

# POLL FINDINGS

## Poll of Michigan Parents Demonstrates Shortcomings and Inequities in Remote Learning Amid Pandemic

**W**hile the impact on student achievement due to the mass school closures and pivot to remote instruction amid the pandemic is yet unknown, findings from a new poll suggest Michigan parents have significant concerns about their children's virtual learning experience, with nearly half saying that the quality of teaching and instruction their children receive is worse.

The poll also sheds light on troubling disparities that are expected to worsen longstanding inequities in educational offerings for underserved students, especially as Black parents and parents of color are more likely to indicate that their child is participating in full-time remote learning.

The vast majority of parents reported concerns about their children's academic outcomes; however, parents of color are more likely to express concern about their child falling behind than White parents, a troubling finding that suggests the opportunity gap that already exists in our state may widen.

Overarchingly, parents believe the state should implement quality standards for remote learning and expect schools to communicate early and often about learning loss and how their child can catch up for the next grade.

### Recommendations to State Leaders

With less than half (45%) of Michigan public school parents stating that their child receives three or more hours per day of live online instruction from a teacher during remote learning, **a majority of parents agree that state leaders should...**

- ...have a plan to address learning loss and make sure students catch up to their current grade level (85%).
- ...set quality standards for virtual learning in the state to ensure students learning remotely are receiving quality online instruction (84%).
- ...should provide safe, free and voluntary in-person summer school for students that need to catch up (83%).

*Many staff and partners contributed to the research and development of this report, including: Executive Director Amber Arellano, Chief of Staff Mary Grech, Director of Communications Jennifer Mrozowski, Director of Policy and Research Tabitha Bentley, Data and Policy Analyst Riley Stone, Senior Data Consultant Jacqueline Gardner and Director of External Relations Brian Gutman. We are also grateful for the input and collaboration of our colleagues across the country including The Education Trust President and CEO John B. King, Jr. and Vice President for P-12, Policy and Practice at The Education Trust Ary Amerikaner and Associate Director for P-12 Analytics at The Education Trust Ivy Morgan.*



## KEY FINDINGS:

### Learning Loss

- **The vast majority of all parents, but particularly Black parents and parents of color, expressed concern about their child falling behind academically.**
  - 91% of Black parents and parents of color indicate concern about their child falling behind academically because of the pandemic, compared to 83% of White parents.
- **47% of all parents indicate they have received little or no information from their child's school about whether their child is suffering from learning loss or has fallen behind grade-level expectations as a result of schools being closed due to the pandemic last spring.**
- **Black parents and parents of color are more likely to have students learning remotely full-time compared to White parents.**
  - 81% of Black parents and 74% of parents of color indicate their child is participating in full-time remote learning, while 63% of White parents say their child is learning remotely full-time.
- **A few key components of remote learning, however, have had some benefit for students, according to Michigan parents.**
  - 40% say their ability to support their child's education is better.
  - 40% say their child's ability to learn at their own pace is better.

### Extended Learning Time

- **A majority of parents agree that state leaders should provide safe, free and voluntary in-person summer school for students that need to catch up (83%).**

### Virtual Instruction

- **Just over a third of parents (37%) rate remote learning as successful or extremely successful (ratings of 8-10 on a scale of 0-10).**
- **Parents identify several aspects of their child's education that are distinctively worse under remote learning compared to traditional in-person classes before the pandemic and school closures.**
  - 54% say their child's one-on-one time with teachers is worse.
  - 52% say their child's overall educational experience is worse.
  - 46% say their child's engagement and interest in schoolwork is worse.
  - 45% say the quality of teaching and instruction they receive is worse.

### Digital Access

- **While an overwhelmingly majority of parents indicate that providing resources to increase digital access would be helpful in navigating the coronavirus pandemic, significantly fewer parents say their student's school is actually doing so.**
  - 96% of parents indicate that lending mobile technology devices would be helpful, but only 62% of parents indicate their student's school is actually doing so.
  - 88% of parents indicate that providing free internet access would be helpful, but only 21% of parents indicate their student's school is actually doing so.
- **A majority of parents from low-income households are concerned about affording internet or losing internet access this school year compared to parents in higher income brackets.**
  - 62% of parents in the \$0-\$49,000 income bracket, 37% in the \$50,000-\$99,000 income bracket

and 37% in the \$100,000+ income bracket are concerned about affording internet or losing internet access this school year.

- **An alternative method to providing digital access to students could be to offer a safe place to do schoolwork and participate in virtual learning.**
  - While 86% of parents indicate that this would be helpful, only 18% of Black parents indicate their student’s school is actually doing so – compared to the 28% of White parents who indicate their student’s school is doing so.

### Early Childhood Education

- **No matter race nor income level, an overwhelming majority of Michigan parents support investing more public funds to expand access to quality, affordable childcare/preschool for Michigan families with young children (ages 0-4).**
  - 90% of White parents, 98% of Black parents and 94% of parents of color indicate support.
  - 95% of parents in the \$0-\$49,000 income bracket, 90% in the \$50,000-\$99,000 income bracket and 87% in the \$100,000+ income bracket indicate support.

**About this poll:** The Education Trust–Midwest partnered with Global Strategy Group to conduct an online (desktop and mobile) survey among 400 parents of children in Michigan public schools from December 10-16, 2020. The survey had a confidence interval of +/-4.9%. All interviews were conducted via web-based panel. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of parents are properly represented.



Photo by Allison Shelley for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action.