least 70% of the students enrolled in grades three through eight and grade eleven participating in the California Alternate Assessments (CAA) will also be automatically placed into DASS.

CALIFORNIA DASHBOARD   (CDE Definition)

The Dashboard contains reports that display the performance of local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and student groups on a set of state and local measures to assist in identifying strengths, challenges, and areas in need of improvement.

DISTANCE FROM STANDARD   (CDE Definition)

- A state indicator on the Dashboard that measures how far each student is from the lowest possible scale score within the "Standard Met" Smarter Balanced performance level. The Smarter Balanced Consortium identifies "Standard Met" as demonstrating the knowledge and skills necessary for students to be on track for college and career readiness at their grade level.

- All the "distances" are then used to calculate the average distance for each local educational agency, school, or student group. The results show, on average, the needed improvement to bring the average student score to "Standard Met," or the extent to which the average student exceeds the standard.

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SUSPENSION RATE   (CDE Definition)

A state indicator on the Dashboard that measures the percentage of students who have been suspended at least once in a given school year.

COLLEGE AND CAREER INDICATOR   (CDE Definition)

- The percentage of students who graduate with a status of "Prepared" for college/career. Graduates classified as "Prepared" must meet at least one of the criteria.
- It is calculated by dividing the number of students who graduated "Prepared" by the total number of students in a graduation class.

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appendix b

Characteristics of Schools That Responded to CCSA's April 2020 Survey Compared to State Average for Charter Schools

	Survey Respondents (n=409)	Statewide Charter Average (n=1,311)
Autonomous/Independent	98%*	76%
CMO/Network	75%*	54%
Independent Study/Combination	14%*	24%
Conversion	6%*	15%
Elementary	50%*	43%
Middle	13%	11%
High	19%*	23%
Elementary-High	19%*	22%
Average Enrollment	543	534
Percent Latinx	59%*	54%
Percent Black	9%*	8%
Percent Asian	5%	5%
Percent White	20%*	25%
Percent English learners	18%*	16%
Percent FRL	64%*	59%
Percent Students with Disabilities (2019 Test-Takers)	12%*	11%
Average DFS Percentile	48	47
Average SSR	6.0	5.7
Average CCI	50	45

Significant at the 95% confidence level

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appendix c

Methodology for calculating average distance learning start date

This data source provides data on 174 California school districts, including school closure dates and the distance learning start dates. Using this information, we calculated the number of days without distance learning (ie. the number of days after schools closed and before distance learning began) for districts in the sample. The "average start date" represents the average day that districts began distance learning based on the average number of days without distance learning and assuming a closure date of March 16. We also used the data provided on the percentage of students in each district that are low-income[±] and compared the average percentage of low-income[±] students enrolled in districts that spent more than two weeks without distance learning to enrollment in districts that spend less than two weeks without distance learning. We then compared this to data from the CCSA Distance Learning Survey, in which charter schools indicated their start date.

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