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School Districts Have Expanded Nonacademic Services for 2021–2022, While Academic Offerings Remain Much the Same

Selected Findings from the Third American School District Panel Survey

Key Findings

- Districts have substantially expanded their offerings beyond traditional academic services.
 - Nine out of ten district leaders said their districts offered summer 2021 programming.
 - In 2021–2022, seven out of ten districts will offer personal computing devices to K–5 students, and eight in ten districts will do so for students in grades 6–12. Technology services is the largest growth area for districts among the wide variety of services we covered in the survey.
 - Seven out of ten districts will provide mental health programming for students in 2021–2022. Five out of ten were already doing this prior to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, while two in ten are newly offering this service.
 - One-quarter of districts surveyed allowed families to choose a “do over” year for 2021–2022.
- In contrast, districts’ academic offerings for the 2021–2022 school year remain largely unchanged from pre-pandemic services.
 - A little more than eight out of ten districts will offer tutoring in 2021–2022. Seven out of ten were already doing this pre-pandemic, and one in ten are newly offering it.
 - The most substantive academic change we found is that one-quarter of districts have altered their school schedules in ways that could increase time for academic instruction.
- Most district leaders did not perceive a strong parental demand for changes to schooling. However, as many as four to five out of ten leaders from three types of districts (urban, suburban, and majority students of color) said parents have “strongly demanded” social and emotional learning (SEL), more communication, or a fully remote schooling option. There is only a weak correlation between perceived parental demand and district provision.

Is the COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally changing public education? The results from the June 2021 survey of the American School District Panel (ASDP) indicate that the answer to that question is mixed: Yes, in terms of districts expanding their offerings beyond traditional services, but no, in terms of districts providing new academic offerings. Will parents’ demands change public schools? They could in the long run, but we did not find evidence of this thus far.

We draw these conclusions from the results of a survey administered to 292 district leaders from June 1 through July 2, 2021, and after weighting their responses to make them nationally representative. These leaders are members of the American School District Panel (ASDP). The ASDP is a partnership among the RAND Corporation, the Center on Reinventing Public Education, Chiefs for Change, the Council of the Great City Schools, and Kitamba.

We use the terms *districts* and *district leaders* in this report to refer to both the 277 traditional public school district leaders who took the survey as well as leaders from 15 charter management organizations (CMOs).

This is the second of three reports about district leaders’ views at the end of the 2020–2021 school year. In our first report (Diliberti and Schwartz, 2021), we examined districts’ fiscal outlook, staff turnover, and hiring. Our forthcoming third report will focus on the future of remote instruction in public school districts.

Abbreviations

AEP	American Educator Panels
ASDP	American School District Panel
CMO	charter management organization
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
OST	out-of-school time
SEL	social and emotional learning

Because districts’ experiences vary, we examined differences in district leaders’ responses in the following four categories, that yield nine subgroups:

1. district type (traditional public school district versus CMO)¹
2. locale (urban, suburban, and rural)
3. student racial and ethnic composition (districts in which more than half of the student population are students of color are categorized as *majority students of color* with the remaining districts categorized as *majority white*)
4. district poverty level (districts in which half or more of the student population qualifies for a free or reduced-price meal are categorized as *high poverty* whereas the remainder are categorized as *low poverty*).²

In this report, we describe only those differences among district subgroups that are statistically significant. Because only 15 CMO leaders completed our survey, we do not present any differences between CMOs and traditional public school districts in this report. However, we do present results for both district types as well as the seven other subgroups in our Interactive Survey Results Tool at www.americanschooldistrictpanel.org/survey-results. Accompanying technical documentation (Grant et al., 2021) provides information about the survey methodology and weighting procedures.

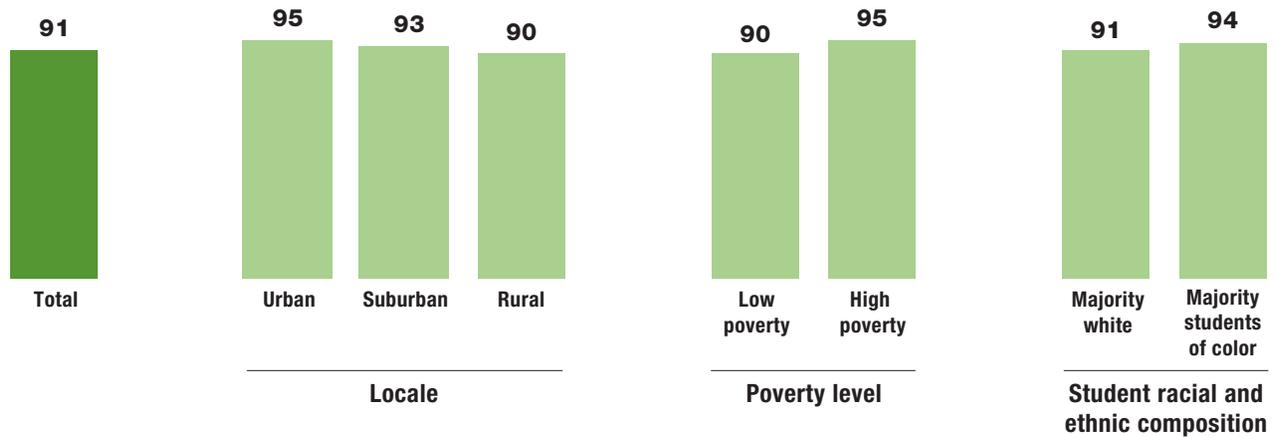
Summer Programs, Tutoring, and Grade Retention in Spring and Summer 2021

Nine out of Ten Districts Offered Summer Programs for Students in 2021

Nearly all district leaders (91 percent) indicated that their districts offered summer programming for students in 2021. This was true across all district subgroups, with at least 90 percent of districts in each subgroup offering summer programs (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Percentage of Districts That Offered Summer Programming in 2021



NOTES: This figure depicts response data from the survey question: “Which of the following, if any, did your [district/CMO] offer or enact for spring or summer 2021? Summer program(s)” (*n* = 292). There were no statistically significant differences in the percentage of districts that offered summer programming in 2021 across district subgroups.

Although we could not find any national data about the proportion of districts that hosted summer programs before the pandemic began, a scan of large,

urban districts’ summer plans and recent media reports indicate that many districts expanded summer programming in 2021 and that enrollments have

Retaining Students in Grade for 2021–2022

- Twenty-four percent of district leaders indicated they offered families the option to voluntarily keep their children in the same grade from 2020–2021 for the 2021–2022 school year. In particular, a high percentage of leaders of high-poverty districts (35 percent) and rural districts (28 percent) reported offering families a “do over” year. We do not know what percentage of families are accepting this offer.
- Fewer districts—only 15 percent—are mandating retention of students in grade for the 2021–2022 school year. This percentage was consistent across all district subgroups. While we do not know the percentage of districts that have historically mandated retention, we do know that 18 states had mandatory retention laws in place for third-graders (the earliest grade in which all states must assess students for accountability purposes) before the pandemic began (Modan, 2019). Federal data indicate that 2 percent of students nationally were held back in a typical pre-pandemic school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).
- The research evidence on the academic and behavioral effects of mandatory grade retention is mixed; there are potentially beneficial effects in early grades for struggling readers (Martorell and Mariano, 2018; West, 2012).

increased (e.g., Hong, 2021; Pitts, 2021; Thompson, 2021).

Nationally, few districts (only 14 percent) indicated that they contracted with outside organizations to provide summer programming in 2021; most operated entirely district-led programs. However, urban districts (38 percent) and suburban districts (24 percent) were especially likely to contract out their summer programs, compared with only 6 percent of rural districts. This finding comports with the general pattern of urban districts partnering more frequently with outside organizations to provide such services as out-of-school time (OST) programs, at least partly because these OST programs are predominately located in urban or suburban settings (Afterschool Alliance, undated; Schwartz et al., 2021). A higher percentage of majority-students of color districts also contracted out at least some summer programming services compared with majority-white districts (25 percent versus 9 percent, respectively).

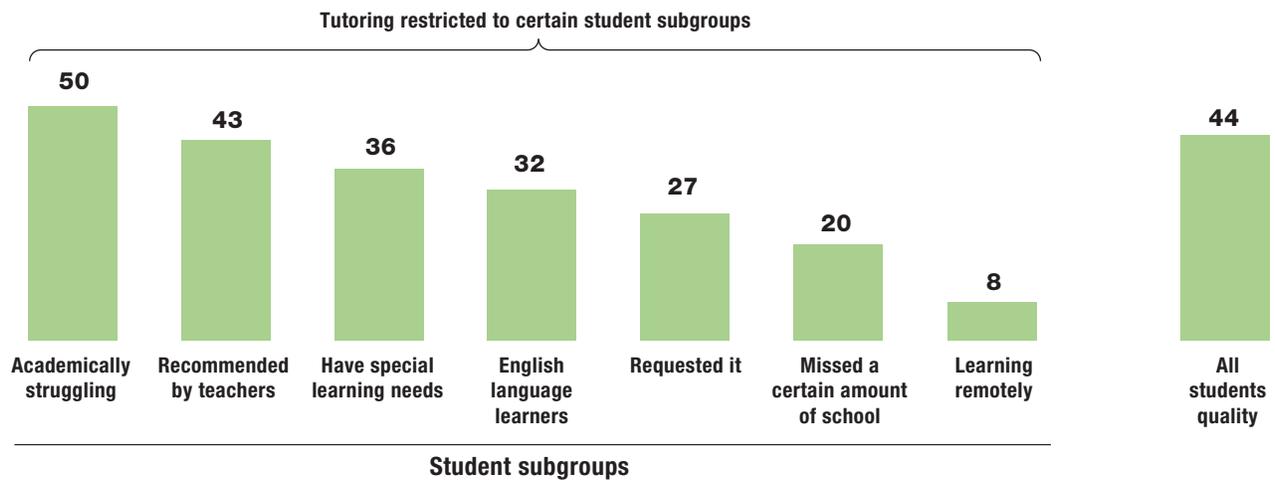
More Than Half of Districts Offered Small Group or One-on-One Tutoring in Spring or Summer 2021

Nationally, six out of ten districts offered either small group or one-on-one-tutoring (or both) in spring or summer 2021. Thirty-nine percent of districts offered both options, 19 percent offered only small-group tutoring, and 3 percent offered only one-on-one tutoring. Fewer rural districts (56 percent) offered tutoring, while more suburban districts (71 percent) did so. There were no differences in the percentage of districts offering either type of tutoring by poverty level or student racial and ethnic composition.

Among those districts that offered tutoring in spring or summer 2021, most (56 percent) restricted tutoring to certain students (see Figure 2). In half of the districts that offered tutoring, it was restricted to students who were academically struggling. Only 8 percent of districts reported targeting tutoring specifically based on whether students were learning remotely. (However, our previous research on students' educational experiences during the 2020–2021

FIGURE 2

Percentage of District Leaders Who Said Only Certain Student Subgroups Qualified for Tutoring, Among Districts That Offered Tutoring in Spring or Summer 2021



NOTES: This figure depicts response data from the survey question: "Which students qualified for tutoring in spring 2021 or summer 2021?" (n = 184). Respondents could select all options that applied, although the "all students qualify" option was mutually exclusive.

school year suggests there may be large overlap between students learning remotely and students who are academically struggling [Kaufman and Diliberti, 2021].) Forty-four percent of districts that offered tutoring offered it to all of their students.

Expanded District Services for the 2021–2022 School Year

Districts Have Vastly Expanded Their Personal Computing Offerings for Students

We asked district leaders what technology-related services they are planning to provide in the 2021–2022 school year, and which of these services were new since the start of the pandemic, as shown in Figure 3.

The percentage of districts offering personal computing devices has doubled for middle- and high-school students, and it has tripled for elementary-grade students. Eight in ten districts plan to offer devices to their secondary (grades 6–12) students in 2021–2022, while seven in ten districts plan to do so for their elementary (grades K–5) students. Six in ten districts plan to help their students obtain internet access, either by providing hotspots directly or by subsidizing families’ purchases of home internet service.

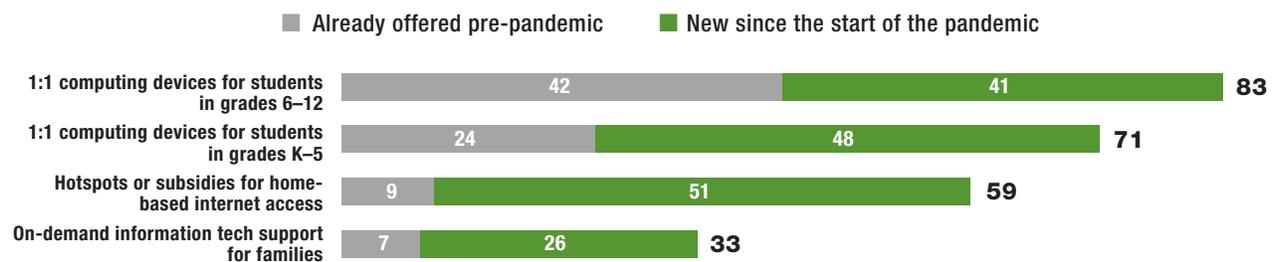
Of the four personal computing services we asked about, districts’ role in helping students obtain internet access grew the most since the pandemic began. Only one in ten districts reported providing hotspots or subsidies for internet access before the pandemic. This number has grown to six in ten districts for the 2021–2022 school year. Likewise, one in three districts will offer on-demand tech support for families in 2021–2022, compared with less than one in ten prior to the pandemic. We did not ask leaders about the funding sources for this expansion, although we hypothesize that, for many districts, federal stimulus dollars is a main source.

There were notable differences across district subgroups in technology offerings for the 2021–2022 school year. In particular, more districts with a majority of students of color plan to offer all of these technology-related services in 2021–2022 than majority-white districts plan to do. For example, 75 percent of majority–students of color districts plan to offer hotspots or internet subsidies in 2021–2022 compared with 53 percent of majority-white districts. This is likely related to the fact that more majority–students of color districts than majority-white districts began providing these services for the first time during the pandemic.

Urban and high-poverty districts are also more likely to offer some of these technology services in

FIGURE 3

Percentage of Districts Offering Technology-Related Services in 2021–2022 and Whether These Services Are New Since the Start of the Pandemic



NOTES: This figure depicts response data from the survey questions: “Which of the following services, if any, do you plan to offer to families in 2021–2022?” and “Which of these services has your [district/CMO] newly offered since the start of the pandemic (i.e., that you did not offer in 2019–2020 prior to the pandemic)?” (n = 289). Bars may not sum to total because of rounding.

the coming school year: For example, 87 percent of urban districts will offer one-for-one computing devices to elementary students and 70 percent of high-poverty districts will offer hotspots or internet subsidies. Higher percentages of high-poverty districts than low-poverty districts began offering hotspots and devices to elementary students during the pandemic.

These are the same district subgroups—that is, urban districts, high-poverty districts, and districts with a majority of students of color—that were particularly likely to have offered remote instruction at some point in the 2020–2021 school year (Institute of Education Sciences, undated; Schwartz et al., 2021).

A Minority of Districts Have Also Newly Added Student Health Services and Weekend Meals for 2021–2022

We also asked about districts’ plans to offer health services for students and weekend meals, and whether these services were new since the start of the pandemic.

As shown in Figure 4, seven out of ten districts plan to offer mental health programming for students

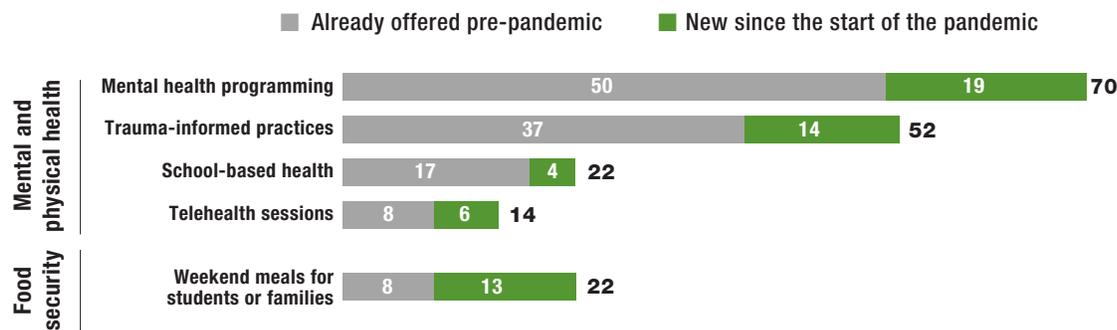
in the 2021–2022 school year. Five out of ten districts had already offered some type of mental health programming prior to the pandemic, and the remaining two out of ten are newly offering it. The focus on student mental health services for fall 2021 is consistent with the high degree of concern that district leaders expressed about students’ mental health on our February 2021 ASDP survey (Schwartz et al., 2021).

Nearly six in ten district leaders indicated they will contract with an outside organization to provide mental health services. In contrast, only 13 percent of districts will contract out “physical health services.” We interpret this to mean that districts’ physical health services will continue to rely primarily on district-employed school nurses because 84 percent of public schools had at least one full- or part-time nurse on staff as of 2016 (Spiegelman, 2020).

Fewer districts plan to offer school-based health clinics and telehealth sessions for students in 2021–2022 (22 and 14 percent, respectively) than mental health services, although those services have also increased from pre-pandemic levels. Similarly, the percentage of districts offering weekend meals to eligible students or families nearly tripled during the pandemic, increasing from 8 percent of districts

FIGURE 4

Percentage of Districts Offering Student Health Services and Weekend Meals in 2021–2022 and Whether These Services Are New Since the Start of the Pandemic



NOTES: This figure depicts response data from four survey questions. Data on mental and physical health-related services come from the following questions: “Which of the following school services or policies, if any, will your [district/CMO] offer in 2021–2022? Please include both [district/CMO]-run and contracted services” and “Which of these school services or policies are new since the start of the pandemic (i.e., that your [district/CMO] did not offer in 2019–2020 before the pandemic began)?” Data on food security practices come from the following questions: “Which of the following services, if any, do you plan to offer to families in 2021–2022?” and “Which of these services has your [district/CMO] newly offered since the start of the pandemic (i.e., that you did not offer in 2019–2020 prior to the pandemic)?” (n = 291). Bars may not sum to total because of rounding.

before the pandemic began to 22 percent for the 2021–2022 school year.

Some district subgroups stand out in this area. For example, 81 percent of suburban districts, compared with 74 percent of urban districts and 64 percent of rural districts, plan to offer mental health programming for students in the 2021–2022 school year. In a similar pattern, 74 percent of urban districts and 63 percent of suburban districts plan to offer trauma-informed practices compared with only 44 percent of rural districts. This could be the result of many suburban districts newly adding trauma-informed practices during the pandemic. In contrast, most urban districts offering this service in 2021–2022 were already doing so before the pandemic began.

Meanwhile, a relatively high percentage of urban districts (39 percent) plan to offer school-based health clinics—all of which were already offering this service before the pandemic began. And 23 percent of majority–students of color districts will offer telehealth sessions in the 2021–2022 school year—perhaps because a higher percentage of majority–students of color districts than of majority–white districts have newly added these services during the pandemic (12 percent versus 3 percent, respectively).

Finally, 39 percent of urban districts and 33 percent of suburban districts, compared with 14 percent of rural districts, will offer weekend meals in 2021–2022. Among suburban districts, this service was generally new since the pandemic began.

Few Districts Are Adding New Academic Recovery Measures, but They May Be Expanding Pre-Existing Ones

One in ten or fewer districts are adding academic services, such as tutoring, credit recovery, reduced class sizes, or afterschool programming that they were not already offering before the pandemic (see Figure 5). However, because many districts already offered one or more these measures prior to the pandemic, there may be somewhat less room for growth in these services. Further, districts may be expanding

pre-pandemic offerings, which we did not ask about on this survey.

More high-poverty districts and districts with a majority of students of color plan to offer some tutoring in the 2021–2022 school year (91 percent and 92 percent, respectively) than their low-poverty and majority-white counterparts (80 percent and 81 percent, respectively). In particular, a higher percentage of high-poverty districts than low-poverty districts (13 percent versus 6 percent, respectively) are newly offering one-on-one tutoring since the pandemic began. Meanwhile, a higher percentage of majority-white districts than of majority–students of color districts plan to offer one or more fully online courses in 2021–2022 (41 percent versus 27 percent, respectively). Suburban districts and districts with a majority of students of color are especially likely to offer after- or before-school classes in 2021–2022 (60 percent and 63 percent, respectively). Also, high-poverty districts are more likely than low-poverty districts (68 percent versus 51 percent, respectively) to offer required credit-recovery courses in 2021–2022.

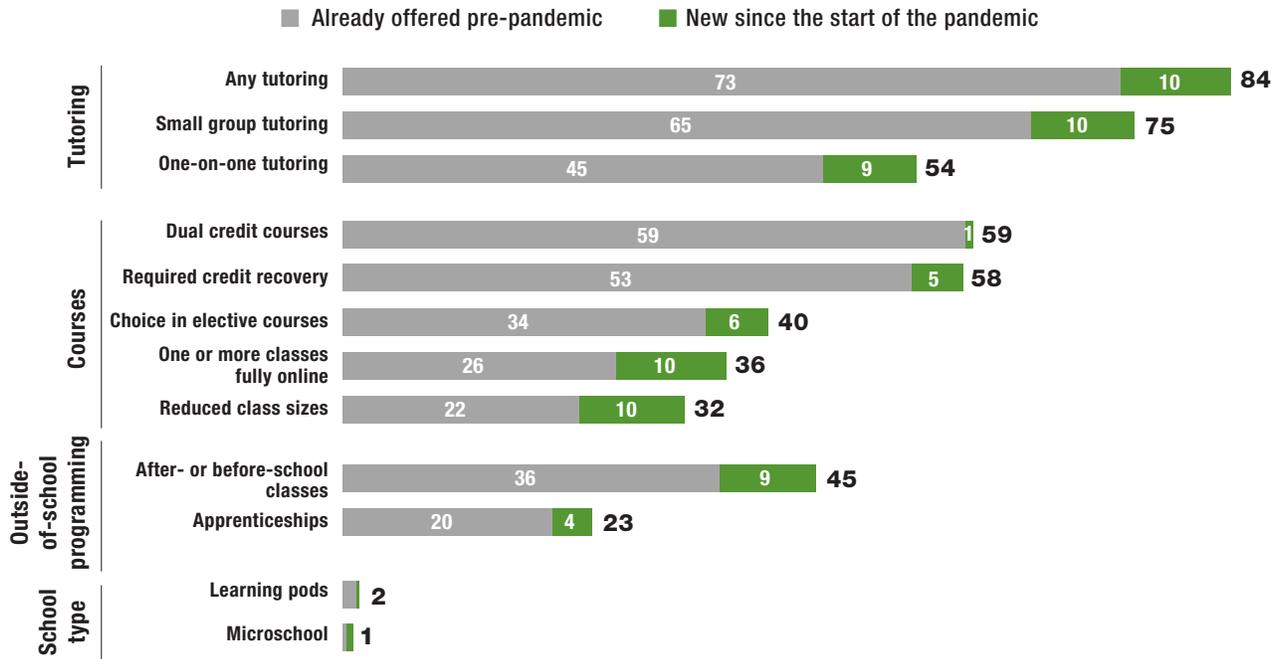
One-Quarter of Surveyed Districts Have Adopted School Schedule Increases, and One in Five Are Adding Minutes for Social and Emotional Learning

When we asked district leaders in our February 2021 survey about any changes that they had made to their schedules for the 2020–2021 school year, half of the district-leader respondents indicated they had shortened the school day (Schwartz et al., 2021). We inferred that this change was largely because of remote instruction, because a shortened school day was less common among districts that continued to offer fully in-person instruction. For the coming 2021–2022 school year, however, 97 percent of districts indicated that they will offer a fully in-person instruction option. (And 86 percent of districts reported they will *only* offer fully in-person instruction, as we discuss in our next and final report about the June 2021 survey findings.)

Perhaps related to their plans to offer fully in-person instruction, six in ten district leaders

FIGURE 5

Percentage of Districts Offering Some of the Most Commonly Mentioned Responses for Academic Recovery from the Pandemic in 2021–2022



NOTES: This figure depicts response data from four survey questions. Data on choice in elective courses come from the following questions: “Which of the following services, if any, do you plan to offer to families in 2021–2022?” and “Which of these services has your [district/CMO] newly offered since the start of the pandemic (i.e., that you did not offer in 2019–2020 prior to the pandemic)?” Data on the remaining items come from the following questions: “Which of the following school services or policies, if any, will your [district/CMO] offer in 2021–2022? Please include both [district/CMO]-run and contracted services” and “Which of these school services or policies are new since the start of the pandemic (i.e., that your [district/CMO] did not offer in 2019–2020 before the pandemic began)?” (*n* = 291). As defined on the survey, *learning pods* refer to learning environments in which small groups of school-age children are educated together at a child’s home, a shared workspace, or a school building or community center. *Microschools* are small K–12 schools often characterized by size and structure: class sizes of typically 20 or fewer children, mixed-aged level groupings, innovative or active teaching models, and personalized approach and attention. Bars may not sum to total because of rounding.

reported that they will “not adopt any substantive changes to our school schedule or calendar for 2021–2022” compared with their pre-pandemic schedules.³

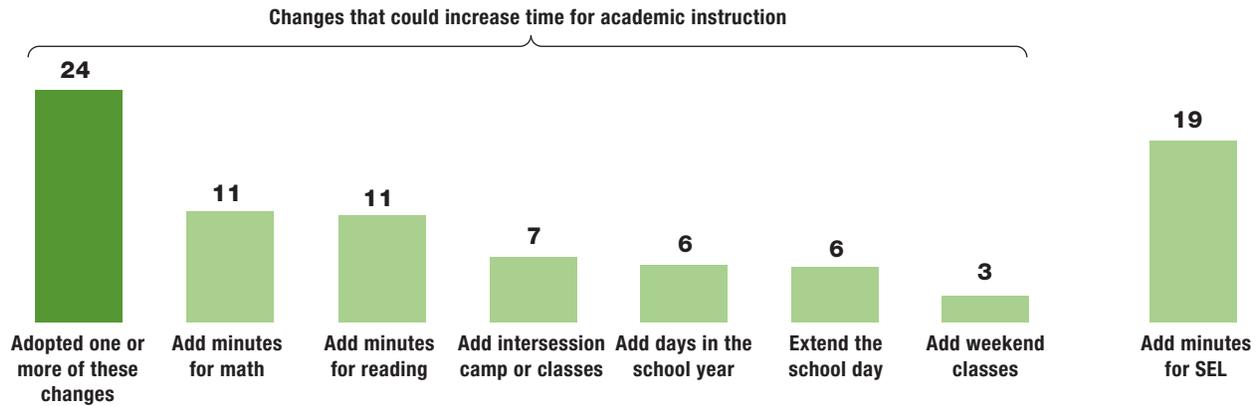
The remaining four out of ten districts have adopted one or more changes to their schedules for 2021–2022, of which increasing minutes for SEL is the most common, adopted by one in five districts (see Figure 6). Meanwhile, one-quarter of districts surveyed have adopted one or more schedule changes (such as a lengthened school day) that could at least, in theory, increase time for academic instruction. The most common of these changes is to increase the

minutes dedicated to math or reading instruction, which one out of ten districts plans to do. Less than one out of ten districts have adopted other additions, such as intersession classes (e.g., classes held during the winter break in the school year), weekend classes, or more days in the school year.

There were relatively few differences across district subgroups in terms of school schedule changes, with one notable exception: Fewer rural districts (13 percent) plan to increase instructional minutes for SEL than suburban districts (28 percent) and urban districts (30 percent).

FIGURE 6

Percentage of Districts Planning Schedule Changes for 2021–2022



NOTES: This figure depicts response data from the survey question: “Which of the following changes, if any, to the school schedule or calendar will one or more of your schools adopt for 2021–2022? In your responses, please note the 2021–2022 school schedule offerings that you did not already have in place in 2019–2020 before the pandemic began” (*n* = 291).

Parental Demand for 2021–2022 School Services

More Urban, Suburban, and Majority–Students of Color District Leaders Than Leaders of Rural Districts and Majority-White Districts Perceived Strong Parental Demand for Certain School Services

The increased role that parents have played in their children’s schooling throughout the pandemic and politically charged debates about school curricula have led to much speculation about whether parents would demand a stronger voice in shaping public schools in the future (Manno, 2021; Rokita, undated). To assess whether district leaders have registered strong demand from parents for changes to public education, we asked the following two questions, asking them to select any of the 21 response options shown in Figure 7:

1. “Which of the following services or policies for students, if any, have parents strongly demanded for the 2021–2022 school year?”
2. “Which of the following services for parents, if any, have parents strongly demanded for the 2021–2022 school year?”

At most, one-quarter of district leaders overall said parents strongly demanded any one of the 21 offerings we listed on the survey (see the first shaded column of Figure 7). District leaders perceived the strongest parental demand for a greater emphasis on SEL (25 percent of district leaders), followed by more frequent communication between teachers and parents (22 percent), a fully remote schooling option (21 percent), and district-provided computing devices (20 percent).

However, higher percentages of leaders from urban, suburban, and majority–students of color districts reported strong parental demand for SEL, more teacher-parent communication, and a fully remote schooling option. Smaller percentages of rural leaders and majority-white leaders reported the same. Slightly more than four out of ten urban and suburban leaders reported strong parental demand for SEL, and four out of ten leaders of districts with a majority of students of color reported strong parental demand for more-frequent teacher-parent communication. By contrast, only two out of ten rural district leaders and only two out of ten majority-white district leaders, at the most, reported strong parental demand for any of these offerings.

Across the board, very few to no district leaders reported strong parental demand for learning

FIGURE 7

Percentage of District Leaders Who Reported That Parents Have “Strongly Demanded” the Following Services or Changes

Greater emphasis on SEL	25	46	43	13	26	24	21	34
More-frequent communication between teachers and parents in general	22	33	28	18	14	34	15	40
Fully remote schooling option	21	24	35	14	21	22	17	31
Computing device provided by the district	20	24	22	18	19	22	16	28
More personalized attention from teachers	18	32	19	15	17	20	14	27
Home internet access subsidized or paid for by the district	13	24	11	13	12	16	9	24
More-frequent reports about their child’s academic progress	13	19	15	11	10	18	10	19
Schooling options that combine remote and in-person instruction	12	10	16	11	14	10	12	13
Before- or after-school care	12	28	20	5	11	13	10	16
More school time	11	15	19	6	14	6	11	10
New committees for parents to have more voice in the school	10	31	20	3	11	10	6	21
Revised grading policy to assign incompletes instead of failing grades	9	11	7	10	10	8	9	10
Workshops for parents on education- or school-related matters	8	13	14	4	5	11	4	15
Greater parental input into a school’s curriculum choices	4	8	8	2	6	2	4	5
Revised school discipline policy	4	10	4	2	2	5	2	7
Greater parental input into the choice of which teacher(s) their student gets	2	6	0	3	3	1	2	2
Greater parental influence on placement of students in particular courses	2	0	3	2	3	1	2	2
Less school time	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Learning pod	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
Microschool	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
Reduction or removal of School Resource Officers	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	All districts	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Low poverty	High poverty	Majority white	Majority students of color
		Locale			Poverty level		Student racial and ethnic composition	

NOTES: Lighter yellow cells represent smaller percentages of district leaders, while progressively darker shades of green represent larger percentages of district leaders. This figure depicts response data from the survey questions: “Which of the following services or policies for students, if any, have parents strongly demanded for the 2021–2022 school year?” and “Which of the following services for parents, if any, have parents strongly demanded for the 2021–2022 school year?” ($n = 286$). Bold font indicates that the subgroup percentage of district leaders reporting strong parental demand for an offering is statistically significantly different ($p < 0.05$) from the balance of district leaders not in that subgroup who said the same.

Pods, microschools, greater say in which teachers or courses their children get, a revised school discipline policy, or the removal of *school resource officers* (SROs; police officers who work in schools). If parents are, indeed, demanding these changes, either superintendents were not aware of these demands, or they chose to report they were unaware of them. The lack of perceived parental demand for the removal of SROs is a surprising finding given vigorous public debate about police in schools in summer 2020 (Sawchuk et al., 2021). And while there is weak evidence of parental demand for learning pods and microschools, we noted that 12 percent of district leaders reported strong parental demand for schooling options that combine remote and in-person instruction. This demand may be transitory insofar as it relates to COVID-19 health concerns, or it could reflect parental desire for a permanent option—in which case, new forms of school provision, such as learning pods, could expand.

We found either weak or no correlation between district leaders' perceptions of strong parental demand for a service, such as SEL or a fully remote instruction option, and the provision of that service. This could either indicate that district leaders' perceptions of strong parental demand do not influence district offerings, or, as we believe is more likely, the relationship between demand and provision is more complex than that. There could well be a several-year time lag between expressed parental desire for a service and the district's ability to provide it. And numerous factors could influence a district's ability to provide a service, including, but not limited to, funding and staffing availability, partisanship in the local community, teachers' union negotiations, regulatory considerations, and ability to procure services.

Implications

Results from the June 2021 ASDP survey of school district leaders show that school districts' provision of nonacademic services has grown. Many districts offered at least some of these services prior to the pandemic, but COVID-19 appears to have greatly accelerated the growth in the number of non-

academic services that districts offer. For example, the pandemic fueled a huge increase in districts' provision of personal computing services for students and families. Likewise, a majority of districts will offer mental health services to students in the 2021–2022 school year. The most common change to districts' school schedules was to add SEL minutes.

There is a split in both parental demand for these new nonacademic services and districts' provision of them between rural districts on the one hand and suburban and particularly urban districts on the other. Suburban and urban districts are especially likely to have adopted these expanded nonacademic services for the 2021–2022 school year, including increased amounts of SEL instruction, mental health services for students, weekend meals, and school-based health clinics. Urban district leaders (and leaders of suburban and majority-students of color districts) have also reported strong parental demand for SEL and a remote learning option, although we found only a weak correlation between perceived parental demand and the provision of these services. These are more-recent points of evidence for a rural-urban divide that we noted in our February 2021 survey of district leaders. In that survey, we found a large difference in the proportion of rural districts and of their suburban or urban counterparts offering in-person instruction this past school year (Schwartz et al., 2021). Looking ahead, if such subjects as SEL, such services as mental health care, and even such instructional modes as remote versus in-person become increasingly politicized—as they well may—we can expect relatively new types of differences to emerge between urban and rural schooling.⁴

We found less division between rural and urban districts in their academic offerings for the 2021–2022 school year than we do in their nonacademic offerings. Districts of all types have almost universally offered summer programming in 2021. And about one-quarter of each district subgroup that we examined added time to the 2021–2022 school year that could be used for academic instruction by, for example, increasing time for math and reading and lengthening the school day or year. Likewise, few

districts in any district subgroup are newly offering the most commonly mentioned academic recovery interventions, such as tutoring, to support student learning.

Looking ahead, as districts expand the scope of their services, should and will their staff and budget expand proportionally? Districts' can leverage new federal funding streams for summer, tutoring, and other expanded learning time opportunities for the next few years (Learning Policy Institute, 2021). Our first report in this three-part series about the June 2021 survey results shows that district leaders have expanded their hiring, especially of mental health

staff, for the 2021–2022 school year, even though four out of ten district leaders foresee a fiscal cliff in the next three to four years (Diliberti and Schwartz, 2021). Will these mental health and other nonacademic services fade, grow, or plateau? Will they continue to be concentrated in certain types of districts, either reducing or exacerbating inequities in student outcomes? It will be important moving forward to document with more precision what these districts' new nonacademic services consist of (particularly for mental health services and SEL), who provides them, and how many and which students or families receive them.

How This Analysis Was Conducted

- RAND Corporation researchers fielded the third survey of the ASDP from June 1 through July 2, 2021.
- This report is based on survey responses from 292 district leaders; these responses are weighted to be nationally representative. Surveys were completed by district superintendents, charter management CEOs, or their designees.
- Data on district demographics were obtained by linking survey data files to the 2019–2020 Common Core of Data issued by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Our locale definition aligns with the four-category locale definition used by NCES, with the exception that we collapsed the districts located in towns into the rural category for sample size reasons. We classified districts as *majority white* if they had a student enrollment that was 50 percent or more white. All other districts were classified as *majority students of color*. Similarly, we classified districts as *high poverty* if 50 percent or more of their student population was eligible for free or reduced-price meals as part of the National School Lunch Program. All other districts were classified as *low poverty*.
- We conducted significance testing to assess whether subgroups were statistically different at the $p < 0.05$ level. Specifically, we tested whether the percentage of district leaders in one subgroup reporting a response was statistically different from the balance of district leaders who took the survey (e.g., leaders of urban districts versus the rest of district leaders who took the survey who were not in an urban district). Because of the exploratory nature of this study, we did not apply multiple hypothesis test corrections.

Endnotes

¹ Note that all 15 CMOs in our sample are members of the Charter School Growth Fund (an organization that funds charter school expansion) and therefore are likely not representative of all CMOs nationally.

² We do not separately analyze differences by district size. However, district size and locale are correlated. Among the districts in our sample, urban districts have an average enrollment size of 36,800 students, suburban districts have an average enrollment size of 15,600 students, and rural districts have an average enrollment size of 1,800 students.

³ Note that our survey only asked districts about schedule additions, not reductions, for the 2021–2022 school year.

⁴ The following are two examples of political polarization around SEL. The first is a June 2021 letter from the Florida Chancellor of Public Schools to math publishers “advising publishers and school districts to not incorporate unsolicited strategies, such as social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching” into math materials (Oliva, 2021). The second is the Indiana Attorney General’s *Parents Bill of Rights* document that links SEL to critical race theory (Zalaznick, 2021).

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About This Report

The American Educator Panels (AEP) are nationally representative samples of teachers, school leaders, and district leaders across the country. The American School District Panel (ASDP) is a partnership among the RAND Corporation, the Center on Reinventing Public Education, Chiefs for Change, the Council of the Great City Schools, and Kitamba. For more information, please visit the ASDP website at www.americanschooldistrictpanel.org.

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This Data Note series is intended to provide brief analyses of educator survey results of immediate interest to policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. If you would like to know more about the dataset, please visit *Technical Documentation for the Third American School District Panel Survey* (RR-A956-6, www.rand.org/t/RR-A956-6) for more information on survey recruitment, administration, and sample weighting. If you are interested in using AEP data for your own surveys or analysis or in reading other AEP-related publications, please email aep@rand.org or visit www.rand.org/aep.

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