The State Board of Education (Board) released the "COVID-19 Academic Impact Report" on November 1, 2021, pursuant to Executive Order 2021-03. The report used data from the 2020-2021 school year to draw comparisons to prior years and to identify the impact of COVID-19 on student learning.

Due to the varied and diverse COVID-19 impacts, data from the 2020-2021 is not as complete or reliable as prior years. Notwithstanding issues with the data, there were insights to be gleaned at the state level. Significant takeaways of the Board's report include the following:

1. Early grades saw larger academic impacts;
2. The impact to mathematics is larger than the impact to English language arts, but both are significant and broad;
3. Student mobility (i.e. students moving to different schools or to homeschooling) was higher compared to prior years; and
4. English learners continue to struggle more than their English-language proficient peers.

The report can be found here: https://azsbe.az.gov/2020-2021-school-year-reports.

Staff has prepared an update on the ongoing work and seeks input from Board members on the direction of the follow-up report.

As discussed at Board meetings in the Fall of 2021, Board staff began work on a follow-up report to determine the evidence-based strategies and practices used throughout the pandemic that assisted with a positive and/or limited impact on student learning during 2020-2021 school year, despite challenges schools and students faced. The report is intended to present information to further learn "what worked" in this unprecedented situation. Recovery and acceleration of student learning may require a broad, multi-year approach and staff is taking its time to study the resilience across multiple areas including:

- Race/Ethnicity
    - Native American/American Indian, Black/African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Program Participation
    - Income Eligibility 1 & 2, English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities
- Geographic Area
    - Gila County, La Paz County, Yuma County
    - Areas with large amount of tribal land
        - Apache County, Coconino County, Mohave County, Navajo County
- Grade Levels
    - 3rd - 5th grades (ELA and Math)
    - 6th grade (Math)
    - 10th grade (ELA and Math)

Areas listed above were selected based upon the Board's initial findings of deep disparate outcomes. Staff utilized the list to find positive outliers. It did so by determining which schools demonstrated resilience amongst the specific populations, meaning that the schools' statewide assessment data showed rates of "improvement" in ELA and/or math or rates of "modest to no impact". A holistic approach was utilized by not solely focusing on one year of outcomes, rather by reviewing historical school achievement to determine impact. Staff did not view low proficiency or low growth as negatives, rather as an opportunity to study why schools were able to hold steady despite the challenges imposed by COVID-19.

In order to ensure data accuracy, staff put controls around the percent of students assessed in the Spring of 2021. Schools that had 90 percent or more of students tested were compared against the rates of impact to identify schools with "improvement" to "modest to no impact" rates.

The following schools were identified for resilience (exhibited by statewide assessment data) serving high-need/impact students and areas:

	Centennial Elementary School	**Page High School**	**Masada Charter School**	**Winslow High School**	**Ehrenberg Elementary School**	**Countryside Elementary School**
Charter/ District	Higley USD	Page USD	Charter Entity	Winslow USD	Quartzsite USD	Dysart USD
County	Maricopa	Coconino	Mohave	Navajo	La Paz	Maricopa
School Size	Large	Large	Medium	Medium	Small	Medium
Population Identified	Not Title I, 25% Hispanic /Latino	Title I, Majority Native American students	Title I, Majority students in poverty	Title I, Majority Native American students	Title I, Majority Hispanic/ Latino students	Not Title I, Students with Disabilities, 30% Hispanic/ Latino, PK-Grade 4
COVID Impact ELA	Improvement	Modest to No Impact	Improvement	Modest to No Impact	Improvement	Modest to No Impact
COVID Impact Math	Improvement	N/A low student count	Improvement	N/A low student count	Modest to No Impact	Improvement
Percent Proficient ELA (2021)	64	18	76	23	30	37
Percent Proficient Math (2021)	65	14	74	16	10	33
Median SGP Trend: 2019 Current-Cohort Referenced and 2021 Pre-Pandemic Cohort Reference	**ELA:** 54 to 57 **Math:** 57 to 62	**ELA**: 46 to 50 **Math:** N/A low student count	**ELA:** 60 to 60 **Math:** 47 to 55	**ELA:** 40 to 44 **Math:** N/A low student count	**ELA:** 32 to 60 **Math:** 61 to 52	**ELA:** 41 to 50 **Math:** 35 to 49

Board staff utilized a set of control questions for the site administrator(s) to answer in the initial interviews. The questions allowed staff to establish a baseline in local decisions and/or policies that led to positive outlying student outcomes.

From the initial interviews, interesting trends emerged from the school leaders. Leaders had been at their school longer than ten years, some in different roles throughout their tenure, however, all had been able to build strong, well established bonds with their school's community. Leaders described how trust from

both students and parents played into the daily decisions of the leaders. Staff believes the importance of strong and consistent site leadership merits recognition.

Due to the established trust with the school committees, leaders found that communication to parents, both from site administration and classroom teachers, was positive, with many of the leaders stating that their teachers knew individual families' needs and rose to meet those needs by being flexible with instruction and establishing strong patterns of consistency for students. Additionally, teachers were willing to move to other subject areas, fill-in when needed to substitute for a class, give up planning periods and personally deliver supplies, books and lessons to individual households. Leaders believed had they not had the strong relationships already built within their school communities, they would have seen different outcomes.

A few of the leaders described how the students' start of the school year was pushed back to make time for teachers to develop the skills needed to provide lessons virtually to the students and allowed for the teachers to plan on how to meet the needs of students who did not have technology access. The change of schedule allowed for teachers to be prepared in providing dual instruction: in-person instruction while also connected to virtual learners. Because of the thoughtful professional development, with enough time to fully understand the concept and plan accordingly, teacher confidence in the dual modalities was high, which may have led to greater student outcomes. While modes of teaching were varied across schools, high student expectations and clear communication for student grading and deadlines were consistent across all schools. These decisions were assisted by parental and community support.

All of the school leaders identified different areas they believe led to the positive student results. While a student cannot learn if they are anxious or dealing with a family issue and a student cannot read if not provided the necessary interventions, both get to the same outcome: students learning. Some leaders focused on adapting their reading programs and interventions to allot for physical distancing, instead of dropping the programs, while others were keen to focus on the emotional impact COVID-19 had on their student population and moved to implement increases to counseling staff. Leaders and school staff took assessment of what the students needed at any given time and provided the necessary remediation.

As the 2020-2021 school year progressed, school leaders focused their teachers on student data, collected from various benchmark assessments and individual student contact, to develop strategies and intervention plans for students across multiple areas. Leaders understood the needs of the whole student and moved their staff to engage in multiple areas in the students' academic and community life. One school provided in-person special education classes to students, understanding the population would respond well to the structured environment, while another, in order to get students to school to receive instruction and interventions, ensured extracurricular activities were still offered.

While the initial control questions focused more on the site level policies and decisions, the findings suggest a strong, positive school community and culture instituted by experienced site administrators and dedicated teachers, while providing for the academic and emotional needs of students, led to positive student outcomes and, in this case, led to lesser impacts of COVID-19 on student learning.

Staff will continue the conversation with school leaders, focusing on deeper dives into the academic supports, to include evidence-based strategies provided during the 2020-2021 school year. Furthermore, in order to assist with capturing as many Arizona student populations and school configurations for the case studies, staff will identify additional schools, as the goal of the follow-up report is to highlight the success of schools by compiling relevant and practical case studies. The goal being schools with similar student populations and school characteristics can learn from and implement successful evidence-based strategies to address unfinished learning.