



To: Interested Parties
From: Global Strategy Group
Date: May 1, 2020

Re: Parents’ Survey Identifies Schooling Successes and Key Needs for Montgomery County Families Navigating New Reality

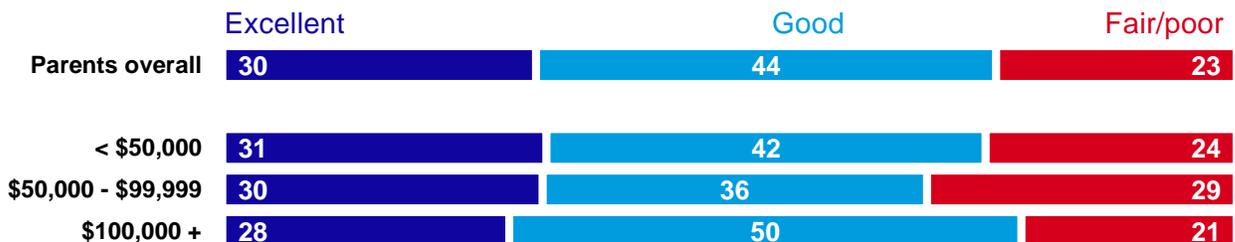
Global Strategy Group partnered with The Education Trust–Maryland to conduct a survey among 408 parents of children in Montgomery County public schools from April 20th to April 27th, 2020. Key findings from the research are outlined below.

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 to do with coronavirus-related school closures among parents and found academic concerns rose to the top. This is driven by parents in non-English speaking households, Hispanic parents, and parents who face a myriad of challenges lower incomes, children with disabilities, single parents, or essential workers who all worry that being out of school will be a major setback for their child. Emotional and mental health concerns also top this list, particularly for low-income and African-American families. Financial concerns are also top issues, 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 | 47% very concerning | 75% total concerning | Particularly concerning to parents in non-English speaking households (67% very concerning), low-income parents (66%), parents whose child has a disability (62%), single parents (56%), Hispanic parents (55%), and parents who are essential workers (54%) |
| Ensuring your child is on track to go to college (among high school parents) | 40% | 65% | Particularly concerning to parents in non-English speaking households (76% very concerning), low-income parents (66%), single parents (56%), Hispanic parents (54%), and parents whose child has a disability (53%), |
| Ensuring your child is on track to graduate (among high school parents) | 40% | 62% | Particularly concerning to parents in non-English speaking households (79% very concerning), low-income parents (74%), Hispanic parents (63%), single parents (60%), and African-American parents (48%) |
| Ensuring your child feels safe and emotionally at ease | 30% | 57% | Particularly concerning to African-American parents (38%) and low-income parents (38%) |
| Not having the resources or supplies to help your child stay academically on track | 29% | 53% | Particularly concerning to parents in non-English speaking households (61% very concerning) and low-income parents (49%) |

In the immediate aftermath of school closures, Montgomery County parents give positive ratings to schools for their handling of coronavirus. Nearly three-quarters of parents say their child’s school is doing an excellent or good job handling the coronavirus (74%). Parents give high ratings to public schools throughout the county, with very little differentiation across income levels.



Montgomery County schools are doing fairly well in providing access to teachers, devices and meals for families relative to other geographies, though there are still some significant gaps for policymakers to look to close. More than half of public school parents already have access to mobile device lending programs (69%), regular contact to their child’s teacher (62%), and at-school pickup meals (54%) provided by their school. Despite the success in these areas, there is still critical room to improve and reach more universal coverage for parents. Beyond these areas, as well, schools should look to narrow the more sizeable gaps that exist between the things schools have put in place during this period (in dark blue below) and some of things parents feel would be most helpful as remote learning continues (in light blue below).

| Would be helpful | Child’s school is doing this | Gap | |
|------------------|------------------------------|-----|--|
| 93% | 62% | 31% | Providing parents with regular contact with or access to their child’s teacher <i>This need is even more unmet (i.e. larger gap) in Senate Districts 18-20 (38pt gap), Hispanic parents (40pt gap), and Low-Income families (44pt gap)</i> |
| 87% | 45% | 42% | Providing parents or students with regular contact with or access to a school counselor <i>This need is even more unmet for African-American parents (64pt gap), non-English speaking households (56pt gap), and Low-Income families (60pt gap)</i> |
| 79% | 69% | 10% | Lending mobile technology devices like Chromebooks or iPads to families <i>This need is even more unmet for African-American parents (21pt gap), non-English speaking households (20pt gap), and Low-Income families (32pt gap)</i> |
| 79% | 47% | 32% | Providing technical assistance to help families get set up for remote/distance learning <i>This need is even more unmet in Senate Districts 18-20 (40pt gap), African-American parents (43pt gap), and Low-Income families (54pt gap)</i> |
| 79% | 42% | 37% | Providing parents with paper packets of instructional materials <i>This need is even more unmet for African-American parents (51pt gap and Low-Income families (48pt gap)</i> |
| 72% | 41% | 31% | Providing free internet access to families <i>This need is even more unmet in Senate Districts 18-20 (42pt gap), African-American parents (47pt gap), Low-Income families (64pt gap), and parents of English learners (36pt gap)</i> |
| 72% | 38% | 34% | Providing instructional materials and other resources to support students with disabilities <i>This need is even more unmet in Senate Districts 18-20 (46pt gap), African-American parents (49pt gap), Hispanic parents (42pt gap), and Low-Income families (51pt gap)</i> |
| 72% | 43% | 29% | Providing instructional materials for English learners <i>This need is even more unmet for African-American parents (41pt gap), Hispanic parents (47pt gap), non-English speaking households (58pt gap), and Low-Income families (58pt gap)</i> |
| 71% | 41% | 30% | Connecting parents to resources that can help with food, housing, employment, health, and other emergency needs <i>This need is even more unmet for African-American parents (52pt gap), non-English speaking households (49pt gap), and Low-Income families (49pt gap)</i> |
| 67% | 54% | 13% | Providing meals that parents can pick up at their child’s school <i>This need is even more unmet for African-American parents (32pt gap), Hispanic parents (26pt gap) and Low-Income families (23pt gap)</i> |
| 66% | 47% | 19% | Providing information for parents in languages other than English <i>This need is even more unmet in Senate Districts 39-14 (24pt gap) and 17-19 (24pt gap), African-American parents (46pt gap), Hispanic parents (23pt gap), non-English speaking households (27pt gap) and Low-Income families (46pt gap)</i> |
| 66% | 55% | 11% | Providing meals that parents can pick up at other locations in their communities <i>This need is even more unmet for African-American parents (29pt gap), Hispanic parents (21pt gap) and Low-Income families (33pt gap)</i> |

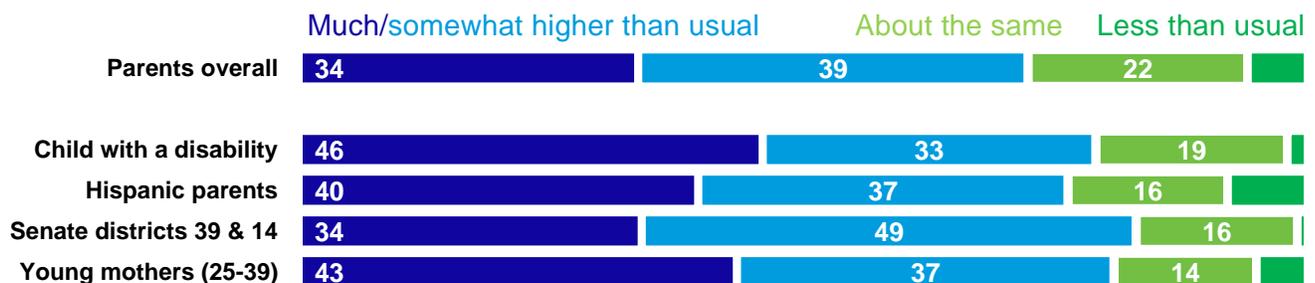
In addition, there are clear gaps that parents feel prevent their children from successfully participating in alternatives to instruction while schools remain closed. For both remote or distance learning and other alternatives to classroom instruction, we have outlined the most pressing issues below:

- **Lack of technological support.** The top issue preventing families from fully participating in remote or distance learning is software difficulties and functionality (24%). This is even more of a barrier among parents of children with

disabilities (36%), parents in non-English speaking households (35%), and low-income parents (34%). A majority of parents countywide say that schools providing technical assistance would be helpful (79%), though less than half (47%) have access to assistance now. With a fifth (22%) of parents rating themselves below an A or B in terms of tech savviness, providing this support will be critical for Montgomery County Parents.

- Subjects beyond math and reading/English.** Math (90%) and reading/English (89%) 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 these subjects, there is a significant drop-off in materials' coverage: science (50%), social studies (48%), and music and the arts (43%) make up a second tier while other subjects like physical education (35%) and world languages (26%) are getting significantly less attention. Three-quarters of parents say they are concerned about their child falling behind academically, so closing this gap will be essential to assuage those concerns and ensure students are staying on track.
- Support for non-native English speakers and English learners.** Nearly two in five (39%) parents in non-English speaking households say their child's school has not provided materials in other languages. While roughly three-quarters (73%) of parents in non-English speaking households indicate schools providing materials in other languages would be helpful, only half (52%) report that their schools are currently doing so. 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 46% 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 their child does not fall behind academically (62% say this is very concerning, compared to 47% among parents overall) and can remain on track to graduate high school (48%, compared to 40% among parents overall).
- Providing access to meals.** Barely over half (55%) of parents report that their child's school is providing free breakfast and/or lunch for students while school is closed, which means the other near-half of parents either do not have access to this essential resource or do not know that it is already available. This is particularly concerning for middle-income households (\$50,000 - \$99,999), with nearly three in five (56%) indicating that their schools are not providing meals for students while the schools are closed. At a time when layoffs and furloughs may mean greater food insecurity even for historically well-off families, reducing awareness and access to free meals will be particularly important.
- Gathering feedback and addressing differing perceptions of success.** White parents are less likely to say distance learning has been successful (25% rate the experience at an 8-10 out of 10) than African-American (35%) and Hispanic (40%) parents, likewise, low-income parents are more likely to report success (37%) than both parents earning \$50,000-\$99,999 (33%) and those earning more than \$100,000 (31%). As remote learning continues, schools should look to gather feedback from families across demographics and circumstances, addressing concerns and closing gaps in perceptions among parents.

This is a stressful time for parents, who have real fears about how their families will cope during this period. More than seven in ten (73%) public school parents report higher levels of stress than usual, including over a third (34%) who say their level of stress is *much* higher than usual. Acute feelings of stress are particularly common among parents of children with disabilities (46% much higher), young mothers (43%), Hispanic parents (40%).



About this poll: The survey had a confidence interval of +/-4.9%. All interviews were conducted via phone and text-to-web interviews. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of public school parents are properly represented. Twenty-three percent of those interviewed said their child receives free or reduced-price breakfast and/or lunch at school, and 18% have a household income of less than \$50,000 per year.