

A YEAR THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING: LEARNING IN A PANDEMIC



The Pearson and Connections Academy Parent Pulse Report: March 2021

A year ago, COVID-19 forced parents and their children to abruptly shift to “emergency remote learning” while simultaneously juggling quarantines and new ways of working while worrying about loved ones. A new Parent Pulse Report examines the past year and finds that amid a year of complex challenges, American parents found positive and unexpected benefits to living and learning during the pandemic.

Among the top findings:

Parents see a future with online learning: When asked about their “ideal vision” for school in the future, parents were almost split: 47% love their bricks and mortar school, but 43% raised their hand for either full-time online or hybrid (a mix of in-person and online) school; 10% chose homeschooling. Most parents agree their child is getting good grades while learning online (81%) and about 60% will consider staying with online school even after the pandemic is over. **Almost eighty percent of parents agree that online education should be used during emergencies including snow days.**

43% want more flexible options powered by technology (full-time online or hybrid school)



47% prefer traditional school where students go to a physical building



Almost 80% of parents agree that online education should be used during emergencies including snow days

10% voted for traditional homeschooling

Parents are concerned about learning loss and social isolation; but the majority believe most kids will “bounce back quickly” and with valuable new skills: While parents are concerned about their children losing learning (66%) and regressing socially (65%), approximately 77% of parents believe that kids will “bounce back quickly,” and with new beneficial skills like self-sufficiency (79%), growing resilience (78%), and competencies for the future of work (85%).

The Skills Children Are Gaining:



Families got closer, and men took a more active role in their children's education: Parents find juggling work/school at home stressful (68%), but an overwhelming number of parents report that their families have gotten closer (84%), while 84% of men in the household reported increased participation in their children's education (compared to 68% of women). Seventy-six percent of parents expressed that supporting their child's learning at home was "gratifying" and 74% will "miss their children" when it's time to go back to traditional school. Still, 71% of parents agree their child needs a lot of support with online learning.

Attitudes About Home Life:



84% report that their families have gotten closer
84% of men in the household reported increased participation in their children's education (compared to 68% of women)



76% expressed that supporting their child's learning at home was "gratifying"



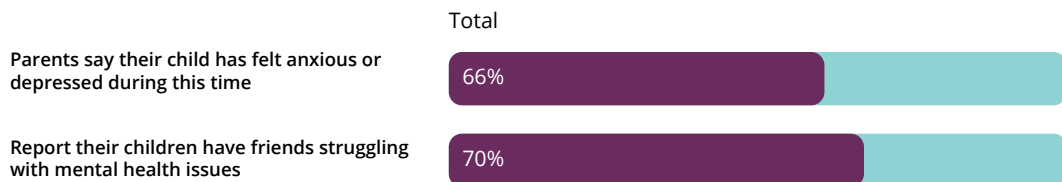
Still, 71% of parents agree their child needs a lot of support with online learning

Recognition that women who left careers to take care of their children during the pandemic, low-income families and children of color will have a hard time regaining ground: Seventy-three percent of parents acknowledge that low-income families have been hit hard and may struggle to "catch up," while children of color will pay a disproportionate price for the school disruptions (65%). Parents also agree that women who left their careers to take care of their children during the pandemic will suffer a longer-term toll (79%).

Teachers and parents hit their stride with online learning: Eighty percent of parents are satisfied with their child's education during the pandemic and say schools have communicated their response plans well. After a year, parents are more comfortable with online learning (80%) and say teachers have gotten better at online teaching (82%). Eight out of ten parents agree that closing schools was the right response to the pandemic.

The pre-pandemic mental health issues impacting young people continue to be a problem as 66% percent of parents say their child has felt anxious or depressed during this time. Nearly 70% report their children have friends struggling with mental health issues.

See *Pew Research Study about Teens and Mental Health*. [Pew Research Study](#)



High schoolers have pushed pause on typical teen rights-of-passage with parents reporting their high school students are not getting their driver's licenses (49%), dating (67%), or getting jobs (50%). Forty-two percent of high schoolers are reevaluating their college plans.

Parents and children like the flexibility and safety of online learning, but kids miss their friends and can struggle to stay focused. Flexibility and safety have long been popular reasons for enrollment in full-time online schools like Connections Academy. Parents report that children also gravitate to these “likes” with the remote learning put place for the crisis. As for dislikes, parents say socializing with friends and staying focused are among their children’s top challenges.



- 45%** like being able to work at their own pace
- 45%** like the safety of working at home
- 42%** like being able to work wherever they want



- 44%** find staying motivated challenging
- 43%** find staying focused challenging
- 42%** find socializing with friends challenging

Majority of parents are open to rethinking the structure of school: A year with remote school has parents rethinking the way children have traditionally attended school with 77% of parents open to a new day and time structure and 57% open to a year-round calendar. In keeping with recent research about children and sleep, 68% of parents support starting school later in the morning, after 9am.

Parents expressed mixed emotions about how the introduction of the vaccine will impact what’s next for school: Fifty-nine percent of parents think a vaccine should be required of students returning to physical classrooms and 80% think teachers need to be prioritized for the vaccine. About six in ten parents will keep kids learning at home until their child is vaccinated.

Methodology

Pearson and Connections Academy conducted the study in partnership with Dynata to provide parents, teachers, and school systems with insight into how online learning during the pandemic -- one year later -- has evolved. 1,052 K-12 parents in the US participated in the poll which was in field from February 18, through February 26, 2021. The survey was deployed to ensure sample consistency with the first wave of the survey launched April 17-20 2020 (released May).

[Read the 2020 report](#)

Detailed Results

1. Please select what most closely represents your child's experience attending school in the current 2020-2021 school year:	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents (W2)	1,052
Online only	38%
Majority online	19%
Half online, half in-person	24%
Majority in-person	9%
In-person only	10%

2. When do you anticipate that your child's schooling will no longer be disrupted by COVID-19 and will return to its "normal" pre-pandemic routine?	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents (W2)	1,052
Before the end of the current school year	16%
By Fall 2021	42%
By Jan 2022	18%
By Fall 2022	17%
Our schooling was not disrupted	7%

3. Which of the following most closely matches your ideal vision for your child's school environment moving forward?	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents (W2)	1,052
A traditional school model where students go to a physical school building every day.	47%
A hybrid school model where students split their time between a physical school building and online learning at home (or another flexible, supervised location)	22%
An online school model where students learn online with flexibility in terms of time, location and pace -- from any supervised location.	21%
A traditional homeschool experience.	10%

4. Thinking about you or your family's adjustment to online education over the past 12 months, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? Showing % who agree (strongly + somewhat agree)	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Child's experience attending school NOT in-person only in the current 2020-2021 school year (W2)	951
I feel more comfortable with online learning now than I did when the pandemic began.	80%
My child is enjoying learning online more than they did when the pandemic began.	69%
My child learns well online.	75%
My child is getting good grades learning online	81%
My child needs a lot of my support with online education	71%
With our children learning at home, our family has gotten closer	84%
I will miss having my children at home when school goes back to in-person.	74%
My child has managed the transition to online learning better than I have	79%

Detailed Results

5. Looking at the following list, please indicate which of the following you believe your child's school is currently providing well? Showing % who agree (strongly + somewhat agree)	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents	1,052
Offer a quality academic experience	87%
Prepare my child for college	82%
Prepare my child for the future	85%
Offer a positive social experience	84%
Teach the digital skills, like virtual collaboration and virtual communication, needed to live and work in a technology driven world	88%
Teach soft skills like creativity, time management and critical thinking, needed for future of school and work	84%
Teach my child how to interact with many different types of people	83%
Provide caring and quality teachers	90%
Provide my child a sense of confidence	85%

7. High schoolers are facing additional disruptions during the pandemic. How much do you disagree/agree with the following? Showing % who agree (strongly + somewhat agree)	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Child is in grades 9 - 12 (W2)	351
The college search has become more difficult.	50%
My child has had to postpone getting a driver's license.	49%
I won't let my child get a part-time job due to health safety concerns.	50%
My child is not dating.	67%
My child is an athlete or performing artist and can't demonstrate his/her skill to college recruiters.	50%
My child is considering postponing college for a year or two.	42%
My child's career aspirations have changed.	46%

6. Thinking about how government and school districts are responding to the pandemic, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about school? Showing % who agree (strongly + somewhat agree)	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents	1,052
The federal government is doing good job helping schools respond to the pandemic.	64%
My local school district has a well-coordinated response to the pandemic	78%
I understand the criteria or rationale for opening or closing my child's school	82%
My child's school communicates well with parents about school disruptions and safety issues	81%
My child's school is taking appropriate protective measures when in-person schooling occurs (mask mandates, staggered schedules)	83%
I have confidence in the decisions being made by my child's school or school district to keep my child safe	78%
I believe it's still necessary to keep most schools closed	65%
Teachers need to be prioritized for vaccines	80%
Schools should mandate that students receive the COVID-19 vaccine in order to return to full time, in-person schooling.	59%

Detailed Results

8. Thinking about the pandemic's long term impact on society to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following: Showing % who agree (strongly + somewhat agree)	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents	1,052
By the end of the pandemic, many children will have regressed socially	80%
By the end of the pandemic, many children will be several months or more behind in their learning	82%
This generation will become more resilient because of the adversity faced during the pandemic	78%
Most children will be able to bounce back socially quickly	78%
Most children will be able to bounce back academically quickly	76%
The education disruptions during the pandemic will have long term effects on our society	83%
The education disruptions during the pandemic will leave lasting mental health effects on this generation	77%
The education disruption during the pandemic will have lasting effects on our economy	82%
Children from low income families may never be able to catch up	73%
Children of color will pay a disproportionate price for educational disruptions	65%
There will be long term effects on children that we can't even imagine right now	80%
There will be a long-term toll on working women who have had to leave the work force to care for children during the pandemic	79%

9. In thinking about how students attend and interact with school, to what extent do you agree with the following? Showing % who agree (strongly + somewhat agree)	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents	1,052
Summer vacation doesn't make sense anymore - students should go to school all year long with more breaks versus a block of vacation over the summer	57%
School should start later in the morning (9 am or later)	68%
Online learning offers a good opportunity to rethink the day and time structure of school	77%
A traditional daily school schedule works well for my child	87%

10. Thinking about the future and the use of technology for your child's education, to what extent do you agree with the following statements? Showing % who agree (strongly + somewhat agree)	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents	1,052
More students will attend school virtually (e.g., online) instead of attending a traditional school within ten years	81%
In the future, schools should use online education instead of cancelling school for emergencies (snow, bad weather, etc.)	80%
The use of technology for school right now will make my child more prepared for the demands of their future job, like teleworking or virtual collaboration	85%
The pandemic has changed education forever	84%
I like the flexibility that online learning provides	79%

Detailed Results

11. Thinking about your child's school experience to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: Showing % who agree (strongly + somewhat agree)	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents	1,052
My child's generation faces more serious problems in school than I did	83%
My child is more self-sufficient than I was at their age	73%
I believe that schools should do more to teach digital skills, like virtual collaboration and virtual communication	85%
The education system works well for the current generation	71%
I believe that schools should do more to teach soft skills (e.g., teamwork, creativity, critical thinking) necessary for life and work	89%
My child has suffered learning loss during the pandemic	66%
My child has regressed socially during the pandemic	65%

12. To what degree do the following circumstances affect your family's stress levels? Showing % who agree (causes some stress + great deal of stress)	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents	1,052
Managing the health of a loved one with COVID-19	54%
Coping with the loss of a loved one due to COVID-19	55%
Having a family member who is an essential and/or emergency worker	57%
Explaining or coping with social justice issues	57%
Personally experiencing an act of racism	50%
Worrying that my child is falling behind in school	67%
Experiencing the loss of a job or income.	58%
Having to balance the whole family learning/working at home	68%
Having to adjust my job to deal with education disruptions	58%
Not having enough food in the house	54%
Scheduling a vaccination	53%
Dealing with friends or family who have different views on mask wearing, social distancing and vaccines	62%
Not being able to see extended family members or other loved ones	69%

Detailed Results

13. Thinking about the use of technology during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak for your child's education, to what extent do you agree with the following statements? Showing % who agree (strongly + somewhat agree)	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents	1,052
My child's school is using technology and online resources well	87%
Technology is helping my child be more self-sufficient	79%
I'm worried that my child is on social media rather than completing their online assignments	65%
Even after the pandemic, students should have technology-enabled school options like online school	83%
We have altered or suspended rules in our household about the use of technology, such as limits on screen time, restrictions on social media sites or restrictions about when and where you can use devices	73%
My child's teachers have gotten better at teaching online since the start of the pandemic.	82%
There is too much time on Zoom or other synchronous online classrooms.	67%
Technology like laptops and wi-fi hot spots have been available for students in need	84%

14. Why are you not satisfied with your child's education during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak?	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Not satisfied in child's education during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak	209
My child is not engaged	50%
The school system/teachers are not organized	36%
My child has too much free time	25%
Confusing schedules	24%
My child is not getting enough attention	39%
My child is not getting enough social interaction with other students	56%
My child doesn't have the right setting to learn at home (i.e. a quiet workplace, desk, etc.)	23%
I don't feel like my child is learning what he/she should be	64%
Teachers are giving too much work, causing stress for my child	25%
Teachers are providing "busy work"	30%

Detailed Results

15. Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, have you found yourself more or less involved in your child's education?	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents	1,052
Much more involved	45%
Somewhat more involved	31%
No change in my involvement	21%
Somewhat less involved	3%
Much less involved	1%

16. Which of the following best describes how that involvement has made you feel?	Total Parents (W2)
Base: More involved in child's education due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak	792
Gratifying (nice to be involved)	76%
Not prepared and/or stressed (another task I need to focus on)	24%

17. How satisfied have you been with your child's education during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak? Showing % who agree (strongly + somewhat agree)	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents	1,052
Very satisfied	39%
Somewhat satisfied	41%
Not very satisfied	13%
Not at all satisfied	7%

18. Thinking about the current state of education and Coronavirus (COVID-19), to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? Showing % who agree (strongly + somewhat)	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents	1,052
The closure of schools has been the right response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)	80%
The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has added to the anxiety and mental health issues facing today's students	85%
I will consider keeping my child in an online school even after the pandemic is over.	61%
I will keep my child learning at home until they are vaccinated.	61%
I think online learning will be a requirement for my child's education as the impacts of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak continue.	80%
Online learning is an effective learning alternative during crisis situations like the Coronavirus (COVID-19)	83%
I'm more open to my child learning online at home than I previously was	77%

Detailed Results

19. Thinking about the potential negative impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak on your child, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? Showing % who agree (strongly + somewhat agree)	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents	1,052
The disruption of school has contributed to my child's stress, anxiety levels or mental health issues	69%
My child has friends or classmates who are struggling with mental health or anxiety issues right now	69%
My child has felt anxious or depressed during this time	66%
My child has missed a significant milestone or activity while schools have closed (graduation, award ceremony, prom, class trip/travel, etc.)	71%

20. Thinking about things that are challenging for your student while learning online, please select all that apply.	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents	1052
My child has not struggled	19%
Issues with the technology	28%
Understanding what was expected of them	26%
Connecting with teachers	32%
Staying focused	43%
Staying motivated	44%
Completing assignments on time	28%
Understanding new material	32%
Collaborating with peers	23%
Socializing with friends	42%

21. Thinking about the things your student enjoys about online learning, please select all that apply.	Total Parents (W2)
Base: Total Respondents	1052
Being able to work wherever they want (flexibility of learning location)	42%
Being able to work at their own pace (faster/slower than the rest of the class)	45%
Being able to work at non-traditional school times (flexibility of learning schedule)	37%
Collaborating online with classmates	24%
Using technology tools	42%
More one-on-one time with classmates and teachers	21%
More focus, fewer distractions	28%
Felt more in charge of their education	27%
Safety of learning at home	45%
No bullying	28%