

# Colorado School District Needs Inventory

December 2020 | District-Level Findings

For questions, reach out to Rebecca Holmes ([RHolmes@coloradoedinitiative.org](mailto:RHolmes@coloradoedinitiative.org)), Sarah Forbes ([SForbes@coloradoedinitiative.org](mailto:SForbes@coloradoedinitiative.org)), and Alyssa Pearson ([Pearson\\_A@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Pearson_A@cde.state.co.us)).



# Context and Methodology

- As a follow-up to the spring 2020 statewide needs assessment, The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and The Colorado Education Initiative (CEI) partnered on a second needs inventory administered from October 14 to October 30, 2020 to update Colorado's understanding of current challenges facing schools and districts as they work to sustain and enhance support for students, staff, and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Note the dates of administration above when interpreting results, as district responses may have evolved since, especially related to learning model and childcare offerings.
- Superintendents, BOCES directors, and charter and facility school leaders were encouraged to complete the needs inventory to help CDE, policymakers, and funders make informed, data-driven decisions. This report summarizes responses from districts and a few BOCES, as detailed on the next slide.
- The analyses of the resulting data from this second needs inventory focused on highlighting needs by rural status, region, and other variables of interest.<sup>1</sup> Regional analyses of the needs inventory were conducted using the eight CDE regions illustrated in the map to the right.
- The sequencing of results in this report follow themes, rather than the order of questions on the needs inventory. Numbers of responses are noted throughout, since some sections had high rates of non-response.



# District/BOCES Respondents

- This report summarizes responses from the **140 Colorado school districts that responded to the fall needs assessment. Three BOCES are also included in this report** because they either run schools directly or provided information about member districts that did not respond to the survey. Note that not all respondents answered every question, so response numbers fluctuate throughout this report.
- In addition to the 143 districts and BOCES referenced above, all BOCES responses and duplicative district responses were incorporated into the qualitative analysis. Other BOCES, charter school, and facility school responses have been shared with and reviewed by the Colorado Department of Education.

Approximately **78%** of Colorado districts responded.

These districts serve close to **90%** of the state's public-school students.

**80%** of responding districts represent rural communities.

| Region               | Number of District Respondents <sup>1</sup> | Percentage of Districts in the Region who Responded |
|----------------------|---|---|
| North Central Region | 19  | 95%   |
| Metropolitan Region  | 15  | 83%   |
| West Central Region  | 10  | 83%   |
| Pikes Peak Region    | 20  | 77%   |
| Northeast Region     | 24  | 75%   |
| Northwest Region     | 14  | 74%   |
| Southwest Region     | 17  | 74%   |
| Southeast Region     | 20  | 71%   |

<sup>1</sup> This table excludes the Charter School Institute, which is not located within a geographic region, and it excludes all BOCES in the dataset.

# Executive Summary

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- **Device and connectivity needs have declined quite a bit since spring 2020** – among district respondents with verified data, the total number of students lacking access is approximately 30,000 in both categories. This represents a smaller percentage for students lacking connectivity access because of the higher number of respondents for those questions (n=143, compared to n=115 for device needs). It's worth noting the small rural districts who responded to both needs assessments saw the largest decline in device needs from spring (33% to 15% of students) but the least change in connectivity needs, likely in large part due to persistent connectivity constraints in rural communities.
- **Workforce and staffing needs are major concerns for many districts throughout Colorado** – teacher resignations are averaging just under 6% across respondents, with nearly another 2% taking leaves of absence. Very few districts report having a sufficient number of substitute teachers, and teacher mental health was selected as the top priority related to teachers by far (over 90% of respondents reported that it is one of their top three teacher priorities). Furthermore, many respondents shared concerns related to staff burnout and turnover in their open-ended responses.
- In spring 2020, districts selected student emotional support as the top educational support needed, and **while students' mental health continued to be named as a top student priority in the October needs assessment, slightly more districts identified K-3 reading loss as a top student priority at this time.**
- Finally, only 26 district respondents reported that they are providing any kind of childcare support (supervision, not instruction) during remote learning. **While there are about 10,000 unused childcare spots across some districts in the Metropolitan Region, there are several regions where there are many students on the waitlist for childcare offerings.**

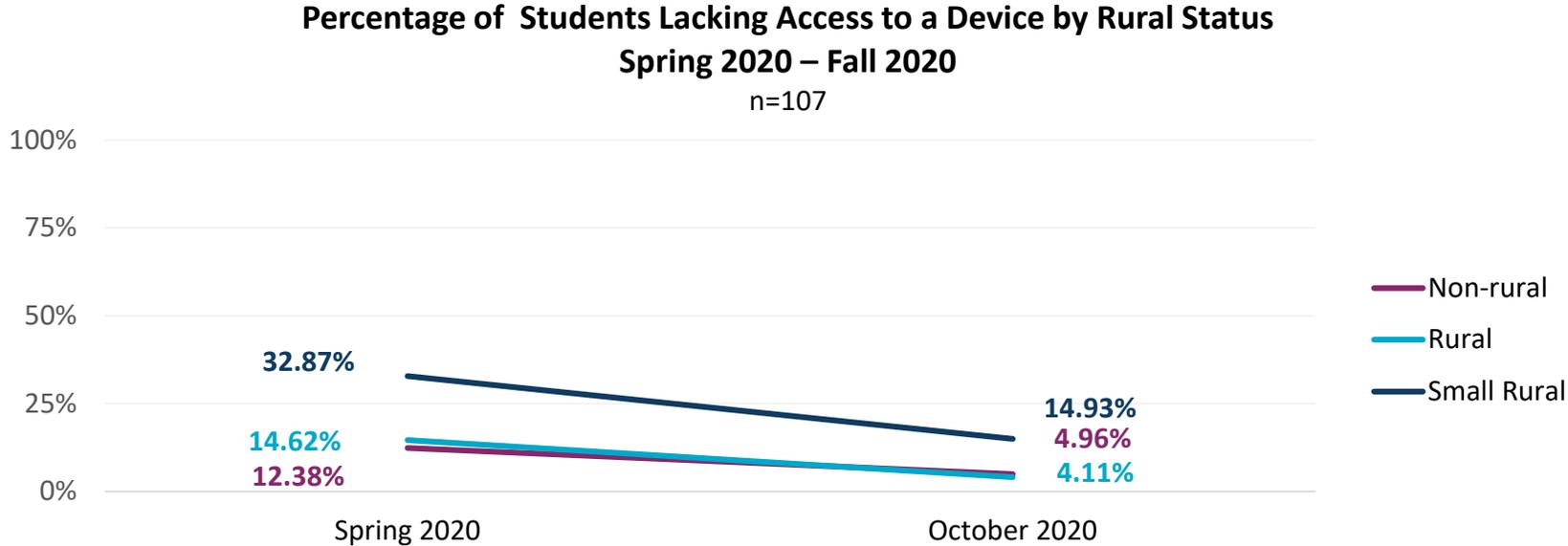
# Device Needs



# Overview of Device Needs

Overall, the reported number of outstanding devices needed for students is **29,845**<sup>1</sup> across 115 districts and two BOCES<sup>2</sup> as of October 2020.

Among the districts for which we have both spring and fall 2020 device data (n=107), device needs have decreased since the spring from 57,063 to 22,044 (14% of students lacking devices to 5%). The graph below shows how these percentages vary across rural, small rural, and non-rural districts.



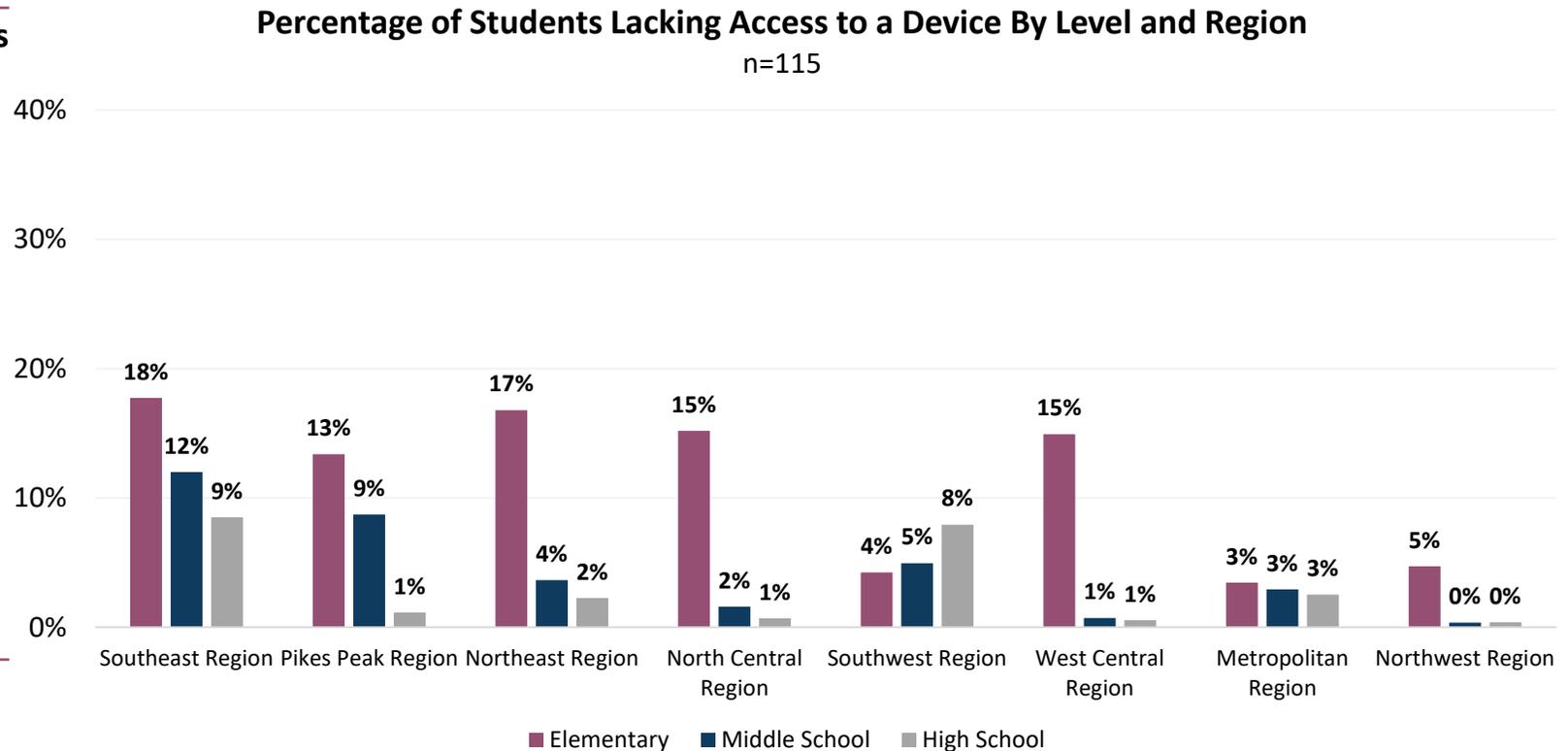
<sup>1</sup> Districts were only asked about students in grades K-12 (not ECE/Pre-K) who were lacking devices.

<sup>2</sup> Note that 25 districts and one BOCES were excluded from the device analysis. Their original responses suggested that they included short- and/or long-term device backfill needs, but this could not be verified through attempts at follow-up requests for confirmation.

# Device Needs by Level and Region

As shown in the graph below, elementary students still have the least access to devices, and the Southeast Region has the highest percentage of students without access to devices currently.

| Region               | Approx. Count of Students without Devices |
|----------------------|---|
| Metropolitan Region  | 10,148                                    |
| Pikes Peak Region    | 7,744                                     |
| North Central Region | 7,136                                     |
| West Central Region  | 1,990                                     |
| Southeast Region     | 1,002                                     |
| Northeast Region     | 845                                       |
| Northwest Region     | 553                                       |
| Southwest Region     | 427                                       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>         | <b>29,845</b>                             |



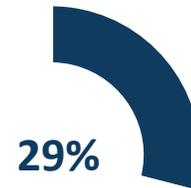
# Barriers to Providing Devices

Below are the percentage of respondents who noted the following reasons as barriers for providing devices to their students (n=143)<sup>1</sup> – respondents could select multiple reasons, so percentages do not add up to 100.

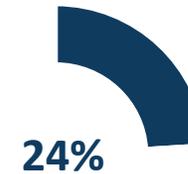
Backorder on devices



Lack of funding



Other



## “Other” responses included the following:

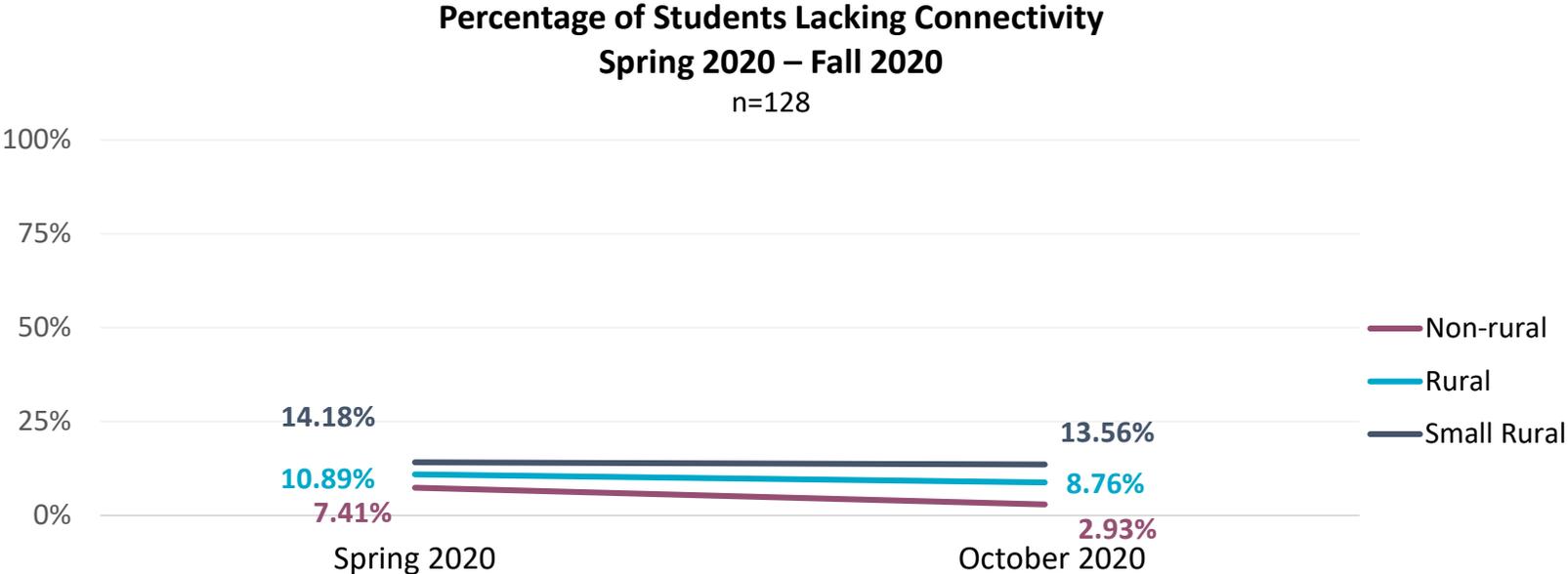
- The most common response was about the underlying barrier of internet access, highlighting the interconnectedness of these two issues.
- A few respondents noted that they have not and/or do not plan to give devices to K-2 students.
- A few district leaders also shared that some students are using district-provided devices while others have to rely on personal devices, a standard issue with schools moving to 1:1 technology plans.
- A few others raised their growing concern about the sustainability of covering the unprecedented device costs.

# Connectivity Needs



# Overview of Connectivity Needs

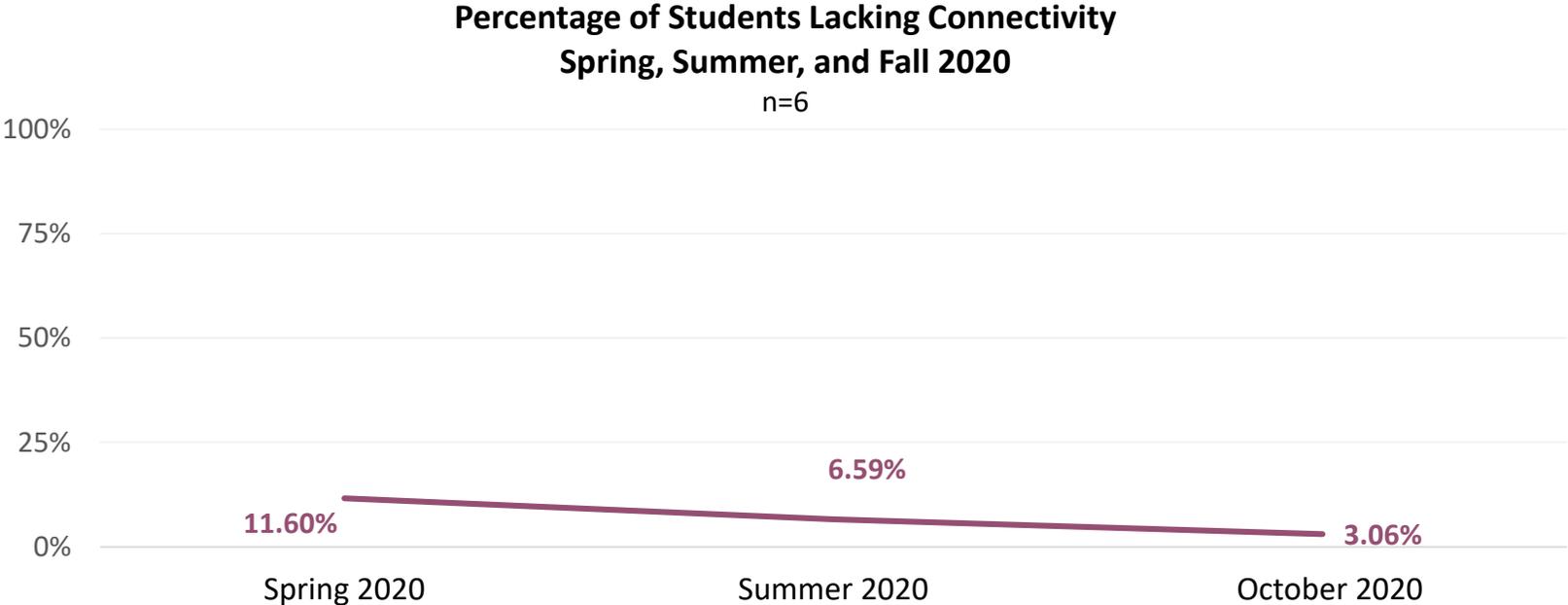
Overall, the reported number of students still lacking sufficient access to the internet is **30,841** (or 4.1% of students<sup>1</sup>) among all district respondents to this question (n=138). Among the districts for which we have both spring and fall 2020 connectivity data (n=128), the number of students without sufficient connectivity has been cut in half since the spring data collections from 47,655 to 23,997 (8% to 4%). The graph below shows these percentages across rural, small rural, and non-rural districts, with the biggest decrease occurring in non-rural districts.



<sup>1</sup> Districts were only asked about students in grades K-12 (not ECE/Pre-K) who were lacking connectivity.

# Snapshot of Connectivity Needs Changes in 2020

Six Colorado districts<sup>1</sup> completed the needs assessment in spring 2020, reported their connectivity needs via targeted follow-up phone calls conducted by CEI and the Governor’s Office in August 2020, and reported their connectivity needs in the October 2020 needs assessment. Their connectivity estimates are included below to give a sense of how connectivity needs shifted over the course of the year in non-rural settings. The total number of students who lacked connectivity across these six districts are: 24,500 in spring; 13,920 in summer; and 6,458 in October.

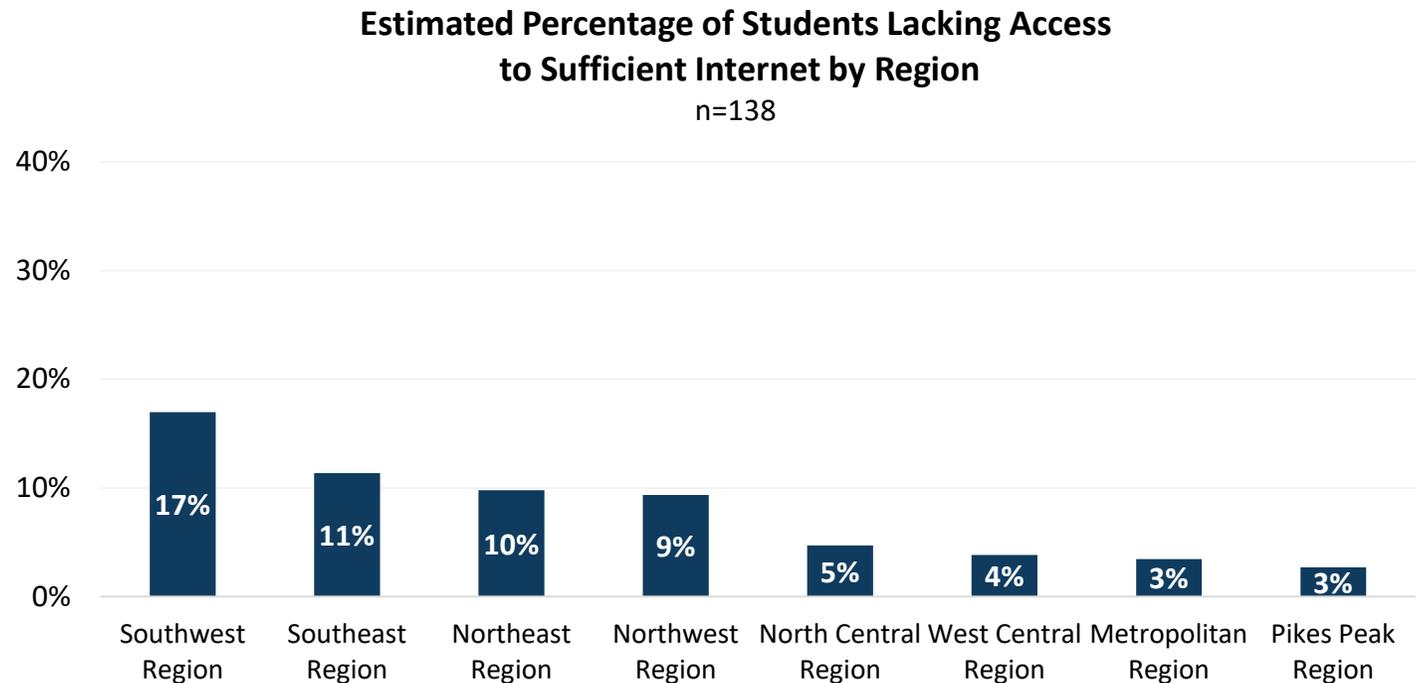


<sup>1</sup> The districts included in this graph are: Adams 12 Five Star Schools, Boulder Valley Re 2, Denver County 1, Harrison 2, Poudre R-1, and Pueblo City 60.

# Connectivity Needs by Region

The West Central Region had the largest reduction in connectivity needs (about 16%) from the spring needs assessment to the October needs assessment, with the Pikes Peak and North Central Regions just behind, with connectivity need decreases of approximately 10%.

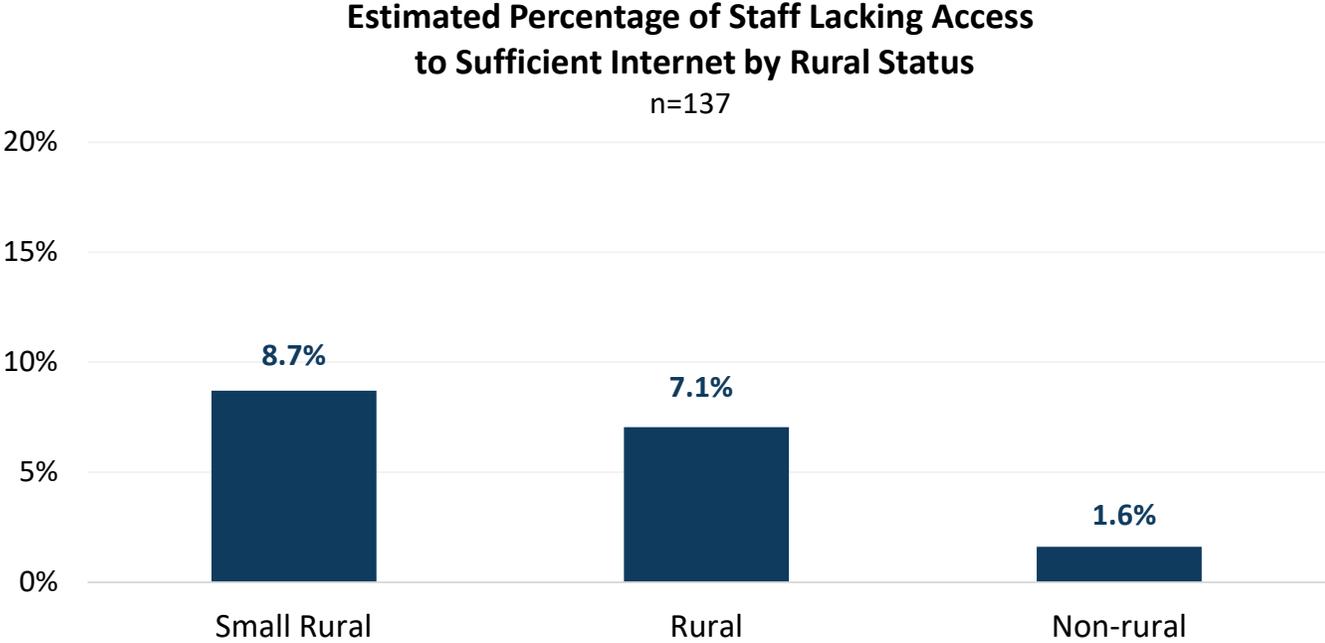
| Region               | Approx. Count of Students without Sufficient Internet Access |
|----------------------|--|
| Metropolitan Region  | 15,096   |
| North Central Region | 4,547  |
| Pikes Peak Region    | 3,388  |
| Northwest Region     | 2,502  |
| Southwest Region     | 1,899  |
| West Central Region  | 1,374  |
| Northeast Region     | 1,174  |
| Southeast Region     | 861  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>         | <b>30,841</b>  |



# Staff Lacking Connectivity

Across responding districts, **2,629** staff still lack access to sufficient internet connectivity, or **approximately 2.5%** of staff members.<sup>1</sup>

As shown in the graph to the right, this percentage is higher within small rural districts, compared to those categorized as rural or non-rural.



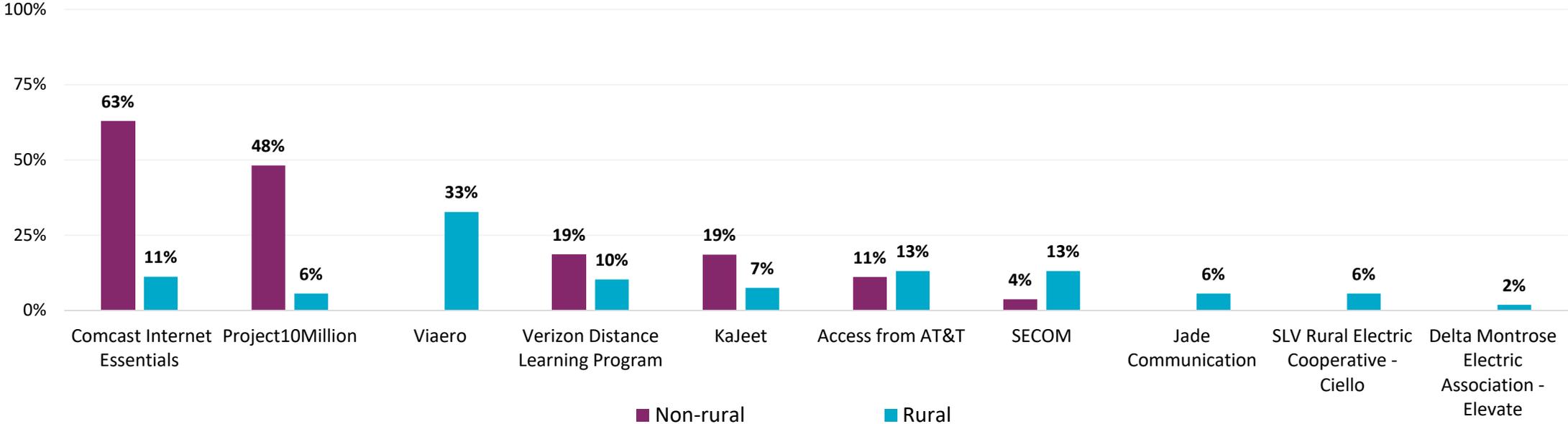
<sup>1</sup> This question asked about any staff lacking connectivity, so the percentages calculated include the following: administrators, crafts/trades/services, office/administrative support, other support staff, paraprofessionals, principals, other professionals, and teachers.

# Use of Technology/Connectivity Solutions

62% of respondents reported using at least one of the technology/connectivity solutions listed below, with the two most used in non-rural districts being Comcast Internet Essentials and Project10Million and the most common in rural districts being Viaero.<sup>1</sup>

Percentage of Respondents Using Each Solution

n=137



<sup>1</sup> Districts were also able to share other technology/connectivity solutions. Responses included many references to district-provided or T-Mobile hotspots (outside of Project10Million) and a couple references to Wiggins Telephone and Eastern Slope Technologies.

# Temporary Technology Solutions

*“We have hot spots for anyone who needs it, but our mountain geography is a challenge to strong and consistent internet service. Some families have [internet service] but it is prohibitively slow, other families don't have it at all. We do have outdoor wifi at each district building...but that only works if they have transportation.”*

**– Small Rural District Respondent**

## Temporary Connectivity Solutions

- Many districts shared that they purchased hotspots for their students, and that hotspots still feel like an insufficient solution due to a lack of cell coverage in rural areas and their inability to provide sufficient signals for students to use.
- Some respondents are creating community internet hubs at libraries or schools, but many note this also feels like an insufficient solution.

## Temporary Device Solutions

- A few districts noted that due to backorders, or a lack of devices for other reasons, some students are required to use personal devices to participate in remote learning.
- Some districts noted they are loaning students devices that are typically used in the classroom and are concerned about the maintenance cost that they will incur when these devices are returned.

# Temporary Funding for Technology

*"We have a number without devices [due to backorders], either we have homes with multiple students attempting to utilize one device, and sketchy internet service at best (even with district supplied hot spots). No relief is in sight, as it is already late October. Due to many other financial cuts and continued cutting, the district has exhausted given funds, and has done all it can do."*

**– Southwest Region District Respondent**



- **Several districts referenced participating in hotspot programs that will expire in the coming months.**
  - *"Our district is currently working on a temporary hotspot solution that expires at the end of April 2021. Additionally, we are working on a small grant to help offset any additional costs to extend that service through the end of summer (2021). The overall costs for extending 500 hotspot devices through the end of the summer are \$85,455 and the grant application is for only \$15K. Thus, there is a shortfall in this grant opportunity alone to meet the demand of the needs in our district."* – North Central Region District Respondent
- **A number of districts reported concern about families' abilities to cover the cost of in-home internet or hotspots, even at reduced prices.**
  - *"Until infrastructure is built out, we will need to supply internet access to these households using a variety of methods. We are hopeful telecom providers will continue to provide low-cost alternatives to meet the needs of these families. We also recognize a cost of \$10 per month is a struggle for many of our families. The district plans on providing access to those families at our cost, but we have no funding identified for this purpose."* – Metropolitan Region District Respondent
- **A few districts cited using CARES dollars to fund hotspots and internet services, and they cite concerns that the funding will run out in the spring.**
  - *"Our temporary solutions for students will expire in April when contract terms are up. Funding from CARES has been used to support providing MiFi devices to students who need them, but we do not have access to any ongoing funding to continue this support come spring."* – North Central Region District Respondent

# Student and Staff Needs

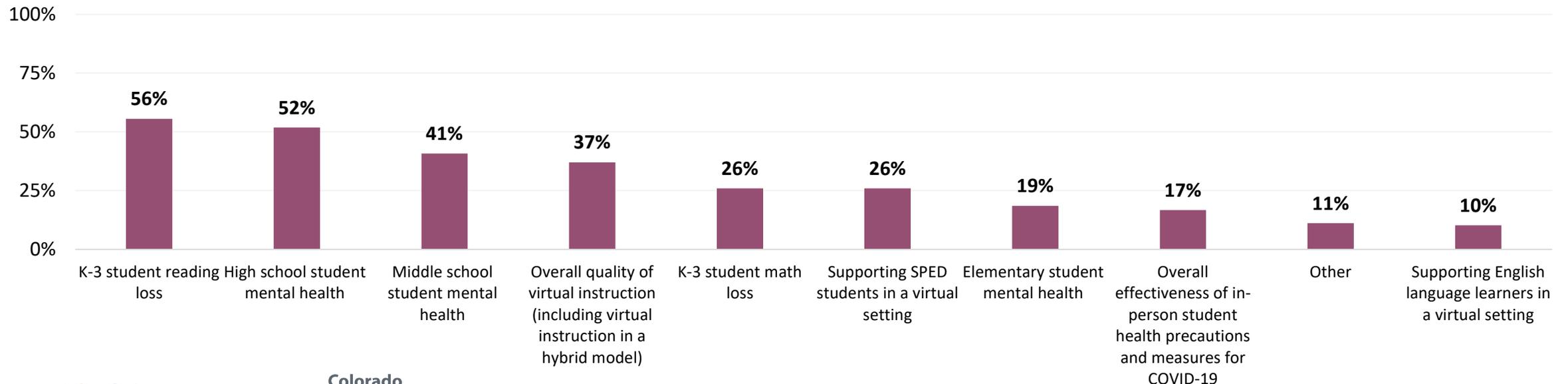


# Districts' Student Priorities

Districts were asked to select their top three priorities related to student needs from a list of ten options. The following graph displays what percentage of districts selected each option. Respondents were given the opportunity to write in other needs, and many used this space to emphasize their concern about students' mental health, learning loss at the secondary level, and supporting student groups with higher needs.

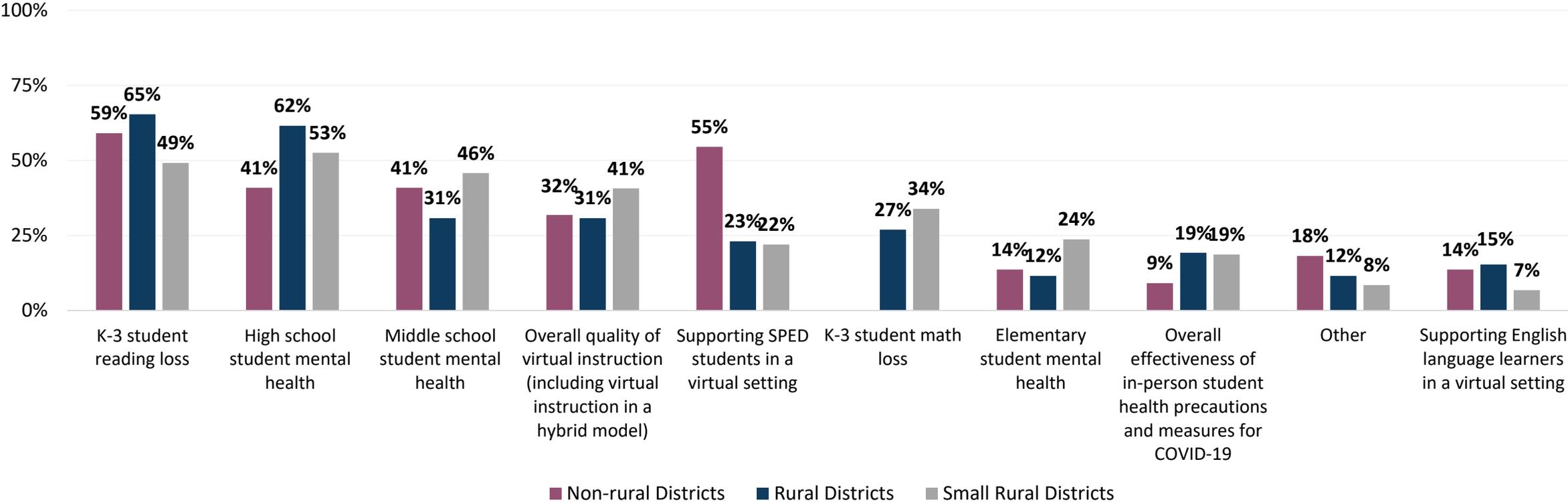
Percentage of Respondents Selecting the Following as a Top Student Priority

n=108



# Districts' Student Priorities by Rural Status

Percentage of Respondents Selecting the Following as a Top Student Priority By Rural Status  
n=107<sup>1</sup>



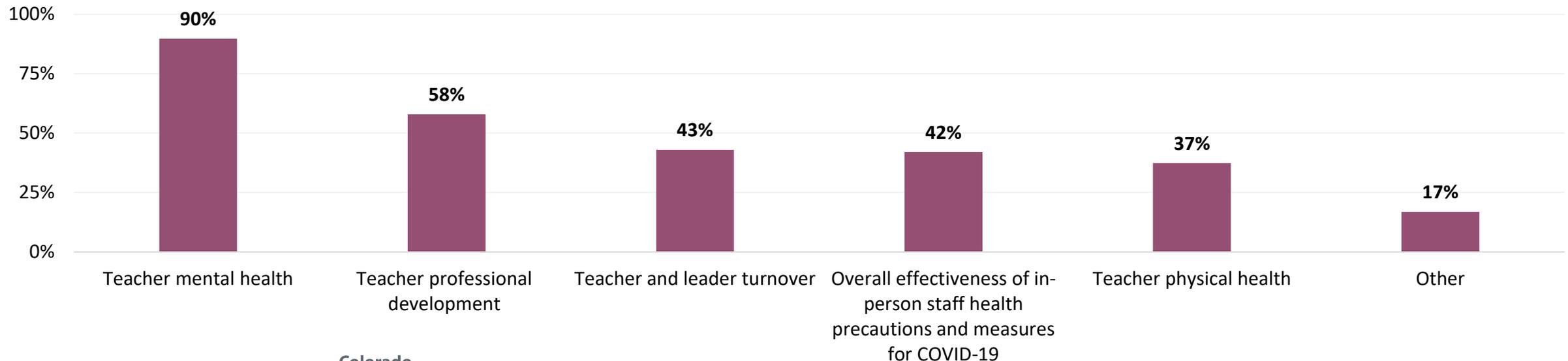
<sup>1</sup> This graph excludes the Charter School Institute, since it does not have a regional designation.

# Districts' Teacher Priorities

Districts were asked to select their top three priorities related to teachers from a list of six options. The following graph displays what percentage of districts selected each option. Respondents were given the opportunity to write in other priorities, and many respondents reiterated concerns about teacher fatigue and burnout. Many also noted that the deficit of substitute teachers only exasperates this problem further. One respondent shared, "If I could click on 'teacher and leader turnover' twice, I would."

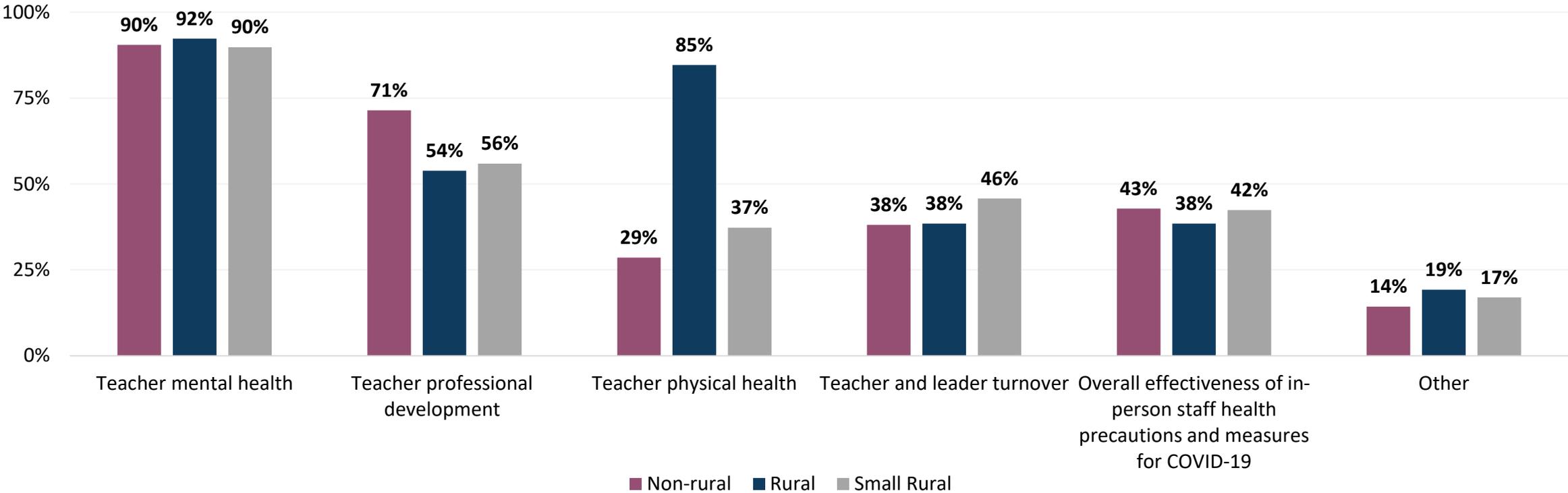
Percentage of Respondents Selecting the Following as a Top Teacher Priority

n=107



# Districts' Teacher Priorities by Rural Status

Percentage of Respondents Selecting the Following as a Top Teacher Priority by Rural Status  
n=106<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> This graph excludes the Charter School Institute, since it does not have a regional designation.

# Teachers' Leaves of Absence and Resignation

The chart below displays the number of teachers taking leaves of absence (n=92) and of teachers who have resigned (n=103). The percentages were calculated using the 2019-20 teacher count for these responding districts. Though the overall teacher turnover rate of these districts from the 2018-19 to the 2019-20 school year was 16.2%, it's important to note that the turnover rate includes teachers leaving for any reason, including moving to a different district or retiring.

| Rural Status | Number of Teachers Taking Leaves of Absence | Percentage of Teachers Taking Leaves of Absence | Number of Teachers Who Resigned | Number of Teachers Who Resigned |
|--------------|---|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Not Rural    | 569   | 1.8%  | 1,685                           | 5.5%                            |
| Rural        | 42  | 1.2%  | 213                             | 5.8%                            |
| Small Rural  | 9   | .7%   | 114                             | 7.5%                            |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>620</b>                                  | <b>1.7%</b>                                     | <b>2,012</b>                    | <b>5.6%</b>                     |

# Personnel Gaps

The table below displays the percentage of district respondents reporting that they have sufficient staff in the following roles by region (n=108). Note that districts also flagged the need for more paraprofessionals, mental health professionals, and physical health professionals.

|                      | Classroom Teachers | Classroom Teachers Able and Willing to Teach In-Person | Special Education Teachers | Substitute Teachers | Janitorial Staff | Food Services Staff | Bus Drivers |
|----------------------|--------------------|--|----------------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Metropolitan Region  | 75%                | 58%  | 58%                        | 0%                  | 50%              | 73%                 | 30%         |
| North Central Region | 69%                | 88%  | 63%                        | 6%                  | 63%              | 88%                 | 19%         |
| Northeast Region     | 85%                | 100%   | 85%                        | 20%                 | 85%              | 95%                 | 35%         |
| Northwest Region     | 30%                | 70%  | 50%                        | 0%                  | 60%              | 50%                 | 40%         |
| Pikes Peak Region    | 75%                | 81%  | 63%                        | 6%                  | 75%              | 81%                 | 38%         |
| Southeast Region     | 69%                | 100%   | 83%                        | 31%                 | 92%              | 85%                 | 38%         |
| Southwest Region     | 58%                | 83%  | 58%                        | 0%                  | 58%              | 83%                 | 36%         |
| West Central Region  | 78%                | 89%  | 56%                        | 11%                 | 78%              | 89%                 | 75%         |

# Enrollment



# Overview of Students Not Yet Enrolled in 2020-21

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Respondents were asked to estimate the number of students anticipated to enroll for the 2020-21 school year who have not yet enrolled nor provided notification that they are enrolled elsewhere (another public/private school or homeschool), but there was some variability in responses that indicates different interpretations of the questions, causing significant concern about the accuracy and utility of the resulting data.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, this report includes high-level takeaways from this needs assessment and highlights themes from the open-ended responses, with a preliminary 2020 October Count release forthcoming to provide insight into more accurate enrollment patterns.

- **The reported percentage of students not yet enrolled is approximately 4%** (17,129 students, n=103), and it is slightly higher among rural districts (5.3%) compared to non-rural districts (3.7%).
- Responses also suggest that **non-enrollment is a bit higher among younger students** and decreases slightly into the secondary levels. **Non-enrollment among students experiencing homelessness (8%) and those in foster care<sup>2</sup> (10%) is also 2-3 times higher than that of other groups of students.**

<sup>1</sup> For example, a number of respondents reported 80% or more of their students have not yet enrolled, indicating probable reporting of the number of students enrolled, rather than *not* enrolled. Note that percentages were calculated using 19-20 pupil membership, and respondents were asked to provide counts of not enrolled students in the needs assessment. Respondents who reported 80% or more of their students as not yet enrolled were removed for this enrollment analysis, so n=103.

<sup>2</sup> Note that the n size included in analysis for foster care is especially low (n=10) due to the frequency of suppressed data on the total number of foster care students at the district level and the non-response about foster care non-enrollment in this needs assessment. For the other student groups included in this analysis, n size ranges from around 30-100.

# Enrollment: Overarching Themes

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- Across the state, districts used a wide range of practices to get into contact with students and families about enrollment options. Innovative practices included leveraging social media, making home-visits, and hosting community meetings in person and via zoom.
- Non-rural, rural, and small rural districts all reported an increased number of families opting for homeschool or online options being provided by other districts/schools.
- Some districts, particularly those in rural areas, noted their concern that students who are being homeschooled are not receiving educational support and believe this may be most prevalent among students of color, students experiencing poverty, and students that need additional language supports.
- Some non-rural and rural districts (but no small rural districts) reported losing students to neighboring districts who are offering preferred learning models.
- A prevalent trend across all districts is families' concerns about COVID-19 causing them to opt out of in-person learning, and a few districts also reported some families opting out of school altogether.

# Barriers to Student Enrollment: Non-rural Districts

*“Many families are opting out of learning all together due to scare of COVID-19. Some families need their students to work as they have lost their jobs and they need help to make rent or buy food. Others have been forced out of their homes and had to move as they can't afford rent due to loss of jobs.”*

**– Pikes Peak Region  
District Respondent**

- Nearly half of districts reported that family mobility is a barrier to student enrollment. Due to economic circumstances, families are moving out of the district or state. In some cases districts do not know where families are and there is inadequate staff capacity to locate them. Additionally, some older students are reporting a need to work rather than attend school to supplement their family's income.
- More than half of districts indicated that some families are opting to enroll in other districts that are providing different and preferred learning environments (e.g., in-person, hybrid, more robust alternative online learning options).
- Some districts shared that the challenges of distance learning for younger students have resulted in families choosing to delay Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten enrollment.
- Nearly half of districts indicated they have seen a significant increase in homeschooling.
- In some cases districts reported that online education programming is limited by lack of access to resources that would create a high-quality learning environment (e.g., devices, experienced staff, quality systems, curriculum options).
- Districts repeatedly noted a need for funding to support FTE and services provided to students that enroll after October 1.

# Barriers to Student Enrollment: Rural Districts

*“We have over 600 students enrolling in homeschool and other online schools that are available around the state or the nation. Some of them have come back to us after October count, and most of them have expressed their intent to return this spring or next fall.”*

**– West Central Region  
District Respondent**

- Students are enrolling in other districts, private schools, or online programming provided by another district or organization to access preferred learning models that families are more comfortable with.
- After initial enrollment in online options, some districts are seeing students coming back after struggling with the program models.
- A majority of districts are seeing a significant increase in homeschooling. Some rural districts shared concerns that students are not receiving educational support and believe this may be most prevalent among students of color, students experiencing poverty, and students that need additional language supports.
- Several respondents shared that there is a continuum of family reactions from a fear of COVID-19 to frustration with mask orders.
- Rural districts need additional social workers and/or mental health professionals to help to re-engage with students and families.
- Some districts are beginning to look for remediation recommendations and supports for younger students.

# Barriers to Student Enrollment: Small Rural Districts

*“We struggle with families who are essentially opting out of school, some who enrolled online but have yet to participate in anything, and several who chose home school who are not engaging (with the system) at all.”*

– Northwest Region District Respondent

- Small rural districts are seeing an increase in homeschooling or families opting to enroll in online options outside of the district, particularly if the district did not offer an online option.
- Several districts also shared that there have been no barriers to student enrollment this fall.
- Family mobility is an issue particularly for families experiencing homelessness or participating in migrant work. Small rural districts reported despite knowing where the majority of students are due to the small size of their community, there are some cases where they cannot locate students or help them access the supports they offer.
- The majority of districts name that a fear of COVID-19 or the need to opt out due to underlying health issues remain barriers. Some small rural districts shared families’ concerns about the ability to social distance particularly on buses when traveling for long periods of time.
- Districts repeatedly noted that when families decide to re-enroll their child(ren) after October count it becomes a financial hardship for small districts and may require more hiring which is difficult to do mid-year.

# Promising Enrollment Practices: Non-rural Districts

*“We employ Community Advocates who work directly with families to resolve barriers to student attendance and engagement. We also have implemented Engagement Managers who track failure rates at the high school level in order to reach out and support students with tutoring and intervention.”*

**– Pikes Peak Region  
District Respondent**

- Several districts are utilizing multiple outreach strategies to connect with and support students and families (e.g., home visits and food services) and have broadened communication strategies to provide multiple access points for families.
- A few districts created “contactless” virtual registration processes.
- Some districts employed additional temporary staff to ensure families had multiple supports through the enrollment process including an enrollment hotline, personal outreach to families, and fully-trained front office staff.
- Some districts vastly expanded online school programs at all grade levels while also continuing to offer homeschool enrichment programming for families.

# Promising Enrollment Practices: Rural Districts

*“We did family orientation days with each family individually to help them navigate the technology and online learning. We adopted one online forum to use districtwide. Our principals and COVID Liaisons are constantly in touch with families and doing home visits if phone calls and emails are not successful.”*

**– Northeast Region  
District Respondent**

- Several rural districts are offering multiple learning environments and allowing families to navigate back and forth between them as they are comfortable.
- One district implemented a summer 'Ambassador Program.' Staff trained through this program reached out to families to provide information and assist with making learning decisions for the fall.
- Rural districts are reaching out to families to let them know the school district is here to support them any way they can and to let them know they are welcome to come back at any time.
- Rural districts described strategies for persistent outreach to students and families including leveraging multiple staff members to follow up as needed.

# Promising Enrollment Practices: Small Rural Districts

*“The biggest support has been the flexibility of blending learning through both in-person and remote instruction. Families can choose the option that fits their individual needs or move between the two. A major challenge with this is internet reliability as well as consistent access.”*

**– Pikes Peak Region District Respondent**

- Small rural districts noted their ability to create flexible instructional models to meet diverse needs and preferences of families as well as the option to transition between models.
- Several small rural districts have been able to offer robust, in-person learning with small class sizes. This has led to an increase in enrollment as compared to last year.
- One district included homeschool population in their athletic programming and saw increased engagement with the district as a result.
- One district saw a need for and developed social emotional learning resources and supports for students enrolled in Colorado Digital Learning Solutions.
- Given the concern with mask requirements, students in one small rural district created a peer engagement strategy in which students encouraged friends to try in-person learning despite mask requirements.
- Even though small rural districts rarely have communications staff, some increased social media outreach after finding that was the most effective means of communication with students and families.

# Learning Models and Attendance



# Overview of Learning Model Opt-Ins

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Respondents were asked to estimate the number of students opting into learning models as of October 2020, which have changed dramatically since then due to rising COVID-19 case numbers in Colorado. Additionally, the initial estimates were difficult to interpret – percentages were calculated based on 2019-20 pupil membership and did not equal total enrollment, even after accounting for respondents' non-enrollment estimates. As a result, like with the non-enrollment numbers, this report includes a few key themes from these questions and suggests several points for further inquiry and/or data collection. **As a reminder, these data were collected in October 2020 before more districts transitioned to fully or mostly remote learning.**

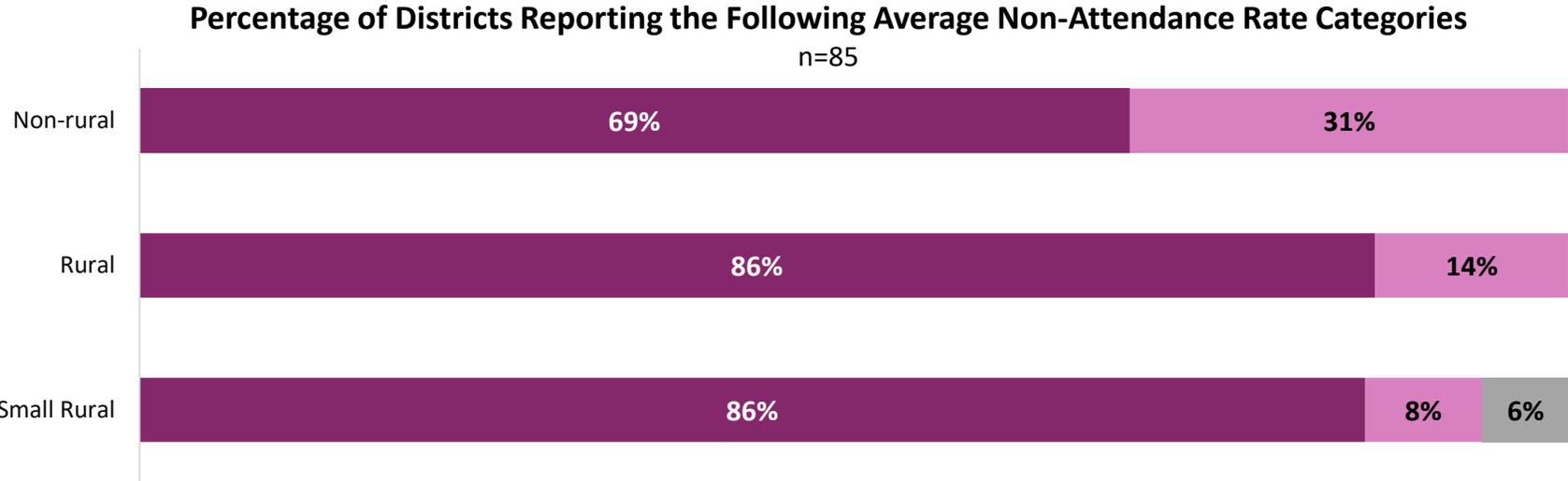
- As expected, **responses showed that ECE and elementary students were much more likely to participate in fully in-person options than secondary students.**<sup>1</sup>
- When looking at learning model opt-in numbers by groups of students, **students with special needs were most likely to participate in fully in-person learning** followed by students who are eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch and gifted students.<sup>2</sup>
- **Unlike other groups of students, English learners and students experiencing homelessness were more likely to be participating in fully remote learning than in-person or hybrid options,** though the differences across learning models were relatively small.

<sup>1</sup> 105 districts responded to questions about grade levels opting-in to different learning models.

<sup>2</sup> Only a small subset of districts (58) responded to questions about groups of students opting-in to different learning models.

# Overview of Attendance Estimates

Respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of students not regularly attending their chosen model (in-person, remote, or hybrid). In this section, there was a high rate of non-response (55 districts did not respond).<sup>1</sup> The graph below shows the percentage of districts reporting average non-attendance in three categories: below 10%, 10-20%, and 20-30%. It's also worth noting that districts reported that **students participating in completely remote models had the highest average rate of non-attendance at 5.9%**, followed by in-person at 3.2% and hybrid at 2.7%.



■ Below 10% not regularly attending their chosen model ■ 10% - 20% not regularly attending their chosen model ■ 20% - 30% not regularly attending their chosen model



<sup>1</sup> For districts who did respond (88), three have been excluded from this analysis as their responses indicated possible reporting of attendance rates, rather than the percentage of students not regularly attending. Note that the remaining districts all reported average non-attendance of 30% or below.

# Childcare Services



# Overview of Childcare Offerings

Though not all respondents made it to the childcare section of the needs assessment, 81 respondents answered at least some questions about childcare.<sup>1</sup> Of those 81 respondents, only 26 reported that they are offering some childcare options in their community – 54% of these are non-rural districts, 31% are rural, and 15% are small rural.<sup>2</sup> **As a reminder, these data were collected in October 2020 before more districts transitioned to fully or mostly remote learning.**

26

districts are **offering some kind of childcare** to at least some of their population.

2

districts **are not offering any childcare** approaches currently but plan to implement at least one approach in the future.

53

districts are **not offering any childcare** approaches currently and **do not plan to** implement any approaches.

# Childcare Approaches

As seen in the table below, a few more districts are offering childcare (supervision, not instruction) to priority populations compared to all school-age students, and it's also slightly more common for district/school staff to be providing that supervision directly, compared to contracting out with other organization(s).

| Childcare Approach<br>(n averages approximately 80)  | Currently Implementing | Plan to Implement <sup>1</sup> |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>CHILDCARE OFFERED TO <u>ALL</u> SCHOOL-AGE STUDENTS</b>   |                        |                                |
| District/school staff directly providing childcare   | 10                     | 3                              |
| District/school contracting with other organization(s) to provide childcare  | 12                     | 1                              |
| <b>CHILDCARE OFFERED TO PRIORITY POPULATIONS</b><br>(e.g., healthcare providers and first responders, school and district staff, families that qualify for state or federal subsidies, families with critical needs) |                        |                                |
| District/school staff directly providing childcare   | 14                     | 2                              |
| District/school contracting with other organization(s) to provide childcare  | 10                     | 1                              |

# Childcare Capacity in October 2020

The table below displays the number of students districts are able to serve and currently serving, as well as the number of students on a waitlist for childcare (n=35).<sup>1</sup>

| Region               | Total Childcare Capacity | Number of Students Currently Serving | Number of Students on Waitlist |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Metropolitan Region  | 11,132                   | 5,027                                | 0                              |
| North Central Region | 5,090                    | 1,015                                | 50                             |
| Pikes Peak Region    | 1,323                    | 805                                  | 0                              |
| West Central Region  | 465                      | 465                                  | 205                            |
| Northwest Region     | 200                      | 100                                  | 10                             |
| Northeast Region     | 45                       | 0                                    | 5                              |
| Southwest Region     | 40                       | 40                                   | 5                              |
| Southeast Region     | 35                       | 35                                   | 2                              |

# Childcare Cost Structure

All but one district offering childcare provided information about their cost structure (n=25). Over 70% of those districts (18) ask for a fee for childcare, for at least some students. Of those 18 districts, 15 are offering at least one option to help ensure affordability, and many are offering more than one affordability option. The 7 districts offering exclusively free childcare are split between rural (4) and non-rural districts (3).

| Cost Structure         | Number of Districts             |                                |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Free                   | 7                               |                                |
| Fee-Based              | <i>For <u>some</u> students</i> | <i>For <u>all</u> students</i> |
|                        | 5                               | 13                             |
| Scholarships Available | 1                               | 9                              |
| Sliding Scale          | 0                               | 9                              |
| Subsidies Accepted     | 1                               | 5                              |
| Other <sup>1</sup>     | 2                               | 3                              |

# Additional Reflections and Needs by Region



# Additional Reflections and Needs: Overarching Themes

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Districts expressed gratitude for this needs assessment effort and a desire that these data inform concrete next steps. Initial common themes emerged from the reflections that districts shared related to their response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Concern related to current and impending budget cuts amidst need to provide more comprehensive supports to students and families;
- Concern regarding imminent staff mental health issues, fatigue, burnout, and turnover as a result of increased demands and stress. Many respondents reiterated their staffing concerns in the open-ended responses, referencing both new COVID-19 procedures and impending staff departures as main challenges;
- Request for relief from state mandates related to assessments, non-urgent professional development, and READ Act requirements to ensure staff have bandwidth to support the increased needs of students and families;
- Interest in building on and sustaining innovative responses and strategies that have emerged in 2020 instead of resorting back to former ways of operating; and
- Desire for state-level guidance on COVID-19 response specifically aligned to CDPHE risk levels and consistent and/or regional practices for tracking and reporting COVID-19 cases.

# Additional Reflections and Needs: Metropolitan Region

*“In addition to all the COVID related additional work, staff is burning out at an incredible rate and many districts have had severe budgetary cuts that already left them with limited staffing resources. As many resources or funding that can be provided to support efforts moving forward with as few strings attached are what is needed.”*

- Districts in the Metro Region are experiencing significant shifts as they transition from one model of learning to another given the increased rates of COVID-19 and this has led to increased stress for staff across the board.
- There is a desire for statewide leadership and guidance to ensure region-wide consistency with regard to how districts respond to CDPHE levels of COVID-19 and the tracking and reporting of COVID data.
- Districts report that families in the Metro Region have experienced barriers to accessing COVID-19 testing.

# Additional Reflections and Needs: North Central Region

*“Many students are food insecure, have limited or no access to WiFi, have begun working to support the family unit, and are providing childcare for younger siblings...we are increasingly more concerned about the impact on public education and the health and safety of our students, staff, and community. The needs are outweighing the resources available to us. Additional funding to meet those needs is essential.”*

- Current budget shortfalls from this past year, combined with the future impacts that have been predicted, raise significant concerns for districts and their ability to provide equitable services and supports for all students. Moreover, without longer-term budget certainty it is challenging to make strategic and sustainable hiring decisions.
- North Central Region districts raised the question about forgoing student count for 2020-21 given the extreme conditions and concerns regarding school finance in the near future.
- There is concern about how increased student responsibilities outside of school may prevent them from fully accessing their education.

# Additional Reflections and Needs: Northeast Region

*“There is no substitute for in-person learning. Remote/hybrid is not an equivalent experience. The state should do everything in its power to provide in-person education for all students.”*

- Northeast Region reflections illustrate the variation in localized experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic across the state. Some districts have been in-person since the fall because they have very few or no COVID-19 cases so far.
- Districts expressed concern with teachers fulfilling existing professional development requirements on top of all the new learning they need to do to meet the moment during this pandemic. They noted concerns about even more turnover and request a reprioritization of requirements.
- Investing in additional student and family supports is necessary in response to COVID-19 but is exacerbating already existing budget shortfalls.

# Additional Reflections and Needs: Northwest Region

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*“Our teachers and staff are stretched thin and we can't offer them any relief. We don't have enough subs and I fear we will begin to lose teachers and other staff. The emotional stress our teachers and especially our leaders are under is vast and I don't know how long we can endure.”*

- Northwest Region expressed great concern over decreased financial and staffing resources during a time of increasing student and family needs.
- Several districts emphasized that they are running at capacity both emotionally and financially.
- The region is tapping into community partners and government agencies to respond to COVID-19 in equitable ways. Still, they need more resources to support translation, outreach, and services for Spanish speaking families.

# Additional Reflections and Needs: Pikes Peak Region

*“The burden of making decisions related to the pandemic is overwhelming to administrative staff. Routinely changing guidance, lack of a statewide and county direction leaves decision makers on an island.”*

- Pikes Peak Region is considering how to address the fatigue that their staff are experiencing and how to address the resulting increase in retirements and resignations.
- Additional staffing needs such as a lack of substitute teachers are also impacting their ability to provide instruction.
- Districts emphasized a request for temporary relief of pressure points such as READ Act requirements, state assessments, and for future flexible funding to meet the needs of students.
- Despite experiencing challenges that are similar to other districts (e.g., mental health, enrollment, learning loss) – Pikes Peak Region also expressed that they are observing positive change including how districts are providing more personalized support for students and families. Districts shared interest in how to sustain innovation measures into the future.

# Additional Reflections and Needs: Southeast Region

*“Student and staff mental health is critical and at an all time low, especially in regards to staff. Our staff will do 'whatever it takes' to provide requested education services to our students, but it is taking a toll.”*

- The constant transitions with student and staff quarantines is creating significant stress for educators.
- Funding surfaced as a major concern and there is great uncertainty about how to manage budget cuts again next year. Districts noted a request to the state legislature to address the school funding formula.
- Districts underscored the need to prioritize mental health this year for both students and staff. They also specifically suggested a pause on the administration of state assessments and use formative assessment data instead.

# Additional Reflections and Needs: Southwest Region

*“We need money to operate our schools and keep the doors open. COVID restrictions require higher staffing levels than we have now, but we are going to have to make huge cuts. The State of Colorado cannot have it both ways: basement funding and small class sizes are mutually exclusive factors.”*

- Southwest Region respondents elevated the need for additional resources to support mental health of educators and administrators.
- The lack of consistent educational delivery as a result of student and staff quarantines will impact academic achievement and districts are concerned about the loss of additional direct instructional time as a result of spring assessments.
- Limited funding for teachers and personnel has resulted in having to implement hybrid models to meet health and safety guidelines in the Southwest.
- The region anticipates ongoing academic issues with students that are missing school or opting for home learning. They expressed that this remediation need will have personnel and budget implications into the future for many districts.

# Additional Reflections and Needs: West Central Region

*“We do appreciate CDE’s flexibility in the UIP timeline...We understand that we should not...use COVID as an excuse to cancel or not do something. At the same time, however, these extreme times are cause to consider flexibility when there is a demonstrated need.”*

- West Central Region districts are working to balance the need to keep classes small with the challenges of school funding and staffing issues with substitutes.
- Districts are concerned about grant cycles ending, particularly the School Counselor Corps Grant, at a time when mental health needs are increasing and the availability of funds to sustain programs and staffing are nonexistent.
- Necessary COVID-19 response efforts have heavily impacted rural districts with their ability to do the fundamental components of their daily jobs. The region is looking to the state to help relieve some pressures that can be deprioritized for this year.
- The region expressed concern with how existing child safety issues such as child abuse and other domestic issues are being amplified by the pandemic.