
2021 National Survey of Public Education's Response to COVID-19

Frequently Asked Questions and Responses

What is the purpose of this study and survey?

Survey data will be used to describe district and charter management organization responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, showcasing innovative approaches, identifying promising practices, and sharing knowledge about the challenges faced. Our goal is to document this moment in education and to provide actionable information to educators, policymakers, and researchers to inform future education practices beyond the initial public health crisis.

Who is conducting this survey?

The [American Institutes for Research \(AIR\)](#) is leading and funding the project. The following organizations are supporting the project: AASA, The School Superintendents Association; Education Commission of the States; Council of Chief State School Officers, and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

What is the American Institutes for Research?

[AIR](#) is one of the world's largest behavioral and social science research and evaluation organizations. For nearly 75 years, AIR has been applying rigorous research to the most vexing social challenges in health and education, communities, and the workforce, in the United States and across the globe. AIR's focus is using the best science to bring the smartest ideas and most effective approaches to improving people's everyday lives, from birth to old age, with a special emphasis on the disadvantaged. As a not-for-profit organization, AIR conducts work with strict independence, objectivity, and nonpartisanship.

Why should my district or charter management organization respond?

What is the benefit to my district or charter management organization?

At this unprecedented time, it is essential to capture information on what is happening in our school districts and charter management organizations. This information will inform how we serve our students moving forward and how we address challenges. In appreciation for respondents' time to complete surveys in 2021, AIR will donate \$30,000 across six charities that survey respondents nominate. In 2020, AIR donated more than \$36,000 to charities and school districts in appreciation of respondents' time.

How will the results of this project be used and shared?

In 2020, the project team shared research briefs and an interactive data tool via [the project webpage](#) and virtual events. The project team will share initial results in spring and early summer 2021, and more detailed results in late summer and early fall 2021. Project updates will be shared through a webpage, research briefs, email communication, and events. District leaders will be able to request additional analyses. The project team will present the survey findings for different types of districts, across diverse education settings.

How many districts and charter management organizations were invited to respond to the survey?

A total of 2,500 public school districts across all states were invited to participate in these nationally representative surveys. In addition, 260 charter management organizations across the United States were invited to respond.

What kinds of information was collected in 2020?

In spring 2020, we administered a survey that asked about how district and charter management organizations have coped with issues related to school closures, including the timing of school closures due to COVID-19; distance learning approaches and challenges; supporting students with disabilities and English learners; district policies and requirements, such as grading and graduation; staffing and human resources; and health, well-being, and safety. Find the 2020 survey [here](#).

What kinds of information will be collected in 2021?

The survey we are administering in February 2021 includes questions about district instructional approaches, student participation and engagement, supports for student learning, and priorities and challenges. In spring 2021, we will administer two short follow-up surveys that will focus on providing social-emotional supports, serving specific student populations, and preparing students to transition to their next grade or level of schooling.

Who should complete the survey?

School district or charter management organization leadership can identify who is best positioned to respond. The district respondent may be the district superintendent, assistant superintendent, or other district leader in charge of the district's distance learning effort or curriculum and instruction. The charter management organization respondent may be the chief academic officer, superintendent, regional superintendent, or other central office leader in charge of the organization's distance learning effort or curriculum and instruction. The main respondent is encouraged to ask colleagues for information if they cannot respond to a question.

Will my responses be kept confidential?

Responses to this survey will be used for research purposes only. Reports will present findings in the aggregate, and responses will not be connected to a specific individual or school district. We use strict data security practices to protect the privacy of information you provide. AIR follows the confidentiality and data protection requirements of the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Is this mandatory or can I decline?

Your participation is completely voluntary. Participants can skip any questions that they do not wish to answer. Furthermore, we recognize that participation will require staff time and energy. In appreciation, upon completing the survey, participating districts and charter management organizations will have the option to nominate a charity that AIR will donate to. We will donate \$30,000 across six randomly selected charities that survey respondents nominate.

What is the burden of participating?

The only burden is the time required (approximately 10–15 minutes for each survey).

Whom can I contact to verify that this is a legitimate research project?

Please send any questions or concerns to the research team at PERC@air.org. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact AIR's Institutional Review Board, which is responsible for the protection of project participants, at IRB@air.org, toll free at 1-800-634-0797, or c/o IRB, 1400 Crystal Drive, 10th Floor, Arlington, VA 22202-3289.



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