

In Summer 2020, we set off to understand New Jersey parents' perceptions and concerns about remote learning in the spring and their expectations for the 2020-21 school year. Our focus groups and statewide survey explored current mindsets and potential actions that could help parents to support their children's success in school.

We found that:

- ★ *Even with deep concerns about safety, loss of social interactions, and a negative impact on academics due to COVID-19, parents remain both hopeful and grateful.*
- ★ *Like parents nationally, NJ parents have an inflated perception of their child's grade level achievement.*
- ★ *The digital divide is a persistent problem.*
- ★ *Parents have higher expectations for how distance learning will go this fall than they did last spring.*
- ★ *Parents feel more connected to their child's education and as a result, want to be more engaged and informed in the new school year.*



*"Parents" encompasses parents and guardians

PARENT MINDSETS IN THE COVID-19 ERA

Parents' top concern is safety, followed by the social and educational impact of COVID on their children:

- 76% are worried schools may not be able to provide a safe environment for in-person learning.
- 68% are worried about their child missing important social interactions at school or with friends.
- 66% are worried school closures/changes will have a negative impact on their child's education.

Almost half of NJ parents (48%) believe their child learned most or all of what they would have in a normal year last spring, but concern for the fall remains:

- 68% believe grades last spring reflected completion rather than content mastery; and
- Only 41% believe their child learned just as much at home as they would have if school was in-person.

Even after parent engagement reached new heights with remote learning, parents maintained an inflated sense of their child's achievement.

- **93%** of NJ parents report that their child is at or above grade level in math. In reality, **45%** of NJ students are at or above grade level in math.*
- **91%** of NJ parents report that their child is at or above grade level in reading. In reality, **58%** of NJ students are at or above grade level in English Language Arts.*

*2019 NJSLA for NJ 3-10 grades

Access to connectivity and devices – as well as technical support – created barriers that will continue into the new school year.

- About one-third of parents said their child did not have the technology needed for remote schooling; African American and Hispanic

families were missing technology at higher rates than white families. (39% respectively compared to 30% of white families)

- 40% of parents overall and 45% of African American parents reported their child was not able to complete all required learning activities following school closures last spring.
- Digital literacy and confusion about lessons served as primary barriers to participation.

PARENT ACTIONS FOR THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

While parents gave schools the benefit of the doubt last spring, they expect much more this fall.

- 89% expect online access to assignments, materials, and resources.
- 87% expect to see data about how their child is doing academically in the fall.
- 83% expect tools to help their child with learning at home.

Parents feel more connected to their child's teachers and are activated to be more involved and informed.

- 64% reported that they have a much better understanding of learning expectations (70% for African American parents and 68% for Hispanic parents).
- 86% are likely to find more time to talk to their child about daily assignments.
- 87% are likely to get a better understanding of grade level expectations.
- 82% are likely to seek a better understanding of their child's academic standing.

Parents see the need for a fall benchmark of student learning.

- 73% see its value to inform instruction and help parents better support learning at home.
- 70% believe it could help identify students' academic starting points after remote learning.

Parents would appreciate tools for collaborating with teachers to support their child.

- An overwhelming majority of parents would value a tool that gives academic information for their child and can be used to develop a personalized plan with the teacher for the new school year.
- Visit www.weraisenj.org/NJParents/Tool for a customizable parent-teacher planning tool for elementary and middle school students.

Please share these insights with your networks and contact us with your ideas to put this data into action.

For more information please visit www.belearninghero.org/NJParents or www.weraisenj.org/NJParents or contact communications@learningheroes.org.



ABOUT LEARNING HEROES

Learning Heroes supports parents and guardians as their child's most effective education advocate. Using key insights from five years of qualitative and quantitative parent research, we work with state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), education nonprofits, parent organizations, civil rights groups, faith based organizations, businesses, and many others, to reach and engage parents with free, research based tools, resources, and communications in English and Spanish. Through these organizations, in 2019, Learning Heroes reached more than 27 million parents, and engaged nearly 4 million with our content. Learning Heroes is a project of the New Venture Fund. For more information, visit www.belearninghero.org.

METHODOLOGY

Statewide representative survey of 500 K-12 New Jersey parents with children in public school conducted online from July 24th-August 2nd, 2020, in English and Spanish with additional oversamples of African American and Hispanic parents.

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