



National Parents Union: Coronavirus Impact Survey Findings Week #3: May 11–12, 2020

General wellbeing and children's education continue to be top concerns for parents of public school K-12 students.

- Consistent with previous weeks, worries about children missing important social interactions, someone in their family getting the coronavirus, and how school closures might affect children's education or readiness for the next grade top the list of parents' concerns.
- Nearly half of parents say they worry a lot or some about their children spending too much time on screens (49%) and how the current situation is affecting their children's mental health and emotional wellbeing (48%).
 - Parents of younger and older students alike share similar levels of concern about screen time. Fifty-two percent of parents with children in kindergarten or elementary school say they worry a lot or some, as do 55% of parents of junior high students and 47% of parents of high school students.
- While other issues rank higher, economic anxiety still affects a substantial share of parents. Four in 10 (40%) worry a lot or some about being able to make ends meet, and 12% say that losing a job or income is one of the greatest hardships they have faced due to the coronavirus outbreak. Forty-three percent say having more money to spend on necessities would be one of the most helpful things for them to have while coping with the crisis, making it one of the top responses to that question.
- Help keeping children engaged continues to top the list of things parents say would be most helpful to have in order to cope with the coronavirus crisis, with 53% giving that response. The share of parents saying more information about how to support their child's learning would be one of the most helpful things has risen from 28% at the end of April to 37% now. At the same time, the share saying it would be most helpful to have more tablets or computers in the house has dropped from 20% at the end of April to 9% now.

Most parents continue to express confidence in their own ability to help their children continue learning and rate their schools positively, though school ratings are slightly lower.

- About eight in 10 (81%) parents say they feel very or somewhat confident about being able to help their child continue learning while their school is closed.
- Most parents with a child whose school is closed say their school is doing an excellent or good job, though the share giving this positive rating is down slightly—65% this week compared to 74% at the end of April and 72% last week.

Parents continue to prioritize safety over getting students back to school.

- More than seven in 10 (71%) parents say schools should remain closed until they are certain there is no health risk, even if it means students fall farther behind.
- When asked who they trust most to establish and evaluate school safety procedures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in their children's schools, a 24% plurality of parents place their trust in the Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), followed by 13% who say they trust state public health officials most and 12% who trust local public health officials most.

- Many safety conditions for returning to school are viewed as absolutely necessary by substantial shares of parents, highlighting their overall high level of concern. Nearly half (46%) of parents would not feel safe sending their children back to school until no new cases of COVID-19 are being reported in their local area, and 43% say they would not send their children to school until a vaccine is available to the public.

Parents place highest importance on their children’s schools requiring students and staff who may have been exposed to COVID-19 to stay home for 14 days, sending out notices of potential exposure, having a full-time nurse or health worker at school, and providing technology for online learning.

- Eighty-one percent of parents say it is extremely or very important that their children’s schools require students and staff members who may have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 to stay home for 14 days before returning to school. Out of all measures, this is the most important to parents, and 56% say they would not send their children back to school without this happening.
- More than three quarters of parents place high importance on their children’s schools sending out notices to parents of students who may have been exposed to a student or staff member who has tested positive (79%), having a full-time nurse or health worker at school (76%), and providing all students with the technology needed for online learning at the beginning of the year (76%).
- Seven in 10 parents place high importance on schools providing face masks to all students and staff (70%) and limiting the number of students in common areas to maintain social distancing (70%).
- Measures to support academic and mental health needs are slightly lower priority, but still viewed as highly important by most parents. Sixty-five percent of parents say it is extremely or very important for their children’s schools to provide an individualized education plan for each student, and just as many (65%) say it is highly important that their schools provide mental and emotional health assessments and counseling for students and staff.
- There are notable differences by race, age, and party in views of the conditions necessary for a safe return to school, with parents of color, parents age 40 and older, and parents who identify as Democrats generally expressing more caution in their views.
 - For example, 52% of parents of color would not feel safe sending their children back to school until a COVID-19 vaccine is available, compared to 36% of white parents. Parents age 40 or older are more likely than younger parents to see that absolutely necessary (48% vs. 37%), and Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say that (53% vs. 40%).
 - Even on measures that most parents see as important, there are differences in perceived priority level. Eighty-two percent of parents of color place high importance on their children’s schools providing face masks, compared to 60% of white parents. Seventy-four percent of parents age 40 or older vs. 64% of younger parents see that as extremely or very important, and 77% of Democratic parents vs. 66% of Republican parents give that response.
 - Despite differing views on some measures, comparable majorities of all groups agree that is absolutely necessary for schools to require students and staff who many have been exposed to COVID-19 to stay home for 14 days before returning to school.