

## POLICY NOTE

# Fund every child's education: National coalition calls for funding students and families, not institutions

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### Key Findings

1. Economic lock-downs have disrupted the lives of millions of families. Tens of thousands of schools will be closed partially or for the entirety of the fall semester.
2. Extraordinary hardships are being placed on parents who are working to ensure that children continue to learn.
3. Families are using tutors, creating learning plans, organizing childcare cooperatives, enrolling their children in community-built extracurricular activities, and upending their lives to provide the continued learning opportunities that many children have lacked for months.
4. The sacrifices these families are making with their time, money, and careers – are immeasurable.
5. As families sacrifice to meet the needs of the day, politicians are debating how many billions of dollars should be spent on school buildings that education officials say will remain closed.
6. Additional education funds from current school budgets should be provided directly to families, via grants, stipends, rebates, or other mechanisms designed to help families cover the costs of schooling their children.
7. The “yes. every kid” organization has assembled a coalition of over fifty organizations calling for funding students and families instead of institutions.

### Introduction

Washington Policy Center has joined over 50 independent policy organizations from around the country calling on Congress to promote school choice and to direct funding for students and families, instead of simply pouring money into established, union-dominated institutions. The coalition has issued a statement calling for changes in education policy to provide public resources to families so that children can continue their education while schools are closed during the COVID-19 economic lock-down.

This Policy Note provides the full text of the statement.<sup>1</sup>

### A time of uncertainty

At a time when tens of millions of students face nearly six months without consistent schooling, priorities should focus on the needs of families over institutions.

The uncertainty surrounding the reopening of schools and the fear of exposure to the coronavirus have disrupted the lives and daily routines of untold millions of families. As governments seek to assist during this pandemic, any aid to support K-12 and protect students and educators should be sent to families, giving them direct financial support to create stable and continuous learning for their children.

At first, it seemed that “spring break 2020” would merely be extended through summer, a disruption that families faced bravely and with few complaints at a time of uncertainty and international crisis.

But now, Americans are living through a phenomenon that no one living in this nation has ever encountered: Tens of thousands of schools will be closed partially – or for the entirety – of the fall semester. This comes after weeks of conflicting statements and guidance from government, school, and public health officials at all levels regarding what could be expected for the 2020-21 school year.

The result is clear. Extraordinary hardships will be put upon parents and guardians who are working to ensure their child or children continue

<sup>1</sup> This statement and the list of organizations signing on to this statement can be found at <https://www.yeseverykid.com/fund-every-kid/?fbclid=IwAR2Xks8yESYEEmgOSO6CJJ6Lv2fqdLTXorR9iz44y4uORMmRPJjwz0bs7g>.

to learn while simultaneously making a living, whether in an office or at home. Too many are unable to return to work because they have been thrust into the role of full-time childcare provider and at-home teacher. Many more are struggling to balance work while trying to implement an effective at-home learning program for multiple children.

The sacrifices these families are making with their time, money, and careers – are immeasurable.

### **Families are turning to practical solutions**

Unwilling to stand by and wait for politicians to figure out how to provide children with a quality education, families are taking matters into their own hands. They are turning to their friends, neighbors, and family in their communities for practical solutions. These communities are leaning on teachers and tutors, creating learning pods, organizing childcare cooperatives, enrolling their children in community-built extracurricular activities, and rearranging their lives to provide the continued learning opportunities that many children have lacked for months.

### **Politicians want to fund institutions, not families**

Yet the main response from politicians and policymakers has focused on institutions, not families. As families sacrifice to meet the needs of the day, politicians are debating how many hundreds of billions of dollars should be spent to reopen schools that education officials have already said will be closed. They are debating the best way to provide digital devices and internet connectivity to children who won't receive them until well after the semester has started – not to mention those who would rather be learning in person in the first place. Plans are being devised for a population deeply divided on the best way to reopen schools for their own children.

All of this has lost sight of one important fact: plans to reopen schools should be designed for the needs and desires of families, not the institutions that have been designated to serve them.

Recovery – whether in business, homes, or schools – begins with individuals. The politics of the day are a lagging indicator of the work already being done by individuals that make up each community of this nation.

### **Conclusion – provide education funding to families**

We, the undersigned organizations in this coalition, call for supporting a more student-centered and resilient education system: If any additional funds are to be provided for education in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, they should be provided directly to families to foster stable and continuous learning and to pay for any educational option that works best for their situation and at their sole discretion.

Families have already paid for the ability to access public education. Any additional funds should be provided directly to families via grants, stipends, rebates, or other mechanisms designed to help cover the schooling, courses, devices,



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connectivity, tutoring, socialization, extracurricular activities, and other forms of learning that have been left to parents to pay for.

This funding will reflect the sacrifices being made by families, and it will provide real and immediate learning opportunities for children.