

Aug. 28, 2020

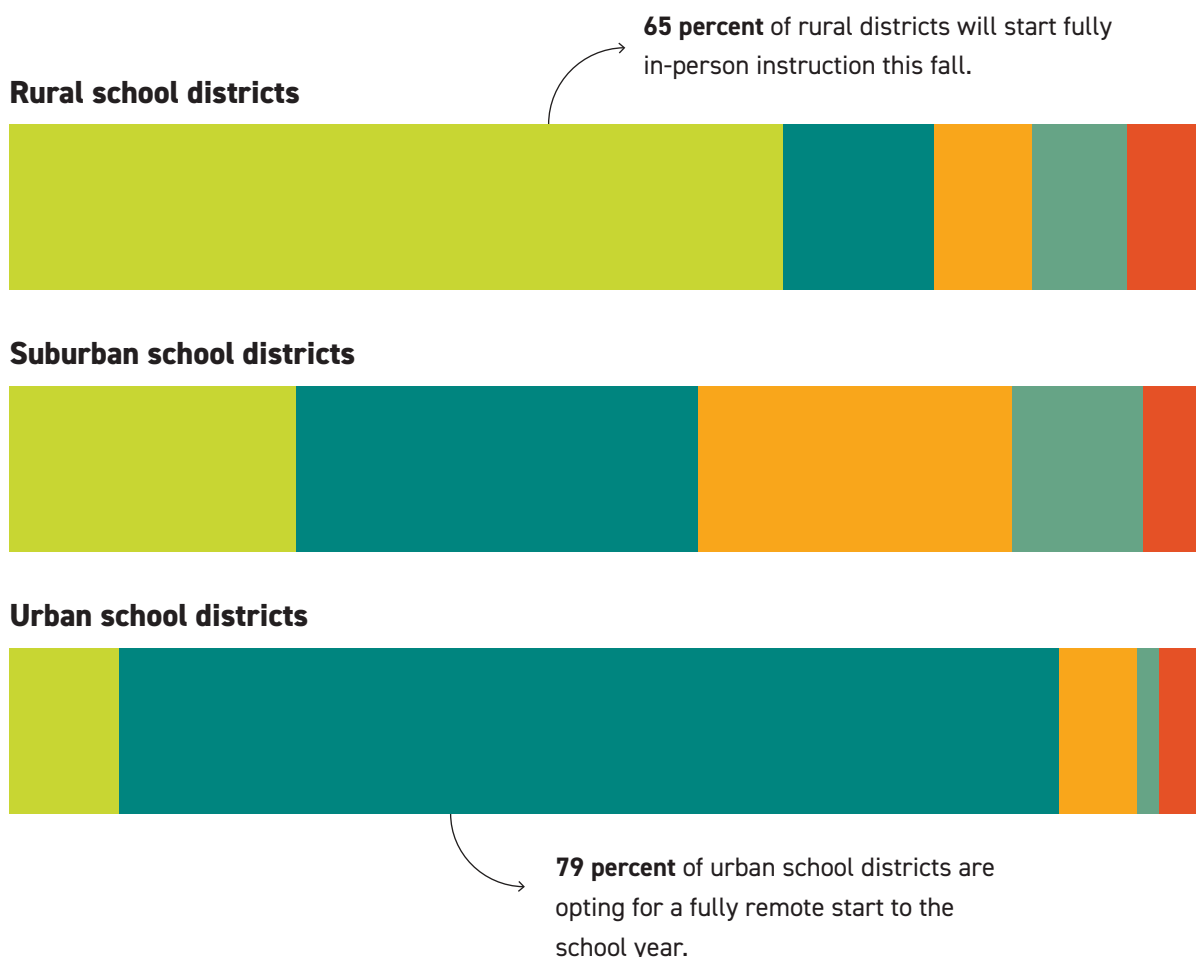
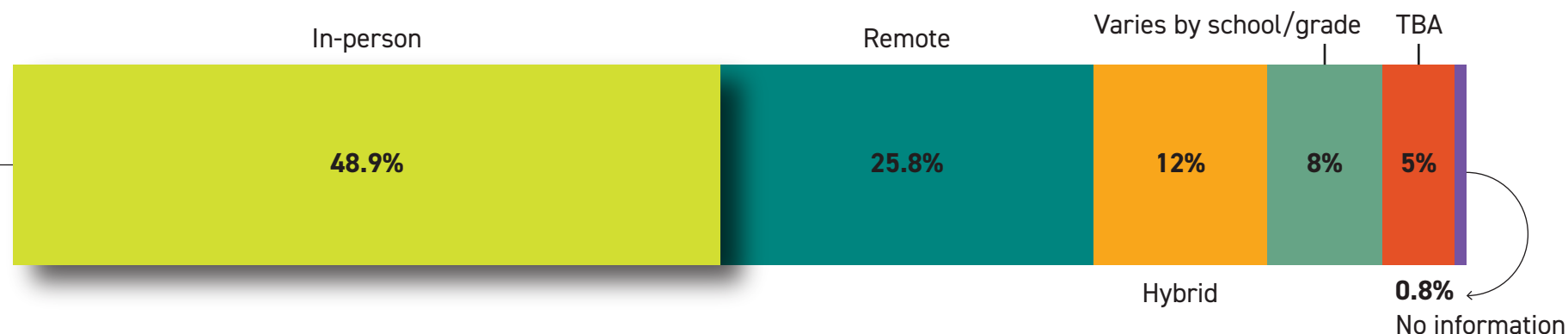
Reopening schools during the Covid-19 pandemic

About 95 percent of school districts across the nation have announced their fall plans. Nearly half of American students will be returning to the classroom.

An analysis by the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) found that students in most rural school districts will be returning to the hallways and resuming their education amongst peers, while nearly four out of five urban school districts plan to start remotely this fall. CRPE also reported that school districts with the highest poverty levels were most likely to begin the fall in virtual classrooms. Without the academic and social support provided by teachers and peers in a classroom setting, fears arise about whether the virtual environment will prove detrimental to low-income students.

Almost half of the nation's school districts plan to return to school fully in-person*

Plans for fall reopenings across the country, as of Aug. 27.



Challenges of remote learning

Students, teachers and administrators alike saw the challenges posed by remote learning several months ago when students transitioned to virtual classrooms for the first time during the Covid-19 pandemic. Remote learning has been found to disproportionately affect students from low-income households, those with disabilities and those who were already struggling academically.



DIGITAL ACCESS
 Last spring when 50 million K-12 public school students were forced to learn remotely from home, there was a rush to distribute devices and connect students to the Internet. While those efforts have significantly helped close the digital divide, millions of students still live in households without adequate internet connection or a device to allow for distance learning — exacerbating existing inequities in education.



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
 Online learning poses a new set of obstacles. Students are struggling to engage and stay focused in a virtual environment. More students than ever are missing class — especially low-income students who might not have access to a quiet space or stable Wi-Fi.



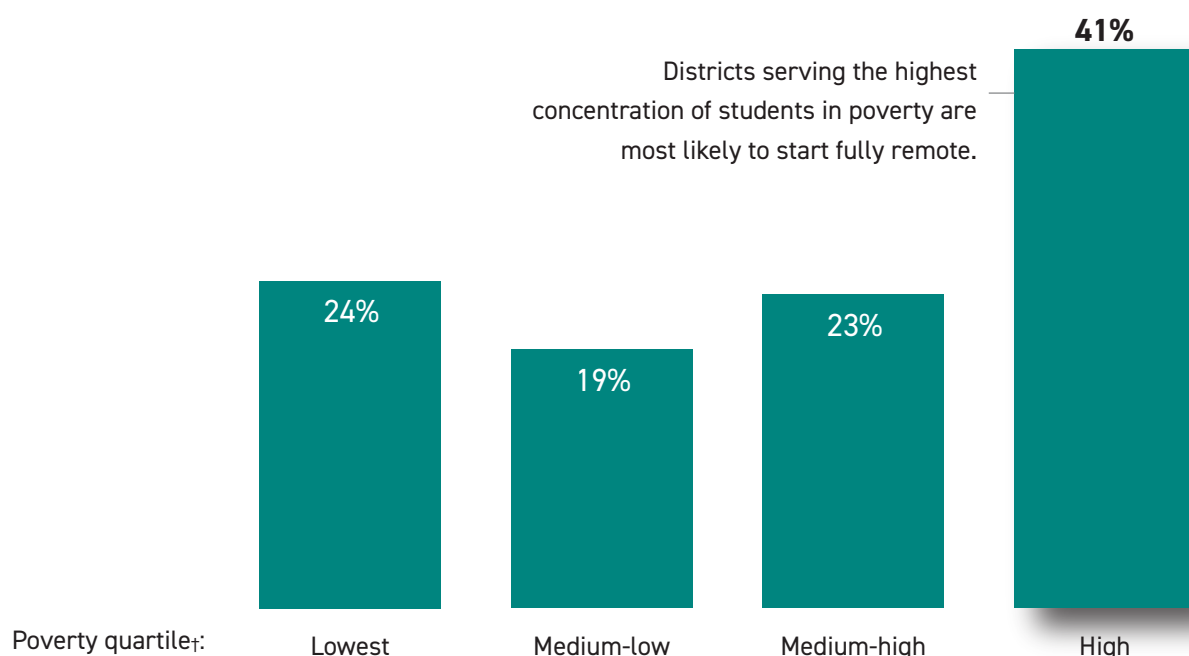
INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY
 High-poverty school districts were less likely to plan for hybrid instruction schedules. While hybrid instruction offers schools the most flexibility, it has also proven to be logistically challenging and likely more expensive.

High-poverty school districts are the most likely to start the school year remotely

Students in the highest-poverty districts are most likely to start the school year fully remote. According to CRPE, these students are likely to need more social, emotional and academic support in school, but virtual classrooms make it harder to establish strong relationships with teachers and peers. Parents of low-income households may also be more likely to work outside the home and therefore not have the capacity to oversee their children's learning.

Percentage of school districts planning to start fully remote, by poverty quartile*

SHARE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS



*Numbers may not add up to 100, as results were weighted to provide a nationally representative sample
 †Calculated based on family income and size