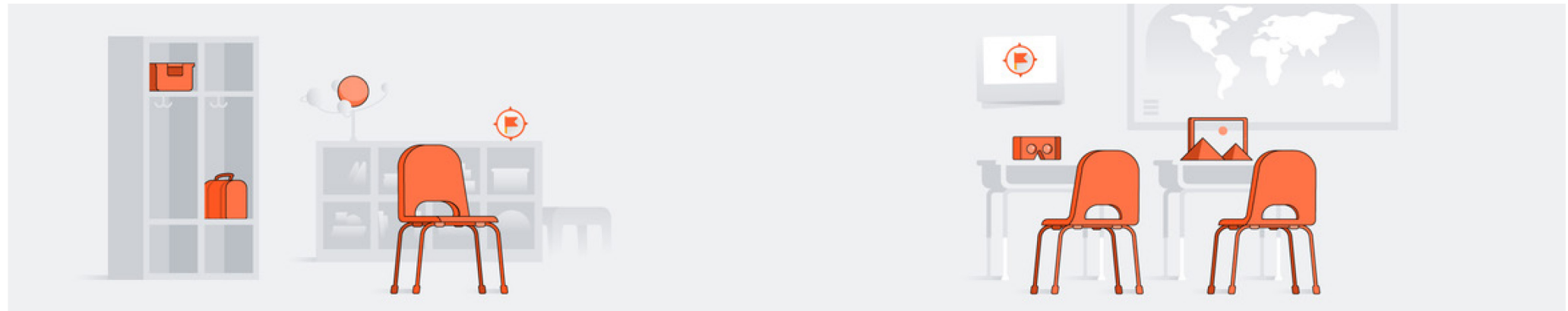# Student Perspectives on Engagement in Distance Learning During School Closures

November 11, 2020

This presentation summarizes student sentiments about distance learning during school closures in the last quarter of the 2019-20 school year (SY). Engagement in distance learning is a challenge for the WCSD and the information here is intended to stimulate ideas for improvement. Comments were captured by the Distance Learning & Well-Being Survey administered by WCSD's Office of Accountability in May-June 2020.

The Value of Engagement
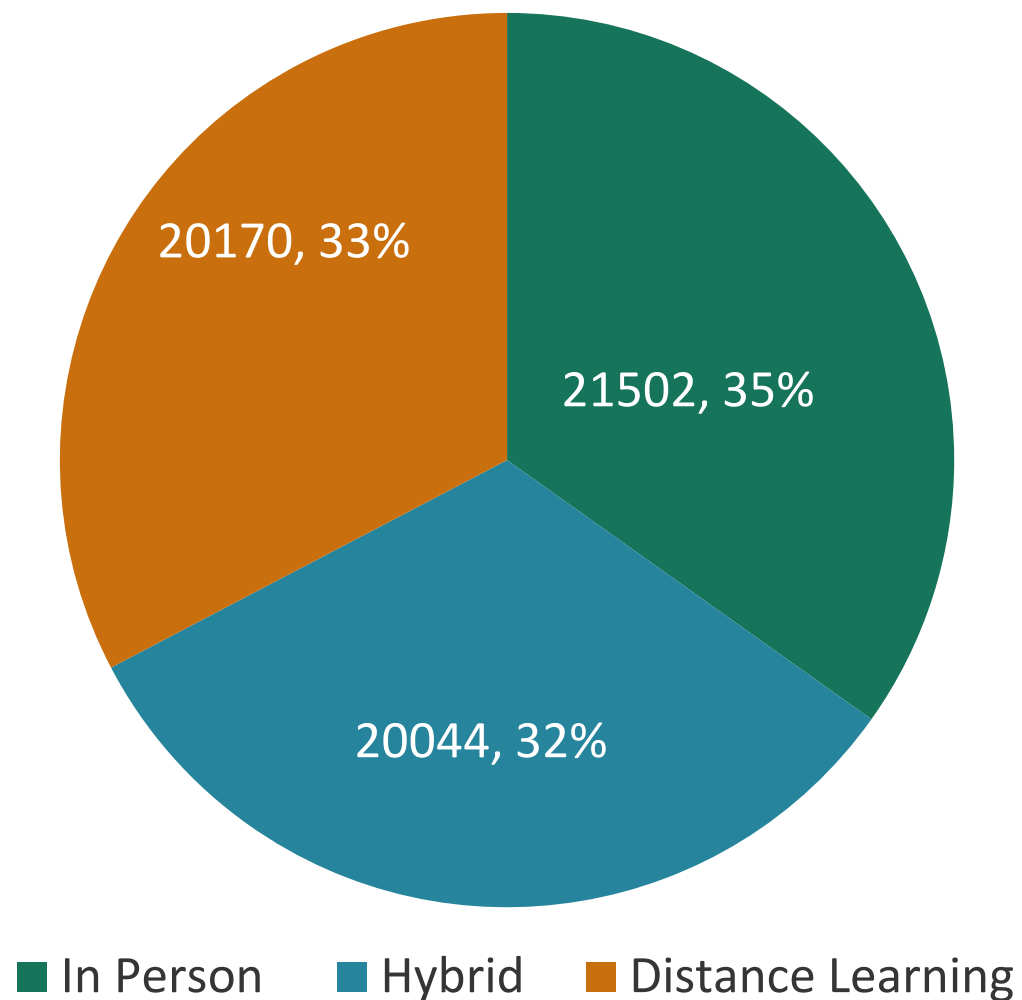
✓ Fosters curiosity, insight, & creativity

✓ Supports learning new skills & knowledge important to students' futures

✓ Low engagement can be an early sign of dropping out
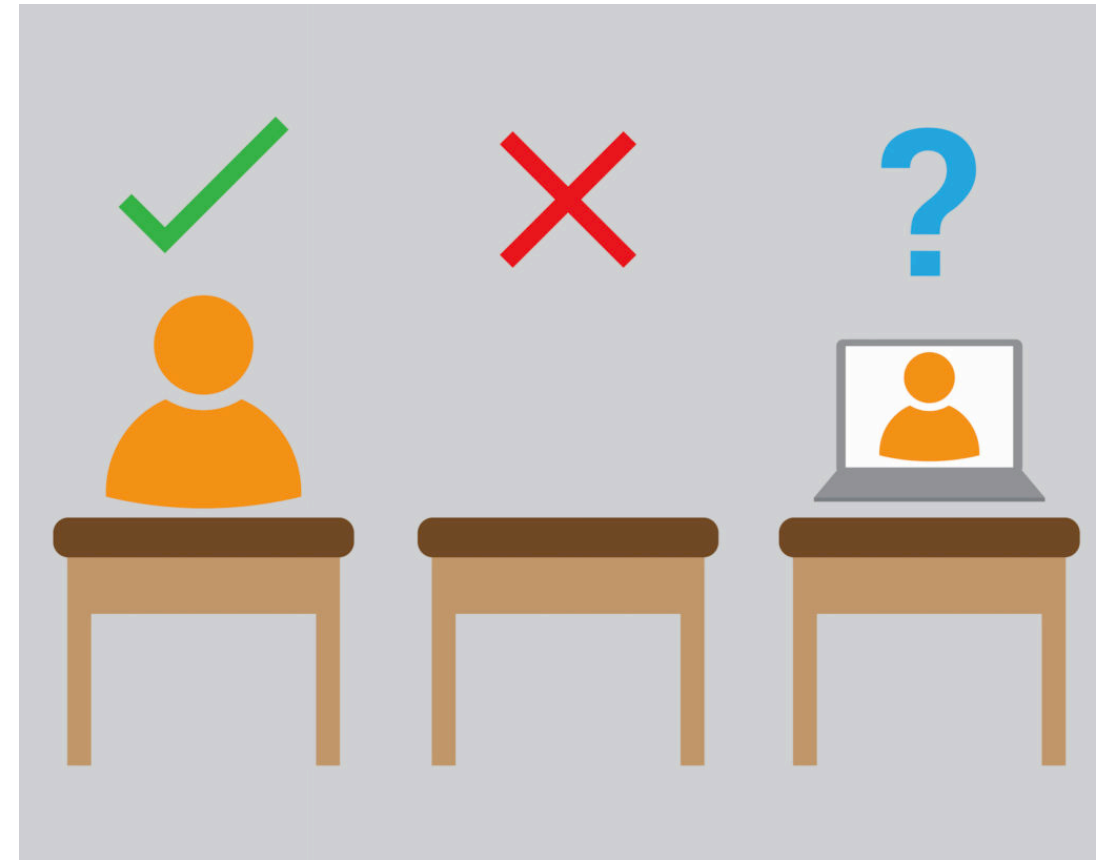
What other reasons explain why school engagement is important?

Enrollment in SY 2020-21 by Learning Model

and % of WCSD students enrolled in in-person, hybrid, and distance learning schedules as of October 2020.

20170, 33%

21502, 35%

20044, 32%

■ In Person　■ Hybrid　■ Distance Learning

Enrollment across learning models is split in thirds

Varies by school level:

- Only 2,414 (~7%) of MS/HS students are in-person daily

Are students similarly engaged in distance learning, hybrid, & in-person classes?

School Engagement & Attendance

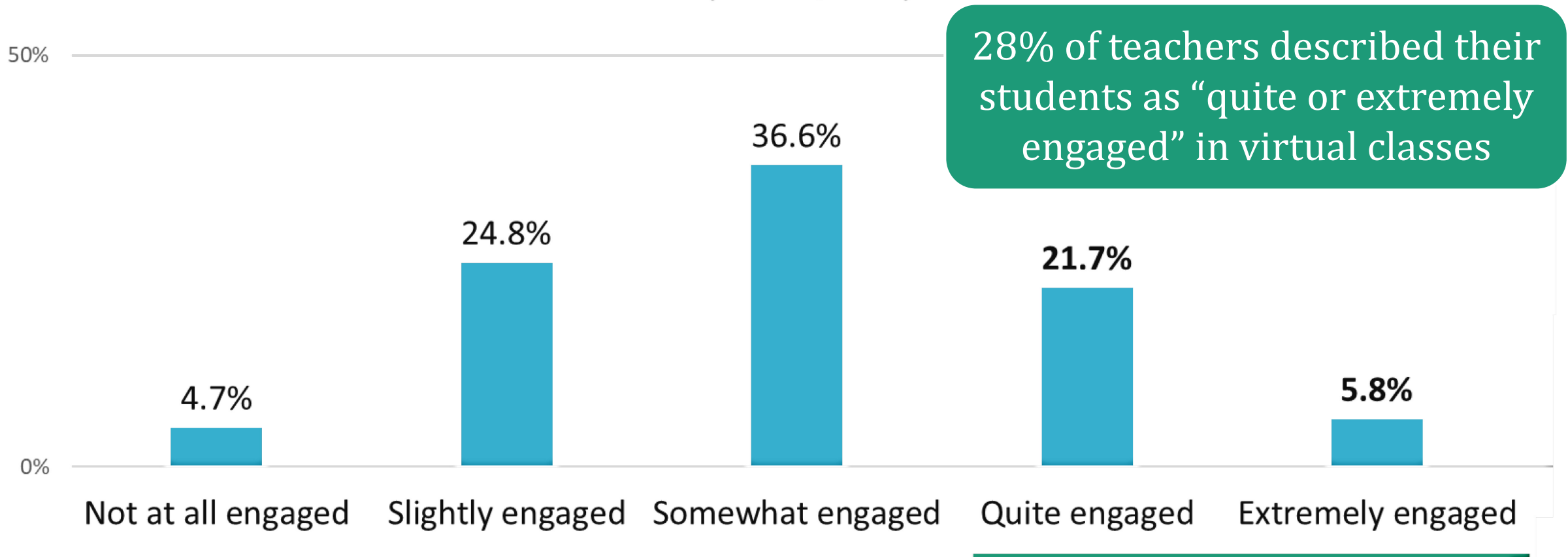One-third of students missed 10% of school days in the first quarter of SY 2020-21

Chronic absence is most pronounced among students in distance learning & hybrid schedules

- **8,009 (40%)** distance learning daily
- **7,424 (37%)** hybrid
- **5,170 (24%)** in-person daily

Engagement in Distance Learning

In the past two weeks, how **engaged** have students been in your virtual classes?
(N = 2,425)

> 28% of teachers described their students as "quite or extremely engaged" in virtual classes

Chart values:
- Not at all engaged: 4.7%
- Slightly engaged: 24.8%
- Somewhat engaged: 36.6%
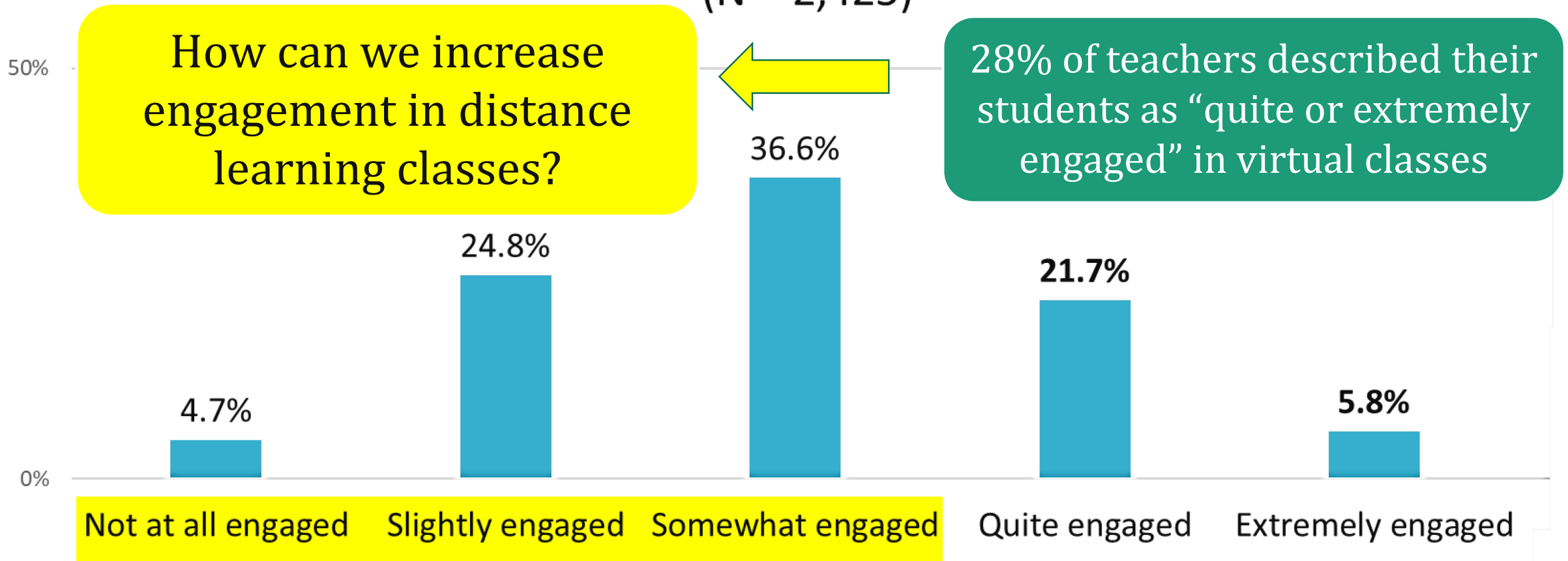- Quite engaged: 21.7%
- Extremely engaged: 5.8%

Note. "Virtual classes" includes students in distance learning and hybrid schedules.
Source: Staff School Reopening Survey (Fall 2020-21)

Engagement in Distance Learning

In the past two weeks, how **engaged** have students been in your virtual classes?
(N = 2,425)

How can we increase engagement in distance learning classes?

28% of teachers described their students as "quite or extremely engaged" in virtual classes

50%

36.6%

24.8%

21.7%

4.7%

5.8%

0%

Not at all engaged   Slightly engaged   Somewhat engaged   Quite engaged   Extremely engaged

Note. "Virtual classes" includes students in distance learning and hybrid schedules.
Source: Staff School Reopening Survey (Fall 2020-21)

Student Perspectives on Distance Learning

Students say there are barriers to engagement in distance learning:

- Lack of motivation

- Uninteresting or "boring" schoolwork

- Distractions related to chores, family obligations, work, & friends

- Feelings of depression, stress, or anxiety

- Limitations with technology

Source: Distance Learning and Well-Being Survey (Spring 2019-20)

Student Suggestions for Distance Learning

*"What is one **suggestion** that you have for your teachers?" (N = 3,182)*

Try to come up with projects that are helpful to people who have a puzzle-based mind set or a project-based mind set.

Fifth grade student, Hunsberger Elementary

1. **Instructional Quality (~39%)**

   - Challenge students to think, learn new skills, & acquire new knowledge

   - Instruct at grade-level & do not assign "busy work"

   - Provide feedback

   - Include interactive activities with "live" video calls

Student Suggestions for Distance Learning

2. **Technology (~17%)**

- Be flexible to accommodate different levels of access to technology
- Don't assume students have printers, Wi-Fi, or ability to download PDFs

It's very hard to do work at home. I don't always have help and I miss out on a lot of things my teacher does because I can't do Zoom meetings.

Fifth grade student, Gomm Elementary

Source: Distance Learning and Well-Being Survey (Spring 2019-20)

Student Suggestions for Distance Learning

3. Communication (~13%)

- Be clear, be organized, give instructions, explain assignments, & provide examples

- Be available, respond to email, answer questions, & respond quickly

- Interact with students more often on a one-on-one basis

Be more involved in checking on students and interact with them. Isolation is difficult, and it's nice to feel like I still have a connection with some of my teachers and classmates.

Senior, Galena High

Source: Distance Learning and Well-Being Survey (Spring 2019-20)
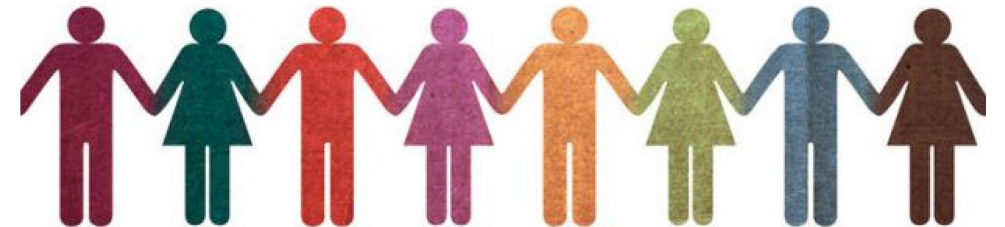
Student Suggestions for Distance Learning

4. Policy & Practice (~11%)

- Set consistent expectations across teachers & classes

- Establish a schedule & show-up to scheduled classes & meetings

- Adjust for technical limitations, competing demands at home, & student well-being

- Ensure class workload is same as in-person learning: Do not "pile-on" assignments

> *Some of my teachers used Teams which was SO HELPFUL, but others used email or another way... With all the teachers using different things it's so hard to keep up.*
>
> *Junior, Damonte Ranch High*

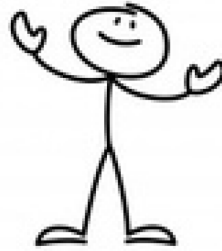Source: Distance Learning and Well-Being Survey (Spring 2019-20)

Student Suggestions for Distance Learning

5. **No suggestions: Three viewpoints**

   a. No changes needed: DL is fine as is (~12%)

   b. Acknowledge issues, but not sure of how to fix them (~3%)

   c. End distance learning: Keep schools open (~3%)

I do not have any suggestions for my Teachers. They have all been super understanding and helpful.

Sophomore, TMCC

I don't know enough about how this all works to make suggestions.

Sophomore, AACT

Source: Distance Learning and Well-Being Survey (Spring 2019-20)

Tips for teachers to support engagement in distance learning

- ❑ Make learning fun!
- ❑ Play music in virtual classes
- ❑ Provide 5-minute rest breaks
- ❑ Record virtual classes for students to revisit
- ❑ Check-in on students often
- ❑ Avoid using downloadable PDFs, use Word docs instead

- ❑ Be patient & understanding
- ❑ Facilitate ways for students to connect with each other
- ❑ Give dance lessons
- ❑ Shorten assignments & allow more time to complete them
- ❑ Check email often
- ❑ Provide instructions & examples

Source: Distance Learning and Well-Being Survey (Spring 2019-20)

Thank you to all students, families, & staff who gave their time & insights to helping us learn… We sincerely appreciate you!

- Click here to view information about the Distance Learning & School Reopening Surveys

- Additional research & evaluation reports regarding this & other topics can be found at WCSDdata & on WCSD's Research & Evaluation's webpage

- For additional information about this presentation, please contact Dr. Laura Davidson, Director of Research and Evaluation at ldavidson@washoeschools.net or Jennifer Harris, Program Evaluator at Jharris@washoeschools.net

WCSD Resources

- ❖ **Intervention Department**
- ❖ **Multi-Tiered System of Supports**
- ❖ **Family-School Partnerships**
- ❖ **Student Accounting**
- ❖ **Digital Learning**

National Resources

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