

Recovery From the Coronavirus Pandemic in K–12 Education

In April 2022, some 69 percent of public schools reported that the percentage of students who had sought mental health services from school had increased since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, and only 13 percent “strongly agreed” that their school was able to effectively provide mental health services to all students in need.

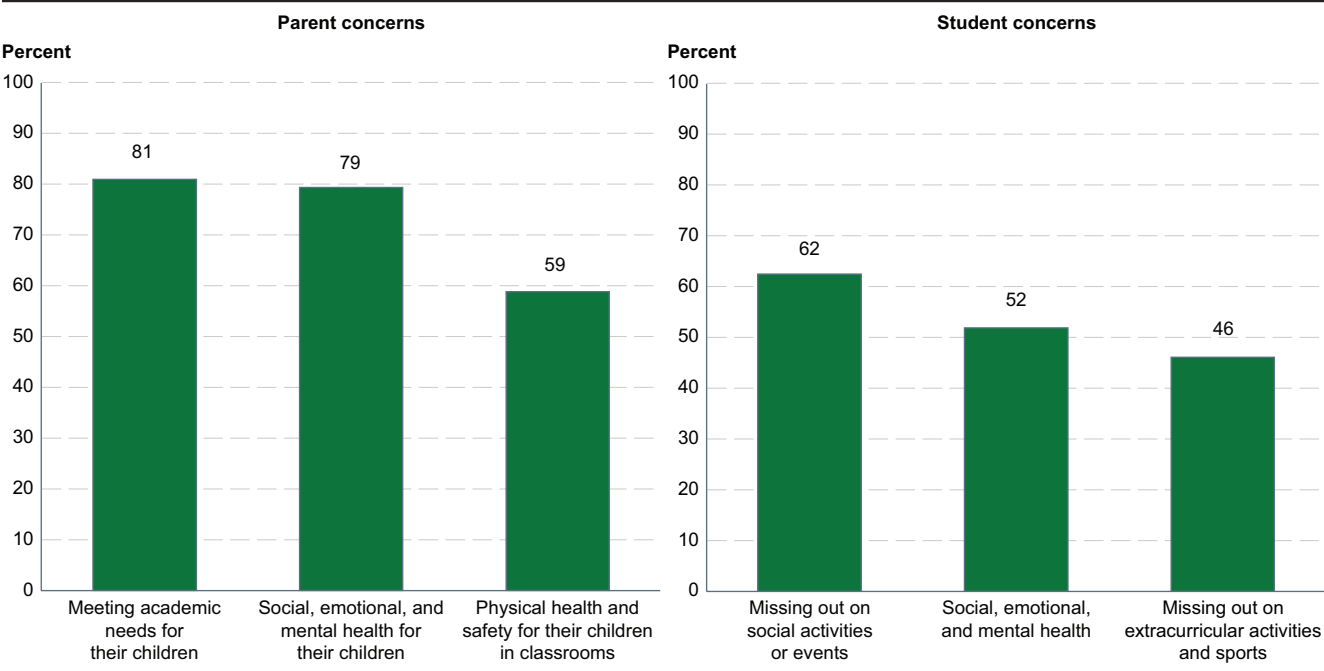
The School Pulse Panel (SPP) has collected extensive data on issues concerning students and staff in U.S. public schools related to the coronavirus pandemic and on schools’ responses to the pandemic. Data from the SPP illuminate the challenges public schools have faced as well as the strategies they have used during the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.¹

According to the SPP results, public schools reported wide-ranging concerns from students and parents during the coronavirus pandemic and used a variety of

strategies to address pandemic-related recovery. The strategies included offering after-school programming and remedial instruction, providing teachers with professional development opportunities on learning recovery, providing students with mental health services, and utilizing community services or partnerships. Although the effectiveness of these and other strategies is unclear, public schools reported that, on average, a lower percentage of students were behind grade level in at least one academic subject at the end of the 2021-22 school year than at the beginning.

Issues Facing Public Schools, Parents, and Children

Figure 1. Percentage of public schools where parents and students expressed some degree of concern on selected topics: March 2022



NOTE: Schools were asked to report concerns expressed by parents and students. Thus, these data are school reported, not direct reports from parents and students. While the results presented in this indicator have been weighted and adjusted for nonresponse, these experimental data should be interpreted with caution. Experimental data may not meet all NCES quality standards. For a complete view of the results, visit the Parents, Students, and Staff Concerns section of the [School Pulse Panel dashboard](#).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, School Pulse Panel (March 2022).

In March 2022, public school administrators were asked to report which of a variety of listed concerns parents and students had expressed during the 2021-22 school year. The most frequently reported were not limited to academic concerns. As reported by public school administrators, the three most common concerns expressed by parents were

- meeting students’ academic needs (81 percent of public schools reported some level of parental concern);
- students’ social, emotional, and mental health (79 percent); and
- students’ physical health and safety in classrooms (59 percent).

Additionally, as reported by public school administrators, the three most common concerns expressed by students were

- missing out on social activities or events (62 percent of public schools reported some level of student concern);
- students’ social, emotional, and mental health (52 percent); and
- missing out on extracurricular activities and sports (46 percent).

Other issues facing public schools during the 2021-22 school year included student and teacher absenteeism, negative impacts of the pandemic on student socioemotional and behavioral development, and students seeking mental health services from school. In May 2022, some 45 percent of public schools reported that chronic student absenteeism had increased “a lot” and 37 percent reported that teacher absenteeism had increased “a lot” during the 2021-22 school year compared with a typical school year before the coronavirus pandemic. In addition, more than one-third of public schools “strongly agreed” that the coronavirus pandemic had negatively impacted students’ socioemotional (44 percent) and behavioral (39 percent) development. Further, in April 2022, some 69 percent of public schools reported that the percentage of students who had sought mental health services from school had increased since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

As these data show, the wide range of concerns public schools reported from students and parents were not limited to academic outcomes. Therefore, it’s important

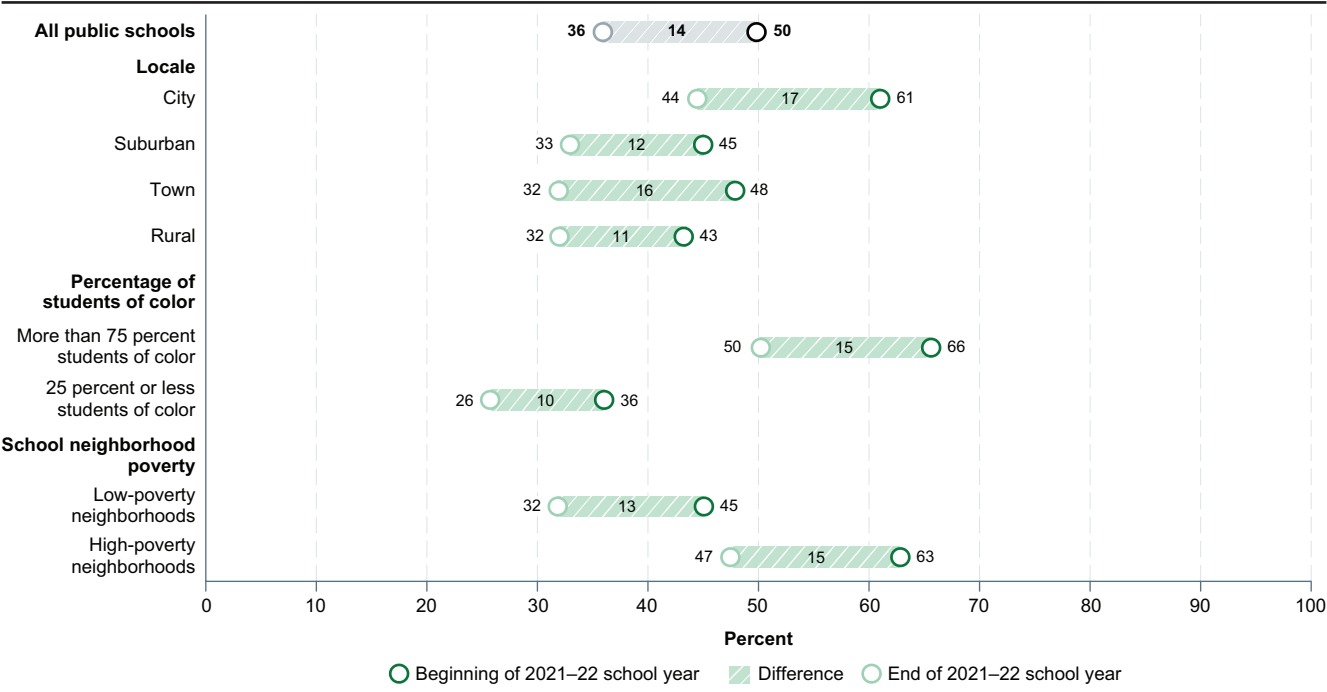
to examine the range of recovery efforts undertaken by schools, from those supporting academic performance to those supporting physical, social, and emotional well-being.

Coronavirus Pandemic Recovery Efforts

Some public schools offer summer programs, after-school programs, mental health services, and/or community services/partnerships, and these may have been part of the strategies employed by schools to recover from the coronavirus pandemic. The type of recovery efforts varied according to public school characteristics such as school locale, percentage of students of color (specifically, schools with student enrollment that is 25 percent or less students of color versus those with student enrollment that is more than 75 percent students of color)^{2,3} and neighborhood poverty (as measured by the Income-to-Poverty ratio for the neighborhood surrounding the school).⁴ Information on the overall recovery efforts of public schools, as well as information on selected school characteristics, is presented below.

Student Learning

Figure 2. Average percentage of public school students reported to be behind grade level in at least one academic subject at the beginning of the 2021–22 school year and at the end of the 2021–22 school year, by selected school characteristics: June 2022



NOTE: The percentages in this figure are average percentages behind grade level reported by the school. School respondents were asked to report on grade level performance “to the best of their knowledge” and were not asked to reference formal measures (i.e. assessment scores). Students of color include those who are American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, or of Two or more races. The Income-to-Poverty ratio (IPR) for the neighborhood surrounding the school location is used to distinguish schools in high- and low-poverty neighborhoods. The IPR estimates come from NCES’s EDGE School Neighborhood Poverty Estimates. The IPR is the percentage of family income that is above or below the federal poverty threshold set for the family’s size and structure. The school neighborhood IPR is a spatially-weighted average of 25 IPR values from families with school-age children who live near a public school building. It ranges from 0 to 999, where lower IPR values indicate a greater degree of poverty. A family with income at the poverty threshold has an IPR value of 100. In this analysis, IPR values of 200 or lower represent schools in high-poverty neighborhoods; IPR values greater than 200 represent schools in low-poverty neighborhoods. While the results presented in this indicator have been weighted and adjusted for nonresponse, these experimental data should be interpreted with caution. Experimental data may not meet all NCES quality standards. Detail may not sum to totals due to rounding. For a complete view of the results, visit the Learning Recovery section of the [School Pulse Panel dashboard](#).
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, School Pulse Panel (June 2022).

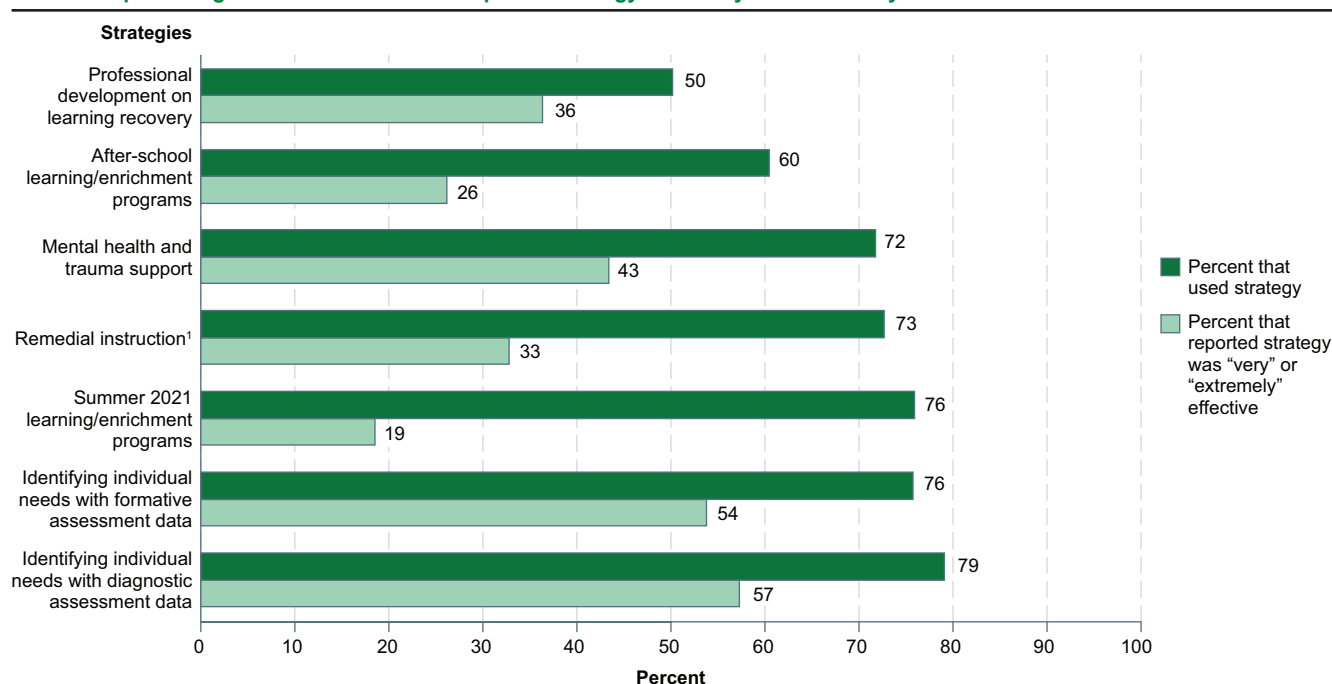
In June 2022, public schools reported that some learning recovery had taken place between the beginning and end of the 2021–22 school year.⁵ On average, public schools reported that 50 percent of students were behind grade level in at least one academic subject at the beginning of the 2021–22 school year, compared to a reported 36 percent on average at the end of the school year.⁶

The percentage of public school students reported to be behind grade level in at least one subject at the beginning and end of the 2021–22 school year varied by school characteristics. For example, at the beginning of the

2021–22 school year, the average percentage of public school students reported to be behind grade level was

- higher for public schools in cities than for those in all other locales (61 vs. 43 to 48 percent);
- higher for public schools with more than 75 percent students of color (66 percent) than for public schools with 25 percent or less students of color (36 percent); and
- higher for public schools in high-poverty neighborhoods (63 percent) than for those in low-poverty neighborhoods (45 percent).

However, no measurable differences were associated with these characteristics in the amount of *recovery* reported (i.e., the difference in the average percentages of students behind grade level in at least one subject at the beginning and end of the 2021–22 school year). On average, the percentage of public school students reported to be behind grade level was 14 percentage points lower at the end of the 2021–22 school year than at the beginning.

Figure 3. Percentage of public schools that used selected strategies to support pandemic-related learning recovery, and percentage of those schools that reported strategy was “very” or “extremely effective”: June 2022

¹ Examples included using content from prior years to teach concepts or skills.

NOTE: Only schools that used a particular strategy to support pandemic-related learning loss were asked about the effectiveness of the strategy. While the results presented in this indicator have been weighted and adjusted for nonresponse, these experimental data should be interpreted with caution. Experimental data may not meet all NCES quality standards. For a complete view of the results, visit the Learning Recovery section of the [School Pulse Panel dashboard](#).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, School Pulse Panel (June 2022).

To support their students’ pandemic-related learning recovery, public schools implemented a variety of strategies during the 2021-22 school year. Overall, some of the most commonly reported strategies used to support pandemic-related learning recovery, out of a total of 15 that public school administrators were asked to report on, were

- identifying individual needs with diagnostic assessment data (79 percent);
- identifying individual needs with formative assessment data (76 percent);
- summer 2021 learning/enrichment programs (76 percent);
- remedial instruction (73 percent);
- mental health and trauma support (72 percent);
- after-school learning/enrichment programs (60 percent); and
- professional development on learning recovery (50 percent).

Among the top 5 most commonly reported strategies for supporting pandemic-related learning recovery, there were few differences in the percentages of public schools that reported using these strategies by neighborhood poverty, percentage of students of color, or locale. The exceptions were that

- a higher percentage of public schools in cities than of public schools in towns and rural areas reported identifying individual needs with diagnostic assessment data (85 vs. 75 and 77 percent, respectively);
- a higher percentage of public schools in high-poverty neighborhoods than in low-poverty neighborhoods reported summer 2021 learning enrichment programs (83 vs. 74 percent; and
- a lower percentage of public schools in rural areas than in cities and suburban areas reported using mental health and trauma support (64 vs. 75 and 76 percent, respectively).

There were more differences by school characteristics among the less common strategies public schools used to support pandemic-related learning recovery. For both after-school learning/enrichment programs and professional development on learning recovery, there were differences in the percentages of public schools using these strategies by each of the school characteristics examined in this indicator. For instance, the percentage of public schools that used after-school learning/enrichment programs as a strategy to support pandemic-related learning recovery was higher for

- public schools with more than 75 percent students of color than for public schools with 25 percent or less students of color (78 vs. 53 percent);
- public schools in high-poverty neighborhoods than for those in low-poverty neighborhoods (72 vs. 57 percent); and
- public schools in cities than for those in all other locales (69 vs. 55 to 59 percent).

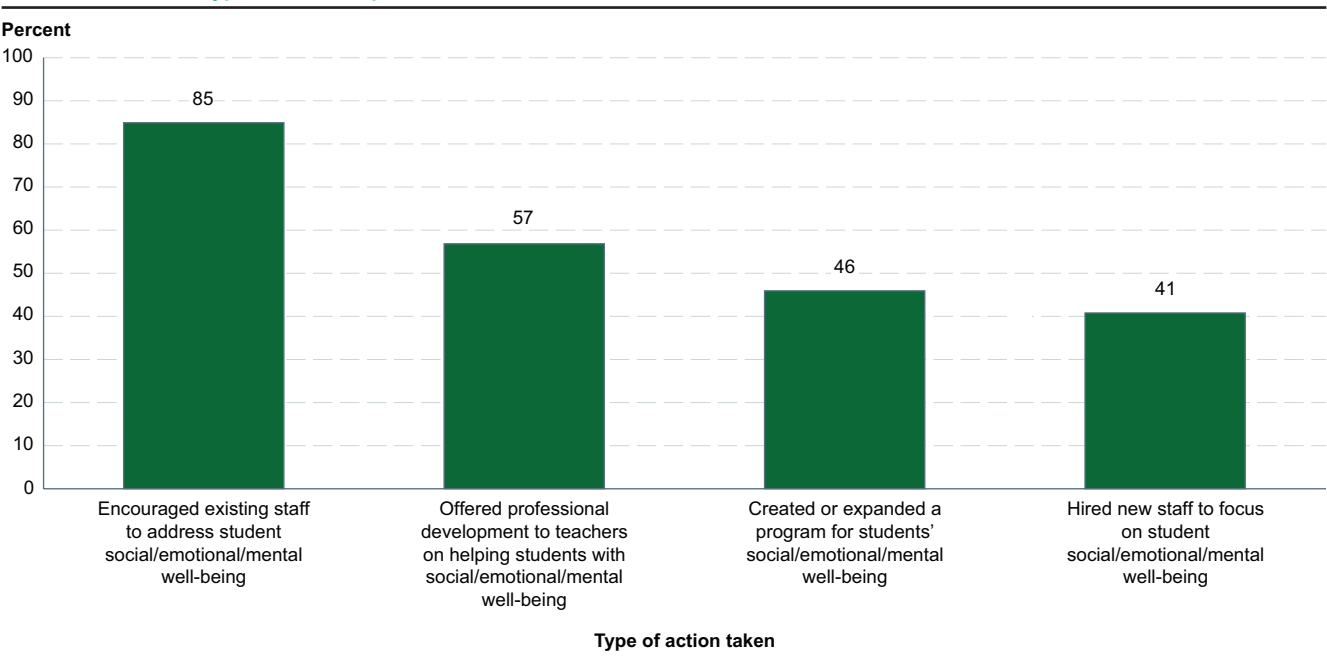
The common use of a strategy is not necessarily evidence that it is considered effective. Among the common strategies noted above, the two that were reported as “very effective” or “extremely effective” by the highest percentage of public schools that implemented them were identifying individual needs with diagnostic assessment data (57 percent) and identifying individual needs with formative assessment data (54 percent). In comparison, despite being used by 76 percent of public schools, summer 2021 learning/enrichment programs were considered “very effective” or “extremely effective” by just 19 percent of those schools.

Mental Health

As discussed above, in March 2022, public schools reported that students’ mental health was a common concern for both students and parents. In April 2022, some 69 percent of public schools reported that the percentage of students who had sought mental health services from school had increased since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. There were some differences in demand by neighborhood poverty and locale. A higher percentage of public schools in low-poverty neighborhoods (72 percent) than in high-poverty neighborhoods (61 percent) reported an

increased demand for mental health services. Likewise, a higher percentage of public schools in suburban areas reported an increased demand for mental health services (77 percent) than public schools in rural areas (61 percent). Overall, only 13 percent of public schools strongly agreed and 43 percent moderately agreed that their school was able to effectively provide mental health services to all students in need. There were no significant differences in the percentages of public schools that strongly agreed or moderately agreed that their school was able to effectively provide mental health services to all students in need by neighborhood poverty, percentage of students of color, or locale.

Figure 4. Percentage of public schools that took a given action to help students cope with the coronavirus pandemic, by selected type of action: April 2022



NOTE: While the results presented in this indicator have been weighted and adjusted for nonresponse, these experimental data should be interpreted with caution. Experimental data may not meet all NCES quality standards. For a complete view of the results, visit the Mental Health and Well-Being section of the [School Pulse Panel dashboard](#).
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, School Pulse Panel (April 2022).

Public schools were asked to report on specific actions taken to help students cope with the coronavirus pandemic. The four most frequently reported actions public schools took were

- encouraging existing staff to address student social/emotional/mental well-being (85 percent);
- offering professional development to teachers on helping students with social/emotional/mental well-being (57 percent);
- creating or expanding a program for students’ social/emotional/mental well-being (46 percent); and
- hiring new staff to focus on student social/emotional/mental well-being (41 percent).

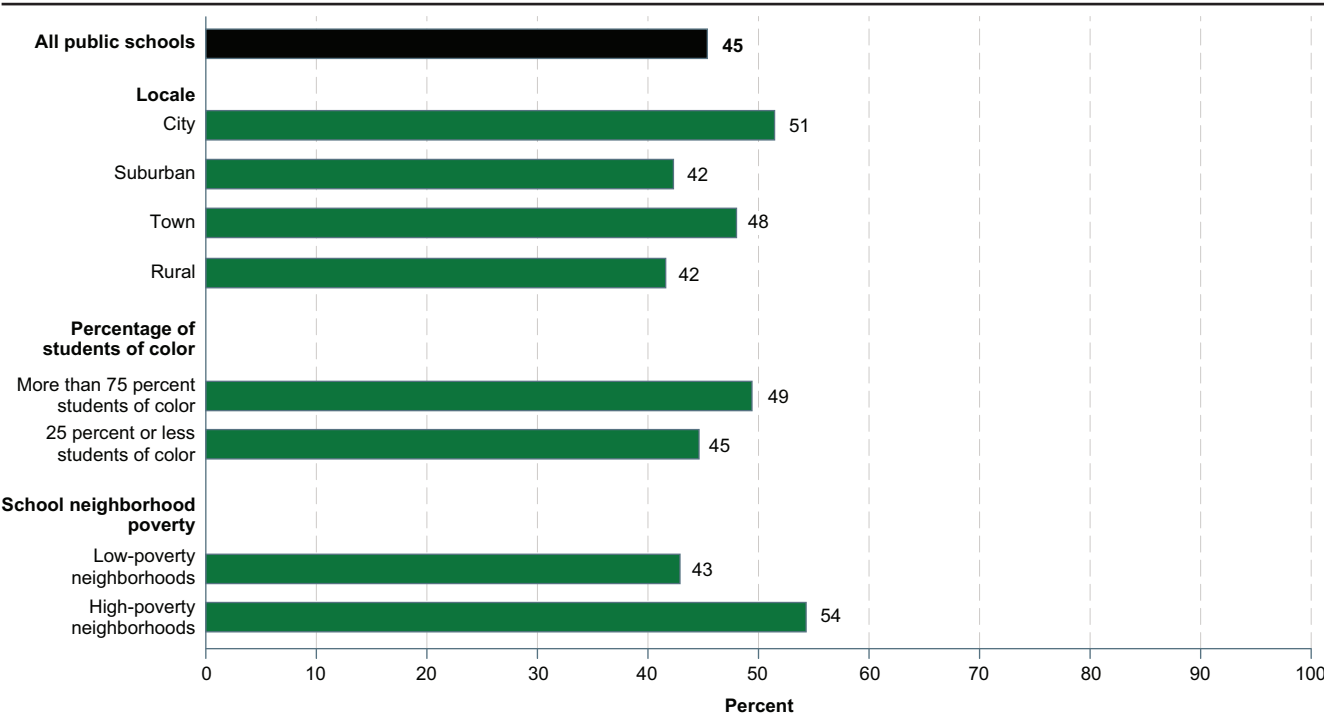
There were no measurable differences by percentage of students of color or neighborhood poverty in the percentages of public schools that took these four actions to help students cope with the coronavirus pandemic. However, the percentages tended to be lower for public schools in rural areas than for those in cities and suburbs. For example, 45 percent of public schools in rural areas offered professional development to teachers on helping students with social/emotional/mental well-being, compared with 64 percent in cities and 60 percent in suburban areas.

Community Partnership

A community school or wraparound services model features a school partnering with other government agencies and/or local nonprofits to support and engage

with the local community. Community school or wraparound services include services such as mental health care, physical health care, nutrition and food services, and social work.

Figure 5. Percentage of public schools with community school or wraparound services available during the 2022–23 school year, by selected school characteristics: August 2022



NOTE: The percentages in this figure are average percentages behind grade level reported by the school. A community school or wraparound services model is formed when a school partners with other government agencies and/or local nonprofits to support and engage with the local community (e.g., providing mental and physical health care, nutrition, housing assistance, etc.). Students of color include those who are American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, or of Two or more races. The Income-to-Poverty ratio (IPR) for the neighborhood surrounding the school location is used to distinguish schools in high- and low-poverty neighborhoods. The IPR estimates come from NCES's EDGE School Neighborhood Poverty Estimates. The IPR is the percentage of family income that is above or below the federal poverty threshold set for the family's size and structure. The school neighborhood IPR is a spatially-weighted average of 25 IPR values from families with school-age children who live near a public school building. It ranges from 0 to 999, where lower IPR values indicate a greater degree of poverty. A family with income at the poverty threshold has an IPR value of 100. In this analysis, IPR values of 200 or lower represent schools in high-poverty neighborhoods; IPR values greater than 200 represent schools in low-poverty neighborhoods. While the results presented in this indicator have been weighted and adjusted for nonresponse, these experimental data should be interpreted with caution. Experimental data may not meet all NCES quality standards. Detail may not sum to totals due to rounding. For a complete view of the results, visit the Community Partnerships section of the [School Pulse Panel dashboard](#).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, School Pulse Panel (August 2022).

In August 2022, public schools were asked if their school used a community school or wraparound services model, and 45 percent of public schools indicated that they did. A higher percentage of public schools reported using this model in high-poverty neighborhoods (54 percent) than in low-poverty neighborhoods (43 percent).

Among public schools that reported having community school or wraparound services, some of the services that would be available for the 2022-23 school year included

- mental health care (84 percent);
- nutrition/food assistance (60 percent);
- dental care (41 percent);
- parenting and family support (41 percent); and
- social work (40 percent).

There were some differences in the percentages of public schools that would be offering these common community school or wraparound services. A lower percentage of public schools with 25 percent or less students of color than of public schools with more than 75 percent students of color reported that parenting and family support (32 vs. 50 percent) and social work (34 vs. 49 percent) services would be available in 2022-23. A lower percentage of public schools in rural areas reported that nutrition/food assistance services (51 percent) would be available than public schools in cities (67 percent) and suburban areas (65 percent). A higher percentage of public schools in towns reported mental healthcare services (93 percent) would be available than public schools in rural areas and cities (84 and 79 percent, respectively).

Endnotes:

¹ As part of a post-release quality evaluation of School Pulse Panel (SPP) data, an error was uncovered in the survey weighting procedure. This required a reweighting of the data and a recalculation of estimates released from the January 2022 through December 2022 SPP collections. Estimates in this indicator have been revised as of August, 2023, based on a reweighting of the data. For a description of the reweighting and its effect on the estimates, see this memo at <https://ies.ed.gov/schoolsurvey/spp/RewightingMemo.pdf>. While the results presented in this indicator have been weighted and adjusted for nonresponse, these experimental data should be interpreted with caution. Experimental data may not meet all NCES quality standards.

² Students of color include those who are American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, or of Two or more races.

³ This indicator does not examine differences for public schools with 26 to 75 percent students of color.

⁴ The Income-to-Poverty ratio (IPR) for the neighborhood surrounding the public school location is used to distinguish public schools in high- and low-poverty neighborhoods. The IPR estimates come from NCES's [EDGE School Neighborhood Poverty Estimates](#). The IPR is the percentage of family income that is

above or below the federal poverty threshold set for the family's size and structure. The school neighborhood IPR is a spatially-weighted average of 25 IPR values from families with school-age children who live near a public school building. It ranges from 0 to 999, where lower IPR values indicate a greater degree of poverty. A family with income at the poverty threshold has an IPR value of 100. In this analysis, IPR values of 200 or lower represent public schools in high-poverty neighborhoods; IPR values greater than 200 represent public schools in low-poverty neighborhoods.

⁵ Survey respondents were asked to report on the percentage of students performing behind grade level, but were not asked to reference formal assessment results. Some public schools may not have such assessments available at either or both points in the year.

⁶ This information, reported by school administrators, is an indirect measure of student grade-level performance at two points within the second full school year of the pandemic. For direct measures of student performance across school years, including findings comparing pre-pandemic direct assessment scores to those during the pandemic, see results for [Reading Performance](#) and [Mathematics Performance](#) from the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Reference tables: [Full set of March 2022 SPP results](#); [Full set of April 2022 SPP results](#); [Full set of May 2022 SPP results](#); [Full set of June 2022 SPP results](#); [Full set of August 2022 SPP results](#)

Related indicators and resources: [Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on the Elementary and Secondary Education System \[The Condition of Education 2021 Spotlight\]](#); [Mathematics Performance](#); [Public School Enrollment](#); [Reading Performance](#)

Glossary: Public school or institution