

## Your Question:

You asked about state responses to unfinished learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Our Response:

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many state policymakers and school district leaders have contemplated or implemented approaches to address unfinished learning. State policymakers have considered expanding summer instructional programming, implementing additional curriculum and programming for foundational skills, changing the school calendar or instructional time, or measuring and reporting on unfinished learning. While not an exhaustive list, the following are examples of states that have considered those approaches, either through legislation, state guidance, or use of CARES Act funds.

### Summer Programming

#### **Connecticut**

[H.B. 5435](#) (Introduced, 2021) would establish a summer learning initiative to aid in recovery from unfinished learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative will award grants to boards of education, municipalities and nonprofits for the purpose of providing educational, enrichment and recreational activities with a focus on foundational skills.

#### **New Jersey**

[A.B. 5147](#) (Introduced, 2020) would establish the Alleviating Learning Loss in New Jersey Grant Program to assist public schools in establishing or expanding summer learning programs in the summer of 2021 or other support programs in the 2020-21 school year to address unfinished learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **South Carolina**

Gov. Henry McMaster issued [Executive Order 2020-29](#) which, among other measures, “urges school districts to work with the Department to provide voluntary, in-person summer learning opportunities for students who were enrolled in kindergarten through the eighth grade during the 2019-2020 school year but who are at risk of falling behind in their learning.” The order stated that the department of education will work with districts to identify available state and federal funds to facilitate summer learning opportunities, and that CARES Act funding would be used to create an Academic Recovery Camp for K-3 students who need supplemental reading and math learning opportunities.

### Curricula and Programming for Foundational Skills

Several states have approached aiding student learning recovery through establishing programming or providing additional services or resources, sometimes focused on improving specific foundational skills such as reading or math. Additionally, many states are exploring how to fund such programs and have introduced grant programs to support student learning recovery.

#### **Connecticut**

[H.B. 5769](#) (Introduced, 2021) would require the department of education to develop a program to provide individualized support to students whose attendance and participation dropped during the 2020-21 school year.

#### **Indiana**

[H.B. 1008](#) (Introduced, 2021) would establish the student learning recovery grant program to award grants to eligible entities to provide learning recovery to students who have experienced unfinished learning, have fallen behind in

acquiring anticipated grade-level skills and knowledge, have scored below academic benchmarks or are at risk of falling below academic standards as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The department of education will “consider a broad range of educational and remedial resources” when awarding grants to eligible entities, including schools, prospective and retired teachers, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations and philanthropic organizations. The bill appropriates \$150 million from the state general fund to support this grant program for the 2021 fiscal year.

Similarly, [S.B. 250](#) (Introduced, 2021) would establish the learning acceleration grant program to award grants to schools to assist students who have experienced unfinished learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. To receive a grant, schools must develop and submit a student learning acceleration plan to provide acceleration and remediation to eligible students. The bill appropriates \$30 million from the general fund in both the 2022 and 2023 fiscal years to support this grant program.

### **Minnesota**

[S.F. 64](#) (Introduced, 2021) would establish and fund a variety of grants and measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill would appropriate a \$3 million grant to the Minnesota math corps to “provide services to students in any grade to reduce math deficiencies related to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic” and would appropriate a \$2 million grant to the Minnesota reading corps to provide childhood literacy services and “to reduce reading deficiencies related to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

### **Tennessee**

[H.B. 7004](#) and [S.B. 7002](#) (Introduced, 2021) would require the department of education to establish and administer a remediation program and would require local education agencies to participate in the program by implementing after-school learning mini-camps and summer learning camps.

## **School Calendar**

### **North Carolina**

As part of the state’s [COVID-19 relief package](#), North Carolina schools were required to open on August 17, a week earlier than the usual start date, to add five days to the 2020-21 school year. The bill required that schools adopt a calendar that includes 190 days of instruction, up from the typical 185 days required by statute.

### **Oklahoma**

The Oklahoma State Board of Education [voted to allow local school boards](#) to hold classes on Saturdays during the 2020-21 school year and added flexibility for fulfilling educational requirements amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Washington**

[S.B. 5147](#) (Introduced, 2021) would explore alternative school calendars to address unfinished learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposal would require a select number of school districts to participate in either 180-day or 210-day, year-round school calendars.

### **Virginia**

[Virginia Department of Education guidance](#) states that schools or school divisions closing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic must make every effort to meet the 990-hour clock requirement of instructional time, “including using scheduled vacation days and planned school closure days as well as extending the length of the school day or calendar.” School divisions may seek a waiver from the board of education if they are unable to meet the requirement.

## Measuring and Reporting on Unfinished Learning

In addition to introducing approaches to learning recovery, many states are still attempting to quantify the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning and student achievement, or are researching potential program options.

### New Jersey

[A.B. 5126](#) and [S.B. 3214](#) (Introduced, 2020) would require the commissioner of education to prepare a report that identifies and quantifies the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student academic outcomes, disaggregated by district size, grade level and academic subject. The report would also examine the impact of the pandemic on existing student achievement disparities and include analysis of student academic outcomes disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, eligibility for special education services and English language learner designation.

### Tennessee

[H.B. 7012](#) and [S.B. 7006](#) (Introduced, 2021) would require the commissioner of education to include any data regarding the extent of unfinished learning experienced by students during the COVID-19 pandemic in the commissioner's 2021 annual report.

[H.B. 7015](#) and [S.B. 7010](#) (Introduced, 2021) would require the Commission on Education Recovery and Innovation to include data and recommendations for addressing unfinished learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the commission's final report.

### Virginia

[H.J.R. 549](#) and [S.J.R. 308](#) (Introduced, 2021) would direct the joint legislative audit and review commission to study the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the state's schools, students and school employees. In particular, the study would examine the impact of the pandemic on previously existing student opportunity gaps, student achievement and student well-being, including any disproportionate impact on at-risk populations. The study would also explore programs that can address unfinished learning and identify barriers to implementation.

## Related Resources

### CARES Act Fund Trackers

Many states have allocated portions of their CARES Act funding to summer schooling, remedial programs or other efforts to assist learning recovery. The Hunt Institute's [GEER Fund Utilization tracker](#) and the National Conference of State Legislatures' [ESSER Fund Tracker](#) both examine state use of those funds, including approaches to learning loss.

### Michigan State University, [State Policies to Address COVID-19 School Closure](#)

Michigan State University's Institute for Public Policy and Social Research and Education Policy Innovation Collaborative are tracking education policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic across all 50 states. Each state profile includes information on policy responses related to instructional hours, school calendars, summer school and other related issues.