



ISSUE BRIEF : Q3 2020

THE HOMEWORK GAP

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO DISTANCE LEARNING DURING COVID-19 COULD HELP LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD FOR AMERICA'S LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

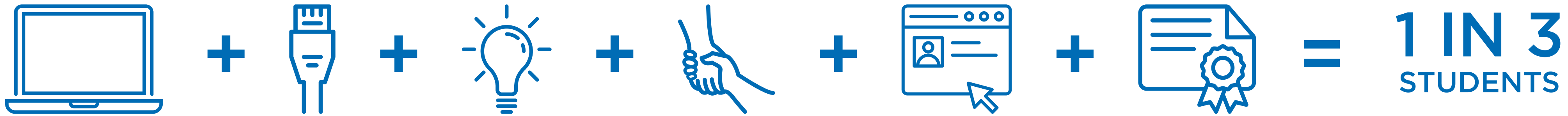


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TOPLINE

1. America's K-12 schools performed poorly before COVID-19. The pandemic just made it worse.

2. To learn from home, a student needs a laptop, broadband, digital literacy, parental assistance, a school offering online curriculum, and teachers who know how to use it.



3. This past semester only about one in three students met all of these requirements: 44 million of America's 56 million K-12 students were unable to learn online, in real-time, and be graded and tracked by their teachers.¹ Educators call this the "homework gap," but "gap" doesn't capture the scale of the problem.

4. Preliminary estimates suggest students will return in fall 2020 with roughly 70% of the learning gains in reading and 50% of the learning gains in math relative to a typical school year.² And most teachers will have no way of knowing what lessons each of their students actually learned.

5. To close the homework gap, we must address each of its underlying "gaps" simultaneously: affordable laptops and broadband, curriculum designed for distance learning (and the future of work), and digital training for students, parents, and teachers.

6. It's a massive undertaking that will require significant investment and coordination, but the tools we build and deliver in response to COVID-19 could level the playing field for students from low-income families, improve our workforce, and grow our economy.

THINGS WERE BAD BEFORE COVID-19

ATTENDANCE

1 IN 7 STUDENTS ARE CHRONICALLY ABSENT*

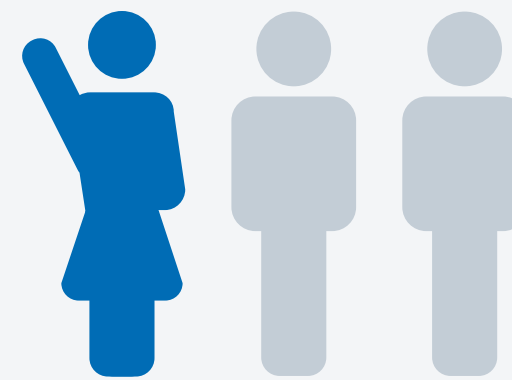


Nationwide, Native Americans (1 in 4), Hispanics (1 in 5), and African Americans (1 in 5) are even more likely to be chronically absent.³

*GOVERNMENT DEFINES CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM AS MISSING 15+ DAYS.

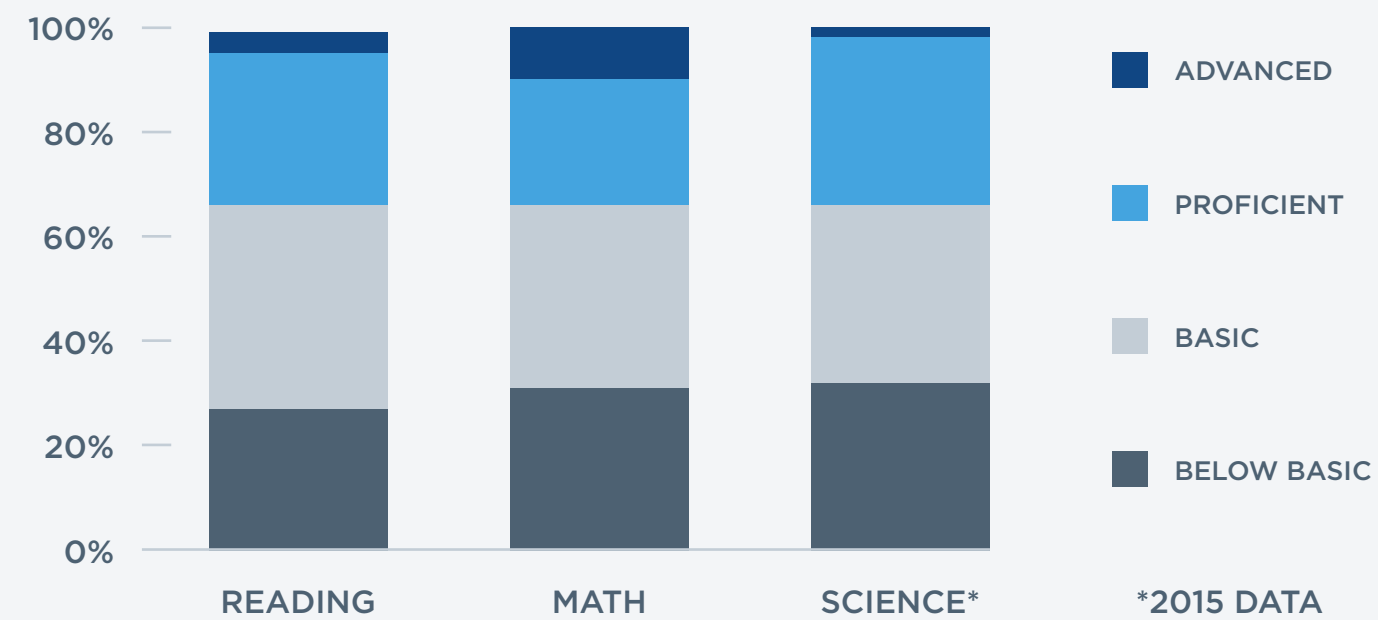
ACHIEVEMENT

ONLY 1 IN 3 EIGHTH GRADERS IS PROFICIENT OR ABOVE IN MATH, SCIENCE, OR READING.



African American 8th grade students are 3x less likely to be proficient in reading or math as white students.⁴

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF 8TH GRADE STUDENTS, BY NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NAEP) READING ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL (2019)⁵



ACCESS TO COLLEGE



BY THE TIME THEY ARE 24, STUDENTS FROM AFFLUENT HOUSEHOLDS ARE:

5X MORE LIKELY TO GRADUATE FROM A FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE

THAN STUDENTS FROM LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS⁶

COVID-19 MADE THINGS WORSE

ATTENDANCE DOWN

More than 55 million students have been impacted by school closures.⁷

In the Philadelphia School District, only 57% participated in school remotely - compared to their normal attendance rate of 92%.⁸

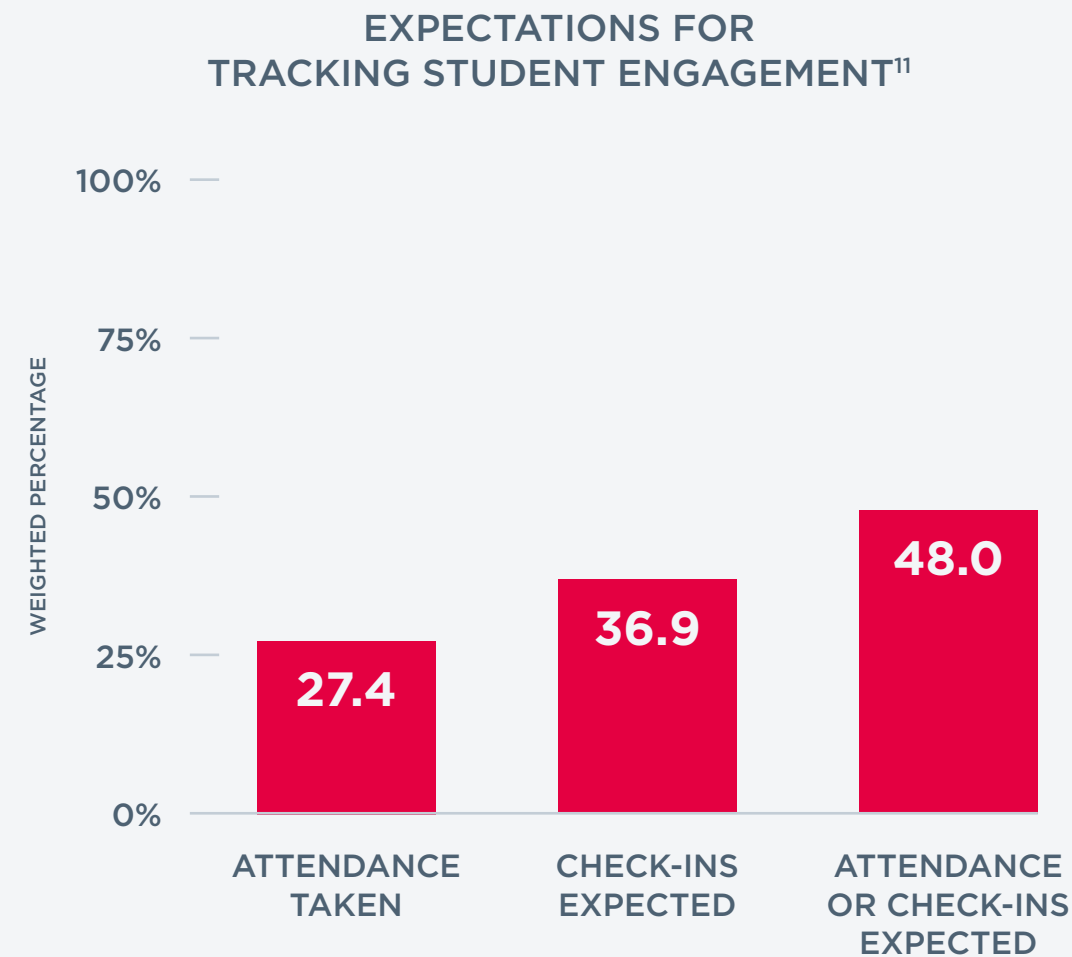
In Chicago, fewer than 60% of all public school students engaged with remote learning three or more days a week.⁹

“AS SCHOOL MOVES ONLINE, MANY STUDENTS STAY LOGGED OUT”

The New York Times

LEARNING COMPROMISED

Less than half of school districts across the country expect teachers to track their students' engagement.¹⁰

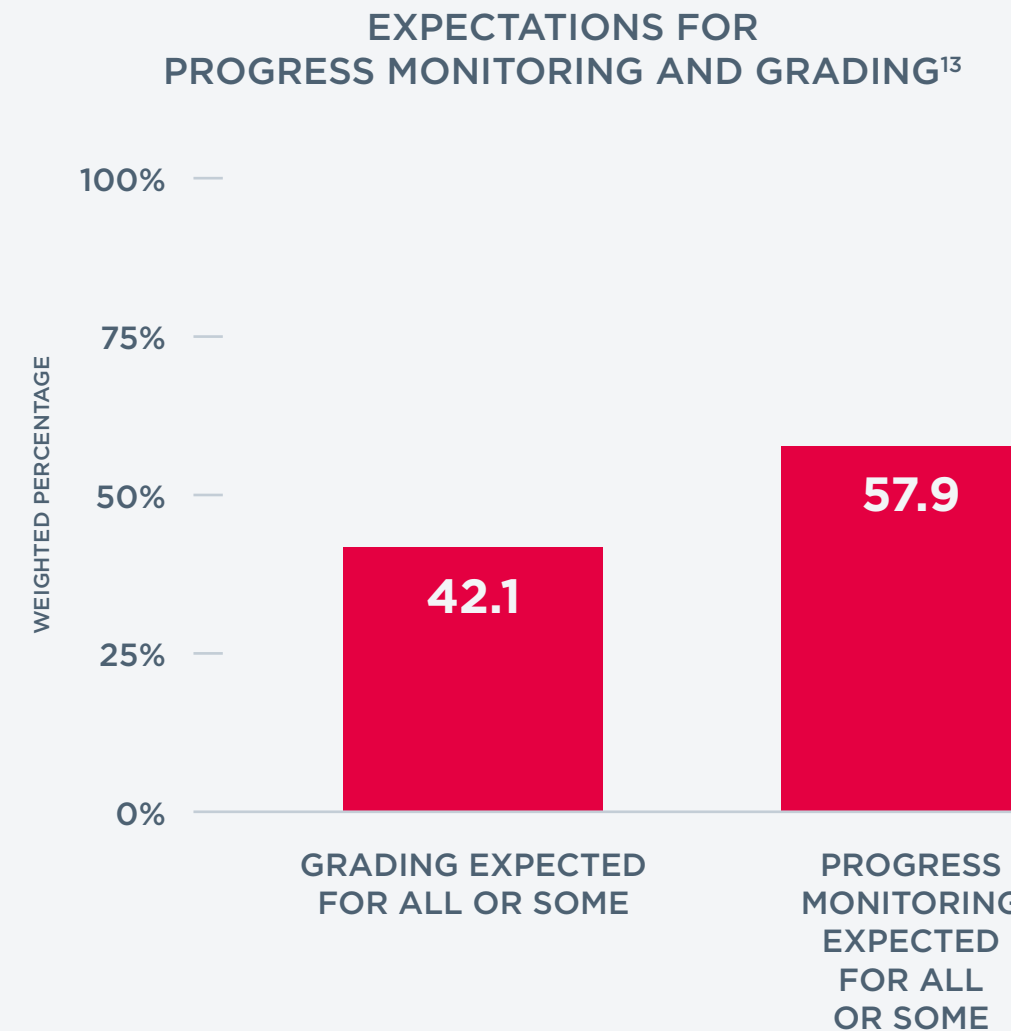


ONLY 1 IN 5 SCHOOLS OFFER REAL-TIME INSTRUCTION¹²

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF RELAXING EXPECTATIONS

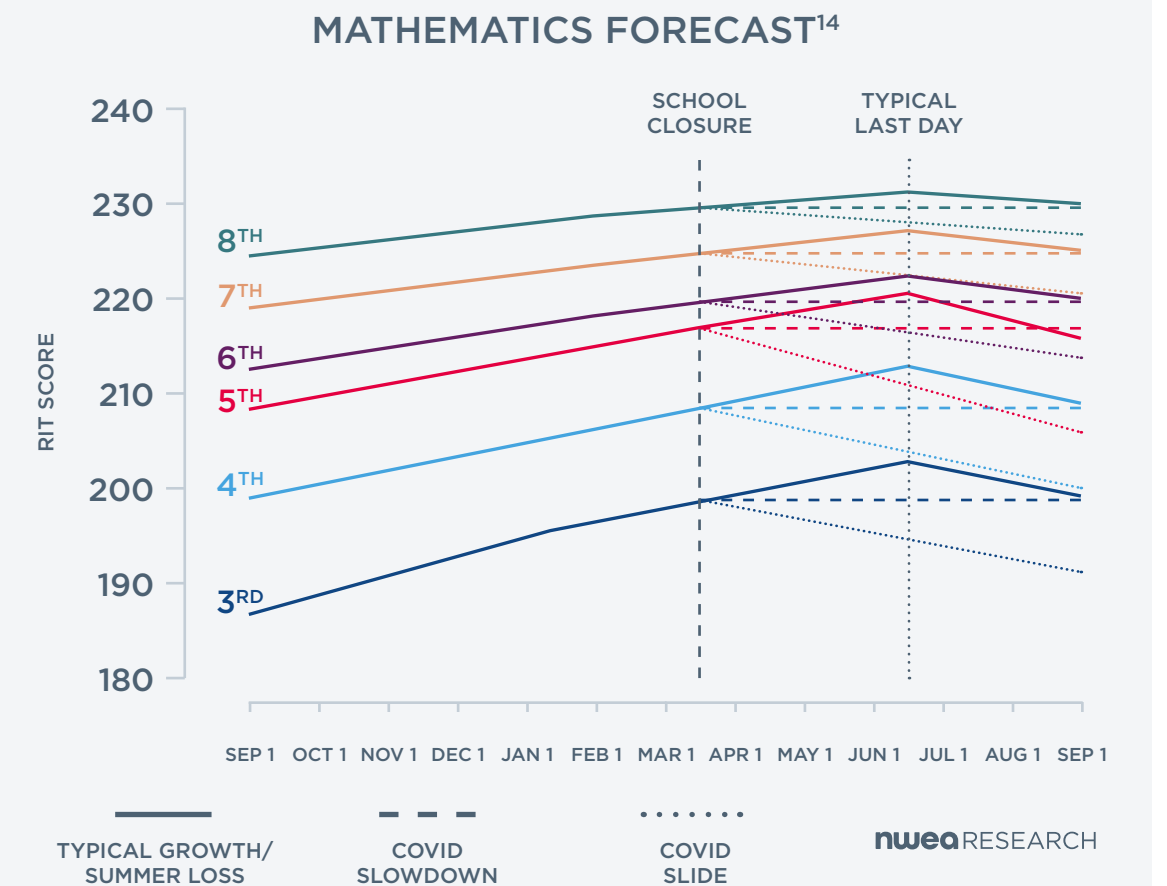
A majority of schools have relaxed standards to avoid penalizing students without laptops and broadband.

This has led to low assignment completion and low student engagement.



“COVID-19 SLIDE”

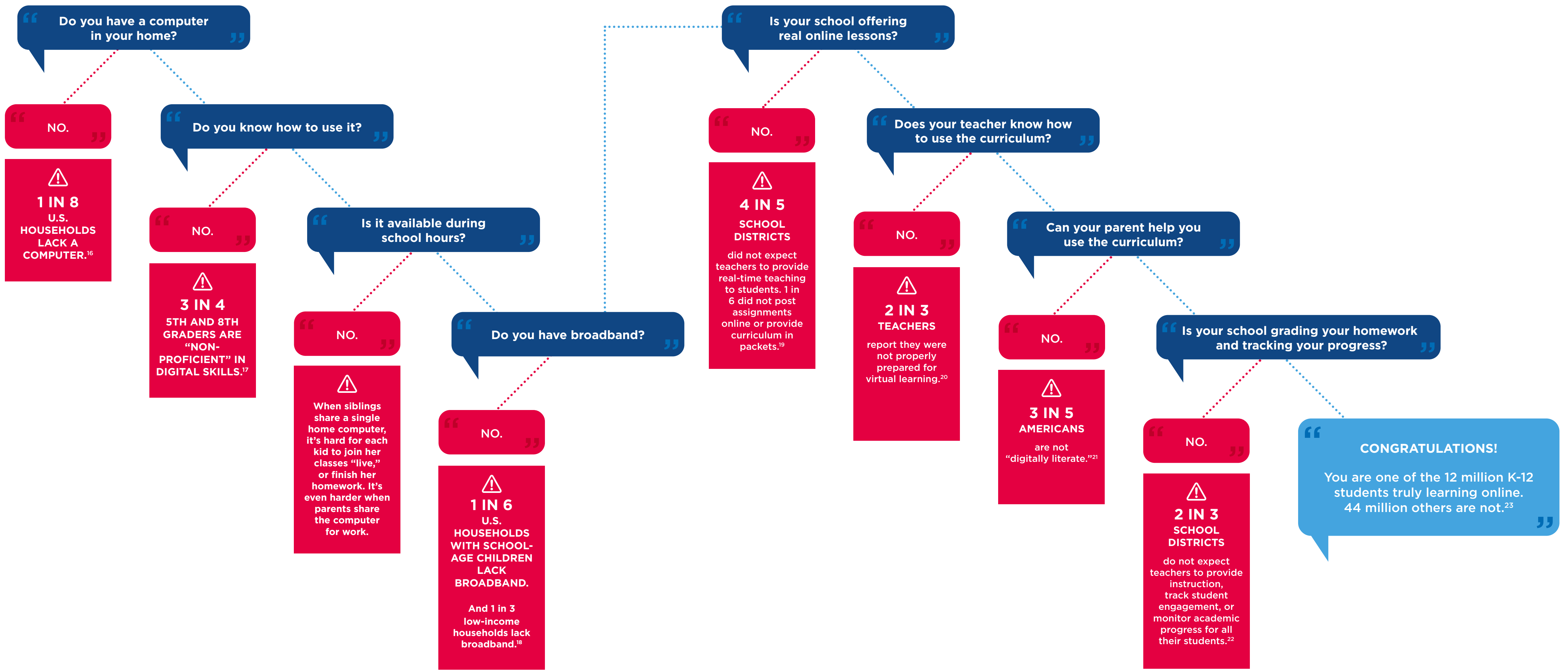
Researchers have found that during the summer, learning slows or declines. This is called the “summer slide.”



Preliminary estimates suggest students will return in fall 2020 with roughly 70% of the learning gains in reading and 50% of the learning gains in math relative to a typical school year.¹⁵

For students from lower-income households, Covid's impact on learning opportunities will go well beyond the traditional summer break's impact as they deal with food, housing, and economic instability.

THE HOMEWORK GAP, EXPLAINED IN 8 QUESTIONS

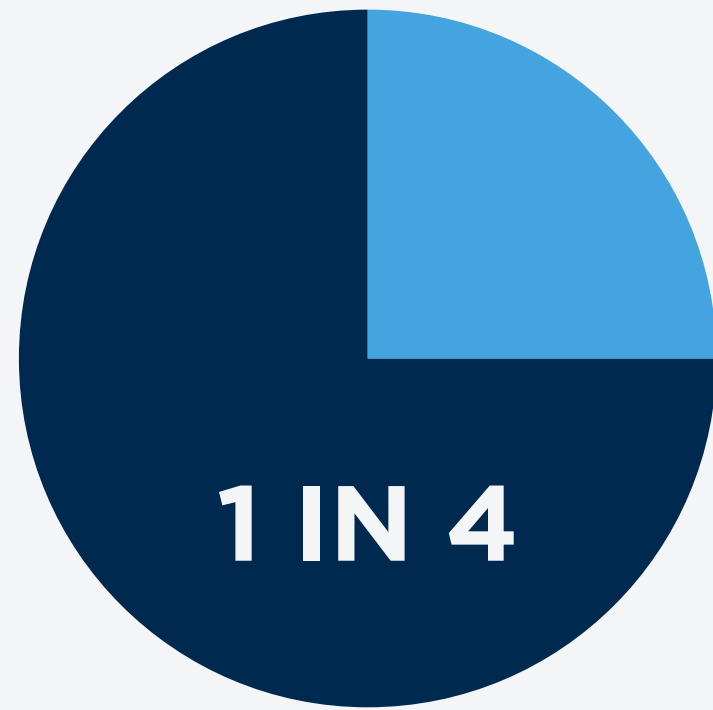


THE TECHNOLOGY GAP

The Pew Research Center reports that nearly one in four U.S. teenagers living in households earning less than \$30,000/year is “often or sometimes unable to complete homework due to a lack of a reliable internet connection or computer.”²⁴

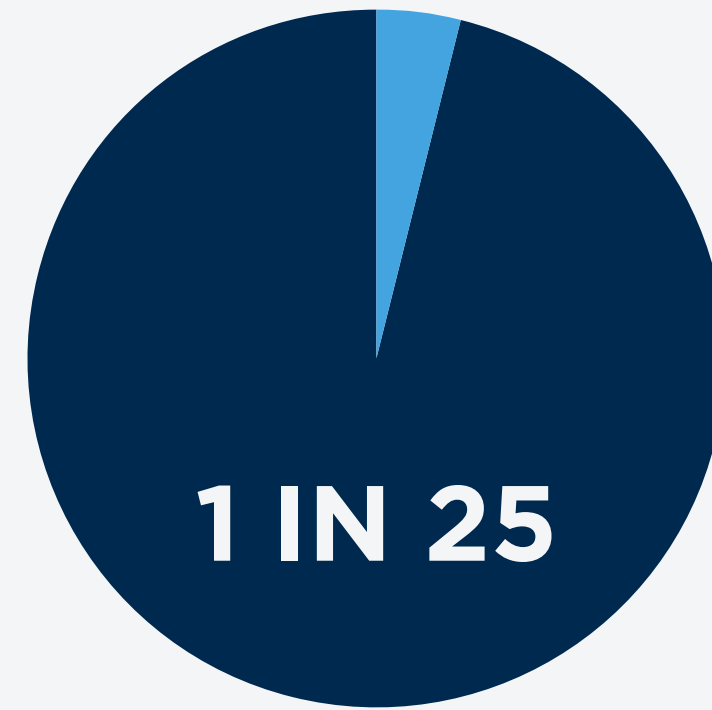
COMPUTERS

CHILDREN (AGES 6-17) WHO LACK ACCESS TO A COMPUTER AT HOME²⁵



1 IN 4

HOUSEHOLD INCOME UNDER \$30,000



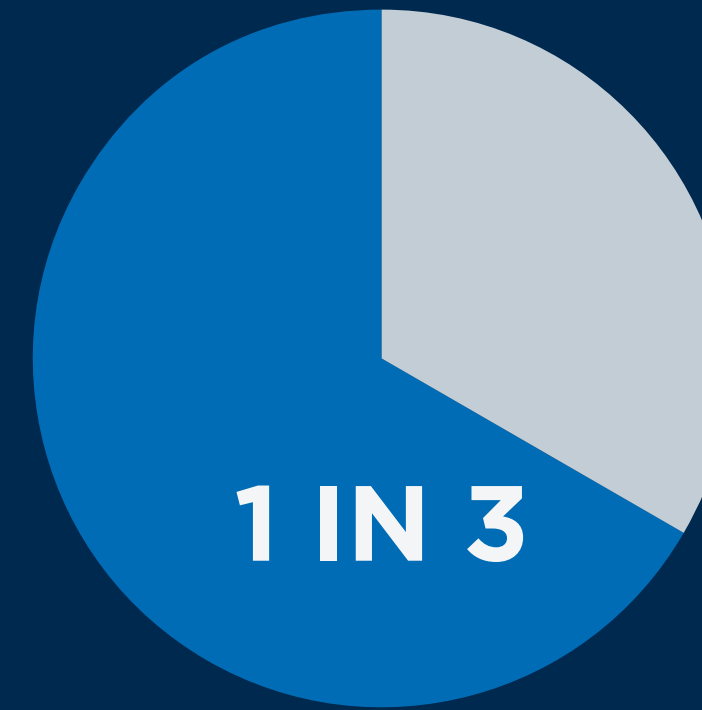
1 IN 25

HOUSEHOLD INCOME OVER \$75,000

ONLY HALF OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS PROVIDE DEVICES TO AT LEAST SOME OF THEIR STUDENTS.²⁶

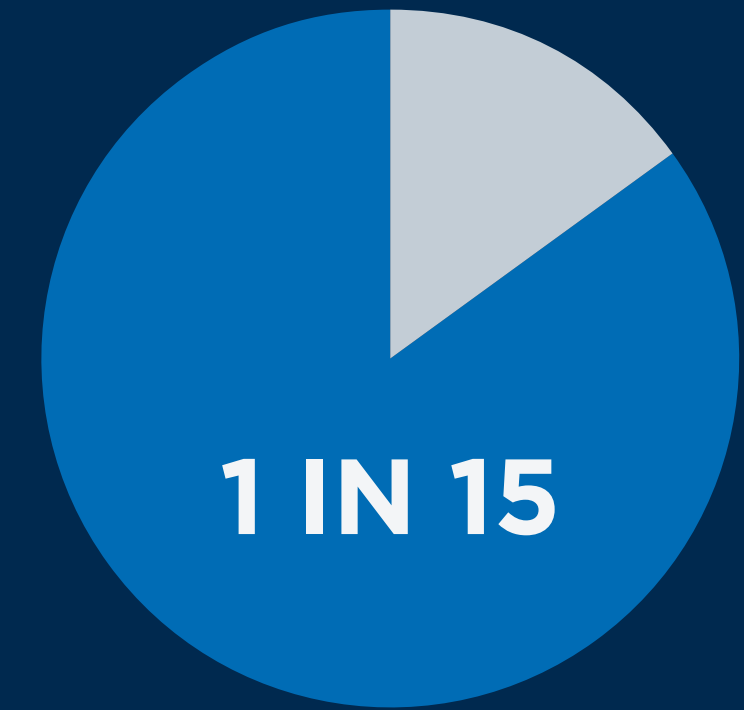
BROADBAND

CHILDREN (AGES 6-17) WHO LACK A HIGH-SPEED INTERNET CONNECTION AT HOME²⁷



1 IN 3

HOUSEHOLD INCOME UNDER \$30,000



1 IN 15

HOUSEHOLD INCOME OVER \$75,000

1 IN 3 SCHOOL DISTRICTS PROVIDES COMMUNITY OR HOME-BASED HOTSPOTS.²⁸

THE DIGITAL LITERACY GAP

STUDENTS

Many students and parents lack the digital skills necessary to navigate remote learning.



ONLY 1 IN 4 FIFTH AND EIGHTH GRADERS IS PROFICIENT IN DIGITAL SKILLS²⁹

“Some education experts say there is a huge gap between what students can do for fun on their cellphones and gaming systems and how good they are at using a device for educational tasks such as reading a document, answering a question or figuring out a problem.”³⁰

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

PARENTS

ONLY 2 IN 5 ADULTS ARE PROFICIENT IN DIGITAL SKILLS³¹



For context, only one in two adults reads at above a 5th grade level or above.³²

This includes “using digital technology, communication tools, and networks to acquire and evaluate information, communicate with others, and perform practical tasks.”

TEACHERS

Teachers, like other adults, struggle with digital literacy.



THE WASHINGTON POST REPORTS THAT 3 IN 5 TEACHERS SAY THEY FEEL “OVERWHELMED” BY DISTANCE LEARNING INSTRUCTION.³³

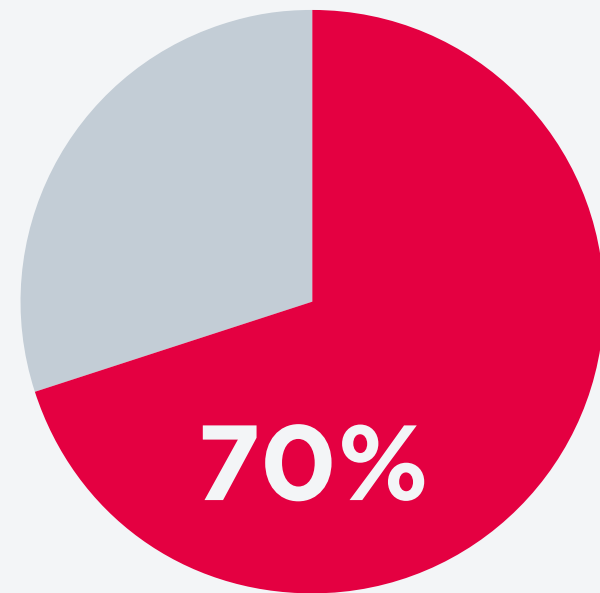
“Stress isn’t new to teachers, but what they’re experiencing now makes their typical stress seem like a picnic. Driven by a pandemic to the front lines of an unprecedented rush to distance-learning, the nation’s teachers are scrambling to manage an armful of new challenges. And they’re exhausted.”³⁴

EDUCATION WEEK

THE CURRICULUM GAP

SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS CAUGHT UNPREPARED (UNDERSTANDABLY)

Few schools prepared for distance learning, purchased curriculum for it, or trained their teachers on it. Ad hoc curriculum hurts student engagement.



70% OF TEACHERS REPORT THEY WERE NOT PREPARED FOR VIRTUAL LEARNING³⁵

“CORONAVIRUS ‘CONFUSION’: TEACHERS HAD LITTLE TRAINING FOR HOW TO DO ONLINE CLASSES”

USA TODAY

LOW STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



2 IN 5 TEACHERS SAY THAT THEIR STUDENTS ARE NOT FINDING THE SCHOOL WORK BEING SENT HOME VERY ENGAGING.³⁶

“EARLY READING INSTRUCTION TAKES A HIT DURING COVID-19”

“Teaching young students how to read and write often requires hands-on activities, like manipulating letter tiles, or learning how to form their shapes. And before they can sound out words, children rely on read-alouds, interactive play, and conversations to learn vocabulary and build knowledge about the world. They can’t read a complex informational text on their own.”³⁷

EDUCATION WEEK

FEW GRADUATES PREPARED FOR THE “FUTURE OF WORK”

Seven million job openings in 2015 were in occupations that required coding skills.³⁸

But only 35% of U.S. high schools offer computer science classes.³⁹



85% OF JOBS

THAT TODAY’S LEARNERS WILL BE DOING IN 2030 DON’T EXIST YET.⁴⁰

TO CLOSE THE HOMEWORK GAP, WE MUST CLOSE EACH CONTRIBUTING GAP SIMULTANEOUSLY

The cost, in lost future wages, of missing 4 months of education is \$2.5 trillion dollars.⁴¹



TECHNOLOGY GAP

LAPTOPS
BROADBAND



DIGITAL LITERACY GAP

STUDENTS
PARENTS



CURRICULUM GAP

REAL-TIME
PERSONALIZED
TRACKING & GRADING



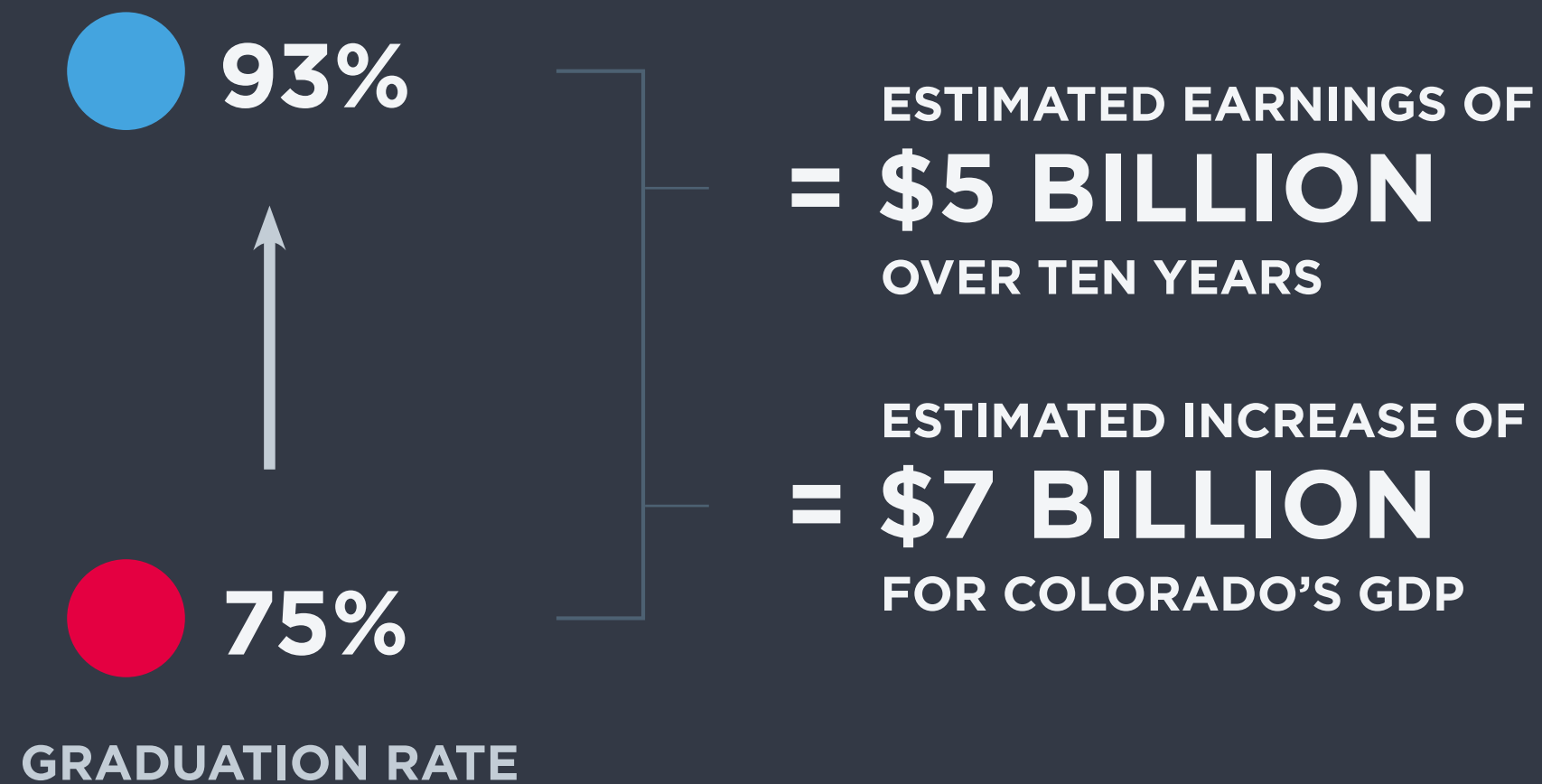
TEACHER TRAINING GAP

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Investments in distance learning this fall could provide homework support for low-income students in future years -- and that could improve school attendance, achievement, and college opportunity. It could also improve our workforce and grow our economy.

CASE STUDY: COLORADO PUBLIC SCHOOLS "PIPELINE"

Colorado business leaders' effort to increase high school graduation rates for poor students from 75% to 93% could help those students earn \$5 billion more over ten years - and increase Colorado's 10 year GDP by \$7 billion.⁴²



“

Districts have an opportunity to do better by students, teachers, and parents this fall... School districts now have several months to plan ahead to align the resources, create teacher professional development, and assess community priorities to design plans for the fall that have high expectations for each student's learning and are responsive to each student's needs.⁴³

”

- BETHENY GROSS & ALICE OPALKA
"TOO MANY SCHOOLS LEAVE LEARNING
TO CHANCE DURING THE PANDEMIC"
CENTER ON REINVENTING PUBLIC EDUCATION

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