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Findings from Education Analytics Identifies Learning Lags in California and South Carolina Since COVID

New Assessment Data Paired with Analysis to Support States Recovery Efforts

June 8, 2021 – MADISON, Wisconsin – Student data expert, [Education Analytics \(EA\)](#) released data today on the changes in learning patterns students in grades 3-8 in California and South Carolina have experienced as a result of school closures and remote learning due to COVID-19. The research report includes information from California and South Carolina, which are two states part of the [Rally Analytics Platform](#).

Using results from winter 2020-21 interim assessments, EA can provide an up-to-date picture of the learning lag students have experienced during the pandemic. Students in both California and South Carolina show learning lags of approximately two and half months in both English Language Arts and math. Additionally, a review of assessment results from Fall 2020 to Winter 2021 (January - February) showed continued learning lags during this school year.

“These findings confirm patterns seen anecdotally throughout the country that the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted learning,” said Libby Pier, Director of Impact, Education Analytics. “We share this information with the goal to identify the students most affected by this disruption so districts and states can provide the resources needed to help students and educators emerge from this crisis.”

EA opted to use the terms *learning change*, *learning lag*, and *learning acceleration* rather than the more commonly referenced *learning loss*. These terms were selected to emphasize that a lag in learning can occur relative to expected progress, even as students continue to learn and gain new knowledge and skills, and that learning delayed during the pandemic can be recouped through deliberate intervention. EA partnered with Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), an education research group, to offer further analysis of California’s data.

“These estimates can help identify which grades and which student subgroups have been most affected by the COVID disruption to schooling, so that local and state leaders can provide the resources needed to help students and educators emerge from this crisis,” said Heather Hough, Executive Director, PACE.

The report includes results from 54 local education agencies in South Carolina and 19 local education agencies in California that are members of the CORE Data Collaborative. In both states, the demographics of students were similar to those in previous years, although slightly fewer students with disabilities were included in the 2020-21 California Sample. In California, the analytic sample includes a greater proportion of Latinx, English learner, and economically disadvantaged students compared to the state. EA recognizes that there are limitations to the findings. Based on available data, EA is unable to dig deeper into results for which students have been learning in-person or virtually.

“The evidence is clear that in addition to long-standing achievement challenges in our systems, school interruptions negatively affected California students’ ability to learn and grow, especially for students of color and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds,” said Rick Miller, Chief Executive Officer, CORE districts. “In addition to this data, when teachers return to the classroom, they will need more high-quality information to deepen their understanding of where students are in their learning to be able to offer differentiated approaches and to accelerate learning.”

Through diagnostic, interim, and summative assessments, educators can measure student learning and determine how best to support their progress. Additionally, when states use high-quality assessments across districts, information can help tell the big-picture story over time of student progress and need to accelerate student learning. State leaders and policymakers can use test information to direct resources to learners who need it most and to create effective, equitable education systems.

“The first step in addressing a problem is measuring the full scope and impact,” said Molly Spearman, Superintendent of Education, South Carolina. “The findings that Education Analytics began sharing with South Carolina last fall were our first look at the academic impact of COVID-19 on our students and continue to play a key role in planning and decision making on both the state and local level.”

About Education Analytics

Education Analytics (EA) is a non-profit conducting research and developing analytics that create solutions and drive continuous improvement in American education. Using data and analytics, EA helps partners make better decisions on policies and programs that lead to success for all students. EA works with local education systems, state departments of education, leading research institutions and universities, charter management organizations, and other non-profit organizations to support the success of the tens of millions of students they serve.