

## **California voters, including parents, have deep concerns about distance learning** *Gov. Newsom gets strong support for handling of education, new poll says*

As most public and private school students in California continue to study from home, distance learning gets a definite thumbs down from most of the state's registered voters, including parents, according to a new EdSource poll.

Three-quarters of voters and parents (75%) say distance learning is worse than in-class instruction. What's more, a majority of voters, as well as parents (54%) feel that California schools in general are not prepared to offer high quality distance learning, although parents are more positive about their own local schools.

These are among the findings of an EdSource survey of 834 registered voters on a range of education concerns related to the pandemic. Nearly 300 of those polled were parents of K-12 or college students. The representative poll was conducted online between Aug. 29 and Sept. 7 by the FM3 Research polling firm.

Other findings of the poll include:

**Support for Newsom's Handling of Education:** Despite their unhappiness with distance learning, a majority of voters (54%) generally give high marks to Gov. Gavin Newsom for his handling of education during the pandemic, while 39% disapprove. African Americans, in particular, give him the highest rating of any racial or ethnic group (71%). An even higher proportion (67%) support his executive order requiring distance learning in counties on the state's monitoring list (now Tier One, or purple, on the list). The support for Newsom, however, is highly partisan, with 93 percent of Democrats supporting him, compared to only 39% of Republicans.

**Motivating children:** One of the major challenges facing teachers is how to motivate children and keep them coming back day after day when they aren't in the classroom and don't have direct contact with teachers.

Parents are deeply concerned about that issue as well. Four out of five (79%) say the biggest challenge of distance learning is sustaining their children's interest and keeping them motivated. Parents also express concerns about insufficient instructional time with a teacher, and say it is hard for children to work on their own, as well as understand assignments. An even higher proportion of low-income parents rate these as challenges.

**Learning Loss:** Many parents (70%) believe if children are at home for the rest of the year, it will result in learning loss for all students, especially for the most economically vulnerable, who suffer from hunger or housing insecurity. Low income parents, in particular, (75%) also worry that prolonged distance learning will mean they won't be able to get back to work.

**Changing Schools:** Levels of unhappiness related to the pandemic run so deep that one in four parents (24%) say they are considering moving their children to a private, parochial or charter school, and nearly the same number (22%) say they are considering moving altogether to access different school options.