

## MINORITY STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

This year is the 28th anniversary of the Minority Student Achievement Oversight Committee (MSAOC), that issued its first report to the School Board in 1994. Today, MSAOC presents its Twenty-Sixth (26th) Report to the School Board as required and in response to the 2019-20 School Board charge:

*Assess the implementation of the Equity Resources Plan, including the Equity Plan for Discipline Policy and Practices and the Equity Profile and whether the Chief Equity Officer has sufficient resources to carry out these activities; and follow up on the status of the Committee's recommendations in the June 2019 Annual Report.*

### Context and Overview

The triple pandemics—COVID-19, economic shutdown and protests for police reform and social justice mark 2020 as the beginning of unprecedented turmoil and change. New evidence shows that school closures caused by COVID-19 could exacerbate existing achievement gaps and widen disparities for children of color.

In late March Governor Northam closed Virginia schools for the remainder of the school year. In early June the Governor announced that all schools will be open to students and be required to deliver instruction in-person and remote learning. Since March FCPS teachers, administrators, and parents are working hard to keep learning alive; nevertheless, these efforts are not likely to provide the quality of education that was delivered in the classroom. The stubborn achievement gaps across income levels and between Asian and White students and their Black and Hispanic classmates will grow. As stated in the FCPS' Reopening Plan:

*Division must address the disproportionate health and economic impact of COVID19 on certain communities and how it impacts students' ability to equitably participate in Distance Learning and potentially widen achievement gaps ([www.EAB.com](http://www.EAB.com))<sup>1</sup>*

The Plan must address Fairfax County's vulnerable and high-risk students and families --: students of color; students with disabilities; bilingual students; and students experiencing poverty, homelessness and grandchildren under the care of their grandparents. It should also prioritize servicing the County's vulnerable neighborhoods-- places with low levels of education, economic distress, inadequate housing and transportation, and large numbers of residents without health insurance. These conditions were found within clusters of census tracts in Herndon, Reston, Centreville, Chantilly, Fair Oaks, Springfield, Annandale, Landmark, Seven Corners, Bailey's Crossroads, Huntington, the Route 1 corridor, and Fort Belvoir in Fairfax County.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> FCPS REOPENING OF SCHOOLS, DRAFT PLANS FOR FALL 2020, June 15, 2020

<sup>2</sup> Woolf SH, Chapman DA, Hill L, Snellings LK. Getting Ahead: The Uneven Opportunity Landscape in Northern Virginia. Richmond: Center on Society and Health, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2017.

Woolf S, Chapman D, Hill L, Schoomaker H, Wheeler D, Snellings L, Lee JH. Uneven Opportunities: How Conditions for Wellness Vary Across the Metropolitan Washington Region. Richmond: Center on Society and Health, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2018.

## MSAOC Annual Report 2019-20

This Report includes findings and recommendations on the following:

- Chief Equity Officer.
- Follow up on 2018-19 recommendations
- Widening of the achievement gap caused by school closing and remote learning
- Parent Advocacy Handbook.

### A. Chief Equity Officer.

Dr. Francisco Duran had served FCPS as Chief Academic and Equity Officer since 2015. In May 2020 the Committee urged the School Board to support the continuation of the Chief Academic and Equity Officer and to start the process of hiring an immediate replacement for Dr. Duran. The Committee believes it should play a part in this process, as well as other relevant community groups. In June Dr. Brabrand announced the restoration of the position to Chief Equity and Academic Officer.

The following are the Committee's responses to the charge from the School Board:

#### 1. Equity Resource Plan

- The Committee awaits the consultant report and recommendations on student discipline.
- The Committee will follow up on the issue of whether Level IV Center selection procedures and will be the same for Local Level IV; and the revised procedures for parent appeals.
- We will review the consultant's final report after yet to be scheduled third meeting with the School Board.

#### 2. Equity Profile

- The Committee recommends including "informal" suspensions in the Equity profile.

#### 3. Sufficient Resources

- FCPS Social Studies has undertaken curriculum revisions and professional development over the last 18 months to address the lack of diverse perspectives in social studies courses. This summer, three additional social studies courses will undergo curriculum audits focused on eliminating biased and otherwise problematic resources. **This effort should be expanded and resources provided to include bias reduction dimension of multicultural education to help students develop positive and democratic racial attitudes.** The work could move forward more efficiently with additional central office staff, funding for professional learning using the model of the Rethinking Virginia Studies project, and funding to hire teachers for curriculum review and development projects.

## B. Follow up on Recommendations for the 2019-20 School Year.

MSAOC Recommendations	Follow up Needed
Closing the Achievement Gap	<p>According to staff funds were also added in the FY20 Budget to increase staffing levels in Title 1 schools to address existing opportunity gaps in Advanced Academic Programs. Staff will continue to identify program specific needs related to addressing equity gaps and will provide the Board with recommendations as part of the FY21 Budget development process.</p> <p><b>What were the recommendations to the Board for supporting closing the achievement gap and funding an independent, outside review of FCPS's CAG efforts for the FY 21 budget?</b></p>
Recruitment and Retention of a Diverse Workforce	<p>HR stated that they were assessing interviewing and hiring practices to determine whether a more structured process would yield a more diverse workforce. DHR proposed structural changes to the process as they adopt a new applicant tracking system – Brass Ring (IBM Kenexa). Principals will have 24/7 access to applicants who have been vetted and designated “qualified”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>What is the status of this assessment? What is the status of the Application Tracking System? Do principals have access to the system?</b></li> <li>• <b>What changes in deployment or assignment, if any, have been made to schools with zero teachers of color?</b></li> <li>• <b>We raised questions about the perceived conflict of interest of the Equity and Employee Relations Office under Human Resources and why that function should not be under the Chief Equity and Academic Office?</b></li> </ul>
Student Discipline	<p>The Equity Plan calls for an “online discipline referral form and data tools that will allow for the systematization of discipline-related data.” FCPS planned to procure this new SIS module for piloting during the 19-20 school-year, with full implementation in the 20-21 school year. <b>What is the progress of the implementation in 2019-20 of the online discipline incident referral data module?</b></p> <p>In reference to the new SR &amp;R, on page 32 it states: “<i>When students are questioned by FCPS administrators for the purpose of student discipline, neither the SRO nor any other police officer should be present unless FCPS administrators have a safety concern or a need for law enforcement expertise.</i>”</p> <p><b>Rewrite the section of the SR&amp;R, page 32: School Resource Officers or any other police officer, by law, are not supposed to be involved in school discipline matters, unless there is an extreme emergency that threatens the life or safety of students and staff.</b></p>
Advanced Academic Programs	<p>The Strategic Plan calls for all schools to have a Local Level IV program by 2024. Staff response stated that this expansion, ongoing talent identification (Young Scholars) and professional development for AART Teachers will increase minority-student participation rates.</p> <p><b>There, we recommend that Young Scholars, now at 90 schools be expanded to all 141 elementary schools and Level IV Centers by 2023/24. Also that Local Level IV, now at 64 schools, should be expanded to all 112 elementary schools by 2023/24. Finally we recommend that middle school counselors should track and appropriately place former Young Scholars in middle school Honors classes.</b></p>

## C. Widening of the Achievement Gap Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic and School Closing

How much learning students lose during school closures varies significantly by access to remote learning, the quality of remote instruction, home support, and the degree of engagement. Even in States where distance learning is compulsory, significant numbers of students appear to be unaccounted for.<sup>3</sup> In short, the hastily assembled online education currently available is likely to be both less effective, in general, than traditional schooling and to reach fewer students as well.<sup>4</sup>

Committee members reviewed the impact of the novel coronavirus from the perspective of closing the achievement gap framework and the plan for reopening. In addition, we looked at two new topics: “Access to Technology” and “Summer School Slide.”

### I. Ready to Learn

School closures will negatively impact children getting ready to enter kindergarten. Pre-kindergarteners and kindergarteners could miss the cognitive and socio-emotional benefits that FECEP/Head Start offer that prepares them for a lifetime of learning. This loss could drive low income parents to rely on grandparents-- most at risk from COVID-19; because they live in childcare deserts or cannot afford pre-school or childcare programs while their income is disrupted; they don't want to jeopardize grandparents' health; and many ECE providers have shut their doors.

VDOE's plan recognizes the needs to prioritize pre-K and early childhood education in Phase I and II. **FCPS' reopening plan should explicitly describe how it will prioritize early childhood programs; make up learning loss during the summer and in the fall; and how it will help children with their socio-emotional development under the two scenarios—100% virtual or part-time in-person schooling.** Since pre-K children's parents are their first teachers the reopening plan should clearly outline what support would be provided during remote learning.

The Education Trust and Global Strategic Group survey found that parents of young children need help in subjects beyond reading and math.<sup>5</sup> The survey also found that:

- Parents say they cannot use learning software provided and that their children are too young to use online software.
- One-third of non-English home speakers say they have difficulty in navigating online software because they lack digital literacy or that the software is not in their language.
- Parents of young children with disabilities report higher stress because they lack skills to help their child.

### II. Academic Support

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<sup>3</sup> Politics K–12, “Coronavirus and learnings: What’s happening in each state,” blog entry by Education Week staff, April 3, 2020, [blogs.edweek.org](https://blogs.edweek.org).

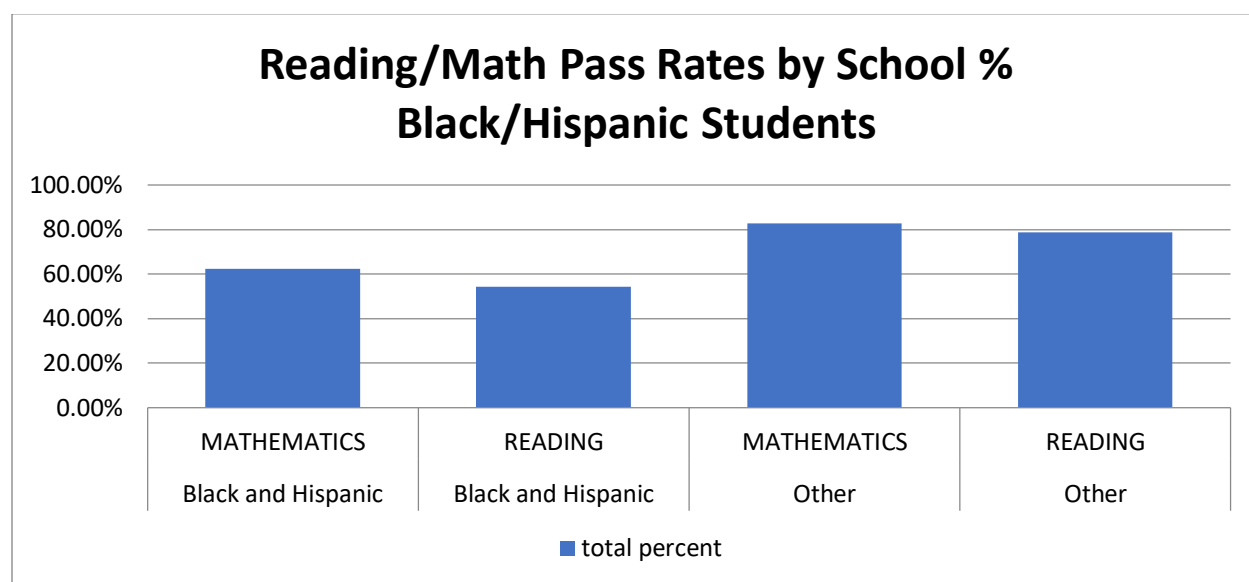
<sup>4</sup> COVID-19 and student learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime, by Emma Dorn, Bryan Hancock, Jimmy Sarakatsannis, and Ellen Viruleg, McKinsey & Company, June 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Global Strategic Group, Parents’ Survey Identifies Key Needs for Washington Families Navigating New Reality, May 12, 2020

Although students' race and income status are separate, MSAOC in earlier reports recognized that Black and Hispanic students are more likely to live in poverty and attend schools with high concentration of low income students. And so school poverty can also account for the gaps in educational performance as well as individual race/ethnicity and socio-economic status.

In 2018/19 there was already a significant achievement gap between students in majority economically disadvantaged and Black and Hispanic schools and their classmates in non-disadvantaged schools. The chart 1 below shows the SOL reading and math pass rates between majority economically disadvantaged Black and Hispanic schools and those schools with less than 50 percent Black and Hispanic students. All students in predominately low income Black and Hispanic enrolled schools had reading pass rate averaging 56 percent compared to 79 percent for not predominately Black and Hispanic schools or 23 percentage point difference.

Chart 1



When we compare these schools by similar student demographics, such as race/ethnicity, low income, and participation in ESL and special education programs, Table 1 below shows that a school's high concentration of these students had the most significant impact on Hispanic students, regardless of their individual demographics as highlighted in "yellow". The differences are also significant for Asian (16) and White (14) special needs students.

Table 1 school/reading pass	group	ASIAN %	BLACK %	HISPANIC %	WHITE %	Two or More Races %
other	Low Income	68.15%	52.91%	46.64%	63.26%	59.58%
Black & Hispanic	Low Income	64.32%	51.61%	39.30%	57.81%	58.70%
other	ELP	63.46%	51.17%	41.85%	58.53%	69.97%
Black & Hispanic	ELP	56.50%	46.32%	33.93%	50.48%	62.20%
other	Special ED	86.13%	68.76%	54.93%	78.47%	88.29%
Black & Hispanic	Special ED	70.01%	60.49%	38.17%	64.78%	79.82%
other	None of Above	92.62%	71.79%	82.14%	89.42%	87.97%

Black & Hispanic	None of Above	85.65%	65.72%	75.05%	88.26%	80.76%
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The effects of schools with high concentrations of low income Black and Hispanic students widen the achievement gap more than individual student demographics. Therefore, **reduce and remediate educational disparities associated of schools with high poverty enrollments by providing additional teachers, instructional, technology support and other resources.**

One recent study has concluded that the achievement gap has already widened since districts have started online learning. The authors predicted that the achievement gap between low and high-income students could increase by as much as 18% for students from low-income schools with no learning activity during the school closures. The study's authors also found evidence that the achievement gap, on average, is widening less than the worst-case scenario, meaning that some students in low-income schools are remaining active in their schoolwork from home.<sup>6</sup> This last point was reinforced by a MSAOC member who said that teachers at her Title 1 school are doing a phenomenal job with providing extra instruction and office hours with their students.

The study also found that struggling readers do not use online learning as frequently as advanced readers, placing them at risk of falling further behind. Based on their data, the gap between struggling and advanced readers could grow by up to an additional 6% because of school closures. The authors also found evidence that the performance gap, on average, is widening less than the worst-case scenario, meaning that some struggling readers are taking advantage of at-home learning opportunities.

### III. College and Careers (HS graduation)

In Fairfax County a disproportionate share of coronavirus cases are occurring in the Hispanic community. Hispanics are about 17% of the County population and but almost 65% of the cases.<sup>7</sup> The Committee believes that any reopening plan to ensure equity must address the following questions:

- **What changes should be made for summer school and the fall opening for credit recovery--whether virtually or face-to-face?**
- **There is anecdotal evidence that teachers in heavily Black and Hispanic and low socioeconomic schools have gone overboard to help their students both instructionally and socio-emotionally. What technology support and incentives can encourage them to continue?**
- **MSAOC members have said that our students, in too many cases, have replaced their parents as "essential" workers because they have to help them make ends meet or their parents are quarantined and can't work. What changes must be made for students who are now working 30-40 hours during the week, don't have access to laptops or internet connections and are too tired to logon or complete their assignments or learning packets?**
- **Next year if distance learning continues more students will have trouble passing their courses and earning enough verified credits to graduate. Will more students consider GED, dropping out or graduating in 5 years?**

<sup>6</sup> Research Brief: The Impact of School Closures on Student Learning Published by Achieve3000, Inc. 331 Newman Springs Rd Red Bank, NJ 07701 www.achieve3000.com © 2020 Achieve3000

<sup>7</sup> Op.cit., FCPS REOPENING OF SCHOOLS



#### **IV. Family and Community Engagement**

MSAOC members said that FCPS must do a better job of working with our families, particularly those at Title 1 schools and parents not proficient in English, to teach them how to work with the online technology so they could work better with their children and teens. Many felt that we should work directly with families to address their needs, not only in using online technology but also helping them better cope with other issues arising from the pandemic. Parents and guardians, particularly grandparents raising their grandchildren have time, language less education and stress and frustration using technology and the internet. Not only are online technical support needed for them but also more personalized and one-to-one assistance. Low income or economically disadvantaged students are not listed in the Reopening of School Plan as special needs population as are students with disabilities and English learners. This omission must be rectified.

**We recommend providing additional resources from the FY 21 budget allocated for the pandemic for the following:**

- **Help, virtually and in-person, families use online technology.**
- **Training to improve their skills related to digital literacy, navigating school system, advocacy and leadership.**
- **Social-emotional needs arising from the pandemic.**
- **The development of a systemic plan engaging multiple stakeholders with diverse backgrounds and lenses to support our most vulnerable populations--English Learners and students with disabilities and their families.**

One former Member said we should work with the County to apply an equity lens to provide trauma-based services because many parents and others are coping with significant stress, particularly for families of color, families that are economically marginalized, and families coping with other forms of oppression. When using the equity lens we should ask the following:

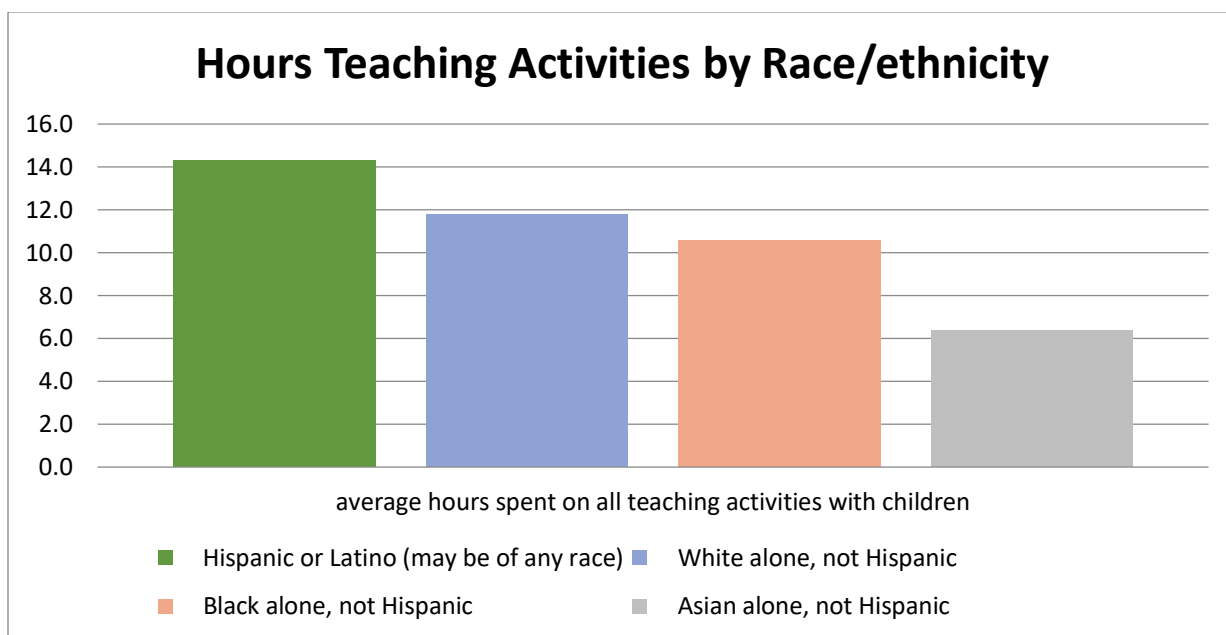
Why are parents, communities of color and low-income families more vulnerable to COVID-19 infection and death and greater exposure to virus? Is it because they are: More likely to live in neighborhoods where social distancing is difficult; more dependent on jobs where they can't work at home; lack a vehicle and depend on public transit, more at risk of exposure to commuters; or overrepresented in service jobs, and in the armed services where more likely to be housed in close proximity on military bases and naval vessels.

In a recent study VCU researchers shed some light on these questions. They mapped out "islands of disadvantage" in Northern Virginia, neighborhoods with low levels of education, economic distress, inadequate housing and transportation, and large numbers of residents without health insurance. These conditions were found within clusters of census tracts in Herndon, Reston, Centreville, Chantilly, Fair Oaks, Springfield, Annandale, Landmark, Seven Corners, Bailey's Crossroads, Huntington, the Route 1 corridor, and Fort Belvoir in Fairfax County.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Woolf SH, Chapman DA, Hill L, Snellings LK. Getting Ahead: The Uneven Opportunity Landscape in Northern Virginia. Richmond: Center on Society and Health, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2017.

Despite of the disadvantages living in these neighborhoods, US Census Bureau Survey of the effects of the coronavirus on US households showed that Hispanic parents are spending an average of 14 hours a week on teaching or learning activities with their children compared to nearly 12 hours for White, 10 hours for Black and about 6 hours for Asian parents.<sup>9</sup>



## V. Relationships

The equity issues for vulnerable populations and neighborhoods involve how we communicate and engage them; the kinds of supports for learning provided by teachers and parents/guardians; their access to the internet and technology; and the extent to which we can provide health and safety measures. There are intrinsic engagement challenges of these populations with remote learning because of language barriers, navigational challenges of special needs students and teacher and parent skills in helping them. There is some evidence that there is lower participation of at-risk students and lower retention of the material. That is why regular “pulse” surveys of their participation is necessary.

Learning loss most probably will be the greatest among low-income, Black, and Hispanic students. Lower income students are less likely to have access to high-quality remote learning or to a conducive learning environment, such as a quiet space with minimal distractions, devices they do not need to share, high-speed internet, and parental academic supervision.

Data from Curriculum Associates, creators of the i-Ready digital-instruction and -assessment software, suggest that only 60 percent of low-income students are regularly logging into online instruction compared to 90 percent of high-income students. Engagement rates are also lagging

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Woolf S, Chapman D, Hill L, Schoomaker H, Wheeler D, Snellings L, Lee JH. Uneven Opportunities: How Conditions for Wellness Vary Across the Metropolitan Washington Region. Richmond: Center on Society and Health, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> US Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, May 21-26, 2020, Last revised June 2, 2020



behind in schools serving predominantly black and Hispanic students; just 60 to 70 percent are logging in regularly.<sup>10</sup>

FCPS like many other districts is doing a great job of filling the gap with respect to meals to go for families that need help. These efforts should continue during the summer and include meals for other family members as well.

There is some evidence the significant drop in reported child abuse cases may be due to a lack of reporting because of schools closing. More frequent contact—online and face-to-face, of school social workers and public health nurses would be necessary to provide mental health assistance and health care.

## **VI. Access to Technology**

MSAOC members recommended that **FCPS needed to continually collect and better use data concerning who has been issued laptops, MiFi's and where, how many lunches have been served and in what schools and neighborhoods, the online attendance and contact hours for each of the target groups-- students of color, students with disabilities, emerging bilingual students, students experiencing poverty and homelessness, and students who belong to other protected classes.**

Not only is connectivity to the internet essential for vulnerable and at-risk families but also bandwidth. The connectivity rate in Fairfax County is 98.8 percent so that it is almost universal but not all areas has sufficient bandwidth to run online programs on laptops, computers and iPads, if families have these devices. While nearly all Virginia's schools are connected, research is clear that students without access to a reliable, high-speed, internet connection at home suffer both during and after secondary school.<sup>11</sup> As of April 10, FCPS has handed out 13,422 laptops. However, many families are now discovering a greater need for access to technology with parents working at home and multiple children needing to access online learning. **FCPS should consider using school buses to deliver Wi-Fi access and food. Wi-Fi-enabled buses could help students download and upload assignments—and pick up meals and learning packets, as well.** Allowing school Wi-Fi networks to be used by the community in school parking lots could also help.

**What are the percent and number of high school students with access to a FCPS provided individual computer or tablet?** Access rates for *FCPSOn* held steady in SY 2018-19 compared to the prior year, pending School Board approval for expansion of the *FCPSOn* initiative.

## **VII. Summer School Slide and School Opening Scenarios**

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<sup>10</sup> The Curriculum Associates analysis of anonymized data on usage from March to May 2020 of i-Ready software (a personalized learning system typically used as supplemental instruction by classroom teachers), percentage of log-ins as a portion of pre-closure rates on a weekly basis, curriculumassociates.com.

<sup>11</sup> The full Fed. Study can be found here:

<https://www.federalreserve.gov/econresdata/feds/2015/files/2015108pap.pdf>

While there is controversy about the magnitude of summer learning loss, seasonal learning research findings show that: (1) achievement typically slows or declines over the summer months, (2) declines tend to be steeper for math than for reading, and (3) loss increases in the upper grades.<sup>12</sup>

According to the study brief preliminary COVID slide estimates suggest students will return in fall 2020 with roughly 70% of the learning gains in reading of a typical school year. However, in mathematics, students are likely to show much smaller learning gains, returning with less than 50% of the learning gains and in some grades, nearly a full year behind what we would observe in normal conditions. The authors conclude that those children hardest hit by the COVID slide will be from "...families who are renting their housing, working in low-pay fields that are hardest hit by the economic impacts, and experiencing higher rates of food insecurity, family instability, and other shocks from this disruption."

#### **VIII. Parent Advocacy Handbook**

- Fund or find each year an additional \$50,000 starting in FY 2021 and FY 2022. This would provide an estimated additional 17,000 copies each year to be phase in with the parent clinics and workshops.
- We could also update the Handbook to be up with current policies, priorities and practices.

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<sup>12</sup> The COVID-19 slide: What summer learning loss can tell us about the potential impact of school closures on student academic achievement April 2020 Dr. Megan Kuhfeld and Dr. Beth Tarasawa