With Deliberate Intentions: COVID-19 & Reopening Schools for Black Students. An In-Depth Exploration And Discussion Of The Beyond The Schoolhouse, Digging Deeper: Prioritizing Black Student Wellness & Opportunity for Reopening Schools Report

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Mission & Vision of CTS

Our Mission at The Center for Transformation of Schools is dedicated to partnering with the education ecosystem to bring about systems change through Humanizing Research, Validating Practices, and Transforming Policies with key stakeholders to support equitable educational outcomes for historically underserved students. It is our vision To be a catalyst for learning communities to boldly nurture and protect the dignity, wellbeing, and full potential of all students.
Key Findings: Place Matters & Accumulation of Disadvantage

- **Academic Outcomes**
  - Lowest Performing in the State, chronic absenteeism, Disproportionality in suspensions/expulsions & disabilities, etc.

- **Environmental & Health**
  - Highest Asthma Rates (3x’s), Lead, Lack of Green Spaces, Food Desserts, etc.

- **Social/Emotional**
  - Multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) Low Human Development Numbers

Recommendations

- Mitigating the Accumulation of Disadvantage
- Districts lack resources to address the social, emotional, and health and behavioral needs of students which contributes to challenges and creates barriers to learning.
IF THE 109,000 BLACK STUDENTS IN LA COUNTY WERE IN A SINGLE SCHOOL DISTRICT, IT WOULD BE THE THIRD LARGEST SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, AND THE 26TH LARGEST IN THE NATION.
UNDERLYING FACTORS

Poverty & Economic Inequality

Higher concentration of poverty
In 10 out of the 14 districts, more than 40% of these families live 200% or more below the federal poverty line.

Housing instability/homelessness
In 8 of the 14 focus districts, Black students are twice as likely to experience homelessness than other groups. In the Centinela Valley Union High School District, Black students experience homelessness at three times the rate of the district overall.

Shifting Enrollment Patterns—Decline of Black families in LA County

Over the past two decades there has been a steady decline of Black students in Los Angeles County schools. There are fewer Black people in LA County, and many of the remaining Black students are migrating to the Antelope Valley. Districts such as Los Angeles, Inglewood, and Compton have experienced significant decreases of Black students.
Enrollment of black students in Los Angeles County schools has declined by 42 percent over the past 20 years.
Health and Neighborhood Conditions

Groundwater pollution
In Los Angeles and Torrance Unified school districts, Black families reside in census tracts with the highest levels of groundwater pollution, while White families in those districts generally live-in areas with the lowest levels of groundwater threats.

Air pollution
Black families tend to reside in parts of the County with higher lead exposure rates, greater proximity to waste dump sites, higher concentrations of air pollution from surrounding oil production and in close proximity to high-density transportation arteries. These environmental factors are linked to asthma and other chronic respiratory illnesses and low birth weights.

Respiratory illnesses
In Los Angeles Unified; Long Beach Unified; and Antelope Valley Unified, census tracts containing the highest proportions of Blacks are also those in the 90th percentile or above for respiratory-related emergency room visits. In these school districts, chronic absenteeism and dropout rates are notably higher.

Low birth weight
Antelope Valley Unified School District (AVUSD) and Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) each have extreme spatial-racial disparities. Black student populations in these districts are concentrated in census tracts that have among the highest rates of low birth weight births in the state.
Academic Outcomes

English Language Arts and Mathematics Standards
At least 50% of Black third and eighth grade students in Inglewood and Paramount Unified are not meeting standards in ELA and Mathematics.

- In 12 of the 14 focus districts, almost 50% of Black eighth grade students are not meeting grade level standards for Mathematics.
- In 3 out of 10 focus districts (Antelope Valley, Compton, and Inglewood) the proportion of Black students not meeting 11th grade Mathematics standards exceeds 80%.

Graduation Rates
In 12 of the 14 focus districts, Black students have graduation rates that meet or exceed the County and state averages. However, Black students in 2 of the 14 focus districts (LAUSD and AVUSD) have graduation rates below county and state averages.

A-G Requirements
In 13 of the 14 focus districts, the UC/CSU eligibility rate for Black students at 40 percent is below both overall County (57%) and state (51%) averages.
School Climate and Policing

High suspension rates
In 13 of the 14 focus districts, Black students with disabilities range from being two to 10 times more likely to be suspended than the average County student.

High chronic absenteeism rates
Black students in AVUSD, Centinela, and LAUSD have chronic absenteeism rates above the County overall rate of 25% for Black students. This percentage is significantly higher than white students (11%), Asian students (4%), Hispanic students (15%), and the state and county averages (14%).

School policing
All 14 focus districts have a school police force; many use video surveillance, random searches, and controlled entry/metal detectors. Black student enrollment during 2014-2017 was just 8% in LAUSD, but at one of the 14 districts included in this report, Black students accounted for 25% of serious interactions with school police.

LAUSD has the largest school police department in the country.
KEY FINDINGS

Special Populations of Black Youth (Economically Disadvantaged, Students in Foster Care, Students Experiencing Homelessness)

Poverty disparities
In 10 of the 14 districts, there are significant poverty disparities between Black and White students.

High chronic absenteeism rates
12 of the 14 focus districts have chronic absenteeism rates of 20% or higher for Black students in foster care.

High homelessness rates
In 8 of the 14 districts, Black students are twice as likely to experience homelessness than other racial/ethnic groups.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICYMAKERS AT THE CITY, DISTRICT, COUNTY, STATE AND FEDERAL LEVEL SHOULD PRIORITIZE EFFORTS THAT EXPLICITLY SUPPORT EDUCATION, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING FOR BLACK FAMILIES THROUGHOUT LOS ANGELES. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ARE ORGANIZED INTO THREE MAIN THEMES: COVID-19 & REOPENING SCHOOLS, IN-SCHOOL, AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL POLICIES.

COVID-19 & Reopening Schools

CITIES
- Ensure connectivity across cities so students and families have access to virtual support, resources and instruction.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS
- Assess student well-being while targeting resources to students who are showing most significant need, prioritizing expanded learning time, tutoring, year-round academic support and mental health services.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
- Encourage sharing of resources and instructional models across all 80 districts to focus on universal, targeted, and supplemental strategies.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
- Dedicate more funds to districts to augment Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) resources, requiring clear articulation of evidence-based practices to support student learning and growth for Black students and families.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
- Require counties and districts to use COVID funds ($6 billion) to focus on addressing opportunity gaps including the digital divide and student achievement differences for Black youth.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In-School Policies: Focus on Essential Skills & Competencies Across Subjects

CITIES
- Encourage businesses and nonprofit leaders to offer internships and work-based learning opportunities that can strengthen student critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication and civic skills in applied settings.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS
- Develop strategies with school students so students can identify what type of academic, social and emotional support they may need to succeed.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
- Establish common strategies and models for helping school districts create engaging and personalized learning experiences, especially in core subjects for Black students.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
- Strengthen the pipeline for more Black teachers to become educators, a factor which has been shown to significantly improve achievement and college matriculation rates.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
- Increase Title I Funding and encourage school systems to use federal funds to invest in Black students and their learning.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In-School Policies: Healthy, Positive Learning Environments

CITIES
- Examine city policies and policing patterns to ensure Black students and families are not being unfairly targeted, thus negatively impacting young people on school campuses.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS
- Incorporate regular student surveys like Turnaround for Children’s well-being index and stay abreast of California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) results to determine and respond to student social, emotional, physical and psychological health.
- Engage relevant stakeholders and outside experts around underlying issues that may be contributing to patterns of racial disproportionality to implement CA Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS).

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
- Using CA MTSS, work with schools and districts to develop social and emotionally responsive school systems centered on students’ lived experiences and cultural assets.
- Expand the County’s community schools pilot across 15 high schools and districts to include feeder elementary schools that serve a significant portion of Black families.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
- Incentivize schools, districts and states to support students, teachers and school leaders in making improvements to classroom and behavior management, especially where rates of disciplinary exclusion are high.
Out-of-school Policies: Students’ & Families’ Basic Needs

CITIES
- Establish clear benchmarks for anti-poverty efforts carried out in coordination with nonprofit and county agencies.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS
- Link families to community-based organizations, agencies and case workers who can help young people and families.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
- Leverage Measure J funds to target investments in these fourteen communities to focus on youth development, job training, small business development and supportive housing services.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
- Encourage partnerships between education, housing and child welfare stakeholders & dedicate state community schools grants to Black communities.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
- Prioritize federal housing vouchers, food stamps, cash grants, Medicaid, and tax credits which all have been found to boost student learning for financially struggling families.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Out-of-school Policies: Family, Maternal & Infant Health

CITIES
- Encourage centralized and mobile clinics to screen for and address maternal and infant health issues.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS
- Establish opportunities for community health clinics to come to school campuses to meet with and provide health care services to families and small children.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
- Work with medical providers to identify barriers to accessing maternal mental health services.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
- Invest in home visiting models that eliminate access challenges for expectant Black mothers.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
- Expand health care coverage for uninsured women throughout their lifespan, with a particular emphasis on their reproductive years, to ensure that every woman receives a basic level of coverage and has a medical home.
Newsom California Come Back Plan (2021)

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Newsom (2021) Transforming public schools into gateways for opportunity

- Priorities Align almost identically with the cross-cutting recommendations that we have made with respect to both in-school and out-of-school policies
- Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)
- Problematize “Vulnerable students”
- Language is relatively neutral (colorblind rhetoric)
- We must call it out and be deliberate about Black students and families

Federal and State Level Policymakers

- Develop Policy Informed By Accurate Data on Black Students
- Complete picture informed by sound data (i.e. our in-school and out-of-school policy recommendations, etc.) when seeking to leverage and create polices for Black students
“The opposite of poverty is not wealth. The opposite of poverty is justice.”

Bryan Stevenson, Equity Justice Initiative
Q & A