

DC Office of the
Ombudsman
for Public Education



Special Education Survey Report, Spring 2020

Family feedback regarding the experiences of students with Individualized Education Programs during distance learning.



Diving Deeper

With the sudden shift to **distance learning**, we were uncertain **how and if** the **educational needs** of students with special needs would be **met**.

So, we **asked** them.



Process

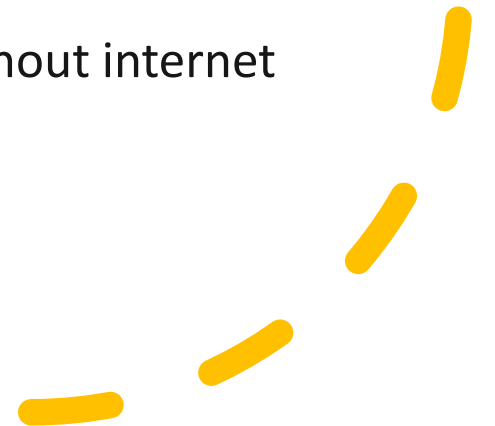
We conducted a survey to **assess the needs and experiences** of students with IEPs during distance learning.

Families we worked with within the **past two years** were asked to participate.

- Initially, we intended to distribute the survey widely. After considering our capacity, we sought to connect with families we opened cases for since August 15, 2018.

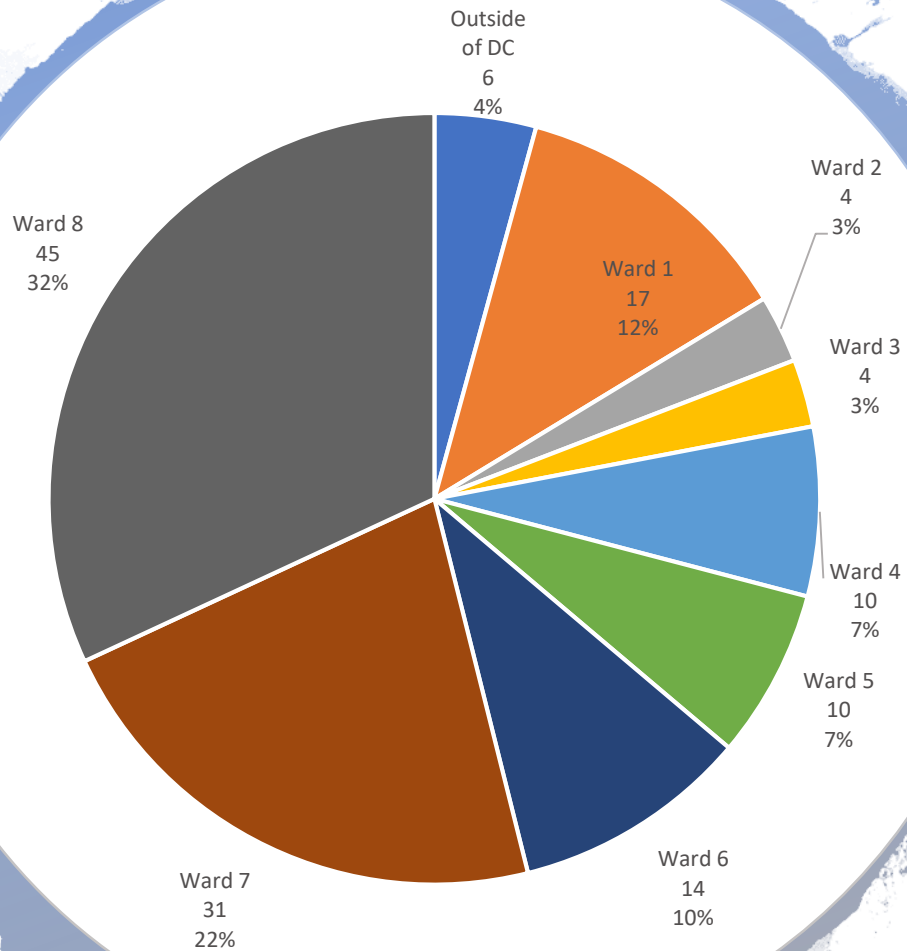
We conducted our survey by **phone**.

- It was imperative we capture families without internet access.





Who Answered the Call?



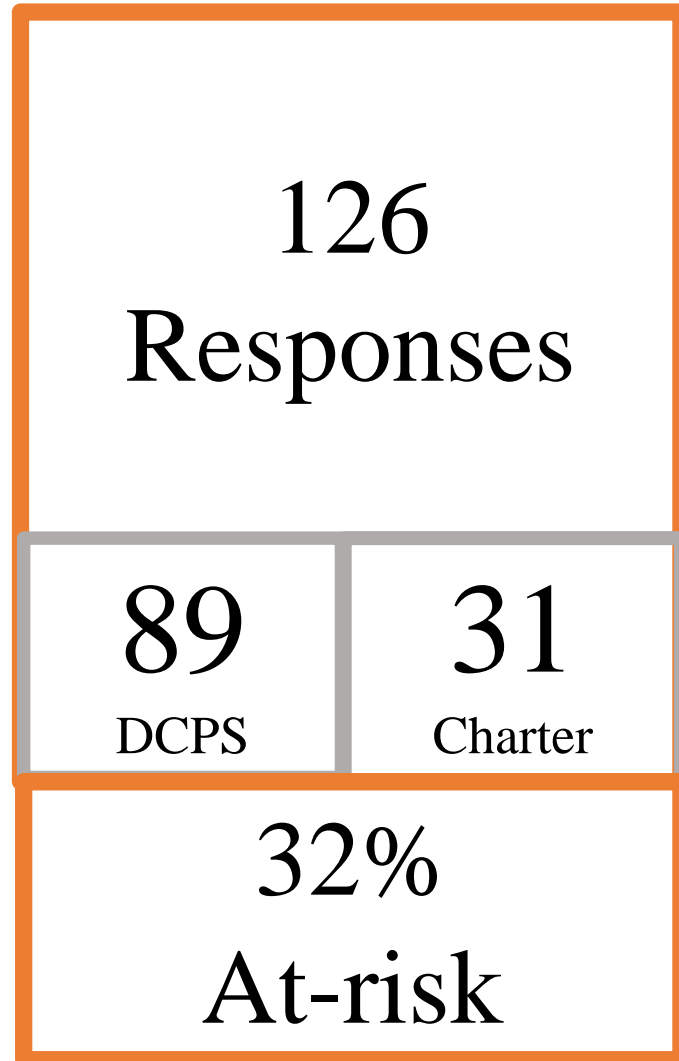
Families across the District were represented.

Wards 8 and 7 had the highest representation.

Representation in Ward 5 was lower than expected, as most of our cases usually come from residents of Wards 5, 7, and 8.



School Sector and At-Risk Identification



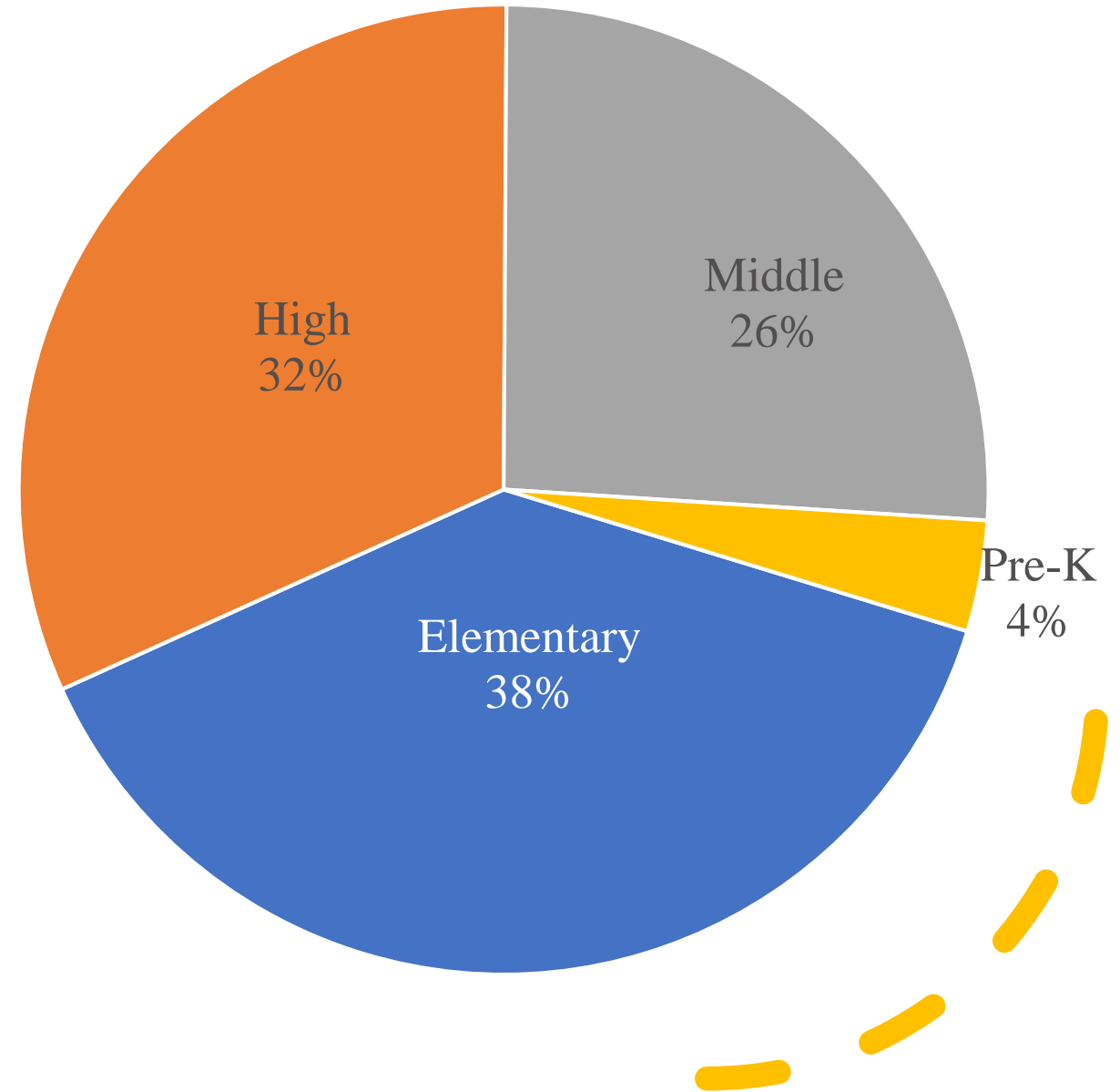
School Sector: Majority of families had students enrolled in traditional public school, as opposed to public charter school. The split was divided at about 70% to 30% respectively and is consistent with our typical sector breakdown. A few families had students who attended nonpublic placements.

At-risk: At least 32% identified at least one at-risk criteria.



Grade Band

Families of students enrolled in grades pre-kindergarten through high school were represented.





What Did We Ask?



Scope of Survey Questions

Survey questions ranged across four areas:

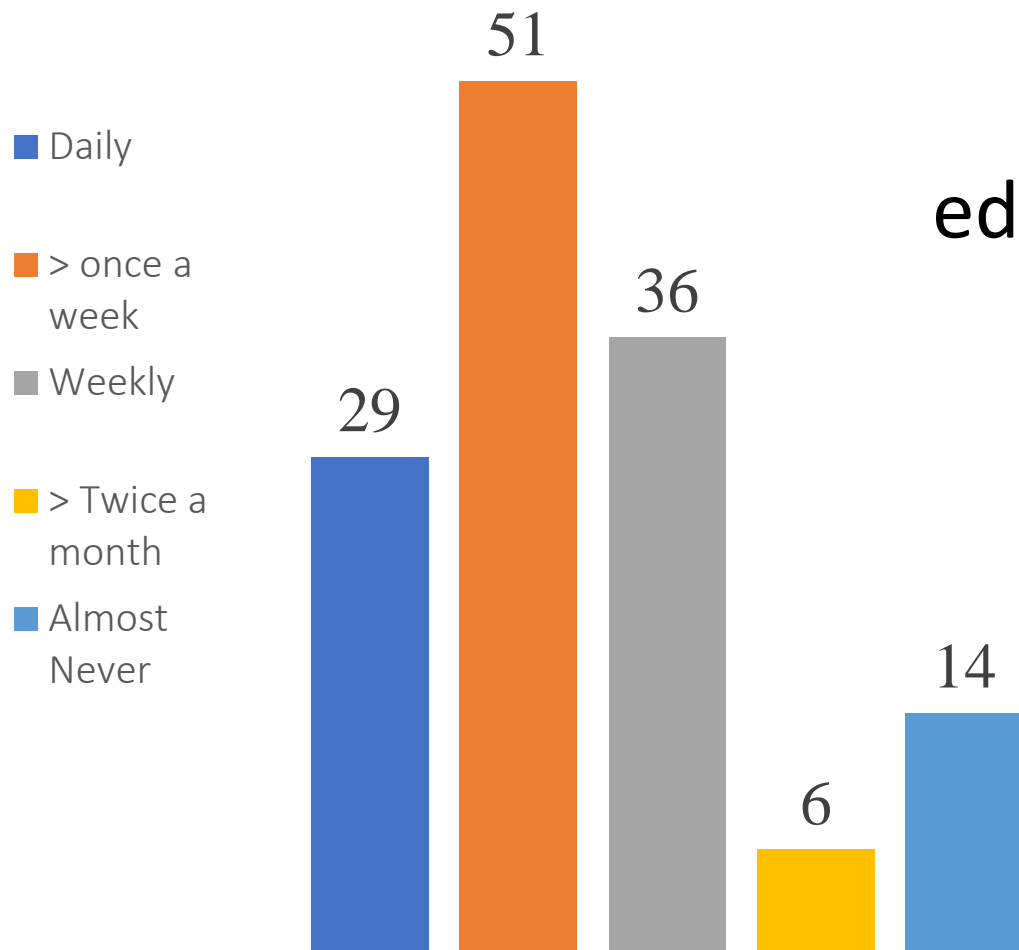
- Communication with the special education teacher
- Educational resources provided
- Technology resources provided
- “Other”
 - Dedicated Aides
 - Related Services
 - Families’ likelihood of seeking compensatory education services





What Did We Find?

Communication



We asked, “How **often** does the special education teacher **communicate** with you?”

Majority of families reported that they spoke with a special education teacher **more than once a week.**

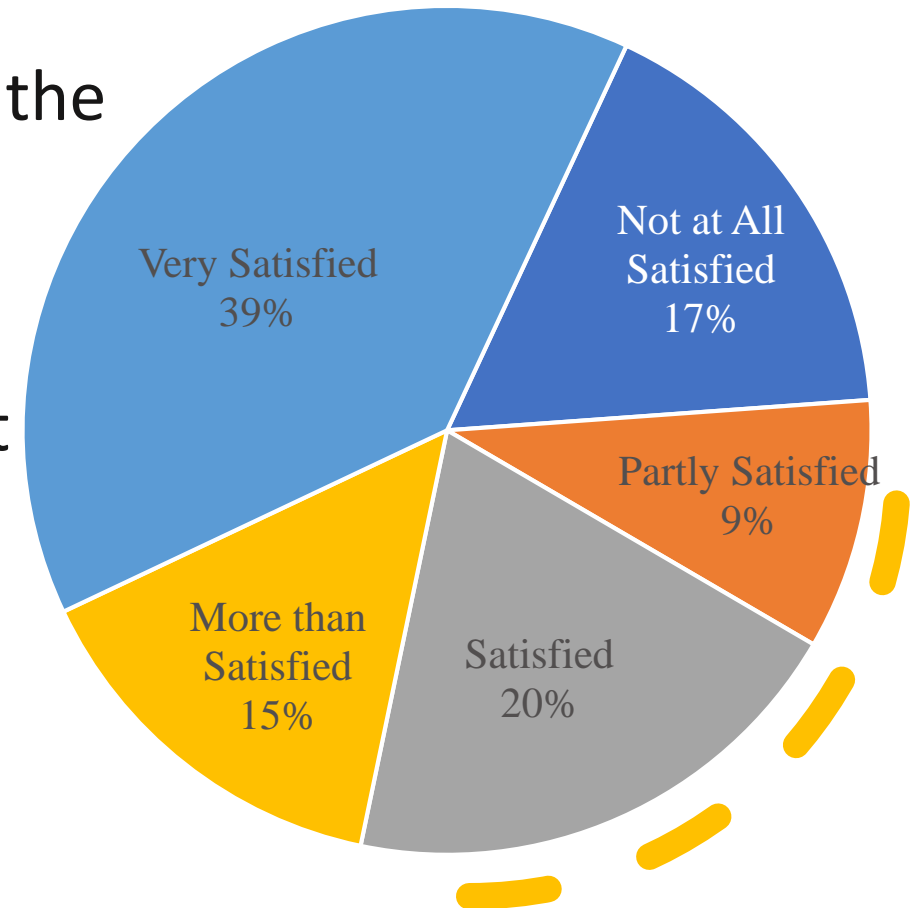




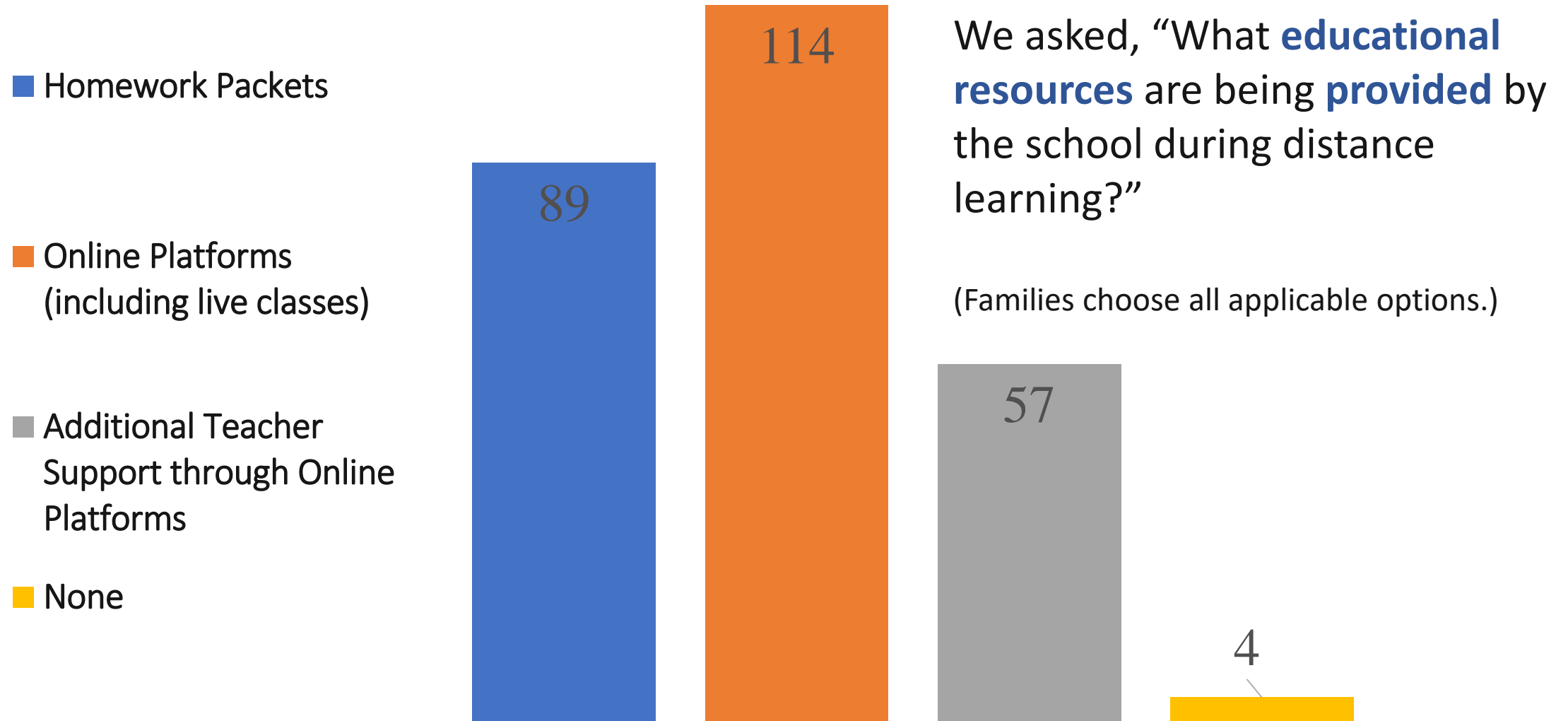
Satisfaction with Communication

We asked, “How **satisfied** are you with the **communication** from the special education teacher?”

54% reported being at least “**More than Satisfied**”.



Educational Resources





We asked, “Is your student able to **access*** school-provided **resources?**”

15%

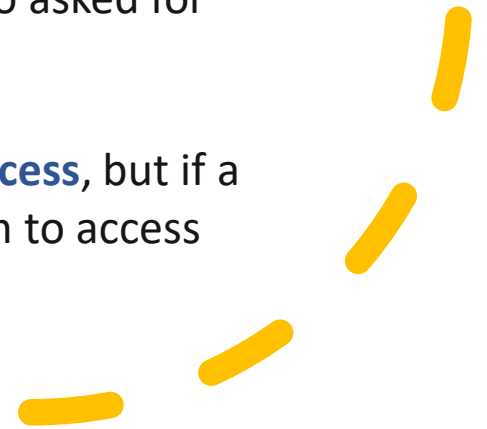
Of families reported that their students did not have access to school-provided resources.

“The teacher asked parents **to print out work but** hasn't asked if that was possible. Schools should be more aware and ask before they assume parents have certain resources. The school also asked for her to pick up packets. **Maybe try mailing packets.**”

“Yes, the school has made sure that **the student has access**, but if a parent is not computer savvy it can be difficult for them to access those classes.”

Accessing Educational Resources

** “Access” was defined as the student being able to fully participate in learning.*





Satisfaction with Educational Resources

- Some families who were unable to access school-provided resources reported at least partial satisfaction.
- Other families whose students were able to access the resources were “Not at All Satisfied” with the resources provided.
- One factor that determined satisfaction was whether the student had access to teacher instruction.



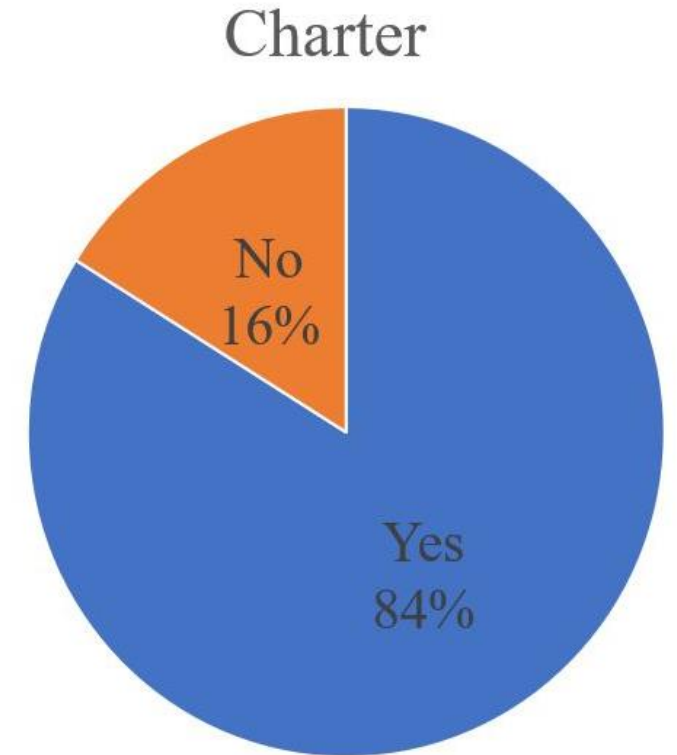
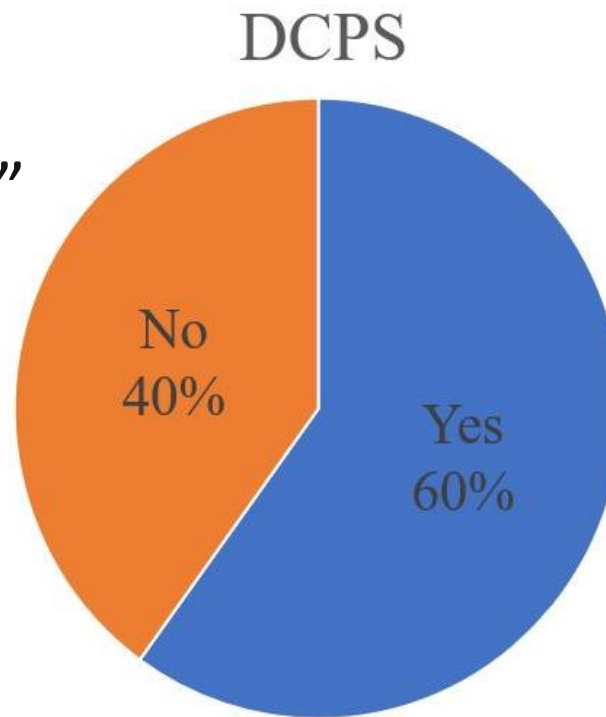
Technology Resources

We asked, “Did your student receive **technology** supports?”

What technology resources are missing?

- Chromebooks
- Printers/Scanners
- Internet
- Online platforms

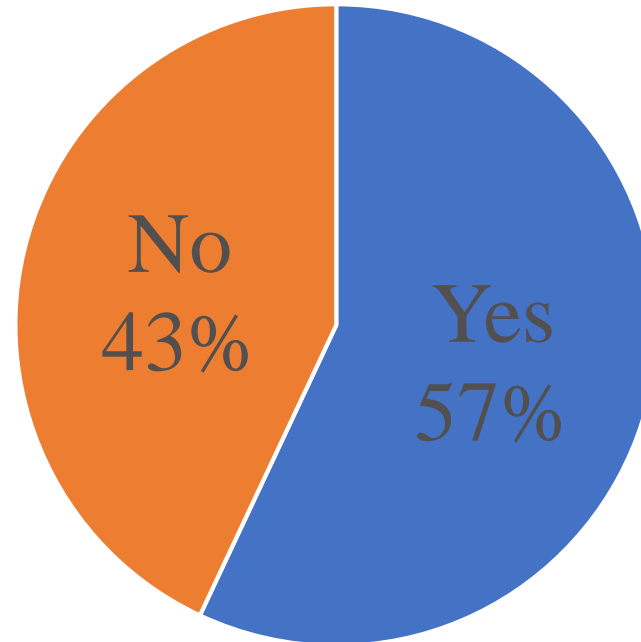
21 of the 22 respondents that indicated they did not have a laptop were DCPS families. This survey was conducted before DCPS began its Chromebook distribution. Students without access to technology relied heavily on work packets.



Related Services

We asked, “Are **related services** being provided to your student during distance learning?”

93
Students with
related services
outlined in IEP



Related services might include occupational therapy, behavioral supports, speech and language pathology, etc. Not all students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) are required to receive related services. Families were not asked about the quality of related services provided.

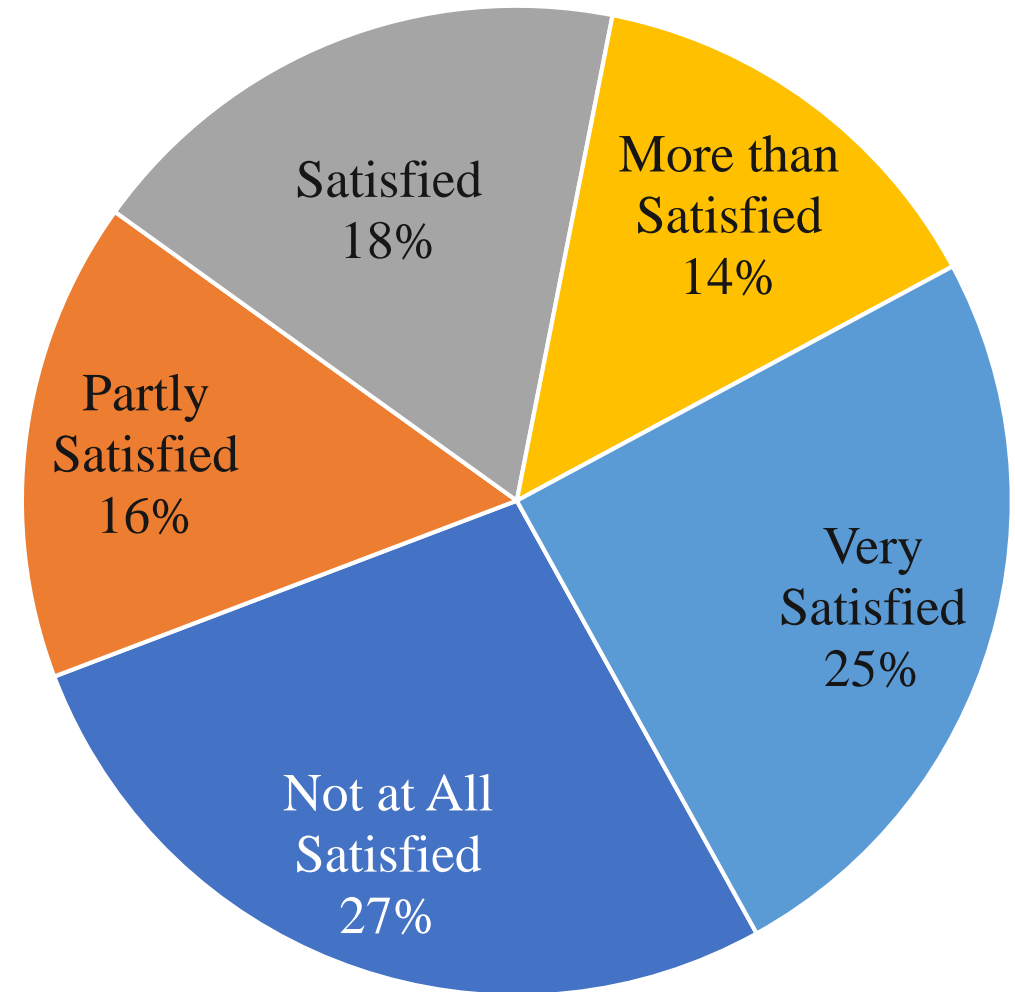


Satisfaction with IEP Implementation



We asked, “What was your level of **satisfaction** with the school's **implementation** of your student's **IEP** during distance learning?”

Families without technological supports were more likely to report that they were “Not at All Satisfied” or only “Partly Satisfied” with IEP implementation during distance learning.



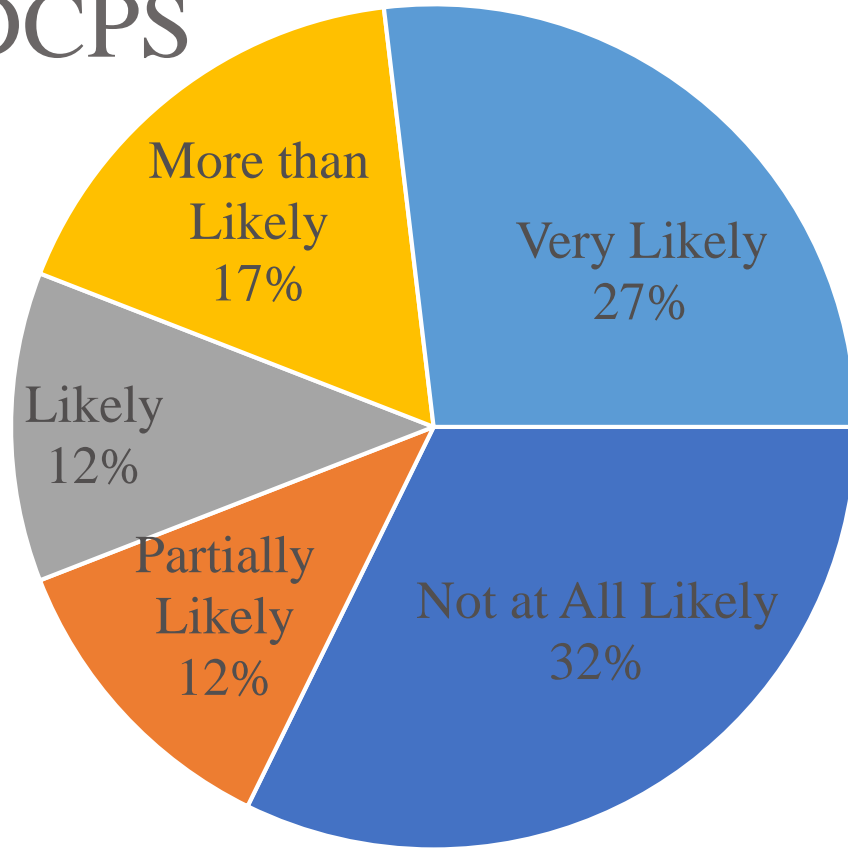
Compensatory Education

We asked, “Do you **anticipate seeking compensatory education** based on your experience during distance learning?”

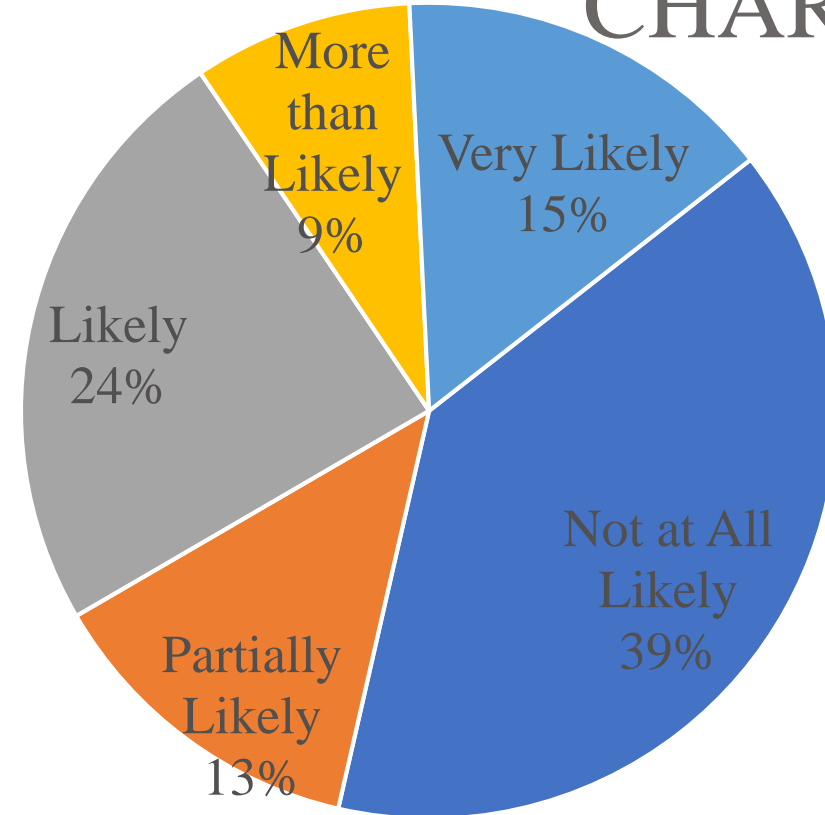


Compensatory Education

DCPS



CHARTERS



Families indicating that they were either “More than Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with IEP implementation were most likely to indicate that they had no intention of seeking compensatory education services. However, “Partially Satisfied” or “Not at All Satisfied” with IEP implementation was not a determining factor regarding the families’ contemplation of seeking compensatory education services.



What Are Families Saying?

"I know teachers are trying their best, but it seems like they are forgetting about my child."

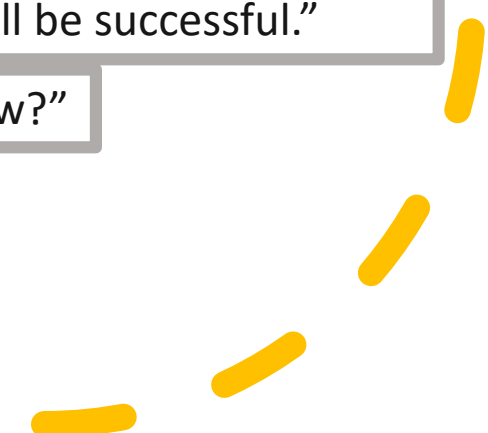
"It's a tough time for everybody. They [school] are doing the best they can."

"One of my children seems to be learning better than they did in the classroom while I am watching my other child fall further and further behind."

"I'm pretty sure my child will be promoted; I am very unsure that my child will be successful."

"So, what's going to happen now?"


"The school could be more mindful on low-income families. Resources should be fair to all students from all incomes."

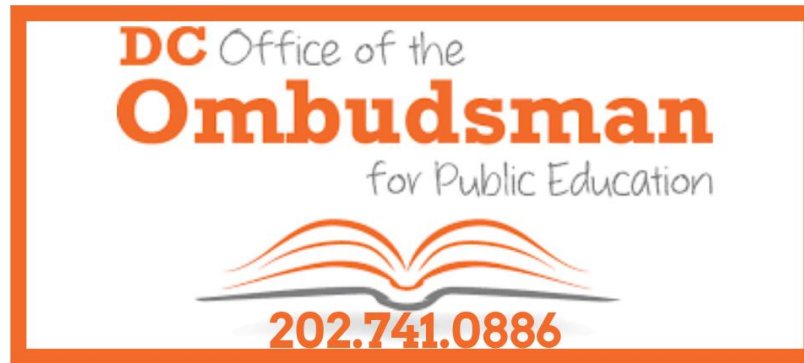




Implications

Covid-19 has presented families and schools with unanticipated challenges in providing supports to students with IEPs. Schools and families have been working hard since mid-March to develop strategies to effectively teach all students and meet families' needs. However, there are looming concerns on the long-term impact on students. This survey provides insight into family struggles and can be used as a resource in planning recovery efforts.





Are you experiencing challenges with your student's school?

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We Listen. We Care. We Help.