

To: Interested Parties
From: Global Strategy Group
Date: October 28, 2020

Re: New York City 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 on New York City parents are outlined below.

Key Findings:

Several weeks into the new school year, New York City parents are positive about their schools' handling of the coronavirus but are not finding remote learning successful. Parents in New York City rate the job their school is doing handling coronavirus as positive (75% excellent/good). However, parents of color (70%), especially Latinx parents (71%), parents from low-income households (67%), and parents of remote learners (66%) are less likely to rate their schools' handling of the coronavirus as positive, compared to their white (82%), more affluent (78%), and in-person/hybrid (83%) peers. Additionally, there is low satisfaction with remote learning overall and among parents of color. Only 40% of parents rate remote learning as successful (ratings of 8-10 on a 0-10 scale, an additional 20% of parents say their child is not participating in remote learning right now) – meaning just half (51%) of parents of remote learners rate it as successful. Low satisfaction ratings for remote learning are mainly driven by parents of color – especially Latinx parents. While 69% of parents rate remote learning as better than last spring, Black parents are less likely to agree (56%).

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

- **Families from low-income households and parents of color in New York City are more likely to say their child is remote learning full-time.** Parents of color are much more likely to report that their child is remote learning full-time (62%) compared to white parents (38%), as are parents from low-income households (73%) relative to higher-income parents (46%). These findings reflect wide variations in learning modes.
- **Parents of color and parents of remote learners are also disproportionately likely to be concerned about their child's health and their family's health overall.** For New York City parents, their child contracting the virus (91% concerning) and another family member contracting the virus (89%) are top of mind. Concern for one's child contracting the virus is slightly more intense among parents of color and parents of remote learners: 66% of parents of color and 67% of parents of remote learners say they are *very* concerned about their child contracting the virus, while 60% of white and 59% of in-person/hybrid parents say the same. Additionally, when it comes to family members contracting the virus, 60% of Black parents, parents of remote learners, and families from low-income backgrounds report being *very* concerned at a slightly higher rate than parents of in-person/hybrid learners (52%), white parents (56%), and parents overall (56%).
- **Ensuring their child's overall well-being is particularly concerning for Black parents.** Six in ten (61%) 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 to Black parents (65% very concerned) and parents of remote learners (64%) than it is for white parents (61%) and parents of in-person/hybrid learners (60%).
- **Parents of color and parents from low-income households with remote learners are the 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 more likely to be remote learners) were more likely to say they have not considered this option (44% parents of color have not considered in-person, 50% low-income). This difference is stark, especially when compared to white (10%) and higher-income families (28%). 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 (27% total, 25% low-income, 23% parents of color), followed by fear that their child is not meeting the academic expectations for their grade level (18% total, 16% low-income, 14% parents of color). In the opposite direction, when parents of in-person/hybrid learners (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 (38% total, 42% white, 41% higher-income) and feeling more comfortable supervising their child's learning (37% total, 39% white, 38% higher-income) were the main reasons.

- **Parents of color, parents from low-income households, and parents of remote learners remain underserved.** Parents from low-income households (40% better now compared to before the pandemic), parents of color (43%), and parents of remote learners (46%) are less likely than parents of in-person/hybrid learners (56%), white parents (64%), and higher-income parents (55%) to think that their child's overall educational experience has gotten better compared to traditional in-person classes before the pandemic. They are also less likely to think that the quality of teaching and instruction that their child is receiving is better than before the pandemic: parents from low-income households (33% better now compared to before the pandemic), parents of color (32%), and parents of remote learners (37%) compared to parents of in-person/hybrid learners (53%), white parents (66%), and higher-income parents (49%).

Concern over family health and safety underscores parents' low confidence in school precautions. Only 47% of parents in New York City 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 (40%), parents from low-income households (32%), and parents of remote learners (36%) more so than parents of in-person/hybrid learners (56%), white parents (58%), and higher-income families (52%). This lack of confidence from parents of color (44% have not considered in-person) and parents from low-income households (50%), whose child is remote learning only, continues to inform their reluctance to even consider in-person learning for their child.

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

- **Sixty percent of parents are very concerned about their child falling behind academically (90% total concerned).** In addition, 64% of parents of high school students are very concerned about ensuring that their child is on track to go to college (92% total concerned).
- **Many parents are not getting the information they need to make sure their child is progressing.** Sixty-two percent of parents say that regular feedback on how well their child is doing academically would be very helpful (95% total helpful), but only about a third (36%) of parents say this is something offered at their school. Another 58% of parents say that information about whether their child is on track to meet academic expectations for their grade would be very helpful (95% total helpful), but only 39% 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, one in five (21%) parents say they have received little to no information.** Similarly, a third (33%) 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.
- **Parents of color and parents of remote learners are most likely to say they received little to no information on grade level expectations (26% parents of color, 30% parents of remote learners) or "learning loss" (42% parents of color, 45% parents of remote learners) – much more so than white parents (12% little to no information on grade level expectations, 19% little to no information on learning loss) and parents of in-person/hybrid learners (13%, 21%).** Families from low-income households are similarly impacted when it comes to lack of information (33% little to no information on grade level expectations, 45% little to no information on learning loss) compared to their higher-income counterparts (16%, 28%).

Whether it be in-person, remote, or a combination of the two, New York City parents are focused on the quality of instruction their child is receiving. While parents' ability to support their child's education has increased (60% better now compared to before the pandemic among parents of remote learners), so has concern around their child's academic performance and ensuring that their child is ready for the next grade level (91% concerned). Ninety-three percent of parents say information on how much live instruction their child is getting from their teacher compared to other schools/districts is important, while 94% stress that knowing how much individual time their child gets with their teachers compared to other schools/districts is important, and 89% are concerned with ensuring that their child is meeting state academic standards.

Higher-income and white families in New York City are more likely to be supplementing their child's education through sources outside public school options – potentially widening opportunity gaps. Parents with household incomes exceeding \$50,000 a year, white parents, and parents of in-person/hybrid learners 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 during the economic crisis.

Overall adoption	Parents of Color	White	< \$50K	\$50K+	Remote	In-person/hybrid	
37%	30%	48%	28%	41%	33%	42%	Relied on online learning tools that you can find on the internet to teach your child
19	17	22	5	23	12	26	Joined a "pod" with other parents to provide tutoring or other educational support outside of school
17	10	29	8	21	13	22	Homeschooled instead of remote learning
16	9	27	4	20	9	24	Found tutoring through a local community organization
9	4	17	4	11	4	14	Relocated to a different part of New York State
9	4	15	-	11	3	15	Sent your child to live with a family member in another state or school district
7	5	10	3	8	1	13	Switched to another school district
36	48	17	58	27	49	22	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, 96% 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 (43%) of parents say that this is something offered at their child's school. Similarly, 96% of parents say that regular contact with their child's teachers would be helpful, but again only 43% say this is available to them. Parents also consider extra support options for their child if they are struggling academically as particularly helpful (94%), but this is also largely lacking for most parents (32% have access).

Would be helpful	Child's school is doing this	
96%	43%	Providing students with regular live access to their teacher, such as live online lessons or phone/video calls
96%	43%	Providing parents with regular contact with or access to their child's teacher
95%	36%	Providing regular feedback on how well my child is doing academically
95%	39%	Providing information for parents about whether their child is on track to meet the academic expectations for their grade
94%	32%	Providing extra support options that are available to my child if they are struggling academically
94%	34%	Providing technical support with technology to help families participate in remote/distance learning
93%	30%	Providing access to recorded live online lessons for you and your child to review later in the day
93%	36%	Sharing resources to help parents teach their children during the day
93%	34%	Providing parents or students with regular contact with or access to a school counselor
92%	30%	Providing students with a safe place to do schoolwork and participate in virtual learning
92%	31%	Providing instructional materials for English learners
91%	26%	Providing free internet access to families
91%	43%	Lending mobile technology devices like laptops or tablets/iPads to families
91%	30%	Providing instructional materials and other resources to support students with disabilities
89%	26%	Connecting parents to resources that can help with food, housing, employment, health, and other essential needs
85%	26%	Providing information for parents in languages other than English

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

- **Subjects beyond math and reading/English.** Math (82%) and reading/English (79%) continue to be the most common subjects covered by the learning materials families have received so far (June 81% and 79%, respectively). But beyond the two main courses of study, there is a significant drop-off across the city: science (74%) and social studies (69%) make up a second tier while other subjects like physical education (44%), music and the arts (39%), and world languages (31%) are getting significantly less attention.
- **Access to meaningful in-person instruction.** Seventy-one percent of parents whose child is in-person or hybrid learning say that their child's in-person learning is virtual learning using a tablet or laptop within a classroom.
- **Class size.** Parents in New York City are more likely to say their class size is bigger than previous years, whether it be in-person (51% bigger / 30% smaller) or remote learning (39% bigger / 29% smaller). This is opposite from what we are seeing in the rest of the state: parents in the New York City suburbs report 1% bigger classes for in-person learners and 9% bigger for remote learners and upstate New York parents report 7% bigger classes for in-person and 10% bigger for remote learners.

Addressing technological barriers is an important step to closing the educational gap among New York City learners. Ninety-one 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 43% of parents say their child has individual technology devices available to them from their school. More than a quarter (27%) of parents say that their child does not receive any technology support (such as free internet or tablets), with Latinx parents (31%), parents from low-income households (41%), and parents of remote learners (33%) the most likely to go without this support. Additionally, the lack of reliable internet access is a top concern for families this fall. Six in ten (61%) parents are concerned about whether their family will be able to afford internet access this school year, and 62% say providing free internet access to families like theirs would be *very helpful* – yet only 26% of parents report that their child's school has made this available to students.

Financial and food insecurity are real concerns for parents this fall. About a third (30%) of New York City parents – including 46% of parents from low-income households, 42% of parents of remote learners, and 41% of parents of color – say they are uneasy about their family's financial situation over the next few months. This includes a staggering 51% of parents who 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. 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 26% of New York City schools are working to bridge this gap.

About this poll: The survey had a confidence interval of +/-3.5%. The margin of error for the New York City sub-sample is greater. 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.