



**EMBARGOED until 1:00 PM PT April 8, 2020**

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## **Poll: California Parents Very Concerned About Children Falling Behind During School Closures**

*First Statewide Poll of California Parents Show Significant Gaps in Access to Resources and Elevated Stress Levels for Families*

**OAKLAND, Calif.** - Nearly 9 in 10 California parents are worried about their children falling behind academically due to coronavirus-related school closures, and 8 in 10 are experiencing heightened stress levels, according to a new poll released today by The Education Trust–West (ETW). The statewide poll, conducted by Global Strategy Group for The Education Trust–West, finds that 81% of respondents rate school leaders’ general handling of the closures as “excellent” or “good.” But it also reveals that the crisis is exacerbating longstanding education equity challenges, including inequitable access to technology, academic support, and resources for students of color and students from lower-income communities.

“Communicating effectively with parents when schools close is no easy task, and teachers, principals, and district administrators deserve a lot of credit,” said Dr. Elisha Smith Arrillaga, Executive Director of The Education Trust–West. “But this is a time to accelerate our work. The poll results show that parents want consistent contact with their children’s teachers and are still lacking equitable access to academic resources. Right now, we must step up planning to ensure teachers and school leaders have the resources they need to stop learning gaps in their tracks when schools reopen.”

### **Key Poll Findings:**

#### **Academic Support**

- 4 out of 5 (82%) Latinx and 3 out of 4 (76%) African American parents are concerned they do not have the resources or supplies to help their child stay academically on track.
- Nearly 1 in 4 (21%) Latinx and 1 in 10 (12%) of African American parents reported receiving little to no information about academic or other resources from their school or

district. For parents who did receive academic resources, students in low-income households were less likely to receive science instructional materials.

- African American parents are less likely to have been contacted by their child's teacher. (33% compared to approximately 41% for all other racial groups).
- A quarter (25%) of non-English home speakers say their child's school has not provided materials in other languages. Only 31% of all parents reported that their school or district is providing instructional materials for English learners.

### **Digital Divide and Distance Learning**

- 38% of low-income families and 29% of families of color are concerned about access to distance learning because they don't have reliable internet at home.
- 50% of low-income and 42% of families of color lack sufficient devices at home to access distance learning.

### **Well-being**

- Most parents (89%) are concerned that their children will fall behind academically and (80%) report a higher than usual level of stress due to school closures.
- 84% of parents of low-income households are concerned about being able to provide financially for their families compared to 72% of those from higher-income households.

Policymakers will need to shift from crisis management to long-term solutions to ensure education equity is at the forefront of every school, district, and state-level decision. In total, 1,200 parents of children in California public schools were polled online (desktop and mobile) from March 26th to April 1st. These poll results were released in coordination with [The Education Trust–New York](#)'s poll of New York parents amidst the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic impacting school closures all across the state and the country.

### **Additional Resources and Recommendations:**

In response to the shifting education landscape caused by the coronavirus, ETW released a series of resources "[Education Equity in Crisis](#)" to guide school and district leaders, policymakers and advocates on how best to center short and long-term solutions on helping students who are the most in need.

### **Digital Divide Map**

This resource was released today and illustrates digital access across the state. The map is designed to:

- Help statewide policymakers evaluate digital access needs in their region,
- Advocate for public private partnerships,
- Target professional development training,
- Require local education agencies to share their distance learning plans, and

- Establish a weighted funding allocation mechanism for federal stimulus dollars.

### **[Addressing Learning, Promotions, Transitions, and Grades during School Closures](#)**

These policy recommendations include key issues and solutions to ensure the COVID-19 crisis does not widen opportunity gaps for students of color, students from lower-income families, English learners, and students with disabilities. ETW provides suggestions in the following areas:

- Meeting P-12 Students' Learning Needs
- K-12 Grade-Level Promotion
- High School Graduation and Postsecondary Transition
- Course Grading Flexibility and Supports at Colleges and Universities
- Student Transitions and Progress at Colleges and Universities

### ***About The Education Trust–West***

*[The Education Trust–West](#) works for educational justice and the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, pre-K through college, in the state of California. We expose opportunity and achievement gaps that separate students of color and low-income students from other youth, and we identify and advocate for the strategies that will forever close those gaps.*

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**To:** Interested Parties  
**From:** Global Strategy Group  
**Date:** April 7, 2020  
**Re:** Parents’ Survey Identifies Key Needs for California Families Navigating New Reality

Global Strategy Group partnered with The Education Trust–West to conduct an online (desktop and mobile) survey among 1,200 parents of children in California public schools from March 26<sup>th</sup> to April 1<sup>st</sup>, 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 the Greater Los Angeles Area as well as low-income parents, 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 attend college. Financial concerns also top this list, particularly for African American and low-income families. Their child’s sense of feeling bored and under-stimulated are also top concerns and rise to the same level of urgency as financial worries. Top concerns among parents are outlined in the table below:

|                                                                                |                               |                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Ensuring your child does not fall behind academically</b>                   | <b>65%</b><br>very concerning | <b>89%</b><br>total concerning | Particularly concerning to parents who have a child with a disability (72%), in the Greater Los Angeles Area (72%), parents who are non-college people of color (71%), low-income parents (70%), and Hispanics (69%)                           |
| <b>Ensuring your child is on track to graduate (among high school parents)</b> | <b>57%</b>                    | <b>84%</b>                     | Particularly concerning to parents who are non-college people of color (70%), parents located in the Greater Los Angeles Area (70%) and in the Valley (65%), African American parents (63%), and low-income parents (69%)                      |
| <b>Ensuring you child is on track to go to college</b>                         | <b>51%</b>                    | <b>82%</b>                     | Particularly concerning to Spanish speaking parents (72%), parents located in the Valley (65%), African American parents (62%), non-college people of color (60%), low-income parents (61%), and parents in the Greater Los Angeles Area (59%) |
| <b>Your child feeling bored or under-stimulated while they are at home</b>     | <b>48%</b>                    | <b>84%</b>                     | Particularly concerning to low-income families who make <\$24,000/year (53%) and white parents in Los Angeles (52%)                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Being able to provide for your child financially</b>                        | <b>48%</b>                    | <b>76%</b>                     | Particularly concerning to low-income families, African American parents (58%), and non-college people of color (55%)                                                                                                                          |

**In the immediate aftermath of school closures, California parents give positive ratings to schools for their handling of coronavirus and the transition to remote learning overall.** Eight in ten parents say their child’s school is doing an excellent or good job handling the coronavirus (81%), but rate slightly lower for making learning materials available to students (75%). Parents give high ratings to public schools throughout the state, with very little differentiation between Los Angeles and the surrounding area, the rest of the state, and urban areas outside of Los Angeles. About half of parents (47%) 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 83% say they have been receiving information from their child’s school at least once a week – and more than half (54%) 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                                    | LA                | Greater LA        | North             | San Diego         | SF/Bay            | Valley            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Handling of coronavirus</b>                                                      | 40% excellent<br>41% good<br>17% fair/poor | 35%<br>45%<br>19% | 44%<br>36%<br>19% | 31%<br>47%<br>20% | 47%<br>40%<br>14% | 39%<br>42%<br>18% | 47%<br>40%<br>11% |
| <b>Making learning materials and instruction available while schools are closed</b> | 34% excellent<br>41% good<br>24% fair/poor | 33%<br>46%<br>20% | 32%<br>38%<br>28% | 34%<br>35%<br>28% | 35%<br>43%<br>22% | 33%<br>39%<br>24% | 37%<br>41%<br>19% |

**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 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, which less than half (45%) of parents say their child’s schools have made available.

| Would be helpful | Child’s school is doing this |                                                                                                                 |
|------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 94%              | 45%                          | Providing parents with regular contact with or access to their child’s teacher                                  |
| 92%              | 31%                          | Sharing examples of resources to help parents teach their children during the day                               |
| 91%              | 29%                          | Providing technical assistance to help families get set up for remote/distance learning                         |
| 91%              | 29%                          | Sharing tips for parents on how to structure their child’s day                                                  |
| 91%              | 24%                          | Providing parents or students with regular contact with or access to a school counselor                         |
| 90%              | 39%                          | Providing parents with paper packets of instructional materials                                                 |
| 89%              | 23%                          | Connecting parents to resources that can help with food, housing, employment, health, and other emergency needs |
| 88%              | 37%                          | Lending mobile technology devices like iPads to families                                                        |
| 88%              | 20%                          | Providing free internet access to families                                                                      |
| 87%              | 24%                          | Providing instructional materials and other resources to support students with disabilities                     |
| 86%              | 48%                          | Providing meals that parents can pick up at their child’s school                                                |
| 85%              | 35%                          | Providing meals that parents can pick up at other locations in their communities                                |

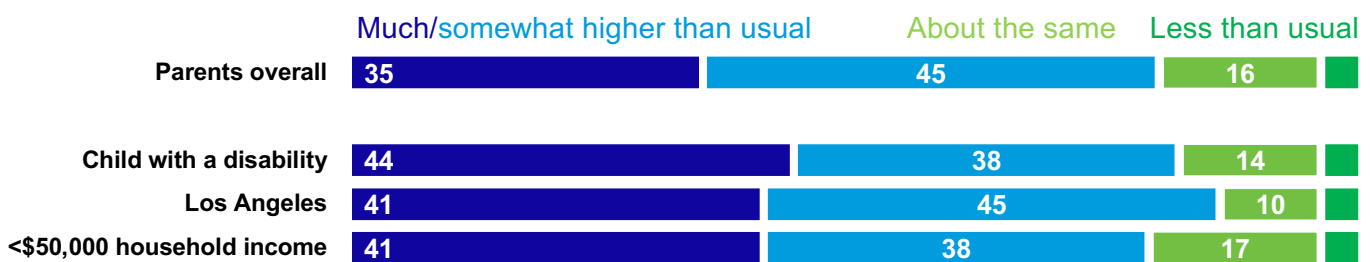
**In addition, there are clear gaps that parents feel prevent their children from successfully participating in alternatives to instruction while schools remain closed.** With 81% of parents reporting that their school district is currently using or will soon use remote or distance learning, it is important to note that low-income parents are less likely to say distance learning has been successful (59% rate the experience at an 8-10 out of 10) than parents who earn more than \$50,000 per year (65%). 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 (41% 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. Among African American families, that number rises to 71%, with families who have a household income of less than \$50,000 per year at 69%, and 67% of parents located in the North of the state reporting this would be very helpful. Overall, only about a third of parents (37%) 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 (29%). This issue is particularly common for families in the North of the state (47%), low-income families (38%), Hispanics in the Greater Los Angeles Area (35%) and families located in the Greater Los Angeles Area in general (34%). 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 20% of parents report that their school district has made this available for students.
- **Subjects beyond math and reading/English.** Math (88%) and reading/English (85%) 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 is not receiving learning materials in reading or math at this time. Beyond this, there is a significant drop-off across the state: science (59%) and social studies (56%) make up a second tier while other subjects like world languages (27%), physical education (26%), and music and the arts (24%), are getting significantly less attention. More than

eight in ten (84%) 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-three percent of parents statewide, including 29% of parents in the Greater Los Angeles Area, 32% in the Valley, and 31% in the North 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. A quarter (25%) of non-English home 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 44% reporting much higher levels of stress than usual (compared to 35% 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 65% of parents overall).
- Providing access to meals.** Seventy percent 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 both the northern and southern regions of the state: just 64% of parents in Los Angeles and 66% of parents in the North 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%) – while only 5% say their school is offering meal delivery, though this is higher in the northern region of the state (11%).
- 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 (58%) 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.** Eight in ten (80%) public school parents report higher levels of stress than usual, including 35% who say their level of stress is *much* higher than usual. Acute feelings of stress are particularly common among parents of children with disabilities, parents living in Los Angeles, and lower-income families.



**About this poll:** The survey had a confidence interval of +/-2.8%. 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.