

The Future of Student Well-being Research | Learning Recovery Research Brief

The RESTART Network Scan and Synthesis of Policy and Practice on Recovery Needs and Activities is a systematic review of studies and other resources about actions taken, policies adopted, and strategies implemented to address the needs of students and educators in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim of the RESTART Network's ongoing scan and synthesis is to provide PK-12 policymakers and practitioners with the most up-to-date information on student well-being.

This brief provides an overview of studies and resources published between March 2020 and March 2023.

At a glance: Student well-being research



There are immense differences in terms of student need since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Student well-being is fundamental to fostering effective and supportive educational environments** that contribute to improved academic performance, attendance, mental health, and long-term success (Cipriano et al., 2023; Durlak et al., 2011).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) highlighted 19 student well-being focused programs in K-12 education setting in which one or more studies met WWC standards with or without reservations, and demonstrated strong, positive student or teacher outcomes.

How schools supported student well-being in the wake of the pandemic



While **there is limited evidence available on post-pandemic student well-being strategies, our research found that schools relied on** four strategies to encourage student recovery from the effects of the pandemic:

- **Adding curriculum and programming** to enhance student well-being throughout the school was by far the most common strategy – in 2021, 70% of districts were providing programming to improve student well-being
- Integrating strategies such as **multi-tiered systems of support or individual check-ins and home visits** into existing student supports

- **Increasing the number of staff and staff resources** focusing on student well-being including hiring additional staff (e.g., psychologists, social workers, or mental health facilitators) and providing staff with student well-being crisis trainings.
- **Providing wraparound services** that aim to serve students and their families with mental health, behavior, and basic needs such as food assistance.

Student well-being is a key target area for COVID-19 recovery efforts and strategies. Evidence-based practices must continue to be evaluated to address the needs of students and teacher outcomes.

* The RESTART Network will update this brief periodically. Visit our [website](#) to see the latest.

How this work informs the future of research

Research findings related to student well-being post-pandemic were primarily descriptive in nature and most reports did not include a planned evaluation.

17 of the **36** reports reviewed indicated or anticipated positive outcomes associated with strategies implemented to support student well-being. 5 of the reviewed reports noted academic benefits and 4 reports indicated improvements to students' well-being.

However, we found very few studies examining the effectiveness of student well-being strategies, and none of the studies rise to the rigor of promising evidence as defined by ESSA. Further, none of the studies meet the criteria to be reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse.

One reason for this may be the time frame studied. Our review covered publications from January 2020 through March 2023. Because of the proximity to the start of the pandemic, researchers were likely more focused on descriptives studies that documented student needs and best practices to meet those needs.

More research is needed to support students and educators at-present. Further, more rigorous research is needed to understand how educators can support student well-being in the event of a future education disruption.

1,143 studies were reviewed for inclusion



77 studies were considered

36 of the studies were deemed eligible for inclusion in the narrative synthesis

17 of the 36 studies indicated or anticipated positive outcomes for the students

Learn more about our methods by reading the [report](#).

Call to action for researchers: Traditionally, it can take 3-5 years for interventions to take hold and demonstrate change (Domitrovich et al., 2008). Now is the time to focus on conducting rigorous studies like randomized control trials and quasi-experimental designs.

Learning Recovery Efforts Interactive Map

The RESTART Network's [Learning Recovery Efforts Interactive Map](#) provides an overview of learning recovery research and ESSER plans across the U.S.

Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners will find this map valuable for understanding the current landscape of pandemic-related education research and how states addressed ESSER plans and strategies.



The Research on Education Strategies to Advance Recovery and Turnaround (RESTART) Network focuses on identifying and sharing evidence-based strategies aligned with the needs of policymakers, leaders and educators to accelerate student academic recovery.

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