



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

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

Global Strategy Group partnered with The Education Trust to conduct an online survey among 1,200 parents of children in Texas public schools from April 13th to April 19th, 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. Almost three in four (74%) public school parents report higher levels of stress than usual, including 32% 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 (43% much higher), those in the Panhandle/West region of the state (40%), and low to middle income families earning \$25k-\$50k/year (39%).

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 of color, non-college, low income parents and those located in the Dallas/Tarrant Counties, 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 sense of feeling bored and under-stimulated are also top concerns and are at a higher level of urgency than even financial worries. However, financial concerns are a significant issue for many parents especially among non-college graduates, particularly non-college parents of color, those in urban areas, and low-income families. Top concerns among parents are outlined in the table below:

Ensuring your child does not fall behind academically	62% very concerning	87% total concerning	Particularly concerning to low-income families making <\$24,000/year (74% very concerning), parents who have a child with a disability (72%), non-college parents of color (71%), those located in the Panhandle/West region of the state (70%), in Dallas/Tarrant counties (69%), and in urban areas (67%)
Ensuring your child is on track to go to college (among high school parents)	51%	79%	Particularly concerning to African American parents (71%) and low-income families earning <\$24,000/year (62%)
Ensuring your child is on track to graduate (among high school parents)	51%	76%	Particularly concerning to non-college parents of color (61%), those in urban areas (58%), the San Antonio/Lower Valley (58%), non-college graduate parents (57%), and African American/Hispanic parents (57%)
Your child feeling bored or under-stimulated while they are at home	47%	80%	Particularly concerning to parents in urban areas (54%), parents who have children with disabilities (52%), and middle-income families who earn between \$50k-\$75k/year (53%)
Being able to provide for your child financially	43%	70%	Particularly concerning to low-income families (55%), especially families earning <\$24,000/year (61%), African American parents (53%), those in the Panhandle/West region (51%), non-college parents of color (51%), and those in urban areas (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 (56%) of parents say their child’s schools have made available. Technical assistance (92% helpful/36% have access to this) and example resources (94%/35%) 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%	56%	Providing parents with regular contact with or access to their child’s teacher
94%	35%	Sharing examples of resources to help parents teach their children during the day
92%	36%	Providing technical assistance to help families get set up for remote/distance learning
90%	44%	Lending mobile technology devices like Chromebooks or iPads to families
89%	30%	Sharing tips for parents on how to structure their child’s day so they can feel their best while they are at home
89%	24%	Providing free internet access to families
88%	41%	Providing parents with paper packets of instructional materials
88%	35%	Providing parents or students with regular contact with or access to a school counselor
88%	23%	Connecting parents to resources that can help with food, housing, employment, health, and other emergency needs
86%	51%	Providing meals that parents can pick up at their child’s school
86%	33%	Providing instructional materials for English learners
84%	28%	Providing instructional materials and other resources to support students with disabilities

Policymakers and administrators should look to close the following gaps that parents feel prevent their children from successfully participating in alternatives to instruction while schools remain closed:

- **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 (68%) of parents statewide say that schools lending mobile technology devices like iPads would be very helpful for families like theirs. That number rises among low-income families that earn <\$24,000/year (85%), and African Americans (79%). Overall, less than half (44%) say their child’s school has lent mobile technology devices to families in response to the coronavirus.
- **Lack of reliable, high-speed internet.** Twelve percent of families say lack of reliable internet access is another barrier that could prevent them from participating in distance learning (12%). This issue is particularly common for families in small town/rural communities (21%), the Panhandle/West part of the state (20%), and low-income families making <\$24,000/year (19%). Almost three-fourths of parents (70%) say providing free internet access to families while schools are closed due to coronavirus would be very helpful for families like theirs, yet only 24% of parents report that their school district has made this available for students.
- **Subjects beyond math and reading/English.** Math (93%) and reading/English (92%) 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 about 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 (82%) and social studies (74%) make up a second tier while other subjects like music and the arts (41%), physical education (36%), English as a second language (ESL) (24%), and world languages (22%) are getting significantly less attention. Eight in ten (80%) 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.** Seventeen percent of parents statewide, including about a quarter of African American parents (24%) say they do not know how to use the remote/distance learning software that has been provided. Just 65% 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. Eighty-six percent of parents say that providing instructional material for English learners would be helpful, while 75% percent, including higher proportions of Hispanic (86%) and low-income families (80%), say it would be helpful to provide information in other languages for parents. However, only 39% of schools have done 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 above, parents of children with disabilities report particularly higher levels of stress than usual as a result of the crisis, with 43% reporting much higher levels of stress than usual (compared to 32% 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 (72% say this is very concerning, compared to 62% of parents overall).
- **Providing access to meals.** Seventy-two 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 African American families and those located in Houston, with only 64% saying 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 (95%) – while only 5% say their school is offering meal delivery, though this is somewhat higher in the small town/rural communities and among families earning <\$24,000/year (8%).
- **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, with 70% percent of parents believing until the end of the school year, educators should look to equip parents with the tools to plan ahead. As of now, 20% of parents are not sure or have not received instructional materials from their child's school – while of those who have received materials, 20% don't know or are unsure whether they will receive materials covering the remainder of the school year.