

Coronavirus Closures Exacerbate Education Gap

By Dani Kritter, J.D. Candidate, 2021 | March 19th, 2020

In addition to the hundreds of thousands suffering from [COVID-19](#), students have also been harmed by the coronavirus pandemic. Schools have closed in 119 countries, affecting over [860 million students](#) around the world. California Governor [Gavin Newsom](#) recently suspended standardized testing and announced the state's public schools will likely remain closed for the rest of the academic year. Many schools have deployed remote technology to continue instruction, but the sudden switch to distance learning exacerbates academic inequities.

Shutting down schools has become a key part of the [social distancing](#) strategy that public health officials have embraced to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Some argue that schools are well suited to [spread disease](#): small classrooms, cafeterias, and busy buses put students, their families, and school employees at risk. Government officials hope that closing schools will help [flatten the curve](#) so that the number of patients sick with COVID-19 does not overwhelm the capacity of the healthcare system.

But school shutdowns are costly, and the closures may have long-lasting impacts on students who already face systemic disadvantages. Some school systems lack resources to make the full switch to [distance learning](#). Even [large school districts](#) with the resources to shift online still have many students who lack computers or tablets, access to the internet, consistent supervision, or [adequate food](#) at home. The more than [1.5 million](#) students who experienced homelessness in 2017-2018 may not have homes at all. As a result, the sudden shift to distance learning in the wake of coronavirus means that the wealthier students in the wealthier schools will likely zoom ahead of those who lack the resources to continue effective learning.

