





Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Multilingual Learners* and Their Social and Emotional Well-Being

For multilingual learners (MLs) and their families, the COVID-19 pandemic has had disproportionate and inter-related consequences for their economic stability, educational opportunities and outcomes, and social, emotional, physical, and mental well-being.

School Attendance8,11

- Since the start of the pandemic in the U.S., an estimated 3 million students have been absent or not actively participating in remote learning.¹
- A survey found that 23% of students were not logging into remote learning and almost 45% had lower levels of engagement.
- Absenteeism can harm the development of key social and emotional skills such as social awareness, self-efficacy, and self-management.
- In schools with only remote learning, attendance was typically lower for middle and high school English learners (ELs) than for non-ELs.

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 Researchers predict that COVID-19-related school closures may negatively affect the social and emotional development of vulnerable subgroups, such as MLs/ELs.

Physical and Mental Health 15,17

The physical and mental health of MLs may have been affected by the following actors:

- Vulnerability to COVID-19 infection
 - Hesitancy to seek medical and mental health services
 - New barriers to diagnosing and treating mental health issues
 - Scarcity of culturally and linguistically competent mental health care options
 - Grief and shock at losing family and friends
 - Increased feelings of anxiety and isolation
 - Reemergence of traumatic memories

According to the CDC, mental health-related visits to emergency departments from April–October 2020 increased by 24% for children ages 5–11 and by 31% for children ages 12–17 from the same time in 2019.^{1,9}

Economy, Community, and Society 5,7,14,15

Many MLs may have experienced the following:

- Family members who are essential workers and are unable to stay at home
- Family members who lost their jobs
- Taking on responsibilities such as communicating with landlords and social service agencies on behalf of adults; serving as translators and interpreters for adults with limited English language proficiency
 - Working to provide additional income for their families
 - Additional responsibilities, such as caring for younger siblings
 - Experiencing discrimination due to their ethnicities

In a survey conducted by Save the Children, a majority of children who did not go to school and whose schools were closed reported increased negative feelings.^{2,12}

Supports and Resources 15,16

For many MLs, COVID-19-related school closures resulted in

- reduced access to mental health and social support services;
- less support from teachers who provide coping tools; and
- less communication and support from peers during instructional tasks.

*The term *multilingual learner(s)* refers to the student population defined as *English learner(s)* in section 8101(20) of the <u>Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act</u>. In this infographic the two terms are used interchangeably.





Recommendations for Supporting ELs in Schools

Supportive learning environments and conditions may help students overcome the negative effects of adverse experiences, such as those MLs faced during the pandemic.¹⁵ As in-person instruction continues, schools and districts should continue to take action to support the social and emotional well-being of MLs.



Supports, Resources, & School Policies 4,10,15,16

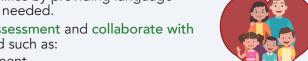
- Continue to consider the impact school closures have had on MLs' experiences and learning opportunities. 6,15,17
- Increase learning time for MLs.
- Provide communication opportunities (including in L1**) by intentionally planning for interaction around academic and social content.
- Implement social and emotional learning, mindfulness, trauma-informed, and culturally and linguistically responsive practices by:
 - providing consistent routines
- promoting translanguaging
- listening to students
- promoting student autonomy
- Implement "working alliances" or collaborative approaches among school staff.
- Introduce a multi-tiered system of supports.
- Implement project-based learning to increase student engagement.
- Continue to build MLs' fluency with technology to allow learning opportunities inside and outside of the classroom.
- Provide professional development on trauma-informed care and teaching.
- Foster a safe and supportive school climate.
- Locate and reengage absent and disengaged students.
- Implement positive discipline practices, such as:
 - non-punitive approaches
 - non-exclusionary approaches
 - avoiding zero tolerance policies

Mental Health Support 15,17

- Implement district and schoolwide approaches to meeting the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students and staff.
- Increase the number of culturally and linguistically competent counselors, social workers, and school psychologists who can support MLs in their home languages, if needed.
- Share mental health resources with students, staff, and families.
- Work to reduce any stigma that can be associated with underserved student groups.
- Talk about mental health.
- Provide students opportunities to speak openly about their lives, stressors, anxiety, etc.
- Let students know that they are not alone.
- Allow time to heal.

Family & Community Engagement¹⁵

- Strengthen existing relationships and develop new ones with community-based organizations.
- Strengthen relationships with ML families by providing language and culturally responsive supports as needed.
- Conduct student and family needs assessment and collaborate with community partners on areas of need such as:
 - physical and mental employment health
 - childcare
 - financial security
- housing security
- food security
- Internet and device access













Sources and Endnotes:

The resources below have been selected based on the following criteria:

- Resource produced by a federally funded study or center
- Resource produced by an open access and peer reviewed journal
- Resource produced by a non-partisan and non-profit organization
- ¹ While these data are not disaggregated by ML/EL status, these numbers and percentages include English learners and other vulnerable student groups.
- ² Save the Children Survey included responses from students around the world whose schools may not have offered remote instruction during the pandemic.
- ³ The term "working alliance" refers to any change process that involves interaction and collaboration.
- ⁴ Boccanfuso, C., & Kuhfeld, M. (2011, March). Multiple responses, promising results: Evidence-based, nonpunitive alternatives to zero tolerance. *Child Trends*.
- ⁵ Capps, R., Batalova, J., & Gelatt, J. (2020, June). COVID-19 and unemployment: Assessing the early fallout for immigrants and other U.S. workers [Fact sheet]. Migration Policy Institute.
- ⁶ Dorn, E., Hancock, B., Sarakatsannis, J., & Viruleg, J. (2020, June 1). *COVID-19 and student learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime*. McKinsey & Company.
- ⁷ Gelatt, J. (2020, March). *Immigrant workers: Vital to the U.S. COVID-19 response, disproportionately vulnerable* [Fact sheet]. Migration Policy Institute.
- ⁸ Korman, H., O'Keefe, B., & Repka, M. (2020, Oct. 21). *Missing in the margins: Estimating the scale of the COVID-19 attendance crisis.* Bellwether Education Partners.
- ⁹ Leeb, R. T., Bitsko, R. H., Radhakrishnan, L., Martinez, P., Njai, R., & Holland, K. (2020, November 13). Mental health-related emergency department visits among children aged <18 years during the COVID-19 pandemic United States January 1–October 17, 2020. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 69(45), 1675–1680. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6945a3.htm
- ¹⁰ Molyneux, T. (2015, January 25). Welcome wave of change: Positive discipline and SEL in schools. Committee for Children.
- ¹¹ Santibanez,L. & Guarine, C. The Effects of Absenteeism on Academic and Social-Emotional Outcomes: Lessons for COVID-19. Educational Researcher, Vol. 50 No. 6. X, pp. 392–400.
- ¹² Save the Children International. Protect a Generation. The impact of COVID-10 on children's lives.
- ¹³ Sugarman, J., & Lazarin, M. (2020, September). Educating English learners during the COVID-19 pandemic: Policy ideas for states and school districts. Migration Policy Institute.
- ¹⁴ Tamanaha, A. (2020, April 1). Rep. Judy Chu says attacks on Asian Americans at about 100 per day due to Coronavirus fear. AsAm News.
- ¹⁵ U.S Department of Education. (2021). ED COVID-19 handbook: Roadmap to reopening safely and meeting all students' needs, Volume 2. https://www2.ed.gov/documents/coronavirus/reopening-2.pdf
- ¹⁶ U.S Department of Education. (2021). New Resource Details Evidence-Based Strategies to Address Impact of Lost Instructional Time by Using American Rescue Plan Funding. https://www2.ed.gov/documents/coronavirus/lost-instructional-time.pdf
- ¹⁷ U.S Department of Education. (2021). Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Mental Health Needs. https://www2.ed.gov/documents/students/students/supporting-child-student-social-emotional-behavioral-mental-health.pdf