



School, Interrupted

FAMILIES' EXPERIENCES WITH EDUCATION DURING THE PANDEMIC

May 2020

FLUENTSM
public opinion + market research

Introduction

This report presents the research findings from the Fluent study examining the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on families' experiences with education. The survey addressed two key research questions:

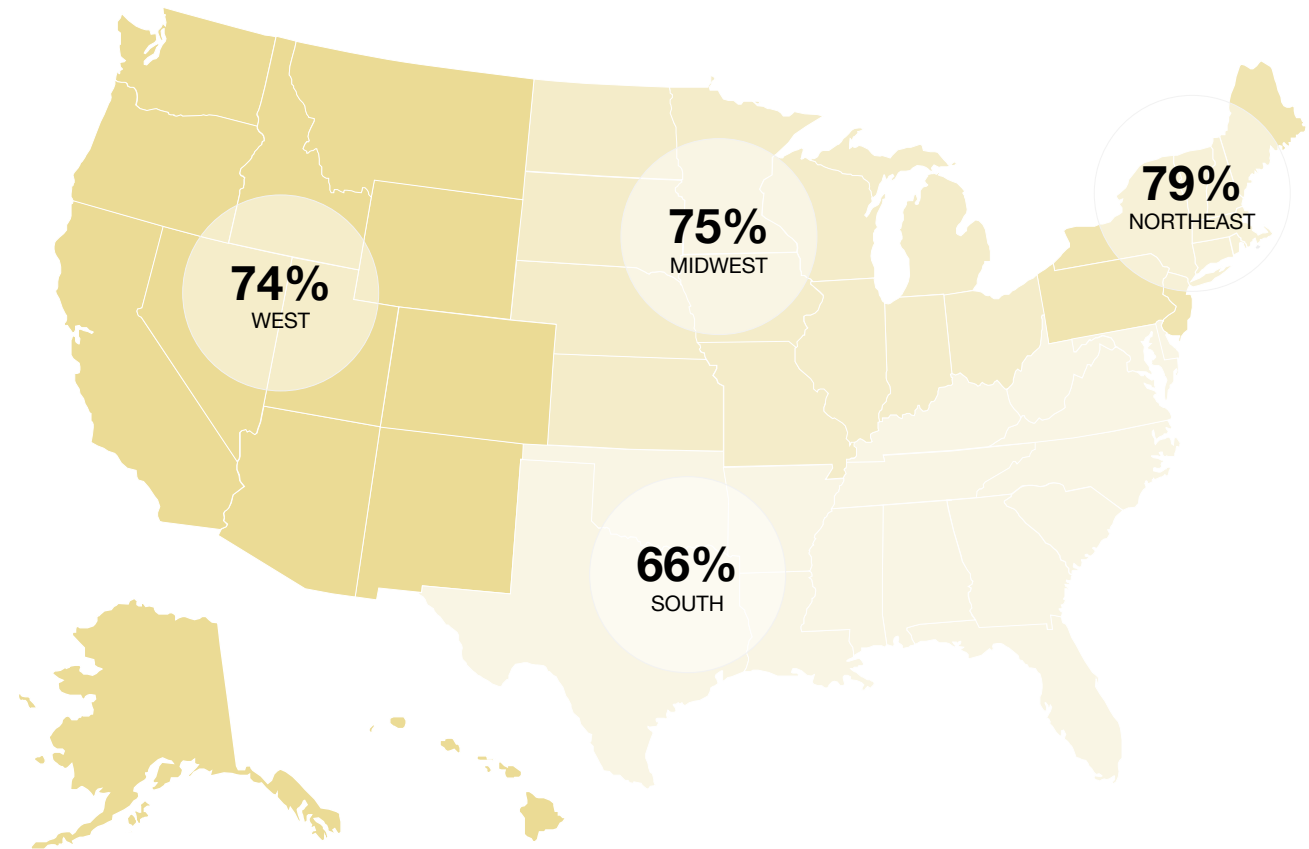
1. What challenges have families experienced with a disrupted school year?
2. What effect have the school closings and distance learning had on families' attitudes toward their child's education?

The survey was conducted online among a national sample of 2,032 parents or guardians of children ages 2-18. In addition, 894 teens ages 13-18 from these households completed a separate section of the survey.

The survey was conducted April 22 – May 5, 2020.

At the time of the survey, nine in 10 families (91%) were living in an area with stay-at-home orders or recommendations to limit interactions with people currently in place.

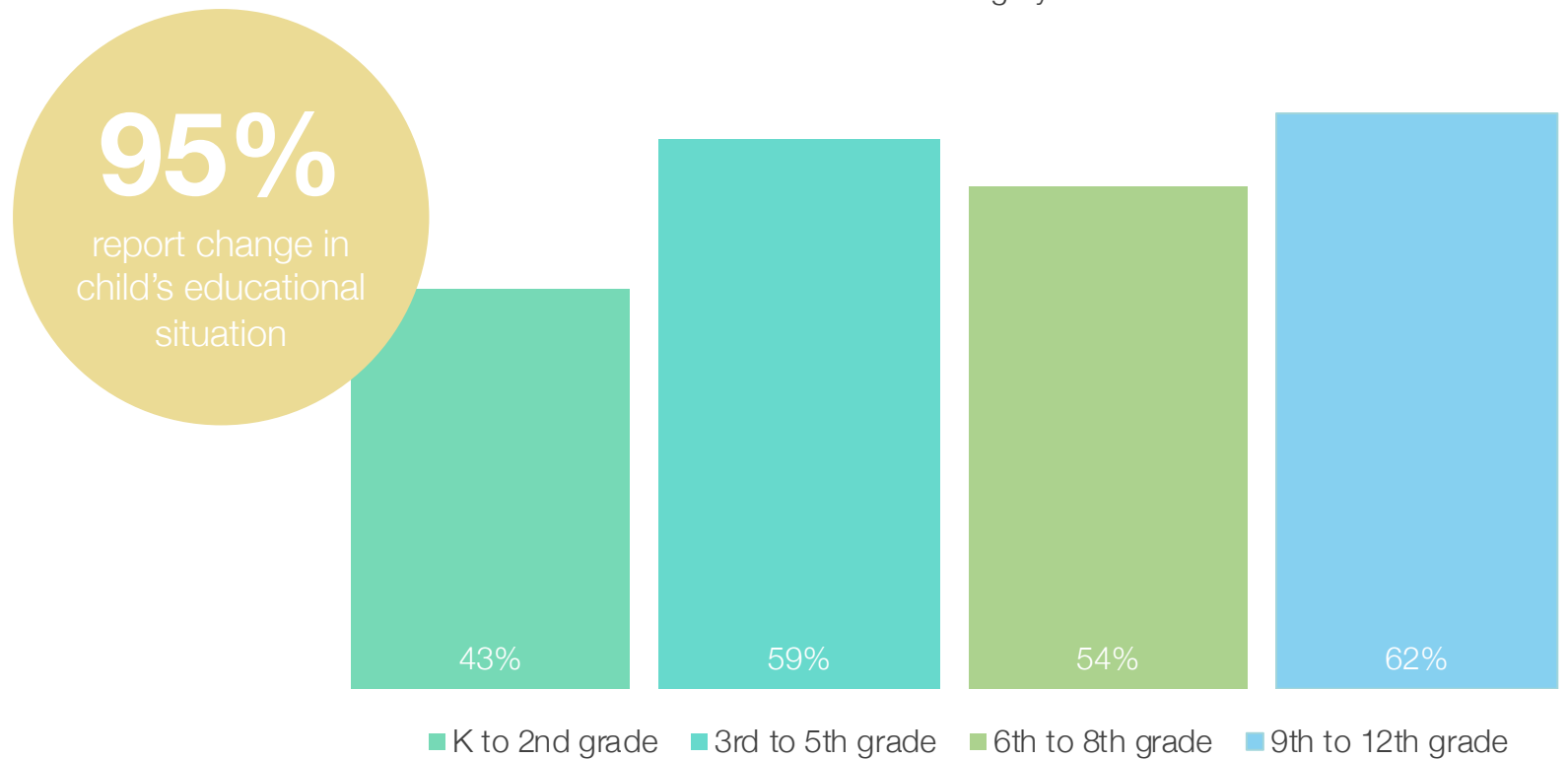
Government-mandated stay-at-home or quarantine order



Which of the following best describes the state of the coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak in your community right now? N=2,032

The majority of parents of school-aged children reported that their child was using distance learning online.

At the time of the survey, virtually all parents of school-aged children reported a change in their child's educational situation due to Covid-19.



My child is currently using distance learning. N=1020

⋮ **Challenges and Frustrations** ⋮ of Distance Learning

Families, already under immense pressure from exposure to Covid-19 and the economic fallout of the pandemic, found themselves in a unique position of providing full-time childcare as well as supporting their children with online distance learning during the disrupted school year.



Parents' waking hours are now filled with device shuffling, Wi-Fi connectivity, learning how to navigate video conferencing apps, brushing up on algebra to assist their child with homework, balancing schoolwork support with their own work or job search, and finding the space for all the members of the household to get their needs met - on top of all the other routine parenting responsibilities.

This has been a frustrating experience for many families.





I have to homeschool my 4 children, and I still have a full-time job as does my partner. I work, and now I technically have a part-time job of teaching (for which I receive absolutely no compensation for). We are both essential workers and there are no daycare for children.

MOTHER OF 9-YEAR-OLD GIRL

One in two parents report that online distance learning has been a frustrating experience for their family.

Frustrations are higher among...

- Parents of elementary-school children (65%)
- Parents of students with special needs (61%)

Three-quarters of parents of children doing distance learning say their child has gotten frustrated with online distance learning during the past week.

51%

say distance learning has been frustrating for their family

75%

say their child got frustrated with distance learning

Inadequate technology has been a major source of stress

- 37%** Nearly four in 10 parents have made a tech purchase or upgraded their wi-fi connection because of the outbreak
- 30%** Three in 10 parents report that their internet connection has not been sufficient to meet all of their needs for work and school
- 21%** Two in 10 of parents say that having adequate technology devices or services at home for school and work needs has caused them a lot or tremendous amount of stress

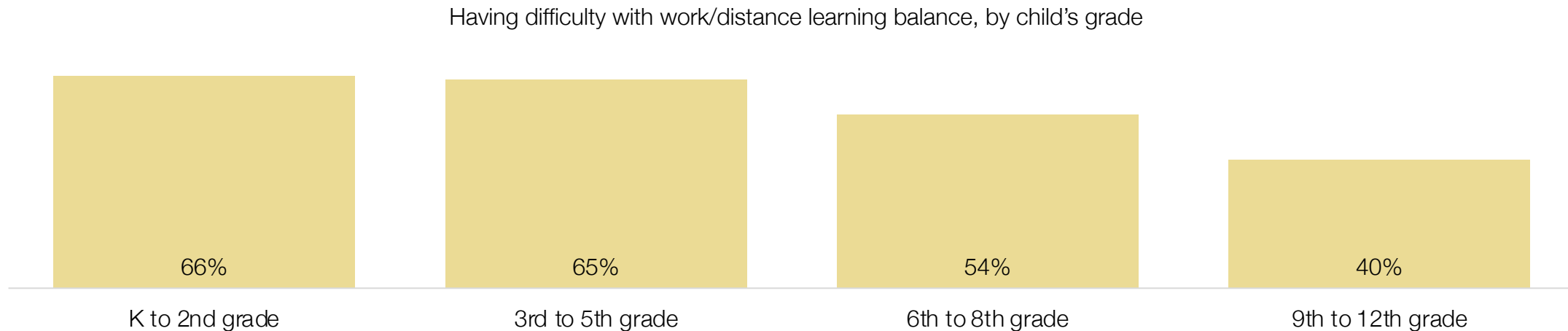
64%

say their child got frustrated with technology

Two-thirds of parents report that their child has gotten frustrated with technology (poor Internet connection or how to use computers) during the past week

For many parents, it's a struggle to juggle their own work and their child's online schooling

One in two parents (50%) agree that it has been difficult to simultaneously manage their child's online distance learning and parents' work from home. It is especially difficult for parents of elementary-school children.



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: It has been difficult to simultaneously manage my child's online distance learning and parents' work from home? N=1020

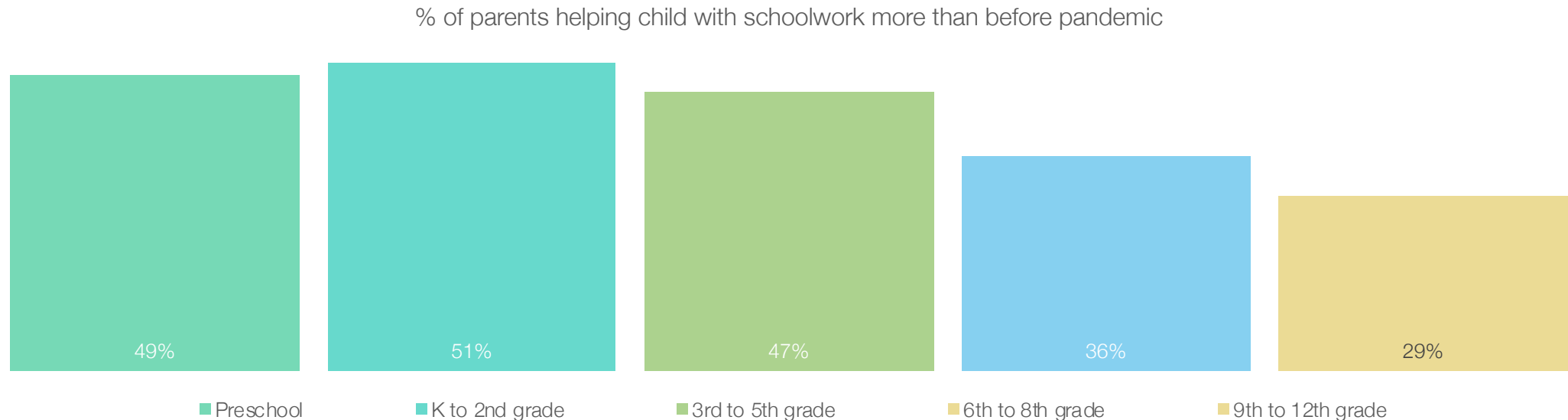


Distance learning is the main issue. It's confusing and expects parents to know how to teach our children. If I wanted to be a teacher, I would have made a career out of it. Think I should get college credits for this.

MOTHER OF 10-YEAR-OLD BOY

Nearly four in 10 parents report that they are helping their kids with schoolwork more now than before COVID-19.

Parents of elementary-school children are more involved than parents of middle or high school students.



How much would you say you are currently helping your child with their schoolwork compared to before the coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak affected your community? N=1747



We are trying to do a sufficient job of helping our daughter with her online classes, which sounds easier than it actually is.

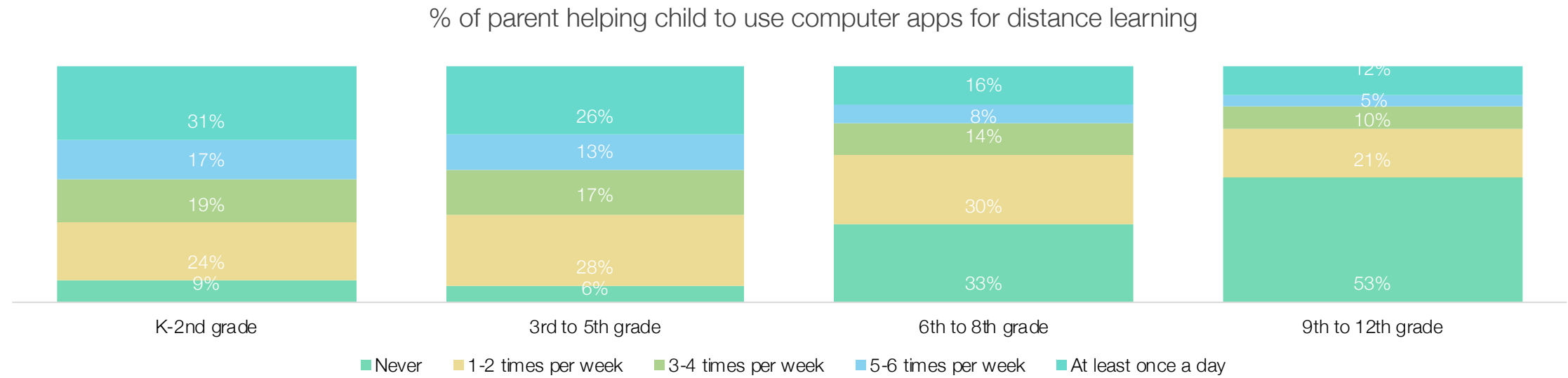
MOTHER OF 9-YEAR-OLD GIRL

Parents' new responsibility: in-house tech support

Elementary school students require much more tech support from parents for distance learning than middle and high school students: 42% of parents provided tech support nearly every day in the past week.

64%

Two thirds of parents helped their kids to use computer apps for distance learning at least once in the past week



Q38r1 During the past week, how often did you help your child to learn how to use computer apps for distance learning . N=980

Appreciation for Teachers and Schools

Despite their frustrations with distance learning, the overwhelming majority of parents give educators high marks for keeping their kids on track with their learning goals.

More than three-quarters of parents believe that distance learning has allowed their child to keep up with their learning goals.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement, "Distance learning has allowed my child to keep up with his/her learning goals." N=1020

78%

say distance learning
helped child to keep
up with learning goals



Students who have the highest educational needs are not being left behind.

Parents of students who have Individualized Learning Plans (IEP) are significantly more likely to report that distance learning has allowed their child to keep up with their learning goals.

83%

say distance learning helped child with IEP to keep up with learning goals

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement, "Distance learning has allowed my child to keep up with his/her learning goals." N=1020

Respect and appreciation for teachers has grown during the time of distance learning.

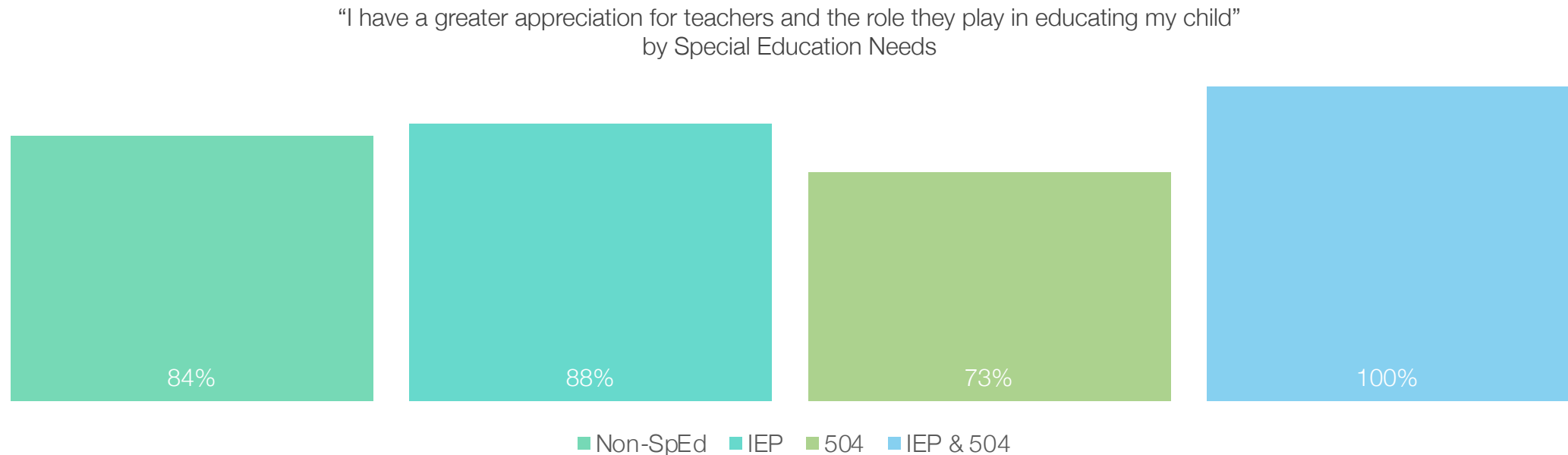
More than eight in 10 parents report that based on their recent experience with their child's distance learning, they have a greater appreciation for teachers and the role they play in educating their child.

85%

report greater appreciation for teachers

Based on our recent experience with my child's distance learning, I have a greater appreciation for teachers and the role they play in educating my child. N=1020

Parents of students with special education needs express the highest level of appreciation for teachers based on their experience with distance learning



Based on our recent experience with my child's distance learning, I have a greater appreciation for teachers and the role they play in educating my child. N=1020

The majority of parents are highly satisfied with their child's educators

Percent of parents rating as **excellent/very good**

- 65% Their child's school
- 60% The parent-teacher relationship at their child's school
- 60% The support their child gets from their school community

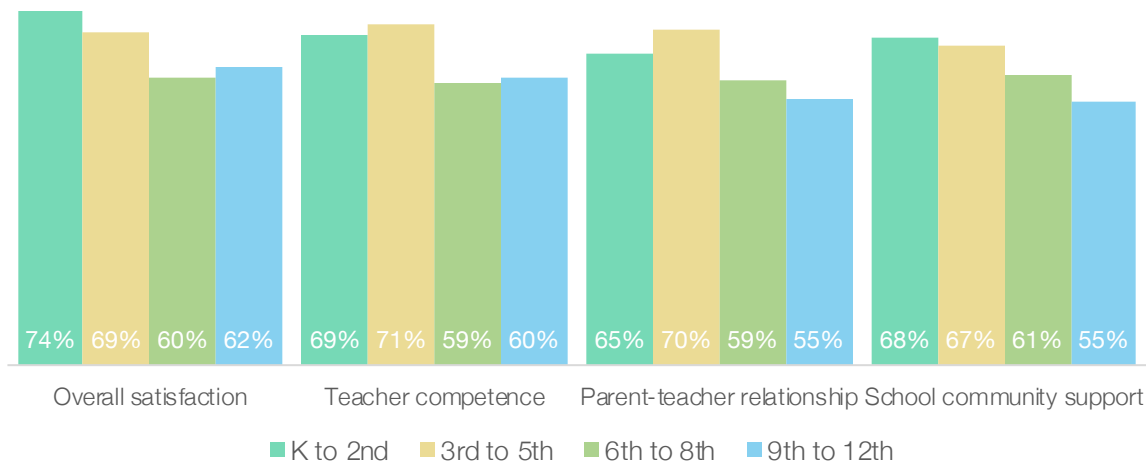
How would rate the following? N=1128

63%
rate highly
competence and
quality of their child's
teachers

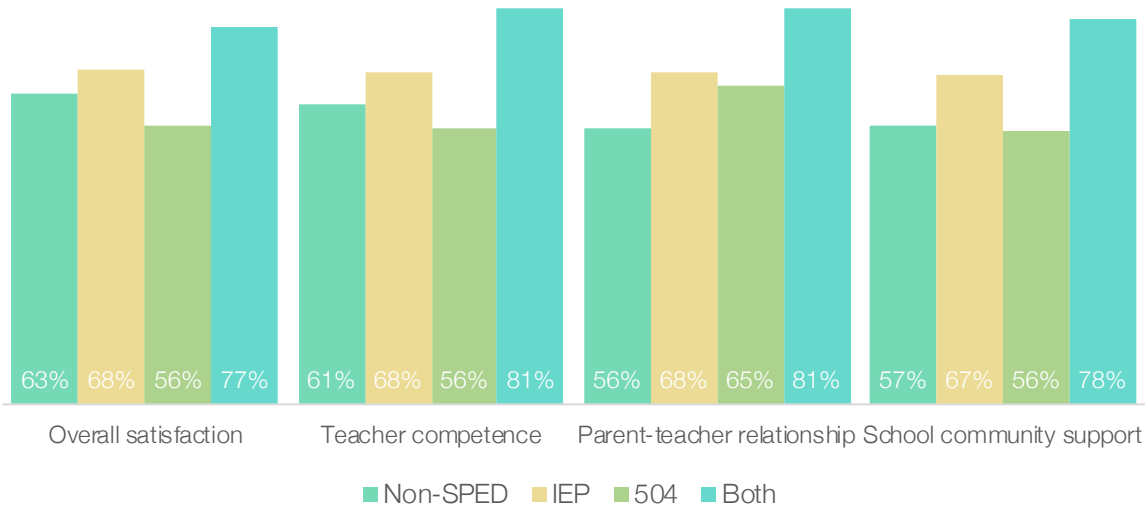


School satisfaction is highest among parents of elementary school and special education students

Parents rating as excellent/very good, by grade level



Parents rating as excellent/very good, by special education status



How would rate the following? N=1128

Virtually all parents agree that their child is well respected and cared for by their teachers

93%

of parents believe that their child is well-respected by their teachers

90%

of parents believe that their child's teachers really care about their child

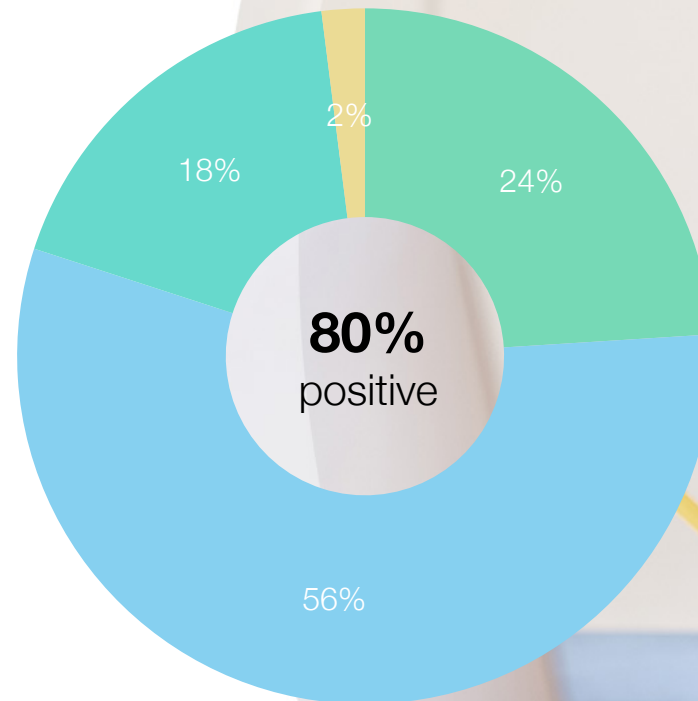
How much do you agree with the following statements: "My child is well-respected by his/her teachers;" "My child's teachers really care about him/her" % agree N=1550

Teens' Experiences with Distance Learning

Eight in 10 teens have had a positive experience with online distance learning.

Experience with distance learning

- Very positive
- Somewhat positive
- Somewhat negative
- Very negative

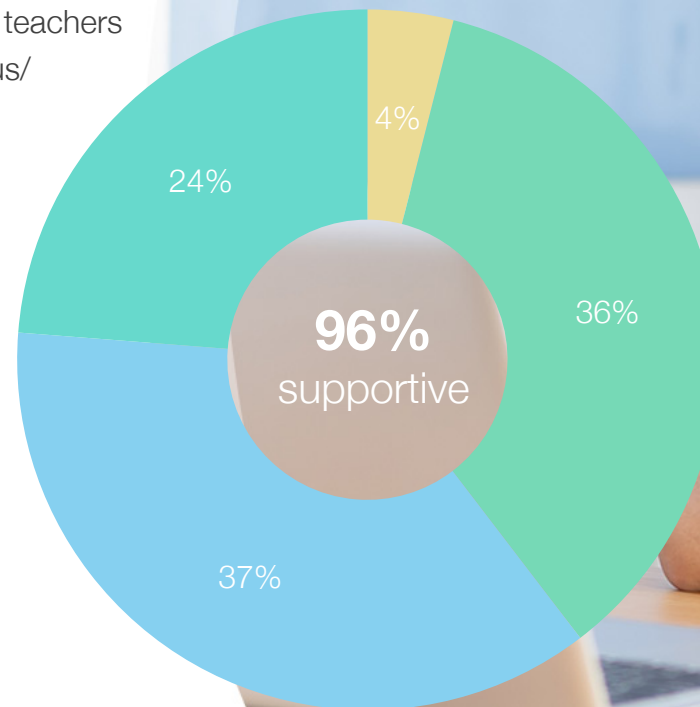


Overall, how would you describe your experience with your online distance learning (that is doing your schoolwork from home) during the current coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak? N=538

Six in 10 teens report that their teachers have been very or extremely supportive during the COVID-19 outbreak.

How supportive have your teachers been during the coronavirus/ COVID-19 outbreak?

- Not at all
- Somewhat supportive
- Very supportive
- Extremely supportive



How supportive have your teachers been during the coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak? N=894

85% of teens report that they have more respect for teachers and the role they play in their education as a result of their experience with distance learning

85%
of teens have greater
respect for teachers

How much do you agree with the following statement, "Based on my recent experience with distance learning, I have more respect for teachers and the role they play in my education." % agree, N=538









Teens gave positive ratings to their schools’ efforts to mitigate the disruption of the school year due to Covid-19

% of teens rating their school as excellent/very good/good...

Helping them continue their education through online distance learning	79%
Providing students with equipment they need (laptops, tablets) for online distance learning	72%
Allowing them to continue their education at your own pace	76%
Helping them to learn how to use distance learning technology	76%
Providing them with live video-call classes (via Zoom, Skype, Google Hangouts or other apps)	73%
Communicating the school’s plans for the remainder of the school year	74%
Making them feel optimistic about their future	71%
Providing emotional support to students	64%
Providing guidance on how to transition to next year’s grade or college	63%
Helping them maintain a sense of normalcy during difficult times	67%

How would you rate your school on how it does each of the following during the current coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak? N=852

Nine out of 10 teens have used technology for educational purposes during the pandemic, with Zoom and Google Classroom the most commonly used apps

	Teen Users	Rating Excellent/Very Good
	47%	56%
 Google Classroom	46%	60%
 Google Meet	19%	58%
	35%	65%
	19%	71%
 KHAN ACADEMY	17%	60%

Which of the following technologies, websites or apps have you used for your learning or educational purposes during the current coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak? N=894

How would you rate the quality of the technologies, websites or apps you have used for your learning or educational purposes during the current coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak? N=894



Nearly 9 in 10 teens report that the increasing availability of computers and digital technology has had a positive impact on their learning

88%

report positive
impact of digital
technology on
learning

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The increasing availability of computers and digital technology has had a positive impact on my learning." % agree N=894

⋮ **Looking Ahead:**

⋮ Parents' and Teens' Hopes and Anxieties

The forced separation from schools has brought to the fore the essential role that schools and educators play in the lives of families.

While parents and teens appreciate their educators' efforts at distance learning as a stopgap measure, they are anxious to resume their traditional, in-person schooling.



Nearly 9 in 10 teens say...

- 85% They miss going to school
- 84% They miss seeing their teachers in person
- 88% They miss seeing friends in person

88%

of teens say they learn
best in a classroom
setting with a teacher
and other students

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your experience with online distance learning while your school is closed because of coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreak? Strongly/Somewhat Agree N=538



I miss my friends, my school and my school soccer team that I play on that has had its season cancelled. I just want my routine back.

16-YEAR-OLD BOY

A significant number of parents are worried about the long-term effects of school closings on their child's academic progress

Nearly on in two parents believe that school closings will negatively affect their child's academic performance for years to come.

Parents of children with Individualized Learning Plans are more concerned about the impact of closings (56%)

Nearly two in five parents are worried about their child's academic performance or school progress

How much do you agree with the following statement: school closings during the current health crisis will negatively affect my child's academic performance for years to come N=1020
How worried are you about your child's academic performance/school progress N=1020

47%

of parents worry about negative effects of school closing

38%

of parents worry about child's school progress



My kids are definitely learning less in school. They are no longer doing extracurriculars as they should. We had to cancel spring break. We may have to cancel summer vacation as well.

MOTHER OF 13-YEAR-OLD BOY



My daughter learned better in a classroom setting. She has a lot of stress related to this.

MOTHER OF 18-YEAR-OLD GIRL

Teens are also concerned about falling behind

Nearly two thirds of teens worry that their academic performance will be negatively affected by school closings

60%

of teens worry about negative effects of school closing

How much do you agree with the following statement: I worry that my academic performance will be negatively affected by school closings. % agree N=538



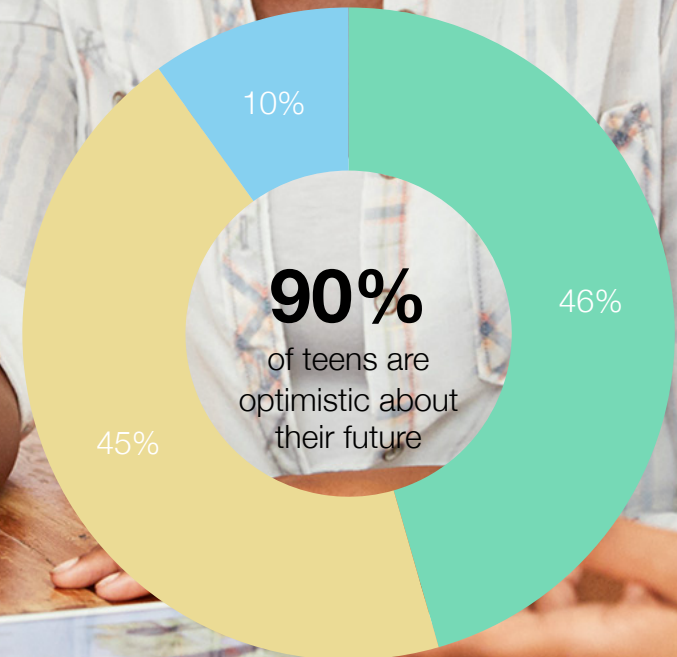
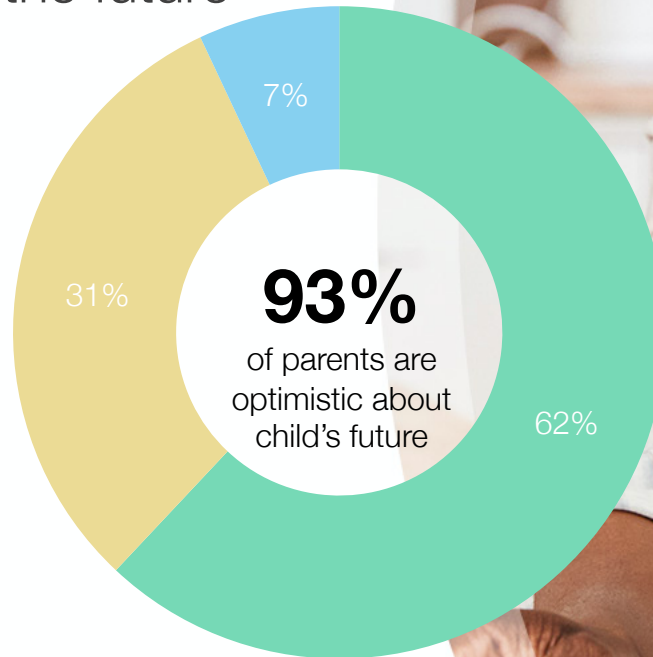
I am not really learning, especially retaining, things via digital learning. I miss going to school and seeing my friends in person and miss attending my Robotics team meetings as well as the competitions that have been cancelled. But I like Mom's cooking better than school lunches.

15-YEAR-OLD BOY

Even though parents and teens are anxious about the effects of interrupted schooling, they remain optimistic about the future

I am optimistic about my/my child's future

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree




How much do you agree with the following statement: I am optimistic about my child's/ my future.

Parents N=2032; Teens N=538



School has been closed since mid-March. I miss my friends, school and my sports. I really miss playing on my teams. I just want to get back to school. I'm done with this stuff.

14-YEAR-OLD BOY



Fluent is a consulting firm specializing in research that informs the development of public policy, educational programs, media and technology focused on children's education, health and wellbeing. We have applied rigorous and innovative research solutions in service of promoting children's access to and quality of education, and gender equality in the U.S. and in over 70 countries around the world.

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