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EDITOR'S NOTE: Find .mp3 files of Secretary Sanderson's quotes on the [State News Multimedia webpage](#)

Department releases COVID-19 report; Aug. 4 Education Summit planned

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Education has released a [report](#) about the impact of COVID-19 on the state's K-12 education system, based on a survey the department distributed to school leaders last May. The report examines what the 2020-21 school year looked like, impacts of the pandemic, and how the department will address pressing needs going forward. The data from this report will be used to drive conversations during an Aug. 4 summit where education leaders and other stakeholders will discuss solutions for improving student and family engagement, addressing summer and after school programming, and bolstering the education workforce.

"Most South Dakota students were able to attend school in-person, thanks to the determination and efforts of our educators, staff, our nurses, and school boards last year," said South Dakota Secretary of Education Tiffany Sanderson. "That was an extraordinary feat."

The information gathered via the survey of school leaders and other stakeholder engagement will inform the department's priorities over the next three years as it invests federal funds received through the American Rescue Plan.

Despite the successes of school year 2020-21, there are concerns that some students exhibited a lack of engagement and could be significantly impacted by lost instructional time. Attendance data indicates that certain groups of students were absent at rates disproportionate to their percentage of the total student population. These groups included high school students, students who are considered economically disadvantaged, Native American students, students with disabilities, and Hispanic students.

"By gathering educators and expert stakeholders at the Education Summit, we have the opportunity to address current needs, to make our schools better and stronger than ever before," said Sanderson. "Our top priorities will be engaging students and families after the year of the pandemic and bolstering a strong, stable educator workforce."