

To: Interested Parties

From: Global Strategy Group

Date: October 28, 2020

Re: New York State Parents' Survey Identifies Disparities and Priorities for Current School Year

Global Strategy Group partnered with The Education Trust–New York to conduct an online (desktop and mobile) survey among 800 parents of children in New York State public schools from October 16th – 21st, 2020. Key findings from the statewide research are outline below.

Key Findings:

Several weeks into the new school year, New York State parents are positive about their schools' handling of the coronavirus but are not finding remote learning successful. Parents rate the job their school is doing handling coronavirus as positive (75% excellent/good), which is an 8-point increase from August (67%). However, parents of color (71%), especially Latinx parents (68%), parents from low-income households (63%), and parents of remote learners (65%) are less likely to rate their schools' handling of the coronavirus as positive, compared to their white (79%), more affluent (90%), and in-person/hybrid (82%) peers. Additionally, there is low satisfaction with remote learning overall and among parents of color. Only 39% of parents rate remote learning as successful (ratings of 8-10 on a 0-10 scale, an additional 18% of parents say their child is not participating in remote learning right now) – meaning less than half (48%) of parents of remote learners rate it as successful. These low satisfaction ratings are largely driven by parents from low-income households and parents of color – especially Latinx parents. And while 68% of parents rate remote learning as better than last spring, Latinx parents (61%), parents of remote learners (66%), and parents from low-income households (60%) are less likely to agree.

Differences in learning modality among racial, economic, and regional groups could widen opportunity gaps for New York State's public-school students. Responses reveal gaps in the educational opportunities afforded to students, and also highlight that parents from low-income households, parents of color, and families in New York City are much more likely to be wary of reopening school buildings and the potential effect it will have on their families:

- **Parents from low-income households, parents of color, and families in New York City are more likely to say their child is remote learning full-time.** Parents of color (53%), parents from low-income households (54%), and families in New York City (53%) are much more likely to report that their child is remote learning full-time compared to white parents (33%), higher-income parents (37%), and parents in upstate New York (39%) and the New York City suburbs (31%).
- **Parents of color, parents of remote learners, and families in New York City are also disproportionately likely to be concerned about their child's health and their family's health overall.** For parents, their child contracting the virus (84% concerning) and another family member contracting the virus (83%) are top of mind. This concern is slightly more intense among parents of color, parents of remote learners, and those in New York City: 61% of parents of color, 63% of parents of remote learners, and 64% of New York City families say they are *very* concerned about their child contracting the virus, while 52% of white parents, 51% of parents of in-person/hybrid learners, and those in the New York City suburbs (53%) and upstate New York (50%) say the same. Additionally, when it comes to family members contracting the virus, parents of color (55%), parents of remote learners (60%), and New York City (56%) families report being *very* concerned at a slightly higher rate than parents of in-person/hybrid learners (45%), white parents (48%), and upstate (49%) and suburban (44%) families.
- **Ensuring their child's overall well-being is particularly concerning for Latinx parents, parents of remote learners, and parents in New York City.** More than half (56%) of parents say they are *very* concerned with ensuring that their child feels safe and emotionally at ease during this time. This is slightly more concerning for Latinx parents (60% very concerned), New York City parents (61%), and parents of remote learners (64%) than it is for white parents (54%), parents of in-person/hybrid learners (52%), and families located in upstate New York (54%) and the New York City suburbs (51%).

- **Parents of color and parents from low-income households with remote learners are less likely to consider switching their child to in-person or hybrid learning.** When asked what are some reasons a parent of a remote learner may consider when thinking of switching their child to in-person or hybrid learning, parents of color and parents from low-income households (who are also more likely to be remote learners), were more likely to say they have not considered this option (36% parents of color have not considered in-person, 41% low-income). This difference is stark, especially when compared to white (22%) and higher-income families (24%). And of the parents from low-income households and parents of color who have considered switching an option, the driving factor was the social aspect – wanting their child to be able to socially interact with their peers and teachers (31% total, 27% low-income, 26% parents of color) followed by the fear that their child is not meeting academic expectations for their grade level (22% total, 27% low-income, 20% parents of color). In the opposite direction, when in-person/hybrid parents (who tend to be higher-income families and white) were asked what they have seriously considered when thinking of switching their child from in-person to remote learning, safety precautions (25% total, 23% white, 26% higher-income) and feeling more comfortable supervising their child's learning (21% total, 19 white, 22% higher-income) were the main reasons.
- **Parents from low-income households remain underserved by the education system.** Parents from low-income households (33% better now compared to before the pandemic) are less likely than higher-income parents (38%) to think that their child's overall educational experience has gotten better compared to traditional in-person classes before the pandemic. Families from low-income households are also less likely to think that the quality of teaching and instruction that their child is receiving has been better than before the pandemic: only 27% of parents from low-income households say it is better now compared to before the pandemic, while 34% of higher-income parents say the same.

Concern over family health and safety underscores parents' low confidence in school precautions. Only half (50%) of parents say they have confidence in the health and safety precautions schools have in place this fall. The lack of confidence is driven by families of color (43%), parents from low-income households (39%), and parents of remote learners (36%) more so than parents of in-person/hybrid learners (59%), white parents (56%) and higher-income families (55%). This lack of confidence from parents of color (36% have not considered in-person), particularly Latinx parents (38%), and families from low-income households (41%), whose child is remote learning only, continues to inform their reluctance to even consider in-person for their child.

For parents in New York State, academic concerns remain a top tier issue and many parents lack information on their child's academic progress:

- **Fifty-nine percent of parents are very concerned about their child falling behind academically (86% total concerned).** In addition, 54% are very concerned about ensuring that their child is ready for the next grade level (85% total concerned).
- **Many parents are not getting the information they need to make sure their child is progressing academically.** Sixty-eight percent of parents say regular feedback on how well their child is doing academically would be very helpful (95% total helpful), but only about four in ten (42%) parents say this is something offered at their school. Another 65% say that information for parents about whether their child is on track to meet academic expectations for their grade is very helpful (94% total helpful), but like before, only 41% of parents say they receive this.
- **When asked to quantify how much information is given to them about whether their child is meeting academic expectations, slightly more than a quarter (28%) of parents say they have received little to no information.** Similarly, more than four in ten (44%) parents say they have received little to no information about whether their child has suffered "learning loss" or has fallen behind as a result of the school closures during the pandemic.
- **Black parents (26%), parents from low-income households (33%), and parents of remote learners (31%) are most likely to say they have received little to no information on grade level expectations or "learning loss" (52% Black parents, 50% low-income households, 49% parents of remote learners) – more so than white parents (27% little to no information on grade level expectations, 44% little to no information on learning loss) and parents of in-person/hybrid learners (27%, 41%). Families from low-income households are also similarly impacted when it comes to lack of information (33% little to no information on grade level expectations, 50% little to no information on learning loss) compared to their wealthier counterparts (25%, 40%).**

Whether it be in-person, remote, or a combination of the two, parents are focused on the quality of instruction their child is receiving. While parents' ability to support their child's education has increased (46% better now compared to before the pandemic among parents of remote learners), so has concern around their child's academic performance. As mentioned earlier, one critical way to address these concerns is by schools giving parents the information they need to properly assess their child's academic progress. Ninety percent of parents stress knowing how much individual time their child gets with their teachers compared to other schools/districts is important, while 89% of parents say information on how much live-instruction their child is getting from their teacher compared to other schools/districts is important. Additionally, not only are 85% of parents concerned with ensuring that their child is meeting state academic standards, but 93% consider it important information for them to know.

At a time when some have suggested eliminating state testing for the current school year, 94% of parents say state tests provide important information on whether their school is doing a good job teaching their child, and also to provide their child's teachers with more information about how well their child is doing (94% important). Parents of color (62%), especially Black parents (67%), are particularly inclined to consider these tests *very* important in terms of college and career readiness relative to parents overall (58%).

Higher-income parents are more likely to be supplementing their child's education through sources outside public school options. Families with household incomes exceeding \$50,000 a year are more likely to report that they are supplementing their child's education through sources outside of the traditional public-school options, many of which are financially out of reach for families, especially families from low-income households, during the economic crisis. This disparity of access between families from low-income households and higher-income families works to widen an already existing opportunity gap.

Overall adoption	< \$50K	\$50K +	
26%	23%	28%	Relied on online learning tools that you can find on the internet to teach your child
10	4	13	Joined a "pod" with other parents to provide tutoring or other educational support outside of school
10	7	12	Homeschooled instead of remote learning
9	2	12	Found tutoring through a local community organization
5	2	6	Relocated to a different part of New York State
4	1	5	Sent your child to live with a family member in another state or school district
3	1	5	Switched to another school district
58	68	53	None of these options

Parents want regular access to their child's teachers and more support from their child's school. After testing an extensive list of things schools could do to help support parents and students, we found that although parents are receptive to all proposed options, 94% of parents say that their child having regular access to their teacher through live online lessons or phone/video calls would be helpful. However, less than half (48%) of parents say that this is something offered at their child's school. Similarly, 95% of parents say that regular contact with their child's teachers would be helpful, but only 48% say this is available to them. Parents also consider extra support options for their child if they are struggling academically as particularly helpful (92%), but this is also largely lacking for most parents (38% have access).

Would be helpful	Child's school is doing this	
95%	42%	Providing regular feedback on how well my child is doing academically
95%	48%	Providing parents with regular contact with or access to their child's teacher
94%	48%	Providing students with regular live access to their teacher, such as live online lessons or phone/video calls
94%	41%	Providing information for parents about whether their child is on track to meet the academic expectations for their grade
92%	38%	Providing extra support options that are available to my child if they are struggling academically
92%	38%	Providing technical support with technology to help families participate in remote/distance learning
90%	53%	Lending mobile technology devices like laptops or tablets/iPads to families

Would be helpful	Child's school is doing this	
91%	40%	Providing parents or students with regular contact with or access to a school counselor
89%	30%	Providing access to recorded live online lessons for you and your child to review later in the day
89%	30%	Sharing resources to help parents teach their children during the day
88%	28%	Providing instructional materials and other resources to support students with disabilities
87%	24%	Providing free internet access to families
87%	27%	Providing students with a safe place to do schoolwork and participate in virtual learning
84%	25%	Providing instructional materials for English learners
83%	30%	Connecting parents to resources that can help with food, housing, employment, health, and other essential needs
72%	25%	Providing information for parents in languages other than English

A narrower curriculum and changes in course structure have created additional challenges for New York State public school students:

- Subjects beyond math and reading/English.** Math (88%) and reading/English (88%) continue to be the most common subjects covered by the learning materials families have received so far (June 85% and 83%, respectively). But beyond the two main courses of study, there is a significant drop-off across the state: science (80%) and social studies (77%) make up a second tier while other subjects like physical education (57%), music and the arts (52%), and world languages (36%) are getting significantly less attention. Of the regions, New York City students are least likely to have received these subjects of instruction when compared to students in other parts of the state:

	New York State	NYC	NYC Suburbs	Upstate New York
Math	88%	82%	94%	93%
Reading/English	88	79	94	96
Science	80	74	88	82
Social Studies	77	69	86	83
Physical Education	57	44	66	70
Music and the Arts	52	39	61	65
World Languages	36	31	42	37

- Access to meaningful in-person instruction.** Half (49%) of parents whose child is in-person learning say that their child's in-person learning is virtual learning using a tablet or laptop within a classroom. Parents in New York City (71%) are more likely to be having this problem compared to other areas of the state (33% suburbs, 37% upstate). This is also more prevalent among parents of color (54%), particularly Black families (57%), than it is for white parents (45%) and parents overall (49%).
- Class size.** Overall, parents in the state are satisfied with the size of their child's class, with parents of in-person learners (94%) slightly more so than parents of remote learners (90%). However, families in New York City are more likely to say their class sizes are bigger for both remote (39% bigger) and in-person learning (51%) than they were in previous years – much more so than parents in upstate New York (10% remote learners, 7% in-person) and parents in the suburbs of New York City (9% parents of remote learners, 1% in-person).

Addressing technological barriers is an important way to close the learning gap among learners in New York State. Ninety percent of parents say that their school lending technology devices like iPads or laptops to each child in the family would be helpful, yet only half (53%) of parents say their children have access to these devices. A third (32%) of parents say that their child does not receive any technology support (such as free internet, tablets, etc.) and the lack of support is occurring at a similar rate among most regional, racial, and economic groups. Additionally, the lack of reliable internet access is a top concern for families this fall. Almost half (47%) of New York families are concerned about whether their family will be able to afford internet access, which is particularly concerning for New York City parents (61%) and Latinx parents (56%). Almost two-thirds of parents (64%) say providing free internet access to families this year would be very helpful for families like theirs, yet only 24% of parents report that their child's school has made this available for students. Additionally, only 10% report that they receive internet support from their school, and families

from low-income households are the least likely to have received support (5%) – especially when compared to higher-income families (13%).

Financial and food insecurity are real concerns for parents this fall. Four in ten (41%) parents – including 55% of parents from low-income households, 46% of parents of remote learners, 51% of Black parents, and 54% of families living upstate New York – say they are uneasy about their family’s financial situation over the next few months. Forty percent of parents in the state say that they have skipped meals or reduced the number of meals they consume personally or reduced/skipped their child’s meals because of the pandemic – Black parents (49%), parents from low-income households (45%), and New York City families (51%) are the most likely to be facing this problem. Additionally, 59% of parents from low-income households say that resources to help with food, housing, employment, health, and other emergency needs would be very helpful, but only 30% of New York State schools are working to bridge this gap.

About this poll: The survey had a confidence interval of +/-3.5%. All interviews were conducted via web-based panel. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of public-school parents are properly represented.

Parents of Color: For the purposes of this research, "parents of color" indicates parents who do not self-identify as white or identify as white but also identify as Hispanic or whose primary home language is Spanish.

Low-Income vs. Higher-Income: Low-income households are those whose total income is less than \$50,000 per year, while higher-income families are those whose household income totals more than \$50,000 per year.