

III. New solutions are emerging. We can address the needs of this generation—and future generations

The essays that accompany this report offer compelling ideas and examples of both what can happen immediately and in the long-term to transform the American high school:

- A greater urgency to address learning gaps before students graduate
- Laser-like focus on students most in need of urgent solutions
- More creative responses to meet student needs and preferences
- More emphasis on adult-student relationships
- Technology-enabled tutoring as a normal part of the school day
- More permeable relationships among high schools, colleges, and careers

These ideas are not far from what is happening in certain communities right now.

Some states are responding in urgent and innovative ways. Colorado and Virginia have bold plans to ensure every high school student graduates with an associate degree and an industry-recognized credential, part of a deliberate strategy to blur the lines between high school and postsecondary success. Colorado has multiple initiatives underway, including apprenticeship and “learn while you earn” models, early college high schools, and a [zero-cost credential program](#) where students can earn healthcare certifications at any community or technical college. Virginia has earmarked \$100 million for [Lab Schools](#), which will stimulate innovative approaches to teaching and learning; encourage greater collaboration among K-12, postsecondary, business, and other community partners; and develop model programs that can be replicated. The state is also exerting major effort to inform and engage parents with timely, honest, and actionable report cards. [Red and blue states](#) are both investing in SEL as part of Covid-19 recovery efforts, and 27 states have adopted SEL standards or competencies to guide pre-K through 12th-grade instruction.

SIX STATES ARE SETTING A NEW PRECEDENT FOR TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Last year, CRPE called for greater transparency from states around pandemic recovery. We called for clear indicators of successful recovery and regular reporting on progress. We called for individualized data and plans for students and families. Some states are making progress toward these goals, investing federal and state dollars into tracking real-time information and reporting beyond the initial pandemic crisis. These efforts help system leaders, businesses, community partners, and families know what’s working, what’s not working, and how to move into an era of long-term recovery.



Connecticut. In 2021, the state established the [Center for Connecticut Education Research Collaboration](#) (CCERC) with pandemic relief funds. CCERC has made significant strides in [tracking and reporting on progress](#) on pandemic initiatives that can help educators determine what to stop, start, and continue. Most recently, CCERC published findings from its [Learner Engagement and Attendance Program evaluation](#), which found that the LEAP program resulted in up to 30-point decreases in student absenteeism rates within six months of the first home visit to families with chronically absent students.

CCERC is continuously monitoring and reporting progress toward pandemic recovery through a robust [portfolio of research partnerships](#) in the areas of learning acceleration, social and emotional learning, teachers and educators, and district improvements.

Indiana. In February 2023, the [Indiana Department of Education \(IDOE\) launched the Indiana GPS dashboard](#), a new tool that shows how Indiana students and schools are performing on various indicators of success, such as academic mastery, career and postsecondary readiness, communication and collaboration, work ethic, and civic, financial, and digital literacy. The dashboard allows users to view data disaggregated by student population across multiple indicators, such as third grade literacy, sixth grade math growth, graduation pathways completion, college and career credentials, and employment and enrollment. The dashboard also shows the state's goals and progress for each indicator, as well as the comparative national averages.

Louisiana. Louisiana's [Comeback Plan](#) asked all school systems to engage in a coordinated effort to join a statewide collective impact model grounded in three core areas: student attendance and well-being, recovery and acceleration, and professional learning.

The collaboration led to the new [EPIC](#) (Education Performance and Innovation Center) dashboard, which includes data on student achievement, school performance scores, graduation rates, and other important indicators for individual school systems. Stakeholders can view their school's academic recovery plan, how their pandemic funds are being spent, and their progress toward educational goals.

Mississippi. In July 2023, the Mississippi Department of Education, Mississippi State University Research and Curriculum Unit, and the software organization SAS launched the [Mississippi Pandemic Education Recovery Dashboard](#) to help leaders understand the statewide and local impact of the pandemic and their progress toward recovery. The organizations compared actual student-specific outcome data to their projected growth trajectory had the pandemic never happened. This disaggregated information is helping education leaders target their recovery efforts more strategically and design the appropriate evaluation plans to continue tracking students' progress.

North Carolina. The [NC Strategic Dashboard Monitoring Tool](#) shows how schools are progressing toward the state's education goals (e.g., eliminate opportunity gaps by 2025).

The dashboard, developed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and SAS, displays data on student access to high-quality learning opportunities, such as advanced coursework, digital resources, teacher diversity ratios, and suspension rates. It also shows data on student achievement and growth on state assessments in math, reading, science, and social studies. Moreover, it reveals data on how schools and districts use their financial and human resources, such as staffing information, per-pupil expenditures, teacher salaries, and teacher effectiveness. The dashboard lets users filter the data by student groups such as race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, and English learner status.

Virginia. The Virginia Visualization and Analytics Solution (VVAAS) [dashboard](#) is a powerful tool that is helping Virginia parents and educators [understand how their students](#) are performing and growing academically, as well as how they compare to their peers across the state and the nation. By providing individualized student reports and communication tools, the Virginia Department of Education has made a commitment to transparency and accountability for the public education system. The VVAAS dashboard also supports the state’s vision to restore excellence and close achievement gaps by providing data-driven insights and guidance for improving student outcomes.

More states can use key data principles to drive evidence-based education recovery

The states highlighted here recognized early during the pandemic the importance of providing timely, accurate, and comprehensive data on student learning and well-being to inform decisions about how to accelerate pandemic recovery efforts.

Across many of these examples, the state education agencies engaged stakeholders in the design and development of their reporting tools, ensuring that they are actionable for the most important data users—students, families, community leaders, and educators. Other states should follow their lead and use data as a powerful ally in restoring trust, closing pernicious achievement gaps, and making up for pandemic learning losses.

New, promising school designs also are emerging

Nowell Academy in Providence, Rhode Island, is designed to provide high-quality, competency-based education to pregnant, parenting, and underserved students. The school has introduced several on-campus services, from day care to night school, to increase student attendance and maximize opportunities for them to learn and gain credits. Educators are rethinking traditional credit recovery opportunities through “transformative learning experiences,” which are interdisciplinary classes that give students double credits in subjects (e.g., Nowell’s food revolution class gives students history and science credits). Their improved attendance is largely attributed to their primary person model and the intentional community the school has built through adult-student relationships. Students meet regularly with a mentor for academic counseling and postsecondary planning, and participate in a range of community-building activities. Mentors also check in daily with students through phone calls and text messages to ensure students feel seen, known, and heard.

Effective use of technology can help support a more personalized approach. **Saga Education’s** longstanding math tutoring partnership with Chicago Public Schools provides a great example of what is possible. Saga offers tutoring as part of a credit-bearing class, and the school system recognizes that tutoring offers as much or more value than the classes it replaces. The research supports this choice: a randomized control trial of 2,633 ninth and tenth graders, published by the [National Bureau of Economic Research](#) in 2021, found the program improved students’ test scores and grades in math and non-math courses. There is much to be learned about which subjects and skills are most responsive to technology-enabled tutoring, but this and emerging large language model tutors like [Khanmigo](#) should cause us to more [seriously consider](#) the role of AI and machine learning combined with teacher-led instruction.

Nokomis Regional High School in rural Maine helps students explore postsecondary interests starting in ninth grade and develop a concrete plan by senior year, while **KIPP Academy Lynn Collegiate** in Massachusetts is expanding its own postsecondary counseling services to support a wider range of options, while staying committed to rigorous academic preparation so every student is college-ready, if not college-going. They are among schools in [six New England states](#) rethinking high school.



Seckinger High School in Gwinnett County, Georgia, is the district's first artificial intelligence-themed high school and is part of a [broader district vision](#) to foster excellence and a sense of belonging in every school. Once the school opens, students will receive a college preparatory curriculum that is taught through the lens of artificial intelligence. Students will also be able to pursue an education in developing artificial intelligence.

Indiana's Purdue Polytech High School is a public charter school network designed to prepare students for careers in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and math). The school uses hands-on and project-based learning, industry and higher ed partnerships, and a flexible and personalized approach. Students leave high school with college credit, in-demand industry credentials, and preferred admission to nine out of the 10 colleges at Purdue University.

Another Indiana charter school, **Geo Academies**, offers a College Immersion Program, a hyper-personalized, dual-enrollment program where high school students take college classes on the college campus of their choice beginning as early as the ninth grade. GEO pays for everything and provides the academic, social, and emotional supports so that kids learn real-life skills and grow the confidence necessary to earn college degrees—and a path to escaping poverty—before they graduate from high school. When they are on their high school campus, GEO students can engage in direct, teacher-led instruction, independent learning and practice, and teacher-assisted small group instruction.

Schools such as **Benito Juarez Community Academy**, serving Chicago high school students, have prioritized social and emotional learning (SEL) as a whole-school reform to help support students' well-being and academics, according to [CASEL](#), which is working intensively with 20 mostly urban school districts (from Anchorage and Austin to Chicago and Cleveland) to integrate SEL and academics. Meanwhile, all of New York City's 1,500 schools are using SEL supports developed by the **Urban Assembly**, which is also running nearly two dozen schools organized around relevant and real-world themes, from healthcare to construction to the arts. Hands-on internships and apprenticeships are the norm.

Responsive, creative solutions are also happening at the college level. In New York City, the **CUNY Reconnect Initiative** set out to bring back students who had dropped out or paused their college education. A team of "navigators" connected with 10,000 former CUNY working-age adults with incomplete degrees and convinced 3,000 of them to come back to school as of the first semester of 2022. Black and Latina women disproportionately comprise the population of students with college credits but no degree. The goal is to help these New Yorkers advance their careers, improve their economic mobility, and aid the city's post-pandemic economy.

"We know the complicated web of factors that can discourage or prevent a person from returning to college. Working to help each individual successfully navigate this transition presents a game-changing proposition for York College and CUNY to promote access and opportunity across New York City." -CUNY Chancellor Felix Matos Rodríguez

Arizona State University is accelerating its efforts to redesign everything, from buildings to instruction, to serve the diverse range of students on its campus. This is not only for the nearly 10,000 students who receive disability resources or accommodations, but for all students who will benefit from increased flexibility in instruction and assessment. University leaders are asking, "In what ways can we design approaches, activities, and measurement of learning *with* students? Instead of a test at the end of every course, what about allowing students to choose how to demonstrate mastery of material in a manner that best suits them? Instead of insisting that all students come back to class now that the pandemic is over, how do we serve the students for whom remote learning was a



godsend—those students who would rarely speak in class but were avid users of the chat function on Zoom?” These latest efforts are part of ASU’s commitment to create a New American University.

New York University is flipping the script on how it educates autistic students, moving from a deficit model (what needs to be “fixed”) to an asset-based model that affirms students’ neurodiversity. Kristie Patten, the university’s Counselor to the President, says, “We used to force students to ask for additional services, often at great expense to them. Now we say, ‘You don’t have to change. This is who you are. You are more than enough. How can we best support what YOU need to continue growing?’”

These institutions and states are showing what’s possible when leaders are willing to rethink outdated approaches and center instruction and support on what students need most. But given the magnitude of the current crisis, these examples are much too few and far between. Many more public and private institutions must step up.

