

OVERCOMING THE LEARNING GAP: DEAL WITH THE EFFECT OF GETTING BACK TO FULL FACE-FACE CLASSES AFTER PANDEMIC APPREHENSIONS

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The educational landscape is at a critical juncture as the Department of Education takes a bold step to restore full face to face classes after two years of pandemic disruption. The return to the Physical Schools is a major step towards normalcy, but it also reveals huge disparities and educational gaps that have widened over the past period of remote or hybrid education. The transition to traditional schooling presents both challenges and opportunities in overcoming these educational setbacks.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has forced educational institutions around the world to rapidly transition to distance learning methods, with many students struggling with the sudden change. For two years, students have faced changing access to technology, inconsistent learning environments, and academic interruptions. While some students adapted successfully to online learning, others struggled to catch up, exacerbating existing achievement gaps along socio-economic, racial, and geographic lines. Now, as schools reopen their doors, the repercussions of this prolonged disruption become increasingly evident. Many students find themselves lagging academically, lacking foundational knowledge, and grappling with social and emotional challenges stemming from extended periods of isolation. The divide between those who thrived in remote settings and those who faltered widens further as the return to full face-to-face classes unfolds. Meanwhile, returning to the physical classroom provides an opportunity to implement targeted interventions and support systems to ensure these students receive the support they need to catch up and thrive.

Additionally, the transition to fully face-to-face instruction requires a reassessment of instructional strategies and curriculum priorities. Educators must adopt flexible approaches to meet diverse learning needs and reduce the impact of learning loss. This includes personalized learning plans, small group instruction, extended study time, and increased social-emotional support to meet students' holistic needs. Collaboration with schools, families and communities is also paramount in this effort. Parents and guardians play a critical role in supporting children's educational journeys, especially after such severe disruption. Establishing robust communication channels and providing resources for parent engagement will allow for a smoother transition and enhance learning outside of the classroom. Thus, investments in the professional development of educators are critical to providing them with the skills and tools necessary to effectively navigate and respond to the diverse needs of their students and foster inclusive learning environments.

Ultimately, a return to full in-person instruction will be a pivotal moment in continued efforts to close educational gaps exacerbated by the pandemic. This requires a collaborative and holistic approach that prioritizes equity, flexibility, and collaboration. By leveraging the lessons learned from the challenges of the past two years, we can redesign and reinvigorate our education system to ensure that all students receive the support and resources they need to succeed.

References:

Ross, Elizabeth M.,(2024, January 31). Despite Progress, Achievement Gaps Persist During Recovery from Pandemic.

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/news/24/01/despite-progress-achievement-gaps-persist-during-recovery-pandemic>.