



5 Predictions for How Student-led Learning Will Help Us Bounce Back

After nearly two years of inconsistency as a whole within the education system, educators are understandably struggling to navigate how to get students back on track.

by Chris Minnich

As we head into the new year, we will start to see new norms that include parents, educators, and districts playing a critical role in empowering students to achieve academic success. We have some predictions of what we can expect as we seek to turn the page on the impact COVID has had on education.

1. COVID caused an uptick in parent engagement; this will be the new norm. Now more than ever, superintendents, principals and other administrators will play a key role in family and community engagement as schools face scrutiny that calls their decisions and choices into question. School leaders will be the point of outreach for providing their communities with valuable insight and addressing concerns while also helping teachers navigate hardships and opportunities.

We will see that when school systems and leadership offer this support for teachers, they will curate a work environment that is both transparent, caring and maintains positive energy and retention—which will also grow community trust. As we face teacher and staff shortages, strong leadership that builds this school climate will also retain its most valuable teachers.

2. Students will lead a revolution in learning. What does a student revolution in learning mean? They are demanding education that prepares them for their own future, not their grandparents' future. This

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will push us toward looking at education differently. This generation of students is galvanized—demanding more individualization and the opportunity to learn the most important things to them, while also caring deeply about how it sets them up for their future.

3. Students must be empowered to own their data. First, we must increase efforts to demystify the data for parents so they have not just the latest test score but a holistic view of how their child is doing. And just as importantly, we must continue to empower students to own their data and be critical voices in the decisions that impact their educational opportunities.

4. Post-pandemic education must focus on building student agency. The pandemic upended "traditional schooling" and in many aspects what students saw as their role in their education. Our longstanding education system is so dependent on students "just showing up to school"

that when schools went remote, "showing up" became something different. While there were many negative aspects to the pandemic and immense impact on society, one positive is the rise of student agency over their own learning. This is a trend we must build upon. This includes empowering students to be champions of their own data—and ultimately their own student story.

5. Rapid, quality research will help address urgent needs in education. The pandemic, coupled with political and social unrest, has deeply disrupted the lives and learning experiences of most students. It has created an urgent need to address long-standing opportunity gaps and has highlighted the importance of providing resources that support student achievement, social-emotional learning, and physical and mental well-being.

This urgency to address the impacts is valid, but it has also created a noisy environment of potential options of what might be best for students. It's critical, now more than ever, for decisions to be grounded in solid research. In the coming year, our researchers are working in partnership with university scholars, school districts and foundations to provide rapid-response research that helps inform recovery policies, identifies high-impact programs and innovations to drive evidence-based decision making that advances equitable opportunities for all kids. **DA**

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