



STATE LEADER SURVEY ON REOPENING SCHOOLS

Survey Results
May 11, 2020

With school campuses shuttered due to COVID-19, the rate and level of quality of student instruction varies across the nation, states, regions and even from neighborhood to neighborhood. As the 2019-20 school year comes to a close, state leaders are considering important questions:

- When and how should schools reopen (after it's safe from a health perspective to do so)?
- What could options for school schedules, student placement and educator staffing “look like” when we reopen?
- How should we provide supports to students, particularly those who are most in need, when schools reopen?

In ExcelinEd's conversations with state education leaders, many expressed the desire to learn how other states are approaching the complex and multifaceted process of reopening schools in ways that support student safety, academic progress and whole-child well-being.

About the Survey

At the end of April, ExcelinEd sought input and feedback on potential school reopening strategies and considerations from national, state and local leaders. Their feedback was used to develop a Survey on Reopening Schools, with the intent of capturing the current directional thinking of state leaders as they consider the many options available.

State education chiefs and governors' offices in all 50 states were invited to participate in this anonymous survey. Between April 30 and May 6, ExcelinEd collected responses from 35 state leaders. Because the survey is anonymous, none of the responses can be attributed to a specific state or state leader.

The survey results and analysis on the following pages reflect the directional thinking and considerations of state education leaders as of May 8, 2020.

Moving Forward

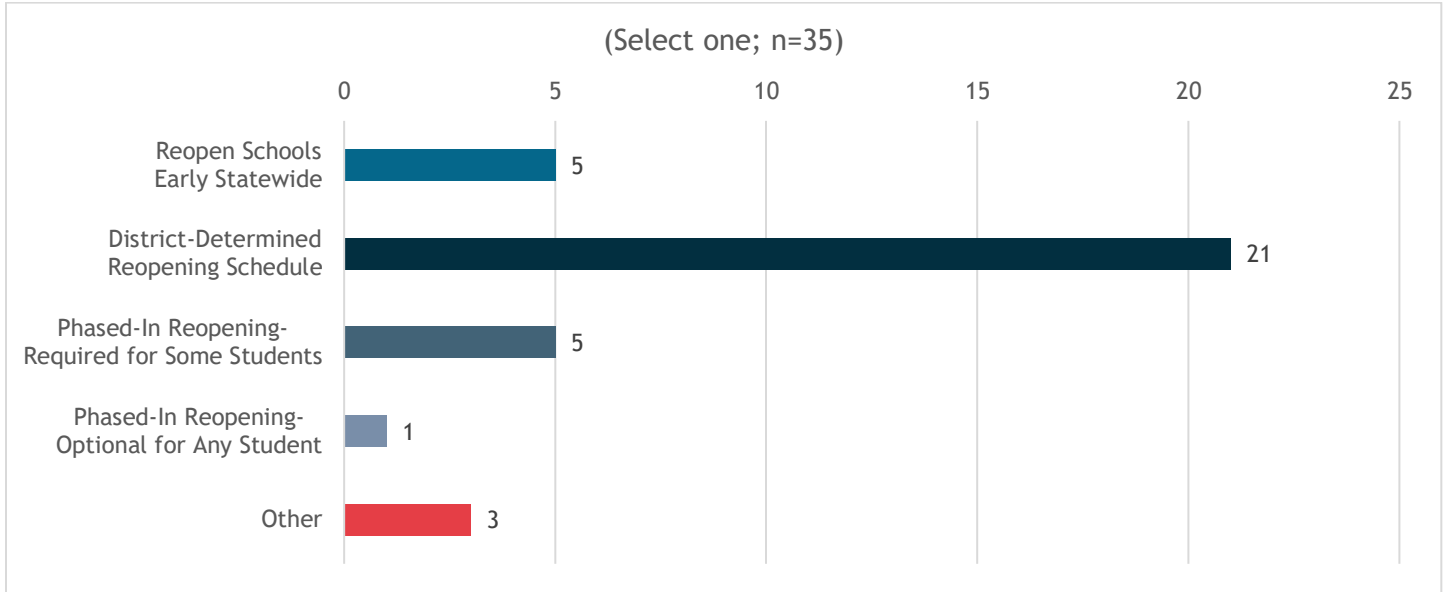
These survey results also informed a policy brief, [Reopening Schools After COVID-19 Closures: Considerations for States](#), which will continue to be updated to reflect emerging trends in reopening approaches and public health information. If you would like to submit recommendations for additional options to be added to this document, please email your ideas to Info@ExcelinEd.org.

ExcelinEd is committed to supporting states and leaders as they continue to navigate the complex decisions related to continuing instruction, reopening schools and supporting students, educators and families.



SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESULTS

1. Which of the following reopening schedules are you leaning toward implementing in the 2020-21 school year?



Key Takeaway

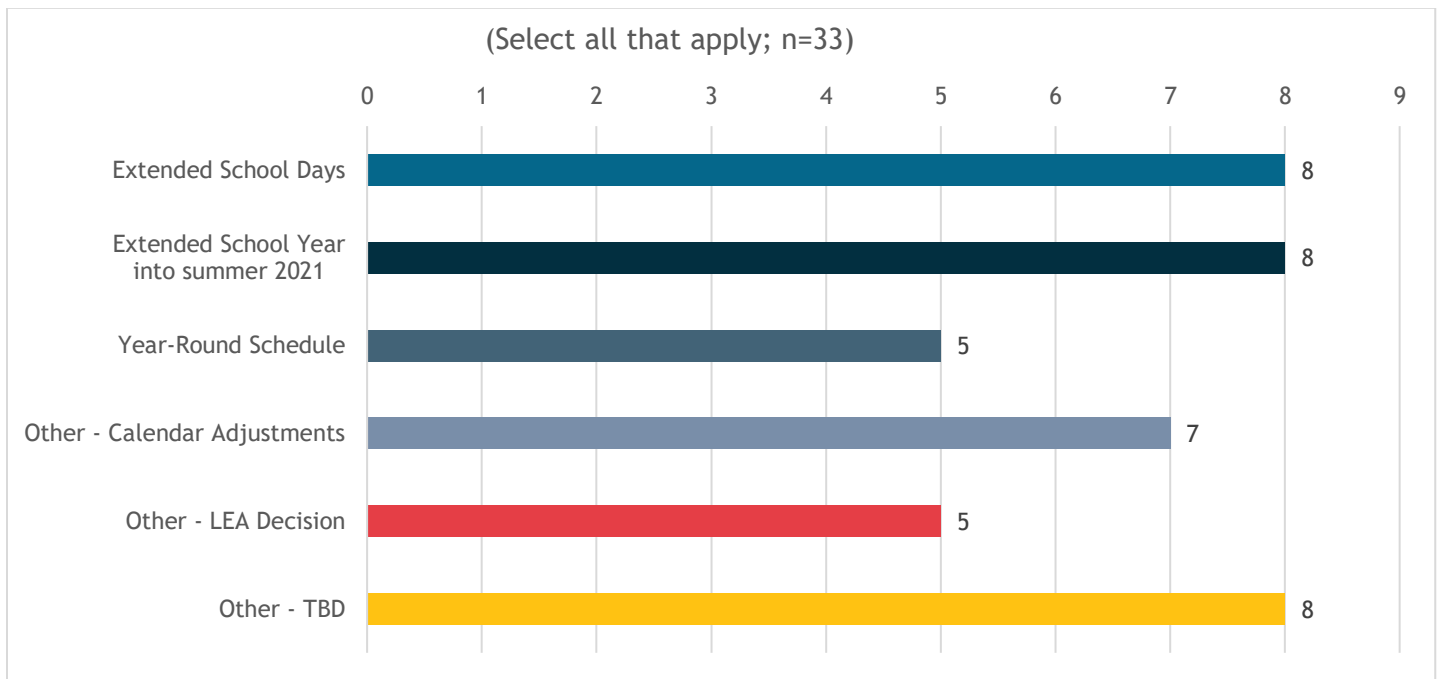
The vast majority of state leaders indicated they were going to allow local districts to determine their reopening schedules. However, several respondents are considering reopening school campuses early statewide or requiring a phased-in reopening schedule that would open campuses earlier than a normal fall schedule.

Additional Findings

- Three leaders who selected *Other* included the following details:
 - Reopening early for students in grades K-8
 - TBD



2. Are you considering requiring or promoting a substantive statewide change in school days/calendars?



Key Takeaway

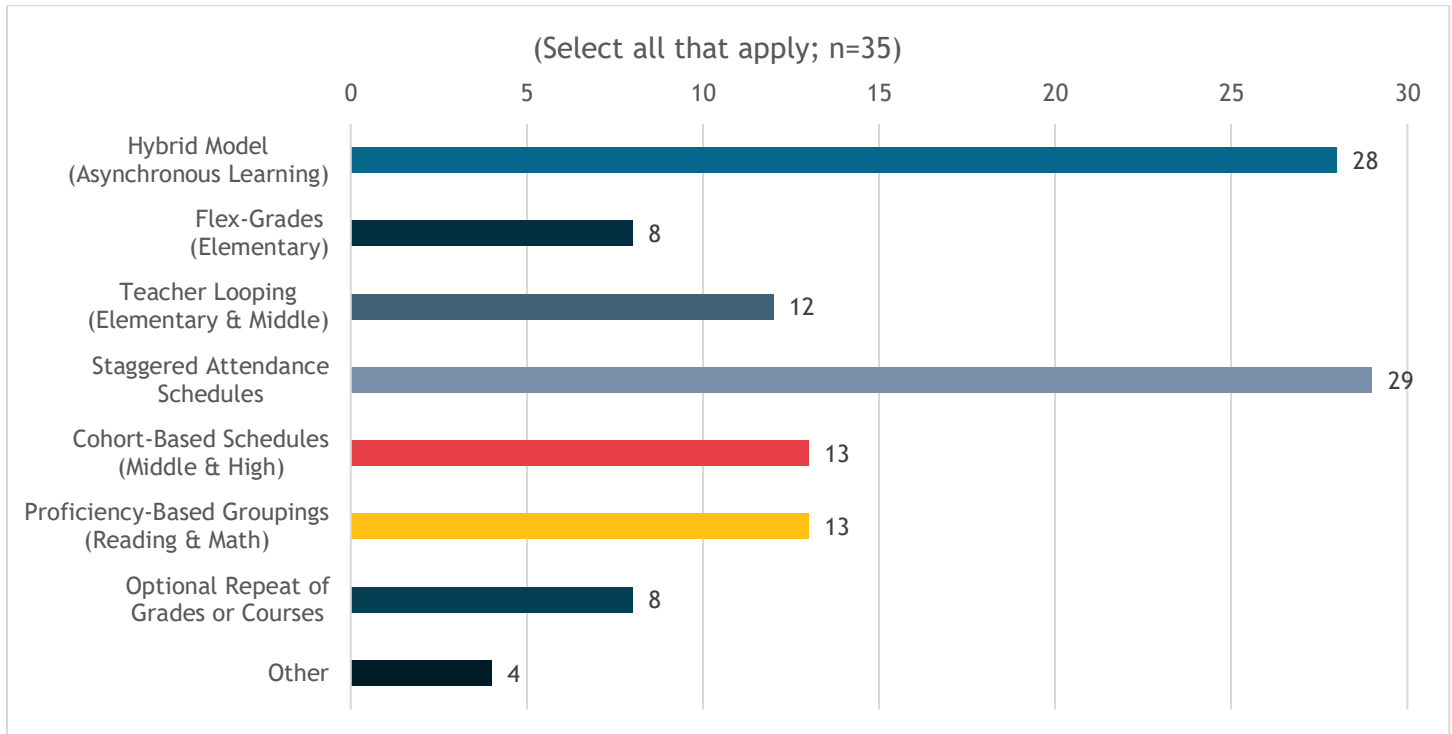
The majority of state leaders are considering multiple options for expanding school calendars. Many of the *Other* responses highlighted variations of extending the school year.

Additional Findings

- Six leaders reported considering multiple changes to school days and calendars. None of these leaders selected the *Other* option.
 - Two leaders indicated considering all the provided options (extended school days AND extended school year AND year-round schedule).
 - One leader indicated considering both extended school day AND year-round schedule.
 - Three leaders indicated considering both extended school day AND extended school year.
- Seven leaders described *Other Calendar Adjustments* and included the following details:
 - Extending the school year by starting the 2021 school year early
 - Offering extended school day opportunities for struggling students
 - Extending the school year by 5 days
 - Adding five required remote learning days
 - Offering summer school options
 - Local decision - but influenced by state revenue and budget capacity



3. Regardless of the reopening timeline, there are a variety of options for how to assign students and teachers to classrooms. Which of the following options are you considering requiring or promoting?



Key Takeaways

While state leaders are considering several different options for grouping students and teachers, nearly all respondents report considering both the hybrid/asynchronous learning model and staggered attendance schedules.

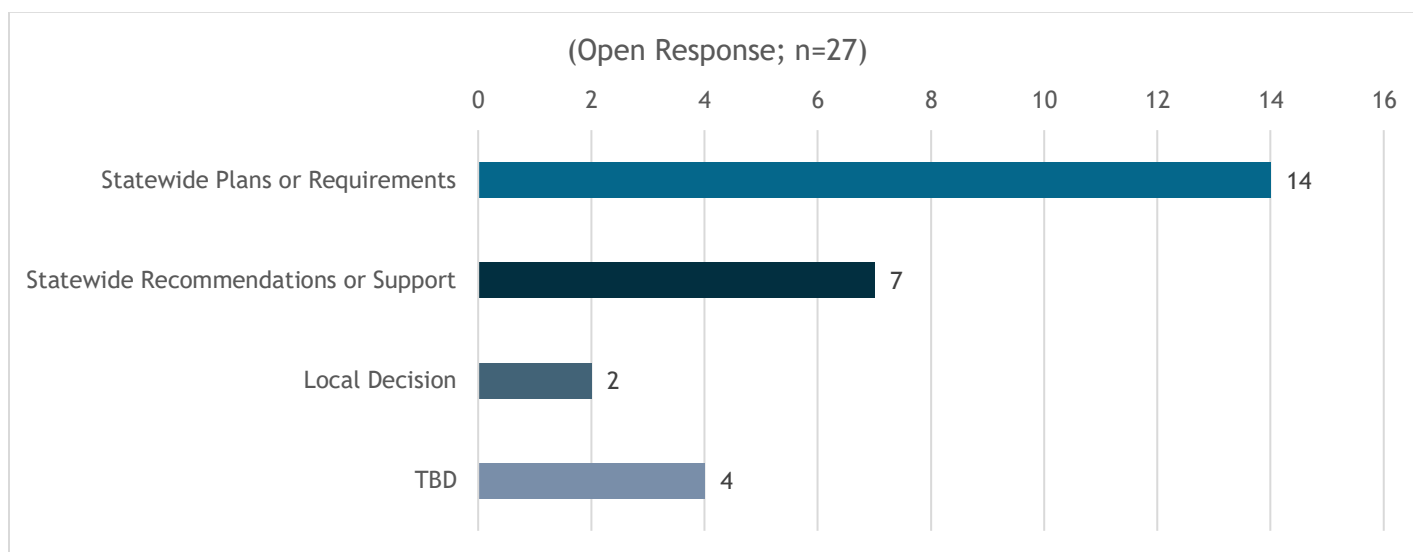
Additionally, most of the state leaders who responded are considering multiple options and potentially a portfolio approach to student/teacher classroom assignments, as nearly all leaders selected more than one option, with an average of 3.3 options selected per response.

Additional Findings

- Four leaders who selected *Other* included the following details:
 - Small-group summer sessions for at-risk students, special education students, English learners and literacy programs
 - Staggered on-site instruction with e-learning
 - This will be a local decision
 - All of the above



4. Please give a brief description of what your state is considering to evaluate student academic needs and measure learning loss.



Note: Open responses were analyzed and grouped into major themes (shown above). Responses related to multiple themes were counted in each theme that applied.

Key Takeaway

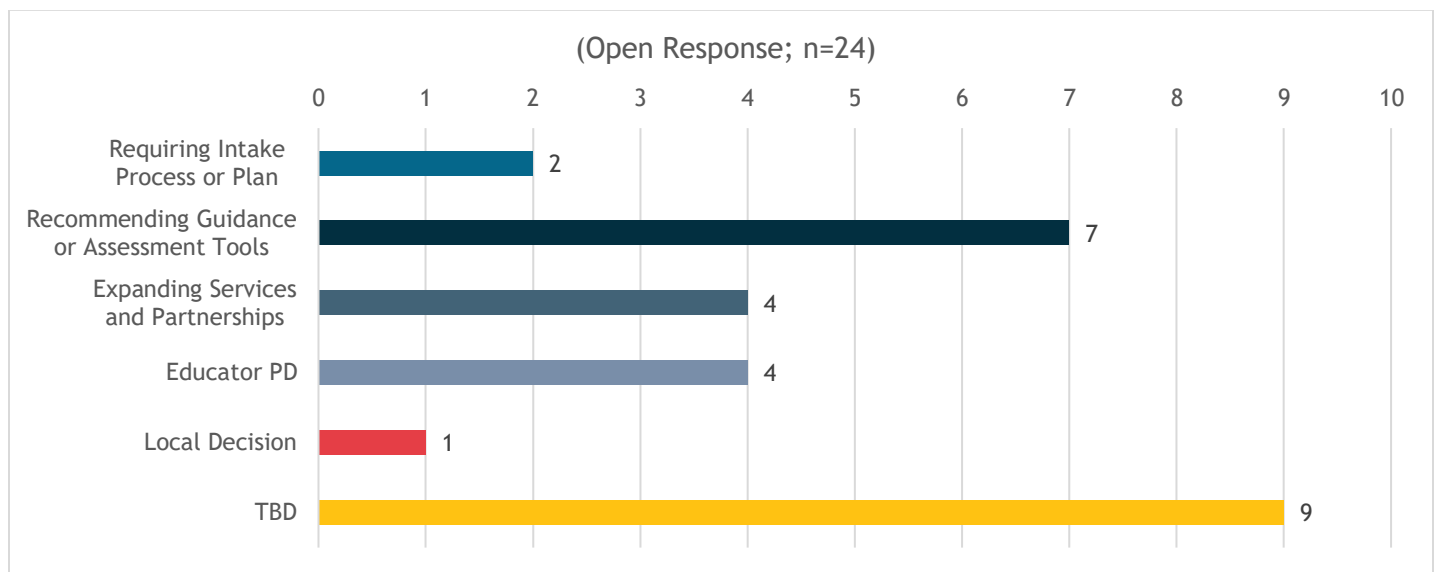
Most respondents indicated that they are considering plans to require, recommend or support the assessment of student academic progress and learning loss when schools begin the 2020-21 school year.

Additional Findings

- Fourteen leaders reported considering *Statewide Plans or Requirements* for academic assessments. Their responses included some of the following (aggregated) details:
 - The state could require districts to administer specific assessments developed, funded, administered and/or approved by the SEA:
 - The state could require statewide administration of the 2019-20 end of grade and EOC assessments used as a 2020-21 fall diagnostic.
 - The state could require another state-designed assessment (not spring 2020) as a fall diagnostic.
 - The state could require or prioritize grade levels, content areas and/or assessments, including:
 - *Elementary*: K-5 existing reading and math diagnostic assessment; universal K-3 reading diagnostic; NWEA K-3; and
 - *Middle Grades*: SBAC 4-8; extending current K-2 fall assessments to 8th grade.
 - The state could require districts to assess students' academic needs without specifying tests.
 - The state could provide access to statewide assessments, diagnostics or resources, but not require their use.
- Seven leaders reported considering *Statewide Recommendations or Support* for academic assessments. Their responses included some of the following (aggregated) details:
 - The state may encourage districts to use current benchmark/interim assessments.
 - The state may encourage districts to use new diagnostic assessments.
 - The state may develop resources that support teachers in using data from diagnostic assessments to inform instruction.



5. Please give a brief description of what your state is considering to evaluate and address 'whole child' student needs.



Note: Open responses were analyzed and grouped into major themes (shown above). Responses related to multiple themes were counted in each theme that applied.

Key Takeaway

State leaders' responses suggest that states may be in earlier stages of planning related to meeting the social/emotional needs of students upon reopening schools. More leaders did not respond or were unsure of what the state may be considering than those who identified at least one aspect of how their state is addressing these issues.

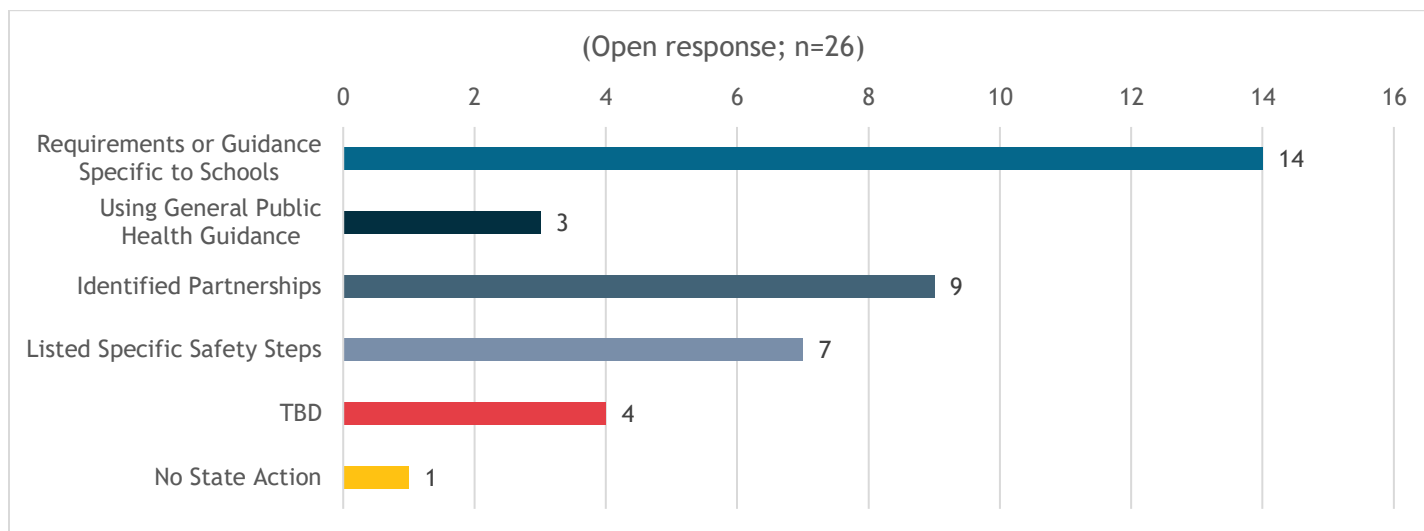
Additional Findings

- Two state leaders indicated they are considering *Requiring an Intake Process or Plan* related to the 'whole child.' Additional details in these responses outline considerations for expanding intake processes to include the whole school community (students and adults) or requiring districts to consult with local mental health services and nonprofits as they develop and implement their intake plans.
- Seven state leaders indicated they are considering *Recommending Guidance or Assessment Tools* related to SEL/mental health assessment tools, and included the following details:
 - The state could encourage (but not require) schools to have intake assessments for mental health.
 - The state could incorporate SEL measures into the statewide academic diagnostic assessment(s).
 - The state could develop guidance and tools to help meet students' needs while reopening, including:
 - specific mental health screeners
 - checklists for principals and teachers to gauge students' mental health needs
 - guidance specifically for school counselors
 - expansion of mental health 'quick-checks' used by social workers and counselors
 - The state could administer social/emotional and mental health assessments during summer programs.
 - The state could continue to implement the statewide Whole Child framework.
- Four state leaders reported *Expanding Services and Partnerships* to support the 'whole child,' including:
 - Expanding tele-counseling/tele-health and in-school supports
 - Expanding or promoting mental health consultation services
 - Deploying university students and faculty and retired teachers/counselors to assist with special education evaluations, mental health needs, etc.



- Four state leaders indicated they are considering *Educator Professional Development* as part of their strategy to address ‘whole child’ needs. These leaders included examples such as trauma-informed training, SEL/social-emotional well-being training and training to identify student needs and develop local responses.

6. Please give a brief description of what your state is considering to ensure school campuses are safe and healthy.



Note: Open responses were analyzed and grouped into major themes (shown above). Responses related to multiple themes were counted in each theme that applied.

Key Takeaway

A majority of the state leaders who responded indicated they are considering developing health and safety requirements or guidance specifically for schools.

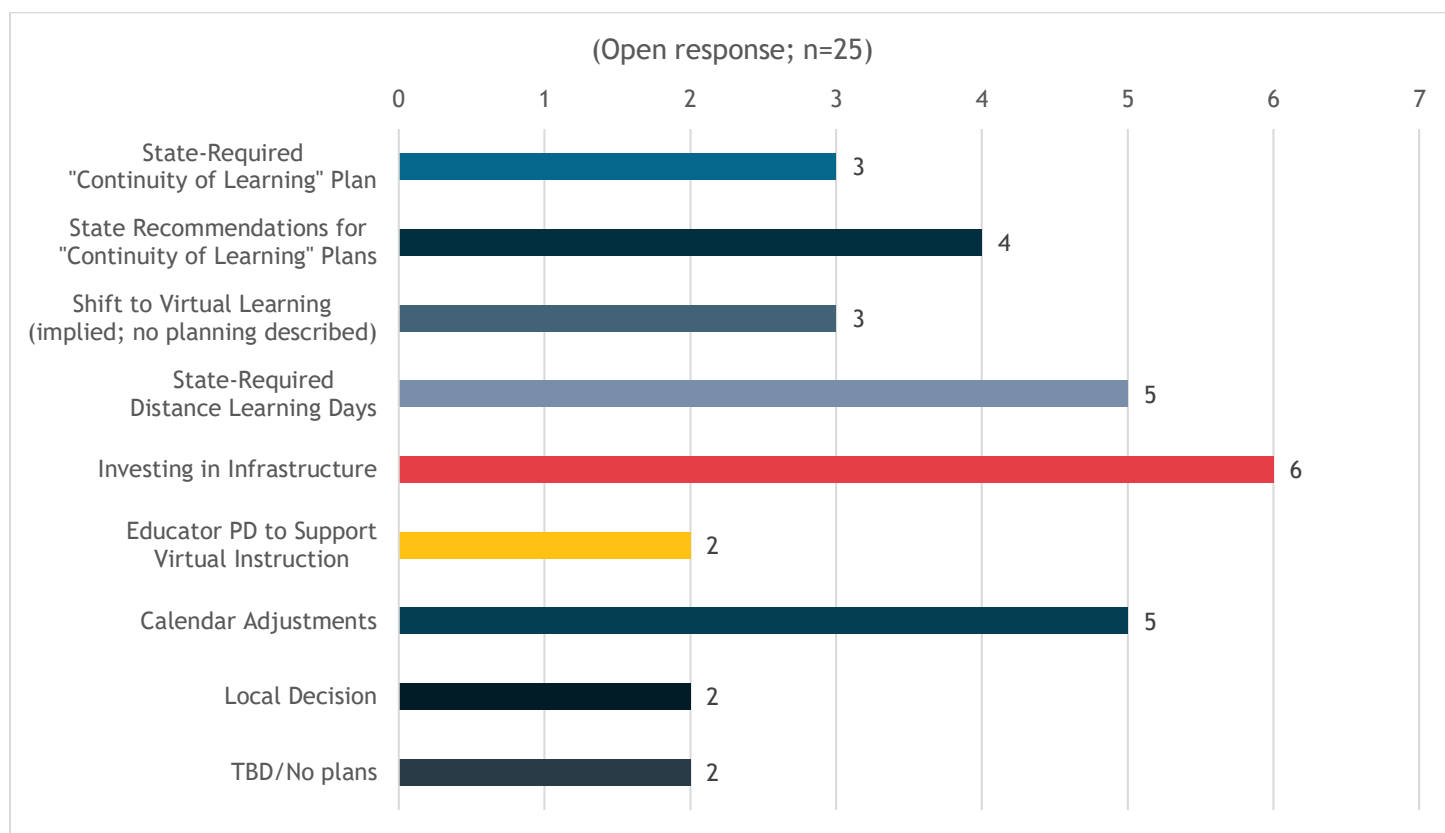
Additional Findings

- Fourteen state leaders reported considering *Requirements and Guidance Specific to Schools* to ensure campuses are safe and healthy. Their responses included the following details:
 - The state could enact policy changes related to school/student health and safety.
 - The state could develop requirements, guidelines, metrics, procedures and/or resources related to safely reopening schools.
 - The state could require evidence of prioritizing health and safety with CARES funding.
- Three leaders reported that school-specific guidance is not currently planned; rather, they described *Using General Public Health Guidance* from the CDC and state/local public health agencies.
- Nine leaders *Identified Partnerships* in their responses to support post-COVID school health and safety strategies. Their responses listed staff from the governor’s office, state/local health officials, the creation of a new taskforce dedicated to school health/safety and national education policy organizations.
- Seven leaders *Listed Specific Safety Steps or Requirements* in their responses. Responses included in this category contained at least one specific measure that leaders are considering to increase safety in schools. However, responses varied in terms of specific plans or requirements for the identified safety measures. The *specific safety steps and requirements* identified by state leaders are aggregated below:
 - **Behavioral Changes:** social distancing, wearing of masks, PPE standards, hand sanitizer throughout the campus, hand washing reminders/protocols
 - **Facilities Changes:** Cleaning/sanitization standards and enhancements, hygiene stations, limited lunch options, use of other tools such as door openers that will include proactive measures to ensure the safety of each student



- **Health Monitoring:** symptom screening on entry, temperature checks, student wellness screening, monitoring for outbreaks
- **Instructional Changes:** staggered schedules, blended models of at-home and at-school learning, closures according to risk models in place, class size restrictions, more planning for future closures, distance learning, limited extracurriculars

7. Please give a brief description of what your state is considering to plan for future disruptions.



Note: Open responses were analyzed and grouped into major themes (shown above). Responses related to multiple themes were counted in each theme that applied.

Key Takeaway

The vast majority of the state leaders’ responses focus on supporting more seamless transitions to virtual instruction by ‘practicing’ required distance learning days, investment in infrastructure and supporting the development of plans to ensure continuity of learning.

Additional Findings

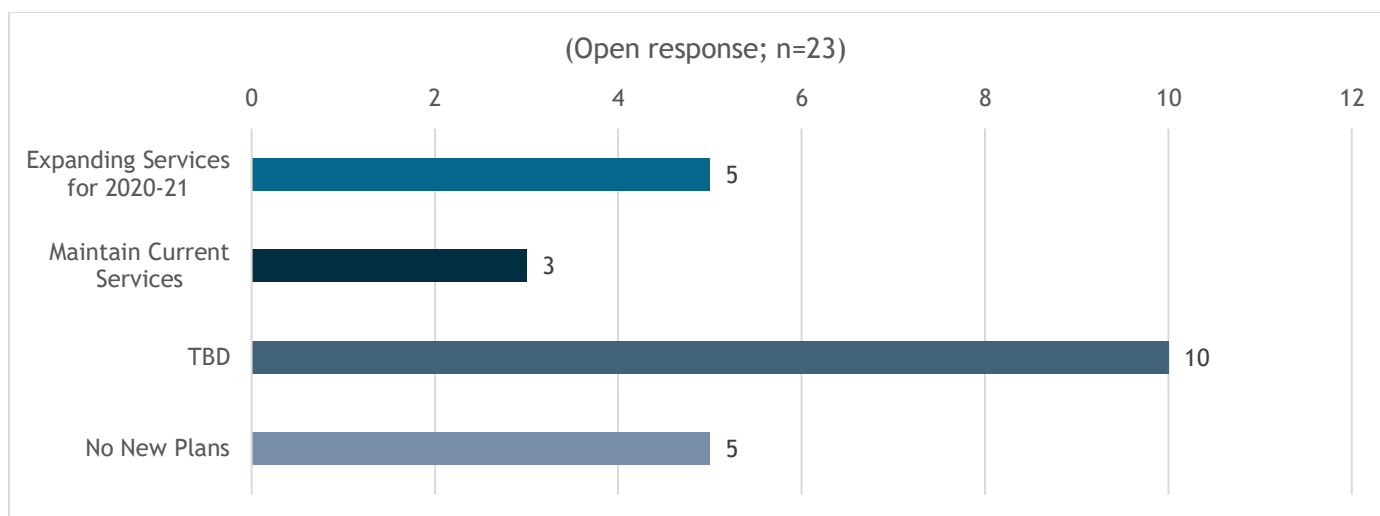
- Seven leaders identified considering *State-Required or Recommended "Continuity of Learning" Plans* for districts. In addition to noting overall requirements or recommendations, some leaders included additional details under consideration, including:
 - The state could develop state-level guidance for remote learning.
 - The state could establish risk-based protocols for both physical space and learning modalities.
 - The state could require districts to have plans for at least 30 days of distance instruction.
- Five leaders reported considering building *State-Required Distance Learning Days* into state and local school calendars. Some leaders included additional details, such as:



- The state could require a certain number of required distance-learning days.
- The state could require districts to practice the transition to virtual instructions so that all school systems can execute in 24 to 72 hours (if necessary).
- Six leaders reported that they are considering *Investing in Infrastructure* to support virtual/distance, blended and/or hybrid instruction. Some responses contained details about the challenges they face and the types of investments they are considering, including:
 - The state or districts could acquire technology/devices for students, teachers, counselors.
 - The state or districts could expand internet connectivity for students/families.
 - The state could implement/expand a statewide LMS that supports blended and virtual options.
 - The state could work to leverage discounted services for schools.
- Two state leaders reported considering statewide strategies for *Educator PD to Support Virtual Instruction*, including the SEA directly providing/supporting the PD and/or the SEA prioritizing PD related to virtual instruction in existing approval processes, such as accreditation or local planning.
- Five state leaders reported considering *Calendar Adjustments* to plan for future disruptions. These responses included increasing the number of scheduled school days (by adjusting the school start/end dates or scheduled school breaks) and expanding districts' authority to make up additional days using distance learning.
- Five state leaders *Identified Challenges* as a way of describing their current thinking/plans related to future disruptions. The challenges identified by state leaders include:
 - Connectivity, especially for rural, remote and low-income students
 - Determining the correct number of days to adjust calendars, with all of the unknowns
 - The broad range in quality of online learning provided to students
 - Resources for parents in supporting student learning, especially when remote



8. Please give a brief description of what your state is considering to support students' families and communities.



Note: Open responses were analyzed and grouped into major themes (shown above). Responses related to multiple themes were counted in each theme that applied.

Key Takeaways

Less than 25% of respondents identified specific steps toward expanding schools as hubs for wraparound services that support students and families. Many respondents indicated that this is a topic of ongoing consideration that will likely persist beyond the initial reopening of schools.

Additional Findings

- Five leaders described strategies they are considering related to *Expanding Services for 2020-21*. Details from these responses include:
 - The state could leverage funding from the Cares Act to support LEAs in providing wraparound services.
 - The state is piloting 'Community In Schools' and may plan to scale that model throughout the state.
 - The state could implement policy changes and waivers in concert with higher education to waive assessments, grades, etc.
 - The state could deploy services to support families and communities in streamlined ways.
- Many leaders identified specific services and/or resources that are currently being offered or are being considered for expansion through schools. These include:
 - Food services
 - Mental health counseling
 - Childcare/day camps, especially for children of essential workers
 - Language services and refugee services for improved communication and translation
 - Communication and resources to support parents in implementing district learning
 - Extending Wi-Fi services