



To: Interested Parties
From: Global Strategy Group
Date: April 6, 2020

Re: Parents’ Survey Identifies Key Needs for New York Families Navigating New Reality

Global Strategy Group partnered with The Education Trust–New York to conduct an online (desktop and mobile) survey among 1,200 parents of children in New York State public schools from March 25th to April 1st, 2020. Key findings from the research are outlined below.

Key Findings:

Parents are very concerned about their child falling behind academically as a result of not being in school. We tested a long list of potential concerns among parents and found academic concerns rose to the top. This is driven by parents in high need areas as well as low-income parents, who worry that being out of school will be a major setback for their child. Financial concerns also top this list, particularly for low-income families. Their child’s sense of well-being and feeling under-stimulated are also top concerns, though they do not rise to the same level of urgency. Top concerns among parents are outlined in the table below:

Ensuring your child does not fall behind academically	63% very concerning	89% total concerning	Particularly concerning to low-income parents (71% very concerning), African American parents (72%), and parents of children in high needs areas (66%)
Ensuring your child is on track to graduate (among high school parents)	54%	87%	Particularly concerning to low-income parents (60%)
Being able to provide for your child financially	52%	78%	Particularly concerning to low-income parents (58%), especially families who earn less than \$25,000/year (65%)
Your child feeling bored or under-stimulated while they are at home	48%	85%	Particularly concerning to parents in the NYC suburbs (52%)
Ensuring your child feels safe and emotionally at ease	46%	79%	Particularly concerning to Spanish-speaking families (59%) and families in NYC (52%)

In the immediate aftermath of school closures, New York parents give positive ratings to schools for their handling of coronavirus and the transition to remote learning overall. More than eight in ten parents say their child’s school is doing an excellent or good job handling the coronavirus (85%) and making learning materials available to students (81%). Parents give high ratings to public schools throughout the state, with very little differentiation between New York City and the surrounding suburbs, the rest of the state, and urban areas outside of New York City. A majority of parents (52%) report receiving “a lot” of information from their child’s school or school district about resources and support that are available to them while schools are closed, and 89% say they have been receiving information from their child’s school at least once a week – two thirds (67%) say they receive information three times a week or more. **Parents are navigating a new reality and generally support their local schools, even as parents’ needs in many cases diverge from what their schools are currently providing, as described below:**

	Overall	NYC	Suburbs	Upstate	Upstate Cities
Handling of coronavirus	40% excellent 45% good 14% fair/poor	38% 48% 14%	43% 41% 15%	41% 44% 13%	38% 46% 14%
Making learning materials and instruction available while schools are closed	40% excellent 41% good 18% fair/poor	39% 43% 17%	38% 44% 18%	42% 37% 20%	39% 38% 21%

There are large gaps between what parents want and what is currently available in the early weeks of school closures – with access to their child’s teacher rated as what parents would find most helpful, even ahead of technology resources. We tested an extensive list of things schools could do to help support parents and students and found parents particularly receptive to all of the options that were proposed. As schools navigate this new landscape over the next several weeks, policymakers and administrators should look to close the – rather sizeable – gap between the things schools have put in place during this period (in dark blue below) and things parents feel would be most helpful as remote learning continues (in light blue below). At the top of parents’ list is regular contact with or access to their child’s teacher, which only half (52%) of parents say their child’s schools have made available.

Would be helpful	Child’s school is doing this	
95%	52%	Providing parents with regular contact with or access to their child’s teacher
92%	34%	Sharing examples of resources to help parents teach their children during the day
92%	33%	Providing technical assistance to help families get set up for remote/distance learning
91%	33%	Sharing tips for parents on how to structure their child’s day
90%	42%	Providing parents with paper packets of instructional materials
90%	38%	Providing parents or students with regular contact with or access to a school counselor
89%	43%	Lending mobile technology devices like iPads to families
87%	27%	Providing instructional materials and other resources to support students with disabilities
87%	21%	Providing free internet access to families
87%	24%	Connecting parents to resources that can help with food, housing, employment, health, and other emergency needs
86%	19%	Facilitating connections to parents so parents can share advice or tips
85%	25%	Providing tips for parents on how to balance caring for their child while working from home

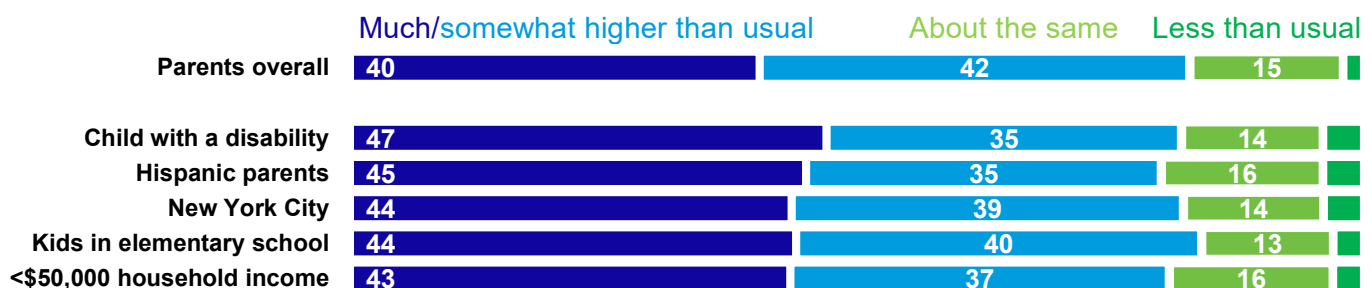
In addition, there are clear gaps that parents feel prevent their children from successfully participating in alternatives to instruction while schools remain closed. With 88% of parents reporting that their school district is currently using or will soon use remote or distance learning, it is important to note that low-income parents are less likely to say distance learning has been successful (52% rate the experience at an 8-10 out of 10) than parents who earn more than \$50,000 per year (57%). For both remote or distance learning and other alternatives to classroom instruction, we have outlined the most pressing issues below:

- **Not enough devices in the home.** Among parents who are not confident that their child will be able to participate in remote or distance learning, not having a computer or tablet or enough available devices (i.e. if parents are working remotely and need access to the family’s computer, etc.) is a top barrier (40% say this applies to them). Sixty-four percent of parents statewide say that schools lending mobile technology devices like iPads would be very helpful for families like theirs. In families with a household income of less than \$50,000 per year, that number rises to 72%, and among parents who live outside of New York City in high needs school districts in large cities (Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Yonkers), 89% of parents say this would be very helpful. Overall, less than half of parents (43%) say their child’s school has lent mobile technology devices to families in response to the coronavirus.
- **Lack of reliable, high-speed internet.** Lack of reliable internet access is another top barrier for families who feel less than confident that they will be able to participate in distance learning (38%). This issue is particularly common in New York City (51%), the surrounding suburbs (42%), and among African American parents (57%) across the state. Two-thirds of parents (67%) say providing free internet access to families while schools are closed due to coronavirus would be very helpful for families like theirs, yet only 21% of parents report that their school district has made this available for students.
- **Subjects beyond math and reading/English.** Math (90%) and reading/English (90%) are the most common subjects covered by the learning materials families have received so far. Schools should look to close this gap and get to 100% in both subjects, as even this level of adoption means one out of every ten children in the state is not receiving learning materials in reading or math at this time. Beyond this, there is a significant drop-off across the state: science (73%) and social studies (71%) make up a second tier while other subjects like physical education (43%), music and the arts (42%), and world languages (30%) are getting significantly less attention. More than eight

in ten (85%) parents say they are concerned about their child feeling bored or under-stimulated at home, suggesting efforts to bridge this gap would be greatly appreciated by parents and students.

- Closing technological barriers.** Twenty-eight percent of parents statewide, including 31% of parents in New York City, 37% in the surrounding suburbs, and 31% of low-income parents say they do not know how to use the remote/distance learning software that has been provided. Just 64% of parents would give themselves a letter grade of an A or B in terms of tech savviness, so helping parents navigate these platforms in the early phases of this transition will be important.
- Support for non-native English speakers and English learners.** This is a significant barrier to remote learning for many parents. More than a third (38%) of non-English home speakers and a quarter of native Spanish speakers say their child’s school has not provided materials in other languages. Navigating remote learning software can be challenging even for English-speaking parents, so making accommodations for non-native English speakers and English learners should be a top priority as schools look to reach full participation in remote learning in the weeks ahead.
- Supporting parents of children with disabilities.** As we note below, parents of children with disabilities report particularly higher levels of stress than usual as a result of the crisis, with 47% reporting much higher levels of stress than usual (compared to 40% among parents overall). Parents of children with disabilities are also particularly concerned with ensuring their child’s mental well-being while they are at home (53% say this is very concerning, compared to 44% of parents overall).
- Providing access to meals.** 70% of parents report that their child’s school is providing free breakfast and/or lunch for students while school is closed, which means almost a third of parents either do not have access to this essential resource or do not know that it is already available. This is particularly concerning in the New York City area: just 62% of parents in New York City and 66% of parents in the suburbs say their school is providing meals for students while schools are closed. There is also a distribution gap, with most schools making meals available for pickup (76%) – just 17% say their school is offering meal delivery, though this is higher in rural areas (32%).
- Advance planning.** Schools, parents, and the American public are all in the same boat, navigating this crisis on a day-by-day and week-by-week basis. However, as it looks more and more likely that schools will continue to be closed, educators should look to equip parents with the tools to plan ahead. A majority of parents (59%) say the materials they have been provided do not extend beyond two weeks of instruction.

This is a stressful time for parents, who have real fears about how their families will cope during this period. More than eight in ten (82%) public school parents report higher levels of stress than usual, including 40% who say their level of stress is *much* higher than usual. Acute feelings of stress are particularly common among parents of children with disabilities, Hispanic parents, and parents living in New York City – who are at the epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic in the United States.



About this poll: The survey had a confidence interval of +/-2.8%. All interviews were conducted via web-based panel, including 59% of interviews conducted via mobile device. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of public school parents are properly represented. Fifty-eight percent of those interviewed said their child receives free or reduced-price breakfast and/or lunch at school, and 36% have a household income of less than \$50,000 per year. “Suburbs” are defined as Westchester, Nassau, Suffolk, Rockland, Orange & Putnam Counties; “Upstate Cities” includes Erie, Monroe, Onondaga, and Albany Counties.