



Theme 5: Equity

Participants reported that the pandemic “showed us the needs and risks that were already there, but we did not see.” Issues were raised that highlight the deeply uneven impact of the pandemic on students, particularly those living in and a part of equity-deserving communities. Participants highlighted that the greatest disparities in learning are found between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. These issues should be considered as inequities or opportunity gaps rather than “learning gaps,” one speaker noted, because clear points of origin can be found in systemic inequalities. Identifying and addressing these inequities should be a system-wide priority moving forward.

Food Insecurity

Participants noted that food insecurity was exacerbated due to the economic impacts of the pandemic. Many cited that school divisions are continually filling gaps in the system and that they need more support in their efforts to respond to this issue. Participants shared stories of families feeling safer and more comfortable in a school setting when they built connections through the school food program. They also highlighted several potential solutions. Planning considerations shared to address increases in food insecurity in schools include:

1. Supporting school divisions in their efforts to respond to food insecurity.
2. Identifying areas of extreme food insecurity.
3. Partnering with not-for-profit and non-government organizations for funding and resources.
4. Building and expanding access to school breakfast and lunch programs, working toward a universal program.