Making up for Lost Time
Addressing COVID-related Learning Loss with Interventions that Add or Manipulate Instructional Time

Independent Analysis Unit
Los Angeles Unified School District

June 2020

Britney Wise, Tracy Wilkinson Macho
with Megan Besecker and Andrew Thomas, Ph.D.

Glenn Daley, Director
The views expressed herein are those of the Independent Analysis Unit and do not necessarily reflect those of the District, the Board of Education, or any individual Board Member
How can the District respond to COVID learning loss?

Add instructional time to the academic calendar

- **Extended School Day**
  - Variable total time (0.5-1 hour/day)
  - Daily tutoring or small group instruction
  - All students receive extracurricular

- **Saturday School**
  - 36 partial days (variable hours/session)
  - Once weekly courses or mini-courses
  - Secondary intervention or enrichment

- **Summer School**
  - 21 partial days (variable hours/session)
  - Once yearly courses or mini-courses
  - Secondary, credit recovery or review

- **Jumpstart**
  - 9 partial days (4 hour/session)
  - Before school year sessions / mini-courses
  - Transition grade or all after diagnostic, review

- **Summer Bridge**
  - 12 partial days (1-2 hours/session)
  - Before school year sessions / mini-courses
  - Transition grade, academic / emotional support

- **Intersessions**
  - 10 partial days (variable hours/session)
  - Between terms / summer classes
  - All credit recovery / remediation / enrichment

Manipulate instructional time to help support students

- **Year Round School**
  - Staggered vacations
  - Spreads students across school year
  - All keeps n-person school w/ distancing

- **Block Scheduling**
  - Longer class periods
  - Multiple options
  - Secondary, reinforce learning

- **Combined Grade Classrooms**
  - More teacher-to-student time
  - Smaller class sizes and differentiation
  - Elementary, address wide differences in skills

- **Looping**
  - More time with previous teacher
  - Teacher moves with students
  - Elementary, review / recoup lost learning

Interventions that add time

- When choosing an intervention that adds time, manipulates time, or does a combination, there are a few considerations...
  1. stage of schooling
  2. students’ other learning needs
  3. feasibility

Feasibility

for students...

1. unintended consequences of adding time to help students recoup learning
2. students’ ability to participate in supplemental learning opportunities

for teachers...

1. ways to minimize burnout
2. how to create buy-in among staff for intervention efforts.

for schools...

1. costs for staffing and operations
2. operational burden for planning (upfront and ongoing)

for the District...

1. flexibility for schools in spending and decision making
2. management obligations to labor partners (re: added time)
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................................................1

2. ADDING TIME ........................................................................................................................................... 2
   A. Adding time to the school day ................................................................................................................2
   B. Adding time to the school week .............................................................................................................3
   C. Adding time during vacation breaks ....................................................................................................3

3. MANIPULATING TIME .................................................................................................................................6
   A. Block Scheduling ................................................................................................................................6
   B. Combined-Grade Classrooms ..............................................................................................................6
   C. Looping ..................................................................................................................................................7
   D. Year-Round School .............................................................................................................................7

4. CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERVENTIONS ..............................................................................................8
   A. First, consider stage of schooling .......................................................................................................8
   B. Then, consider other learning needs ...................................................................................................9
   C. Feasibility .............................................................................................................................................10

5. CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................................................14
1. INTRODUCTION

School facilities closures in L.A. Unified precipitated a shift away from in-classroom education to at-home learning. Though most students have been connected electronically to their schools and teachers, the quality and amount of instruction the COVID-19 cohort have received is unknown.

Based on what we do know about effects of schooling gaps, the needs of various groups of L.A. Unified students, and the realities of remote learning experience for many students, we can assume many students probably have lost a substantial amount of learning in the 2019-2020 school year. This learning loss will impede their academic performance in the 2020-2021 school year and beyond.

The consequences of losing time in school will be large for many students, and, realistically speaking, will take time to make up. In a presentation to the Committee of the Whole in October 2019, District leadership claimed that, “for every day missed, it takes a child three or more days to make up for lost instructional time.” If true, this claim suggests that some students—those with the largest schooling gaps—would need three times the 57 days of missed instruction—171 days, almost another school year—to make up for the lost learning opportunities during COVID-related school facilities closures. There are options for adding considerable amounts of instructional time to the academic calendar, but no option exists that would add that many days.

In usual circumstances, stages in schooling or set time frames determine academic goals. Students are expected to be reading by the end of second grade; they are expected to be ready for algebra by the end of eighth grade; or they are expected to reclassify as English speakers within five years of English Language Development. But school facilities closures have created obstacles for students to meet these timelines. If the District does not act, we can expect a delay in the academic progression of the COVID-19 cohort, which can trigger other severe long-term consequences.

Though adding time is necessary if students are to catch up quickly and achieve academic goals within the typical timeline, some school sites will find it difficult or infeasible to do so, especially if social distancing requirements continue to limit in-person instruction. In these cases, strategies that increase the effectiveness of existing time to help students recoup learning loss might be the best options.

This report presents learning loss intervention strategies that either add time to the instructional calendar or manipulate existing instructional time to accommodate different students’ learning needs.

The learning loss intervention strategies that add time vary in terms of which and how
many students and educators add instructional time, and whether time is added to the day, week or year. The learning loss interventions that manipulate time vary in terms of how students are organized into classrooms, class periods are timed, and school years are scheduled.

School leaders should consider several factors when making decisions about how to adjust the calendar and daily schedule to address learning loss. This report includes a discussion of these factors and concludes with an examination of the feasibility of implementing various time-related changes from the perspectives of students, teachers, schools and District leadership.

We present this discussion of learning loss recovery in the context of the 2020-21 school year. However, some students will require support (both academic and socioemotional) beyond the 2020-21 year because of the severity and pervasiveness of learning loss as well as the continued need for protective strategies that slow the spread of coronaviruses. Changes to the calendar and daily schedule may not be permanent, but they may be needed for several years.

2. ADDING TIME

On March 13th L.A. Unified closed school facilities, and students ultimately lost 57 days of in-person instruction during the 2019-20 academic year. To mitigate possible negative outcomes associated with learning loss, the District will need to help school sites add instructional time to the academic calendar. In this section, we present several learning loss intervention strategies at the District’s disposal that adjust the academic calendar to increase instructional time to provide students with supplemental learning opportunities (see Table 1).

Interventions that Add Time can help students recoup learning loss by...

- **Adding instructional time to the academic calendar**
  Options add time to the school day, week, or during vacation breaks.

- **Providing one-time or ongoing supplemental support to students**
  Supplemental learning opportunities can help students recover course credits or help struggling students master tough concepts with additional instructional time.

However, these options will likely...

- **Cost more money**
  Human capital, administrative and other operational costs increase when time is added to the academic calendar.

- **Place a burden on teachers and students**
  Efforts to recover lost learning in one academic year could lead to burnout and decreased morale among teachers and students.

A. Adding time to the school day

An Extended School Day (ESD) is a program model that extends the school day beyond the standard 6.5 hours. This intervention helps later elementary students and secondary students recoup learning loss and achieve academic goals by incorporating anywhere from 30 minutes to one hour of additional time into the daily schedule. Time can be expanded across classes and academic subjects.

Schools with ESD may add tutoring or small group instruction that supplement an existing course in a core academic area like language arts or math or expand extracurricular offerings (such as art, music, and athletics)
that might not otherwise be available due to time constraints. L.A. Unified has implemented a form of ESD in some high schools. This program provides opportunities within the school day for secondary students to re-take failed courses. The number of courses and the time frame for courses taken depends on flexibility in each school’s master schedule to add auxiliary periods. These credit recovery opportunities can also be offered in a zero period (before the traditional school day) depending on teacher availability and student need.

Additionally, L.A. Unified funded a variety of other tutoring programs at the school and central office level in the 2018-19 school year. There are several examples of tutoring services offered in L.A. Unified.

- Options schools — high schools that provide alternatives to the traditional school setting — offer afterschool and Saturday tutoring opportunities to their students.
- Schools receiving School Innovation Funds target afterschool tutoring opportunities to high needs students.
- The District’s Academic Support and Achievement Program (ASAP) targets one-on-one or small group afterschool tutoring opportunities to high-need foster and probation youth.

Moreover, schools receiving target student population (TSP) funds can purchase teacher overtime to support after school learning for TSP students.

B. Adding time to the school week

An extended school week is usually accomplished by adding Saturday school programming, which adds up to 36 partial instructional days to the academic calendar. Extending the school week can mitigate learning loss by providing supplemental learning opportunities to students of any age or grade level.

Saturday school programs offer either learning or credit recovery opportunities to students who have missed school, function as a form of academic intervention for students in need of additional support, or provide enrichment opportunities for students who are interested in learning opportunities outside of the typical lessons. There are several examples of Saturday school currently operating in L.A. Unified.

- Local District South launched a Saturday school pilot program to recover attendance for chronically absent students in May 2018. The District recovered attendance for 441 students through the pilot program.
- Opportunity high schools can offer Saturday school to provide flexible scheduling options for students who cannot regularly attend school during the traditional Monday-Friday academic week.
- The Division of Adult and Career Education (DACE) partners with several schools to offer Saturday school as a credit recovery option for off-track students. According to the LCAP Update, over 5,100 students participated in these credit recovery options during the 2018-19 school year.

Additionally, several schools in the District offer Saturday school as a strategy for academic intervention for struggling students.

C. Adding time during vacation breaks

A common way for schools to add time is to take advantage of regularly scheduled vacation breaks to offer extra instructional programming. Schools can use these breaks to mitigate learning loss by offering short
stand-alone courses in core academic or enrichment subjects or designed to develop social-emotional and academic skills. Common ways school districts add time over vacation breaks are summer school, summer bridge, jumpstart review, and intersessions.

**Summer School**

Typically, L.A. Unified provides specific students with summer school program options (e.g. credit recovery options for secondary students). District leadership recently announced that, for the first time, summer school will be offered to all L.A. Unified students. In summer 2020, summer school will take place completely remotely. The District again will offer credit recovery options to secondary students, while also offering “focused intensive classes” to a small group of struggling students and enrichment classes to any interested student.17 Summer school will add up to four weeks of partial instructional days for participating students. Currently, the capacity of each of these program options is unclear.18 This intervention helps later elementary and secondary students recoup learning loss and achieve academic goals, but it works particularly well for secondary students in that it provides them opportunities to recover credits to graduate on time.

**Summer Bridge**

A summer bridge program adds partial instructional days between the end of summer school and the beginning of the traditional school year and is commonly used for transition years. Districts implement programs that “bridge the gap” between the end of 8th grade, for example, and the beginning of 9th grade. This orientation to the next school level can help later elementary, middle, or high school students achieve academic goals (e.g. on-time graduation) because they facilitate a transition to a new academic environment. The programs typically include both academic and emotional support for students and last from as few as one week to as many as six weeks. In past years, L.A. Unified has offered a summer bridge program for students transitioning into Title I, CORE waiver high schools. The program was held in early August and offered 4 hours of academic and socio-emotional programming for each of nine days.19

**Jumpstart Programs**

A jumpstart review program adds 1-2 weeks before the start of the school year to review previously taught material and skills before new material and skills are introduced in the new school year. This intervention can help students of any age or grade level recoup learning loss. Several schools in L.A. Unified’s Local District South will offer a “jumpstart” Accelerated Learning Program in Summer 2020. The program will provide “meaningful opportunities to extend learning experiences beyond the school year and foster a path toward academic readiness for Fall 2020.”20 Students in Kindergarten through 8th grade will receive instruction in ELA and Math for 1-2 hours per day, depending on grade level, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays over a 4-week period during the summer. These sessions are intended to give students a preview of expectations for their next grade level in school.

**Intersessions Programs**

Intersessions programs provide supplemental, week-long learning opportunities to students in need of additional support over winter or spring break. These programs have been effective when implemented in such a way that allows for small group instruction.21 In the 2018-19 school year, the Division of Adult and Career Education (DACE)
Table 1 A comparison of strategies that add instructional time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Time Per Session</th>
<th>Additional Days</th>
<th>How Options Help Mitigate Learning Loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESD</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>0.5-1 hours</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Daily tutoring or small group instruction that supplement an existing course in a core academic area like language arts or math or expand extracurricular offerings (such as art, music, and athletics) that might not otherwise be available due to time constraints. All grade levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday School</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>36 partial days</td>
<td>Once-a-week partial or full day courses or mini-courses. Used in LAUSD as a form of academic intervention for students in need of additional support or to provide enrichment opportunities for students who are interested in subjects outside required curriculum. All grade levels, but more common in secondary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer School</td>
<td>One-time</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>21 partial days</td>
<td>Once-a-year partial or full-day courses or mini-courses. Used in LAUSD for credit recovery or enrichment; this year also used for review and re-teaching core academic subjects. Works particularly well for secondary students to recover credits to graduate on time. All grade levels for supplemental or enrichment activities; high school for credit recovery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Bridge</td>
<td>One-time</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
<td>9 partial days</td>
<td>Before school year once-a-year program with multiple sessions or mini-courses, include both academic and emotional support components. Used in LAUSD to facilitate a transition to a new academic environment for students in transition grades. Can be used to review and teach targeted skills, and to help students cope with trauma; could be used after diagnostic assessment for all grade levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumpstart</td>
<td>One-time</td>
<td>1-2 hours</td>
<td>12 partial days</td>
<td>Before school year, once-a-year program with multiple sessions or mini-courses used in LAUSD to prepare students for next grade-level instruction. Could be used for review or teach. Targeted to transition grades between elementary and middle school or middle and high school but could be used after diagnostic assessment for all grade levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersessions</td>
<td>Bi-annually</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>10 partial days</td>
<td>Between terms, multiple times per year, provides weeklong classes, either core subjects or enrichment; good for credit recovery, remediation or enrichment. All grade levels.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

partnered with 19 high schools to provide credit recovery opportunities to off-track students over winter and spring break – referred to as the Winter or Spring Plus program. Approximately 1,500 students participated in the program in 2018-19, a 61% increase in enrollment from the previous year.²²

Additionally, as a part of the District’s A-G Immediate Intervention Plan, all high schools and select elementary and middle schools can schedule intensive credit recovery opportunities for off-track students over winter or spring break. Students typically take one or two classes a day for five or six days. According to the LCAP Update, 62 schools implemented these programs and served approximately 1,500 students in the 2018-19 school year.²³ This intervention is best equipped to
help later elementary, middle, and high school students recoup learning loss.

3. MANIPULATING TIME

Separate from, or in addition to, adding time to the calendar, the District can schedule the school day, week or year differently from they usually do to mitigate possible negative outcomes associated with learning loss. In this section, we present several nontraditional strategies available to the District for scheduling the school year or school day, as well as organizing classrooms to manipulate instructional time to help students recoup learning loss (see Table 2).

A. Block Scheduling

In a block scheduling format, secondary students attend fewer classes per day, but each class meets for more time, compared to the standard 55-minute, six-period a day schedule.

This intervention is best suited for middle and high schools – grade levels in which students interact with more than one teacher per day. It would facilitate review sessions and extra skills practice.

L.A. Unified has used block scheduling in some high schools and a few selected middle schools. It does not add days to the school calendar. It does, however, provide an opportunity for structuring the school day in a way that can help students recoup lost learning by (1) lengthening class periods to reinforce learning and (2) increasing opportunities for personalized instruction by reducing the number of students teachers see each day.

The most common form of block scheduling is the alternate day schedule. Commonly called an A/B schedule, this format requires students and teachers to meet every other day for longer-than-usual periods of time, typically around 90 minutes, rather than meeting daily for 50 minutes. Other common forms of block scheduling include:

- The “4x4” semester plan which requires students to meet for four 90-minute class periods every day over four quarters.
- The trimester plan which requires students to take two to three courses every 60 days.

B. Combined-Grade Classrooms

Combined-grade classes, or combination classes, occur in elementary school and include students from two consecutive grade levels in one class under the supervision of one teacher. Students in combined-grade
classes have assignments from their respective grade levels and are expected to learn content addressed through their appropriate grade-level standards. A high level of differentiation is needed for combined grade levels to be successful. Team teaching is well-suited to combined-grade classes.

Differentiation is central to the success of combined grades. **Combining grades can help mitigate learning loss by increasing opportunities for personalized learning to address the unusually wide differences in skills and knowledge between students in the same grade level that we expect as a result of school facilities closures.** Another advantage of combined-grade classrooms is that they allow some class sizes to be reduced, which would facilitate social distancing.

L.A. Unified implements combined-grade classrooms in its elementary schools, as needed to achieve the correct class sizes. This practice allows for students to work on content and skills individualized for each student’s abilities, regardless of grade level. Students are typically selected for a combination class based on their ability to be responsible and independent, but also based on their ability to work cooperatively with other students of similar age.26

**C. Looping**

Looping, or multi-year placement, refers to the practice of a teacher remaining with the same group of students for more than one school year. For example, a teacher would teach students in third grade one year, then would go on to teach the same students in fourth grade the subsequent year. Looping is a learning loss strategy primarily for elementary schools but has been utilized within L.A. Unified at both elementary and secondary levels.

In the case of COVID-19, **looping can help mitigate learning loss by providing continuity of education to certain groups of students.** For example, students who were in 1st grade in March 2020 when schools transitioned to full-time distance learning would return to school in August 2020 with the same teacher they had during the 2019-20 school year. Students would review content taught in their 1st grade class and learn any content that they were unable to learn during distance learning, then begin to learn 2nd grade-level content and skills.

**D. Year-Round School**

YRS is an alternative way to construct the academic calendar without adding instructional time. Students attend school for 180 days. Those days are spread across three semesters with more frequent, shorter vacation breaks. **YRS is a learning loss intervention strategy because it reduces the number of people on campus at a given time, thereby increasing opportunities for in-person instruction.**2728 The intervention is also uniquely suited to be combined with calendar options such as intersessions to add instructional time and further help mitigate learning loss.29

The most common way to structure a YRS calendar is to hold 60 days of instruction followed by 20 days of vacation break – referred to as the 60/20 format. The second most common format for YRS is the 45/15 format where students receive 45 days of instruction followed by 15 days of vacation break.30 School districts or individual schools can offer year-round schooling in single or multi-track formats. In a single-track format, all students attend school at the same time. In a multi-track format, student attendance is staggered to allow for increased enrollment. From 1974-2017, L.A. Unified utilized the multi-track YRS option to alleviate overcrowding in certain
Table 2. A comparison of strategies that manipulate time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>How they manipulate time</th>
<th>How Options Help Mitigate Learning Loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Block Scheduling</td>
<td>No net time increase, but longer class periods</td>
<td>Block scheduling provides credit recovery opportunities, extra time in class periods for reinforcing learning, and opportunities to take more classes than are possible under a typical school schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined-Grade Classrooms</td>
<td>No net time increase, but smaller classes could give students more time with teacher</td>
<td>Address the unusually wide differences in skills and knowledge between students in the same grade level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looping</td>
<td>No net time increase, but continuity of education can increase early opportunities for review</td>
<td>By providing continuity of education to certain groups of students. For example, students who were in 1st grade in March 2020 when schools transitioned to full-time distance learning would return to school in August 2020 with the same teacher they had during the 2019-20 school year. Students would review content taught in their 1st grade class and learn any content that they were unable to learn during distance learning, then begin to learn 2nd grade-level content and skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year-Round School</td>
<td>No net time increase, or time added per student, but possibly add time to teachers’ work schedules; staggered vacations</td>
<td>By spreading out students across the school year and having fewer students on campus at any given time, can maintain in-person instruction with social distancing. Suited to be combined with intersessions to increase net time in school for students because it creates multiple and longer school breaks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2002, the height of overcrowding in the District, as many as 1-in-3 schools utilized a multi-track YRS calendar.

The multi-track YRS calendar was met with mixed reviews by District stakeholders. Some parents preferred the ratio of instructional days to vacation days, and some principals believed that their students benefitted from the shorter, more frequent breaks. Others, however, felt that the staggered attendance schedule created logistical challenges for parents and educators alike. Moreover, coordinating staggered attendance schedules with state testing schedules was another logistical challenge for some schools.

4. CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERVENTIONS

School sites may need to add instructional time, manipulate existing time, or a combination of both to help students recover learning opportunities that were lost while school facilities were closed. But how should school leaders go about choosing which strategies will work best for their students, families and teachers? Below, we discuss the factors that school leaders will need to consider when selecting a set of learning loss intervention strategies that work best for their students while balancing human capital, financial, and operational costs for students and school site staff.

A. First, consider stage of schooling

Early elementary students have needs that are distinct from those of late elementary students, and middle and high school students have their own requirements as well. For example — in distance learning — the District’s youngest learners (TK-2nd grade) lack access to in-person, physical opportunities for social, emotional, and language and literacy development. Moreover, young learners and
later elementary students (grades 3-5) also tend to lack the self-regulation needed to learn online.

**Elementary Students**

The barriers to distance learning experienced by the District’s young learners and later elementary students are likely to have a negative impact on their academic progression. Specifically, barriers to distance learning might delay student progression in sequential subject areas (e.g. student readiness for 6th grade math). In deciding how to mitigate the potential, negative impacts of distance learning and school facilities closures on their students, elementary school leaders should prioritize learning loss intervention strategies that, among other things:

- Are in-person;
- Provide opportunities for peer-to-peer interactions to encourage socioemotional development;
- Provide vocabulary-rich environments to encourage language development; and
- Provide opportunities to review material that was previously taught, but not mastered, to encourage content mastery in sequential subject areas.

Learning loss intervention strategies that are best suited to help elementary students recoup learning loss and meet academic goals specific to their stage of schooling include **extended school day (ESD)**, **Saturday school**, **jumpstart review**, **intersessions programs**, **year-round school (YRS)**, **looping**, and **combined-grade classrooms**.

**Secondary Students**

Sudden closure of school facilities might have prevented some secondary students from acquiring or mastering pre-requisite skills necessary for sequential, required subjects. Barriers to distance learning (e.g. learning constraints at home or lack of internet access) are likely to affect secondary students’ academic progress. These barriers might manifest themselves in lower grades that reflect a decline in college readiness, as well as decreased graduation and attendance rates. In deciding how to mitigate the potential, negative impacts of distance learning and school facilities closures on their students, middle and high school leaders should prioritize learning loss intervention strategies that, among other things:

- Are flexible in nature to accommodate secondary students’ complex schedules;
- Provide opportunities for students to recover credits for A-G required classes;
- Provide opportunities for personalized learning recovery, and
- Provide opportunities for self-paced learning recovery.

Any of the interventions that add time can be structured in such a way that they help middle and high school students mitigate learning loss. Interventions that manipulate time and meet the needs of middle and high schools include **YRS** and **block scheduling**.

**B. Then, consider other learning needs**

Students with other learning needs — like English learners (ELs) — are likely to have missed important aspects of instruction or to have had difficulty learning at home during school facilities closures. For example — the possible lack of an English-language-rich environment combined with minimal peer and teacher language modeling and supports are likely to have had a substantial, negative impact on the language acquisition skills and overall academic progress of ELs.
Students with disabilities (SWDs), students in foster care, and students experiencing homelessness are also at risk of substantial learning loss due to school facilities closures. Some services outlined in students’ Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) might have been difficult to deliver remotely, and some students’ disabilities (e.g. emotional disturbance) might have made remote learning difficult. Similarly, when school facilities closed in mid-March, many students in the District’s homeless program or with an open foster court case immediately lost access to a stable environment and place to learn, which likely functioned as a barrier to remote learning. These circumstances, and other hindrances (e.g. trauma experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic) are likely to manifest in decreased attendance, lower grades, and lower SBAC scores in both ELA and math for these students.

In deciding how to mitigate the potential, negative impacts of distance learning and school facilities closures on their students, school leaders should prioritize learning loss intervention strategies that, among other things:

- Are in-person;
- Provide English language and vocabulary-rich environments for ELs; and
- Provide opportunities for personalized learning recovery.

Because learning needs will vary among student groups, school leaders will need to identify individual students’ needs and match those needs with the appropriate intervention. In its Planning Framework for the 2020-21 School Year, the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) underscores the importance of diagnostic assessment. Specifically, LACOE expresses the need to “identify key benchmark/ [Beginning of Year] assessments to support student placement and to identify gaps in understanding due to prolonged school closure.”

C. Feasibility

When selecting learning loss intervention strategies to help students, school leaders will need to consider how adding instructional time to the academic calendar or manipulating how they use time will affect their students, staff, and school budgets.

Also, although most learning recovery will take place at the school site and will be decided by school leaders, there are considerations that District leadership must weigh to help schools and ensure consistency and efficacy in learning recovery efforts in L.A. Unified.

For students:

Feasibility considerations of learning loss intervention strategies — as they relate to students — include (1) the **unintended consequences** of adding time to help students recoup lost learning, and (2) the **ability** of their students to participate in supplemental learning opportunities.

One major unintended consequence of adding time to the academic calendar is the possibility of **burdening students with the responsibility of recovering lost learning opportunities**. Adding time to the calendar reduces opportunities for breaks, thereby increasing the likelihood of burnout among students. The likelihood of student burnout is further increased if the District and individual school sites limit supplemental learning loss recovery opportunities to the 2020-2021 school year. **Recovering learning lost to COVID-related school facilities closures will likely be a multi-year process that will require flexibility in curriculum pacing and other requirements (e.g. state testing).** Spreading the learning loss recovery process
across several years could increase the feasibility of intervention strategies and help ease the burden placed on both students to make up lost time.

High school students, however, will not have the luxury of recovering lost learning over the span of several years. Additional consideration will have to be paid to balancing learning recovery and burnout for these students. Other students who might not be able to participate in supplemental learning opportunities without additional supports include students who have experienced copious amounts of trauma related to school facilities closures or students who have additional at-home responsibilities that prevent them from engaging in afterschool or weekend options.

For teachers
Feasibility considerations of learning loss intervention strategies—as they relate to school site staff—include (1) ways to minimize teacher burnout and (2) how to create buy-in among staff for intervention efforts.

Most of the calendar and scheduling options available to the District would require teachers and staff to work additional hours, more days, or both. Just like students, teachers would be at risk of burnout from working long hours to address learning loss in a single calendar year. Spreading out the learning loss recovery process across several years could help ease the burden placed on teachers to help students make up lost time and increase feasibility of strategic interventions.

Research on successful educational interventions found that buy-in from all stakeholders, including teachers, staff, and labor partners, is necessary for effective implementation. Moreover, stakeholders hold local knowledge that should be integrated into intervention efforts to improve programming, create “motivational readiness,”41 and establish ownership over program expansion.42 Regardless of the option(s) selected, cooperation and collaboration between the District—especially school leadership—and labor partners is essential to effectively reopen and, potentially, reimagine schools in the face of unprecedented adversity.

For schools
Since most learning recovery will happen at the school site, school leaders will have to balance the need to add instructional time to the academic calendar with the additional cost and operational burdens that accompany adding time.

Financial feasibility
While there are no exact estimates as to the cost to implement or expand existing interventions that add time to the academic calendar, we do know that each one will cost the District—and individual schools—more money than they budget in a usual year. For example, interventions that extend the school day, week, or year will increase school-site staff budgets. In the 2018-19 school year, schools in L.A. Unified that received Student Equity Needs Index (SENI) funds collectively purchased $1.7 million in teacher overtime for afterschool tutoring.43 This is just one example of how adding time to the calendar creates additional staffing costs that impact the feasibility of the options.

Operational costs must also be taken into consideration for successful implementation. Operational costs include, but are not limited to, marketing, utilities, security, and transportation costs. Each of these cost components would likely increase due to the additional time in school or the greater demand for supplemental academic support opportunities.
Note on School Safety in the COVID-19 Era

This report relates to how schools can add time to the school day, week or year, or organize existing time in different ways to address learning loss. However, because of the continuing risk of COVID-19 transmission, we will likely have to take unprecedented measures to ensure that all individuals on campus, as well as family members at home, are protected. Changing the calendar and daily schedule is one way to decrease risk because it can facilitate social distancing. Though not the focus of this report, considerations related to school safety can also impact the feasibility of learning loss interventions and are highlighted below.

Reopening K-12 schools is part of stage 3 of Los Angeles County’s reopening plan, but reopening does not necessarily mean all campuses open to all students at the same time. Physical distancing may need to continue for an undetermined period due to risks of another wave of illness and ensuring physical distancing between students and adults will be a major challenge to reopening schools.

Distance learning, which L.A. Unified and many schools in the U.S. implemented in the latter part of the 2019-20 school year, is the safest approach. However, it represents a continuation of learning loss for many groups of students. Remote learning is a good option for some students, but for younger students, some students with disabilities, students with barriers at home, and English language learners, in-person instruction is probably more effective.

But what will it take to get back to our traditional face-to-face method of schooling? In order to best meet the safety needs of our post-COVID world, schedule changes may be necessary. Schools will also need to reform and reimagine sections of the schedule when students typically congregate in larger groups, like mealtime, recess, physical education, and passing periods between classes. If students are to return to campus at a time when COVID-19 is still a potential threat, there are options to spread out the schedule in order to facilitate instruction in a safe manner.

One option is to stagger school schedules. This option could be implemented in several ways. Schools could split the school day with some students coming to school in the morning and others coming in the afternoon. Or schools could split the week to allow some students to attend in person on certain days of the week and others attend the other days. Additionally, using a multi-track school calendar where different groups of students are in school and on vacation at different times over the school year has been mentioned as an option by California state leaders. Several countries in Europe and Asia have implemented staggered schedules in their schools in the wake of COVID-19, but since the practice is still so new, we have little information about the effects of staggered schedules on mitigation of the virus.

Regardless of the nature of physical distancing in classrooms, extensive safety measures will be required upon the reopening of schools to ensure that exposure to COVID-19 is as limited as possible. These precautions could include temperature checks upon arrival, testing of students and adults, and contact tracing of individuals exposed to the virus. In addition to these other logistical changes, deep cleaning and sanitation of schools will be critical. Some medical and public health researchers are recommending even more extensive measures like keeping classroom windows open for ventilation and protective face shields for adults. While these measures might seem intrusive and overly complicated to some, precautions will be necessary to ensure the safety of the students, staff and families of L.A. Unified.

Interventions that manipulate existing instructional time also require additional cost considerations. For example, a cost analysis conducted by the California Department of Education (CDE) found that YRS calendars cost more, on average, than the traditional academic calendar. Costs associated with administrative planning, staffing development, communication, and storage space (which the CDE refers to as “transition costs”) are high in a YRS calendar. Operational costs (e.g. the cost of utilities and building maintenance) are also high in a YRS calendar. Block scheduling can also be less cost-effective for a school to implement because teachers teach fewer students for fewer hours than they do under a traditional schedule. The operational costs associated with adding and manipulating time also affect the feasibility of the interventions.
**Operational feasibility**

Learning loss intervention strategies available to the District will require substantial upfront and ongoing planning by central office or local district staff and school site staff. For example, interventions that lengthen instructional time, ask instructors to use time to organize classrooms in nontraditional ways require upfront planning in the form of professional development for teachers and staff.

For options that provide supplemental learning opportunities (e.g. summer bridge or intersessions), upfront planning for program administrators also includes recruitment of both staff and students.

In addition to upfront planning, each learning loss intervention strategy requires some degree of ongoing planning. For example, educators will need to lesson plan for each day’s instructional time – including special planning for combined-grade classrooms or other nontraditional classroom structures. Other ongoing planning needs include coordination of after-hours building access with campus plant managers and custodians as well as coordinating additional transportation options for students who participate in options that extend their school day, week, or year. Planning for most programs happens at the school-level, but some options will require coordinated planning efforts between central office, local district, and school site staff. These planning and coordination costs impact the feasibility of each intervention strategy.

**For the District**

Though most learning recovery will happen at the school site, District leadership will need to weigh considerations that affect the feasibility of the learning loss intervention strategies at school sites. These include balancing the need to expand local autonomies to help school sites support students with the need to manage its obligation to its labor partners and existing collective bargaining agreements.

**Expanding Local Autonomies**

School sites will require flexibility in spending and decision-making to meet the needs of their students, but how much flexibility can the District extend to schools while also balancing District-wide planning efforts and respecting collective bargaining agreements with its labor partners?

Currently, there exist multiple levels of local autonomy in the District. For example, the District’s Pilot schools are afforded the greatest level of local autonomy among District-operated schools. Pilot schools have the authority to implement strategies to “increase and improve services for high needs students such as implement longer school days, increase teacher professional development hours, require additional teacher extracurricular duties like tutoring, implement alternative curricula, and increase teacher and parent voice in school decision-making.” Other types of District-operated schools that experience the same or similar levels of autonomy include Expanded School Based Management Model Schools (ESBMM) and Local Initiative Schools (LIS).

Schools that receive TSP, SENI, and other targeted funds (but are not pilot, ESBMM, or LIS schools) can decide how to spend to meet the needs of their target student populations. These schools, however, are not afforded other autonomies such as the ability to waive aspects of collective bargaining agreements or extend the school day.

**Labor Negotiations**

Learning loss intervention strategies require at least some teachers and staff to work addi-
tional hours. Labor partners should be in-
formed as soon as possible about the poten-
tial for significant changes in teacher and
staff schedules. If appropriate, negotia-
tions about who is eligible to participate and other
issues regarding expanded work schedules,
should begin. LACOE notes the importance
of “establishing and/or maintaining an open
and collaborative approach” with labor part-
ners with regards to COVID-19 considera-
tions and that would include decisions about
new instructional models and schedules.

5. CONCLUSION

Analysis by the IAU found that 440,000 stu-
dents across all grade levels are at risk of
severe learning loss from which they will
struggle to recover. The problem is seri-
os. Long-term impacts for students include
failing to achieve grade-level achievement
benchmarks, being denied the opportunities
to take upper-level courses, not having the
skills, test scores or pre-requisites to get into
college, and facing diminished life-long earn-
ing potential.

The preceding discussion details several op-
tions at the District’s disposal to help stu-
dents recoup learning loss and mitigate po-
tential, negative consequences of school fa-
cilities closures. While the District has al-
ready granted any interested student the op-
portunity to participate in the upcoming
summer term, instruction will still be remote,
which means some students will not get what
they need and the District will still have to
do more than usual to help struggling stu-
dents recover lost time when school facili-
ties can reopen.

School facilities closures and the consequen-
tial learning loss experienced by students is a
pervasive, large, and multi-faceted problem
facing the District that will require supple-
menting the regular program, probably in
multiple ways. Schools will have to consider
whether and how to add time or change how
they organize the existing school day, week
and year.

Because students are at various stages of
their schooling and have a variety of needs
and experiences with remote learning, there
is no one solution that will help all students
recover lost learning opportunities. The
District will need to help school sites be flexi-
ble in how they choose to intervene, while
supporting them and ensuring quality. The
Board may need to consider changing policy
related to school autonomies and will need to
consult with labor partners about changes in
hours, workloads and work duties.

Even if schools could reopen at full capacity
in the fall and in-person instruction could
resume for all students, many students
would still need several years to catch up.
However, normal instruction will not resume
due to the continued need for protective
strategies that slow the spread of corona-
virus. Therefore, the District cannot treat the
problem of COVID-related learning loss as an
18-month problem and resume business as
usual in 2021. Some students will require sup-
port (both academic and socioemotional) be-
{}
NOTES

1 A substantial amount of research has been conducted on learning loss associated with “summer slide” or other gaps in schooling, including as the result of migration and dislocation or chronic absenteeism. Representative studies are: Kuhfeld, M. & Tarasaw, B. (2020). The COVID-19 slide: What summer learning loss can tell us about the potential impact of school closures on student academic achievement. NWEA Collaborative for Student Growth. https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2020/04/Collaborative-Brief_Covid19-Slide-APR20.pdf


7 Safety efforts to block the spread of coronavirus can undermine the learning loss recovery process by prioritizing interventions such as remote instruction over in-person instruction. Continued remote instruction will hamper some students’ ability to recoup learning loss but may be necessary in the short term. To the extent that calendar or schedule changes can make more in-person instruction possible, those students most affected by school facilities closures will benefit.


14 Here, off-track refers to students who are at risk of not graduating on time. These students are “off-track” to complete their A-G required classes.


16 Superintendent’s address May 11, 2020; comments made during the 5/19/20 Board meeting.

17 For example, it is unclear how District leadership plans to define a “small group of struggling students” to whom a set of focused intensive classes will be offered.


22 Ibid.


24 Ibid.


26 Initially, education advocates believed that reducing the length of summer vacation through the YRS format
would improve academic achievement for students who experience the negative effects of “summer slide.” Prior research, however, concluded YRS had minimal impact on reducing learning loss related to “summer slide.” It is important to note that prior research was conducted in comparison to a traditional school year – not one that takes place remotely for health and safety reasons.


37 Ibid.


48 CDE. (February 2020). Year-Round Education


51 Los Angeles County Schools. (May 2020). Rising to the Challenge.