



## Best Practices for Data Use on Student Engagement during the Pandemic



The pandemic brought unprecedented changes to the way schools and districts conducted instruction and engaged students. In turn, these changes made collecting and analyzing student data more challenging than in previous years. In our work with six partner districts, TERA learned valuable lessons about using data to identify important trends related to student engagement and targeting needed supports during the pandemic.

As districts continue to grapple with the ongoing pandemic, implementing good data practices in schools and districts will remain an important piece of recovery in the coming years.

### *Best data practices include:*



**Understanding who opted into different instructional models:** Each district had their own approach to virtual learning and the instructional options they offered to students and families. We saw different student characteristics and learning trajectories for who selected which learning option. Taking this selection into account is vital to fully understanding any difference in student learning outcomes.



**Combining multiple sources of data:** Despite the challenges of this year, districts still collected a lot of data on students. Bringing these sources together can help validate and add insight to emerging trends found in an analysis of student data. Instead of just identifying a certain problem (like an increase in chronic absenteeism), adding additional data sources can help identify students who are struggling across multiple measures and can start getting to more “why” questions.



**Placing this year’s trends in context and constructing apples-to-apples comparisons:** Our work with districts helped bring light to concerning inequities that existed prior to the pandemic and that developed during the pandemic. Looking across different time periods, different school contexts, and different characteristics can contextualize trends and reveal data irregularities that may be unique to data collected during the pandemic. When investigating emerging trends, it is vital to construct equivalent comparisons.