

Existing K-12 Distance Learning Surveys, Articles, and Teacher Dialogues Tell Us...

Teachers and Distance Learning

- **Major concerns among educators during distance learning include:**
 - 1) the complexity of teaching students with disabilities,
 - 2) providing the same level of education to all students, and
 - 3) higher absenteeism rates.
- **Teachers report being challenged by keeping students engaged and motivated to work through appropriately rigorous content in a distance learning environment**

These concerns are more pronounced in high-poverty schools, where educators report lower class attendance, believe distance learning will be less effective for their students, and prioritize closing the digital divide.

Going forward, teachers seem to be looking for more support, flexibility, and autonomy.

- **Teachers generally agree with the initial decisions their Department of Education (DOE) made regarding its guidance for remote learning**
 - Many teachers appreciated the initial guidance (from DOE) but they want to see more classroom teacher input at the state and local level
 - Teachers overwhelmingly agree that they understand what is expected of them and that their district and school leaders expectations of them are “about right.” Just over half of teachers believe they have been provided with the necessary tools and resources to meet these expectations.
- **Frequent and consistent contact among teachers, school leadership, students and their families is essential to effective distance learning**
 - but clear communication is not happening across all schools and districts
- **An overwhelming majority of teachers report the current remote learning situation is taking a toll on their own social and emotional well-being**

Working to keep students engaged and communicative while being physically isolated from their peers is a major challenge for educators.

- **Most teachers think that they are not capable of delivering the same level of instruction in distance learning**
- Teachers are using a variety of instructional strategies, tools, and technology, however, **only a slight majority of teachers believe that they are able to meaningfully engage students through remote learning** and cited many barriers to effectively reaching vulnerable populations
- **Teachers want more professional development opportunities**, especially around Social-

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Emotional Learning (SEL) and Digital Literacy in general, and training on how to use specific platforms chosen by their state/district for distance learning

- More digital literacy training and supports needed for teachers and students
- More accessible (and multilingual) technical support for teachers and students
- More digital media resources that can be used with a variety of platforms and used offline
- DESE-developed state guidelines on PD around effective use of technology in DL environments
- More resources around social-emotional learning and well-being
- More early childhood and early elementary resources for teachers (and parents)
- **Parents also want more resources and training on distance learning**, and want schools to keep working to close the digital divide

Gaps in Access (to Technology, to Learning Materials)

Gaps in access are a major problem in distance learning:

- **30% of students across the U.S. had inadequate access to internet and/or instructional devices**
 - Approximately 70 percent of educators report that their students lack access to reliable high speed internet (72 percent), or lack access to appropriate technology and devices (69 percent).
 - The FCC estimates 21 million Americans lack high- speed internet access at home.
 - BIPOC communities and low income communities are most affected by access gaps
- **Parents, on the other hand, appear to be worried about access gaps *less* than teachers**
 - Only 26% of parent respondents reported being worried about their children's access to adequate internet/instructional devices
 - At the same time, less than half of these parents reported having received adequate preparation or materials ("Key Resources") from schools
- While there are many wonderful digital resources available (at PBSLM and elsewhere), especially in the STEM and Social Studies disciplines, **not all of these can be accessed effectively by teachers and/or students**
 - **Distance Learning digital resources should be platform agnostic** and easily usable from non-computer devices

"A 12 year old on a cracked-screen iPhone 7 should be the standard for online content providers."

~Massachusetts middle school teacher

Family and Student Experiences with Distance Learning

Students are not learning in a vacuum - their families and their home environments have a major impact on distance learning

- **Children spend 4+ hours/day on schoolwork, more than 50% of day in front of screen**
 - Higher among high school students, higher with higher income bracket, **lower among students with insufficient access to tech**
- **Parents very concerned with keeping their children's education on track and the long-term effects of distance learning**, but they strongly support their children's teachers and give them high marks for quality

Consistent communication among teachers, students, and families is essential - think of this network as one of support and reassurance

- **Although parental respect for teachers is high, most parents report NOT having regular access to teachers**
 - Parents want more consistent communication around DL expectations from schools
 - Parents find text/phone call communication most effective, but most communication from schools came through email
 - 90% of parents are using school provided resources; only 23% parents using resources they find on their own
 - Parents thought that more personalized resources (including access to teachers) would be "most helpful" but they received those kinds of resources infrequently
 - "Primers" to help orient parents to their children's DL resources could be helpful
- **Socioeconomic strata affects how parents and their children interact in distance learning**
 - More affluent parents are more likely to work from home and be available to work with their children on distance learning assignments, while **low-income parents are more likely to be essential workers — taking them away from home and limiting the time they have to provide in-person support for their children**
 - **Parents and kids, especially those in lower socioeconomic strata, often have to share devices with others in their households**
 - **Despite the challenges of distance learning, parents feel very able and prepared to help children with their academic work**
 - This feeling is higher among higher household income bracket, among families that have access to reliable internet all the time, and among African Americans
- **Distance Learning is a major source of stress for students and their parents** - 89% of parents deem dealing with COVID stressful (38% overall say extremely or very stressful)

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Sources (Surveys, Articles, and Focus Groups)

- “Closing the K-12 Digital Divide in the Age of Distance Learning” (*Common Sense Media* using National Center for Education Statistics and 2018 US Census data)
- “Coronavirus lockdowns heighten income inequities of school-from-home” (*Axios*, May 15, 2020)
- “Poll Analysis: Coronavirus Impact on Educators” (*GBAO* nationally representative survey of 1,936 NEA teachers and 800 public school parents/guardians – early April, 2020)
- “School, Interrupted” (*Fluent* nationally representative survey of 2,032 parents/guardians of children ages 2-18 and 894 teens ages 13-18 – late April/early May 2020)
- “Lessons from the Remote Classroom: Results of the Teach Plus Massachusetts COVID-19 Teacher Engagement Survey” (*Teach+Plus* survey of 1,398 network teachers from 167 Massachusetts school districts and charter schools – May 2020)
- “EiE Educator Support Survey” (*Engineering is Elementary* survey of 691 greater Boston area classroom teachers, parents, and OST educators – mid-May 2020)
- COVID-19 Closures: A Redefining Moment for Students, Parents, & Schools” (*Learning Heroes/Edge Research* nationwide sample of 3,645 parents/guardians of children in public school, including oversamples among African Americans, Hispanics and parents of students in transition grades, and parents in California, New York, and Washington State – mid April/early May 2020)
- “Parents Exhibit Deep Support for Teachers Amid Coronavirus Pandemic” (*GBAO* nationally representative survey of 1,936 NEA teachers and 800 public school parents/guardians – early April 2020)
- NEA Poll: Lower online class attendance, equity among educators’ top concerns” (nationally representative survey of 1,936 NEA teachers – early April 2020)
- “Family Wellbeing in the Pandemic” (*Fluent* nationally representative survey of 2,032 parents/guardians of children ages 2-18 and 894 teens ages 13-18 – late April/early May 2020)
- “Parents 2020 | COVID-19 Closures: A Redefining Moment for Students, Parents, & Schools” (*Learning Heroes/Edge Research* nationwide sample of 3,645 parents/guardians of children in public school, including oversamples among African Americans, Hispanics and parents of students in transition grades, and parents in California, New York, and Washington State – mid April/early May 2020)
- WGBH Peer Exchange Dialogues (May/June 2020)
- WGBH list of Distance Learning Survey Questions (from BUAC and USH-EAG teachers with internal comments from WGBH)
- WGBH’s U.S. History Educator Advisory Group (USH-EAG) June Focus Groups (June 2 and June 9, 2020)