

Coronavirus effects hurting elementary students and recent graduates, expert says

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With 10,000,000 Americans filing unemployment claims and the coronavirus outbreak forcing longer stay-at-home orders, college graduates have more to worry about than missing their commencement

ceremonies. Younger students who rely on resources provided by their teachers and schools are suddenly out of school for several months. Where will this leave the class of 2020 as they hunt for jobs and the generations behind them?

"Labor market effects will be felt acutely by new entrants, as their labor market trajectories will likely be permanently altered by entering in this downturn," said Notre Dame Assistant Professor of Economics Chloe Gibbs. "We are already seeing the contractions affecting new offers of employment and resulting in rescinded offers, so this situation has made the job market immediately difficult for graduating [high school](#) and college seniors."

Economic research since the Great Recession has shown that, even with a college degree, new entrants to the job market earned less—even in the long run— than graduates who entered the [work force](#) under stable economic conditions.

"We know from previous recessions that education has a buffering effect, that is, that those with [college degrees](#) are more protected from the negative shock, but the nature of this shock is quite different and several economists have suggested it may be more akin to a hurricane-induced economic slowdown," Gibbs said. "In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, for example, [college-educated](#) workers experienced immediate reductions in earnings as well, so the impact may be broader and more spread across those with varying educational backgrounds."

College is still a long way away for [elementary school children](#), but the coronavirus outbreak is affecting their potential, too. Gibbs largely focuses on how policy—including education policy—affects disadvantaged children and families and how to address achievement gaps by race, ethnicity and family income. Much of her work, including recent research on the impact of [full-day kindergarten](#) and the effects of

the federally-funded [Head Start preschool program](#), explores how time spent in [school](#) affects children's cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes. This research finds that more instructional time in the early years has important benefits for children over the short- and long-term, particularly children learning English and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. With the majority of schools in the U.S. on hiatus (some for the remainder of the school year), Gibbs fears the consequences for children with limited or no access to learning resources outside of school.

"[Evidence from previous pandemics](#) indicates that the disruption to school-age children's educational trajectories has long-lasting effects," she said. "When kids are out of school, the differences in resources and environments they experience translate into gaps in skill development, so I worry that school closures could contribute to widening achievement gaps by family income or socioeconomic status. Efforts to implement remote learning may contribute to these gaps as children have differential access in their homes to the technology required."

Provided by University of Notre Dame

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