

# Minnesota PK-12 Distance Learning Survey

Experiences of Minnesota Educators:  
March-June 2020

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
+ HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
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# Context

What has now come to influence the daily lives of all Americans, the coronavirus or COVID-19, is thought to have arrived in the United States as early as December 2019 with the first cases being confirmed in the state of Washington in February 2020. The first confirmed cases in Minnesota were reported on March 6th, 2020 prompting Governor Walz to issue Executive Order 20-01 on March 13, 2020, declaring a peacetime emergency because of the pandemic. It would be only two more days until our PK-12 schools, which included preschool and adult basic education, would become part of the executive orders. On March 15, 2020, Governor Walz issued Executive Order 20-02, which directed schools to close to students and engage in an eight day planning period from March 18, 2020 until March 27, 2020. During this time, school and district staff were directed to report to work to construct continuity of education plans that would be delivered via distance learning. On March 25, 2020, the Governor's [Executive Order 20-19](#), authorized what came to be Distance Learning, which continued until the conclusion of the 2019-2020 school year.

As the state's land grant institution, The University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) saw a responsibility to gain feedback from the educators who were tasked with implementing distance learning to inform the University on how the College of Education and Human Development may be helpful in providing supports to PK-12 schools and share that feedback with the state as a whole. Dr. Kim Gibbons, Director of the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, and Dr. Katie Pekel from the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development led a team of collaborators from inside and outside the University to execute a survey to seek that feedback. This report is a summary of those findings.

Respondents completed the survey between May 27 and June 28, 2020. The significance of this window is that not only was it the end of the school year, a time when many educators reported being tired and relieved that distance learning, the focus of the survey, was over, but also this was a time of tremendous social unrest for the state of Minnesota. On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, an unarmed Black man was brutally killed by four Minneapolis police officers. The murder of George Floyd prompted protests and rioting, with the eventual need for Governor Walz to activate and deploy more than 7,000 National Guard Troops to the Twin Cities. The nation and the world watched Minneapolis and Saint Paul, and the protests and social unrest eventually spread across our country. The PK-12 educational system in Minnesota is known to have significant gaps in achievement among different racial groups. The significant social and emotional unrest following the murder of George Floyd, and what educators describe in their responses to this survey as inequitable opportunities for learning and supports amid distance learning are important contextual factors to understand when reading this report.

**“We were asked to change our whole way of teaching in a very short period of time with little to no direction given. We did our best. I feel we as educators did the best [we could] but I don't feel it was good enough.”**



# Key Findings

## > Relationships Matter

Educators' number one worry was relationship building and the ability to socially connect and engage with students and families. Educators cited:

- Concerns about successfully engaging students in distance learning this spring and being able to do so in the fall absent pre-established relationships.
- The inability to reach some students and families, which leads to concerns about a lack of equity in learning outcomes and the safety and well-being of their students.
- A desire to be part of the planning and to be heard by leaders.
- A strong need to collaborate among one another to support each other and students.

**“We were just on our way to 'blooming' as learners, readers, and our friendships were getting stronger. I am unsure how to build this bond if in the fall we are distance learning...”**

**“Relationships first. Think about the situation a student/family is in before assuming they are lazy/not trying.”**

## > Technology is Important

Technology was a significant concern for educators. It was the most frequently mentioned topic in the qualitative responses in the areas of needed supports and professional development. Educators cited:

- Hardware, internet connectivity, and tech support needs for students/families and teachers to facilitate equity.
- Basic and advanced training needs in tech-based learning platforms as well as professional development in creating engaging online learning.
- A need to reduce the multitude of online learning platforms within districts, which caused stress amongst educators and families.
- Training and tech support needs, like a helpline, for families with regards to the technology being used.

**“[I was] spending so much time and effort dealing with tech issues and helping parents navigate the learning process at ALL times of the day and evening.”**

## > Educators are Worried

Educators were significantly worried about many factors related to learning in the 2020-2021 school year, from how they will build relationships in distance learning to how they will be able to stay healthy in in-person learning.

### Students

- Educators reported great concern about whether they can meet students' needs academically, socially, and emotionally through distance learning. They were particularly worried about students receiving special education services, multilingual learners, and traditionally marginalized students.
- Educators were concerned about all that students have lost (e.g., social connections, access to essentials that schools often provide, and curricular opportunities that cannot be recreated online).

### Families

- Educators wanted to both engage with and support families, as well as receive support from families in holding students accountable.
- There was a great deal of empathy for everything families were juggling. Educators expressed concerns about whether or not families are getting enough support and how they could access support beyond the school system.

### Themselves

- Educators were apprehensive about the unknown and uncertainty; specifically about coming back to schools and getting sick or making family members sick, and of hybrid learning, where they believe they will have to teach both in person and online.
- There was a great deal of concern about continuing distance learning, as some reported they did not feel successful teaching in this format.

**“It's a lot to expect families who are already in trauma and worried on a number of levels to be co-teachers.”**

**“Families need the 'professional development' too to be able to understand how to assist their children in being successful. It shouldn't be just a matter of reteaching or helping the children complete the work. It is how to maximize their child's ability to use the platform successfully.”**

**“I feel really crappy at my job. I don't like to not be good at something....and I feel like I suck at distance learning.”**

**“There are just so many unknowns about next year that cause me to literally lose sleep at night.”**

## > Learning Occurred for Educators

While distance learning presented many challenges, educators also reported that there were lessons learned and skills acquired that they will carry with them into whatever the fall brings, and eventually their classrooms.

- Educators reported that distance learning provided them an opportunity to learn about how issues of equity affected students and their families.
- Educators reported partnering with families in new ways.
- Some educators reported a feeling of surprise and delight at realizing some students who previously struggled in traditional school (e.g., shy, anxious or even had behavior issues) thrived in distance learning.
- Educators also reported acquiring new skills in relationship building, engagement, and technology use that they will use moving forward.

**“During this time, I was able to 'team' more with parents than ever before. Parents were able to see what we really do in a day and that it is so much more than academics... I was able to help one parent that was struggling emotionally between her job, worries of COVID-19, and becoming a teacher for her child. I listened to parents cry because they could not get their child to follow directions or would call to ask advice to support their child. The parents and I grew a deeper respect for each of our roles.”**

## Summary

Overall, there seems to be an ongoing and internal tension for the educators who responded to this survey. They recognized that learning as it was pre-COVID-19 is not what we will return to in the fall. Many even cited the potential positives that could come to education as a result of this time. However, the multitudes of unknowns, the lack of feeling efficacious this past spring, and the challenges that lie ahead seemed to have left educators in multiple places. The open-ended responses to the survey appear to group educators into three categories:

1. educators who appear to be emotionally exhausted, highly stressed, and uncertain;
2. educators who appear to be embracing the future, viewing last spring as a learning opportunity for improvement; and
3. educators who appear to be deeply concerned not only about themselves, but their students and families and the stresses and trauma they have endured since March.

# Methodology

## SEEKING RESPONDENTS

Using contact lists publicly available on the Minnesota Department of Education's website, an email was sent by the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Minnesota to 2,336 school leaders across the state of Minnesota inviting them to both participate in the survey and share the link with other educators in their district to do the same (Appendix A). This email stated that the survey would be open from May 27 through June 5, that participation was voluntary, and that districts would be provided with a summary report of the statewide results, as well as a report of their district's responses. When participants clicked on the survey link, they accessed the survey which can be found in its entirety in Appendix B. Simultaneously, the link to the survey was Tweeted by CEHD and others within the University.

A follow-up email was sent to the original distribution list on June 6 to both remind educators to participate and also to extend the deadline of the survey from June 5 to June 12. The survey was extended, as we received a few requests to keep it open longer because it was right at the end of the school year.

On June 18, Commissioner of Education, Mary Cathryn Ricker, and Education Minnesota President, Denise Specht, contacted CEHD to see if there was a possibility of reopening the survey to give educators an extended opportunity to respond. On June 19, President Specht sent an email (Appendix A) to 61,023 professional educators and education support professionals inviting them to participate in the survey and indicating that the survey would be available from June 19 to June 28.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SURVEY

The MN Distance Learning Survey asked 19 questions about educators' experience with distance learning and 4 demographic questions. The questions about educators' experience with distance learning included the format with which educators provided distance learning, their methods of communication with students and families, their experience with collaboration during distance learning, the adequacy of professional development they received, how the amount of time they worked during distance learning compared to their time working previously, and the extent to which they are worried about the COVID-19 pandemic interfering with their work. Educators were also asked to provide the top 3 areas that they were successful in and the top 3 areas that were challenging during distance learning.

Four of the 19 questions about educators' experience with distance learning sought open feedback: (1) which areas cause educators to worry a great deal, (2) what supports they need to be effective if distance learning were to continue in 2020-2021, (3) what topics of professional development they would need to be successful in future distance learning, and (4) additional insights they have after implementing distance learning in 2019-2020. These questions yielded a total of 15,377 individual responses, which were coded according to commonly occurring themes.

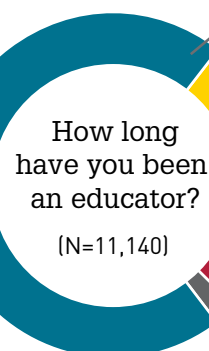
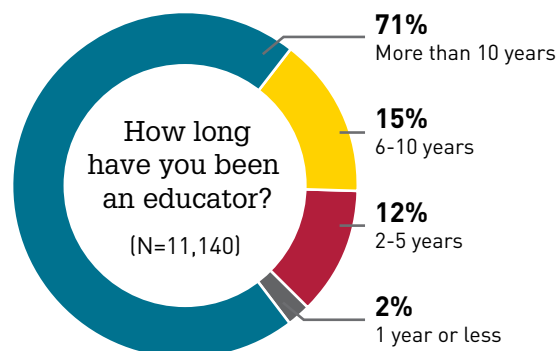
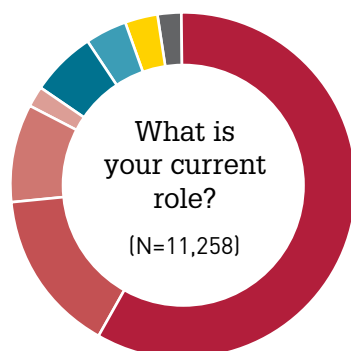
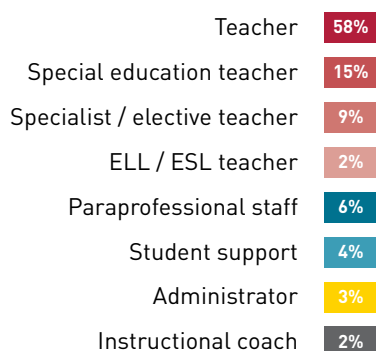
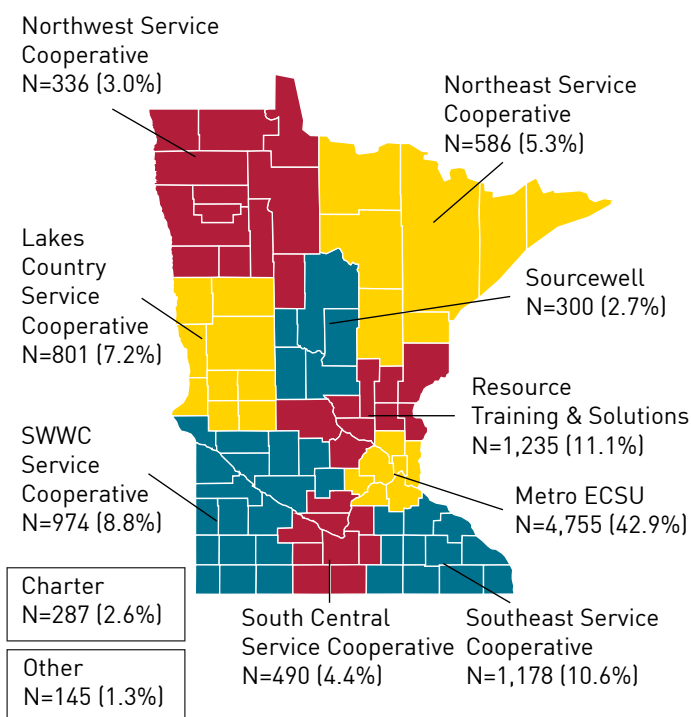
The full survey is in Appendix B. A full list of educator comments can be found online at [z.umn.edu/CEHDSurveydata](http://z.umn.edu/CEHDSurveydata).

# Respondents

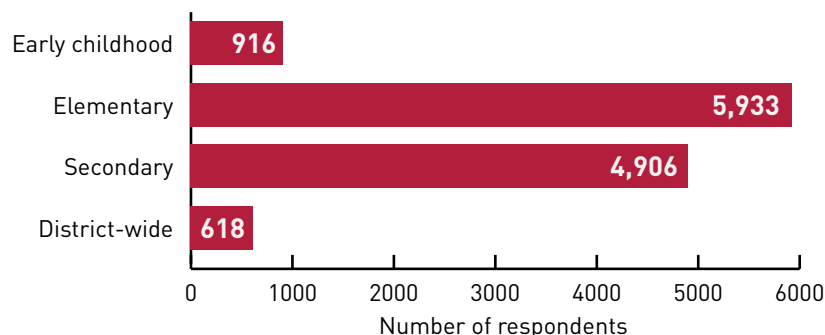
A total of 13,077 educators representing 409 Districts and Charter Schools across the state of Minnesota responded to the survey. The total response rate given the number of educators who received the survey via email was 21%. Since all questions were optional to answer, response rates varied by question. Respondents were asked about a variety of demographic characteristics that would help us understand the perspectives of those who completed the survey. These characteristics included role, years of experience, level they serve, and race/ethnicity. We specifically asked respondents about their race because although race is a social construct with no biological basis, there is widespread evidence that race does affect educators' experiences. In addition, because the teaching force in MN is predominantly white, we wanted to know the extent to which we were able to reach educators of Color.

Respondents to the survey were overwhelmingly white teachers with more than 10 years of experience as an educator. Respondents serving younger learners were slightly more represented.

## Survey Respondents by Region



## What levels do you work in?



## What is your race or ethnicity?

White	10,454
Other	195
Hispanic/Latino	162
Black or African American	120
Asian	104
American Indian or Alaska Native	80
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	14



# Survey Results

## Delivery of Distance Learning

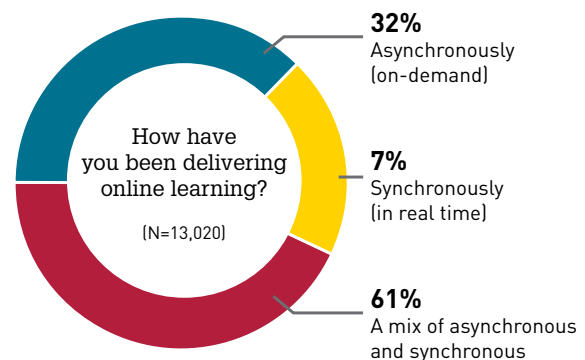
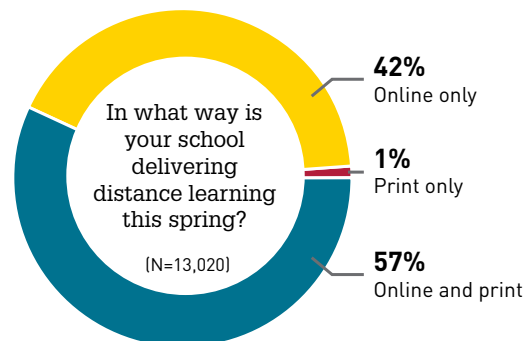
The delivery of distance learning happened primarily through the use of some type of online interface. While 57% of respondents reported a mix of online and print delivery, the qualitative comments largely focused on the uses of online platforms. Qualitative data revealed educators felt that students learning through paper materials did not receive the quality or rigor of education in distance learning that students learning online received. Some educators expressed preferring a mix of online and paper-based learning for students to reduce screen time; this was especially true for early/elementary learners. Educators reported the need for more assistance for themselves and families in navigating online platforms, in engaging students in the online platforms, and assessing students in these environments. Many commented that the use of multiple technology platforms for learning was confusing and difficult for families trying to support students. Suggestions included using only one platform across grade levels, schools, and districts; providing dedicated training and technical support to families and students who need to learn and navigate the online platform by someone other than the teacher; and clearly communicating expectations for "attendance" or participation in distance learning.

**"We must be allowed to teach via Google Meet. Our district did not allow any teaching on google meet since some students (10%) did not have internet at home. We can not stop teaching 100% of the students because 10% do not have internet. If this occurs next school year, it will be criminal."**

Instruction took place online predominantly through a mix of synchronous (where the teacher and students meet in an online setting in real-time) and asynchronous learning (where students work at their own pace on assigned learning tasks). Educators commented on the difficulty of getting kids to "come to class" in the synchronous environment, though also that the synchronous environment provided opportunities for 1:1 engagement not always present in a traditional classroom.

**"I really struggled to provide meaningful academic activities to my EBD students online. The kids I serve are the students who already struggle emotionally and behaviorally at in person school, and who (for most) have little learning support at home. Even with technology available, the motivation to do the work, or interact, was downright overwhelming."**

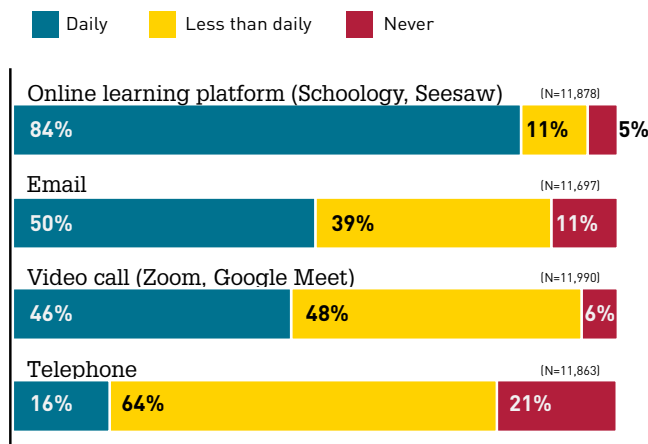
Educators reported worrying about not only the inequities distance learning highlighted but also whether these inequities would become larger as a result of distance learning. Technology resources were the most frequently cited need when asked what other supports educators would need to be effective in distance learning. Educators also reported concern about the instructional format of distance learning as making it extremely challenging to provide services to special education students and English learners, complete appropriate special education evaluations, engage in hands-on learning, and deliver instruction in areas such as music, art, phy ed, and career and technical education.



## Communication During DL

Educators reported that their daily interactions with students came primarily via an online learning platform. These interactions would not have required synchronous two-way communication, but could have been a teacher posting a task to the platform and a student clicking on or completing that task. Combining daily and less than daily use, synchronous forms of communication like Google Meets or Zoom calls were reported as the second most used form of communication.

How frequently do you use each method to communicate with your students?

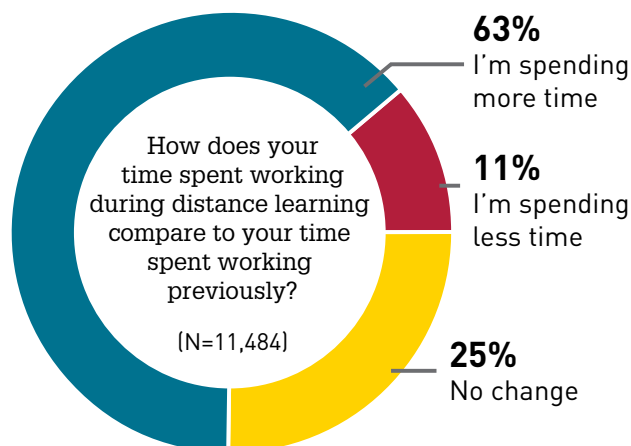


**“Ironically, in some ways I felt I was able to better connect and meet the individual needs of my students. I connected more frequently with families. I also realized the positive and negative impact that regular school environments have on student learning.”**

## Educator Work

### AMOUNT OF WORK

Educators reported spending more time working in distance learning than in traditional teaching. That amount of work was largely reported as overwhelming and to have a lack of clear and reasonable expectations. For educators who are also parents, this demand was two-fold, as they tried to teach their students and their own children at the same time.

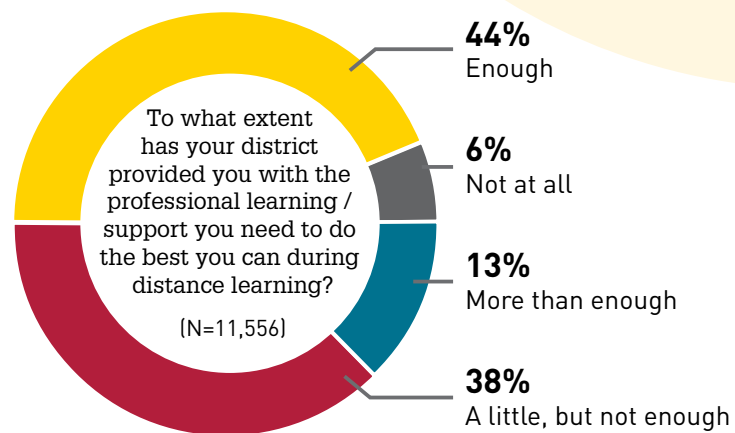


**“My hours were often from 6 A.M. to 10 P.M. on the bad days and 7:30 to 6 P.M. on an average day. It was exhausting and disheartening most of the time, and it did not feel like leadership could understand the burden since they were dealing with other burdens too.”**

## PREPAREDNESS TO DO THE WORK

When asked about resources and supports needed to complete the work expected of them, educators had a variety of comments. They cited the need for additional resources like online curriculum/software subscriptions; concrete ways to engage with, communicate with, and support students and families; time for collaborations with colleagues to help in reducing the burden of workload; and specific strategies for meeting the needs of their most vulnerable students. They also cited a desire for clearer and more proactive plans from all levels (schools, districts, and the Minnesota Department of Education) regarding consistent expectations in areas, such as teachers' work and collaboration, attendance and grading procedures, and priorities for standards/curriculum. However, while some cited this spring as "emergency work" and "not sustainable in its current form," others discussed a sense of preparedness they will now have for the fall that they could not have imagined last spring. They feel better equipped to teach in a distance learning environment and better able to set expectations from the beginning in ways that were just not foreseeable in the spring.

**"We didn't have enough time to prepare for what we had to do. My concern now is if we do distance learning having the curriculum we need via online, and if our district has enough money to purchase curriculum that is available online."**



## Additional Insights from Educators on Preparedness:

"... we were thrown into this with minimal training for teachers and families, which meant that the first few weeks was spent acclimating families and students to everything."

"I would prefer that MDE set the requirements for Distance Learning instead of allowing dysfunctional schools to determine things—like lessons (length & components), assessments and grading. We had a basic structure for Distance Learning that kept changing to meet the needs of administration—not to meet the needs of the students. Our attendance records and grading felt unethical—I would like to see MDE set requirements, communicate those to teachers and students."

"Families were under extreme stress, from joblessness, food acquisition and unrelenting fear. Many immigrant families had little or no understanding of what was going on... many parents told me that Schoology, the platform our district uses for grades 3-12, was impossible for them to understand and very frustrating... inversely, parents with students using SeeSaw for grades PK-2 were very successful."

"The spring went just fine, but after reading, learning, and experimenting with different tools and ideas, I feel I would be much more effective implementing distance learning in the fall."

## Successes and Challenges

The following is a look at how Teachers, Support Professionals, and Administrators viewed successes and challenges during distance learning in the Spring of 2020. This information is broken out by role.

- **Teachers:** Respondents who chose teacher, specialist/elective teacher (e.g., art, music, phy ed), special education teacher, and English learner teacher were categorized as “Teacher.”
- **Support Professionals:** Respondents who chose instructional coach, paraprofessional/support staff, and student support (e.g., counselor, social work, school psychologist) were categorized as “Support Professional.”
- **Administrators:** There was only one category for “Administrator.” It should be assumed those who serve in administrative leadership roles like superintendent, principal, assistant principal, directors and supervisors of special education, and the various roles often found in district level leadership selected this category.

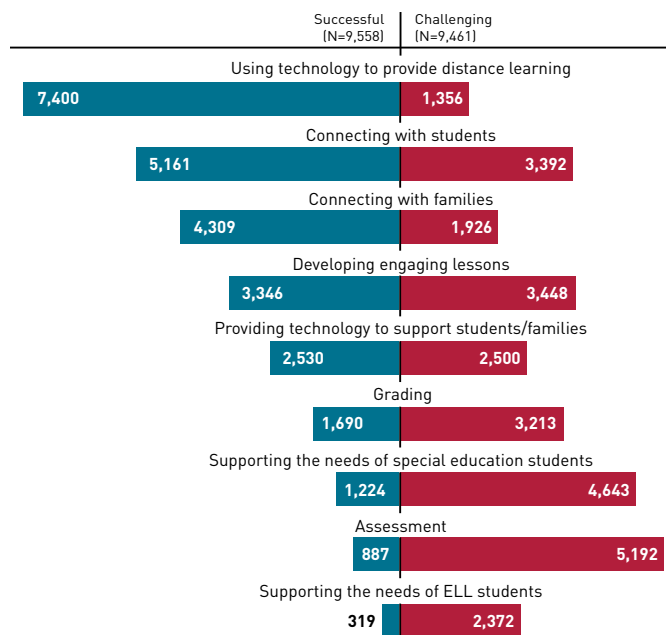
Both the Teacher and Support Professional categories were provided with 9 areas that represented their work during distance learning. Respondents were asked to select 3 areas that were most successful for them during distance learning and from that same list, 3 areas that were the most challenging for them during distance learning.

### Teachers

Interestingly, the quantitative data show that teachers' top three areas of cited successes were in using technology to provide distance learning, connecting with students, and connecting with families. However, analysis of the qualitative data suggest that educators overwhelmingly desired additional support, including further professional development, in these same areas. This lack of congruence could be the result of a “continuous improvement” mindset where educators felt successful but also knew that they could improve in these areas, which they identified as critical for effective distance learning.

The quantitative and qualitative data regarding educators' challenges align regarding concerns over meeting the needs of vulnerable populations (students receiving EL and Special Education services). Additionally, the cited concerns in the qualitative data about needing clarity on grading and assessment were also identified as challenges in the quantitative data. Educators who responded to the open ended question on professional development reported grading and assessment during distance learning as an important area for professional development needs.

Teachers: Choose 3 areas that were the most successful and 3 that were the most challenging for you during distance learning.



### Teachers:

“We did the best we could with not a lot of time to plan. For some kids, this was great. I provided feedback much more quickly than I can in the classroom. For some kids, this was a time they did very little and I had little control over that.”

“Moving to a Pass/Fail grading system, where anyone who ‘makes progress toward their learning’ passes the course was demotivating for the students because ‘progress’ was not clearly defined ... Students need clearly defined high expectations, while at the same time the system can be understanding of those with more obstacles than others to their learning.”

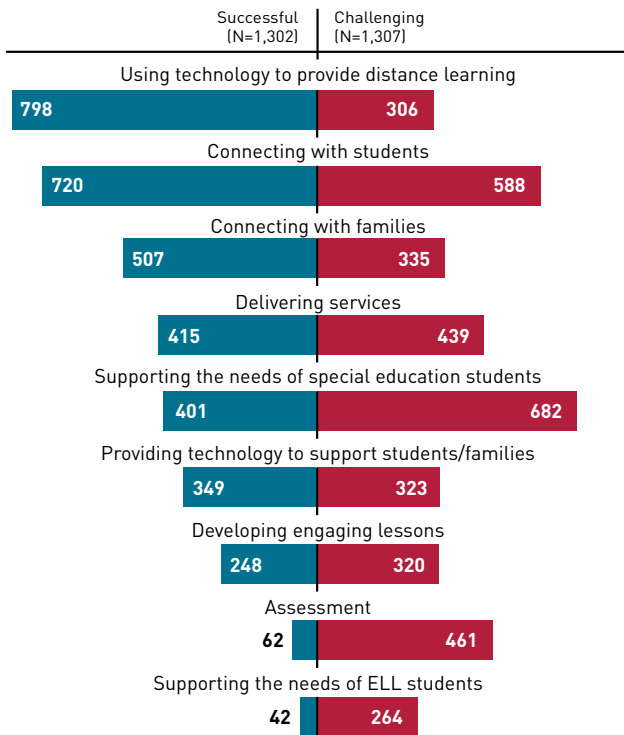
“The changes on the grading guidelines from the state were frustrating.”

“I think going forward, we need to let kids know they will be graded, since many didn't really care. I know this is fraught with problems of equity, though.”

## Support Professionals

Similar to the teachers, Support Professionals reported use of technology, connecting with students, and connecting with families top among their successes. However, they also rated these same areas as challenges at higher rates (by percentages) than their teacher counterparts. Not surprisingly, Support Professionals reported that connecting with students and supporting the needs of students with disabilities was most challenging. This challenge also was a recurring theme in the qualitative data, particularly in the area of supporting the needs of vulnerable students (e.g., EL students and students who are homeless or highly mobile). Support Professionals worry about not being able to meet the needs of students who are unable to effectively communicate remotely (e.g., students who are nonverbal and students who need assistance with braille), not meeting IEP goals/objectives, not being able to conduct special education evaluations, not being able to communicate with EL families, not being able to reach students/families in need of assistance, and not being able to provide appropriate services. An increased need for services and supports for these students was cited in the section on supports along with a request for more professional development for supporting special education students, students who have suffered trauma, and EL students.

**Support Professionals: Choose 3 areas that were the most successful and 3 that were the most challenging for you during distance learning.**



## Support Professionals:

"It is incredibly hard to be a para on line... We as paras get very little professional development; the number of systems that we are using and passwords needed is daunting to an adult, much less a child."

"I'm concerned about mental health and trauma for our students, staff and myself quite honestly. I was ready to throw in the towel many times and I'm tired of being on the brink of tears most of the time."

## Administrators

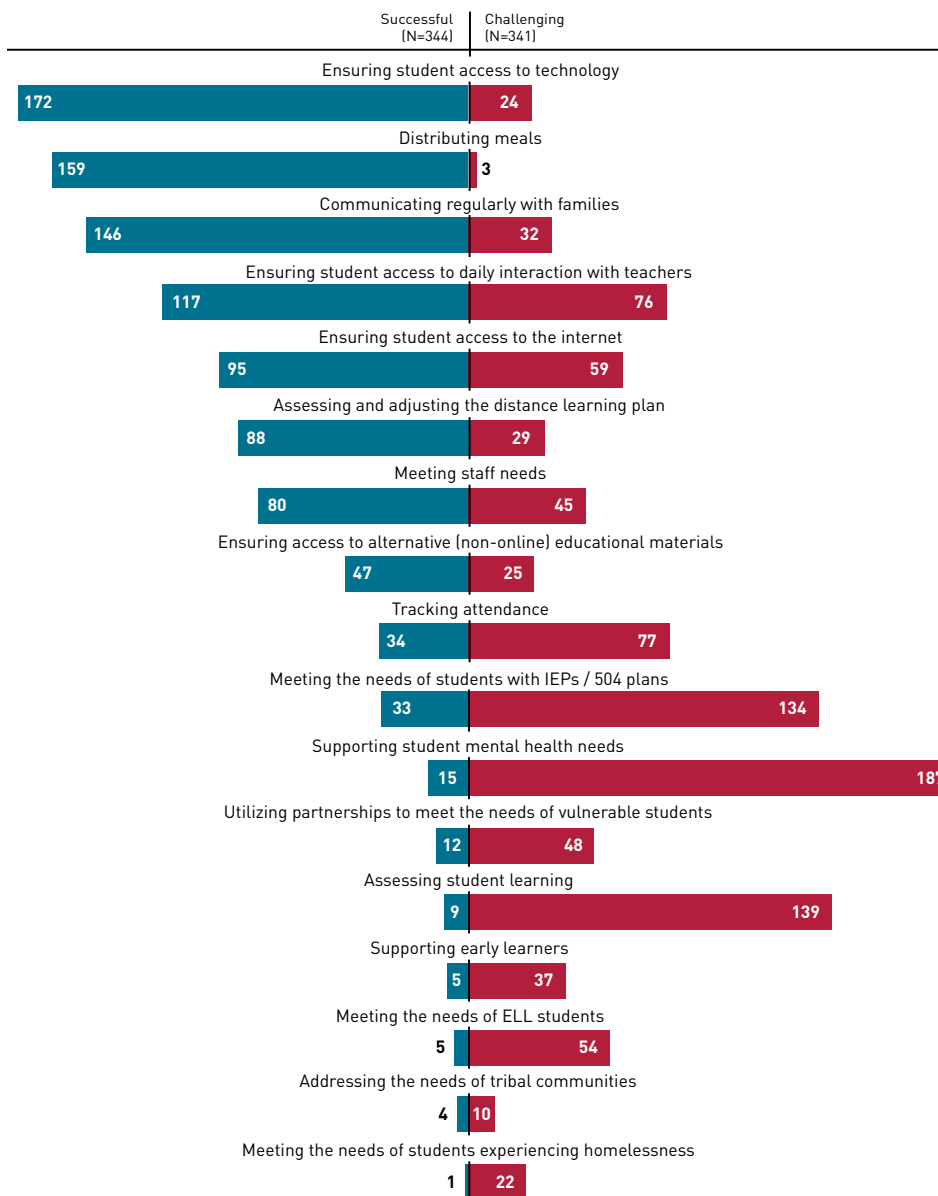
Administrators were asked to select what they saw as successes and challenges from a list of 16 areas that came from the Minnesota Department of Education's original Distance Learning Plan Template (Appendix C). The 16 areas representing the work that needed to be accomplished as part of the MDE Distance Learning Plan Template were used in our survey (Appendix B). Similar to the Teacher and Support Professional questions, administrators were asked to choose 3 areas that were most successful and most challenging for them during distance learning.

Administrators reported successes in what some would consider the technical aspects of launching distance learning, like ensuring access to technology and distributing meals. Areas where they reported the greatest challenges were more focused on meeting student needs (e.g., supporting students' mental health, meeting the needs of students with IEPs and 504s, and EL students). Additionally, administrators overwhelmingly reported assessing student learning as a concern. A closer look at the qualitative responses from administrators revealed that their worries about additional supports and professional learning did not deviate much from the other categories of educators surveyed. Administrators are worried about relationship building, the lack of equity distance learning presents, the potential logistical challenges of implementing a hybrid model, the mental health needs of students and staff, and greater numbers of teachers leaving the profession.

When asked about supports needed to make distance learning successful moving forward, administrators most often said "All of them" in reference to the options of curricular resources, professional development, internet connectivity, and hardware. In their qualitative comments they requested examples of successful models of distance learning and hybrid learning, "SPECIFIC guidance on attendance and

grading” and “State Education guidelines that help formalize the expectations of a student day and teachers day to help schools maintain or redefine contractual language for educators.” In addition, assessment of student performance, engagement, how to ensure equity in distance learning, best practices in delivering rigorous distance learning, ways to support the mental health of students and staff, and lesson design all showed up as themes in areas of needed professional development.

**Administrators:** Choose 3 areas that were the most successful and 3 that were the most challenging for you during distance learning.



## Administrators:

“I need staff to hear and see how to best support students in a DL format. How important relationships are and how important it is to have empathy for students.”

“I worry about the stress a hybrid system will put on our teachers. If we go straight distance learning, I don't know how we can provide the rigor we need to provide and be equitable.”

“Distance learning was really 'emergency learning.' We did the best we could with what we had— In reality, I am really proud of the staff.”

“We had students that excelled with distance learning, and some of those that excelled even surprised us! I would say however that we have upwards of 50% that did very little, some nothing. This was a time that great 'grace' was given to students and families, but if this continues in the future, there needs to be routine established. The routine can be different for individual needs, but routine nonetheless... Routine check-ins for support and accountability— High expectations with high support.”



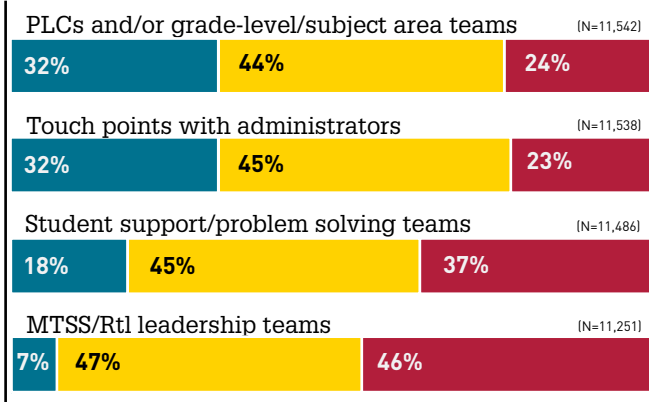
## Educator Collaboration

Overall, educators reported collaborating with their colleagues, though the amount differed depending on the topic. According to respondents, Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and student problem solving teams reportedly met less than before distance learning. However, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) or grade-level/content teams and touch points with administrators increased for about 30% of respondents and stayed the same for another 44%.

The qualitative data show that educators want increased collaboration with social workers and paraprofessionals along with time for collegial planning as needed supports for continued distance learning. They also reported seeing a value in teachers who have lighter workloads (e.g., specialists) as playing a crucial role in helping classroom teachers connect with students.

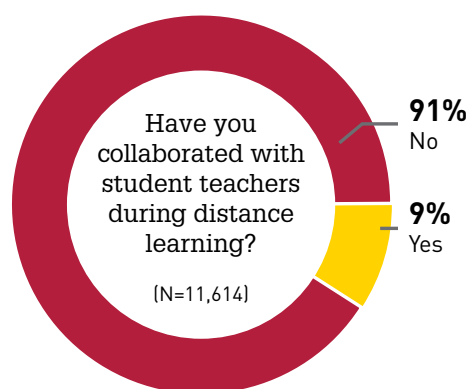
To what extent are educators in your school continuing to collaborate in the following areas relative to before we went to distance learning?

More than before About the same Less than before

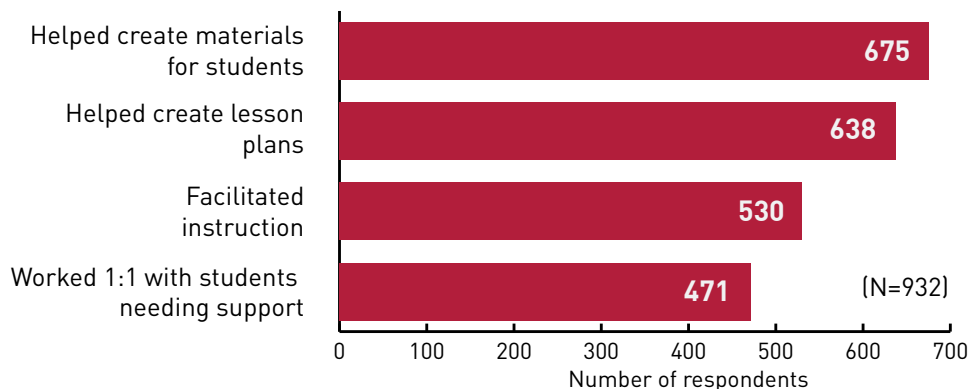


**“We also had a staff that met consistently through video conferencing to talk and modify what we were doing. The collaboration that took place was nothing short of amazing, and I feel this experience will forever change how our classrooms could and should look. There were a lot of positive take-always that this distance learning experiment provided. If we are to do it again, we’ll be even better...”**

**“Our paraprofessionals were amazing and really helped bridge the gap. It's not something we teachers could have managed alone.”**



In which of the following ways did the student teacher(s) support distance learning? Select all that apply.



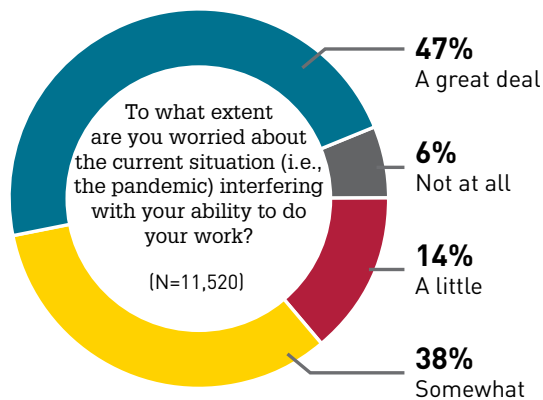
## Looking Forward: Educator Worries

A key finding of this survey is that educators are worried about many things. While the quantitative data show educators seem to be more concerned about continuing distance learning in the fall than they are of coming back to school and getting sick, 94% of respondents had some level of worry that the pandemic is interfering with their ability to do their job. When respondents were asked to select what worried them a great deal (continuing distance learning in the fall, coming back to school and getting sick, accessing technology in the fall, or other) 2,726 people chose "other" with the option to comment on what that "other" may be.

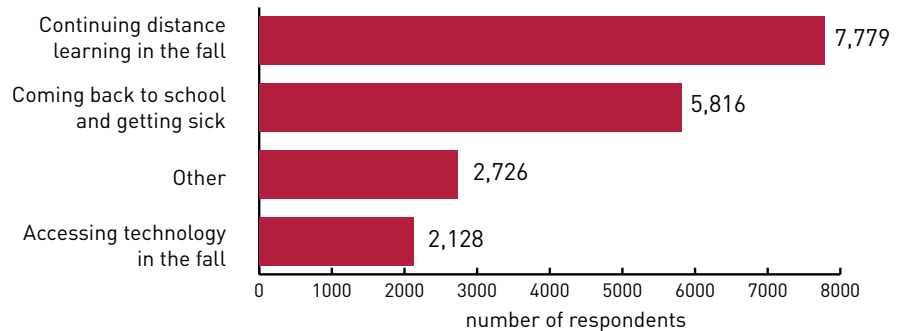
Remarkably, 2,712 respondents entered a comment describing their worries. These comments were coded into 17 categories. While 23 respondents said they have no worries, 2,689 educators vulnerably detailed their concerns that included a broad range of topics. However, the primary worry educators noted was relationship building with students and families. Their second greatest concern was the feasibility or safety of returning to in-person learning.

The most common worries illustrate the tension found again and again in the individual comments. Educators want to be able to build relationships in person, and they want their students, and themselves, to be safe from the virus. Other areas of concern for educators include the ways we may proceed (e.g., hybrid model, distance learning) and the workload and exposure to the virus associated with both. Educators were quite worried about the mental health of students and themselves, the inequities in distance learning and students falling behind, and that vulnerable populations of students are likely being most adversely affected. The unknown and uncertainty not only of the decision regarding the fall,

**"[I'm worried about] the health of students if we return to 'brick and mortar' schools in the fall. The impacts e-learning and isolation is having on the Social Emotional wellbeing and development of our students. The large academic backslide students are experiencing."**



Which of the following worries you a great deal? Select all that apply.



but long-term outcomes like loss of jobs or hours of work also worried respondents. Throughout most of the categories cited, educators were worried about the ability to meet the needs of students.

### EDUCATOR WORRIES—QUALITATIVE DATA

The following is a summary of the 2,712 individual comments respondents entered after choosing "other" to the question "Which of the following worries you a great deal?" These comments were coded into 17 categories, which are presented in alphabetical order. All of the individual comments are presented by question in [Data Supplement A](#).

#### Childcare/educating their own children at home.

Educators were worried about having access to childcare or having to care for their own children during distance or hybrid learning. Also, they were worried about balancing family needs with the heavy workload of distance or hybrid learning. Some teachers shared that they may be forced to quit if they do not have access to childcare.

#### Falling behind/increasing achievement gaps.

Educators were worried about the effectiveness of their distance learning instruction, children falling behind academically, the achievement gap/education gap expanding due to distance learning, and how that learning loss will affect students in the long term.



**“If we are in a hybrid situation and I am expected to provide online materials and support and teach in person, I will be overwhelmed.”**

**Feasibility/logistics of providing safe in-person learning.** Educators were worried about following Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) recommendations that they think are unrealistic for a school environment (e.g., wearing masks, cleaning supplies and procedures, additional bussing procedures/routes, social distancing)—especially without additional funding. Also, educators

were worried about having to hold students accountable for CDC/MDH recommendations, being responsible for cleaning, accessing enough substitute teachers to accommodate teachers who get sick, following guidelines around taking sick time (how will quarantine requirements align with sick day policies), having large class sizes, and not being able to do partner/group work or share materials.

#### **Health/safety/getting sick.**

Educators were worried about the risk for themselves, their families, and/or their students of getting sick if in-person learning is implemented in the fall, especially those who are at a high-risk due to preexisting conditions. In addition, educators were worried about how funding restrictions will limit their ability to follow CDC/MDH guidelines for making in-person school safe and possibly put the financial burden of PPE on educators themselves.

**Hybrid model.** Educators were worried about having a hybrid model of instruction that would expose them to risk of getting sick, require them to prepare and implement both in-person and distance learning simultaneously which would require double the work, and pose scheduling challenges for educators with children. Educators also expressed concerns about lack of clarity around what a hybrid model would look like in their school/district.

**Implementation of DL.** Educators were worried about not being able to meet the needs of students if distance learning continues. They were especially concerned about meeting the needs of early learners, courses that require hands-on activities (e.g., shop classes, music classes/ensembles, physical education), teaching social-emotional skills, developing relationships online without a prior

relationship being established, maintaining student engagement, and students not having support at home to help with distance learning.

**Issues of equity.** Educators were worried about providing access to and support for equitable educational opportunities for students in a hybrid or distance learning model in the fall. Educators were especially concerned about racial and social justice, low-income students, and special education students. In addition, educators perceived that students receiving paper learning materials were at a disadvantage compared to those with online materials.

**Loss of job/hours.** Educators were worried about losing their job or being furloughed, especially those who teach specials/electives that may be cut, those who work in early childhood education programs that they fear will be eliminated or reduced in some way, and those who were support staff.

#### **Loss of sports, specials, specific content areas, extracurriculars, etc.**

Educators were worried about students losing access to sports, physical education, music, art, career and technical education, and other specials or extracurricular activities due to distance learning. In addition, educators were worried about how they can make the media center materials available to students and what programs may be cut altogether.

#### **Mental health.**

Educators were worried about the mental health of students and staff given the limited opportunities for social interaction in distance learning, collective trauma due to COVID-19 and social unrest related to racism, burnout due to the heavy work demands being placed on teachers, and family anxiety/stress due to job loss and challenges with work-life balance.

**“I am worried about children's mental health issues as we come back to school—mental health has suffered as a result of distance learning. I'm concerned about the equity issues surrounding distance learning. The achievement gap is likely to expand because of distance learning.”**

**Relationship building/social connection/engagement.** Educators were worried about how to develop relationships with a new cohort of students and families if starting the fall with distance learning, gaining student/family buy-in, keeping students engaged if distance learning continues, as well as maintaining communication with families and what to do when families are unresponsive to any contact.

**Supporting vulnerable students.**

Educators were worried about being able to support the needs of highly vulnerable students, such as students with disabilities, English Learners, and students who are homeless or highly mobile. This included concerns about not being able to meet with students who are unable to effectively meet remotely (e.g., students who are nonverbal and students who need assistance with braille), not meeting IEP goals/objectives, not being able to conduct special education evaluations, not being able to communicate with EL families, not being able to reach students/families in need of assistance, and not being able to provide appropriate services.

**Technology.** Educators were worried about both their and their students' access to technology (e.g., internet, devices), technology support (e.g., training and assistance when facing challenges), and appropriate technology platforms (e.g., google classroom, seesaw, schoology). Also, they were concerned about families not knowing how to use the technology platforms their district uses or not being able to use the technology platform in their native language.

**The unknown/uncertainty.** Educators were worried about the unknown of what is to come (e.g., not knowing what the plans for the fall are), the potential need to switch delivery models during the school year, the lack of administrators seeking feedback from teachers, and uncertainty regarding how much planning time/training/technology educators will receive to prepare for the fall.

Educators who selected "Other" also specified worries that fell into the following categories:

**All of the above.**

Educators were worried about all of the response options provided (i.e., coming back to school in the fall and getting sick, continuing distance learning in the fall, and accessing technology in the fall).

**None.** Educators had no worries.

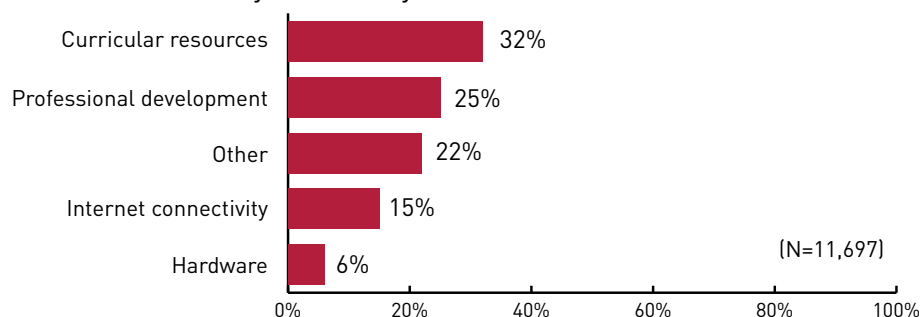
**Other.** Educators were worried about other aspects of their work, such as educator expectations and unmanageable workloads, parent expectations, generally meeting students' needs, accountability, grading, educational standards, academic dishonesty, no opportunities for voice in school/district decisions, budget cuts, bureaucratic/legislative mishandling of education, class sizes, civil unrest, food and nutrition, and not having access to resources at school.

**"When distance learning was put into place we were all in a panic... we now have a better idea of what COVID-19 looks like in MN and are not as panicked. ... I did need to find different and more engaging ways of delivering my lessons. I worked numerous hours that I normally wouldn't if I was in my classroom but I saw the fruits of my labor in many ways. If/when we go to distance learning this year we (educators) are not coming from a panicked position of so many unknowns. We have more tools in our box and will likely get more direction from our districts to best meet the needs of our learners."**

## Looking Forward: Needed Supports

Respondents were asked to respond to a question inquiring about what supports they would need to be successful if distance learning were to continue in the fall of 2020. Response options were curricular resources, professional development, internet connectivity, hardware and other. Over 3,500 respondents indicated needing curricular resources, 2,764 cited a need for professional development, 1,598 cited internet connectivity and 630 cited hardware. Respondents who chose either "other" or professional development were given the option to provide open-ended comments on what specifically they needed. Technology rose to the top of the list in both response categories.

What supports do you most need to be effective in distance learning in the 2020-21 school year and beyond?



Of the respondents who chose "other," 2,434 people listed individual comments that were coded into 19 categories, which are presented in alphabetical order. Two areas mentioned the most were technology and instructional supports. In the area of technology, respondents listed specific resources including better hardware and connectivity for themselves and their students. In the area of instructional supports, many respondents listed training for parents to help support their students in the use of technology. Other areas educators are looking for support include clarity on plans and procedures surrounding instructional delivery formats, accountability, attendance, and grading. They also are seeking ways and resources to support the mental health of students and families.

### NEEDED SUPPORTS—QUALITATIVE DATA

The following is the presentation of the 2,424 individual comments respondents entered after choosing "other" to the question "What supports do you need to be effective in distance learning in the 2020-2021 school year, and extending beyond that?" These comments were coded into 19 categories, which are presented in alphabetical order. All of the individual comments are presented by question in [Data Supplement B](#).

### Accountability, attendance, and grading procedures.

Educators needed ways to hold students and families accountable for participation, clearer expectations for student engagement/participation, improved grading procedures that are more complex than pass/fail (which educators felt demotivated students), ways to prevent academic dishonesty, and alternative attendance procedures (especially for students using paper materials).

**Childcare.** Educators needed childcare or flexible accommodations to care for educators' own children while also having to implement distance learning or hybrid learning. In general, educators feel overwhelmed from navigating their work and home responsibilities during the pandemic.

### Curricular resources.

Educators needed curricular resources to support implementation of distance learning (e.g., access to existing online curricula), especially resources that support safe/authentic scientific experiments, interactive lessons, and social-emotional learning. In addition, educators needed guidance and resources on how to prioritize and adjust standards.

**Funding.** Educators needed financial support to be effective in distance learning. This included funding to purchase online interactive platforms/materials for students, ebooks for the library, and technology as well as funding for the extended time educators are working now compared to their previous schedules.

**"It is very hard to teach my students, and teach my own children at home. It's almost impossible."**

**Informational resources.** Educators needed informational resources regarding how to build relationships virtually, best practices in distance learning, assessment ideas, making distance learning equitable, due process, evidence-based delivery models, how to support students and families who are struggling, communication with non-English speaking families, online lessons using the Montessori method, special education, how to handle increased screen-time, and how to help parents motivate their children to participate.

**Instructional format.** Educators needed an alternative format for instruction because they felt the spring of 2020 was ultimately ineffective. In general, educators did not want to do distance learning again and do not like the idea of a hybrid format. Educators preferred an in-person learning format. Also, educators requested having only one learning management system, offering socializing opportunities, and providing opportunities to meet in person periodically. Some educators raised specific concerns about distance learning making certain activities, such as special education assessments, hands-on learning, music, and career and technical education, extremely challenging or impossible.

**Instructional supports or resources for students/families.** Educators needed more support (e.g., training) for parents to be able to access quality internet, access/use online learning platforms, and help their children with distance learning. In addition, educators needed support regarding ways to connect with and engage students (especially early learners), more efficiently/effectively communicate with students and families (especially those who are hard to reach and/or don't seek help from teachers), build relationships with new students online, and collaborate with social workers and paraprofessionals.

**Mental health supports for students, families, and staff.** Educators needed mental health supports for themselves or students/families. This included, continued access to counseling services, increased communication and monitoring of students to assess needs, connections to community resources, ways to manage the challenges/stress of distance learning, and opportunities for human contact and social-emotional support.

**Plans, procedures, and expectations.** Educators needed their school, district, or MDE to provide clearer and more proactive plans for different formats, clear and consistent plans and expectations for all teachers/staff, directives from leaders, opportunities for teacher involvement in decision-making processes, and flexibility in policies and procedures (e.g., ability to access resources at school, more class time, ability to meet in small groups rather than 1-on-1, and opportunity to use an alternative platform). Educators also wanted specific

plans around standards/curriculum adjustments/priorities and staff coverage if sick, directives for working with families who do not respond to communication, as well as more respect and reasonable expectations from administrators.

**Services/supports for vulnerable students (e.g., EL, SPED, & HHM).** Educators needed services and supports for their most vulnerable students, such as evaluation opportunities, translation support, ways to connect with the most vulnerable students, additional technology to support specific services (e.g., speech pathology), ways to ensure students with IEPs have a workload comparable to students without IEPs, clearer expectations about specialist participation and how to deliver special education services, technology training in students'/families' native language, flexibility around IEP service minutes and due process, lower caseloads, and wellness checks for students/families who are not responding to communication.

**"I didn't really have the hardware I needed, but managed to fake a document camera from a webcam and part of an old sprinkler system in the garage. I had major bandwidth issues and had to teach from my car in the church parking lot which was a bit of an adventure, but everyone kind of got into it. A bit strange trying to use PowerPoint with my finger on the track pad to try to work calculus problems. I also had problems with the computer overheating and killing the microphone, camera, and/or keyboard. I eventually (mostly) solved the problem by sitting it on ice packs. It was definitely an exercise in resilience and creativity. It gave me an opportunity to collaborate with my students to find solutions and ended up being memorable, positive and empowering."**

**“[We need] a miracle—learning a world language without the classroom community and with less time with students is SO HARD.”**

**Supplies/workspace (student or educator).**

Educators needed access to whiteboards, stamps, printing, home workspaces, ergonomic equipment, PPE, etc. for themselves as well as hands-on resources (e.g., books, manipulatives and art materials) and home workspaces for students.

**Support from families.** Educators needed more support from families (e.g., parent buy-in, responsiveness, commitment, engagement, involvement, and interest). Educators felt this would help hold students more accountable for participating in distance learning.

**Technology resources.** Educators needed quality hardware, internet connectivity, and tech support for themselves and students. In addition, educators needed online curriculum/software subscriptions, webcams, better learning platforms, secure testing platforms, and VPN access to files on servers to implement distance learning effectively.

**“I am feeling unsure of how to fairly and ethically proceed with initial evaluations for special education following this major life change for all students (who will be coming back to school with varying experiences in this pandemic).”**

**Time (generally and for planning/collaboration).**

Educators needed more paid time to plan for their instruction, collaborate with peers, and connect with students/families. Also, educators needed the ability to set time restrictions. One-on-one meetings with students, for example, can take up a full-workday, leaving little time to complete other instructional tasks.

**Training/PD.** Educators needed more training or professional development around various topics, including but not limited to teaching/engaging students remotely, technology, MDE expectations, mental health and trauma-informed practices, best practices for distance learning, special education via distance learning, starting the school year virtually, and administering assessments. In addition, educators needed training for students and families so that they know how to use learning management platforms and other online learning resources.

**Workload.** Educators needed adjustments to their workload to accommodate for increased responsibilities during the pandemic. This included clear and modified expectations around the amount/standards of work, ways to share the workload, having a “catch-up” day every week, manageable caseloads, more staff, reduced curriculum, and specialists helping other classroom teachers connect with and help students.

**“Being able to ensure equitable learning/grading is very hard. I want to keep my class rigorous and hold my students accountable for their learning at the same time. I just can't wrap my head around how to best accomplish both.”**

Educators who selected “Other” also specified worries that fell into the following categories:

**All of the above.** Educators specified that they needed all of the supports listed in the question (i.e., curricular resources, professional development, internet connectivity, and hardware).

**None/I have what I need.** Educators specified that they did NOT need any other support or that they had what they needed already.

**Other.** Educators also needed other supports, such as support from administrators, developmentally appropriate expectations for distance learning, collaboration with community resources and community outreach/support, continued access to paraprofessional and assistant support, equity across families, and fewer students. Also, some educators specified that they were not sure what other resources they needed.

**“Having to be over the phone tech support for families was also very difficult since I was having to learn much of the tech myself on my own... I would have more tech support for parents from someone who is familiar with the tech; knowing ways to help and having the time to support families.”**



## Looking Forward: Professional Development

When asked about needed supports, 2,765 respondents selected professional development and were prompted with a follow-up question asking what topics they would need professional development on. From this open-ended question, there were 2,208 individual comments that were coded into 22 categories of desired areas for professional development.

Similar to needed supports, technology ranked at the top of the list with 681 educators noting they would like professional development in the platforms they are using, how to use technology creatively and how to use it with specific students like early learners. A large number of respondents (N=604) also reported wanting professional development in strategies for engaging and motivating students in a distance learning environment. Educators also wanted more clarification on expectations and procedures in the areas of assessment, grading, and prioritizing standards and curriculum. Educators are also seeking professional development in building relationships and supporting students both from specific populations (e.g., students receiving special education services and early learners) and those who may need mental health or trauma support.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT—QUALITATIVE DATA

The following is the presentation of the 2,208 individual comments respondents entered after choosing “Professional development” to the question “What supports do you need to be effective in distance learning in the 2020-2021 school year, and extending beyond that?” These comments were coded into 22 categories, which are presented in alphabetical order. All of the individual comments are presented by question in [Data Supplement C](#).

**Accountability for students/families.** Educators needed professional development on how to hold students and families accountable in distance learning and how to not lower grade-level expectations, especially for those students who did not have support at home. In addition, educators wanted clearer student expectations and administrative protocols and procedures for dealing with noncompliant students.

**Connecting with students/building relationships.** Educators needed professional development on connecting with students/families, building relationships and community, and facilitating student collaboration.

**Content specific support.** Educators needed professional development related to adaptations, standards, and best practices in implementing DL specific to their content areas, such as music, math, CTE (including woodworking and welding), ELA, physical education, reading (especially for struggling readers), cooking, health and wellness, foreign language, and science (especially lab activities). There was also interest in professional development on utilizing speech/OT/DAPE and school nurses wanted more training on connecting with their caseload during DL and aiding in the pandemic response (e.g., contact tracing).

**EL students.** Educators needed professional development on how to support their EL students, including modifying assignments, engaging EL students, connecting with the families of EL students, conducting assessments, and helpful online tools.

**Equity/cultural diversity.** Educators needed professional development on connecting to all language and cultural backgrounds, effectively and equitably assessing student learning during DL, engaging in social justice conversations with students, addressing systemic racism, culturally and linguistically responsive teaching, equitable instructional practices, multicultural materials and activities, teaching about racism, anti-racism, and cultural competency.

**Grading/assessment during DL.** Educators needed professional development on how to conduct formative and summative assessments via distance learning, especially in ways that were integrated within the learning management system (e.g., Schoology), prevented academic dishonesty, and were meaningful or authentic. Also, educators would like professional development on grading (particularly fair and equitable procedures), collecting data, and conducting assessments during distance learning.

**High quality/effective DL lessons.** Educators needed professional development on how to create high quality and effective lessons online. For example, in what ways should they adjust existing lessons to work in an online format? Also, educators would like to know how they can develop rigor in their online lessons.

### How to/expectations for implementing DL.

Educators needed professional development on how to implement distance learning, what shifts need to be made to move instruction online, how/what to prioritize in terms of the curriculum, benefits of and best practices in synchronous vs. asynchronous learning, as well as expectations of and time management for both students and staff in DL.

**MTSS interventions/supplemental support.**

Educators needed professional development on how to continue MTSS, PBIS, intervention, and other support services.

**Personalizing/differentiating instruction.**

Educators needed professional development on how to differentiate virtual instruction, personalize learning for students, provide modifications and accommodations, and implement guided reading.

**Providing safe in-person instruction.** Educators needed professional development on what the guidelines for safe in-person learning are and how to follow them, especially in particular circumstances such as speech language therapy and physical education.

**Roles of paraprofessionals.** Educators needed professional development and clear expectations on paraprofessionals', EA's, and ESP's role in online learning. In addition, paraprofessionals would like to be more involved in supporting special education students, many of whom they previously worked with on a regular basis.

**SEL/Mental health/Trauma.** Educators needed professional development on mental health support for staff/students/families, online social-emotional learning strategies, work-life balance, trauma-informed teaching, behavior management, crisis management, effective counseling practices in DL (e.g., teletherapy), stress management, and teacher burnout.

**Special Education students.** Educators needed professional development on how to support special education students. This included modifications and accommodations, administering assessments, collecting data on IEP goals and objectives, creating lessons that students can do independently, how to best use video conferencing tools for special education students, collaborating to meet student needs, and accessible materials.

**Starting the new year in distance learning (DL).**

Educators needed professional development on how to build relationships with new students and families via DL, especially kindergarteners who are new to school.

**Strategies for engagement/motivation.** Educators needed professional development on strategies to motivate students, make their lessons more engaging, and how to engage both students and families in distance learning. Some educators were particularly interested in learning how to make asynchronous learning engaging.

**Supporting families.** Educators needed professional development on how to support families, especially those who are overwhelmed, struggling during the pandemic, living in poverty, and having a hard time helping their children engage in DL. Educators also needed resources, community support, and technology support that they can share with families.

**Supporting students that don't have tech.**

Educators needed professional development on how to support students who have limited or no access to technology, how to develop lessons that don't require technology, how to differentiate with paper packets, and how to support families with low-tech or low-literacy skills, including immigrant families.

**Technology.** Educators needed professional development on technology, including how to utilize the approved programs (basic and advanced features), adapting assignments/lessons to work with the available technology, how to be creative with technology, best practices in teaching with technology, how to use technology with specific populations (e.g., early learners), safe technology practices, and how to make videos.

**Time for planning and collaboration.** Educators needed professional development on team building and staff collaboration. Also, they wanted more time to plan, collaborate, as well as learn and practice using new technology tools.

**Young learners (PK-2).** Educators needed professional development around supporting young learners (PK-2), such as student friendly/age appropriate platforms, best practices on implementing DL for young learners specifically, engaging and building community with young students and their families, creating hands-on lessons with manipulatives that families with limited resources can access, and programming for socialization.

Educators also specified other topics of professional development which included the following:

**Other.** Educators needed professional development on other areas as well, including best practices, flipped classrooms, blended learning, project-based learning, curriculum writing, specialist needs in DL, hybrid learning models, ethics and confidentiality in DL, classroom management online, efficient ways to develop lessons, relicensure, home-school partnerships, time management, work authenticity, standards, and data management. In addition, some educators were not sure what PD they needed or generally requested more resources.

## Educator Insights

The final question of the survey elicited perhaps the most useful and challenging data to report. The question stated: "Reflecting on your experience during this initial distance learning time, what insight would you like to share about implementing distance learning?" There were 8,023 individual comments in response to this question, and these comments were coded into five broad areas presented in alphabetical order: (1) advice for the future, (2) challenges and worries, (3) experiences during distance learning, (4) needs, and (5) successes. Given the depth of this data, the content is presented using sub-headings.

While these descriptions can not possibly capture each of the 8,023 comments, they give a sense of the themes that educators conveyed. The comments themselves are informative, powerful and moving. Given the honesty and vulnerability with which educators wrote, we felt it was important to make the comments for all of the open ended questions available. Comments were edited to eliminate identifying information (e.g., where the respondent worked) and anything that could be construed as personally disparaging to an individual, though there were very few of those comments. The full list of comments from which these descriptions were derived are available in [Data Supplement D](#).

**Advice.** Respondents' comments that provided advice focused on two general areas: the format of distance learning moving forward and support for colleagues.

- *Distance Learning Formats.* Insights educators shared regarding distance learning formats included comments providing advice on the format of learning for the fall. Some educators supported continuing distance learning citing primarily health concerns and the ability to improve next time around, others supported a hybrid-model to get at least some in-person time with students, and yet others requested fully in-person learning for the fall feeling that instruction can be at its best when in person. In general, educators wanted decision-makers to make decisions by keeping student and staff safety in mind and incorporate feedback from families and staff.
- *Support of Colleagues.* Educators offered advice on how to best support teachers and on how to stay positive and take care of oneself. Respondents advised giving teachers more time to plan, providing clear guidelines for staff, students, and families regarding expectations

and communication, holding staff and families accountable while also implementing supports for families that cannot assist their children in distance learning and for staff who are unable to connect with certain families. Respondents also offered advice for colleagues. There were recommendations to be flexible, patient, creative, kind (to oneself and families), prepared, realistic, understanding, brave, positive, innovative, and consistent. With regards to instruction, educators suggested breaking lessons down into manageable steps for students, building relationships whenever possible, and collaborating with colleagues. Finally, educators gave reminders to take care of oneself and one's students in this difficult time, do one's best with what is available, try new things, change what is not working, communicate regularly, and start slow then ramp instruction up over time.

**Challenges and Worries.** Educators detailed challenges they faced and worries they had in the insights section that fell into four broad areas: (1) connecting with students and families, (2) inequities, (3) instruction and assessment and (4) the well-being of themselves and others.

- *Connecting with Students and Families.* Among some of the most common challenges cited by educators were overall student disengagement and the notion that disengagement increased as distance learning continued. Educators cited that

**"Districts and Gov. Walz have done an absolutely outstanding job throughout this crisis, and I think we have a real opportunity here to continue to grow as educators and community members - I'm not sure what it looks like - but we're at the brink of inclusivity and turning a new page."**

they struggled to successfully reach families due to inaccurate contact information or families not responding. While educators described this as frustrating, they also empathized with the difficult burden that was placed on families due to the sudden transition to distance learning. In addition, educators repeatedly cited concerns about the challenge of implementing distance learning in the fall without previously established relationships with students.

- *Inequities.* Educators cited the inequity of distance learning and how the consequences of differences in resources were exacerbated by distance



learning. This resulted in significant worries among educators about growing disparities in educational outcomes for all students, but especially students living in poverty, students of Color, students receiving special education services, immigrant or English learner students, and early learners. Educators were specifically concerned about the heavy caseloads for English learner teachers and lack of resources to support English learners (e.g., translation services and

students' disengagement from distance learning. Furthermore, educators reported concern about the effectiveness of instruction in distance learning and how far behind students might be in their learning overall.

- *Well Being.* Educators repeatedly reported mental and physical health concerns for themselves, students, and families. They indicated in their comments that the mental health of staff and students/families worsened over the course of

**“If we continue distance learning in 20-21, I am most concerned about how to get students who did not participate at all in the spring to become involved. As a kindergarten teacher, I feel much safer continuing distance learning rather than going back to school while COVID-19 is still an ongoing pandemic. I have people in my family who are high risk, and my students do as well, so it does not feel safe for us to be back in our school environment in the fall. Young elementary students are not great at physical distancing, and I think all the safety precautions needed (masks, face shields, staying in own classrooms, no 'normal' recess time, etc.) would make school feel like a very different and potentially unpleasant place for kids. I think we should find a way to continue distance learning to the best of our ability until this pandemic has ended.”**

learning management platforms with support in languages other than English). Similarly, educators were concerned about the heavy workload placed on special education teachers (e.g., large caseloads, modifying assignments, holding IEP meetings) and the difficulty some students with disabilities had in interacting virtually. Educators reported concern about increased screen time for early learners. Finally, some respondents reported feeling concerned that students with access to online learning may have received better quality and more rigorous educational opportunities than those using paper materials.

- *Instruction and Assessment.* Other challenges educators encountered related to instruction, such as difficulty administering assessments, grading given concerns about cheating, enforcing accountability, creating lessons in new online platforms, teaching classes that are difficult online (e.g., music, career and technical education, and physical education), meeting state standards, and some students' limited access to or skill in using the internet or technology. Many educators cited being concerned about the use of pass/fail grading systems, indicating they believed pass/fail grading may have contributed to

distance learning. They reported this as a worry, citing they felt unprepared to provide the social-emotional and mental health support that students needed. Many comments described worries for the fall. Respondents reported concerns about their own health and the health of others if in-person learning happens in the fall. While some educators reported they were willing to take that risk for what they described as perceived 'benefits' of in-person learning, others respondents felt the opposite was true. In addition, educators reported concerns about schools lacking the financial resources for safety measures (e.g., PPE and cleaning equipment) that they perceived as necessary for safe in-person learning.

**Experiences.** Insights educators shared included a variety of both positive and negative experiences. Educators reported a steep learning curve for implementing distance learning, that the workload was greater, and that they did not always feel successful in their work. Some educators reported not being included in decision-making.

- *Learning Curve.* Many educators reported learning technology skills and how to make creative adaptations with lessons and assessments in an online format. They also noted that the distance learning experience taught them about the

critical support that schools provide to students that go beyond academics (e.g., food, health, and mental health services). Finally, some educators expressed that they have identified what they would do differently and reported that they could do distance learning better moving forward.

- **Workload.** The quantitative survey data indicated that respondents reported a greater workload during distance learning. In their open-ended comments, respondents cited longer work days because some students were unable to complete work during the regular workday. As a result, many educators provided support to students in the evenings and on weekends. Educators with their own children at home cited struggling to both teach their students and support their own children as well as maintaining a work-life balance. While respondents cited a heavier workload during distance learning, there were also comments that they were grateful for opportunities for planning, training, and preparation time (including the 8 days the Governor provided) as well as collaboration and assistance from colleagues.

- **Feeling of Success.** Many educators reported that they did their best given the quick switch to distance learning, however they reported feeling less effective than they had been while providing in-person instruction. Educators reported missing their students, feeling overwhelmed, burnt out, isolated, lonely and anxious about whether they were meeting the needs of their students. There were reports of feeling successful when they were able to connect 1:1 with students. These successful interactions provided insight to educators on relationship building, and many educators reported that they will use these skills in future online and in-person instruction.

**“Going distance learning is not a one size fits all. Northern MN should not be in the same categories as the cities. It makes no sense for us not to go back to school when we have small class sizes already.”**

**“Perhaps we need to stop forcing things back to the way they were but instead focus on what we can do to deliver quality educational resources and experiences that grow our youth, wherever they may be.”**

**Needs.** The comments that respondents cited as needs are themes that were found in other places in the data. However, the fact that similar themes surfaced across multiple questions is important to both note and report. Comments around needs fell into three areas: technology; supports for students, families, and educators; and policy changes or considerations.

- **Technology.** Educators reported a variety of technology needs, including quality technology and internet access as well as training and technology support (e.g., helplines) for educators and families for the online learning management systems and online curricular resources
- **Supports for Students/Families.** Educators reported a desire for better support for families in helping their students complete work and options for parents who are unable to support their children in distance learning. Educators cited needs such as school supplies (e.g., paper, notebooks, pencils), library books, and social-emotional learning and mental health supports, including more social workers and psychologists.
- **Supports For Educators.** In terms of teaching, educators reported needs for support in instructional design, translation services, closed captioning services, and opportunities for synchronous learning. Paraprofessionals commented on needing more access to training and opportunities to interact with students. Specialist educators expressed the need to emphasize the importance of every subject playing a role in the development of the whole child. Educators expressed needing clearer and higher expectations for families, accountable attendance and grading systems, and other systems to support educator-parent communication. Educators cited a need for support from administrators rather than micromanagement as well as having equitable expectations of staff. Special education teachers, in particular, expressed feeling that higher

**“The one thing that I liked the most about distance learning was connecting with students that I wouldn't otherwise have had as much time to work with ...I would do distance learning again in a heartbeat!”**

expectations were placed upon them than general education teachers. Respondents reported wanting to have a voice in decision-making as well as needing a clear plan, more structure, and better communication within and across schools and districts.

- **Policy.** Educators also shared policy needs at various levels. For example, educators expressed needing changes at the state and federal level to support families' (including undocumented and immigrant families) access to financial and health resources, stable housing, and internet access. In addition, educators wanted clear special education directives and looser academic requirements at the state level. Other policy-related needs expressed included, higher teacher pay, childcare for educators, more collaboration and preparation time, and smaller class sizes. Finally, educators expressed a broad need to address inequities in the educational system and to continue having difficult conversations about equity in learning, and funding, and resource distribution across the state.

Finally, educators expressed a multitude of needs regarding the decision about fall instruction. Some educators emphasized the need to consider students and educators who are immunocompromised and the safety of in-person learning. Other educators focused on the benefits of in-person instruction in comparison to distance learning (e.g., opportunities for developmentally appropriate hands-on learning) and expressed the need to return to in-person learning. Educators also emphasized the need for PPE and cleaning supplies if returning to in-person instruction. Furthermore, educators highlighted the differences in the pandemic across regions and expressed needing MDE to consider a regional approach to fall instruction.

**Successes.** Many educators thought that distance learning went better than anticipated and praised the time, effort, and energy educators put into

making distance learning the best it could be. They reported successes in learning new skills and gaining new understandings of their students and families.

- **Skills Gained.** Educators were surprised that distance learning presented opportunities they did not typically have teaching in person, such as learning new technology skills, accessing free online resources, individualizing instruction, and regularly meeting 1-on-1 with students and families. In addition, educators reported the opportunity distance learning provided to focus on mental health and individual student needs rather than testing. Some respondents reported that having time to build relationships and focus on individual student needs allowed them to learn more about their students' lives causing them to think critically about issues of equity. As a result, some old-beliefs were challenged, and educators reported that they were re-imagining learning. Educators attributed successes of distance learning to both relationships already established earlier in the year as well as opportunities to focus on building relationships and meeting students' needs in distance learning.
- **New Understandings.** In addition, educators felt some of the distance learning successes were due to 1-1 technology programs that were already in place, the time they had to plan, and collaboration with colleagues. Furthermore, some educators felt some students thrived in distance learning because they had family support, were independent or self-motivated learners, previously did well in school, or found traditional school triggered negative emotions (e.g., anxiety) that was not present in the distance learning environment. Educators also shared a variety of lessons they felt students learned in distance learning including time-management, adaptability, and perseverance.

# Closing Thoughts

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an unprecedented and sudden change in the way students in Minnesota were educated in the spring of 2020. This survey provided the opportunity for the voices of over 13,000 educators to be heard. Educators responded to this survey in the midst of a pandemic when information changed rapidly—sometimes on a daily basis—and at a time of great social unrest and heightened concern regarding systemic racism resulting from the murder of George Floyd. With these contextual factors in mind, three themes emerged about how educators were feeling during the time they completed the survey. Some educators felt emotionally drained, anxious and uncertain. Others felt optimistic about applying the lessons they learned from the spring of 2020 to their teaching in the fall. Finally, while educators saw the value of in-person instruction, many were worried and concerned about students, families, or themselves should in-person instruction resume. The emotions of educators depend on the individual person and their situation, coping mechanisms, and feelings of self-efficacy in order to successfully meet the needs of students. The results of this survey highlight the need to support educators and provide them with the tools, resources, and strategies to provide quality instruction, establish and maintain healthy relationships with students, partner with families, and increase their own self-efficacy. The data gathered through this survey provides a wealth of information to focus on recovery and redesign of learning as educators across Minnesota prepare to move into the next school year.

We sincerely thank all educators who took the time to complete the survey. Your voices were heard.



# Appendix A

## Communications from CEHD to Educators

**Sent: May 27 by College of Education and Human Development**

Greetings from the University of Minnesota!

We are attempting to gather information from educators to aggregate the needs of all districts in the state and identify ways the University can support school districts in the future. With the assumption that schools may need to be in at least a hybrid mode of distance learning at some point during 2020-21 and may need greater levels of support to do that effectively, we have developed a survey regarding the implementation of distance learning this spring.

We will provide district leaders with a report for their district as well as a report of how their district compares to the entire survey sample at no cost. The survey is completely voluntary and should take no more than five minutes to complete. It is designed for all staff and will pose questions specific to role (e.g, teacher, paraeducator, administrator). We hope that you and your staff will complete the survey by Friday, June 5. To do so, you can simply forward this email or the link below:

[z.umn.edu/DistanceLearningSurvey](https://z.umn.edu/DistanceLearningSurvey)

Thank you in advance for your consideration,  
Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement  
College of Education and Human Development  
University of Minnesota

**Sent: June 6 by College of Education and Human Development**

Greetings once again from the University of Minnesota!

We are pleased to share that we have gotten a really good response on the PreK-12 Distance Learning Survey sent on Thursday, May 28. At the request of some in the field, we will be extending the deadline until this Friday, June 12 at 5pm.

Despite the school year being over or nearly-over for many, we still invite you to send this on and encourage all your educators (teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, etc.) to take part in the survey for a few reasons: It will allow you to have information about your district for use in planning for next fall. The information your district receives will be able to be compared to the state as a whole.

To our knowledge, this is the only state-wide effort to collect feedback from educators and thus may stand to inform future state-wide policy making. If you have already participated and encouraged those in your district to do so as well, thank you.

Access the survey here: [z.umn.edu/DistanceLearningSurvey](https://z.umn.edu/DistanceLearningSurvey). You can forward this whole message or just the link to other educators in your district.

Thanks again,  
Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement  
College of Education and Human Development  
University of Minnesota



**Sent: June 19 by Denise Specht at EdMinn**

Greetings, educators!

The Minnesota Department of Education has released new guidance for three potential scenarios for our return school in the fall.

While a final decision will not be announced by Gov. Tim Walz until the week of July 27, this time provides us with an opportunity to ensure our voices are part of the planning process.

The University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development launched a survey in late May seeking feedback on distance learning from educators. It is the only statewide survey seeking the perspective of educators, and will be used to refine plans by MDE and likely local districts. While the response rate has been good, with more than half of the respondents being educators, I think it could be even better.

Commissioner of Education Mary Cathryn Ricker and I have asked the University of Minnesota to extend the survey deadline to ensure all teachers and education support professionals across the state can be heard and are a part of the planning process at the state and local level. They were happy to do so.

I am writing to ask each of you to complete the survey. It should take no more than five minutes. Statewide results will be shared publicly, and district-level data will be sent to superintendents.

I ask that you complete the survey below by Sunday, June 28.  
[z.umn.edu/DistanceLearningSurvey](https://z.umn.edu/DistanceLearningSurvey)

Together,

Denise Specht, President



# Appendix B

## Complete Text of Survey of Educators

### MN Distance Learning Survey

This survey is being conducted by the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development in order to gain insights from PK-12 educators on their experiences with distance learning implementation in the spring of 2020. This short 18 question survey is voluntary and anonymous, was developed with input from educators in the field, and is intended to inform potentially needed future support that individual districts, the U of M or other organizations may be able to provide. Thank you for your participation.  
Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, University of Minnesota

### In what way is your school delivering distance learning this spring (2020)?

- Online
- Print materials
- Online and print materials

*If respondents choose Online or Online and print materials in the previous question, they received this question:*

### How have you been delivering online learning?

- Asynchronous (on-demand, at any time that works best for the student) (1)
- Synchronous (in real time) (2)
- A mix of asynchronous and synchronous (3)

### How frequently do you use each method to communicate with your students?

	Never	Less than Daily	Daily
Email			
Online learning platform (e.g., Schoology, Google classroom, Seesaw)			
Telephone call (or similar platforms, i.e., Google Voice)			
Zoom call (or similar platform, i.e., Google Meets)			

### To what extent are educators in your school continuing to collaborate in the following areas, relative to before we went to distance learning?

	Less than before	About the same	More than before
PLCs and/or grade-level/subject area teams			
Touch points with administrators			
MTSS/Rtl leadership teams			
Student support team/Problem solving team (i.e., special education, 504 plans, ELL supports, mental health support, student/family engagement)			

### Have you collaborated with student teachers (i.e., worked with university practica/internship students) during distance learning?

- Yes
- No

*If respondents chose Yes to having collaborated with student teachers in the previous question, they received this question:*

**In which of the following ways did the student teacher(s) (i.e., university practica/internship students) support distance learning? (Select all that apply)**

- Helped create lesson plans
- Helped create materials for students
- Facilitated instruction
- Worked one-on-one with learners who needed additional support

**To what extent has your district provided you with the professional learning/support you need to do the best you can during distance learning?**

- Not at all
- A little, but not enough
- Enough
- More than enough

**To what extent does your time spent working during distance learning compare to your time spent working previously?**

- I'm spending less time working during distance learning
- I'm spending the same amount of time working during distance learning
- I'm spending more time working during distance learning

**To what extent are you worried about the current situation (i.e., the pandemic) interfering with your ability to do your work?**

- Not at all
- A little
- Somewhat
- A great deal

*If respondents choose A little, Somewhat, or A great deal, they received this question:*

**Which of the following worries you a great deal? Select all that apply.**

- Coming back to school in the fall and getting sick
- Continuing distance learning in the fall
- Accessing technology in the fall
- Other (please specify)

The following questions are specific to your current role.

**What is your current role?**

- Administrator
- English learner teacher
- Instructional coach
- Paraprofessional/support staff
- Special education teacher
- Specialist/elective teacher (e.g., art, music, phy ed)
- Student support (e.g., counselor, social work, school psychologist)
- Teacher

**Which school district are you from?**

*[Respondents were given the option to select their district/charter school from a drop down menu]*





*Respondents who selected Teacher, Specialist/elective teacher (e.g., art, music, phy ed), Special Education Teacher, or English language learner teacher were asked:*

**Choose 3 areas that were the most successful for you during distance learning.**

- Assessment
- Grading
- Connecting with families
- Connecting with students
- Developing engaging lessons
- Providing technology support to students/families
- Supporting the needs of ELL students
- Supporting the needs of special education students
- Using technology to provide distance learning

*Respondents who selected Teacher, Specialist/elective teacher (e.g., art, music, phy ed), Special Education Teacher, or English language learner teacher were asked:*

**Choose 3 areas that were the most challenging for you during distance learning.**

- Assessment
- Grading
- Connecting with families
- Connecting with students
- Developing engaging lessons
- Providing technology support to students/families
- Supporting the needs of ELL students
- Supporting the needs of special education students
- Using technology to provide distance learning

*Respondents who selected Instructional coach, Paraprofessional/support staff, or Student support (e.g., counselor, social work, school psychologist) were asked:*

**Choose 3 areas that were the most successful for you during distance learning.**

- Assessment
- Connecting with families
- Connecting with students
- Developing engaging lessons
- Delivering services
- Providing technology support to students/families
- Supporting the needs of ELL students
- Supporting the needs of special education students
- Using technology to provide distance learning

*Respondents who selected Instructional coach, Paraprofessional/support staff, or Student support (e.g., counselor, social work, school psychologist) were asked:*

**Choose 3 areas that were the most challenging for you during distance learning.**

- Assessment
- Connecting with families
- Connecting with students
- Developing engaging lessons
- Delivering services
- Providing technology support to students/families
- Supporting the needs of ELL students
- Supporting the needs of special education students
- Using technology to provide distance learning

*If respondents chose Administrator, they were asked:*

**Choose 3 areas that were the most successful in your implementation of distance learning.**

- Addressing the needs of tribal communities
- Assessing and adjusting the distance learning plan
- Assessing student learning
- Communicating regularly with families
- Distributing meals
- Ensuring student access to technology (laptops, tablets, etc.)
- Ensuring student access to the internet (wifi, hotspots, etc.)
- Ensuring student access to alternative (non-online) educational materials
- Ensuring student access to daily interaction with teachers
- Meeting the needs of students receiving special education services (IEPs) and with 504 plans
- Meeting the needs of staff
- Meeting the needs of students receiving English learning services
- Meeting the needs of students experiencing homelessness
- Supporting early learners
- Supporting the mental health needs of students
- Tracking attendance
- Utilizing partnerships to meet the needs of vulnerable students

*If respondents chose Administrator, they were asked:*

**Choose 3 areas that were the most challenging in your implementation of distance learning.**

- Addressing the needs of tribal communities
- Assessing and adjusting the distance learning plan
- Assessing student learning
- Communicating regularly with families
- Distributing meals
- Ensuring student access to technology (laptops, tablets, etc.)
- Ensuring student access to the internet (wifi, hotspots, etc.)
- Ensuring student access to alternative (non-online) educational materials
- Ensuring student access to daily interaction with teachers
- Meeting the needs of students receiving special education services (IEPs) and with 504 plans
- Meeting the needs of staff
- Meeting the needs of students receiving English learning services
- Meeting the needs of students experiencing homelessness
- Supporting early learners
- Supporting the mental health needs of students
- Tracking attendance
- Utilizing partnerships to meet the needs of vulnerable students

**What supports do you need to be effective in distance learning in the 2020-2021 school year, and extending beyond that?**

- Hardware
- Internet connectivity
- Curricular resources
- Professional development
- Other (please specify)

*Respondents who chose Professional development received this question:*

**What topics would you need professional development on?**

**Reflecting on your experience during this initial distance learning time, what insight would you like to share about implementing distance learning?**



**How long have you been an educator?**

- 1 year or less
- 2-5 years
- 6-10 years
- More than 10 years

**What levels do you work in? Please check all that apply.**

- Early childhood
- Elementary
- Secondary
- District-wide

**What is your race or ethnicity? Please check all that apply.**

- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Black or African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other (please specify)

Thank you for participating in this survey. Following data analysis, statewide results from the survey will be available at the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement's website: <https://www.cehd.umn.edu/carei/>.



# Appendix C

## MDE Distance Learning Plan Template

*This Distance Learning Plan Template, used to inform our survey question to Administrators for areas of success and challenges, was created and posted by the Minnesota Department of Education. March 26 2020; updated March 31 2020. Accessed at <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/health/covid19/>*

### Distance Learning Plan Template

This template is intended to support Minnesota school districts and charters in ensuring they have meaningful, relevant, and equitable learning plans in place to address the needs of all students. Districts are not required to use this template and can use whatever formats support their distance learning programming. Districts are not asked to submit their distance learning plans to MDE.

Distance Learning Defined: Students engaging in distance learning have access to appropriate educational materials and receive daily interaction with their licensed teacher(s).

It is important to note that distance learning does not always mean e-learning or online learning. It is critical to provide this learning in a format that can be equitably accessed by all students.

School districts and charters can find additional planning resources at the MDE COVID-19 Updates page.

### Overall Equity Considerations

- Who are the racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other marginalized groups that are affected by the distance learning plan? What are the potential impacts on these groups?
- Does the distance learning plan ignore or worsen existing disparities or produce other unintended consequences? Who does the distance learning plan benefit?
- How have we intentionally involved stakeholders who are also members of the communities affected by the distance learning plan? How have stakeholders and community members validated or invalidated our conclusions to questions 1 and 2?
- List all the potential barriers (structural, human, financial, community, etc.) to more equitable outcomes related to the distance learning plan.
- How will we mitigate the negative impacts and address the barriers identified above?
- Once the distance learning plan has been implemented, how will we gather and use the input from those impacted?
- What qualitative and quantitative evidence will we gather and analyze to determine the effects of the distance learning plan?

### Template

#### 1. How are we ensuring students have access to appropriate educational materials, including technology?

##### Additional considerations

- If we are using an online learning system, how are we ensuring it can effectively support the district's unique learning and teaching needs, including the ability to provide differentiated instruction as well as one-on-one support for students who need it?
- If we are using an online learning system, what additional options are being made for students and families who will not have access to this system? How will we ensure that the options are of the same, if not better, quality than the system students and families cannot access?
- If we are delivering materials or asking families to pick up materials, who are the families that will have barriers to getting materials? How will we address those barriers?
- How are we ensuring that a variety of educational resources that reflect multiple and silenced perspectives are being identified and used?
- How are we ensuring that our distance learning model is secure and will not allow for the release of protected student or staff information?
- Additional student instruction resources.

## **2. How are we ensuring students receive daily interaction with their licensed teacher(s)?**

Additional considerations

- How are we defining engagement and student-teacher interactions? What are our expectations?
- How are families' perspectives and experiences centered in our efforts to engage students in learning and interactions with their teachers?
- How will we determine and support the various modes by which teachers can interact and engage with students?
- How will teachers be culturally responsive and relevant during their distant learning interactions with students?
- How will we utilize support staff to engage with students and families?
- How will we differentiate instruction for various levels of learning?
- What are we doing differently for students in daycare settings, both on and off school grounds?

## **3. How will we support the mental health needs of students?**

Additional considerations

- What information will we share with families regarding mental health services and supports?
- What community resources and partnerships can be used or leveraged to help support students and families?
- How can online resources and resources that don't require internet access be used to support students and families?
- How will we support students who are not connected to a mental health provider?
- How will we assist families in obtaining medical assistance benefits?
- How will we assist students who are participating in telehealth options via school linked mental health providers?
- What information will we provide to help staff and families talk with students about COVID-19 and its impact?
- How will we proactively address bullying?

## **4. How will the needs of students with IEPs be met?**

Additional considerations

- How will lessons be delivered to accommodate students with 504 plans?
- How will students receive support from their teachers and support staff?
- What online and non-internet mandatory resources are available to help support students with IEPs?
- How will we measure IEP goals? How will data be collected?
- How will we ensure we meet evaluation requirements within legal timelines?
- Additional special education resources.

## **5. How will we ensure students have internet access as needed?**

Additional considerations

- How can we work with local internet providers to obtain internet access for students and families?
- Keeping in mind that all areas will not have the capacity to offer internet access to students and families, what additional options can be used to get students and families the materials, resources and support that they need?

## **6. How will meal delivery or distribution occur?**

Additional considerations

- If we are delivering meals or asking families to pick up meals, who are the families that will have barriers to getting materials? How will we address those barriers?
- If we are delivering or asking families to pick up meals for multiple days, how will we ensure homeless students can refrigerate and store food?
- Additional food and nutrition resources.

## **7. How will we support our English Learners?**

Additional considerations

- How will we provide legally required English language development instruction for English learners?
- How will mainstream teachers provide supports for English learners within their distance learning instruction?
- How will we communicate distance learning plans to multilingual, multicultural families including translation and interpretation needs? How will we build collaborative networks with community elders, bilingual staff, and cultural organizations to help with outreach and communication?
- Additional English learner programming guidance.

## **8. How will the needs of students experiencing homelessness be met?**

Additional considerations

- Do we know which students are experiencing homelessness?
- Do we have methods in place to maintain communication with students experiencing homelessness?
- How can we ensure families have access to needed supports?
- How are we utilizing our liaisons, school counselors, school social workers, and other relevant personnel to conduct outreach?
- How are we working with our community to ensure access to virtual or distance learning opportunities?

## **9. How will Early Learning occur?**

Additional considerations

- Since preschool learners are not as independent as older learners, how will learning be embedded in routines so families are not overwhelmed?
- How will we support families of our youngest learners in using screen time as a support to, and not instead of, adult-child interaction?
- How will activities accommodate hands-on experiences when families may not have a variety of materials? How will materials be provided, delivered and returned?
- How will all learning areas be addressed such as creative play, real-life exploration, physical activity, language development, and social interactions?
- How might family members like grandparents and older siblings support the young child's learning?
- Additional prekindergarten distance learning guidance.

## **10. How will we assess our students?**

Additional considerations

- What do we believe about assessments and what they are meant to do?
- What are the various ways by which students will be assessed for proficiency?
- How will we report students' progress?

## **11. How will we regularly communicate with families?**

Additional considerations

- How are families' perspectives and experiences centered in our communication plan?
- How are we communicating with families who speak a language other than English?
- How are we ensuring families understand our distance learning model? Use of the model? Student expectations?
- What are the platforms or apps that adults, students, and families utilize the most? How can these be leveraged to get information to students and families?

## **12. How will we address the needs of our tribal communities?**

Additional considerations

- How are we ensuring our plan is not dependent on students having internet access?
- Who will be our consistent Indian Education point person to communicate with and advocate for students and their families?
- What is our plan to regularly communicate with American Indian families?
- How are we partnering and coordinating our services with local tribes, community organizations, and/or MDE Indian Education personnel to support students and their families?

### **13. How will we utilize partnerships to meet the needs of vulnerable students?**

Additional considerations

- How are we utilizing programming options for school nurses, school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, paraprofessionals, and other school specialists and cultural liaisons?
- Who are our community partners and how are we collaborating to meet students' needs?
- Additional resources and guidance on supporting students.

### **14. How will we meet the needs of staff?**

Additional considerations

- How will we ensure consistent, clear communications exist across all staff?
- How are we providing initial and ongoing training to our staff on our distance learning model and expectations? How will we address problems of practice as they occur?
- How will we regularly observe distance learning and provide feedback to teachers and staff?
- How will teachers continue to collaborate in professional learning communities, grade-level teams, subject-area teams, etc.?
- How are we supporting the social, emotional, and mental health needs of our staff?
- How will we ensure the resources and professional development available to staff include instruction and guidance on culturally responsive and relevant distant instruction?

### **15. How are we tracking attendance of students and staff?**

Additional considerations

- How is attendance being defined? Are there additional ways by which attendance can be defined or achieved?
- How are we communicating attendance procedures and expectations to students and families?
- How are our practices for tracking attendance equitable? What considerations are we making for students and families that cannot connect via the internet?

### **16. How will we assess and adjust our distance learning plan during implementation?**

Additional considerations

- What data and information will we collect to assess the implementation and impacts of our distance learning plan?
- Who will monitor impacts? How frequently?
- How will impacts be communicated to appropriate stakeholders, including families?
- How will we monitor whether our distance learning plan is benefitting some students and presenting learning barriers to others?

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