

National Survey Finds Three-Quarters of Public Schools Open For Full-Time In-Person or Hybrid Instruction

White students are more likely to enroll in full-time in-person than Black, Hispanic, and Asian students

WASHINGTON (March 24, 2021)— Three-quarters (77 percent) of U.S. public schools with fourth- and eighth-graders held instruction in classrooms, according to the first data from the 2021 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) School Survey released today by the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES). Classroom instruction was accomplished through either full-time in-person instruction or with a combination of in-person and online learning, also known as hybrid.

Overall, 38 percent of fourth-graders and 28 percent of eighth-graders were enrolled in full-time in-person learning, while 43 percent of fourth-graders and 48 percent of eighth-graders were enrolled in full-time remote learning.

Rates of full-time in-person learning enrollment varied by race and ethnicity. More than half of all Black, Hispanic, and Asian fourth-graders learned in a fully remote environment. By comparison, a quarter of White students learned fully remotely, and nearly half of White students learned in-person full-time.

“These are the first round of survey results that provide critical data on school reopening,” said Mark Schneider, the director of IES, the research arm of the U.S. Department of Education. “The survey will give a monthly snapshot on the status of schools and will be updated each month through the end of the 2020-21 school year. The data collected by the survey are essential for beginning to measure and understand the pandemic’s impact on American students.”

The monthly survey is designed to collect data on modes of instruction (remote-only, hybrid, full-time in-person), and enrollment, and will inform the 2022 administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as The Nation’s Report Card. The survey data will also provide context for understanding the reading and mathematics achievement of the fourth- and eighth-graders assessed by NAEP in 2022.

The initial release of data from the survey, which can currently report data for the nation, 32 states in grade 4, 34 states in grade 8, and both grades in 8 large urban school districts, is designed to provide a fuller picture of students’ instructional experiences.

Questions included whether schools offered remote-only, hybrid, or full-time in-person instruction; the percentages of students actually enrolled in each instructional mode; percentages of students enrolled in each instructional mode by demographic group; the type of hybrid model offered; the number of days students were offered in-person instruction under the hybrid instructional mode; the number of hours of live synchronous instruction students received on average every day under the remote learning mode; and whether some student groups received priority for in-person instruction.

“We are grateful for all of the school officials who responded to this survey while also doing the difficult job of reopening schools and educating students remotely during the pandemic,” said Lynn Woodworth, NCES commissioner. “We are confident that in March and future months, additional schools will be participating and sharing additional data about enrollment and attendance to fill the vision of providing a complete and accurate representation of the impact of the pandemic on students.”

The survey results are available on an interactive dashboard where users can explore data for participating states and districts. The dashboard will be updated every month until the end of the 2020-21 school year. Researchers are able to download the data for their own analysis.

“In addition to the NAEP School Survey, IES is creating a new NCES school pulse survey that will evaluate the continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic,” Schneider said. “Taken together, this new

data and research—all part of the IES effort to respond to President Biden’s January 21 Executive Order on Supporting the Reopening and Continuing Operation of Schools and Early Childhood Education Providers—will help provide a deeper understanding of how this pandemic has affected our schools, students, and teachers, and help show us the path to recovery.”

KEY FINDINGS

Other findings from the survey include:

- Rates of full-time in-person enrollment varied by school location. At grade 4, 53 percent of students in public schools in towns and 52 percent in rural areas were enrolled fully in-person, while 25 percent of students in public schools in cities were full-time in-person. At grade 8, 51 percent of students in public schools in towns and 43 percent in rural areas were enrolled full-time in person, while 15 percent of city students were enrolled full-time in person.
- Overall, 60 percent of fourth-graders and 68 percent of eighth-graders spent at least part of their week learning remotely.
- When learning remotely, many students were receiving two hours or less of live instruction.
 - Twenty-five percent of fourth-graders and 21 percent of eighth-graders were offered 2 hours or less of live instruction per day when they were learning remotely.
 - Five percent of schools with fourth grade and 10 percent of schools with eighth grade offered no live instruction in their remote learning.
- More than 40 percent of schools self-reported prioritizing students with disabilities for full-time in-person instruction at grades 4 and 8, but students with disabilities did not receive in-person instruction at markedly higher rates than other student groups. Economically disadvantaged students and English learners also did not receive in-person instruction at higher rates than other student groups.

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The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) is the independent and nonpartisan statistics, research, and evaluation arm of the U.S. Department of Education. Its mission is to provide scientific evidence on which to ground education practice and policy and to share this information in formats that are useful and accessible to educators, parents, policymakers, researchers, and the public.

The National Center for Education Statistics, a principal agency of the U.S. Federal Statistical System, is the statistical center of the U.S. Department of Education and the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the U.S. and other nations. NCES, located within IES, fulfills a congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report complete statistics on the condition of American education; conduct and publish reports; and review and report on education activities internationally.