

The Tennessee Commission on Education Recovery and Innovation



Preliminary Report to the General Assembly: Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Tennessee's Educational Systems

December 24, 2020

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Introduction and Legal Authority

With the unprecedented spread of COVID-19, combined with tornadoes devastating the state of Tennessee in the spring of 2020, the Governor and the Tennessee General Assembly took several steps to address the effects of this public health crisis on the state's educational system for both the short- and the long-term. Days before taking a two-month emergency recess, the legislature passed measures granting emergency rulemaking authority to the State Board of Education (SBE) and allowed the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) to make changes to attendance, operational timeframes and structures, and graduation requirements. During this time of crisis, provisions to alter rules and policies necessary to support ongoing operations of Tennessee's school districts and institutions of higher education were also granted.

On June 17, 2020, the House of Representatives joined their Senate colleagues in unanimously passing Senate Bill ¹1974, thereby creating the nine-member Tennessee Commission on Education Recovery and Innovation to examine short-and long-term systemic effects on the state's educational systems of the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters of 2020. This act later became Public Chapter 792, which recognized in law the pandemic will likely affect students for the next twelve years and charged the new commission to:

"advise and make recommendations to the general assembly, the state board of education, the department of education, the Tennessee higher education commission, and the state institutions of higher education on strategies to close educational gaps resulting from school closures, and to modernize the state's educational structure from kindergarten to career to create more flexibility in the delivery of education to students."

The commission's work involves three deliverable reports as detailed in the law:

"The commission shall submit an initial assessment of the effect the COVID-19 pandemic has had on Tennessee's educational systems to the general assembly no later than January 1, 2021. The commission shall submit a report on the commission's actions, findings, and recommendations to the general assembly no later than January 1, 2022 and shall submit a final report on the commission's actions, findings, and recommendations to the general assembly no later than June 30, 2022."

This report, the first of the three, is required by the statute and designed to provide an accurate snapshot of Tennessee's educational situation. The commission recognizes as of December 2020 there is limited data available to reflect the most current impact of COVID-19 on Tennessee's educational system; thus, we plan on updating this report by 09/15/2021.

¹ Public Chapter 792: <https://publications.tnsosfiles.com/acts/111/pub/pc0792.pdf>

Executive Summary

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the disruption caused by tornadoes in March 2020, Tennessee's students, parents, teachers, administrators, and educational staff made extraordinary efforts to support students at all levels from kindergarten through higher education. Our educators demonstrated remarkable resilience, compassion, and innovation, and these heroic efforts are noted throughout this report. These efforts, along with the Governor and General Assembly's extra support, have once again proven Tennessee is largely unafraid to do what is right in the name of better student outcomes.

As we are still in the midst of the pandemic, we do not have final data regarding the effects of COVID-19 on the state's education systems. The details provided utilize pre-pandemic information, national education trends, and data collected from a survey sent to all Tennessee's superintendents. Collectively, early information indicates our entire educational system needs a comprehensive assessment in light of the pandemic, followed by a holistic kindergarten-to-career plan and substantially more support if we expect all of Tennessee's students to thrive in the future.

The Education Recovery and Innovation Commission (ERIC) identified four themes, which will be some of our primary areas of focus over the next 18 months: *learning loss*, *well-being*, *post-secondary and career preparedness*, and *technology gaps*. The one constant across each of these themes is the need to reimagine support for our most vulnerable students. There continues to be a widening gap among specific subpopulations, and we do not see this as a rectifiable path if we do not provide deliberate and greater support for these students now.

For Tennessee to offer the best education to career possible, this commission identified some preliminary observations/recommendations:

Learning Loss

- Helping prepare students for long-term success by ensuring students are proficient in literacy and numeracy in kindergarten through third grade.
- Intensive assessment and remediation across the kindergarten through post-secondary education systems need to occur as many students were behind academically before the pandemic.
- Implementing continuous quality improvement programs with definitive outcome measures in schools and institutions to ensure all students have opportunities for success.
- New expectations in educator preparation need to include virtual teaching/learning and renewed focus on early childhood education success.

Well-Being

- Providing greater attention to students, families, teachers, staff, and administrators emotional and mental well-being as well as bolstering supportive programs that schools provide, which include supplying meals, counseling services, etc.

Post-Secondary and Career Preparedness

- Improving education transitions as students progress through high school to traditional, career and technical, and work-based learning pathways that translate into viable jobs and careers.
- Identifying and assessing critical and competency-based measures of student success across the K-12 through post-secondary education systems.

Technology Gaps

- In spite of added investment from state and federal sources, two of the most considerable barriers to virtual learning are access to technology and high-speed Internet connectivity; thus, overcoming these challenges (e.g., supply chain demands, ongoing support, etc.) must be taken into account and addressed.

Tennessee is a great state that does not back down from challenges. The pandemic has challenged us in many ways, but it also provides us with opportunities to improve and implement best practices. Our children are our future, so our education expectations must match what we imagine our future to be. We must align a high-quality K-12 education with higher education to tomorrow's jobs to provide economic and emotional well-being to our citizens.

National Context of Tennessee Education Pre-Pandemic

Over the past decade, Tennessee has made great strides in education, but 2020 challenged the entire ecosystem. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a crucial data point in comparing Tennessee students' academic performance with other states, our K-12 system sits in the middle of the pack. The 2019 NAEP scores revealed Tennessee was on-par with the national average in Fourth Grade Reading (35% at or above proficiency, equal to the national average) and Fourth Grade Math (40%, one point below the national average of 41%).² Each state, district, and school responded quickly and uniquely to the needs of students and families during the COVID-19 pandemic, and at this time, there is no exact comparison of actions.

According to the Lumina Foundation, the state's current post-secondary attainment rate stands at 43%, several points behind the national average of 51.3%.³ Tennessee has a goal to see 55% of Tennesseans attain a post-secondary degree or credential by 2025. TN Promise and TN Reconnect programs helped considerably in that effort, and the college and universities quickly pivoted to support students as they left campus.

The effects on students of all ages and backgrounds, families, and educators throughout the education spectrum will continue to be reported and researched for years to come. The COVID-19 pandemic forced unprecedented levels of innovation and adaptation, and it is essential to remember Tennessee is a state largely unafraid to do what's right in the name of better student outcomes for all.

K-12

While the COVID-19 pandemic spotlighted decades of educational inequities, it also revealed how many other services schools provide for their communities. Many schools act as a social services conduit issuing electronic benefit transfer (EBT), nutrition, healthcare, counseling, and many other services. It should be noted the General Assembly and Governor made no cuts to the Basic Education Program (BEP) Funding formula for K-12 in the 2020-2021 budget.

When the pandemic began, many of Tennessee's districts, schools, and educators were not set up to teach virtually; likewise, students and their families were also unprepared for the heavy responsibility of remote learning. For example, many students lacked devices to access virtual learning, some schools did not have quality virtual curriculums readily available, and several educators lacked both the technology and expertise required to teach and connect with students electronically. Simultaneously, many districts had strategies in place to make the immediate transitions necessary. ***Across the state, Tennessee's educators, support staff, students, parents, and administrators worked tirelessly to adapt to this new learning environment that changed from day-to-day and week-to-week, often without necessary tools or broadband access needed to make this a smooth transition.***

Some say broadband access is this generation's required utility, and the pandemic uncovered its critical importance no matter where you live – urban, suburban, or rural. Due to this access crisis, the Governor passed through \$65 million in federal Coronavirus Relief Fund grants to supply devices and Wi-Fi/ Mi-Fi devices to students and educators. Students walked out of school in the spring into a new online learning environment, as did teachers, administrators, and parents. The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) and districts across the state provided professional development opportunities to assist teachers in acclimating to new virtual learning platforms and curriculum. ***It's becoming clear we need to set new expectations with all our educator preparation programs to ensure the next generation of educators are***

² TN SCORE Report: <https://tnscore.org/tennessee-is-approaching-the-national-average-on-the-nations-report-card/>

³ Lumina Foundation Report: <https://www.luminafoundation.org/state/tennessee/>.

prepared to teach in the virtual classroom setting in equal quality as the more traditional teaching delivery model of in-person learning.

Tennessee has 147 school districts with varying numbers of schools and educators supporting approximately one million students. As a result, quality of instruction and curriculums, as well as teaching consistency and student experience vary across Tennessee's districts.

i. Data

This report used two primary data sources: TDOE report card and an ERIC district survey. To be clear, at the time this report was written, TDOE did not have current data on the effects of COVID-19 on student performance outcomes. As we are still in the midst of a school year and a pandemic, this report shares historical data pre-pandemic with some additional national context when relevant. As more data becomes available, we will update this report.

In November 2020, all 147 Tennessee superintendents received a voluntary survey from the ERIC. This survey required districts to identify themselves as urban, rural, or suburban but did not require them to disclose the district's name, nor did the survey require respondents to answer all questions (a full list of questions is listed in the appendix). Eighty-one or 55.1% of the districts responded, of those, 6.17% urban, 17.28% suburban, 76.54% rural. Readers note the “N” count for each of the charts represents the number of respondents answering the specific question/item.

ii. Federal CARES Act Provisions K-12

The federal CARES act provided funding to Tennessee in three categories. The first was Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding of \$260 million for districts, \$234 million passed through directly to districts based on the proportion of Title I students. The remaining was used by TDOE on a variety of resources for districts (see appendices for full list). The second funding category was the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER), consisting of \$64 million directed by the Governor to various partner groups and strategic initiatives. The last category was the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF), consisting of \$155 million for K-12 to provide grants for technology, Internet connectivity, and educator personal protective equipment (PPE).

iii. K-12 Operations

The pandemic disrupted teaching and instructional models, caused a sudden shutdown of school buildings, and, in many districts, quickly forced extended building closures for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year. Districts had to immediately shift how they provided instruction to their students, resulting in various innovations among systems to ensure students had access to learning opportunities.

Two of the most considerable barriers to online learning include access to technology and high-speed connectivity. Although the state awarded \$65 million in grants supporting access to devices and Internet connectivity, Tennessee is still behind in broad technology adoption for education. Lack of high-speed Internet and national supply-chain delays in device orders further contributed to technology barriers.

Governor Lee dedicated \$200 million federal dollars in addition to the direct district dollars distributed according to the CARES Act to support K-12 education. This helped fill some gaps associated with technology devices (see Figure 1). However, there is a concern with the ongoing cost of technology maintenance once the grant and federal dollars end. In addition to the lack of high-speed Internet in some areas, the monthly cost of Internet service can also be prohibitive for students and families who face inequities and barriers preventing them from experiencing optimal learning opportunities (e.g., disadvantaging conditions or underserved). Thus, even where high-speed Internet is available, many students will likely not have regular access to it.

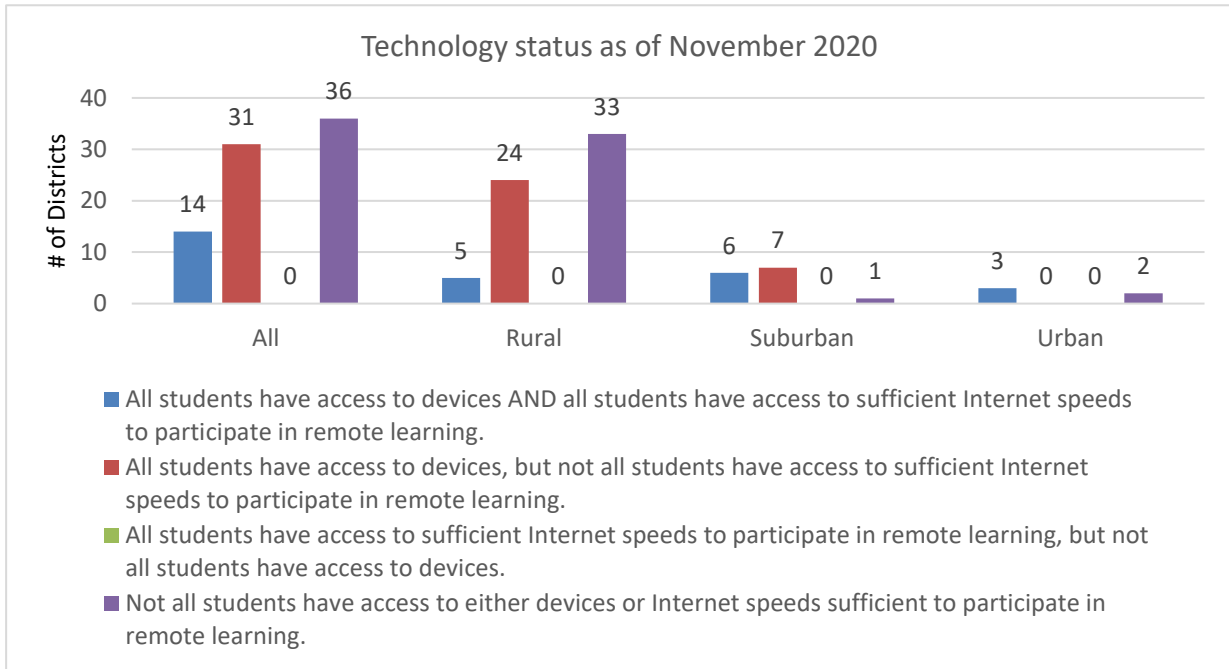


Figure 1
N=81
Source: ERIC district survey

As districts shifted their focus to the start of the 2020-21 school year, they had more time to plan how instruction would occur. While some districts chose to delay the start of their school year, either due to COVID-19 cases or increased preparation time for teachers, almost all districts had officially started instruction at the end of August. By the end of September, the vast majority of districts, more than 90%, were operating a parent-choice model, meaning each family decided whether to attend school in-person or virtually. Within this model, ERIC district survey respondents noted an average of eighty to ninety percent of their students attended in-person.

Beyond the complexities of operating both in-person and virtual instruction, entire districts and countless schools within communities had to completely shift their instructional models from in-person to a more virtual environment as COVID-19 infection rates increased (see Figure 2). This placed high levels of stress on everyone, especially district leaders, teachers, staff, students, and families.

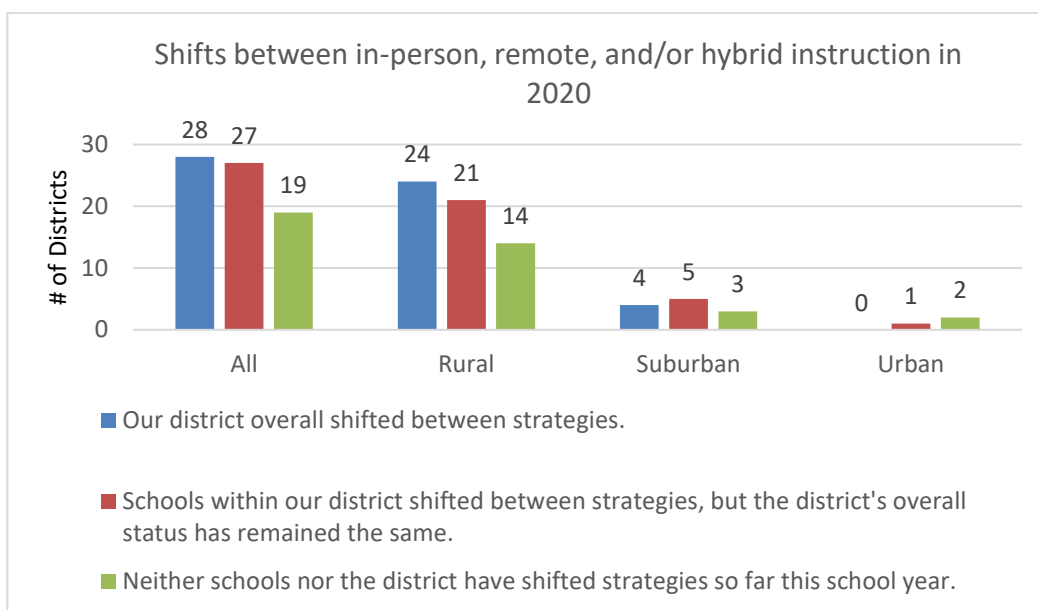


Figure 2
 N = 74
 Source: ERIC district survey

iv. Elementary Academics

A strong early education sets a sturdy footing for academic success. ***We want all of our students to have a robust foundation in reading, writing, and arithmetic so they can thrive for the rest of their education and career.*** According to an Annie E. Casey Foundation report, one in six children who are not proficient at reading in third grade will not graduate from high school on time⁴. The commission recognizes the importance of K-3 academics. Over the past three tested years (2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019), TNReady⁵ test data for grades three and eight show little to no achievement growth in math and English language arts (ELA). K-12 data demonstrate our pre-pandemic achievement levels (see Figure 3). We anticipate knowing some of the pandemic effects on these metrics after the results of the spring 2021 TNReady assessments are available.

One national research organization tried to quantify the effects of student learning loss as a result of the pandemic. The Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University released a report titled *Estimates of Learning Loss in the 2019-2020 School Year*.⁶ This report estimates a 50% drop in third-grade reading levels and a 65% decrease in third-grade math levels nationwide. If accurate, these results are deplorable. It is essential to note this report used previous testing data and statistical calculations to estimate the impact COVID-19 had on student learning. The crux of CREDO's data relies on the assumption students received zero instruction from the time school buildings closed. At least in Tennessee, districts, schools, and teachers worked with assiduity to continue providing students with instruction during the spring semester.

⁴ Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Double Jeopardy Report*: <https://www.aecf.org/resources/double-jeopardy/>

⁵ TDOE Report Card: <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/education/data/data-downloads.html>

⁶ Stanford CREDO Report, *Estimates of Learning Loss in the 2019-2020 School Year*
https://credo.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj6481/f/short_brief_on_learning_loss_final_v.3.pdf

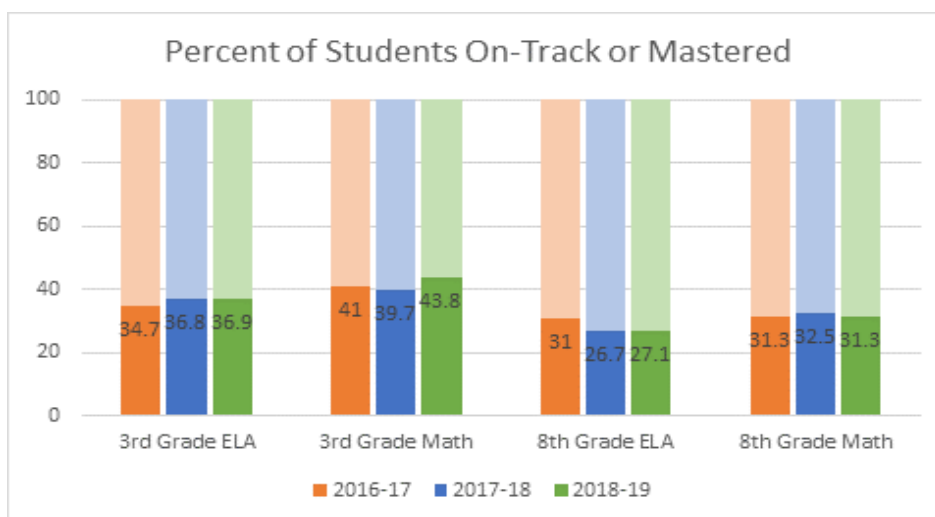


Figure 3

*Lighter regions represent students not on-track/mastered TNReady Data

Source: <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/education/data/data-downloads.html>

Demonstrating resilience, innovation and a collaborative mindset, educators and systems around the state worked hard to find ways to teach students to read in an ever-changing remote environment. Unconventional partnerships and programs were formed to assist in the process and find solutions. For example, in an effort to reach students who may not have Internet access, the TDOE and Tennessee teachers developed a suite of video lessons and partnered with the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) of Tennessee to launch a reading series for younger students. The department also teamed with the Governor’s Early Literacy Foundation (GELF) to launch the ReadyRosie application that uses videos and mobile technology to prepare students for school.

v. High School Academics

Several statewide academic performance measures including TNReady, ACT scores and graduation rates indicate K-12 progress stalled from 2015 to 2019. Tennessee uses a "Ready Graduate" measure to determine if students are prepared for college or career post-graduation (see Figure 4). Specifically, this is measured based on ACT score. The ACT is a nationally normed college assessment and taking the ACT is a requirement for high school graduation in Tennessee. Scoring 21 or above suggests a student is academically ready for college. Due to COVID-19, ACT spring 2020 testing was canceled, but many districts implemented alternative testing opportunities for the 2020-21 senior class. A large portion of post-secondary admissions and scholarship funds typically rely on ACT scores, so it's vital for future planning that students have every opportunity to take the ACT. According to the ERIC district survey, many districts that held in-person instruction during fall 2020 offered expanded ACT preparation and free ACT dates for 2021 seniors.

Over the past three years, Tennessee continues to see graduation rates close to 90%, while only 40% of students are ready for a college experience based on the TDOE's "ready graduate" metric. A review of last spring's graduation and ready graduate levels reveal little change from the previous year even though many schools were operating virtually. During this time, an emergency rule passed by the State Board of Education (SBE) froze student course grades for high school students based on last day of in-person attendance. That meant the grade could only improve; it could not get worse.

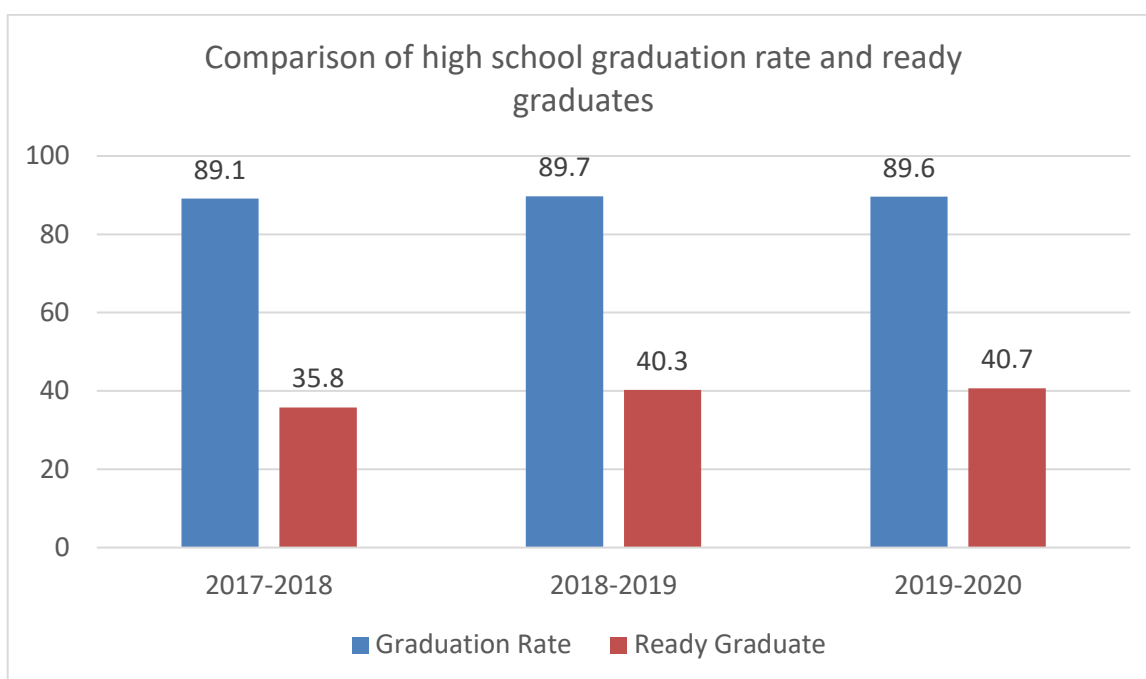


Figure 4

Note: "Ready Graduate" uses a score of 21 or above on the ACT or the completion of 2-4 early post-secondary opportunities combined with industry certifications or military readiness to determine whether students are ready for college and careers after high school.

Source: TDOE

As a result of extended school closures and remote learning in spring 2020, the state dropped all testing requirements for the 2019-20 school year, including both TNReady and ACT. Due to a lack of assessment data from the 2019-20 school year, determining students' progress in the 2020-21 school year will be difficult.

McKinsey & Company's *COVID-19 and Student Learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime*, attempts to quantify learning loss by assuming that K-12 students are receiving varying levels of virtual instruction: average, low-quality, or no instruction. The report estimates if remote instruction were to continue until January 2021, students would lose between three to 14 months of learning, depending on the quality of virtual instruction. While the McKinsey report is a national report, it reflects what happened in Tennessee where a vast majority of students received instruction of some kind since the spring school closures. ***McKinsey's data also reminds us that low-income, Black and Hispanic students are most likely to experience learning loss. They are less likely to have access to the devices, high-speed Internet, and quiet learning spaces needed for successful remote learning. This loss of learning translates into decreased future earnings and suggests long-term economic disparities costing students who are White, Hispanic, and Black \$1,348, \$1,809, and \$2,186, respectively, per year throughout a 40-year working life***⁷. Supporting the existence of inequities, Tennessee's State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE), in *Renewing Our Pledge 2021 State of Education in Tennessee*, not only recognizes long-standing inequities in Tennessee but also states that COVID-19 worsens racial and economic inequities in education⁸. It is important to note that Tennessee and TDOE made great efforts to support students with disabilities by providing eight million dollars in grants (see appendices).

⁷ McKinsey and Company, *COVID-19 and Student Learning in the United States*: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-student-learning-in-the-united-states-the-hurt-could-last-a-lifetime>

⁸ TN SCORE State of Education 2020 Report: https://tnscore.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2021-StateOfEducation_digital_FINAL.pdf

According to the 81 districts responding to the ERIC district survey, Tennessee students lost, on average, forty to fifty instructional days (defined as a minimum of six and a half hours of instruction per day). See Figure 5.

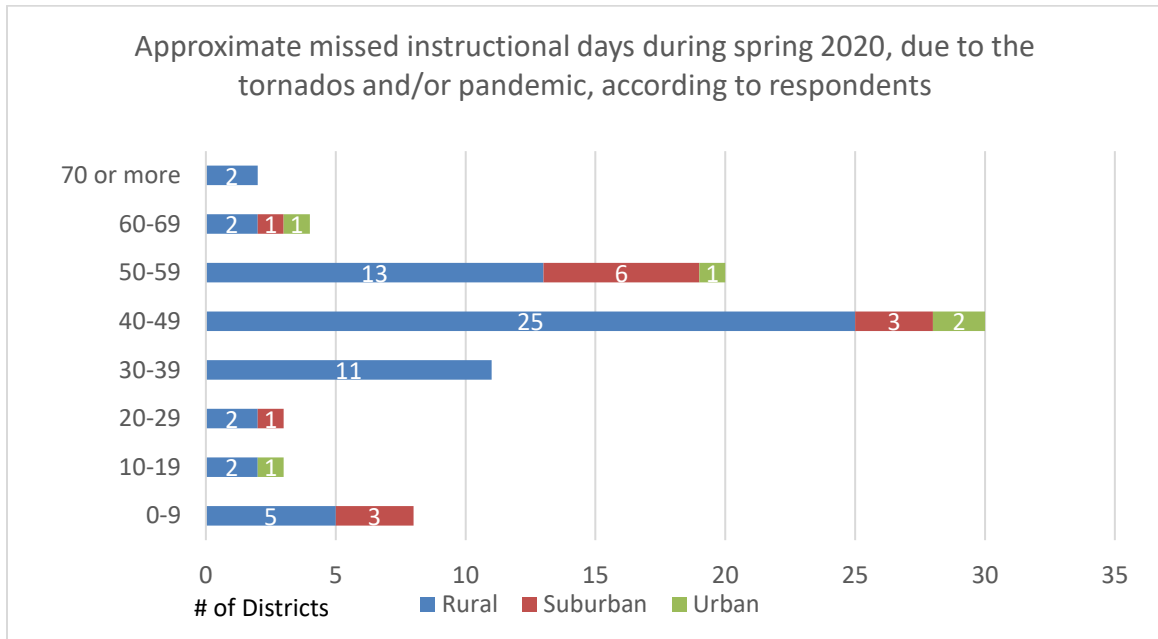


Figure 5
N = 81
Source: ERIC district survey results

This survey also revealed responding districts provided a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities from the time buildings closed through the end of the school year (see Figure 6). Asynchronous learning is a self-paced, virtual model which does not require constant real-time engagement. Synchronous learning is scheduled participation in real-time virtual classrooms.

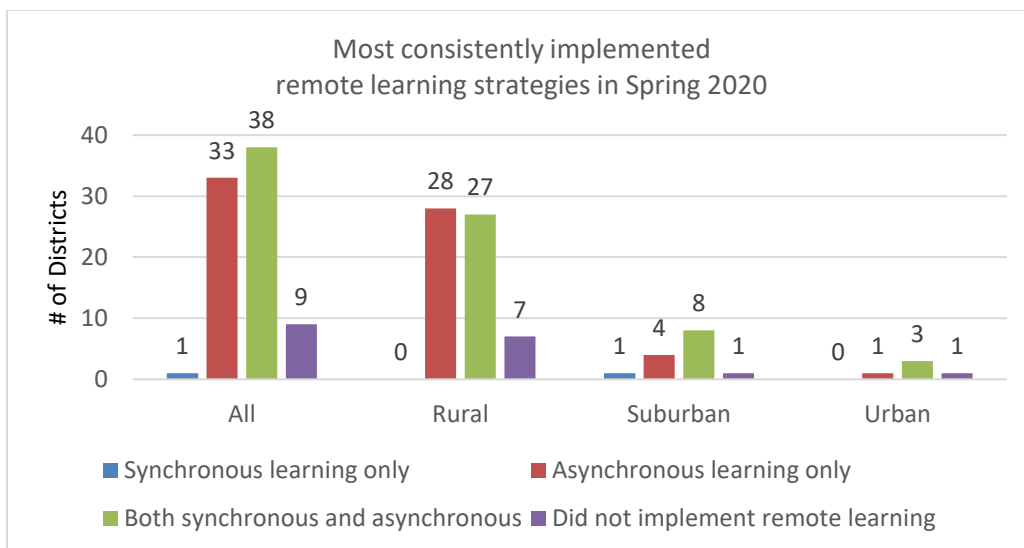


Figure 6
N = 81
Source: ERIC district survey results

Because state-wide Spring 2020 assessment data is unavailable, it is more important than ever for districts to administer and evaluate local benchmark testing. Of the 81 districts responding to the ERIC survey, the

vast majority administered fall benchmark testing, whether virtually or in-person. Student performance varied from district-to-district, but only one of the districts reported consistently higher results than previous years (see Figure 7). Brookings Institute released a nationwide year over year comparison of academic achievement and growth where the sourced data was from four million Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments⁹. According to Brookings, nationwide reading achievement levels are very similar to the previous year, with some students making gains during 2020. Math, on the other hand, is showing lower achievement and growth overall⁹. Brookings also notes, this is all still preliminary information, and we have a lot more to learn.

The Center for Reinventing Public Education highlighted Tennessee as one of only 12 states in the country to require instructional plans from districts. A Continuous Learning Plan process was a strong partnership between the SBE, TDOE, and Tennessee's school districts. It was a critical step towards ensuring substantial opportunities for children this year and an excellent example of state-wide partnership and collaboration. ***During the spring and summer of 2020, a great deal of work was undertaken by districts and teachers across the state to demonstrate how they would continue to teach students in the pandemic environment.***

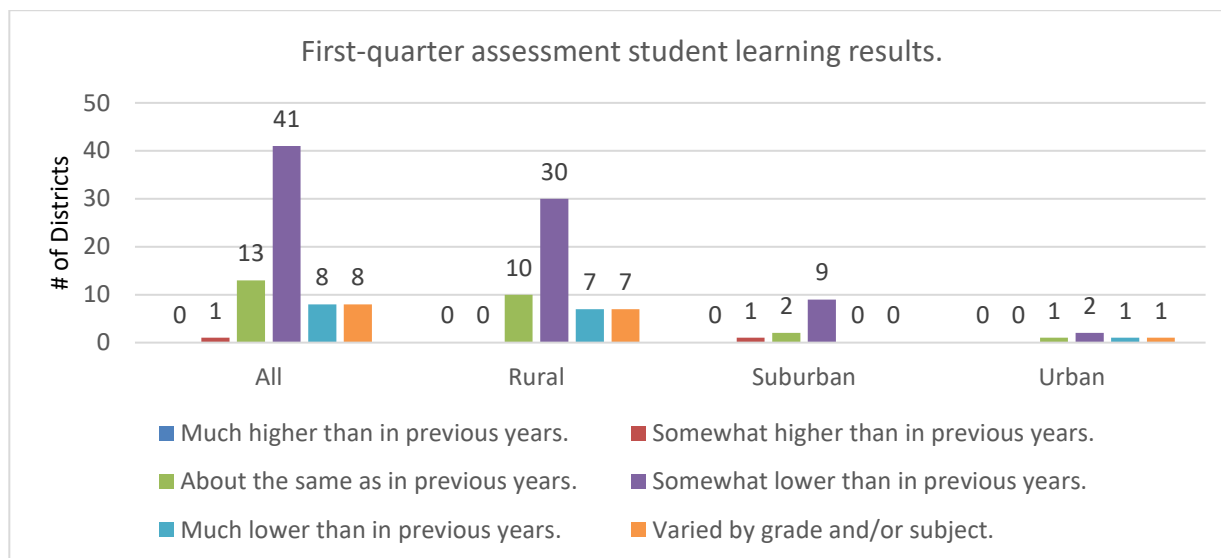


Figure 7
N = 71
Source: ERIC district survey results

Although the full extent of learning loss due to COVID-19 school closures is still being measured, anecdotal evidence suggests the pandemic negatively affected students. ***Tennessee must administer state-wide testing in the 2020-21 school year so academic performance can be carefully evaluated to accurately inform which educational practices and innovations will best serve students moving forward.***

Currently, there is no uniform way of collecting district mid-year benchmark assessment data across all the Tennessee districts. Changing that would require legislation. There is great work being done across the state by educators and districts, but not having a central data repository makes it hard to analyze and share best practices.

⁹ Brookings Institute, How COVID is affecting student learning: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2020/12/03/how-is-covid-19-affecting-student-learning/>

vi. K-12 Enrollment

Based on the October 1 enrollment count for the 2020-21 school year, the state experienced a projected decrease in public-school enrollment of 35,000 students. These are projections, not final numbers, and are typically finalized in the late spring by the TDOE. However, this, and other factors led the Basic Education Program (BEP) Review Committee, in its 2020 report, to recommend the General Assembly and administration hold school districts "harmless" for the 2021 budget by allocating the same funds as the 2020 school year. At this point, it's unclear where the estimated 35,000 students have re-enrolled, if at all. *As more enrollment data becomes available, it may be possible to get a clearer picture of the number of students not enrolled and display this data collectively and by specific subgroups to determine adverse consequences superimposed on existing inequities prior to the pandemic.*

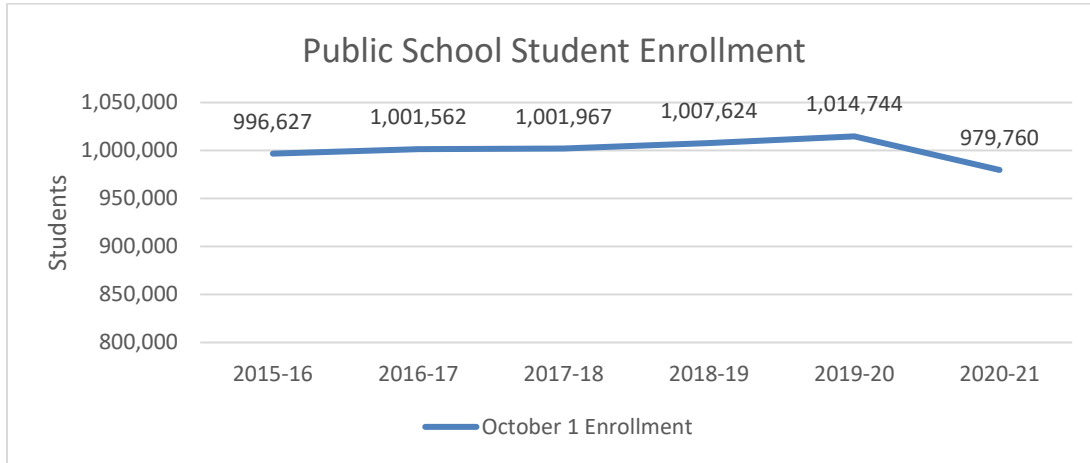


Figure 8
Source: TDOE

Although lacking validation, anecdotal data provided by directors of schools on the ERIC district survey, suggest largest decreases in public-school enrollment is due to more students homeschooling (see Figure 9). Directors cited parents' unwillingness to expose children to COVID-19, coupled with dissatisfaction with virtual options provided by the districts, as the impetus behind families choosing to homeschool. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, fewer than four percent of students in the country are homeschooled. Though there are theories of a mass movement to this education method, TDOE reports 11,096 students in Tennessee, double from the previous school year, withdrew to become home schoolers. Owing to the varied nature of home-schooling programs, there is no state-wide criteria for all homeschool curricula.¹⁰

¹⁰ National Center for Education Statistics Parent and Family Involvement in Education: Results from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2016: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017102.pdf>

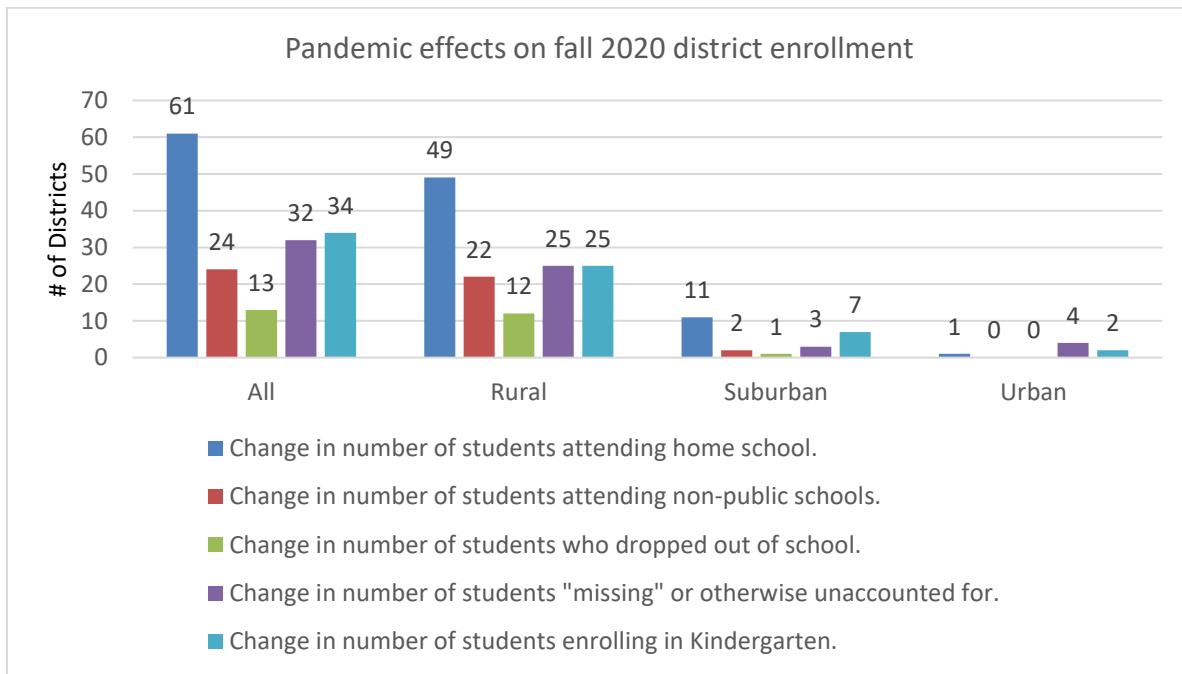


Figure 9
 N = 76. Please note respondents could select more than one answer including “no change” which is not reflected in the graph above.
 Source: ERIC district survey results

Another concern for many directors is "missing" students; these include previously enrolled students who did not re-enroll this year or students enrolled in virtual learning who have not attended. Districts are continuing to track down these students, but it means this data will continue to fluctuate. Several districts reported a drop in kindergarten students, but many directors indicated they anticipate these students will enroll in kindergarten next school year.

The final area of consideration is the number of students dropping out. We will not have a clear picture of this data until the end of the 2020-2021 school year, but some directors provided anecdotal evidence pointing to students who are eighteen years old dropping out. These students may seek employment to help support their families or possibly pursue their high school equivalency (HiSET). **While we cannot use last year's graduation rates as evidence due to the changes in course requirements and grading policies unique to the pandemic, some directors stated they anticipate the lowest graduation rate in years for the 2020-2021 school year.**

vii. K-12 Staffing

In addition to enrollment, staffing is one of the most challenging data points to measure before the end of the school year. Because numerous factors contribute to K-12 staffing, it will be almost impossible to definitively measure how the pandemic may affect this. The SBE and TDOE granted additional educator licensure flexibility to allow more out-of-state teachers to teach in Tennessee. "Grow Your Own" grants totaling two million dollars were used in some districts to help staffing concerns. **Overall, districts shared they did not significantly change the number of vacancies for licensed educators compared to previous years. A few noted somewhat higher or much higher vacancies, but we are unable to connect those directly to COVID-19 at this time (see Figure 10).**

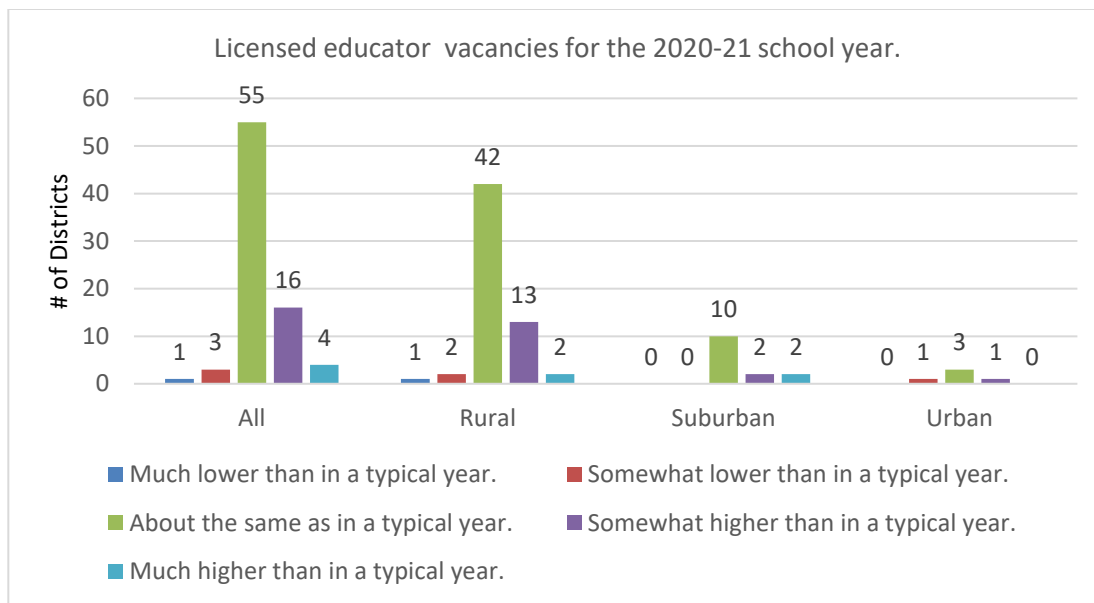


Figure 10
N = 79
Source: ERIC district survey

Tennessee Higher Education: Contextual Overview

For the better part of the last decade, Tennessee led the nation on higher education reforms related to access, affordability, and cross-sector alignment of degree pathways¹⁰⁻¹⁵. For example, Tennessee has repeatedly been recognized by the Southern Legislative Conference (SLC), the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), and the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) for the development of performance funding, TN Promise, and TN Reconnect programs. Successive State Transformation in Action Recognition (STAR) Awards¹¹ from the SLC and SHEEO’s recent designation of THEC as the nation’s leading higher education agency¹² are a testament to the significance of these reforms.

Tennessee’s outcomes-based funding model shifted the determining factors for state appropriations away from a purely enrollment-driven metric to an array of metrics driven by student success outcomes. **As a result of intentional and focused efforts, enrollment trends, retention rates year-over-year, and**

¹¹ THEC Wins STAR Award: <https://www.tn.gov/the/news/2019/7/29/tennessee-higher-education-commission-wins-slc-star-award-for-third-consecutive-year.html>

¹² SHEEO Announcement: <https://sheeo.org/sheeo-announces-excellence-awards-recipients/>

*graduation rates have steadily increased across Tennessee higher education*¹³. Additionally, Tennessee has seen five years of the lowest tuition increases in the modern era¹⁴. Policy efforts, coupled with a re-imagined State Higher Education Master Plan, provided the framework for a THEC initiative to facilitate maximum alignment between higher education, local and state workforce needs, and related state initiatives and agencies: Future of Work (FOW).

THEC only recently begun to convene and engage with stakeholders around FOW when Governor Bill Lee announced the first diagnosed case of COVID-19 in Tennessee on March 5 and just a week later, declared a state of emergency. By Mid-March, all public universities and most Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) institutions announced a suspension of classes or extended Spring Break to allow more time for developing appropriate protocols for transitioning to emergency remote teaching.

i. Student/Institution Effects: Transitions and Resourcing

On or around March 16, every public post-secondary institution notified its student and faculty community of the decision to suspend on-campus instruction indefinitely and transition to a fully online instructional model where possible. Most Universities informed faculty of new work-from-home measures with exceptions for specific critical leadership and facilities personnel. Resident students on each university campus were strongly encouraged to return home, given the ongoing shelter-in-place orders from the administration and shift to online course delivery. Those students with no viable alternative to campus residence for the term could remain subject to heightened restrictions on movement throughout campus.

By mid-April, all universities elected to prorate or refund students for housing, dining, and other campus access fees impacted by the transition to emergency remote learning. In total, universities refunded nearly \$50 million to students for these services. Eventually, all universities and TBR community colleges announced plans to remain in remote learning posture through the summer semesters. The Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology returned to campus utilizing a hybrid model, which was a combination of online, remote, and in-person learning, beginning May 4, 2020. Eventually, all universities and most TBR institutions announced plans to remain in remote learning posture through the summer semesters. The institutions would use the following two months to assess strategies for returning to campus and setting up fall semester planning scenarios. In early May, for example, East Tennessee State University announced that the Future Operations Workgroup would develop a plan on how to return to academic, campus, and business operations safely. Chattanooga State Community College announced return-to-campus phase-in plans to allow support personnel and faculty to return to campus safely. And UT Knoxville convened the Re-Imagining Fall Task Force to brainstorm how the campus would re-open in the fall.

In the weeks following Governor Lee's initial announcements and with the escalating nature of the pandemic, the Governor chartered the Unified Command Group (UCG) and charged it with the management of the pandemic and related activities. The THEC Executive Director, TDOE Commissioner, and other state officials served on the UCG since inception and have been responsible for coordinating with campuses and multiple state agencies in preparation for the fall return to campus and all other COVID-19 related issues. As part of this planning, the Higher Education Liaison coordinated with the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) to execute tabletop exercises at every Tennessee Higher Education Institution or System and conducted numerous calls with each campus to identify gaps in their respective COVID-19 emergency response plans.

¹³ TN Higher Education Fact Book: <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/thec/research/fact-book.html>

¹⁴ Appendix Document: THEC-TSAC 2020 Budget Hearings_021220

Tabletop Exercises Overview:

Objectives:

1. *Assess the institutional Emergency Response Plan in the context of COVID-19.*
2. *Assess how the existing campus structure will address the challenges of COVID-19.*
3. *Assess how institutions will coordinate their response with external partners (i.e., area hospitals & public health agencies).*
4. *Identify the next steps in the planning process.*
5. *Clarify lines of accountability and communication to enable a timely, coordinated, and effective response.*

Outcomes: *As a direct result of participating in these exercises, every campus identified gaps in their planning, response, and/or coordination concerning COVID-19. Since those identified gaps differed in depth and difficulty, campuses resolved what they could during the exercise and resolved the more difficult or complex issues in follow-up planning meetings. THEC created a Lessons Learned Document outlining common challenges and best practices to facilitate the sharing of knowledge.*

By mid-summer, most universities established on-campus working groups to determine viable working plans for students' return. Most of the institutions moved forward with an altered fall semester, in which academic courses would not break for Labor Day and Fall break, and students would not return to in-person classes after Thanksgiving. All final exams would be online. Further, plans were deployed allowing for both different modalities of instruction and, institutions to deliver content in a manner that best aligns with their academic or technical program needs.

1. **In-Person/On-Campus:** Not all courses can be facilitated virtually, some classes and clinical instruction will require in-person learning but with sufficient precautions.
2. **Hybrid:** Courses may be taught by remote learning except in specific competencies that must be taught in-person. This would also include course sequences that could be deployed using both virtual and on-campus learning as a mechanism to minimize class sizes.
3. **Online/Remote:**
 - a. **Asynchronous:** all student learning will occur virtually but shall be self-paced and require no real-time engagement within the overall academic calendar.
 - b. **Synchronous:** student learning will be scheduled for a specific day and time for participation in real-time virtual classrooms.

For the remainder of the summer, universities and community colleges and colleges of applied technology implemented safety protocols in coordination with the Tennessee Pledge's Access Guidelines for Higher Education¹⁵. They also planned for the expansion of testing upon student return, reserved quarantine space for students potentially exposed to COVID-19 and implemented mask requirements for all students and personnel.

The transition to online course delivery presented an additional disruptive obstacle to many students across the state living in WIFI-challenged or broadband deficient areas. Likewise, students in urban and suburban areas of the state are also often subjected to minimal computer and Internet access. ***To facilitate student learning irrespective of the learning environment, most universities and community colleges, and colleges of applied technology established laptop loan programs, and provided mobile broadband hotspots.*** Several universities partnered with nonprofit agencies, businesses, and libraries, expanding Wi-Fi capabilities enabling students to connect remotely from their parking lots. Additionally, campus

¹⁵ TN Pledge for Higher Education: https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/governorsoffice-documents/covid-19-assets/Pledge_Higher_Ed.pdf

resources related to IT help desks and digital library services remained operational for students, providing full technical support and access to all available learning research resources.

ii. Fall 2020: Student Enrollment Trends

All public universities and community colleges submitted to THEC the fall 2020 14th day aggregate enrollment data. **Preliminary results indicate a state-wide decrease of 8,355 in total student headcount, a 3.7% decline compared to fall 2019 14th day enrollment** (see Figure 11). Specifically, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic appears to have primarily affected enrollment in our community colleges.

The TBR reports 78,772 students enrolled in community colleges this fall, a decrease of 9,046 students. No Tennessee community colleges reported an increase in students year over year. This decline mirrors national trends; analysis by the National Student Clearinghouse found public 2-year enrollment for summer 2020 down 5.6% year over year. One critical factor in this decline is the significant number of adult learners who have been economically impacted by the pandemic. Adult and non-traditional learners can make up between 40 to 60 percent of the student headcount at a community college, and they often face obstacles associated with work schedules, transportation, food insecurity, and childcare. These factors have been compromised and exacerbated for thousands of our current TN Reconnect enrollees who have to make hard decisions about work and school priorities. **Interestingly, while many students at colleges of applied technology face similar issues, TBR enrollment for fall 2020 (as of the second week of September) indicates colleges of applied technology had an overall headcount student registration of 10,772, representing an increase of 3% as compared to fall 2019**¹⁶.

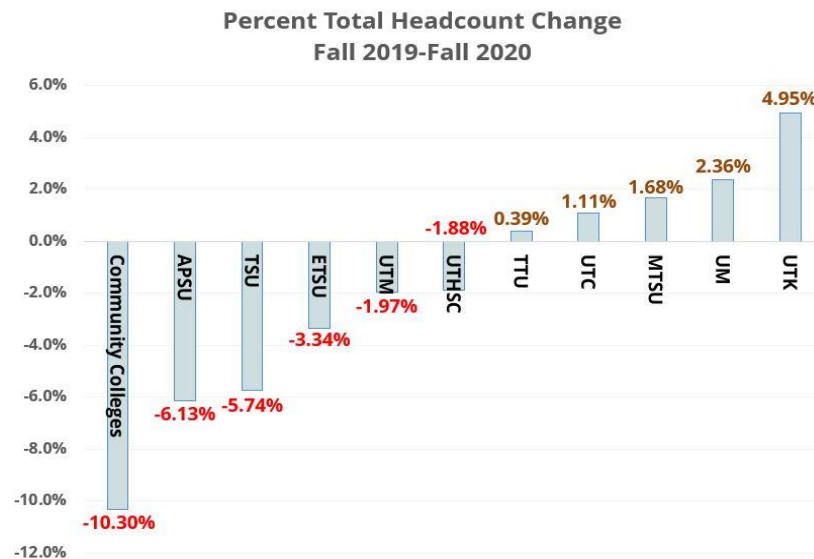


Figure 11
Source: THEC

Overall, headcount enrollment at the University of Tennessee (UT) institutions increased 2.7% over last fall, with substantial variance across institutions. Undergraduate enrollment at UT institutions is up 2.3%, while graduate student enrollment is up 4.0%. Among locally governed institutions (LGIs), notable increases occurred at both the University of Memphis and Middle Tennessee State University (2.4% and 1.7% increases in overall enrollment, respectively). Graduate student enrollment, up 5.7% overall, bolsters LGI enrollment, while undergraduate student enrollment is down 1.2%. Only Tennessee State University (up 2.1%) and the University of Memphis (relatively flat but up 0.02%) registered an increase

¹⁶ TBR September 2020 quarterly meeting:
https://www.tbr.edu/sites/default/files/media/2020/10/2020_September_Policy%20and%20Strategy_Board%20Slides.pdf

in undergraduate enrollment. Overall, the LGIs are down less than a percent from fall 2019 14th day enrollment.

iii. Fiscal Implications for Students: Tuition & Financial Aid

Upon the Governor's announcement of a "Declared Emergency," THEC worked with leaders in the General Assembly to stabilize the financial implications facing students and institutions at the outset of the pandemic. Students were informed of abbreviated semesters, restricted housing, housing closures, and distance learning—each of these carries critical financial implications for them personally and for their student standing. The legislature adopted Public Chapter 632, which granted specific authority to the THEC/TSAC Executive Director to approve waivers for individual relevant statutory and rule requirements: Public Chapter 632—"the authority to temporarily suspend, modify, or waive any deadline or other nonacademic requirement in statute, rule, or policy of any financial aid program..." for a specified period of time as determined by the Executive Director of TSAC.

- *Operationalized to Date:*
 - *Deferred requirement for TN Promise Summer Community Service (3/25/2020)*
 - *Modified GPA calculations for Lottery Scholarship Programs (3/26/2020)*
 - *Suspended interest accrual and deadlines for loan-scholarships (4/1/2020)*
 - *TN Promise Fall Community Service (5/28/2020)*
 - *Qualifying ACT Exam Scores (7/16/2020)*

Every higher education institution, and the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC), reconsidered campus and financial aid policies to provide relief to students whose academic performance might suffer due to the transition to emergency remote learning. For example, in April, most of the institutions implemented pass/fail extensions, granting students the ability to reassess their progress within an altered classroom experience without causing undue damage to their cumulative grade point averages. Likewise, TSAC made several substantive changes and allowances within TN Promise and the HOPE Scholarship to help students avoid the loss of crucial scholarship funding due to grades, timing, and altered attendance measures.

iv. Fiscal Implications for Higher Education Institutions: State Funding & Tuition Revenues

While a full analysis of the fiscal impact from the COVID-19 pandemic will require additional longitudinal data, Table 1 presents a snapshot of the most immediate fiscal impacts as of October 2020 for each university, community college, and TCAT (see Table 1). The first column reports funds returned to students in the Spring and Summer semesters in response to the move to emergency remote learning. These refunds include prorated housing and dining fees. The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act stipulated that the institutional portion of the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) could be used to reimburse such refunds. However, for nearly every university, the total aid available did not meet the full refunds required.

The second column reports any known revenue loss and actual expenditures from the Spring and Summer semester due to the pandemic. Lost tuition revenue from reduced enrollments and reduced auxiliary (e.g., dining, housing, athletics) utilization are included for revenue loss. Actual expenditures include, among others, instruction and student support services and required cleaning and PPE. Finally, the third column reports projected revenue loss and expenses for the fall semester. Most significant for universities are lost housing and dining revenue and, for the University of Memphis and UT Knoxville specifically, athletic revenue.

The primary cause of revenue loss for the community colleges is lost tuition dollars, as community college enrollment is down nearly 10 percent from the previous fall semester. ***In total, the combined***

actual and projected financial impact of all public higher education institutions as of October 2020 surpasses \$330 million in lost revenues.

COVID19 Financial Impacts - October 2020

Institutions	Spring & Summer Refunds ¹	Spring & Summer Revenue Loss & Actual Expenditures ²	Fall Estimated Revenue Loss & Expenditures ³	Total
LGIs				
APSU	\$ 2,348,139	\$ 2,806,432	\$ 6,549,300	\$ 11,703,871
ETSU	\$ 3,460,000	\$ 3,020,000	\$ 7,068,000	\$ 13,548,000
MTSU	\$ 1,901,397	\$ 10,038,000	\$ 13,002,000	\$ 24,941,397
TSU	\$ 3,877,000	\$ 6,872,660	\$ 23,679,000	\$ 34,428,660
TTU	\$ 3,252,783	\$ 5,261,614	\$ 3,710,443	\$ 12,224,840
UM	\$ 4,083,000	\$ 17,996,353	\$ 22,763,000	\$ 44,842,353
LGI Total	\$ 18,922,319	\$ 45,995,059	\$ 76,771,743	\$ 141,689,121
UT Institutions				
UTC	\$ 5,938,000	\$ 2,357,965	\$ 9,795,102	\$ 18,091,068
UTK	\$ 21,251,000	\$ 29,767,000	\$ 66,619,000	\$ 117,637,000
UTM	\$ 2,222,000	\$ 2,234,750	\$ 1,501,000	\$ 5,957,750
UTHSC	\$ 116,872	\$ 4,701,221	\$ -	\$ 4,818,093
UT Total	\$ 29,527,872	\$ 39,060,936	\$ 77,915,102	\$ 146,503,910
Community Colleges				
CHSCC	\$ 4,000	\$ 748,000	\$ 4,565,000	\$ 5,317,000
CLSCC	\$ -	\$ 679,000	\$ 1,168,000	\$ 1,847,000
COSCC	\$ 4,000	\$ 337,187	\$ 2,022,500	\$ 2,363,687
DSCC	\$ -	\$ 386,000	\$ 713,000	\$ 1,099,000
JSCC	\$ -	\$ 185,755	\$ 1,311,118	\$ 1,496,873
MSCC	\$ -	\$ 219,240	\$ 3,392,140	\$ 3,611,380
NASCC	\$ -	\$ 80,000	\$ 2,225,000	\$ 2,305,000
NESCC	\$ -	\$ 33,545	\$ 1,281,134	\$ 1,314,679
PSCC	\$ -	\$ 1,774,600	\$ 2,762,000	\$ 4,536,600
RSCC	\$ -	\$ 819,000	\$ 3,408,000	\$ 4,227,000
STCC	\$ 20,000	\$ 1,967,625	\$ 5,205,000	\$ 7,192,625
VSCC	\$ -	\$ 1,531,298	\$ 2,600,000	\$ 4,131,298
WSCC	\$ -	\$ 867,687	\$ 600,000	\$ 1,467,687
CC Total	\$ 28,000	\$ 9,628,937	\$ 31,252,892	\$ 40,909,829

1 - Funds returned to students in the Spring & Summer semesters in response to the move to emergency remote learning.

2 - Includes foregone revenue and revenue losses from the Spring and Summer semesters as well as realized expenditures in response to COVID-19 (e.g. funds expended to limit the spread of PPE or to help students, faculty and staff response to an online learning environment).

3 - Estimated foregone revenue, revenue losses, bad debt, or losses due to installment tuition agreements for the Fall 2020 semester.

Table 1

v. Federal CARES Act Provisions Higher Education

The Federal CARES Act¹⁷ provided tremendous support to K-12, as cited earlier in this report. It was signed into law on Friday, March 27, providing \$30.75 billion for the Education Stabilization Fund. Tennessee public institutions received \$169 million through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF). At least half of an institution's HEERF allocation was distributed to students in the form of emergency financial aid grants related to the disruption of campus operations, including eligible expenses under a student's cost of attendance, such as food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and childcare. Institutions could spend the remaining portion on student refunds for room and board, tuition, and other fees owed to the changes in instructional delivery due to the pandemic, or to reimburse themselves for expenses related to providing students with technology, such as computers or Internet service, required for the transition to online learning.

Minority-serving institutions, such as Tennessee State University and Southwest Tennessee Community College, and institutions that qualify for the federal Strengthening Institutions Program, received an additional \$22.5 million through the HEERF. All of these funds could go to student grants, cost refunds, or lost revenue due to disruption of campus operations. *In total, institutions received nearly \$200 million through the CARES Act. With roughly half earmarked for student emergency grants, the CARES Act provides less than a third of the revenue needed to meet the estimated financial deficit caused by the*

¹⁷ Full text of law available here: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/748/text>.

pandemic—approximately \$330 million as of October. Of the funding available through the CARES Act, THEC is administering \$21.4 million through the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF), authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, to assist the Tennessee higher education enterprise in dealing with challenges related to:

Social distancing:

- Adapting classroom configurations,
- Modifying student housing to comply with COVID-19 health precautions,
- Supporting physical plant costs, or
- Subsidizing non-executive payroll expenses for faculty/staff dedicated to mitigating COVID-19.

Transition to online learning:

- Expanding and supporting online instruction,
- Increasing students' access to technology, including laptops, Wi-Fi hotspots, and digital subscriptions, or
- Subsidizing payroll expenses for new personnel or extended duties of existing non-executive personnel.

CRF grants were open to the accredited public and private, nonprofit institutions of higher education (IHEs) domiciled in Tennessee. All eligible institutions that opted to submit a grant proposal were ultimately approved for funding after a thorough THEC staff review. Funds were awarded based on the proportionate share of low-income students the institution serves. THEC staff communicates regularly with campus program directors and are monitoring all institutions through monthly reports.

Tennessee Student Well-Being

Pandemic-related school closures not only affected students' academic performance but their social and emotional well-being. When in school, students of all ages have access to a variety of support services, including meal programs or food pantries, medical or emotional counseling, social support from friends/teachers/staff and therapeutic services for students with disabilities. In spite of the use of phone line counseling, telehealth services, and extraordinary efforts to provide nutrition services through the TDOE's "SchoolMealFinder.com" program, because of school building closures, some students were not receiving these essential services, which is likely to have a negative effect on their mental and emotional health.

While some reporting on emotional well-being for students has started, it will take years to conduct comprehensive research. According to the Tennessee Child Wellbeing Task Force report¹⁸ and The Communities in Schools of Tennessee COVID-19 Report¹⁹, economic hardships, isolation, domestic violence, and other factors contribute to adverse experiences that can have long-term effects on students. The Tennessee Education Research Alliance (TERA) conducted a survey²⁰ of educators in Spring 2020 that included questions on the impact of COVID-19. ***The teachers' top three concerns were students missing critical services such as meals and counseling, maintaining relationships with students amid uncertainty, and barriers preventing students from accessing remote learning.*** The report goes on to state:

Educators expressed concern for the physical and mental health of students and their families in their open-ended comments. Teachers and leaders indicated necessities—including adequate

¹⁸ TN Child Well-Being Task Force Report: https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/health-&-safety/CWTF_Summary.pdf

¹⁹ Communities in School of TN Report: https://76bb3e70-87ed-449f-b8d26293d7d730cb.filesusr.com/ugd/c9b4b6_1898fb4495a04f6e9aa7772bdf34e3d2.pdf

²⁰ TERA, Teaching Through a Global Pandemic: https://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/TERA/files/TERA2020_COVID_Brief_FINAL.pdf

nutrition, security, and supervision—are crucial to ensure students can successfully engage in remote learning.

The TERA report shows how profoundly concerned Tennessee teachers are about students' well-being. Undoubtedly, our educators are not only struggling with student attendance and attentiveness, but also students' well-being during this pandemic with varying shifts of educational delivery from in-person to virtual. Studies have shown a correlation between student health and wellness and academic performance.²¹ ***Without addressing the social-emotional strains the pandemic has on students, these challenges are likely to continue affecting their academic performance negatively for years beyond the pandemic.***

In post-secondary institutions nationwide, mental health and well-being has been an ongoing discussion prior to COVID-19. Research²² suggests these students were already susceptible to mental and emotional health concerns and the pandemic revealed considerable stress and worry which is negatively impacting student academics and overall well-being.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The events of 2020 presented unprecedented challenges, and Tennessee's kindergarten-to-career education ecosystem has been stretched to the limit. The purpose of this first report is to provide an accurate snapshot of the educational situation in Tennessee. Because we are still in the midst of a pandemic and do not have all the information needed to provide a clear picture, we relied, on pre-pandemic statistics, national education trends, and survey data from superintendents in Tennessee. Based on national research, some students may be excelling academically, especially in reading, though we fear many, mostly those who experience inequities, increased barriers to learning and those who are economically challenged, may fall even further behind.

Every school in Tennessee at the K-12 and post-secondary levels stepped up during this crisis and we applaud those efforts. After ten months of worrying, wearing masks, and keeping our distance, educators, students and their families are understandably exhausted but determined. Though we may not have all the data on the effects of COVID, our educators have identified and launched new and innovative solutions to support their student communities. The state leaned in with increased funding and federal grants, the TDOE propped up supplemental programs and partnerships, and the educators supported students of all ages.

The Education Recovery and Innovation Commission will be exploring applicable education and industry best practices that address the identified barriers and opportunities. Sharing a sense of urgency and focused attention to support those students who are most vulnerable, some of the primary themes surfaced from this report are:

- 1- **Learning Loss**: Tennessee needs to aggressively address learning loss with a keen focus on early literacy and those students who are our most vulnerable. The General Assembly, Governor, SBE, and TDOE are involved in setting Tennessee's K-12 direction, however, our governance structure allows for each district to operate independently and, in their community's best interest. Our school K-12 districts have worked hard to create some

²¹ Langford R, Bonell CP, Jones HE, Pouliou T, Murphy SM, Waters E, Komro KA, Gibbs LF, Magnus D, Campbell R. The WHO Health Promoting School framework for improving the health and well-being of students and their academic achievement. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2014, Issue 4. Art. No.: CD008958.

²² Changwon Son, Sudeep Hegde, Alec Smith, Xiaomei Wang, Farzan Sasangohar. Effects of COVID-19 on College Students Mental Health in the United States: Interview Survey Study (<http://www.jmir.org>), 03.09.2020.

normalcy while still laser-focused on educating Tennessee's children in an ever-changing environment. Educators' efforts remain focused on educating and supporting students despite this pandemic. To minimize learning loss, specific measures of success must be identified, remediation interventions must be applied and associated with outcomes measuring success. Continuous quality improvement programs must be established and assessed.

- 2- Well-Being: Tennessee needs to fully assess and support the social and emotional state of our students, families, and educators. As with any high impact event that includes job loss, loss of life, or extreme social isolation, the emotional effects will be long term. Further the projected loss of learning, increase stress levels and decrease loss of future earnings is concerning and interventions to counteract and proactively prevent harm should be implemented now.
- 3- Post-Secondary and Career Preparedness: Tennessee needs to ensure all our students are graduating prepared for post-secondary and career which means we must make sure early childhood education (K-3) is superior and successful, and our career opportunities are connected to the education opportunities in secondary and postsecondary education. Measurable success outcomes that represent progression and improvement must be clearly identified and collected across the entire education ecosystem. This includes educational assessment and quality improvement plans for K-12 and Tennessee's Higher Education systems. We recognize the quick response by all parties to the changing environmental needs faced with the pandemic. Specifically, Tennessee's higher educational systems transformed from traditional to almost entirely online delivery in a mere two weeks; this is remarkable for post-secondary education which is traditionally intransigent in the face of change. Granted, some schools already had online infrastructure, which helped, while other schools did not. Such a transition was particularly challenging and provided unique learning opportunities for colleges of applied technology and health professional colleges which have a significant focus and reliance on "hands on" or clinical learning in health care environments. While communication from administration to students varied in its effectiveness, all institutions provided some level of disaster response thanks to the assistance rendered by THEC through tabletop exercises and help from other institutions. As we progress through the pandemic, we must keep sight on data measurement, assessment, and improving educational outcomes for all of our students. Careful attention to transitions of education as students progress from K-12 to post-secondary education and eventually into job placement must be evaluated using specific outcome and competency-based measures of success including well-being assessments.
- 4- Technology Gaps: Tennessee needs to strategically address the gaps in technology availability and application, and access to high-speed Internet at all levels of education. Across the board, one of the largest gaps to learning is technology. Many students of all ages lacked basic computer technology, and access to broadband, or high-speed Internet, necessary for access to online education. The state was able to pull together support, but we need a sustainable solution. Many schools lacked seamless curriculum transfer from in-class instruction to online instruction, not to mention some educators, like students, did not have a device or access to broadband at home.

Tennessee is in the midst of an ongoing crisis that has revealed many gaps in our kindergarten-to-career operations, including the need for real-time data across the education continuum, which often requires legislative authorization. The best-laid plans are based on available data, and in the absence of that information, setting a course is challenging. As noted by Governor Lee, Tennessee must administer state-wide testing in the 2020-21 school year so academic performance can be carefully evaluated to accurately inform which educational practices and innovations will best serve all students moving forward. Tennessee needs to align a consistent, high-quality K-12 competency-based education with higher

education to the jobs of tomorrow so our students can thrive financially with high growth opportunities and optimal health and well-being.

Acknowledgements

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Acronym Glossary

ACT	American College Test
APSU	Austin Peay State University
BEP	Basic Education Program -- Tennessee’s K-12 Funding Formula
CARES	Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, And Economic Security Act
CCTA	Complete College Tennessee Act Of 2010
CREDO	The Stanford University Center for Research on Education Outcomes
CRF	Coronavirus Relief Fund
EBT	Electronic Benefit Transfer
ERIC	Education Recovery and Innovation Commission
ESSER	Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief
ETSU	East Tennessee State University
FAFSA	Federal Financial Aid Application
FOW	Future of Work
GEER	Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund
GELF	Governor’s Early Literacy Foundation
HEERF	Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund
HiSET	High School Equivalency Test
HOPE	Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally
IHEs	Institutions of higher education
K-12	Kindergarten through grade 12
LGIs	Locally Governed Institutions
MAP	Measures of Academic Progress
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCSL	National Conference of State Legislatures
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
SARS-CoV-2	(Covid-19) Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2
SBE	Tennessee State Board of Education
SCORE	State Collaborative on Reforming Education
SHEEO	State Higher Education Executive Officers
SLC	Southern Legislative Conference
STAR	State Transformation in Action Recognition

TBR	Tennessee Board of Regents
TCAT	Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology
TDOE	Tennessee Department of Education
TEMA	Tennessee Emergency Management Agency
TERA	Tennessee Education Research Alliance
THEC	Tennessee Higher Education Commission
TSAC	Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation
TSU	Tennessee State University
TTU	Tennessee Tech University
UCG	Governor's Unified Command Group
UM	University of Memphis
UT	University of Tennessee
UTC	University of Tennessee Chattanooga
UTHSC	University of Tennessee Health Science Center
UTM	University of Tennessee Martin