

What's the Plan? How K-12 School Districts Are Preparing to Resume and Reopen

Methodology

Selection of districts

Our database tracks policies related to COVID-19 response and reopening plans for 375 school districts. Among these districts there is tremendous geographic and socioeconomic diversity.

We began tracking 196 of these districts in the spring of 2020. This initial group included the following districts from each state, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C.:

- Largest school district by student population, as per data from Niche
- Highest-poverty school district as per searches from news accounts
- Highest-performing school district as per formula developed by Niche
- One charter district/school (random selection) where they exist

We added 179 districts in the summer of 2020. To add these districts, we divided the states, Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. into five bands, based on COVID-19 positive test rates as tracked by Johns Hopkins University (as of July 20, 2020). For each band, we selected districts based on the criteria below.

- Band 1 locations (highest infection rates) of Puerto Rico, Arizona, Nevada, Florida, Idaho, Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia, Texas, and Mississippi: 2 urban, 2 suburban, 2 rural districts for each state and territory, as per Wikipedia's designation, randomized, prioritizing districts that had released reopening plans
- Band 2 locations (second highest infection rates) of Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Utah, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Iowa, Indiana, Missouri, and California: 1 urban, 1 suburban, 1 rural district for each state, as per Wikipedia's designation, randomized, prioritizing districts that had released reopening plans
- Band 3 locations (third highest infection rates) of Wisconsin, Colorado, North Carolina, Virginia, Wyoming, Nebraska, Oregon, North Dakota, Ohio, and Pennsylvania: 1 district for each state, randomized, prioritizing districts that had released reopening plans
- Band 4 locations (fourth highest infection rates) of Washington, South Dakota, Kentucky, Maryland, Delaware, Montana, Minnesota, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and West Virginia: 1 district for each state, randomized, prioritizing districts that had released reopening plans

- Band 5 locations (lowest infection rates) of Illinois, Alaska, Michigan, Massachusetts, Washington, D.C., New Hampshire, New Jersey, Hawaii, New York, Maine, Vermont, and Connecticut: 2 urban, 2 suburban, 2 rural districts for each state and D.C., as per Wikipedia’s designation, randomized, prioritizing districts that had released reopening plans
- In cases where we weren’t able to find enough districts in a given category, we supplemented with districts from high population states (California, Texas, Florida, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, Georgia), randomized, prioritizing districts that had released reopening plans.
- We excluded charter schools and districts in this second group.
- We included 14 districts that have been given support from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation in developing district reopening plans, some of which were already in our database.

Data capture process

We partnered with Social Context Labs to analyze publicly-available data from district websites and social media accounts in order to offer this database of how school districts around the country are responding to COVID-19. Where plans are available, Social Context Labs looks for policies specific to our analysis.

Social Context Labs uses a proprietary technology to pull data from district websites and district-operated social media pages. Analysts from Social Context Labs review this content and apply tags that correspond to policy and practices that EdSurge is tracking for this project. Data are pulled from district websites and district-operated social media pages daily. Analysts apply tags to these pulled data at least once a week. The data reported in the Tableau representation on the EdSurge guide page come from these tagged data and are, therefore, no more than one week old, when district data has been released within that week.