
Teaching During Covid-19

Research Brief

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Key Findings

- 81% of respondents are expected to teach online during school closures
- 88% of survey participants indicated that they do not have any experience teaching online
- Around 63% of teachers received training to prepare for the transition to virtual teaching
- 45% of the teachers surveyed indicated that they felt *somewhat prepared* to teach online and an additional 16% reported feeling *very well prepared*. Conversely, 21% reported feeling *somewhat unprepared* and 16% felt *not at all prepared*
- 63% of teachers whose schools will not provide online instruction cited equity concerns as the primary reason for that decision
- Just over half of teachers indicated that students were provided with laptops or other devices (58%) and assistance with internet connectivity (53%)
- 97% of educators will be working from home and around 55% of them will be responsible for caring for a child or other family member during online instructional time
- Leading platforms for communication and instruction include email, Google, and Zoom
- The majority of teachers (62%) will use a blend of synchronous and asynchronous instruction, while 17% will use only recorded sessions and 7% will conduct live lessons

Survey Objectives

Covid-19 has significantly impacted all aspects of life and resulted in millions of people working from home. Almost overnight, many educators were expected to shift their practice to a virtual delivery model, leading to unprecedented challenges and opportunities. This research brief explores responses related to how educators are responding to the situation, examining emerging practices and areas of concern.

Methods

Survey items were developed based on a thematic analysis of questions posted on several educator blogs and social media groups during the week of March 20, 2020. The final survey version was distributed to many of these same online groups on March 30, 2020. Participants provided consent and remained anonymous. The survey included a range of questions regarding online teaching, including training for the transition to online learning, feelings of preparedness, personal considerations, concerns, and virtual platforms.

Survey Participants

A total of 1145 educators completed the survey, of which 941 (82%) indicated a primary educational role of teacher and an additional 186 (16%) specifically reported their role as a special education teacher. Elementary (K-5) teachers represented 42% of participants, followed by high school (24%) and middle school (21%) teachers. Most educators (77%) were employed in public schools and 13% worked in private schools. Remaining participants represented charter school teachers (6%), Catholic school educators (2%) and other settings (2%). The majority of respondents were located in the United States (90%) although educators from 24 other countries also completed the survey. Participants were from a range of settings, including 41% from suburban schools, 32% representing urban locations, and 27% reporting that they worked in a rural school. School district size within the United States sample ranged from a few hundred to 271,000 (Florida) while individual school populations spanned from less than 100 to 4500 (Texas) with an average size of 749 students. Educators reported an average of 11.5 years of teaching experience.

Survey Results

Online Learning Expectations and Preparation

A majority (81%) of respondents are expected to teach online during school closures, with 97% working from their home. Most educators (88%) reported that they do not have any experience teaching online. Prior to initiating online instruction, 63% received an average of 4.5 hours of training. Around half of educators (48%) rated this training as moderately effective, 25% rated their training as slightly effective, and 15% reported training that was highly effective.

Close to half (45%) of the teachers surveyed indicated that they felt somewhat prepared to teach online, and an additional 16% reported feeling very well prepared. The remaining educators reported feeling somewhat unprepared (21%), not at all prepared (16%) or unable to determine their level of preparedness (Figure 1).

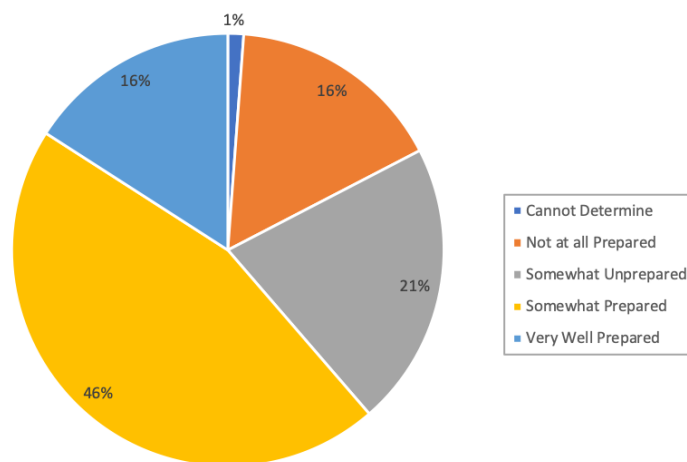


Figure 1: Self Ratings Regarding Preparedness to Teach Online

Instructional Delivery

Educators reported that, on average, they typically provide 6.8 hours of instruction per school day. In comparison, those transitioning to teaching online were expected to lead instruction for an average of 4.4 hours per day. The majority of teachers (62%) will use a blend of synchronous and asynchronous instruction, while 17% will only use recorded sessions and 7% will conduct all lessons live. Leading platforms for communication and instruction include email, Google, and Zoom. Write-in responses further indicated that Scholastic, Epic, and Discovery Education were also additional platforms that teachers were using for online instruction. See Figure 2 for additional information on the various types of digital applications used for instructional purposes.

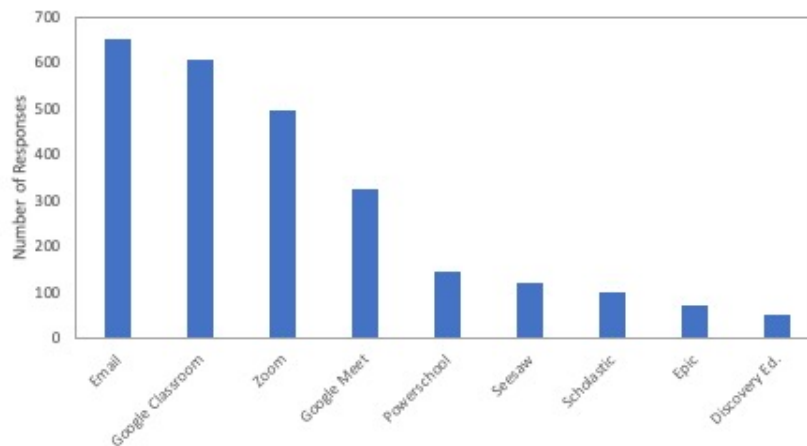


Figure 2: Platforms Used to Deliver Online Instruction

The majority of respondents (82%) indicated that online instruction would “count” towards annual attendance requirements with 39% reporting that student work will be graded, 30% indicating that no work will be graded during this period, and 32% were not sure about grading policies. Slightly more than half of teachers (56%) reported teaching at a school where students were already using a personal device for learning and (58%) indicated that students were provided with laptops or other devices. In addition, 53% of educators reported that students were provided assistance with internet connectivity.

Personal Considerations

Nearly all respondents (97%) reported that they will continue to be paid during school closures. Just over half of educators (55%) indicated that they are responsible for caring for family members during the hours when they are expected to be providing online instruction, including children under 18, adult children with disabilities, and older family members. A majority (77%) indicated that they had not received information from a school representative regarding benefits under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and 71% reported that they did not have access to time off if they were unable to teach online due to caring for other family members. Around a quarter of survey participants (23%) received direct or indirect (links/referrals) support for their emotional well-being during this time. Some educators (144) shared strategies that they were using for their own self care, which included reading, maintaining a schedule, spending time with family and pets, exercising, baking and cooking, getting adequate rest, crafting, and connecting with family and friends either by phone or virtual means.

Teaching “Offline”

Around 20% of survey participants indicated that they will not provide online instruction. Of these 211 respondents, 77% reported that the school provided materials for students to continue learning at home. Of the 138 educators reporting that their district provided a reason for this decision, 63% cited equity concerns as the primary reason, 9% reported that it was due to the grade or age level of the students, and 5% indicated that this was due to concerns regarding the quality of instruction.

Special education and related services

Close to 60% of special educators reported that they had not received information regarding ethical or legal considerations related to providing services online, although 72% indicated that their school was planning to conduct IEP meetings during the school closure period. The majority of counselors and school psychologists (80%), representing 122 participants, reported that they were planning to continue their work with students online. Similar to special education teachers, the majority (94%) had not received any guidance regarding the provision of services in an online format.

Teacher Concerns

Respondents submitted over 900 responses to a prompt asking them to share their greatest concerns as educators during the current crisis situation. Inductive coding was used to identify the following major themes:

- Equity was the leading theme, with three major subcategories:
 - access to technology
 - family support for home learning
 - online instruction for students with disabilities
- Emotional and physical well-being of students, including:
 - mental health supports
 - availability of food
 - physical safety
- Quality and rigor of online instruction
- Clarity of expectations for educators
- Support to educators for implementation of online instruction
- Student engagement
- Personal concerns, including:
 - additional time and preparation needed to teach online
 - caring for family members while working
 - worry about their job security

The following responses demonstrate some of these concerns:

- Equity. How will my students without technology access keep up? I have families that share 1 iPad between 4 school aged children. How is that going to work?
- I am worried about the equity of teaching online when many students do not have devices or internet access
- Lack of internet for most of my students
- Balancing the learning needs of my children and demands of teaching students.
- How effective can I be teaching students how to use technology virtually when I am so unfamiliar with it myself
- Very little support or guidance from administration (superintendent and principal). They want it to be meaningful instruction, but have provided zero help or guidance, there has been minimal communication
- No guidance. We have been doing some forms of online learning but we have had no guidance on what is expected. What platforms to use, how much is enough
- Students will not get a quality learning experience
- Will students gain the knowledge in their current courses, to succeed in courses next year?
- I am concerned about the kids whose parents work all day and can't help with schoolwork
- Too high of expectations, stress on families during a difficult time
- I'm not concerned academically, our kids will be fine. I think we worry too much about grades. I'm more worried for their health emotionally and physically
- Balancing home and work life. It takes time to develop lessons appropriate for students and transferring them online. It is incredibly challenging to do that all while trying to learn the new digital landscape
- I'm most worried about the safety well being of my students. I pray that they are being fed well taken care of. That is my number one concern
- The well-being of my students. Is someone caring for them?
- The emotional and social support that I'm able to provide my younger students when we are together, regression in skills we have been learning to prepare them for future grades, the inability to present new content that I've yet to teach, I miss my students!

Summary

Educators recently faced an unprecedented situation when schools closed abruptly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of these school closures, many teachers have been asked to rapidly transform their classrooms into virtual learning environments. Responses to this survey suggest that around a third of participants did not feel well prepared to begin teaching online and comments further indicate that educators are seeking more direction and support from their administration. Participants also reported significant personal concerns related to the situation that warrant attention from school leaders, such as balancing the care of family members while teaching online.

Equity, with regard to access to the technology necessary to participate in online instruction, emerged as a top concern. Just over half of respondents reported that students were provided with laptops or access to the internet, and survey comments suggest that some students do not have either. In addition, responses indicate that many students are sharing devices with other family members, have not received adequate instruction regarding how to utilize online platforms, or do not have an adult available to facilitate their learning at home. Lack of training for both teachers and students, combined with limited access and unclear directions for educators regarding learning expectations, contribute to educator concerns surrounding the rigor, equity, and quality of the online instruction they are providing to students.

Although there were no specific survey questions regarding the emotional and physical well-being and safety of students, those areas emerged as top considerations for educators who submitted responses regarding their concerns. Many school nutrition programs are continuing, and over 80% of the counselors responding to this survey indicated that they would continue providing counseling services online. However, it is unclear whether these supports will reach our students with the greatest need, especially if these services rely on families to provide the technology or transportation necessary for access. In addition, educators, as mandated reporters, may not have any direct online contact with at-risk students or may find it difficult to determine if a situation warrants a referral when all interactions occur online.

Contact Information

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