

Research-documented effects of school closure—talking points:

- **Academic:**
 - The negative short-term impacts of closure on students’ academics are well documented: students’ test scores and grade point averages tend to fall in the year before and immediately after closure. (Brummet, 2014; de la Torre & Gwynne, 2009; Gordon et al., 2018; Larsen, 2014; Ozek et al., 2021; Sherrod & Dawkins-Law, 2013)
 - The long-term effects are more mixed. For example, a recent Center for Research on Education Outcomes study of closures motivated by low academic performance shows that, if students land in an academically stronger school, they can see test score gains; if not, their scores decline (Han et al, 2017)—and research also shows that most students do not land in stronger schools (de la Torre & Gwynne, 2009; Ewing, 2018; Han et al., 2017; Lipman et al., 2014; Sherrod & Dawkins-Law, 2013).
- **Social:**
 - Closure can disrupt students’ relationships with peers and teachers and lead to student confusion (Conner & Cosner, 2014; Deeds & Pattillo, 2015; Gordon et al., 2018; Kirshner et al., 2010; Lipman et al., 2014; Shiller, 2017; Toneff-Cotner, 2015); some research has shown an increase in absenteeism, though the effects may fade over time (Engberg et al., 2012; Larsen, 2014).
 - Students, especially in rural areas, also often face longer bus rides or travel time (Conner & Cosner, 2014; Deeb-Sossa & Mazano, 2018; de la Torre et al., 2015; Graham et al., 2014; Hyndman et al. 2010; Killeen & Sipple, 2000; Lee & Lubienski, 2016; Spence, 1998) and are less involved in after-school clubs and sports, even if the number of extracurricular options expands (Graham et al., 2014; Hyndman et al., 2010; Lipman et al., 2014).
- **Financial:**
 - There are very few comprehensive evaluations of closures’ financial effects.
 - What little research does exist suggests that savings are a small fraction of a district’s budget or, oftentimes, far below what was promised, especially when student travel costs are included (Dority & Thompson, 2013; Dowdall, 2011; Jack & Sludden, 2013; Finnigan & Lavner, 2012; Killeen & Sipple, 2000).
 - Closure can also bring job loss for teachers (Ewing, 2018; Hill & Jones, 2018; Lincove et al., 2017), a particularly harsh impact in rural areas with few available jobs.
- **Community:**
 - Parent involvement also appears to decrease after closure (Cochran et al., 2011; Deeds & Pattillo, 2015; Lipman et al., 2014; Spence, 1998).
 - There is also little research examining closure’s impacts on communities; what does exist indicates effects that can be destructive economically and socially (Alsburly & Shaw, 2005; Chance & Cummins, 1998; Ewing, 2008; Lipman et al., 2014; Lyson, 2002; Surface, 2001).
 - School closure can close businesses and further outmigration (Alsburly & Shaw, 2005; Sell & Leistriz, 1997; Surface, 2011).
 - In many rural communities, it represents the loss of the town’s largest employer, as well as an important social center (Alsburly & Shaw, 2005; Tieken, 2014).
- **Equity:**
 - Research shows that school closures disproportionately impact low-income and racially minoritized communities (Billger, 2010; Gallagher & Gold, 2017; Han et al., 2017; Jensen & Ritter, 2010; Jimerson 2005; Johnson, 2006).
 - Thus, closure can further harm the communities and children that most need support and can perpetuate racial and class-based inequities.

For more information (and documentation of these effects), please see:

Tieken, M. C., & Auldridge-Reveles, T. (2019). Rethinking the school closure research: School closure as spatial injustice. *Review of Educational Research*, 89(6), 917-953.