



EDUCATION: A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN GOOD

Summary: San Juan Diego Institute believes that education is a fundamental human good. Along with the most basic necessities of life (food, water, shelter, security), education is a right that all humans have, by virtue of their innate dignity, to develop and grow into productive members of their families and broader communities. San Juan Diego Institute provides transformative change in education by partnering with local and national organizations that research, target, deploy and evaluate models for educating students from lower-economic and minority populations.

- We focus on and partner with organizations dedicated to:

- 1) Improving School Attendance
- 2) Improving Learning Outcomes
- 3) Increasing Education Options and Access
- 4) Forming and Investing in Teachers
- 5) Increasing Undergraduate Opportunities

The Current Issue: Children have suffered enormous learning loss because of the devastating in-person school closures during the global Covid pandemic. Students entered into the 2022-2023 with some of the largest learning deficits ever encountered. Nationally, 3rd-8th grade Math scores dropped on average 20-27%.ⁱ Similarly, 3rd-8th grade reading scores dropped 9-18%.ⁱⁱ Arizona's test scores followed similar trends and educators throughout the state pointed out the need for additional resources. Despite gains in 2021/2022 school year, over 18,000 children remain unenrolled in our public schools.ⁱⁱⁱ

Unfortunately, the hardest hit communities are those comprised of minority and lower-income families which entered in this school year with an equity gap that grew nearly 20% since the Covid-19 pandemic.^{iv}

To date, over \$282 Billion has been spent on education from Federal Covid relief funds,^v however, families are continuing to be impacted by the learning losses, and the future societal and economic consequences will be far-reaching.

Prudent Response: The issues facing Latino students are representative of a broader set of challenges facing the US education system. While systematic change is needed to address the varieties of inequities, specific interventions can begin to address the impacts of covid related learning losses. A review of the emerging data as well as our direct experience with public, private and charter schools^{vi} indicate five areas of focus to improve outcomes for students moving forward.

- **1) Improving School Attendance** - Improving school attendance is of critical importance. Unstable attendance can reduce student learning significantly and create a cascading effect of unfinished learning. Reasons for lack of attendance vary from district to district. They generally include student motivation issues, parent lack of confidence in value of school, parent concern over school safety, or family challenges related to work, childcare etc. Interventions must respond to the direct reasons for declining attendance. Increasing student motivation may include everything from direct incentives, increased student teacher engagement, restructuring school time, and increasing support for social emotional health. 2 years of disrupted learning, hybrid, virtual, etc. has dramatically impacted student and parent motivators for going to school. Parental concerns must be addressed head on, and increased parental engagement is a positive new post-pandemic reality that school must learn to navigate.
- **2) Improving Learning Outcomes** - Remediation in core subjects will be needed for the foreseeable future. Every school must have a strategy for diagnosing level of need and providing opportunities for direct improvement through curriculum interventions, tutoring, increased classroom time, or afterschool/summer school. This requires frequent student assessments and increased opportunities for direct tutoring (one on one, or in small group). Research indicates that direct tutoring during school day has the greatest impact. Followed by tutoring outside of school, and increased learning time (e.g. afterschool or summer school programs).
- **3) Increasing Education options and Access** - Related to the above concerns is the parent's ability to select educational opportunities that fit their children and family needs. There is evidence that states with increased school choice had improved outcomes for students that selected other public, charter or private school options. Far from damaging public schools, charter and private schools provide an important and complementary education, however they must work in cooperation with the larger public district. Increasingly, private parochial schools must develop models to include underprivileged students to better serve their communities and insure enrollment viability into the future.

- **4) Forming and Investing in Teachers** - A growing teacher shortage is looming. In addition to training up more teachers, teachers must have the ability to navigate the widening range of student abilities in each grade. Schools will need to develop teacher mentoring programs, and additional formation related to curriculum, testing, and assessment in order to help new teachers succeed. They will also need to develop ways to increase overall direct spending on teachers and students. Multiple state agencies and research foundations have indicated that administrative positions have grown much faster than teaching positions. Department of Education Statistics indicate 20 year trend that shows a 75% increase in District Admin Staff, and 33% in School Admin vs. only 7% growth in Teachers and Aides.^{vii} This trend seemed to increase during the pandemic relief spending.^{viii}

- **5) Increasing Undergraduate Opportunities** - The sharp declines in college enrollment along with the increasing cost of attendance will require creative alternatives for many students. Well developed trade school programs, vocational certificates, military service, combined with traditional opportunities for 2 year, 4 year and other degree paths will be needed to meet the range of students graduating from High School. 5th year programs that provide structure, formation, and financing is one creative model to help Latino students succeed post high school.

ⁱ Test Score Patterns Across Three Covid-19 impact School Years. Annenberg Brown University, <https://edworkingpapers.com/sites/default/files/ai22-521.pdf> see summary at Brookings <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2022/03/03/the-pandemic-has-had-devastating-impacts-on-learning-what-will-it-take-to-help-students-catch-up/> also *Learning during Covid-19: An Update on Student Achievement and Growth at the Start of 2021-2022 School Year*. Center for School and Student Progress (NWEA, December 2021)

ⁱⁱ Ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ Total AZ Enrollment: 1,150,987 (2019-2020) vs. 1,112,598 (2020-2021) vs. 1,132,997 (2021-2022). As reported <https://www.azed.gov/accountability-research>

^{iv} Test Score Patterns Across Three Covid-19 impact School Years.

^v \$9.75B GEER, \$190.5B ESSER, \$5.5B EANS, \$76.5B HEERF. = \$382 Billion

^{vi} SJDI conducted two studies on behalf of Raza Development Fund. One in 2019-2020 at the beginning of the Covid-19 Pandemic - Impact of Coronavirus on K-12 School Attendance, Performance and Culture, and one in 2020-2021 - Raza Development Fund Covid-19 Education Research & Intervention 2020.

^{vii} <https://www.educationnext.org/growth-administrative-staff-assistant-principals-far-outpaces-teacher-hiring/>

^{viii} https://www.realcleareducation.com/articles/2021/11/15/are_new_federal_funds_contributing_to_k-12_administrative_bloat_110670.html#!