2 Crises Affecting Schools: Katrina and COVID

• Similarities:
  • Fundamentally man-made disasters
  • Students thrown out of school completely for weeks
  • Students isolated from friends, family, & teachers for a year
  • Health and economic crisis, inequitably distributed

• Differences:
  • In Katrina, students shifted into regular school buildings, not remote
  • In COVID, an ongoing crisis that threatened everyone
Preview: Lessons of Katrina/New Orleans for What Comes Next with Schools Post-COVID

- Leveraging the forced changes in educational habits
- Providing more options for students
- Improving education from the bottom up
Leveraging the Forced Change of Educational Habits

• After Katrina, the city was forced to adapt
  • Example: Most school buildings destroyed and families returned in unpredictable ways, so the city was forced to eliminate attendance zones

• Under COVID:
  • Students and teachers being forced to learn new technologies & new approaches to teaching and learning
  • Parents taking on new and more extensive roles
Providing More Options for Students

• After Katrina, again, we expanded choice
• Under COVID:
  • For the vast majority of students, in-person instruction is best
  • But some students might be better served with 2-3 days in person
  • And a (probably small) number of others might prefer remote learning
  • We can and should provide those options
• Note: Providing options is not cheap
Improving Education from the Bottom Up

• After Katrina, the reform process was top-down, outside-in
• Black voters and educators cut out of the process
• Almost no one liked the mix of schools available; partly because they didn’t engage the community in choosing schools
• At this point under COVID, we don’t know what’s next—it’s a process
• Let’s not make the same mistake
POSSIBLE POST-COVID FUTURES
Getting the Mix of Classroom Instruction and Online Technology Right

• We’ve now spent a year experimenting with new online technology
• Some of it’s very good; some of its not; and some of it could be if we have more time to learn it
• This is where we can expect the most certain changes
• “Flipping” classrooms and making the best use of in-person time
Rethinking Policies

• At the district level…
  • Do we really want high school students to start at or before 8 am?
  • Should students be able to take online courses provided elsewhere?
  • Should all students come in person every day?

• At the state level…
  • How to define “attendance” and “course credits”?
  • How does all of this affect school finance?
Concluding Thoughts

• Experiencing something different is useful—let’s learn from it.
• We can, and must, do better