Schools, COVID-19, and instructional plans

Stephen Sawchuk
Associate editor, Education Week
www.edweek.org
The context

- There are ~13,500 public school districts in the United States
- District size extremely variable; nearly half have fewer than 1,000 students
- Confused messages from the CDC and federal health agencies about schools
- Complete lack of U.S. Department of Education guidance
What did EdWeek do?

- Interactive map, updated daily, with sample of districts’ decisions to close schools at pandemic’s start. (Completed in May)

- Interactive map, updated daily, of state’s mandates or guidelines on reopening schools. (Ongoing)

- Reporting & news coverage. (Ongoing)

- Analyzed sample of districts’ reopening plans. Sample included 900 school districts’ plans, including the 100 largest, plus at least 5 from every state. (Completed in September)

- Periodic, nationally representative surveys of educators. (Ongoing)
### What health data are districts using?

- Many permutations of this data. (7-day new-case rolling averages, testing issues, etc.)
- Districts frequently using just first two indicators, or sometimes only one (N.Y.C.)
- Little to no comparability
- Epi disagreements; lack of clarity on “upper end” measures
- District v. county problems

#### CDC indicators and thresholds for risk of introduction and transmission of COVID-19 in schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>Lowest risk of transmission in schools</th>
<th>Lower risk of transmission in schools</th>
<th>Moderate risk of transmission in schools</th>
<th>Higher risk of transmission in schools</th>
<th>Highest risk of transmission in schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CORE INDICATORS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of new cases per 100,000 persons within the last 14 days*</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>5 to &lt;20</td>
<td>20 to &lt;50</td>
<td>50 to 100</td>
<td>&gt;200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of RT-PCR tests that are positive during the last 14 days**</td>
<td>&lt;3%</td>
<td>3% to &lt;5%</td>
<td>5% to &lt;8%</td>
<td>8% to 10%</td>
<td>&gt;10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability of the school to implement 5 key mitigation strategies:</td>
<td>Implemented all 5 strategies correctly and consistently</td>
<td>Implemented 4 strategies correctly and consistently</td>
<td>Implemented 3 strategies correctly and consistently</td>
<td>Implemented 1-2 strategies correctly and consistently</td>
<td>Implemented no strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Consistent and correct use of masks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Social distancing to the largest extent possible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Cleaning and disinfection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Contact tracing in collaboration with local health department</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools should adopt the additional mitigation measures outlined below to the extent possible, practical and feasible.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SECONDARY INDICATORS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent change in new cases per 100,000 population during the last 7 days compared with the previous 7 days (negative values indicate improving trends)</td>
<td>&lt;-10%</td>
<td>-10% to &lt;-5%</td>
<td>-5% to &lt;0%</td>
<td>0% to 10%</td>
<td>&gt;10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of hospital inpatient beds in the community that are occupied***</td>
<td>&lt;80%</td>
<td>&lt;80%</td>
<td>80 to 90%</td>
<td>&gt;90%</td>
<td>&gt;90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What NON-HEALTH factors influenced reopening decisions?

**Logistics.** Buses, hybrid plans, liability insurance, cleaning supplies, one-to-one devices ... etc.

**Parents.** Diversity of opinion, especially when broken out demographically

**Politics.** Some research evidence links reopening to gov’s political party; some states pressured districts to stay open (FL, TX)

**Staffing.** Substitutes; staff quarantining affecting ability to keep doors open

**Labor.** Teaching is heavily unionized profession
The implications

**National scope.** It is VERY hard to draw conclusions absent a nationally representative sample of districts

**Impacts/learning loss.**

**Remote learning.** How do we improve remote learning for the students who have it?

**Journalism.** What are our ethical responsibility as journalists? How do we improve our coverage?
Questions? Thoughts? Cheers? Jeers?

Write me:

ssawchuk@educationweek.org
Rockwell (Title Slide)
See instructs for overlay on slide 7
Title Page (Alternate)

See instructions for overlay on slide 7
Title Variation 3

Century Gothic
Overlay bw photo with high contrast. Change Transparency to fade back by right clicking on image, format picture, and then select the image icon to adjust transparency. (Ask art for help if you need to)

Tip 2: Send photos to back to create the right layering. Image size: 1920x1080, 72dpi. Also, the art dept can help you with these higher touch pages.