Summary of Community Engagement Research

Learn to Return (L2R) supports Washington State K-12 schools to design and implement customized COVID-19 testing strategies and vaccination campaigns. Feedback from school communities engaged with L2R is integral to adapting services to meet ever evolving needs and challenges. In May and June 2021, Health Commons Project conducted two online surveys: one with school leaders engaged with L2R and overseeing school-based testing programs in their districts; another with school community members in districts currently offering school-based testing. We also conducted interviews with leadership in school districts enrolled in L2R. The summary of the findings is summarized below.

Responding to these findings, L2R is here to support by:

- Providing public-facing summaries of up-to-date guidance and evidence approved by the Washington State Department of Health (DOH).
- Expediting release of communication materials translated into other languages (e.g., Spanish, Vietnamese) to ensure equitable access to health information for non-English speakers.
- Publishing short, easy-to-digest video and infographic content for social media and webpages that communicate priority messaging to school communities to diverse audiences.
- Creating case studies from L2R schools to highlight the importance and benefits of a school-based testing strategy and vaccination campaigns.
- Developing user guides for parents, families, and school administrators for easy navigation of testing vendor registration portals.
- Encouraging COVID-19 testing vendors to update language to address concerns about privacy and demographic questions and diversify video content before the start of the new school year.
- In advance of the new school year, (re)establish a regular cadence and format for COVID-19 updates and guidance for dissemination to the school community (e.g., send an email every Friday with updates and reminders the following school week).
- Anticipate some resistance to COVID-19 restrictions as families prepare for the new school year: stress that the fastest way back to a “new normal” is to employ a combination of evidence-based safety strategies over the course of the next school year.
- Host webinars (with time for open Q&A) in August with the school community to reinforce messaging around safety strategies for schools, promote vaccinations for all eligible students, and provide space for questions as families, staff, and teachers prepare for the transition back to in-person learning in the fall.
- Use school community survey results to identify best practices and cadence for communication with L2R school community (i.e., majority of families request information via email but may require additional follow-up via text messages as a reminder to check email).
- Share short, easy-to-understand video content and infographics via social media (translated into multiple languages and targeted to different age groups).
- Continue to regularly share feedback with Health Commons Project on communication challenges to identify where support and additional resources may be needed to support your efforts.

Recommendations for L2R Schools:

- In advance of the new school year, (re)establish a regular cadence and format for COVID-19 updates and guidance for dissemination to the school community (e.g., send an email every Friday with updates and reminders the following school week).
- Anticipate some resistance to COVID-19 restrictions as families prepare for the new school year: stress that the fastest way back to a “new normal” is to employ a combination of evidence-based safety strategies over the course of the next school year.
- Host webinars (with time for open Q&A) in August with the school community to reinforce messaging around safety strategies for schools, promote vaccinations for all eligible students, and provide space for questions as families, staff, and teachers prepare for the transition back to in-person learning in the fall.
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- Share short, easy-to-understand video content and infographics via social media (translated into multiple languages and targeted to different age groups).
- Continue to regularly share feedback with Health Commons Project on communication challenges to identify where support and additional resources may be needed to support your efforts.
L2R School Community Survey

PURPOSE
- Better understand concerns from parents and guardians regarding school-based testing and vaccinations
- Gather feedback from community members on their preferred frequency and mode of communications around school-based testing and vaccinations

METHOD & SAMPLE
- The 10-minute survey was available in 8 languages (Spanish, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Somali, Tagalog, and Russian) via Google Forms – accessible to anyone with a link.
- The survey was distributed by the L2R schools to their school communities.
- The survey was open from June 25 to July 6, 2021, and received 1,384 total responses (1214 English, 147 Spanish, 23 Vietnamese).

Key Findings from School Community

How much do you know about what is being done at your child’s school to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

- NOT AT ALL FAMILIAR: 4%
- SLIGHTLY FAMILIAR: 13%
- MODERATELY FAMILIAR: 31%
- VERY FAMILIAR: 34%
- EXTREMELY FAMILIAR: 18%

How effective are the COVID-19 safety measures in your child’s school?

- VERY POOR: 2%
- POOR: 3%
- FAIR: 21%
- GOOD: 46%
- EXCELLENT: 27%

How easy or hard has it been for your child to follow COVID-related safety measures and protocols at their schools?

- VERY HARD: 5%
- HARD: 8%
- ACCEPTABLE: 33%
- EASY: 30%
- VERY EASY: 24%

Would you be comfortable with your student being tested weekly at school?

- NO: 42%
- YES: 58%

Would you be comfortable with your student being vaccinated at school?

- NO: 48%
- YES: 52%
Interviews with School Administrators

**PURPOSE**
Understand how L2R can better support the needs of enrolled districts with a focus on communication and engagement with their school communities.

**METHOD & SAMPLE**
In May and June 2021, the communications consultants conducted confidential 30-minute semi-structured interviews with superintendents and/or L2R testing program leads. A diverse cross-section of L2R schools were invited for interviews (n=26) and 10 schools participated.

**Key Findings from Interviews**
L2R schools are using a multi-pronged communications strategy to engage with their school communities, but support for translations and timely, easy-to-understand communications resources is still a priority.

Misinformation will continue to be a constant challenge: a proactive communication strategy during a protracted crisis is essential.

Online registration systems for COVID-19 testing platforms can be cumbersome and not intuitive for some users, causing some unnecessary frustration.
Recruitment Survey to K-12 Schools Not Yet Enrolled in Learn to Return Program

**PURPOSE**
- Better understand the needs of districts not enrolled in L2R and how Health Commons Project can support and recruit these schools.

**METHOD & SAMPLE**
- Online survey distributed to unenrolled school districts across Washington State
- 64 Washington K-12 schools not enrolled in L2R.

**Key Findings**
- The primary concern for districts that have not implemented school-based testing is a lack of adequate labor support.
- Although several districts have implemented their own school-based testing programs, most have relied on community-based sites, pharmacies, or doctors’ offices for COVID-19 testing.
- Many districts acknowledged the likely benefit of school-based testing especially as community-based testing sites wind down:
  - Free and convenient testing option for staff, students, and their families
  - Faster results & outbreak mitigation
  - Reduced lost learning days & lessened anxiety about in-person schooling

How Will Health Commons Project Use These Findings to Better Support Schools Not Yet Enrolled in L2R?

In response to the primary concern about adequate labor support, L2R will help reinforce messaging around technical assistance and financial resources:

- Enrolled districts gain access to funding to reimburse staff time or hire new personnel to support testing programs
- L2R provides one-on-one strategic support for developing sustainable staffing models

One of the difficulties with COVID-19 is that isolating or quarantining at home not only makes learning difficult but puts life on pause. Through Learn to Return, Health Commons Project will continue to build partnerships between health care and school systems so that communities have access to services like COVID-19 testing and vaccination, as well as pandemic recovery services like those in Care Connect (e.g., food kits, assistance with bills).

Health Commons Project will use these findings to ensure our programs and offerings are meeting the needs of K-12 schools across the state as they work to prepare for the return to school in the fall.

FIND OUT MORE AT THE LEARN TO RETURN WEBSITE OR EMAIL US DIRECTLY AT SCHOOLS@HEALTHCOMMONS.ORG