ENGAGE New Mexico

A Triage Response to Engaging and Supporting Students in Remote Learning During COVID-Related School Closures

Prepared By
Gwen Perea Warniment, Ph.D.  |  Katarina Sandoval, Ed.M.  |  Rebekah Richards
About The Authors

Gwen Perea Warniment, Ph.D.
Deputy Secretary of Teaching, Learning and Assessment, Public Education Department, New Mexico

Gwen Perea Warniment serves as the Deputy Secretary for Teaching and Learning for the New Mexico Public Education Department (NM PED). In this role, she oversees three divisions: Educator Quality, Curriculum and Instruction, and Assessment. With a little over two decades of experience supporting public education, Dr. Warniment has taught across the elementary to post-secondary landscape, chiefly focused on bilingual, STEM education.

Before joining NM PED, Gwen was the Program Director for the Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation with a portfolio that included direct programming, advocacy and grant making in support of public education. In this role, she directed various initiatives to support teacher retention in rural districts, socio-emotional support systems and professional learning for educators, as well as a consortium designed to build educator capacity in inquiry science and the Next Generation Science Standards.

Gwen is passionate about student voice, culturally and linguistically sustaining instruction, and supporting educators in their reflective practice. She holds a Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from New Mexico State University.

Katarina Sandoval, Ed.M.
Deputy Secretary of Academic Engagement and Student Success, Public Education Department, New Mexico

Kata Sandoval has worked in education for more than two decades, including more than 10 years as a classroom teacher. She recently served as the Senior Director of Academics and School Performance for the Native American Community Academy, implementing K-12 program development.

Deputy Secretary Sandoval served in administration with the state’s largest school district, Albuquerque Public Schools, including serving as Chief Academic Officer and Associate Superintendent. Deputy Secretary Sandoval holds a Bachelor’s from Stanford University and a master’s in education from Harvard University.

Rebekah Richards
Co-Founder & Chief Academic Officer, Graduation Alliance

Rebekah Richards is a co-founder of Graduation Alliance. She has worked in online high school education since 1999, and has been involved in the early stage planning and implementation of numerous public and private online high schools throughout the country, including Colorado Online Learning, Connecticut’s Adult Education online program, The Online Latin School, and Insight Schools, Inc.

As the Chief Academic Officer for Graduation Alliance, Rebekah oversees education program development and policy initiatives. Rebekah received a B.A. in classics from Brigham Young University, an M.S. in instructional design and technology from Utah State University, an M.A. in classical philology from the University of Colorado-Boulder, and completed an administrator certificate program at Drexel University.
On April 23, 2020, the Public Education Department in New Mexico (NM PED) announced a new initiative - ENGAGE New Mexico - aimed at helping students who did not successfully make the transition to remote learning in the wake of COVID-19 disruptions get back on track and finish the school year strong.

For some students, going from a structured classroom setting to learning from home is a tough climb. During this pandemic, many students encountered obstacles with remote learning or simply chose not to engage.

New Mexico’s Public Education Department developed and launched the ENGAGE New Mexico project through a partnership with Graduation Alliance, an organization that provides academic and social-emotional support to help students realize their goals of earning a high school diploma.

This targeted effort to re-engage students focused on those who, for a variety of reasons, struggled to participate and succeed in a learning environment that had shifted in profound ways.

Participation by districts and charter schools in ENGAGE New Mexico was voluntary. Once a district or charter school opted-in, they specifically identified students whom they determined were either struggling with their remote learning or entirely disengaged. Those students would then be assigned an academic coach to work with them on a plan to get back on track and remain on track through the end of the school year.

ENGAGE New Mexico was a collective effort by the entire agency and aimed at supporting students socially and emotionally as they worked to meet academic standards. “Targeted outreach and support have been proven to make a positive difference in a child’s life, especially under challenging circumstances,” said Dr. Gwen Perea Warniment, Deputy Secretary of Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

“Providing a dedicated outreach team to work in support of our educators ensures that our teachers can focus on teaching, while the ENGAGE team works to re-establish contact with students described as ‘missing’ from their continuous learning classrooms.”

Katarina Sandoval, Deputy Secretary of Academic Engagement and Student Success, noted: “Some of our students are struggling to engage with schoolwork right now. We’re offering an additional layer of support from an adult who is not a teacher or family member to motivate students to stay connected and focused on their futures.”

It was anticipated that students in the project would benefit from ongoing support levels within the general design of Response to Intervention (RTI) models. Using these models, Graduation Alliance has worked together with school districts across the US for more than a decade to serve vulnerable students in a remote learning environment.
The Need

Just weeks before the announcement of the ENGAGE New Mexico project, districts and charter schools throughout the state learned that school buildings would be closed for the remainder of the school year due to the COVID-19 virus.

While policy changes were quickly put into place to mitigate the consequences of this radical transition of all students to home learning, it was clear that additional resources would be necessary to bolster the valiant efforts of educators to keep students engaged and to fill the equity and infrastructure gaps that existed throughout the state.

Districts completed their continuous learning plans and submitted them to the state on April 8. High on the list of priorities was to find a way to keep education going in spite of technology infrastructure and access issues. School leaders’ innovation in finding novel ways to serve students, such as outfitting school buses with wifi hotspots and using the existing transportation infrastructure to deliver and pick up packets and school lunches, should be commended.

But it was only part of the solution: schools found ways to bring education to students, but many students and their families struggled with what to do next. As a result, one in five students in New Mexico who were participating in the traditional classroom environment completely disengaged during the remote learning period, according to the NM PED.

The Solution

Deputy Secretary Gwen Perea Warniment and her team led the review of the continuous learning plans. It was clear that many districts lacked both the expertise and the resources to provide the outreach and the additional social emotional and academic support required to keep students engaged. Given the range of issues that they anticipated addressing in the course of this project, Dr. Perea Warniment enlisted the support of Katarina Sandoval, Deputy Secretary of Academic Engagement and Student Success. Together they led the effort to support the initiatives of school leaders throughout the state and engage students through ENGAGE New Mexico.

Graduation Alliance has worked in partnership with districts and state agencies across the country to serve vulnerable students in a remote learning environment for more than a decade. Graduation Alliance’s expertise and resources in this area created the opportunity for NM PED to act with urgency to address student attendance issues, by applying principles for at-risk student engagement and deploying resources quickly and at scale on behalf of school systems around the state.

The foundational principles of the program included:

1. Persistent, consistent, and systematic outreach to disengaged and struggling students and families
2. A triage approach to understanding each individual student’s barriers to engagement
3. On-going support using a differentiated treatment strategy based on students’ identified barriers
Given the amount of detail school leaders were managing in the transition to remote learning, the state felt it was critical to play a facilitating role in providing solutions. By holding the contract on behalf of any district or charter wishing to participate, the state removed barriers to participation and accelerated the adoption of the project at the local level.

As described in the graphic below, the state engaged Graduation Alliance to deploy their resources quickly and at scale on behalf of any schools/districts that wished to participate. After learning about the goal of the program, school leaders made a decision whether to opt-in for participation and refer students to the program.
Because elementary students typically have just one teacher throughout the day, the resources for this program were focused on students in grades 6-12. Schools referred students who had completely disengaged or who were irregularly participating and in jeopardy of failing one or more of their courses.

The Graduation Alliance outreach team used a multi-modal outreach strategy, including phone, email, and text message, to reach out to students and their families. Where data allowed for it (in consultation with the NM PED) a culturally sensitive approach to outreach to special populations, including Hispanic families with language barriers and Native American families, was implemented.

When the outreach team was able to make contact with students and/or their parents or guardians, they explained the program and offered them the opportunity to opt-in to on-going coaching support through the end of the school year. The response of many families is reported in the student stories reported throughout this paper.

Students who opted-in to coaching were asked a series of questions to help the outreach counselor assign the students to the appropriate intervention support level. This triage approach allowed the team to quickly ascertain the level of support a student was likely to need. The assignment level was reviewed by the support team lead and revised if necessary before assigning the student to a coach for on-going support.

The goal of the support team was to commit the student to re-engaging with the district’s continuous learning programming and provide the social emotional and academic support necessary to keep them engaged and on-track through the end of the school year. In addition to coaching, and when appropriate, the support team referred students and families to state and local resources related to public health initiatives, mental health support, and workforce support for families.

The sections that follow outline key findings and implications of the findings from the more than 11,000 interventions conducted between April 30 and the end of the 2019-2020 school year.
Time was the biggest constraint for the ENGAGE New Mexico project. With just weeks left in the school year for students in grades 6-11, and approximately six weeks for seniors at-risk of not graduating, quick decision-making from school leaders was absolutely necessary.

The NM PED team’s approach to outreach included using the tools at their disposal: they quickly issued a memo to school leaders and personally answered questions that arose. At the Department’s request, Graduation Alliance’s outreach team reached out to every school leader in the state to ensure they had the opportunity to ask any questions prior to deciding to participate.

Next came one of the most challenging parts of the project: generating lists of students for referral to the student outreach team. The school leaders’ focus on generation of these lists in the midst of the overwhelming tactical challenges they and their teams were facing is commendable. Eighty seven percent of districts/charter schools that opted in to participation submitted referrals to the project team for outreach.

Across the entire project, 7,429 students were referred for outreach. In the ensuing three weeks, the outreach team made approximately 29,000 phone calls and sent 14,000 emails and text messages in an attempt to contact students.

Fifty-three percent of all students the outreach team was able to establish contact with requested on-going support from the coaching team. Anecdotally, the primary reasons students did not request coaching included lack of familiarity with the program and services being offered (program was too good to be true), uncertainty about the student’s standing in the school year, and perceiving the school year as “finished” (parents/students felt it was too late to make difference, students were already focused on summer activities).

Interestingly, despite a focus on outreach and support for 11th and 12th graders, the program opt-in rates were highest for middle school students and younger high school students. This is likely a result of a related pattern in the involvement of parents correlated to grade level. As expected, adult family members were the primary point of contact for the majority of participating students from Grades 6-8. Beginning in Grade 9 and increasing with each grade level, the majority of contacts were directly with the students, reflecting a growth in independent learning skill and student-level responsibility for their own learning, as well as the increasing need for external accountability, support, and problem solving.
Opt-In Rates - Percentage of Contacted Students by Grade Level

- 6th Grade: 70%
- 7th Grade: 60%
- 8th Grade: 50%
- 9th Grade: 40%
- 10th Grade: 30%
- 11th Grade: 20%
- 12th Grade: 10%
The triage approach focused on identifying barriers, including traditional at-risk indicators, such as whether students were struggling with courses and whether they saw a connection between succeeding in school today and their goals for the future, combined with factors specific to home learning during the COVID crisis, such as technology access and availability of at-home support.

An important component of this triage process was to have students self-identify their barriers to engagement. Not only did self-identification of barriers allow the team to streamline the data collection process from districts, student self-identification allowed coaches to align with students and families quickly on areas of perceived need for greatest impact.

As shown in the data below, the biggest barriers students identified were related to academic success (between 70-75%). While there certainly was a population that lacked access to connected devices and internet access (20%), this question was asked of all students, not just students in districts using online learning as a sole remote learning option. Ranking above technology access as a barrier was lack of clarity about how to connect with teachers and access their assignments (26%).

### Self-Identified Barriers to Engagement Across All Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>YES (%)</th>
<th>NO (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you have any classes where your grade is below a C?</td>
<td>69.65%</td>
<td>30.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you find your current courses difficult?</td>
<td>74.54%</td>
<td>25.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know how to contact your teacher &amp; access assignments?</td>
<td>73.69%</td>
<td>26.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have access to a computer and the internet?</td>
<td>79.63%</td>
<td>20.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have a career or education plan after graduation?</td>
<td>42.89%</td>
<td>57.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you in foster care or homeless?</td>
<td>0.91%</td>
<td>99.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you currently have an adult checking on your progress?</td>
<td>75.78%</td>
<td>24.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there other commitments that you have outside of school?</td>
<td>16.64%</td>
<td>83.36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was some variability, as would be expected, based on grade level. Younger students and their families were less likely to have access to technology or know how to contact teachers.

### 6th Grade

- **Do you know how to contact your teacher & access assignments?**
  - **YES**: 62.63%
  - **NO**: 37.37%

- **Do you have access to a computer and the internet?**
  - **YES**: 74.75%
  - **NO**: 25.25%

### 12th Grade

- **Do you know how to contact your teacher & access assignments?**
  - **YES**: 79.49%
  - **NO**: 20.51%

- **Do you have access to a computer and the internet?**
  - **YES**: 87.18%
  - **NO**: 12.82%

---

**Support - Using an RTI-Type Approach**

On-going intervention and support was divided into three support levels. Level 1 represented general intervention and was applied to students who had a single identified barrier which was resolved in a single intervention. Level 2 was a targeted intervention for students with home support but multiple barriers. Level 3 was reserved for students with significant on-going barriers that would require as often as daily intervention. Fifty-seven percent of students fell into this category, with little variability by grade level.

---

**Percentage of Students by Support Level Across All Grades**

- **Level 1**: 11%
- **Level 2**: 32%
- **Level 3**: 57%
The percentage of two-way contacts by support level as shown in the table below indicates the strong level of engagement of students and families, their desire to participate in their education, and their need for consistent outreach and support during this challenging time.

### Interventions Made by Support Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Level</th>
<th>Interventions Conducted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>2,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>7,528</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avg. Interventions/Student</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Students w/ 2-Way Contact</th>
<th>Level 1 w/ 2-Way Contact</th>
<th>Level 2 w/ 2-Way Contact</th>
<th>Level 3 w/ 2-Way Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ENGAGE New Mexico project focused on data collection from the start in order to gather information that would be informative to school leaders should further periods of remote learning be required in the future. Below find some key findings and implications based on the data we collected.

The Implications

Top Barriers to Student Engagement: Lack of Structure and Accountability

As the data shows, learning from home represented a new set of challenges that could not be solved simply by providing students with devices or a user name and a password. We cannot lose sight of the fact that the shift to remote learning happened in the midst of significant social and financial upheaval for families and communities across the state and around the world. These changes often exacerbated underlying challenges, such as availability of at-home supervision - whether adults were working outside the home, working inside the home while students were also requiring assistance/access to family technology resources, or suddenly not working at all - and the need for supporting learning challenges and emotional behavioral issues.

Student Story

Carolina struggles with depression, anxiety, and ADHD. She was having a hard time with her classes before remote learning and that challenge became even greater with the change of routine and traditional education support model. She struggled with motivation to work and felt like she didn’t have anyone helping her stay accountable or help her understand the concepts. Because she typically reads or does projects to help her deal with her depression and anxiety, her coach worked with Carolina to create a schedule and that gave her breaks to read or do other anxiety-reducing activities. They also worked on a plan to put Carolina in touch with her teachers to get the extra support she needed from a content perspective. The plan also helped Carolina develop a balance between working on schoolwork and caring for her younger sister. Her coach committed to Carolina to be in contact every day to help her be accountable for her work. Immediately after they created the plan, Carolina emailed her teachers and started to work on her outstanding assignments. She was able to combine homework with her family responsibilities as she and her sister did their homework together.

57% of interventions required to re-engage students and keep them engaged were focused on the details of how to learn remotely and providing accountability for daily engagement and consistent progress - problems normally solved through the observation of and access to teachers in a face-to-face environment.
Vincent was consistently missing Zoom meetings with his teachers. All it took to help him get re-engaged was some counseling and instruction on the importance of schedule-keeping and how to use his technology (in this case, the alarm on his phone) to help him get to “class” on time.

37% of interventions were aimed at solving specific issues such as getting additional help, connecting with teachers, accessing courses, or resolving technical issues; of those, only 8% were focused on getting students access to devices or internet connectivity.

Sheena was already struggling in school. Without a computer at home, the transition to online learning threatened to push her even further behind. With ENGAGE New Mexico’s help, Sheena was provided a laptop computer and technical support. Since receiving her computer, Sheena has had a tremendous surge in engagement and learning — so much so that her mother will be engaging the school district about accommodations that might permit her daughter to continue to take some courses online in the future.

While small numbers, critically important were the referrals to community resources, including mental and physical health, to support students and families.

Mateo is an adoptee who had been acting out recently, behaving in ways that have confounded his older parents. Through ENGAGE New Mexico, Mateo has been connected to much-needed mental health services — a vital first step toward stabilizing his home environment, which in turn can set the stage for greater engagement in school.
Severe medical issues had been hampering Janie’s learning even before the pandemic shut down her school, and it was hard for Janie’s mother to keep her daughter motivated. It turns out that what Janie needed was another source of encouragement, and giving her mother a kind ear, ENGAGE New Mexico was able to help Janie complete her school work and help her mother navigate the paperwork she needed to complete to get Janie enrolled in medical services at a top clinic.
Implications for School Leaders

• Consider forming a review committee comprised of parents and students from a variety of backgrounds to review instructions for remote learning in advance and provide feedback on any unclear direction or unanswered questions.

• Consider publishing suggested schedules for schoolwork. Make sure they are realistic.

• Consider developing parent support channels such as regular telephonic office hours and use of social media for updates and encouragement.

• Consider publishing key numbers for support in a durable format such as a magnet directing parents who to call with academic questions, technical questions, school lunch questions, course scheduling questions, community resource questions, etc. and mail to students and families.

Types of Interventions Needed (By Barrier)

Using data collected by the ENGAGE New Mexico project, the team attempted to correlate the interventions required by the barriers students self-identified during the Triage process.

Interestingly, students who struggled the most academically required more specific problem solving, while interventions with students who were not struggling with courses prior to remote learning were focused primarily on the logistics of learning online and checking in with students to ensure consistency in engagement.

Student Story

Manuel was in danger of failing the year when he began the ENGAGE New Mexico program. In just a couple of weeks, with the support of his district, his father, and his coach, he completed the work he was assigned, had a follow-up IEP meeting, and graduated!

Student Story

ENGAGE New Mexico didn’t just help Jason get re-engaged with school after falling off track during the first few weeks of the pandemic shut-down — it also helped him start thinking about his next steps after high school. Through text messages, a coach was able to engage Jason in a conversation about post-secondary options — prompting a shift in thinking that will pay off long after his involvement in ENGAGE New Mexico ends.
Percentage of Intervention by Type Across All Grades - Not Struggling Academically

- Accountability for Consistent Engagement: 57.36%
- Additional Academic Resources: 8.53%
- Community Resources: 0.00%
- Confidence Building & Encouragement: 2.71%
- Coursework Access: 5.04%
- Health (Mental/Emotional): 0.78%
- Health (Physical): 0.39%
- How to Learn Remotely: 6.98%
- Special Education: 0.00%
- Connections to Teachers: 7.75%
- Technical Access (Devices, Internet Access): 9.30%
- Value of Education, Post-Secondary Planning, etc: 1.16%

Percentage of Intervention by Type Across All Grades - Struggling Academically

- Accountability for Consistent Engagement: 44.11%
- Additional Academic Resources: 9.79%
- Community Resources: 0.22%
- Confidence Building & Encouragement: 4.18%
- Coursework Access: 9.02%
- Health (Mental/Emotional): 0.88%
- Health (Physical): 0.33%
- How to Learn Remotely: 10.34%
- Special Education: 0.33%
- Connections to Teachers: 12.54%
- Technical Access (Devices, Internet Access): 7.37%
- Value of Education, Post-Secondary Planning, etc: 0.88%
Similarly, for students with adult support, the focus of interventions was on how to learn online and on providing external accountability for consistent participation. For students without adult support, the focus shifted slightly to problem solving specific issues related to course, teacher, and technology access.

**Student Story**

Mark was able to complete all of his classes and is officially done for the year - on time and on track. Mark was struggling to get the coursework done; he set a goal with his coach to work on his classes for 30 minutes a day. He followed through with the plan and finished the year strong.

---

### Percentage of Intervention by Type Across All Grades - Adult Support Available

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability for Consistent Engagement</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Academic Resources</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Resources</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence Building &amp; Encouragement</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coursework Access</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (Mental/Emotional)</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (Physical)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Learn Remotely</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to Teachers</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Access (Devices, Internet Access)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Education, Post-Secondary Planning</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### Percentage of Intervention by Type Across All Grades - No Adult Support Available

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability for Consistent Engagement</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Academic Resources</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Resources</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence Building &amp; Encouragement</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coursework Access</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (Mental/Emotional)</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (Physical)</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Learn Remotely</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to Teachers</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Access (Devices, Internet Access)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Education, Post-Secondary Planning</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Not surprisingly, for students without access to technology but for whom the district remote learning solution incorporated online curriculum or technology, twenty-five percent of intervention calls were around enabling access to technology-connected devices or internet for students who did not have access, whereas just three percent of interventions for students who had devices and internet connectivity was spent on enabling technical access.

### Percentage of Intervention by Type Across All Grades - Does Have Technology Access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Intervention Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability for Consistent Engagement</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Academic Resources</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Resources</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence Building &amp; Encouragement</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coursework Access</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (Mental/Emotional)</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (Physical)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Learn Remotely</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to Teachers</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Access (Devices, Internet Access)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Education, Post-Secondary Planning, Etc.</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Percentage of Intervention by Type Across All Grades - No Technology Access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Intervention Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability for Consistent Engagement</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Academic Resources</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Resources</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence Building &amp; Encouragement</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coursework Access</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (Mental/Emotional)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (Physical)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Learn Remotely</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to Teachers</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Access (Devices, Internet Access)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Education, Post-Secondary Planning, Etc.</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ariana’s password wasn’t working, and the one her teacher gave her as a replacement didn’t work either. As a result, she had quickly fallen behind in math. With the help of ENGAGE New Mexico, Ariana was finally able to get logged in and got the support she needed from her teacher to get caught up.

**Implications for School Leaders**

- Consider ways to help students and families solve typical issues by posting an FAQ on district websites and mailing it to families who lack technology.

- Update technology access in student profiles during this interim period; provide appropriate alternatives for families and students who do not have reliable access to devices and internet.

- Implement professional development for staff around incorporating helps for students around planning for remote learning and best practices for holding students accountable for consistent participation in a remote learning environment.

**Families Proactively Requested Support**

During the course of the ENGAGE New Mexico project, school leaders requested information about the project to share with families and lend legitimacy to the outreach efforts. While numbers were small, almost immediately the project team started receiving inbound requests from parents asking how they could get support for their students and participate in the project.

**Implications for School Leaders**

- Consider ways to communicate about and provide on-going academic and social emotional support for families to opt into during periods of remote learning.

**Students and Families Engaged with Coaches at the Same Rate Regardless of Whether They Had a Connected Device**

At the outset of remote learning, there was concern around the country that moving to an online format would widen the digital divide and further disadvantage disadvantaged students.

Our data shows that students and families engaged with coaches at the same rate whether they had a connected device or not, indicating that the concern about equity from a connectivity perspective created opportunity for innovation, for example through packets delivered and picked up by buses.
Student Story

Sarina was struggling to understand the social studies packets that were being delivered by bus each week and was having a hard time connecting to her teacher. Making matters more difficult, she didn’t have the textbook. With the help of ENGAGE New Mexico, Sarina and the instructor found a way to connect that worked for both parties, and Sarina received an electronic version of the book.

Student Story

Zara was struggling with her math packets and didn’t know where to turn for help. ENGAGE New Mexico provided her with multiple tutoring resources, helping her get back on track.

There were still challenges for particular populations in attempting to connect where online was the modality of choice by the district but social distancing rules and transportation barriers made it difficult for students to access.

Student Story

Sam and his mom had no internet and a broken vehicle so they could not drive into town to use the school’s internet. They had tried going to a cousin’s house but because of social distancing rules they had to sit outside and only could use it for limited hours. Mom had lost a close friend and had not been feeling well. Sam had done very little work. Sam’s mom reached out recently to his coach and told her that he had been working daily and that he would be finishing on Friday. She thanked his coach for checking on him and for not giving up on them.

On the other end of the spectrum, too much technology enablement created its own set of challenges. Students reported being confused by multiple logins and not knowing where to go when for what.

Implications for School Leaders

- Consider multiple methods for students to complete work - online and packets.

- Simplicity is best: consider offering a single portal that integrates curriculum/learning tools and avoid multiple logins to sites. Complexity in access is in itself a significant barrier to engagement. Additionally, a common view of student progress is necessary to quickly and efficiently identify behaviors that signal disengagement.

- Packets represent the most disconnected form of learning. Consider what additional supports can be provided in the packet to ensure students have the ability to contact teachers, get additional assistance on content, and know the logistics around when and where to pick up and drop off packets.
A New Class of At-Risk Students: Students Who Were Participating in Traditional Programs and Showed No Risk Factors Prior to Disengaging

One of the more concerning pieces of data we collected showed students who had no risk indicators prior to COVID into the program but still disengaged from or struggled to succeed in remote learning. This new class of at-risk students became at risk by virtue of the fact that we transitioned to remote learning.

Implications for School Leaders

- Because it is difficult to predict which students who did not have risk factors are likely to be disrupted by the transition to home learning, additional academic and social emotional support should be extended to all students and families.

- Consider professional development for teachers and other staff to rethink their role in student engagement in a remote learning environment, including effective use of technology, typical barriers for remote learners, tracking and reporting on participation and engagement, and ways to provide academic and social/emotional support for students and families away from the classroom.

Structural Upheaval Resulted in Students Who Did Not Engage

While this project had tremendous engagement with families and students who responded to the outreach and requested additional support, there was a segment of the population referred that remained part of the twenty percent of students across the state who did not engage at all in remote learning.

One of the challenges encountered by the outreach team in this project was access to current contact data for students. The ENGAGE New Mexico project reporting included both statistical reporting and returning updated lists each week to districts indicating which students the team had been able to make contact with and which students had accepted the offer of additional support.

Disengagement from school for extended time and in the midst of a global pandemic, financial crisis, and social upheaval is a significant risk factor for dropping out that cannot be ignored.

Implications for School Leaders

- Consider tracking students who did not engage during remote learning separately and making multiple attempts quickly to re-engage them in their education, whether through summer learning opportunities or redoubled efforts to connect in advance of the school year.

- Consider making a concerted effort to get current contact information - and as many points of contact as possible - to facilitate future outreach attempts to families that were disengaged during the spring period of remote learning.

- Prepare to deploy a systematic and persistent dropout recovery strategy for students who do not return at the beginning of the school year.
The ENGAGE New Mexico Project provided a much-needed and well-received triage response to the acute attendance issue for a significant number of students and families during a time of upheaval. While longer-term remedies will certainly be required to recover students who did not engage and give students an opportunity to recover lost learning, the assumptions of the ENGAGE New Mexico project proved to be true: students and families, whether at-risk prior to the COVID-related school closures or not, required significant outreach and on-going academic and social emotional support in order to stay engaged and progressing in remote learning activities.

Given the lack of clarity around what form schooling will take in the coming months, we expect the need for outreach and support to increase. It is our sincere desire that the implications of the data gathered during this project will inform future planning to provide schools and families with the support they need to move forward under such uncertain and challenging circumstances during periods of future disruption.
Graduation Alliance

In partnership with educators, government agencies, and community leaders across the nation, Graduation Alliance provides versatile pathways to high school graduation for youth and adults, fosters college and career exploration, and connects job creators to skilled and ready workers. Since 2007, Graduation Alliance has worked with more than 200 state agencies, school districts, community colleges, and workforce boards around the country to recruit, re-enroll, educate, and mentor students. Graduation Alliance is fully accredited by the Northwest Accreditation Commission, a division of Cognia.

In everything it does, Graduation Alliance works for one common goal: creating opportunity through the power of education.