



**To:** Interested Parties  
**From:** Global Strategy Group  
**Date:** May 12, 2020

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

Global Strategy Group partnered with The Education Trust to conduct an online survey among 881 parents of children in Washington public schools from April 13<sup>th</sup> to April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Key findings from the research are outlined below.

**Key Findings:**

**This is a stressful time for parents, who have real fears about how their families will cope during this period.** More than three in four (76%) public school parents report higher levels of stress than usual, including 34% who say their level of stress is *much* higher than usual. More acute feelings of stress are particularly common among parents of children with disabilities (54% much higher) and families earning less than \$50,000/year (47% much higher).

**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 non-college parents, parents of color, and those located in the Vancouver area and Yakima regions, who worry that being out of school will be a major setback for their child. This is especially seen among parents of high school students, who are not only concerned about falling behind academically, but whether their child will still be on track to graduate high school and attend college. Their child’s inability to interact with other students coupled with an increase in boredom and lack of stimulation while at home is also a top worry – with parents concerned about the mental well-being of their child (41% very concerned/78% concerned).

Top concerns among parents are outlined in the table below:

<b>Ensuring your child does not fall behind academically</b>	<b>58%</b> very concerning	<b>86%</b> total concerning	Particularly concerning to parents who are essential workers (68% very concerning), low-income families making <\$50,000/year (67%), non-college parents of color (67%), and parents located in the Vancouver area (65%) and Yakima (64%), and non-college parents (64%)
<b>Ensuring your child is on track to graduate (among high school parents)</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>82%</b>	Particularly concerning to parents in the Vancouver area (64% very concerning) and Yakima (63%), parents who are essential workers (63%), and non-college parents of color (60%)
<b>Ensuring your child is on track to go to college (among high school parents)</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>81%</b>	Particularly concerning to parents in the Vancouver area (67%) and Yakima (62%), non-college parents of color (63%), and parents who are essential workers (60%)
<b>Your child not being able to interact with other students while they are at home</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>85%</b>	Particularly concerning to parents making over \$150,000 per year (57% very concerning), parents in the Vancouver area (56%), and college-educated parents (54%)
<b>Your child feeling bored or understimulated while they are at home</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>84%</b>	Particularly concerning to parents who are essential workers (55% very concerning), middle income parents making between \$50,000-\$75,000/year (52%), and parents of children with a disability (51%)

**There are large gaps between what parents want and what is currently available to them weeks after 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 during this time and found parents particularly receptive to all the proposed options. 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 (96% say this would be helpful), which only a little more than half (58%) of parents say their child’s schools have made available. Sharing examples of resources (92% helpful/35% have access to this), tips on structuring child’s day (89%/33%), providing paper packets of instructional material (89%/45%), and technical assistance (89%/37%) are also viewed as particularly helpful, in addition to closing technological gaps like access to internet and devices to use for remote learning.

Would be helpful	Child’s school is doing this	
96%	58%	Providing parents with regular contact with or access to their child’s teacher
92%	35%	Sharing examples of resources to help parents teach their children during the day
89%	37%	Providing technical assistance to help families get set up for remote/distance learning
89%	45%	Providing parents with paper packets of instructional materials
89%	33%	Sharing tips for parents on how to structure their child’s day so they can feel their best while they are at home
88%	53%	Lending mobile technology devices like Chromebooks or iPads to families
86%	35%	Providing parents or students with regular contact with or access to a school counselor
84%	22%	Providing free internet access to families
84%	29%	Connecting parents to resources that can help with food, housing, employment, health, and other emergency needs
81%	26%	Providing instructional materials and other resources to support students with disabilities
81%	22%	Providing tips for parents on how to balance caring for their child while working from home
79%	19%	Facilitating connections to other parents so parents can share advice or tips for managing during the crisis

**In addition, there are clear gaps that parents feel prevent their children from successfully participating in alternatives to instruction while schools remain closed.** With 77% 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 earning less than <\$24,000/year are less likely to say distance learning has been successful (33% rate the experience at an 8-10 out of 10) than parents who earn more than \$50,000 per year (47%). 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.** 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 barrier for many communities. Two-thirds (67%) of parents statewide say that schools lending mobile technology devices like iPads would be very helpful for families like theirs. That number rises among families located in the Yakima and the Vancouver area (77%) regions, parents who have children with disabilities (76%), low-income families that earn less than \$50,000/year (73%), and single parents (72%). Overall, only a little more than half (53%) say their child’s school has lent mobile technology devices to families in response to the coronavirus.
- **Lack of reliable, high-speed internet.** Eleven percent of families say lack of reliable internet access is another barrier that could prevent them from participating in distance learning. This issue is particularly common for low-income families (20%), families in small town/rural communities (19%), parents of children with disabilities (18%), single parents (16%), and families located in the Vancouver area (16%). 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 22% of parents report that their school district has made this available for students.

- **Subjects beyond math and reading/English.** Math (89%) and reading/English (84%) 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 at least one out of every ten children in the state are not receiving learning materials in reading or math at this time. Beyond this, there is a significant drop-off across the state: science (64%) and social studies (58%) make up a second tier while other subjects like physical education (41%), music and the arts (39%), English as a second language (ESL) (18%), and world languages (17%) are getting significantly less attention. More than 8-in-10 (84%) parents say they are concerned about their child feeling bored or under-stimulated at home and a little less worry about their child's mental well-being (78%), suggesting efforts to bridge this gap would be greatly appreciated by parents and students.
- **Closing technological barriers.** Thirteen percent of parents statewide, including parents located in the Vancouver area (17%) and in urban areas (17%) say they do not know how to use the remote/distance learning software that has been provided. Additionally, 13% of parents feel their child is too young to use the remote/distance software while they are working. This is particularly true for non-Native English speakers (22%). Just 60% of parents would give themselves a letter grade of an A or B in terms of tech savviness, so helping parents navigate these platforms for them and their younger children will be important.
- **Support for non-native English speakers and English learners.** This is a significant barrier to remote learning for many parents. Slightly more than a third (39%) of non-English home speakers say their child's school has not provided information 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 above, parents of children with disabilities report particularly higher levels of stress than usual as a result of the crisis, with 54% reporting much higher levels of stress than usual (compared to 34% among parents overall). Parents of children with disabilities are also particularly concerned with ensuring that their child does not fall behind academically while at home (62% say this is very concerning, compared to 58% of parents overall).
- **Providing access to meals.** Seventy-four percent of parents report that their child's school is providing free breakfast and/or lunch for students while school is closed, which means more than a quarter of parents either do not have access to this essential resource or do not know that it is already available. This is particularly concerning among Hispanic parents (61%), those located in urban areas (63%) and for single parents (67%) who say their schools are providing meals while schools are closed – leaving at least a third of them without access. There is also a distribution gap, with most schools making meals available for pickup (88%).
- **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. This means making sure parents can understand and teach assignments. Twenty-six percent of parents report the assignments given are confusing and require additional explanation/instruction and with 92% of parents indicating that it would be helpful to have examples of resources – this is key to effectively moving forward. Additionally, as of now, 25% of parents are not sure or have not yet received instructional materials from their child's school – while of those who have received materials, 22% don't know or are unsure whether they will receive materials covering the remainder of the school year.