Pandemic's impact on the youth in foster care

and how schools are tackling their learning and emotional needs

CENTRAL QUESTIONS

1. What has the educational experience been like for youth in foster care during the COVID-19 pandemic?

2. What can we learn from the research on at-risk youth during other periods of school closure that can inform how we address needs and support educational and emotional well-being going forward?

KEY INSIGHTS

To Break down the Issue...

◊ Foster parents and teachers agree that learning losses have occurred. Though this is true for many students, most foster youth enter school already behind in reading and math.

◊ Older youth are at a risk for drop out if they were unengaged in remote learning last year.

◊ Foster youth were found to be one of the groups most likely to be unengaged in remote learning.

◊ Supportive school environments for teachers, and a strong student-teacher and teacher-foster parent relationship will help foster youths re-integrate into school.

◊ These students have been through a lot in life. They must feel safe and connected first.

"Education is not their first worry—these kids have seen a lot of life"

Strategies to Consider...

◊ Tutoring that is offered immediately after school and is tied to classroom content and one to one engagement.

◊ Prioritize older students who have avoided school during the pandemic by making additional outreach like texting, visiting home/places of employment, and

◊ Teachers need coaching on working with traumatized students and how to build connection with students who have experienced disruptions and crisis.

◊ Assume that all youth who are in foster care have historical trauma AND additional covid-related trauma.

Strategies to Avoid...

Avoid summer school, voluntary retention, as strategies for learning loss since birth parents view them as punishment as they reflect badly on them and harm reunification.

Schools shifting "best teachers" to address high need students can negatively impact all students in the school. Schools should be strategic about reassigning teachers & providing resources to all teachers	Avoid punitive consequences for trauma-related behaviors (anger, inattention). Avoid punishing in ways that lower engagement.

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