

A Comparative Case Study of Washington State and Mississippi's COVID-19 Learning

Loss Recovery Strategies

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Abstract:

This study is a comparative case that investigates the learning loss strategies implemented by Washington State and Mississippi. This case study will address the following questions: What strategies did Washington State vs. Mississippi implement to alleviate the impact of COVID-19 learning loss and facilitate recovery? What specific initiatives have been implemented by Washington State and Mississippi to address COVID-19 learning loss, particularly concerning the racial gap? Addressing why Washington state with a low initial learning loss has a slow recovery and the opposite is true for Mississippi. Mississippi has the highest learning loss but has one of the fastest recovery rates. We should look into the best strategies for the academic gap and maybe learn and take advantage of what these two states did to help close the achievement and racial gaps in America.

The strategies that Washington State implemented to alleviate the impact of COVID-19 learning loss and facilitate recovery were Equity and Accessibility, Mental health and well-being, Professional Development and Senate Bill 6168, and Engagement with Families and Strengthening Community Voices. The strategies that Mississippi implemented to alleviate the impact of COVID-19 learning loss and facilitate recovery were Mississippi Connects and Technology Access, Professional Development and Teacher Diversity, Family Engagement and Support. Lastly, On-Demand Tutoring. The specific initiatives that Washington State took concerning the racial gap were enforcing Senate Bill 6168 and giving voices to communities who have been excluded from education policy process, Vs. Mississippi. Mississippi hiring, certifying, and training educators of color, along with creating an online program or app as a digital learning resource called “Mississippi Connects”.

Overall, My findings in the future may help policymakers and other researchers interested in racial equity and learning loss further understand the vastly different approaches each state took, comparing it to the results. This could potentially help in making policies based on this research to improve the quality of learning overall. Through my research as well as other fellow academics we hope to see a change and make a difference. I aspire to raise awareness and motivate advocacy efforts for policymakers to create or adjust policies that address racial disparities. I also hope other researchers and academic persons like me can use my findings for further studies.

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Chapter 1 – Purpose of The Study

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges to the education system, exacerbating the already existing academic disparities and highlighting the urgent need for effective strategies to address learning loss and promote recovery, particularly concerning racial equity. The significant decline in academic achievement and educational progress experienced by students as a result of the pandemic has highlighted the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the widening disparities and ensure that all students, particularly those from marginalized communities, have the resources and opportunities necessary to recover and succeed academically.

The United States had faced a significant learning loss and decline in test scores from the COVID-19 pandemic . “ In the United States, math scores decreased by 11% of a standard deviation, while reading and science scores did not show statistically significant changes. These declines in the U.S. are approximately 86% of the size of the OECD average declines in math and less than 10% in reading.” (United States Government, 2023, n.p) Math scores declined the most in the United State during the pandemic, approximately 86% of the OECD average. Ultimately, bringing math scores up would hopefully reduce the learning loss in the United States and promote the increase in learning scores. It's important that we keep track of students' scores and see what we can do to help them improve.

Along with the significant learning loss and declining test scores, the pandemic has widened the racial academic gap. “Estimated that learning loss in the United States would be more severe for low-income, Black, and Hispanic students, potentially increasing existing achievement gaps by 15 to 20% “(Jones, 2024, n.p). Leaving behind more kids to struggle to

succeed in their learning. It's interesting to see the significant difference in decline in learning during the pandemic especially in the communities of color and low income.

Recovery across the United States has been uneven. The reason for this inconsistent recovery is that each state had different ways in how they wanted to address the COVID-19 learning loss. This uneven recovery across the United States is a reflection of differences in policy, resources, and priorities from each state. “Because political conditions and actual politics vary widely among the states, we should expect to find variations across the politics of states COVID-19 policy disputes” (Libey, Herrington, Choi, Marsh & Bulkley, 2023, p. 8). Having each state doing their own educational system and their own policies makes it hard for each state to have similar recovery. They are learning as they go on what will work best to improve learning loss in schools.

My study aims to investigate and to uncover the learning loss recovery strategies and how they might be different by examining and comparing the COVID-19 learning loss strategies that were implemented by Washington State and Mississippi. Questions to help guide my case study will be the following: What strategies did Washington state vs. Mississippi implement at the state level to alleviate the impact of COVID-19 learning loss and facilitate recovery? What specific initiatives have been implemented by Washington state and Mississippi to address COVID-19 learning loss, particularly concerning the racial gap?

My research study holds significant implications for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders invested in education and racial equity. By examining the strategies implemented by the two states, Washington state and Mississippi state, this research aims to identify promising practices, challenges, and opportunities for addressing COVID-19 learning loss in racially

diverse communities. Ultimately, this study seeks to inform evidence-based policies and interventions that would promote educational equity, and social justice for all students, regardless of race or background.

Chapter 2 – Review of Literature

Achievement Gaps Prior to the Pandemic

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States school curriculum was designed for in-person learning with a strong emphasis on standardized testing. Long before COVID-19, the American schooling system always had a significant racial achievement gap that still exists to this day. According to Reardon et al. (2015), these disparities were attributed to various factors, including socioeconomic status, access to quality early childhood education, and school funding inequalities. Hanushek and Rivkin (2009) also highlighted the role of teacher quality and school resources in continuing these gaps. The gaps were not only evident in test scores but also in other academic outcomes such as advanced coursework enrollment and disciplinary actions.

Learning Loss During the Pandemic

When the pandemic happened, the American school system instantly transitioned from in-person learning to remote or hybrid learning. Standardized testing was also postponed or modified. This transition as we know and already pointed out caused learning loss and increased the existing racial achievement gaps. “From 2019 to 2022, test scores plunged. Students lost more than half a year of learning. The students most at risk are those in poor districts, whose test scores fell further during the pandemic. ” (Miller, Mervosh & Paris, 2024, n.p). Overall, students of different racial groups and lower incomes suffered the most in learning loss as they didn’t have the proper tools to better assist them in their learning. That could be due to a lack of tutoring or one-on-one with a student to help them get a better understanding of the material. Also the a lack

of internet access, technology, and a supportive environment for students to be able to do their work. Having access to these 3 was crucial in a student's success to prevent learning loss. Which not many students had access to.

When the COVID-19 pandemic happened it took the world by surprise, this public health crisis was extremely unprecedented to us. COVID-19 basically made it difficult for districts to implement interventions effectively. “The 2021-22 school year in particular included unprecedented problems for districts—including surges in infections due to new COVID variants, political polarization, and other challenges—that inevitably hindered districts’ ability to implement interventions as intended” (Carbonari, Dewey, Kane, & Muroga, 2024, p. 6). These unprecedented issues undoubtedly created a challenging environment for educational institutions, affecting their capacity to deliver consistent and effective interventions. This caused students to fall behind in their studies as it took them longer to implement the right interventions needed for students' success. The top three were a reliable internet connection which most students did not have. A device they can use at home to do their work and a quiet place to study. Sadly, these were equipment that most students of color or low-income did not have access to until it was provided for them.

After the Pandemic (Recovery Phase)

After the pandemic, the American education system slowly started opening up schools and having in-person learning with the right precautions and health measures. Focusing on addressing the learning loss and helping students catch up and stay on track. The transition was difficult for everyone as the fear of staying safe was key. We as a society are currently still in the “recovery” phase of the pandemic, and not much information is known about the long-term

impacts and outcomes. The only thing is that students are doing better now as test scores have improved from the pandemic but we hope to see more improvement as we move forward.

After the COVID-19 pandemic had “stabilized” schools started opening up again. Students are now slowly recovering what they lost. Students in the United States have recovered about a third of what they lost in math, and less in reading. “Overall in math, [a subject](#) where learning loss has been greatest, students have made up about a third of what they lost. In reading, they have made up a quarter” (Miller, Mervosh & Paris, 2024, n.p). The loss of learning that was experienced during the pandemic is not recovering and we are able to see that. With time, kids are now improving in their ability to learn as things have shifted from in-person to remote to hybrid. Kids have adapted to a hybrid role of learning and encouragement of reaching out when needing assistance.

Washington & Mississippi

Washington lost half a year of learning during Covid while Mississippi lost almost a year. The data from (the Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University, n.d), shows that Washington state in 2019-2022 went down -0.58 standard deviation in math scores and went down -0.36 standard deviation in reading scores. In 2022-2023 math scores went up by +0.9 standard deviation and reading scores went down even lower by -0.3 standard deviation. Washington State is currently -0.49 standard deviation behind in math and -0.39 standard deviation in reading. Mississippi in 2019-2022 went down -0.73 standard deviation in math scores and -0.22 standard deviation in reading scores. In 2022-2023 went up by +.53 standard deviation in math and +.43 standard deviation in reading. Mississippi is still -0.2 standard deviation behind in math but +0.21 standard deviation head in reading. Which is amazing,

Mississippi is almost fully recovered. “Some states, including Mississippi, had the strongest recoveries.”(Miller, Mervosh, & Paris 2024, n.p)

(Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University, n.d) shows that in Washington state, White students' test scores from 2009-2018 were above average at +0.8 standard deviation. Asian students' test scores from 2009-2018 were above the average by +1.66 standard deviation. Black students' test scores from 2009-2018 were below average by -1.4 standard deviation. Hispanic students' test scores from 2009-2018 were below average by -1.28 standard deviation. Native American students' test scores were below average by -1.86 standard deviation. Poor students' test scores from 2009-2018 were below average by -1.07 standard deviation. Non-poor students' test scores from 2009-2018 were above average by +1.44 standard deviation. Sadly, test scores after 2018 are not available yet to compare them.

(Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University, n.d) shows that in Mississippi, White students' test scores from 2009-2018 were above average by +0.27 standard deviation. Asian students' test scores from 2009-2018 were above the average by +1.74 standard deviation. Black students' test scores from 2009-2018 were below average by -1.74 standard deviation. Hispanic students' test scores from 2009-2018 were below average by -0.81 standard deviation. Native American students' test scores were below average by -1.38 standard deviation. Poor students' test scores from 2009-2018 were below average by -1.49 standard deviation. Non-poor students' test scores from 2009-2018 were above average by +0.69 standard deviation. Again, similar to Washington State's test scores after 2018 are not available yet.

Chapter 3 – Methodology:

My study uses a comparative case study design to contrast the approaches of the two states. This design is well-aligned with the research objectives as it allows for an in-depth analysis of each state's strategies and their effectiveness in addressing COVID-19 learning loss and promoting racial equity. By examining two distinct cases, the study can draw broader conclusions about successful interventions and best practices. I chose Washington since it's the state I live in and the fact that Washington had the lowest learning loss but the slowest recovery rate. Meanwhile, Mississippi had the highest learning loss but the fastest recovery rate, alongside the fact that Washington and Mississippi have different socio-economic, demographic, and educational contexts. Comparing the two states to see what they did during the learning loss and the recovery to help understand what helped students the most during this time.

Data Collection

The primary sources of data for this study come in the form of documents from the state education departments, government reports, policy documents, and educational guidelines issued by Washington and Mississippi. These documents were retrieved through official state websites, including the "[Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction](#)" website and the "[Mississippi Department of Education](#)" website. On these sites, I found Legislation, reports, and timestamps that were retrieved for analysis.

For Washington State, I analyzed three documents. Academic and Student Well-Being Recovery Plan: Planning Guide 2021 by Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Equitable Access to Technology 2022 by Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. 2022 Legislative Platform by Washington State Board of Education.

I analyzed four documents for Mississippi. Strategic Plan Annual Progress Report 2021-22 by Mississippi Department of Education. Strategic Plan Annual Progress Report 2019-2020 by

Mississippi Department of Education. Mississippi Connects by Mississippi Department of Education. Family Engagement Professional Development Sessions by Mississippi Department of Education. For full citations and links to each report look at Appendix A.

Analysis

I analyzed these documents by initially reading them and theming the content of each paragraph (Saldana, 2015). Theming of the data in this way involved summarizing what I read or what stood out to me as a way to translate these legal documents. Once the themes were established, I analyzed the states individually and then compared and contrasted the similarities and differences to create themes to come up with a conclusion.

In translating the legal documents into themes, I organized them by identifying and integrating recurring patterns and finding any significant elements relevant to COVID-19 learning loss and racial equity strategies. For example, Washington States while reading all the legal documents. The Academic and Student Well-Being Recovery Plan: Planning Guide 2021, the Equitable Access to Technology 2022, and the 2022 Legislative Platform. I identified the common key themes by cross-referencing all three documents and seeing what is being referenced the most. For example, Engagement with Families and Strengthening Community Voices. All three documents stress the importance of involving families and communities in the educational process. The Academic and Student Well-Being Recovery Plan discusses strategies for increasing family engagement. The Equitable Access to Technology 2022 talks about the efforts to connect families with technology resources. The 2022 Legislative advocates for policies that would enhance collaboration between schools, families, and community

organizations. I just did the same thing for Mississippi, then cross-reference the themes from both states to compare and contrast the two states.

Limitations

Limitations regarding my case studies might include gaps in the available information. There may be gaps in the documentation and reporting of the specific strategies implemented by both states. This can make it challenging to obtain a full picture of the measures taken to address learning loss and racial equity. The quality and availability of data can vary significantly between states, districts, and schools. This variability can affect the consistency and reliability of the information used. Another limitation might be that the results might not apply to other states beyond Washington and Mississippi. For instance, in studying Washington and Mississippi, numerous factors such as economic conditions, state policies, and social dynamics interact in ways that make it difficult to isolate cause-and-effect relationships. Despite these limitations, comparing the two states helps us understand the issue better by giving us detailed insights into each state's situation.

Chapter 4 – Results and Discussion

For this chapter, I have organized my findings by state. Washington state into one section & Mississippi into another section. Within these sections, I write about what each state did. Afterward, a discussion section where I compare and contrast the two states and talk about what I learned and the overall key points that I found.

Washington State Policy Strategies:

Equity and Accessibility

Washington State DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) Grant Program, provides funding for programs that aim to reduce educational inequities and support marginalized communities. This includes efforts to ensure all students have access to necessary resources and support systems. Just as the distribution of technology to low-income families. A necessary tool for Remote learning and a vital tool in a student's learning progress. A breakdown of what the funding went towards can be found below.

The DEI Grant Program awarded \$9.5 million to 42 school districts and four ESDs. Primarily the awards focused on 1:1 device programs, allocating \$4.5 million toward student devices. These allocations helped the district grantees become fully 1:1 by completing their device fleet or replacing obsolete equipment. Some districts also utilized these allocations to provide staffing to support the deployment of these devices. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of grant allocations. Appendix B discusses survey findings on 82% of the grant recipients and Appendix C includes the breakdown of allocations for the 2022–23 school year, totaling more than \$9 million(Loran, T., 2022, p. 8).

Mental health and well-being

Washington Funding programs for mental health support and Social-emotional learning (SEL) to address the holistic needs of students. RCW28a.415.440 is one of these programs. “RCW 28A.415.440 requires a focus on social-emotional learning with one or more of the following topics: Social-emotional learning, trauma-informed practices, using the model plan developed under RCW 28A.320.1271 related to recognition and response to emotional or behavioral distress, consideration of adverse childhood experiences, mental health literacy, anti-bullying strategies, or culturally sustaining practices” (Reykdal, C. 2021, p.16).

Along with Well-being assessment being used on all grades level to monitor, assess, and target support for student's well-being. (Reykdal, C, 2021). Washington State believes that learning can't take place unless the well-being of students is taken care of. Learning is not just academic, it's social and emotional. Students learn better through social interaction and connections. Giving students a place to express their emotions and social interactions to help students focus on learning better.

Professional Development and Senate Bill 6168

In these professional development courses, they train educators in areas such as digital teaching methods, navigation, selecting student materials, assessment, and communication with students and families. This helps improve instructional quality and support to students and families. Along with that Washington state has Senate Bill 6168. This requires professional development for educators on racial literacy and cultural responsiveness. This legislation aims to address systemic issues within the educational framework and ensure educators are equipped to handle diverse classroom environments effectively(Reykdal, C., 2021).

Engagement with Families and Strengthening Community Voices

When parents and families are actively involved, they can create a supportive learning environment at home and improve educational outcomes. Strengthening the connection between schools and families is crucial in supporting remote learning experiences and overall student success. Washington State invests in strengthening the State Board of Education's capacity for community engagement (SBE) and extending voting authority to student members on the State Board of Education. By doing these things they have created more authentic and meaningful opportunities to engage with students, families, and community members as essential partners in

policymaking. Along with supporting student-led advocacy efforts and promoting student representation on local school boards and work groups. Allowing student's voices to be heard (Washington State Board of Education, 2022).

When students and families are given a voice they become empowered. When students can voice their needs and concerns it helps them in their educational progress. By informing Local school boards and work groups of issues that they didn't know existed and resolving these issues to create a better learning environment for students and their families. Also having a Community Liaison Position dedicated to engaging with historically marginalized communities to ensure marginalized groups voices are being included in educational policy-making (Reykdal, C., 2021). This helps address the needs and concerns of diverse community groups.

Mississippi Policy Strategies

Mississippi Connects and Technology Access

Mississippi designed a state program called "Mississippi Connects" to enhance educational opportunities by providing all students with the necessary resources for digital learning. This initiative aims to support remote and hybrid learning environments (Wright, 2021; Mississippi Department of Education, n.p). Mississippi also distributed devices, such as laptops and tablets, to ensure that every student had access to a device for online learning. Additionally, school districts partnered with internet service providers to offer reliable internet access to students in need, thereby ensuring that all students had both a device and dependable internet connectivity to complete their remote learning (Wright, 2021).

Professional Development and Teacher Diversity

Mississippi expands professional development opportunities for educators to help them improve teaching practices and how to integrate technology effectively for remote learning. This helps address learning loss by equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively teach students which improves students' learning outcomes. “Professional development provided to approximately 5,500 administrators and 11,000 teachers”(Benton, K. S. 2022, p.12).

Mississippi is also doing a good job of hiring and certifying teachers from different backgrounds. Exceeding the national average for educator diversity. “76% of Cohort 1 and 83% of Cohort 2 identifying as people of color.”(Benton, 2022, p.55). Hiring and certifying teachers from different backgrounds supports students of color in their educational success, which helps reduce the racial achievement gap.

Family Engagement and Support

Mississippi developed new programs to support parents in assisting with remote learning. Providing resources and training for parents to assist with their children's remote learning as well as homework. Mississippi has a Family Engagement Professional Development Webinar Session for all (parents, family, educators, administrators, etc...) called “My Pleasure: Creating a Remarkable School Culture for Serving Families.” This program ensures family involvement in students' learning and other ways they can support a student's success (Benton, K. S., 2022 & Mississippi Department of Education. (n.d.). Family engagement & professional development sessions).

On-Demand Tutoring

Mississippi provided multiple on-demand tutoring programs that offered personalized instruction such as vertical, and hybrid tutoring as well as a new program called Mississippi Connects. Students have access to online tutoring in English Language Arts and Mathematics 24 hours a day, seven days a week. “350,000 students in grades 3-12 in 136 districts and six charter schools have access to online tutoring in English Language Arts and mathematics 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Students participated in 178,968 hours of live sessions with tutors, including 40,842 hours of essay reviews”(Benton, K. S., 2022, p. 12). On-demand tutoring helps to address the immediate learning loss by helping students in critical subjects and raising test scores. This strategy aims to support students’ learning needs directly, making sure that every student can receive the help they need when they need it.

Comparative Analysis:

Similarities

Washington and Mississippi both got federal funding from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds. Which were used for extended learning opportunities, summer school programs, and tutoring. Looking through all the legal documents from Washington state and Mississippi, there hasn't been a whole lot addressing the racial gap. One strategy that both states used to address the racial gap was having the districts hand out devices so that lower-income students could participate in online learning. This did help address the racial achievement gap since it levels the playing field. By reducing the gap between students who have access to technology at home and those who don't have access to ensure students' learning. Also assuring that all students have the required materials they need to succeed in their education.

While both Washington state and Mississippi have invested in technology and digital infrastructure to support remote learning, each state also emphasized the importance of family engagement in supporting students' educational experiences and recovery. The importance of involving families and communities in the educational system. Families must be involved in their kid's learning to keep track of their progress and request help if needed. While giving the teachers a second pair of eyes to help students succeed since it would help to understand a student's progress and struggles in another view.

Lastly, both states talked about implementing professional development programs as a strategy. Professional Development programs were always implemented even before the pandemic but were expanded as a way to train educators and help them navigate remote teaching. Expanding professional development programs help reduce learning loss by improving students' learning by equipping educators with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate remote and hybrid learning environments effectively, ultimately leading to improved teaching practices and better learning experiences for students.

Differences

Washington State's way of closing the racial gap is dedicating time for educators to educate themselves on racial matters through literature. “ Senate Bill 6168 (2020) specifies that one professional learning day must be spent on racial literacy, cultural responsiveness, and stereotype threat for purposes of closing persistent opportunity gaps.” (Reykdal, 2021, p.17) Washington wanted to create a new community and family engagement that would “focus on centering the voices of those who have historically been excluded in the state policy-making process.”(Washington State Board of Education, 2022, p. 2) The people who have been

historically excluded in policy-making progress are people of color and low-income people. Implementing this will have a great impact on the community and how policies are made as it includes all races in the decision-making. Reducing the racial gap in the education system since there will be more voices fighting to make a difference in success. I'm happy to see these policies take place as of now since it is of more importance that we recognize and learn about ways to help reduce the racial achievement gap. These actions are a good start for Washington but I'm hoping more policies will be implemented about this issue in the future.

Mississippi's way of closing the racial gap is by hiring, certifying, and training educators of color. Also, Mississippi was the first to create an online program app as a digital learning resource called "Mississippi Connects". Within Mississippi Connect you have free access to online tutors, counselors, mental health professionals, etc in one app. I found Mississippi Connects to be super cool, and seems like a useful tool to have. It's something that was needed and still is as we continue in the hybrid role of schooling. Having a tool like this that is easy to access for students is amazing since it allows kids to be self-reliant and seek help when needing it. Mississippi Connects is a program that should be available for all students in their educational learning.

Overall, Washington State took the more holistic route. Focusing more on family, community engagement, mental health, and well-being of the students. Making sure that kids are well supported by family and loved ones since this was a difficult time for everyone. The transition was a bit difficult since it was something that no one had planned for or knew how to deal with. While Mississippi prioritizes making online learning an easy transition for students, families, and staff, Mississippi also prioritizes improving academic performance. Mississippi has focused on improving teacher effectiveness and ensuring that resources are distributed across

schools. They made sure that the program that they created, Mississippi Connects, was a tool for kids to use for anything they might need help with. From tutoring to needing personal counseling. They made sure that nothing would come in the way of student's education and that they would help them if issues arose.

The uneven recovery rates in Washington states and Mississippi can be caused by the strategic differences that I mentioned. Mississippi's more immediate, academic-focused approach likely resulted in quicker improvements in remote learning and academic performance. In contrast, Washington's approach of building a more supportive educational environment may have led to a slower academic recovery since there was a shift in focus.

Discussion

The findings from my comparative analysis contribute to the existing literature by illustrating how different states can implement strategies to address educational challenges caused by the pandemic. The findings reveal that Washington and Mississippi have adopted a range of strategies to address learning loss, resulting in varied recovery outcomes. Washington State's focus on holistic support, including mental health services and community engagement, contrasts with Mississippi's emphasis on immediate academic support and improving remote learning. These differing approaches reflect the state's priorities and the unique challenges they faced during the pandemic. (Libey, Herrington, Choi, Marsh & Bulkley, 2023). Examining Washington State and Mississippi we could explain why Mississippi had a fast recovery rate and others didn't (Miller, Mervosh, & Paris 2024). Academic support and Improving learning quality by giving students resources for remote learning could be the reason for their fast recovery rate. Examining Washington and Mississippi we get a glimpse of what challenges that

states were facing during these uncertain times and insights into what they did. (Carbonari, Dewey, Kane, & Muroga, 2024)

Both states did the best they could to continue students' success in education considering the worldwide global pandemic. While their approach to the education system differed it also had a lot of similarities. Their key point was the success of students in school and out of it. Making sure they were well supported and had access to the resources they needed. Both states did a good job of including these aspects in student learning. With so many similarities, why did one state have more learning loss than another? When you look at it as a whole both states had different ideas in mind on how to solve the problem. One state was concerned about the students' academics while the other I felt focused on the students as a whole to ensure that they can succeed in a safe and caring environment for them to insure success.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions

In conclusion, the strategies that Washington State implemented to alleviate the impact of COVID-19 learning loss and facilitate recovery was investing in providing students with essential technology for remote learning. Training and giving educators resources in supporting student's mental health and promoting engagement with parents/families to support students' learning at home.

The strategies that Mississippi implemented to alleviate the impact of COVID-19 learning loss and facilitate recovery were providing students with essential technology for remote learning and creating Mississippi Connects. Offering professional development for educators to improve their skills in remote and hybrid teaching, focusing on effective online instructional

strategies and the use of digital tools. Provided on-demand tutoring programs, providing resources and training for parents to assist with remote learning and homework.

The specific initiatives that Washington State took concerning the racial gap were enforcing Senate Bill 6168 and giving voices to communities who have been excluded, Vs. Mississippi. Mississippi hiring, certifying, and training educators of color, along with creating an online program or app as a digital learning resource called “Mississippi Connects”.

My findings in the future may help policymakers and other researchers interested in racial equity and learning loss, by highlighting the fact that there is a lack of strategies that states are implementing relating to the widening of the racial gap caused by the COVID-19 learning loss. I hope to put this information on their radar, in hopes of raising awareness and motivating advocacy efforts for policymakers to create or adjust policies that address racial disparities.

I also hope that other researchers and academic persons like me can use my findings as a basis for further studies. My research might identify gaps or new questions that require deeper exploration. I recommend a study looking into effective interventions or policies that have successfully reduced inequalities. Another study that could be interesting is how the learning loss and racial gap could be connected and if there's a correlation. For example, does closing the racial gap improve learning loss effort? Or even a study just examining the racial gap before and after COVID-19 within a few states of choice. Why might poor states be recovering faster than wealthy states? I might even also recommend looking into how a program like Mississippi Connects helps close the racial gap and help students of color and or students from low-income families.

In all, I do think that this research is just getting started and we will have more information on the damage and effects of COVID-19 has brought to the education system, especially in the people of color communities. I think it's important that we keep track of the effect COVID-19 had on students and find ways to better assist them to succeed as they will be the next generation to lead.

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Appendix A: Documents Analyzed for Washington State and Mississippi

Washington:

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