

Prioritizing Support for Students Who Are Vulnerable



Framing the Issue

Although coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) affects every student in the United States, the pandemic has a disproportionately negative impact on the lives of students who have been historically marginalized. Addressing and ameliorating the effect of COVID-19 on students' lives requires increased focus on those students most affected: English learners, students with disabilities, racial and ethnic minority students, and students experiencing trauma. These students face unique challenges posed by the pandemic and that educators must recognize and understand. The longer these sharpened needs do not receive elevated supports, the wider the gaps of equity and achievement will grow.



Key Contacts at AIR

English Learners

Patricia Garcia-Arena
Principal Researcher
pgarcia-arena@air.org

Brenda Arellano
Senior Researcher
barellano@air.org

Rebecca Bergery
Senior Researcher
rbergery@air.org

Students With Disabilities

Teri Marx
Senior Researcher
tmarx@air.org

Supporting Racial and Ethnic Minority Students

Jameela Conway-Turner
Researcher
jconway-turner@air.org

Students Experiencing Trauma

Kathleen Guarino
Senior Technical Assistance Consultant
kguarino@air.org



Key Takeaways

Supporting English Learners

1. Support teachers to help them communicate with parents/guardians who are not English speakers, especially those parents or guardians who are supporting students in remote learning settings. Guidance might focus on providing parents an overview of academic expectations, upcoming content, expected group/student norms in a remote or hybrid setting, and ways in which parents can be involved and support and track their children's progress.
2. Include guidance for teachers and other staff on how to better identify and assess students who may benefit from English language support and services in a virtual environment.

Supporting Students With Disabilities

1. Engage in cross-departmental implementation teams that include special education voice at the state, district, and school levels to ensure, from the onset, that plans for remotely supporting students encompass students with disabilities.
2. Consider adopting universal design for learning—a way of thinking about teaching and learning that provides all students equal opportunity to succeed. Design instructional opportunities that focus on students who are often the most difficult to teach, and these opportunities will benefit all students.
3. Use a data-driven, multi-tiered system of support framework to ensure students are receiving appropriate interventions, at increasing levels of intensity, based on their needs

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Supporting Racial and Ethnic Minority Students, With Emphasis on Black Students

1. Address bias and commit to anti-racism. Challenge beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals who support or perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways.
2. Participate in implicit bias and cultural competence training related to inter-educator relationships and teacher–student relationships.
3. Challenge the conscious or unconscious racial bias that teachers and students may hold, which can include public expressions of racism, often involving slurs, biases, or hateful words or actions.
4. Learn about systemic racism in education and within your own community.

Supporting Students Experiencing Trauma

1. Educate all school staff about trauma, including stressors associated with COVID-19, and the effect of trauma and stressors on students and staff.
2. Institute regular check-ins with students that are focused on well-being, such as emotional check-ins at the beginning and end of class (in-person or virtual) and/or surveys or Google Forms with questions about current state of well-being.
3. Integrate strategies for coping with stress and fostering emotional regulation into daily interactions with students, whether in-person or virtual (e.g., emotional check-ins, breathing exercises, mindfulness practices). Consider integrating similar strategies into regular meetings with staff to foster adult well-being.
4. Strengthen internal systems for identifying students in need of additional support, including integrating screening and assessment tools that consider potential exposure to various forms of adversity and trauma and related effects.
5. Institute regular check-ins with parents and caregivers that include inquiries about their current state of well-being and what they are needing for supports at this time.



Resources

Supporting English Learners

- Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School (NCEE 2014-4012) (<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/19>)
- Guidance for Navigating Remote Learning for English Learner Students (<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/blogs/english-learner-remote-learning.aspx>)
- What are some specific practices used to support English learner (EL) students and their families? (https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/Docs/Blog/FAQs_COVID-19_SupportingELsFamilies_508c.pdf)

Supporting Students With Disabilities

- Highlighting Resources for Teachers and Parents to Enhance the Continuity of Learning During COVID-19 for Children With Disabilities (<https://osepideasthatwork.org/continuity-learning-during-covid-19>)
- Practices and Resources to Support Parents and Families (<https://osepideasthatwork.org/sites/default/files/SWDLearning-Families-508.pdf>)
- Practices and Resources to Support Teachers (<https://osepideasthatwork.org/sites/default/files/SWDLearning-Teachers-508.pdf>)

Supporting Racial and Ethnic Minority Students, With Emphasis on Black Students

- Coaching for White Leaders to Build Anti-Racist Skills (<https://www.jenwillsea.com/work-with-me.html>)
- Culturally Responsive Education Remotely (<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bc5da7c3560c36b7dab1922/t/5e7a26b60fdceb59f9749c3c/1585063606912/NYU+Metro+Center+Guidance+on+Culturally+Responsive+Sustaining+Remote+Teaching+and+Learning+%282020%29+%281%29+%281%29.pdf>)
- Tools for Educators to Listen to and Learn from Families During COVID-19 School Closures (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1e1JLqNvf_yPfOqwNNObPATrSLsRAKKVQeC7viGFTAWU/edit)

Supporting Students Experiencing Trauma

- Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package (<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/trauma-sensitive-schools-training-package>)
- Supporting Student Resilience: Well-Being Self-Assessment Planning Tool (https://gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/Supporting_Student_Resilience_Well-Being_Self-Assessment_Planning_Tool.pdf)

<https://www.air.org/resource/air-s-covid-19-response-and-resources>



AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

1400 Crystal Drive, 10th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202
202.403.5000

www.air.org