

Lessons from Tulsa SEED: Supporting Learning & Well-being During COVID

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Lessons from Tulsa SEED: Supporting Learning and Wellbeing during COVID

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Sponsored by: The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

December 8, 2020

Background: Poverty, Stress, and Child Wellbeing

- Growing up in poverty increases the risk of household food insecurity and parental depression
- Food insecurity and parental depression are linked with decreased educational, behavioral, and health outcomes for children
 - Caregivers who are hungry or worried about providing food, or who are experiencing symptoms of depression, may be distracted, short-tempered, or withdrawn
- COVID has contributed to increased rates of food insecurity and parental depression, especially among low-income families
 - Documented nationally and in our Tulsa SEED Study (2020)

The Tulsa SEED Study

- Tulsa SEED (School Experiences and Early Development) has been following low-income families and children in Tulsa, OK since 2016
 - Started when children were age 3; continuing through 4th grade (2023)
 - Following approximately 1,000 children
 - Multiple child assessments, observations, and surveys of children, parents, and teachers each year
- Children were in 1st grade when COVID struck and schools closed
 - We embedded a pair of COVID surveys into the SEED study in May-July 2020
 - Asked parents and teachers about food insecurity; mental health and other stressors; and experiences with remote learning

Families have faced loss of work, loss of income, and food insecurity since the pandemic began



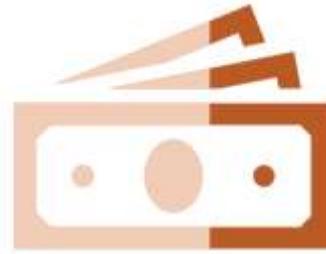
46% have lost their job or seen a decrease in work hours.

N = 567



49% have experienced food insecurity.

N = 533



59% have experienced a decrease in household income.

N = 515

Depressive symptoms were tied to food insecurity: Parents who were food-insecure were twice as likely to report feeling depressed as parents who were food-secure.

Parents' and children's mental and behavioral health suffered



1 in 4 parents have experienced depressive symptoms since the start of the pandemic.

N = 574



47% of parents said their child has experienced **increased emotional or behavioral problems** since the pandemic began.

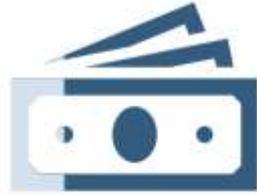
N = 584

Teachers of 1st grade children in our sample also reported income loss, food insecurity, and depressive symptoms



20% have experienced food insecurity.

N = 110



25% have experienced a decrease in household income.

N = 110

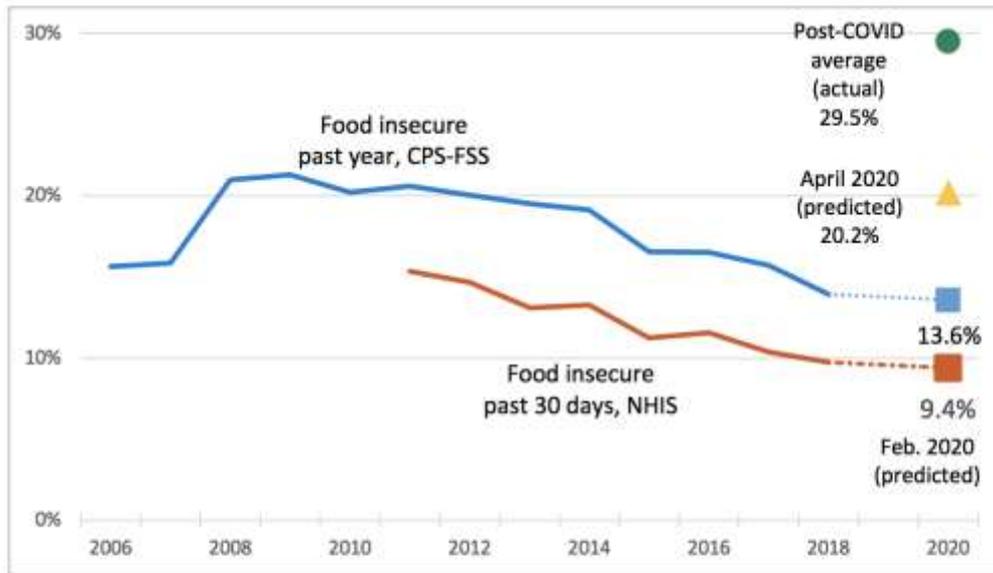


1 in 3 teachers experienced depressive symptoms since the start of the pandemic.

N = 117

As with parents, food insecurity and depression were correlated: half of teachers who were food-insecure reported feeling depressed, compared to one-third who were not

National data from the Brookings Institution also show rise in food insecurity among households with children



Actual average rate April-May 2020, based on weekly data from Census Pulse Surveys

Predicted Feb. and April 2020 rates, based on monthly data from the National Health Interview Survey and monthly unemployment rates

Notes: In both figures, the orange line is the annual average share of families reporting that their food did not last, calculated from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). The orange square predicts the trend line to its February 2020 trough and the yellow triangle predicts the April 2020 level, using a model with NHIS data and monthly unemployment rates. The blue line is the share of families measured as food insecure over the year using the CPS Food Supplement Survey (CPS-FSS) and the blue square is predicted Feb. 2020. The green circle is the post-COVID average food insecurity from the Census Pulse Survey. Statistics are weighted to be population representative.

This may explain why education and policy scholars are sounding the alarm about COVID exacerbating income-based achievement gaps

Parents who are worried about food access and who are depressed are more likely to struggle with the added burden of supporting remote learning

In our Tulsa study, 65% of low-income parents struggled during distance learning



Distance Learning Challenges for Parents

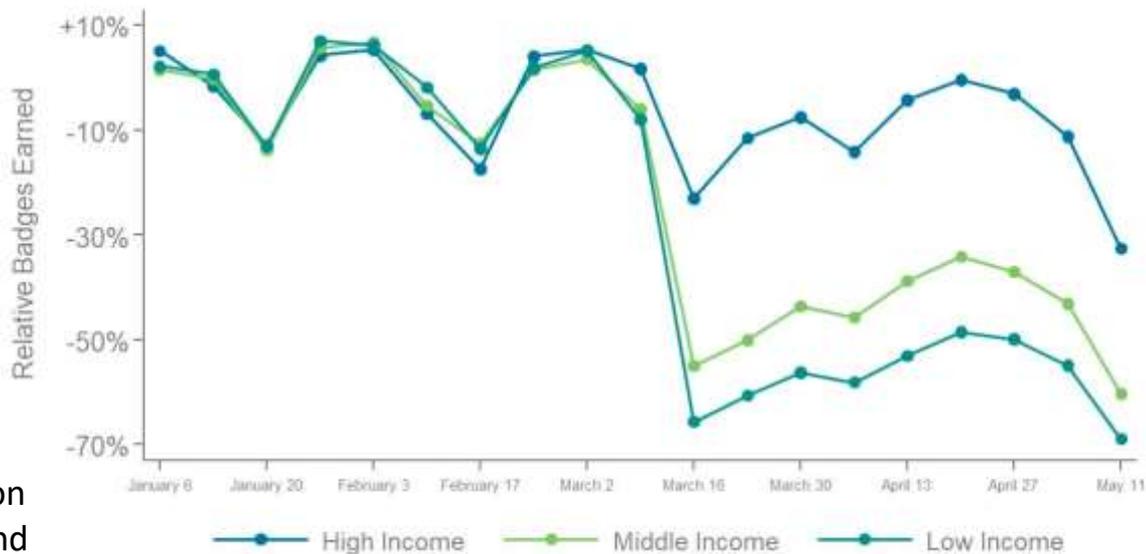
1. Child needs more support than the parent has time to provide 30%
 2. Lack of or inconsistent internet access 16%
 3. Lessons/instructions too hard to understand 14%
 4. No dedicated quiet space for schoolwork 13%
 5. Lack of device to connect to distance learning 10%
-

N = 565

20% of children *never communicated* with their teacher during distance learning

Nationally, the greatest drop-off in educational engagement was among children in low-income areas

Student Progress in Zearn, by School-Area Income Level
For Classrooms Using Zearn *BEFORE* the Shutdown



**Zearn* is a math app aligned with the Common Core math curriculum and used by many public school districts

COVID-related learning loss in fall 2020

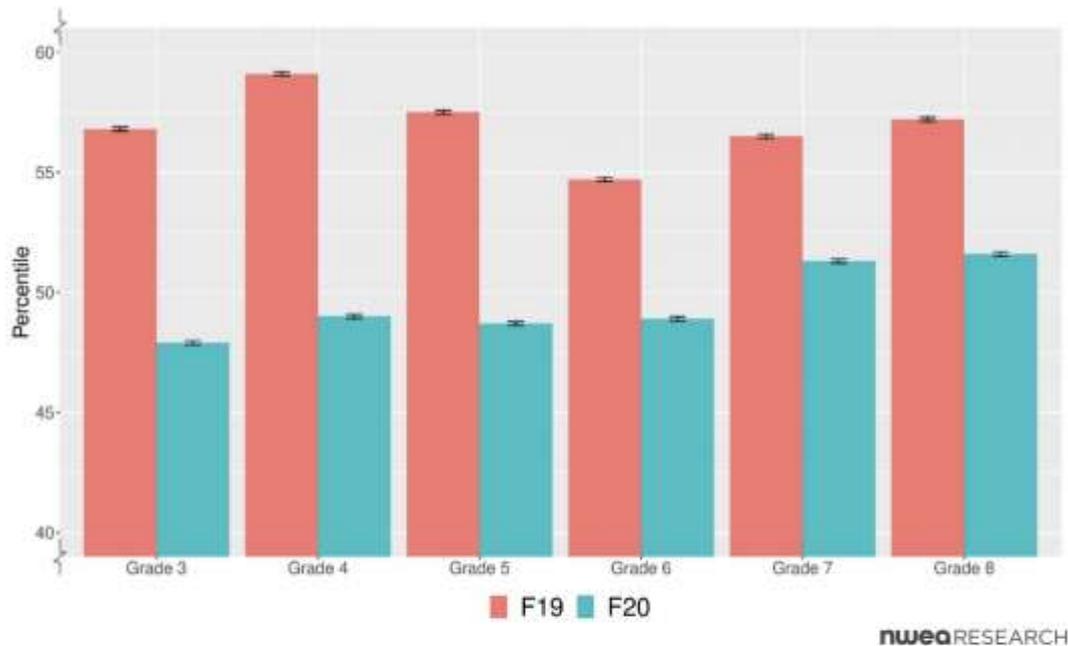


Figure 1: MAP Growth achievement percentiles in math by grade level in fall 2019 and fall 2020

Most students showed growth in both reading and math achievement since the onset of COVID-19 disruptions, but growth in math was lower than in a typical year

- Less growth in math scores from winter 2020 to fall 2020 than from winter 2019 to fall 2019
- This is likely an underestimate of the impact of COVID on student learning – the most disadvantaged students were most likely to be missing data

What can be done?

- Schools and school districts are lifelines for families during a crisis
- Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) provided food and technology support to families – it matters!



Supports families received from their child's school when it was closed due to the pandemic

1. Free meals/food/groceries 53%
2. Technology supports 19%
3. Access to educational activities, videos, and materials not created by school district 16%
4. Access to internet 7%
5. Social and emotional supports (e.g., counseling) 6%

What else can be done?

- Increase internet access
 - Mobile hot-spots
- Make mental health resources available via online school platforms
 - Build check-ins with school counselor into remote school day schedule
- Advocate for expanded access to unemployment and other cash benefits for low-income parents
 - Unemployment explains much of the COVID-induced increase in food insecurity

Thank you!

- Thank you to our partners at TPS, and to the families and teachers in Tulsa who responded to our surveys and who continue to participate in our Tulsa SEED study
- Email me with questions: Anna.Johnson@Georgetown.edu

Questions & Discussion

Upcoming GLR Learning Tuesdays Webinars:

FUNDER TO FUNDER CONVERSATION

Advancing Policy Solutions to Reduce Child Poverty: The William T. Grant Foundation
Tuesday, December 15, 12:30 p.m. ET/9:30 a.m. PT

LEARNING LOSS RECOVERY CHALLENGE WEBINAR

Scaling Playful Learning: How Civic Infrastructure Can Support Our Youngest Learners
Tuesday, December 15, 3 p.m. ET/12 p.m. PT

JANUARY 2021

LEARNING LOSS RECOVERY CHALLENGE WEBINAR

Conversation with Randi Weingarten, AFT and Becky Pringle, NEA
Tuesday, January 12, 3 p.m. ET/12 p.m. PT

Please Join Us!

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