THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

REOPENING SCHOOLS IN THE FALL AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Opening Remarks:

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Panel:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, good afternoon, ladies, and gentlemen. My name is John Allen. I'm the president of the Brookings Institution. It is my sincere pleasure to have you all with us today. As part of our mission to support the public good, Brookings is committed to reopening of America and the world in the safest and most efficient way possible. (audio skip) experts from across our institution, Brookings is launching later this month a comprehensive effort aimed at assessing the many key considerations implicit to the broader conversation of reopening.

But today's event is a prelude to that launch and we hope that you learn something this afternoon that can directly support your community and to keep you and your families safe.

Turning to the topic at hand, though many parents are looking forward to sending their children back to school, and of course reopening schools would be a major signal of reopening of the economy in general, there is no guarantee that schools can safely reopen or that they'll reopen in a way that will present the kind of momentum that we need to continue our process for education.

Now, epidemiologists and public health experts continue to warn about the possibility of a second wave, which could either further the delay the reopening plans for our schools, or shutter schools at least until the next school year. Given social distancing guidelines, most school reopening will, at a minimum, create smaller student capacity that will likely require a mix of remote learning along with live instruction to accommodate all of the students necessary. And this will place an enormous burden on our teachers.

This has profound implications, especially to the vulnerable student population, to include our minority populations, who are generally expected to be most impacted during the current closures and into the next school year with the virus continuing to pose a threat.

The purpose of our webinar today is to discuss the pressing needs and the constraints that school leaders and teachers need to grapple with as they look to reopen our next school year. This is a global problem, not just a U.S. problem. Schools have been closed across the globe and are only now starting to seriously consider reopening. We can learn lessons from looking abroad and some o the discussion will certainly consider how other countries have approached the question of reopening

schools.

As President of Brookings I am determined to focus the collective capacity of our institution on generating big ideas and sound policy guidance so that our country and the world emerges from this pandemic stronger than ever. Today's public event is an important element of that effort. We encourage you to join this and future reopening conversations on social media using #COVIDReopening or by emailing your questions to Events@Brookings.edu -- that's Events@Brookings.edu, with any questions you might have. We look forward to having them from you.

So let me please introduce Dr. Michael Hanson for our discussion and our panel today.

Mike is a Senior Fellow, a director the Brown Center on Education at Brookings and one of our very best at the institution on this subject. And it's great to see you, Mike. And I thank you very much for leading this panel today and leading this discussion. It's a very important topic and we're grateful for your time and for all of the panelists who join us today.

Mike, over to you please.

MR. HANSEN: Thank you, John. I appreciate the introduction and the overview of Brookings' work as we try to help policy makers and practitioners navigate this very challenging environment that we find ourselves in.

Now, let's turn to the panel discussion. We have three great panelists who have joined us to offer some insights and perspectives as they've helped engage with questions and how schools can safely reopen.

Let me introduce those three panelists to you. First, we have Heather Hough. Heather is the executive director of Policy Analysis for California Education, or PACE. PACE is a research center that works with policy makers and school leaders in California to promote evidence-based practices and continuous improvement at all levels of education.

Daniel Domenech is the executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, the School Superintendents Association. He has more than 36 years of experience in public education, 27of those served as a school superintendent, including 7 years as superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools here in neighboring Virginia.

And, finally, we have Emiliana Vegas. She's a senior fellow and co-director of the Center for Universal Education here at the Brookings Institution. Before joining Brookings Emiliana served as the chief of the education division at the Inter-American Development Bank where she led research and analysis efforts to support education systems throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

And, just as a reminder, we encourage those in the audience to submit your questions for the panelists either through email at Events@Brookins.edu or over Twitter using @BrookingsEd, or using #COVIDReopening. We will weave those questions into today's conversations.

Now, let's begin. First I'm going to turn to Heather. Heather, California has been on the leading edge of dealing with this pandemic. Please tell us what you're seeing on the ground with how state and district leaders are dealing with the question of reopening and how PACE is supporting their efforts to deal with the fallout from COVID-19.

MS. HOUGH: Thanks so much for having me here today.

PACE, as you mentioned, is a policy research institute that focuses on bringing evidence into decision making. So since the pandemic descended, we've been working closely with district leaders, county leaders, and state leaders to try to wrap our heads around how to bring evidence into this constantly evolving situation.

At the moment, our state is consumed with this question of how do we know when to open schools, what types of measures will keep our students safe, what do we need to introduce in order to make sure that kids keep learning, and what will it cost. And so to help all of that, we've organized our work here at PACE around thinking about three separate but tightly interconnected issues.

The first is around data. We know that students are going to come back to school, whether that's in person or virtual, a hybrid model. These are some of the questions that are being discussion about function of schools, the structure of schools. But no matter how they come back, we know that they're going to have very high levels of need. Many schools lost instructional time -- or most students lost instructional time as a result of school closures, but many of California's students are housing or food insecure, are experiencing issues with trauma at home. So how do we know what their needs are when they come back? How can we evaluate what both their academic and social and

emotional needs are?

And then once that information is collected, we need to empower our system to be able to act on it, to provide wrap around services to students and families that help to navigate some of the challenges that they're experiencing at home and to raise up evidence based practiced about what will work for these students, but also to help to develop the capacity in all of our systems to engage in a cycle of continuous improvement. How do we evaluate what's working for which students and under which conditions and spread those practices more broadly?

And then, finally, here in California we are very, very tightly focused on the issue of education funding. What we're asking of our educators across the state, but also across the country, is to redesign education to do what we've never done before. And in California we're right now asking schools to do that with 10 percent less funding that we had before.

So how do we balance these conflicting demands? And that's part of the deep conversation that we're having here in California right now.

MR. HANSEN: Thank you, Heather; that's very helpful.

And now let's go to Dan. Dan, you participated in our Brookings event on preparing schools for dealing with COVID-19 that we hosted last March. It's hard to believe that it was just two months ago. But please tell us about how your organization is supporting districts during this crisis and what some of the most pressing issues that you are seeing as schools grapple with these questions right now.

MR. DOMENECH: So we represent all of the superintendents in the country and what we are doing is working with them in all of these states. We've assembled a task force of 30 superintendents from around the country and we meet with them on a weekly basis and we gather information from all of the states and superintendents in terms of their issues and the emerging solutions hopefully.

What we have found to date, the biggest concern right now is for schools to be in essence forced to open without observing the guidelines that have been promoted by the CDC. And, by the way, we were very happy to see just over this weekend that the CDC finally did put out guidelines that

were more comprehensive and more specific than what we had seen before. But our concern is that districts would be mandated to open schools irrespective of those guidelines.

We already see indicators from some states that have passed laws saying that schools will open on such and such a date in August without a proviso that would say assuming that the health conditions are appropriate for schools to open. So that's a big concern right now. Our educational leaders, our superintendents do not want to put students or staff in jeopardy. Their biggest concern and responsibility is to assure the safety and welfare of students and staff. So that's a big concern.

But assuming that those guidelines are met and schools are in a position to open, as Heather indicated, there are basically three scenarios in terms of what's going to happen. Either the environment in a community is going to be such that schools could open as they would at any other time of the year. They would love to be able to do that. Scenario two is a combination, a hybrid, which is really at this point probably the most realistic, where some of the students would be in school -- not all of them because you have to adhere to the spacing guidelines, and then the remaining students would be at home undergoing a continuation of, you know, remote learning. And a third scenario is that it's not possible to physically have the kids in school at all and it would just be remote learning as it has been the last quarter of this school year.

Probably the first and third scenarios are unrealistic. Everybody wants to open, everybody wants to have the children back in school. So most of the planning is revolving around the middle scenario. And then, of course, how, you know, what parameters. You hear some indications, for example -- and, Mike, I congratulate you in the piece that you wrote because you make reference to that in your recommendations -- but basically you might want to bring in the children that are most in need into the school buildings. For example, our special ed students whose IEP requires them to be in school and working physically with a therapist or a teacher or other professionals in order to deal with their needs. The students that, for example, right now have not had any instruction because they don't have the technology and they don't have internet access at home. And that is a significant amount of our students right now. The younger students, as opposed to the older students, who need the physical presence of a teacher more so than the elder students might. So that is one possibility.

Another possibility is just to flip them from day to day and bring in -- so at some point in time maybe all of the students are in school at least one day a week. But all of these things are going to require, if you think about it, a different school calendar than what we have. And what's being advanced by many of these districts as well is basically year round schooling and to extend the calendar with more days in it that would allow all of the students in this kind of schedule to spend an equal amount of time in the building.

MR. HANSEN: Well, great. Thank you. Thank you, Dan, for that insight. And we're going to be talking through a lot of these parameters and different options in more detail as we continue the conversation.

But, first, let's move to Emiliana. Emiliana, some of the work that I've seen you and your colleagues at the Center for Universal Education put out stresses some of the different approaches that other countries have taken to both closing and reopening schools. Please tell us about what you've seen globally.

MS. VEGAS: Thank you, Mike.

Well, I did a review of the countries so far that have been among the first to open schools and one of the things that really contrasted with the sort of discussion in the United States is how much the right that children have to have a quality education was factored in in both the decisions to close schools as well as to reopen schools.

So just to give an example, in both Denmark and Finland, two of the first countries that have reopened the schools, even in announcing the school closures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the governments of these countries explained that some schools would not close because they had to remain open to serve children of, for example, first responders or children with disabilities who would otherwise be denied a quality education during the school closures. Also the right to quality education was a very important factor in the decision to reopen schools in both Denmark and Finland. Government officials explained that the risk of spreading the disease by the time they were making the decision did not outweigh the right of children to have access to quality education.

And the last factor that has been interesting from what we've seen in these countries is

that they've also made decisions regarding assessments. For example, in Denmark to reduce inequality in completion of secondary education, the government decided to suspend assessments, what they call the end of year assessments, at the end of secondary education this year because, as they stated, they would negatively affect children of immigrant households who don't speak the language of instruction at home. So these issues of inequality and kind of rights that all students have to have access to a quality education have been hugely important, both in the decisions to close and how they did it, as well as when to reopen and in what ways.

MR. HANSEN: Thank you, Emiliana. That's very, very insightful.

Now, before jumping straight into the questions of reopening in the fall, why don't we start by establishing what has been happening to students and schools during the closures that we've seen to date. Virtually all schools in the country closed by late March and have remained closed through the end of the school year. There's a lot of lost school time and most school systems have now made an effort to support with some kind of virtual learning.

How has remote learning been going overall? How has it worked for families, how has it worked for educators, from what you can see?

Dan, why don't we first go to you and then Heather?

MR. DOMENECH: Okay, great. Well, let me summarize it very simply -- it has not worked well at all. Schools were designed basically for the kids to be physically in the presence of a teacher in a classroom. Remote learning has been, up until this point, ancillary to classroom instruction. A high school student might take a course online. At the elementary level, youngsters in the classroom might be going online as the teacher personalizes instruction, but it was never foreseen that schools would shut down and that the -- throw the switch for remote learning entirely.

And when this happened, what we saw really was the huge inequity that had existed in our schools in terms of the haves and the have nots. Those school districts that are in wealthy communities and have the resources, so that they already had one to one, that's a laptop for every student n the district, who already had acquired the software, where the teachers had all been trained, were able to make the switch to remote learning instantly. On the other hand, we have the districts at the

other end of the spectrum who did not have the resources, where students did not have a laptop to take home, and where their homes didn't even have internet connection. And there are today still -- and the school year is almost over -- millions of students in that situation who have not received any instruction other than some of these districts were sending packets of information to the home. But definitely not the same thing as the student being able to be online interacting with a teacher or at least getting lessons online.

So there's this huge disparity, which, by the way, has widened the achievement gap even further as we think about it going into the end of the school year. So the biggest issue that we're confronted with right now, as we talk later on about the opening of schools, is is that situation still going to be in place when we reopen schools? If it is, then we have a huge problem, because there's going to be a continuation of millions of students in this country that do not have the technology and do not have access to internet in the home.

Where our organization is working with all the state superintendents organizations, as well as many other educational organizations, is pushing Congress in their next bill to provide the finances, the money, that would allow school districts to ensure that every student has a laptop and also try to get the FCC, through the E-Rate program, to provide internet service as they do in something that's known today as the Lifeline approach, where families that can't afford telephone service do get telephone service, that those families also have telephone service and internet service as well.

So the immediate issue is to correct the inequity that exists right now in terms of the technology component, particularly if we see a model emerging into next year that remote learning is still going to be a significant part of instruction.

MR. HANSEN: Great. Thank you, Dan.

And, Heather, what are you seeing on the ground in California?

MS. HOUGH: We're seeing all of what Dan described and then some. I think the technology and access to technology issue is huge and can't be understated. We need to make sure that all students and families have devices and access to WiFi.

But the problem I think goes beyond that. We've seen a huge variation in California

based on what schools and districts are choosing to offer, so decisions about curriculum and instruction, decisions about how you implement virtual learning. So some districts here in California have stayed fairly close to what they were planning to deliver for the rest of the year. Some districts potentially stopped instruction in March when we closed schools and began offering enrichment or sticking with the same material that they had presented in the period before.

So what we're seeing isn't just an issue of lack of access to technology, but really an issue about how we conceptualize what students should have been getting during this time. And I think what's critical looking forward is that what happened in the spring none of us were expecting. And in some places where they already had a blended learning model, they were able to hit the ground running. They were able to make sure that they continued student learning. The already had Google Classroom set up, all students already had devices.

Looking to the fall, we should have a pretty good sense of what's coming. Most of the models suggest that even if we're back in school physically in the fall, we will likely be toggling back and forth between virtual and online learning. So now is the time to get really smart about what online learning can and should look like, so that we're prepared now when and if that situation happens in the fall.

MR. HANSEN: Okay, thank you.

Emiliana, are you seeing anything different globally about how remote learning is working for students or their families or their educators?

MS. VEGAS: I guess only that the U.S. is one of the richest countries in the world, and so when you think about the whole world and take into account developing countries, the situation is much worse for students who are living in countries where internet access is only 30 percent of the population, where even if governments have been able -- and many were -- to offer online solutions in platforms, you know, it's a very small proportion of the students who can access them, where there was very little online education taking place before, and then you have -- I was recently in a chat with a number of teachers from all over the world and a teacher from Australia was describing how prior to closing the government took very seriously the objective of making sure that all students would have

access to WiFi and partnered with private corporations and ensured that all students had devices before they closed schools. And at the same time, teachers had already been working in online professional development communities for a while, so delivering professional development during the school closures to teachers on how to engage students effectively was much easier because they had already been practicing that.

So I think, you know, there's the whole span globally of countries that are able to resolve some of the issues that the U.S. is still struggling with and countries that are much farther behind than some of the poorest regions of the United States.

MR. HANSEN: Okay. Thank you, Emiliana.

So it's clear that we expect students to come back to school much further behind that we otherwise would have expected them. Is there anything that we can be doing now, before schools reopen, to help support students at scale, or are there things that schools should be thinking about, you know, in planning for next year. I've heard of ideas like half grades or whole school tutoring, for example. Do you feel like any of those intensive remediations could be helpful here?

What do you think, Heather?

MS. HOUGH: Our team has been doing a lot of research on best practices on distance learning, because if we think about what we can do right now -- at least here in California at this moment -- physical reopening of spaces is not happening. So in thinking about how can we accelerate student learning right now, we have to look to what we know about how we can do that in a remote context.

So part of what we've been raising up is that there are ways to extend student learning, to address student learning needs, we just have to make sure that we build on what we know about how kids learn. And a big part of that is really focusing on small group, one on one instruction, even in a remote context, that many students aren't able to access content when it's delivered in a video or in a synchronous content. And so thinking about what does a student need to learn and then figuring out a way to deliver that content remotely is the way to be thinking about how we introduce intervention. We know things like home visits, summer school, one on one tutoring, these are all practices that we know can accelerate student learning. So that's where we need to start. Instead of thinking what's the

technology we can use right now, what we need to think is what do students need and how can we deliver that in a remote context.

MR. HANSEN: Okay. Excellent. Thank you.

Dan, what have you been hearing on this question of whether we can be doing anything to support students in the immediate future? Summer school, perhaps.

MR. DOMENECH: Yes, so a lot of school districts are thinking exactly along those lines, summer school will be an excellent opportunity to be able to reach those youngsters. The problem is that the very youngsters that we're talking about have the greatest needs are the youngsters that are missing. There are actually millions of students out there that the districts have not had any contact with while all of this has been happening.

MR. HANSEN: Just to interject, for an estimate, that's roughly 21 percent nationwide, according to an EdWeek educator survey.

Please continue.

MR. DOMENECH: So, yeah, 21 percent of 52 million, that's a lot of kids.

MR. HANSEN: It is. Thank you.

MR. DOMENECH: So how to reach them, that's the first problem, how to get to them in order to do that. The second problem is that as long as the spacing issues continue it will have to be remote, it can't be done personally. And here again, the same problem with the lack of technology. So the thought for most districts is to think in terms of when they are able to come back. If those students can be given a priority in terms of being the ones that are physically in school, particularly if the situation is still that they don't have the technology and they don't have the internet access, and then extending for those youngsters the period of time that they would be in school, the number of days, perhaps Saturday classes. Some of the districts around the country actually begin the school year in August, so they're thinking August as the time to begin classes and to bring those students in.

So the solution to that particular issue is knowing that they are behind, that they have the greatest needs, is to bring them into the school as soon as that's possible as a priority and then continue remote learning with those youngsters once they have the technology and the access that would allow

remote learning to work for them.

MR. HANSEN: Okay. Thank you.

Emiliana, one of our audience participants, Katherine, she strikes up an interesting point about the balance between providing services and also equity. And so she raises the question that if we are actually providing some kind of services and they're delivered remotely, then we are likely going to be continuing to exacerbate inequalities. Or should we just simply do nothing? And that sounds very much like perhaps some of the calculus that developing countries have addressed. You know, should we just do nothing or how can we balance these competing interests of trying to promote education, but also promoting equity?

MS. VEGAS: That's a very hard and relevant question. You know, I think that doing nothing is probably a big mistake. It's kind of leveling down. And I think it's up to every community and country to really figure out what resources they can reallocate to be able to provide a quality education, particularly for the most disadvantaged students.

That being said, you know, that we might consider, for example, learning from countries like Denmark. Again, in order to accommodate the majority of students that they could in schools once they reopened, they also (inaudible) a number of other public spaces, like community parks, that were close to adults during the school hours so that classrooms could take place in outdoor areas. So museums were opened only for classes to take place.

So that's one option to include as many. Another option is that some countries have employed is to prioritize the entry of children of parents who both have jobs or who are first responders I mentioned, and sort of discouraging or gently requesting that parents who have one adult in the household who is able to stay at home keep their children a home for remote learning a little bit longer to allow for a kind of fewer children returning at one time.

So all these are important questions that I think every community should really put on the table for discussion and for decision makers.

MR. HANSEN: Okay, thank you.

MS. HOUGH: Can I jump in there as well?

MR. HANSEN: Please, Heather.

MS. HOUGH: I think that the conversation that we really need to be having is that one size does not fit all as we think about coming back to school. And I think some of these questions about equity, and like you said, Mike, do we just give everyone the same thing or do we do nothing, I think has been the dichotomy that many districts have been dealing with, but there's a whole lot in the middle of those two options. And so as we think about either what happens over the summer, if were in a virtual setting, or what happens as kids go back to school in the fall, and number of these different scenarios, we really do need to be thinking what does every kid need, whether that's childcare, whether that's direct targeted support, whether that's school mental health services to help them deal with issues of trauma in their home or community. We need to think about how we structure what school looks like in the fall in order to very specifically meet kids' needs and design around that.

MR. DOMENECH: Now, let me add to that, Mike if I may, that some of the initial problems when schools started to close, were the issues of providing for the needs of our special education students who have IEPs. And that created the very point that you were just making, a lot of superintendents were basically told, even by the governors, that if you couldn't do programs for all, you couldn't do programs for any. That's exactly the point that you made. I can tell you right now that I don't know of a single superintendent who said, hey, if I'm going to be sued, I'm going to be sued, but I'm going to provide programs for as many children as I can. And there is still a major liability factor out there.

And one of the things our organization has been pushing for was for the Secretary of Education, who has the power to be more flexible in terms of the IEP provisions -- because at this point in time I can tell you that there are potential thousands of lawsuits out there on the part of parents whose children's IEP has not been met because of the conditions that exist right now. So that is an unfortunate -- and we talk about inequity -- this is an unfortunate situation here where we've been able to do something in terms of remote learning for some of the students, but in terms of students who have special needs, or ESL, English as a second language, students who don’t speak the language, those students also have not been receiving the service that they require.

So that is a major issue that we're going to have to contend with and resolve as schools

continue to open.

MR. HANSEN: Let me continue this thought a little bit. We actually have a question from David that deals with how can states approach flexibility in CTIME requirements to address COVID-19. Dan, you just mentioned flexibility around IEP and those kinds of requirements for providing education. It also touches on what Emiliana opened up with, with students having a right to education. Are all bets off the table for the next year until this Coronavirus clears up? Or is there a right that students are obligated to get?

Let's first go to Dan, and then maybe, Emiliana, if you could chime in there.

MR. DOMENECH: Well, I could tell you that many states have already eliminated the CTIME requirement. Obviously because this year it couldn't be done, couldn't be met. So they've eliminated the CTIME requirement. And the interesting thing, by the way, is that -- because our superintendents are already thinking about the future of education beyond this year, and what we see happening is that a lot of the things that are going to be happening this school year are going to deal with traditions, rules and regulation in education that are going to have to change. So, for years we've heard about the agrarian calendar in school. Why do kids have to be off for two months in the summertime? Why is there a CTIME requirement when youngsters can learn just as well away from the classroom? And we're seeing that right now in remote learning.

So a lot of these issues and a lot these rules and regulations are going to change. And one of them, for this coming year at least, and probably thereafter, is going to be the CTIME requirement issue.

MR. HANSEN: Emiliana, do you want to offer any perspective there?

MS. VEGAS: Sure. You know, I'm hearing Dan and thinking about some of the work that we've been doing through colleagues trying to estimate not just the learning loss to date that students may suffer from the school closures, but also potentially based on the evidence from previous crises and pandemics, sort of the impact this will have throughout their lifetimes in terms of earnings losses, et cetera.

And also hearing Dan thinking well, we're going to have to change a lot. I think we have

to get very smart and creative as educators and communities really in taking this crisis as an opportunity to dramatically change how our schools serve children. And I think, you know, the silver lining of this might be that we are more explicit about what are the skills that we want U.S. students to have when they complete 12 years of mandatory education, and then how to allow them, the students, with better with assessment systems and a blended model of in person and online education, to let them kind of have their own individual education trajectories to achieve them.

We know we have been operating -- not just in the U.S. but almost all over the world -- under still the industrial model of education where kids enter a certain age and move around at the same pace and learn the same things at the same time, roughly. And we know from the learning sciences that kids have very different learning styles and some do well with lecture based lessons, some do better with project based learning. Even the same child will learn different subjects differently. And they also come in with different levels of learning and skills. And so how do we adapt to the child and to their own needs and let them flourish?

And I think with some high standards, but with a lot of individualized support using what we hopefully will learn from this experience, that may work in terms in terms of ed tech.

MR. HANSEN: Okay. Thank you.

As a reminder to those in the audience, we encourage you to submit your questions that you have either via email through Events@Brookings.edu or over Twitter using @BrookingsEd or #COVIDReopening.

So now let's get to some of the nuts and bolts of how schools might reopen. The CDC has issued some guidance. Dan, you mentioned some of that guidance initially, but very briefly, do you feel like the new guidance that has been issued, is that adequate? And do you feel like districts feel that they have enough guidance to move forward with?

MR. DOMENECH: Well, you know, a couple of weeks ago those guidelines were leaked by the CDC and we latched onto them and said, hey, this is what we've been waiting for, only to hear from the Administration that those guidelines would not be put out at all. They wouldn't see the light of day was the first term. The following day we heard from the Administration that no, no, they will see the

light, but they're going to have to be edited, only to see this weekend those very same guidelines released. And we're so happy, because those were the guidelines that we wanted to see.

So I think we have more specific guidelines for administrators to be able to follow in terms of opening and in terms of the situations that have to take place in a school, such as the space of students, such as the health conditions. Are they going to wear face masks or the protective equipment the teachers are going to need? All of these issues are addressed in the guidelines and we're very happy that the CDC was allowed to release them. And I think they will be very helpful.

MR. HANSEN: Okay, great.

Emiliana, are the guidelines and the practices that are being recommended in U.S. schools, are they all that different from what you've seen in other countries? So just to name a few, these are things like discontinuing shared spaces, so no more lunchroom, for example, or encouraging social distancing, keeping students apart, perhaps using staggered schedules in order to allow students to transit to school with a smaller capacity bus or actually in the building.

Emiliana, how are those different, if at all, from other countries? You're muted, Emiliana.

MS. VEGAS: Sorry about that.

They align pretty well with what we're seeing from other countries. I think one of the interesting things that other countries have done is when they have defined the number of children who can be with one teacher at a time. They have also established rules so that remains constant throughout the school day so that if you have like a group of 10 children with 1 adult, that in the past that adult may change. You know, if you have a music lesson or an art lesson, you might have a different teacher come into the class. And that's no longer happening in some of the systems, which may mean some -- may have some effects in terms of the quality of the education that the students are receiving, but they're prioritizing in this case the health -- and particularly the health of the teachers, because by not exposing them to different children every day they are also helping them stay safe. But it's pretty similar.

In other countries also what we've seen is a lot of hand washing, like, you know, when you come into school at every hour. Meals are provided, again, not in a common room, but in the same groups that you're in. And in some cases extra sinks and bathrooms have been installed in school prior

to reopening to minimize the effect of that.

MR. HANSEN: Okay, thank you.

Heather, still on the topic of the CDC guidelines, can you please walk us through how the guidelines are going to constrain schools' ability to serve all students and what California is potentially considering in light of that?

MS. HOUGH: Well, I think you can't talk about those guidelines without starting to get really into the weeds about how you would meet them and what the cost would be for meeting them. And that's a big part of the conversation right now in California. A big group of urban school districts and a coalition of membership associations in California have already issued statements saying we can't actually physically reopen school with the current level of funding. And that's because if you just walkthrough any of these options and start to price them out, it is much more expensive than what we've been offering right now, or it can be.

So you take a staggered schedule, for example. Some of the very specific proposals that are being put out are what if students come to school Monday, Wednesday, or that fist is Tuesday, Thursday. What if it's one week on, one week off, a.m., p.m. All of those scenarios require that students are in class sometimes and then being taught virtually other times with sanitation happening in schools very regularly. So you have staff time to offer both in person and virtual, you have additional cleaning staff to sanitize schools. You also need to purchase this protective gear if students are going to be wearing masks and teachers are going to be wearing masks.

So just the physical -- the cost of organizing schools in this physical way is something that we can't ignore in the discussions about reopening schools, especially if we want every student to be there. So I think that that has to be part of the conversation about what the offerings are and then you throw into the mix that these aren't just things that we can do without actually understanding the motivations and preferences of the people who occupy schools.

So there is some recent research that has shown that about a third of teachers in the United States are at risk for severe illness as a result of COVID-19. We also know that many students are medically fragile or live with people who are at risk for COVID-19. So many individuals across the

country will choose not to re-occupy physical spaces and we have to understand what that need and what that preference is while we're considering the cost and the ideal designs for education.

So, again, back to the point I made earlier, rather than thinking about this in like how can we design the system from up here, it really should be, when you think about the needs and the preferences and the health requirements of every child and every teacher, how can we design around that, which is why we both have to be thinking about local decision making, but also providing strong guidance and frameworks from the state level and from the national level about what quality education looks like and how we can get there.

MR. HANSEN: Thank you. Thank you, Heather.

So these are some very, very valuable insights. And you talk about potentially -- well, should we actually educate all students at home and should we be encouraging students to -- excuse me, in schools, in physical schools -- excuse me -- should we actually be encouraging more students to be learning from home. I understand that some countries have gone that route, Emiliana, or at least have offered that option. Can you say anything about what the uptake has been like there, Emiliana?

MS. VEGAS: Yes. So it seems like, you know, countries have gone in one of two ways. Once the decision to reopen schools has been made at the sort of central level, like what in the U.S. would be the state level I suppose, then communities like school districts still are given an option to adjust -- you know, to not open or delay until they have the ability to meet the guidelines that they have issued in order to reopen. So that's done in terms of the government structure. There is some flexibility.

The other type of flexibility is then to parents. And Heather was saying some of the countries that have reopened do allow parents who have at risk family members living at home to keep the student at home, do allow teachers who have health conditions that prevent them from -- or that would put them at an undue risk to continue teaching remotely from home instead of having to do it in person at school. I think that the very thing I want to highlight though is that even when parents are given, let's say, the choice to have their children remain in school, they are required to have them continue with remote learning and the government is moving to what they call -- actually they call remote learning in some of these countries emergency education, in part in recognition to the fact that we started

the conversation early on with Dan saying it's not working very well. So recognizing that, you know, okay, you are a child who is either ill yourself and we can't put you at risk or you have someone at home, we cannot guarantee that you are going to have the same type of learning outcomes that you would otherwise, so we're going to call this emergency education. We'll see if they move onto, as we were hoping, some sort of better quality, let's say remote learning 2.0, after this period of emergency education, but I don't think any country is truly there yet.

MR. HANSEN: Okay.

Dan, do you feel like superintendents that you've spoken with, would they be supportive of allowing parents the options of just doing at home learning if that works for them?

MR. DOMENECH: Oh, absolutely. And I can tell you right now that a number of districts have already surveyed their parents and they're getting as many as 30 and 40 percent of the parents saying, look, I'm not going to send my child to school, okay, because I'm concerned about their welfare and them getting sick if we send them to school, so I'm going to keep them home. So home instruction is becoming very much a component of what schools might look like, that there may be a much higher percentage of our students being instructed at home than would usually be the case. There are already states that allow home instruction to happen that do not have -- they don't find those students truant if they're not attending the school system or -- a private or a public school system.

So that's an option that would accommodate the ability of a school to provide more of the students that opt to be in the building to be in the building. So that's a reality right now. Right now in our area, in the Washington area, the Montgomery County School District in Maryland, Jack Smith, the superintendent there, did such a survey of his parents and indeed found that a large percentage of his population would opt to keep their kids at home and do home instruction.

So absolutely, that is a feasible option for this coming year.

MR. HANSEN: Okay, excellent. Thank you.

Why don't we go to some of the questions that we've gotten from the audience? And what I'll do is I'll read some of these questions, I'll direct them to one of our panelists, or if a panelist wants to volunteer, please do. But so that we can get through as many as we can, we're going to try to keep the

responses brief.

So how do we see student assessments? This is a question from Mary -- excuse me. How do we see student assessments coming into play give the Covid disruption? Should we be going back to student assessments next year or should we kind of put them on hold for a little bit.

Let's put that one to Heather.

MS. HOUGH: Great. We've actually been recommending that all of the state assessments that were not administered in the spring be reconfigured to be a diagnostic assessment in the fall. And whether that's a statewide assessment or a local assessment, what we know to be true is that educators starting in the fall, and system leaders, will have very little information about what students' learning levels are. And this isn't just kind of at an average level, it's what specific skills and content did you acquire or retain and what specific skills and content need to be re-taught.

And so that is a critical aspect that can be used in the classroom, but it can also be used at the school as we think about how we structure for a particular kid. So there might be some kids that are a full grade level behind and there might be some kids that because they responded well to remote learning or generally were engaged at home, are a grade on grade level. So before we think about do we put all third graders back in third grade next year, instead we need to be looking at what are kids' specific learning needs and then how do we address those. And diagnostic assessments are a really important way to get that information.

MR. HANSEN: Great. Thank you, Heather.

Next question, this one comes from Melissa, with budget cuts and no pay increases and the uncertainty of reopening schools, how can we support teachers during this time to help ensure that they can then support their students?

Dan, you work with superintendents and educators, what can we do as parents and the community to help support those teachers?

MR. DOMENECH: Well, you know, hats off to our teachers. They have been doing a fantastic job. As bad as -- I shouldn't say bad -- but as weak as their remote learning has been, teachers going out and -- and you see it in the news practically every day -- teachers that are visiting the homes of

students, principals that during graduation were delivering the diploma to the home of every graduating student. I mean educators have gone above and beyond in terms of connecting with the kids and making the kids feel good about themselves in this terrible environment.

This is going to be at tough year for teachers as we come in. Because of the economic downturn, so many states who had huge cuts in budgets, as Heather mentioned before in California, that's the case in every state. And that's going to translate into huge cuts in the education budget. So all of these things that we're talking about doing to conform with the guidelines can't be done unless there's more money, certainly not less money.

And another ugly factor is that there are projections that as many as 300,000 teachers are going to be losing their job this year because of this economic downturn. So, I mean, this is like adding insult to injury, that teachers are working so hard on behalf of their kids, and the result is that so many of them are going to wind up losing their jobs. So everything that we can do to support teachers, everything that we can do to encourage our Federal Government to provide schools with the kind of aid that they need, please do it.

MR. HANSEN: Thank you, Dan. I appreciate that.

Here's a question I'm going to direct to Emiliana from Zolfikar (phonetic). In a developing country like India, some teachers are not trained to really help best in this situation, but are there any suggestions that you have to minimize the loss of time that students may suffer in really remote or rural areas that can't be touched by connectivity and internet? And of course that's also applicable here in the U.S. Is there something that we can do if we can't actually reach them online?

MS. VEGAS: So I've been in conversations also with people from India who are working this space, and as well as been observing what's happening across the world in the least developed countries, and there are clever things that people are using. For example, even in the most remote areas in India parents do have cell phones, and so some efforts are being made to use text messaging or even the WhatsApp application to communicate educational guidance to parents while their kids are staying at home. So that's a creative way.

Another kind of time tested strategy that countries, particularly in Latin America, have

used in the past and are using now for populations that don't have connectivity to internet is broadcast through radio and TV. Countries like Peru and Chile have programs today called "Learn From Home" on TV that provide curriculum aligned lessons. And I was very touched to see in the Peruvian newspaper a parent posting a picture of her daughter even wearing the uniform for the first day that the TV program of learning from home was launched, sitting at the little table but wearing her formal uniform even though she's going to be learning from home.

So there are a lot of things. Are they super effective and are they going to produce the same results that they children would have at school? I don't think so. I think there's evidence for that. But they are a tool to mitigate the learning loss. And I totally agree with Heather that the best thing we can do once children can return to school is to conduct some serious diagnostic assessments to adjust -- to help them catch up, those who are falling behind and to really be able to diagnose where they are.

MR. HANSEN: Okay, thank you.

A quick question from Dr. Alexis Halley. How will this affect the accreditation of schools? I'm going to give that to you quickly, Dan. Are schools at risk of losing accreditation because of this?

MR. DOMENECH: I doubt it. Everybody understands the circumstances. This has been pretty much universal, so accreditation -- the accreditors are very much aware of what has come, what has happened. The state tests have not been administered in every state, assessments have not been done. So there's no basis for accrediting an institution at this point without that proper knowledge. So I'm pretty sure that all the accreditation institutes will take a step back and look at next year. This year is kind of a washout at this point.

MR. HANSEN: Okay, thank you.

So we have been getting a ton of questions and thank you to all the listeners for your interest and engagement. Unfortunately, we can't get to all of them, but we will be hosting a Twitter Ask Me Another after the event wraps up and we'll continue to take some of these questions online. I'm hopeful that some of our panelists would be willing to continue to engage on some of those tweets. I got a thumbs up from Heather. (Laughing) So we'll continue to field some of those questions afterwards, but I really appreciate it.

And so why don't we wrap up the conversation with a final question? This is a question that comes to us from Michael. Can reopening schools be a catalyst for changing education in the U.S.? And I'm just going to give that to each of our panelists, just a quick 45 second response.

What do you think? Let's start off with Dan.

MR. DOMENECH: Absolutely. Schools will not ever be what they used to be by the middle of March of this year. We're going to see significant changes in how we personalize education, the school calendar, professional development, remote learning. There are going to be significant changes.

So if there is a silver lining behind this, it is that we will abandon the 20th century educational industrialized system that we've had and really bring education into the 21st century.

MR. HANSEN: Okay. Thanks, Dan.

I see nods from Heather. What do you think, Heather?

MS. HOUGH: I think absolutely. I think that we have to acknowledge that our education systems, in California for sure, and nationwide, were not serving all kids. So as we think about designing systems that do, this is a real opportunity to be creative and to bring in best practices that will accelerate student learning for California and the nation's vulnerable youth.

MR. HANSEN: Great, thank you.

Emiliana, how do you think this is going to change education in both the U.S. and globally?

MS. VEGAS: I completely agree that it's a golden opportunity and that this crisis shouldn't go wasted and we should really reform and transform our schools. I do worry that like in the past, and as this crisis has really made our inequalities within countries as well as across countries even more evidence that they ever were before, that the transformation and the -- as Dan was saying, that movement to the 21st century and the abandonment of the 20th century industrial model of schooling will not happen everywhere. And so I think it's -- my ask for everyone who cares is to make sure that we prioritize those communities and students in particular who are most disadvantages, because they're the ones that are going to be hurt the most from this period and from a lack of learning opportunities.

MR. HANSEN: Okay, thank you. Thank you to each of our panelists for participating today. Thank you to the audience for your questions. Again, we will be happy to continue to respond to some of those questions that come in on the Twitter ask me another. And we look forward to engaging and thank you for tuning in.

MS. VEGAS: Thank you.

MS. HOUGH: Thank you.

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