2021

COLORADO'S EDUCATION LEADERSHIP COUNCIL REPORT

July 30, 2021

KEYSTONE
POLICY CENTER

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To synthesize lessons learned across Colorado's education ecosystem as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
To examine those lessons learned and to apply them to the visionary long view of education in Colorado.
These lessons have been developed from stakeholder engagement and are presented with specific recommendations for creating a world class education system.

BACKGROUND

The Education Leadership Council is the only statewide commission tasked with bringing the early childhood, K-12, higher education, and workforce communities together to focus on the future of education in our state. Early in the work, the ELC agreed on a high vision for a world class education system in Colorado's future.

"All learners are prepared for a rapidly changing world – civically engaged; physically, socially and emotionally healthy; competent academic scholars; and ready to contribute productively to the economy".

While it's impossible to capture and articulate a vision, a strategy and a plan for change in an entire system as large and complex and with such a long cultural history as education, the council did choose significant segments of the overall system to address in detail. We believe that progress has been made in that the council's work has influenced legislation and the recommendations and priorities have been embedded in our schools.

Change in a system's culture and processes will more readily occur in response to a crisis. Our education system was already in crisis, but the COVID pandemic added an unanticipated and overwhelming dimension.

While during the COVID-19 pandemic, immediate responses were critical, the Council had the enormous task of looking past current challenges and discovering how they might affect education long term. This report reflects months of work to try to understand the pandemic's affect on our statewide vision and to identify ways to take steps forward.

In some ways, the pandemic has accelerated a shift towards personalization and a focus on every child's needs. In others, it further emphasized the importance of providing additional supports to students in poverty and those that face learning challenges to help ensure that they too are prepared for a rapidly changing world. It showed the world that schools cannot address all of students' challenges on their own and further demonstrated the importance of partnerships between schools, communities, health care, housing, and other areas.

In some areas, the pandemic will leave a legacy of these partnerships, including stronger relationships between early childhood, K-12, higher education, and workforce, that can drive us forward to our vision. It will also leave exacerbated gaps between students who had access to quality learning opportunities and those who did not that will need unprecedented collaboration and attention moving forward.

Heading into the 2020-21 school year, the ELC's task is to share successes, including heroic acts of ingenuity and resilience within school districts, new strategies of collaboration among community agencies and schools, and innovative approaches to educating students that were worthy of capturing and sharing. This report will show how schools, school districts, and communities were responding to the immediate needs of the moment in innovative ways, capturing these lessons, and offering recommendations to support improvements in our education system statewide moving forward.

THE WORK OF THE ELC 2020/2021

In August and September of 2020, in lieu of pulling key state leaders away from the urgency of opening a new school year, Keystone reached out individually to ELC and ELC Advisory Council members to collect their best thinking for moving forward with the work of the ELC. Members remained committed and felt that the need to keep an eye toward the broader vision for education was even more important during this crisis than before. Members also recognized the unique position of the ELC to affect critical changes needed to support our education system. Additionally, they expressed a commitment to keeping the focus on the four priority areas of early childhood, literacy, high school transitions, and community partnerships while accepting that major impacts and newly discovered methods may lead to new priorities.

It was important to the ELC to address the following components:

- Promising innovations implemented that support the State of Education Report, the ELC vision, and the four priority areas (literacy, early childhood, high school transitions, and community partnerships).
- Catalyzing innovative responses in the education system toward potential policy changes.
- Addressing COVID-19 learning opportunity gaps, numeracy and literacy, and equity gaps.
- Increasing access to concurrent enrollment, higher education, and workforce opportunities for students of color, First Generation students, and low-income students.
- Celebrating successes, resiliency, and stories to be told.
- Focusing on the impact of the pandemic on equitable opportunities for students, support for educators, and continued innovative solutions.
- Closing achievement and opportunity gaps that have been exacerbated by the pandemic; particularly evident among children living in poverty whose families were severely impacted by the loss of jobs, housing, and opportunities typically provided at schools and childcare centers.

This year, the ELC has devoted its work to the collection of lessons learned over the course of the 2020-2021 school year, and to bring them with recommendations for moving forward to the attention of the Governor, the State Legislature, the State Board of Education, and education leaders statewide to build upon the successes and innovations that will strengthen our education system from early childhood through higher education and bring us closer to our statewide vision. This report reflects the summary of this work, compiled through an outreach strategy that included one-on-one and whole team meetings with ELC and ELC Advisory Council members; sub-group meetings of the ELC (early childhood, K-12, and higher education); panel presentations to the ELC at monthly meetings between January – June 2021 that included parents and students; and additional stakeholder outreach to teachers and superintendents. A complete list of stakeholders is included at the end of the report.

SUPPORTS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Lesson 1: Students experienced disparate levels of learning, literacy and numeracy development, school engagement, and overall achievement from early childhood to K-12 to higher education depending upon the supports they had access to at home, likely exacerbating the pre-existing and possibly creating additional achievement gaps between minority and low-income students and their more affluent peers.

Lesson 2: Students and families from K-12 to higher education adapted to the blend of in-person and online instruction gaining new appreciation for flexibility of pace and structure within instructional delivery and the use of time in the school day and school year.

Lesson 3: The critical importance of family and community involvement in the learning of their children was elevated to new levels of awareness.

Lesson 4: Institutions of higher education reported decreases in participation among first generation students, students of color, and students with limited financial resources which has exacerbated the opportunity gap.

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The COVID-19 Pandemic laid bare the inequitable opportunities and challenges our most vulnerable students face in accessing the best learning opportunities. Achievement gaps were apparent pre-COVID, and it is likely this gap has widened. With COVID, options and opportunities were far more limited for students in poverty, in isolated communities or in communities that experienced the highest levels of COVID cases. Students with strong family or community supports, broadband access, and computer devices had more opportunity to do better while those with limited supports, limited access to connectivity for remote learning, and who needed more structure likely fell behind. Most metro area districts were remote-only for substantial periods of time in 2020-2021 and while many rural school districts were able to continue in-person learning, learning opportunities were still impacted due to necessary COVID staff and student quarantines.

As a result, we may have students who are prepared to reengage academically more quickly while others have experienced significant unfinished learning. Exacerbating this challenge is the likelihood that students living in poverty and students of color were more likely to experience negative impacts from COVID -19, such as sickness, loss of a family member, the need to work to support their family in addition to the normal disruptions to in-person learning. This challenge persists from early childhood to higher education, with a reported statewide decline in enrollment of these students. Because schools cannot control all the variables that affect students' learning, policies and strategies moving forward must include families and communities as partners.

Recommendations to Consider for Early Childhood and K-12:

- Fund investment in new ways to close learning and opportunity gaps for all students using evidence-based practices such as small group learning, extended learning time, high dosage tutoring and effective remote learning as a supplement.
- Implement catch-up and enrichment programs using what has been learned from the implementation of the variety of "learning pods" (small group learning and extra supports) that focus support for students who need it the most.
- Expand access to services for families to in-person intervention services for children aged 0-5 who need developmental supports and services they did not receive due to the COVID disruption.
- Provide every child with access to requisite technology including internet access and hardware and software necessary for different environments.
- Establish programs so that students behavioral, mental, and physical needs are being met through appropriate wraparound services, including those provided in partnership with health care, housing organizations, and other community-based organizations.

Recommendations to Consider for Higher Education:

- Invest more in non-academic, student support services staff at institutions of higher education to conduct personalized outreach to current and potential students and aid them in accessing and navigating all the basic needs and related systems that impede their ability to attend and complete academic programs.
- Ramp up programs and investment in adult basic education supports and other forms of new-skilling or up-skilling training available, such as the expanding work-based learning programs and other pilot programs led through CDE to support adults in obtaining a higher education credential.
- Invest in college readiness supports to close learning gaps exacerbated by COVID for students needing additional social emotional and/or academic support to succeed in and complete post-secondary opportunities.
- Fund targeted financial and academic support for first generation English language learners and others facing additional challenges enrolling or persisting as a direct or indirect consequence of the pandemic.

- Encourage CDHE, CCHE and Colorado's IHEs to collaborate in updating a vision for the overall higher education ecosystem, including clear strategies to meet the needs of all students and the role of each institution as well as to effectively compete and serve students amid the growth of access to national or out-of-state online programs and to serve the growing interest in remote instruction.

LESSON 2: Students and families from K-12 to higher education adapted to the blend of in-person and online instruction gaining new appreciation for flexibility of pace and structure within instructional delivery and the use of time in the school day and school year.

Schools and families adapted to alternative academic schedules with some in-person and online days which required flexibility with short notice. One size does not fit all – some students and families expressed satisfaction with online/flexible learning while others demanded and needed more in-person opportunities to support the learning styles and needs of the family. The importance of differentiating instruction with options to address individual student learning styles and preferences was elevated, as well as the critical need for our youngest learners to be in school and learn in-person.

Recommendations to Consider for Early Childhood and K-12:

- Extend learning time in multiple ways that is not time-bound by the school day and school year.
  - Use remote/online learning options to supplement and prioritize educational content that is most effectively delivered in-person. High quality online classes can free up time, space, and workforce requirements.
  - Extend or innovate on the traditional school year calendar by creating a year-long calendar or by adding additional quarters for students who may need more learning time.
  - Offer more asynchronous learning to allow for teacher professional development, training and small group or one-on-one tutoring for students who need additional time or more work-based learning opportunities.

- Support school, district, and community models so that a "menu" of learning options is offered using approaches that best fit the student and family needs including ideas such as:
    - Remote and in-person hybrid models within a school day or week.
    - Micro schools or learning pods within the district focused on specific needs or subjects.
    - Partnerships with online classes to expand course options and access to teachers in shortage areas.
    - Online classes for supplemental supports and catchup.
- Enact legislation and fund districts and childcare providers/educators to meet the social-emotional, mental health challenges that have been created for students that might be more impacted by social isolation brought on by the pandemic.
- Include all other sources of funding to schools and community entities that provide learning opportunities intended to close the learning gap outside of the funded school day or year for early learners and K-12 students.

Recommendations to Consider for Higher Education:

- Expand "open-entry, open-exit" course offerings, as well as evening and weekend course delivery to be more responsive to students' schedules.
- Seek solutions to the K-12 school calendar/higher education calendars to work more closely together with offerings for students.
- Offer year-round school options and other changes to the calendar and hybrid models for delivering instruction to better accommodate student and family schedules.
- Recognize and implement the efficiencies found during COVID and find ways to continue these and other efficiencies to reduce costs to students while maintaining quality.
- Expand offerings and drive awareness of opportunities for continuing degree completion after an interruption in learning and of programs to transfer credits between two-year and four-year institutions, including for earning Associates degrees or post-high school credentials and certificates.
- Remove technology barriers to any group of students continuing their pursuit of higher education.

LESSON 3: The critical importance of family and community involvement in the learning of their children was elevated to new levels of awareness.

While developing parents, families and the community as partners in education has always been a goal for schools, never has it been more critical. It took the pandemic to remind us how important it is for parents and families to be actively engaged in their children's education and it will be important to ensure that this momentum does not wither as the next school year approaches.

Some parents and families pooled their own resources to provide educational opportunities for small groups of students in learning pods. Others formed informal networks of communication and resource sharing among their community. All expressed appreciation for the increased communications from their schools and the need to continue regular interaction with their child's teachers.

Districts across Colorado that had already done the work to center their relationships with families/students as the driving factor to academic success seemed to weather the storm of COVID-19 better than districts without these structures and deep relationships in place.

Recommendations to Consider:

- Develop school and district strategies, programs, and curricula that center families as authentic and critical partners in their child's academic experience.
- Engage with parents and families in their child's academic success to include participation in online or in-person lessons to observe examples of excellent instruction.
- Offer or extend school and district professional development opportunities to parents and families so that they can better support their children at home.
- Give families the tools and support they need (access to transparent and user-friendly data and relevant information) to make the best decisions for their child's learning environments.

LESSON 4: **Institutions of higher education reported decreases in participation among first generation students, students of color, and students with limited financial resources which has exacerbated the opportunity gap.**

The pandemic forced many students to make tough decisions about continuing their education or supporting their families. Unfortunately, students of color and low-income students were the hardest hit. Many K-12 schools reported reductions in participation in dual enrollment and concurrent enrollment programs when learning shifted to online platforms. While postsecondary access opportunities have been improved over the years, it became apparent that confusion between the K-12 system and the higher education systems over funding for student tuition, program provision, and access to opportunities continue to be a barrier to participation.

Recommendations to Consider:

- Analyze the "catch-up" incoming students will need and design programming/funding to support this effort.
- Invest in supports for students and families to complete the FAFSA and CASFA and consider policy changes that will encourage completion.
- Recruit and fund non-academic staff members to serve as "counselors" or "recruiters" to identify and find the students who have dropped out and create supports to get them back on track for completing certificates and degrees.
- Expand cross state department programs that address the social determinants of student success.
- Promote the availability of SNAP and other safety net benefits to college students.
- Modify financial aid for identified student groups including for year-round or summer-school courses.
- Update the State Master Plan and goals for higher education to ensure its currency or responsiveness where appropriate to recent events and the impact on students and various groups of students.

SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOLS

Lesson 1: The education profession experienced distress due to critical teacher and substitute teacher shortages, reductions in the number of prospective candidates, limited diversity within the pipeline, reported decreases in job satisfaction among the current work force, and increased levels of emotional stress.

Lesson 2: Access to technology devices and supports at home and connectivity to the Internet varies widely among communities throughout the state.

Lesson 3: Students and families experienced significant stress and behavioral health issues during the pandemic, often exacerbated as a result of limited access to socialization and school supports. Schools are depended on to provide a vast array of services and supports for students beyond their primary educational functions. As it relates to supporting student and educator mental and behavioral health, it is critical to build capacity beyond schools and create cohesion with expansive and focused local and statewide efforts to build the critical linkages necessary to increase capacity and meet students' needs."

LESSON 1: The education profession experienced distress due to critical teacher and substitute teacher shortages, reductions in the number of prospective candidates, limited diversity within the pipeline, reported decreases in job satisfaction among the current work force, and increased levels of emotional stress.

Teachers providing input into this report expressed unprecedented degrees of anxiety and distress, a claim supported by CEA leadership at a time when the nation is already facing key teacher/school leader shortages. This is particularly evident at the early childhood level (preschool and child care) and substitute teacher shortages needed to fill gaps for school districts as required quarantines took their toll on district workforces. A recent survey conducted by CEA found that over 40% of teachers were considering leaving the profession, a markedly higher number than in previous years. Colorado's educator "pipeline" continues to struggle to meet the needs of Colorado's schools in several subjects, grades and geographic regions while the workforce itself also does not yet reflect the diversity of the student communities it serves. The CDE and CEI October 2020 needs inventory rated the highest priorities for teachers as teacher mental health, teacher professional development, and teacher and leader turnover.

As students return to school, teachers will face the added challenge of learning gaps and social reintegration of students. While teachers recognize the need to differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of their students, the variance in learning among students because of the pandemic will most likely challenge even the most experienced teachers.

Recommendations to Consider:

- Provide instructional supports and coaching for teachers that encourage a team approach to meeting individual student needs and learning.
- Develop new partnerships to address teacher mental and physical health needs through both direct services and telehealth.
- Enact legislation to implement alternative staffing structures that reduce non-instructional burdens for teachers.
- Use additional professionals provide expanded opportunities for teachers to collaborate.

- Provide professional development to support educators utilizing team teaching and other collaborative approaches.
- Provide educator networking and connectivity beyond their employing school or district to maximize collaboration and sharing.
- Reimagine and augment the educator workforce as identified by the 80+ stakeholders who participated in the ESRII coalition and published in Rebuilding Stronger, released by that group.

LESSON 2: Access to technology devices and supports at home and connectivity to the Internet varies widely among communities throughout the state.

It became clear that some school districts, were able to offer remote educational opportunities more quickly for students while other districts simply did not have the resources in place for 1-1 computer devices for students. Further, internet connectivity and broadband capacity vary drastically throughout the state. Moreover, simply having the resources and connectivity did not necessarily equate to quality online instruction. Many teachers statewide from early childhood through higher education did not have the training, skills, or resources needed to pivot from in-person instruction to online learning.

Although schools have made great strides in developing technology tools and resources for teachers and students, the sudden shift to remote learning pressed the issue of access to technology and internet, and the need for strategies to effectively deliver instruction remotely to never before witnessed levels of significance. Moving so quickly from in-person instruction to an online format was a huge shift for teachers, many of whom were simply not prepared.

Recommendations to Consider:

- Provide access to opportunities for all students by expanding high-speed broadband access statewide and bring the federal infrastructure plan to the state level.
- Assure that every child has the technology device needed to learn remotely.

- Provide a resource bank for teachers of high-quality shared lessons and strategies taught by expert teachers that can be used in any classroom statewide.
- Provide a resource bank of open educational resources and online courses that can be accessed for low or no cost throughout the state.
- Provide support and professional development to educators, building leaders and other staff to empower them to utilize all technology available and support students in their use of technology.

LESSON 3: Students and families experienced significant stress and behavioral health issues during the pandemic, often exacerbated as a result of limited access to socialization and school supports. Schools are depended on to provide a vast array of services and supports for students beyond their primary educational functions. As it relates to supporting student and educator mental and behavioral health, it is critical to build capacity beyond schools and create cohesion with expansive and focused local and statewide efforts to build the critical linkages necessary to increase capacity and meet students' needs.

To address critical mental and behavioral health needs, the State of Colorado is implementing a statewide process to invest significant federal stimulus resources in expanding mental health services. Educator and student mental health should be a critical part of that process, both in informing how the resources are invested, and in benefitting from the outcomes. In addition, school districts and schools should work to build linkages with local mental health partners to build capacity for student services, in addition to the supports schools already provide.

Recommendations to Consider:
- Ensure that young Coloradans are included as the State determines how to invest federal dollars in enhancing behavioral health infrastructure and resources in Colorado.
- Work to build a coordinated system of mental health crisis services and other supports so that schools communities, including teachers, parents and students, receive the behavioral health supports they need.
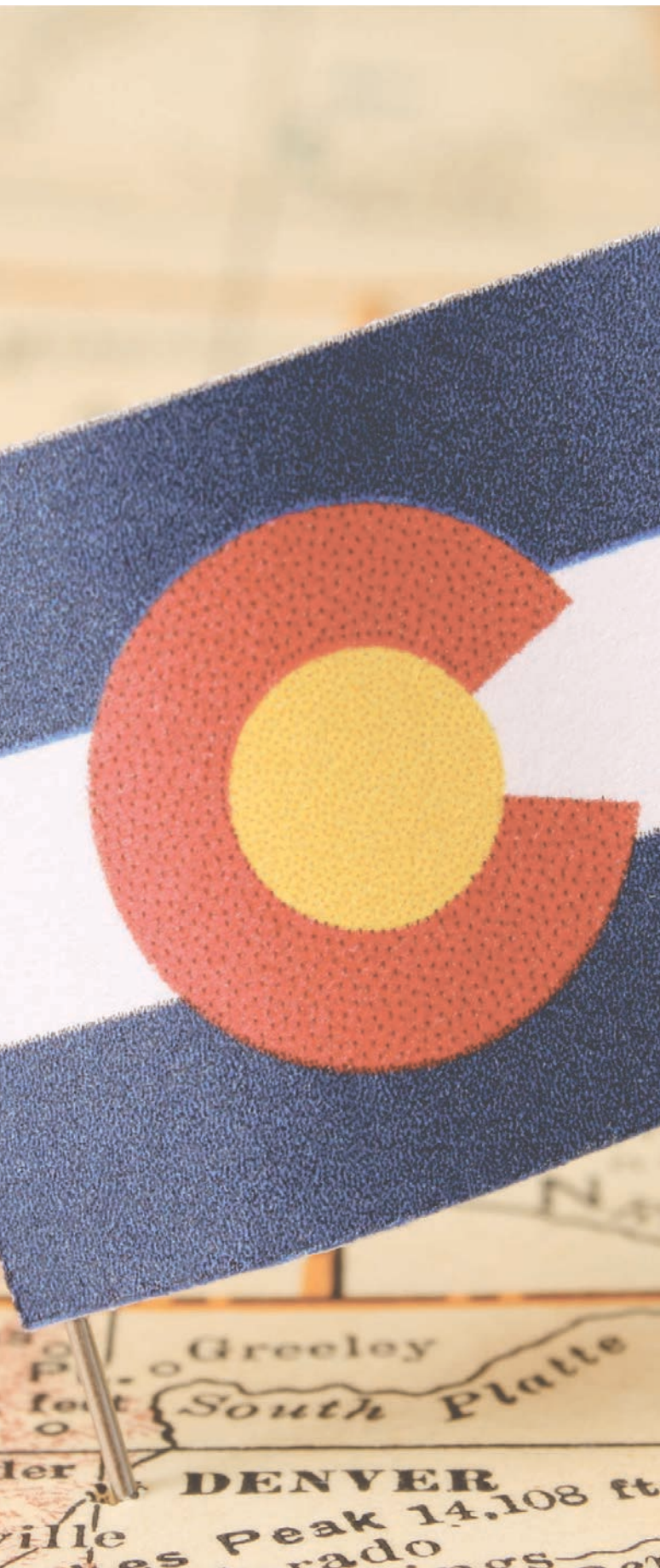
SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

Lesson 1: Schools and early care and education programs provide critical services to the functioning of communities, their children and families, and the local economy.

Lesson 2: The availability of childcare and early learning opportunities are critical services for children and families and to the functioning of the economy.

Lesson 3: Numbers of high school students participating in concurrent enrollment opportunities declined in many parts of the state and institutions of higher education reported losses in enrollment among first generation and low-income students.

Lesson 4: Colorado's workforce experienced drastic increases in unemployment rates and is challenged by the need to fill critical job shortages

LESSON 1: Schools and early care and education programs provide critical services to the functioning of communities, their children and families, and the local economy.

As schools closed for in-person learning and families were encouraged to stay home, the critical services families depended upon for survival became paramount. Schools were on the front line of this huge societal shift and became hubs for food service delivery for children who depended upon the school breakfast and lunch programs. Parents were suddenly thrust into the role of providing education at home, many without the training or tools to do so and were reminded of the value they placed in their child's teachers. Schools scrambled to provide technology devices for students who needed them. Students without physical access to their teachers and peers experienced increased levels of emotional distress and schools became hubs to access critical health services.

As the dependence on schools to provide these resources to children and families became apparent, opportunities arose for community partners to provide some of these services so that schools and teachers could focus more directly on the educational needs of students. It became clear how hard schools had been working to overcome the disparity of resources and opportunities available to the children and families they served.   Parents and communities with resources were better equipped to fill the gaps for students when schools and early childhood centers closed than those in less affluent or in some rural settings which exacerbated the inequity in learning opportunities and supports for Colorado's students.

Recommendations to Consider:

- Include community partners in exploring and expanding learning opportunities within the community for students to foster innovation that supports personalized student learning at the early childhood, K-12, and higher education levels.
- Implement 21st Century Learning Community programs to bring more capacity through community resources and support to students and schools.
- Develop more intensive partnerships with community-based programs that enrich and extend learning for at-risk students to provide equitable opportunities for all students.

LESSON 2: **The availability of childcare and early learning opportunities are critical services for children and families and to the functioning of the economy.**

Parents were faced with tough decisions about what to do with their children during remote learning while they continued to work. Parents with resources were better equipped to find suitable opportunities for their young children while others struggled to do so. Some childcare providers allowed older school-aged children to attend their centers to work in learning pods and to participate in virtual learning in order to support working parents.

The rapid implementation of the Emergency Child care Fund which provided services for children of front-line workers, highlighted the critical nature of child care services communities to be able to offer vital health care and emergency services. Families turn to their early childhood providers as trusted partners in caring for children and relied on providers for critical supplies such as diapers and food for their children.

Lower income families, many of whom were barely scraping by before the crisis, were acutely impacted by the sudden loss of income. Job loss affected their housing opportunities and ability to provide for their children. Children experiencing the need for critical services were suddenly without interventions that could not be effectively provided in a virtual setting. Time spent out of school more critically impacted these children and exacerbated inequities that providers had been working to overcome.

Recommendations to Consider:

- Implement Universal Preschool funded by prop EE to increase the learning and well-being of young children attending a variety of quality preschool programs including home-based or community-based childcare settings and public or private schools.
- Communicate and collaborate among providers, school districts, and community partners to coordinate the connection of vulnerable children and families with high quality early childhood care and education.
- Utilize family outreach liaisons to connect families of all backgrounds with childcare, early education, Early Intervention services, and language development support.

LESSON 3: Numbers of high school students participating in concurrent enrollment opportunities declined in many parts of the state and institutions of higher education reported losses in enrollment among first generation and low-income students.

The pandemic forced many students to make tough decisions about continuing their education or supporting their families. Unfortunately, low-income students were the hardest hit. Many K-12 schools reported reductions in participation in dual enrollment and concurrent enrollment programs when learning shifted to online platforms. While postsecondary access opportunities have been improved over the years, it became apparent that confusion between the K-12 system and the higher education systems over funding for student tuition, program provision, and access to opportunities continue to be a barrier to participation.

Recommendations to Consider:

- Clarify communication to students and families about all advanced coursework, credential, and concurrent enrollment options to reduce barriers and unnecessary expenses.
- Expand opportunities for accessing early college programs.
- Offer concurrent enrollment as part of comprehensive, intentional pathways rather than standalone course credits that don't necessarily advance students towards degree or credential completion.
- Clarify understanding at the level of the LEP regarding legislative and policy updates to concurrent enrollment, particularly around students who do not pass a course and then are limited from re-enrolling because of financial penalties.
- Implement pathways between the GED and AA degree opportunities for students with "some college".
- Explore and invest in technology solutions to streamline systems for facilitating student and credit transfers between institutions of higher education.
- Offer opportunities that allow high school students to access courses at higher ed institutions across the state if local offerings are limited or courses of interest are not available in the local community.
- Expand graduation requirements to include requirement for concurrent enrollment, career or technical classes, or apprenticeships.
- Break down silos between school districts, community colleges, and colleges and encourage cooperation.

LESSON 4: Colorado's workforce experienced drastic increases in unemployment rates and is challenged by the need to fill critical job shortages

In April of 2020, Colorado's unemployment rate skyrocketed from 4% to 12% and currently sits slightly above the national average at 6.4%. The labor force most acutely affected by job loss includes the leisure and hospitality industry and education and health services. Women and people of color have been more likely to leave the labor force and individuals with less formal education have experienced higher rates of unemployment. There could be a looming critical shortage of educators including early childhood teachers, K-12 teachers, and substitute teachers statewide that has been exacerbated by the challenges within these professions in response to the pandemic.

Recommendations to Consider for Early Childhood and K-12:

- State leaders must assume stronger responsibility for the teacher workforce challenges by leading the conversation around funding for education in Colorado and addressing the funding gaps head-on.
- Expand existing programs such as the AmeriCorps Workforce Capacity Program, Colorado Tutoring Corps, and Substitute Teacher Corps, CDE Substitute Bootcamp and CO Center for Rural Education Substitute Educator Program, and the Workforce Development Council Workforce Pipeline Development Program.
- Fully fund the Alternative Teacher and Principal stipend program and eliminate the lottery system of funding stipends.
- Remove funding barriers to encourage entry into the teaching profession.
- Support the expansion of work-based learning and career exploration opportunities for high school students.
- Assure that all high school students are "digital ready" to continue their education and training.
- Fully fund certificate programs for high school graduates in fields evidencing critical shortages in the workforce.
- Create more opportunities for work-based learning pathways and offer college credit for those experiences at scale.
- Provide transportation for high school students to CTE programs.

Recommendations to Consider for Higher Education:

- Provide solutions to reducing the duplication of services and programs within Career and Technical Education programs offered in schools and community colleges, perhaps by considering geographical locations of programs.
- Expand all degree programs to include an early work-based component.
- Provide tuition assistance and/or tax breaks for students pursuing careers in hard-to-fill jobs.
- Expand collaboration between Colorado Department of Higher Education, CDE, Department of Local Affairs & Office of Economic Development and International Trade, State Workforce initiatives and non-profit entities to ensure alignment of CTE offerings and other coursework in K-12 align with Institutions of Higher Education offerings for certificate, credential, or other career pathways and that IHE programs maintain currency with the needs and opportunities in the workforce.
- Collaborate with OEDIT and other state agencies, tax incentives to incentivize industry apprenticeship/internship programs as part of their relocation agreements (including small businesses, nonprofits, as well as large corporations) and for employers that offer flexible hours and/or tuition assistance to employees working toward advanced degrees/credentials.

CONCLUSION/NEXT STEPS

The intent of this report is to raise awareness among Colorado's leaders of the lessons the education system has learned while responding to unprecedented challenges and provide for tangible strategies to move us closer to our statewide vision. The strength and innovation evidenced during this time by our early childhood providers; our school, district, and community leaders; and our state reflect stories that need to be told. For Colorado to achieve the statewide vision for education, a call to action with policies and funding that support the continuation of these innovative actions must be prioritized by the Governor, the State Board of Education, the State Legislature and education leaders everywhere. It is the hope of the ELC that the recommendations identified in this report become actionable items that result in lasting change to address fundamental challenges within our education system and that make our system stronger for children and families, educators, and our public moving forward.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT RECEIVED

- Panel Presentations to the Education Leadership Council (ELC):
  - Colorado Education Initiative
  - Colorado Children's Campaign
  - Governor's RISE Innovation Fund
  - University of Denver Evaluation and Action Lab
  - Keystone Policy Center
  - Public Education and Business Coalition
  - Colorado Department of Education
  - State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) Network
  - Colorado Youth Congress
  - Colorado Workforce Development Council
- ELC Members
  - State legislators
  - Education departments leadership: Early Childhood, K-12, Higher Education
  - Colorado Department of Labor and Employment
  - Teacher, school and district practitioners and leaders
- ELC Advisory Council Members
  - Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE)
  - Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB)
  - Colorado Education Association (CEA)
  - Colorado Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES)
  - Colorado Education Initiative (CEI)
  - Colorado League of Charter Schools
  - University of Colorado Board of Regents
  - Early Childhood Leadership Commission
  - Colorado Succeeds
  - Colorado Children's Campaign
  - Colorado Rural Schools Alliance
  - Democrats for Education Reform
- Colorado Department of Education Superintendents Advisory Council
- Colorado Department of Education Teacher Cabinet