

2021 Back to School Study








Background

- ◆ **Understood and UnidosUS conducted an online survey among educators and parents of children ages 5–18 in the United States (referred to throughout as “parents”).**
- ★ **A total of 495 educators and 1,005 parents were surveyed about:**
 - Preparedness for returning to school since COVID-19
 - Concerns with children’s academic and emotional development
 - What can be done to enhance virtual learning
 - Actions to take to address learning challenges
- ┌ **For the purposes of this survey, parents of “typical” children are defined as those whose children have not exhibited signs of learning differences or have not been diagnosed with a learning difference.**
 - This is in contrast to parents of children who are symptomatic or have been diagnosed with a learning disability such as dyslexia or ADHD, referred to as learning and thinking differences
- **The survey was conducted between July 23-30, 2021.**

Summary of findings

- Despite feeling ready for a full-time return to the classroom, the ill effects of COVID-19 linger, and 90% of educators are concerned about challenges all kids might face from missing traditional education last year as a result of the pandemic.
 - The top concerns are related to children's academic development (73%), anxiety (65%), and social (63%) and emotional advancement (62%).
 - Educators are so concerned with the upcoming year that they are dipping into their own pockets to help subsidize students with learning challenges, with 34% expecting to spend upwards of \$200 this year.
- Over half of educators have become more reliant on technology in the past year and had learned to reimagine their classrooms through creativity and innovation to connect with students.
 - The top ways to improve classroom learning are by providing more hands-on activities (61%), reducing class size (57%), and afford students more one-on-one interactions with teachers (54%).
 - About 80% of parents wish they had a tool to manage and track changes in their child's behavior prior to being diagnosed.

Summary of findings

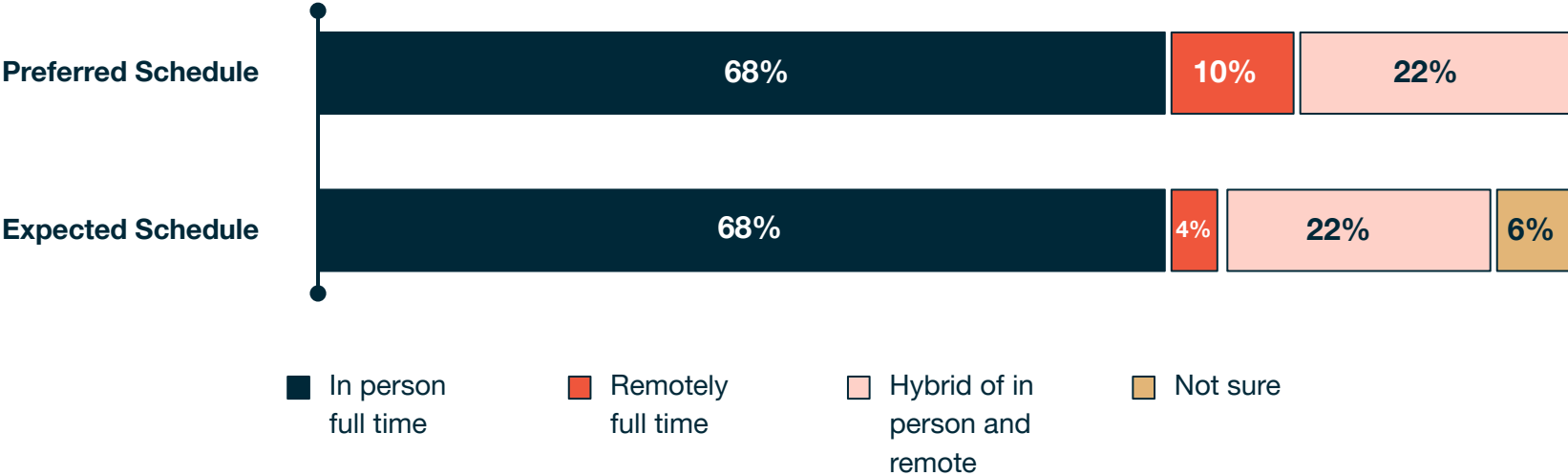
-  Schools can help to support learning at home by offering advice to parents on how to support their children academically or emotionally (69%) and by making learning devices—including laptops, tablets, etc.—available to families who have more than one child in school (66%).
 - Parents can also enhance learning opportunities by designating a quiet work area for their child (72%), joining forces with the school to ensure the child’s progress (61%), clearly separating work and play on a calendar (60%), and spending more time helping their child on school assignments (58%).
-  Consistent with educators who want to return to in-person learning, most parents (60%) are eager to send their child(ren) back to school full time in-person but 50% have concerns about learning difficulties their kids may experience as a result of the pandemic learning environment and not having the same education last year.
-  Parents are unsure how to address these concerns, as more than 40% say they do not know how to engage teachers about learning challenges.

Summary of findings

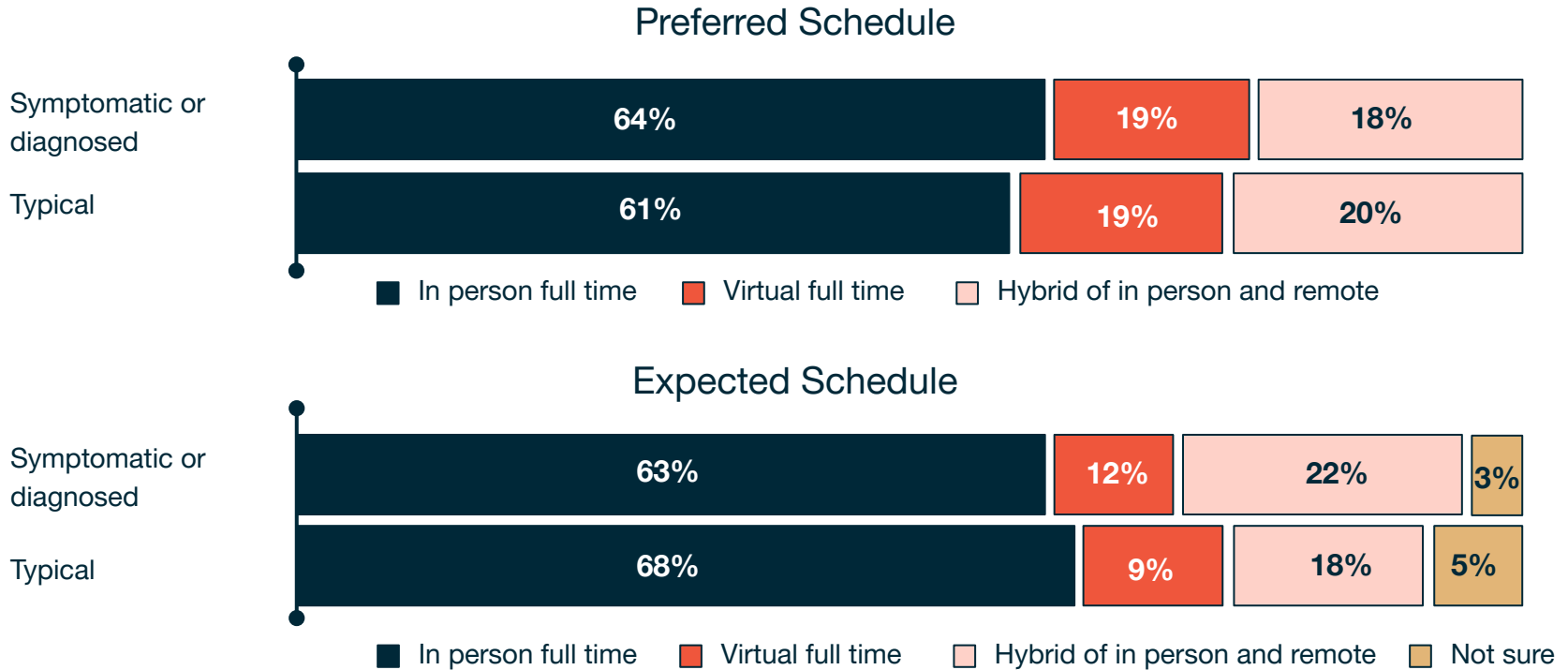
- ◀ Learning challenges occur at a high rate among diverse students too.
 - 71% of Hispanic/Latino parents and 65% of Black/African-American parents have witnessed their child experience a learning challenge in the past year, and about one-third of these parents attribute the challenge(s) to struggling to adjust to post COVID-19 rules in the classroom.
 - Just under half of Hispanic/Latino (44%) and Black/African-American (46%) parents think their child may be experiencing a learning challenge but cannot afford to get it diagnosed.
 - About 50% of Hispanic/Latino and Black/African-American parents feel unsupported by the community, and 63% of Black/African-American parents, along with nearly half of Hispanic/Latino parents (44%), struggle to find Spanish language resources.
- ◆ Merely talking about their child's learning challenges brings anxiety to 54% of Hispanic/Latino parents.
- The top responses for actions around awareness of learning challenges are to request a new evaluation, especially among Black/African-American parents (42%), or to hire a learning specialist (39%).

Key findings from 2021 Back to School Study

Two-thirds of educators want to and expect to return to the classroom full time in person.



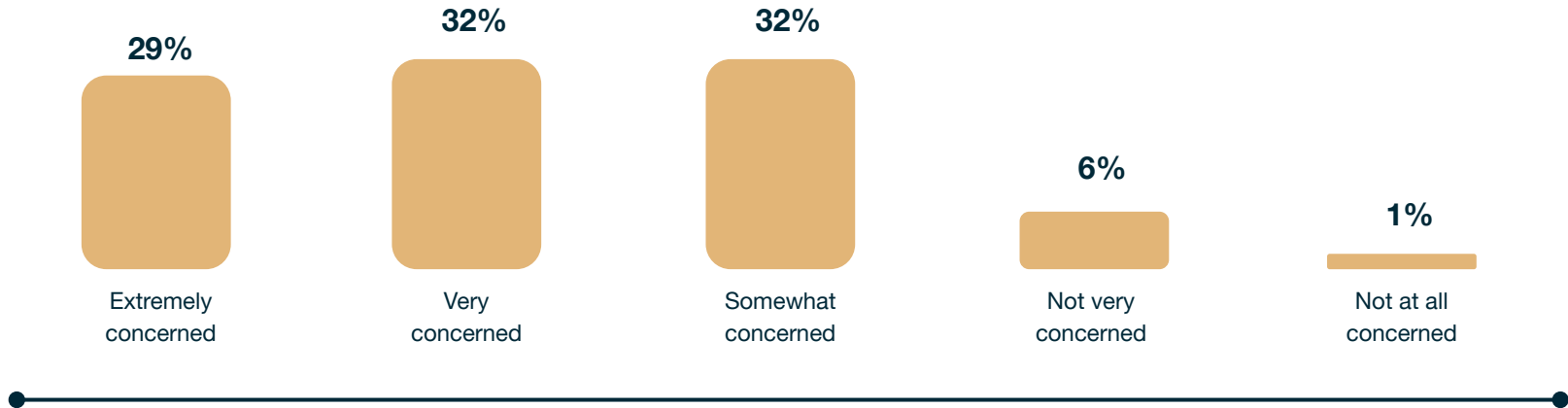
Similarly, more than 60% of parents would prefer and expect their child(ren) to attend school in person full time.



When the new school year begins, how do you expect your child's classroom to function? If it were up to you, how would you prefer your child's classroom to function in the upcoming year? **Base:** Parents of Symptomatic or diagnosed child(ren), (502); Parents of "Typical" child(ren), (503)

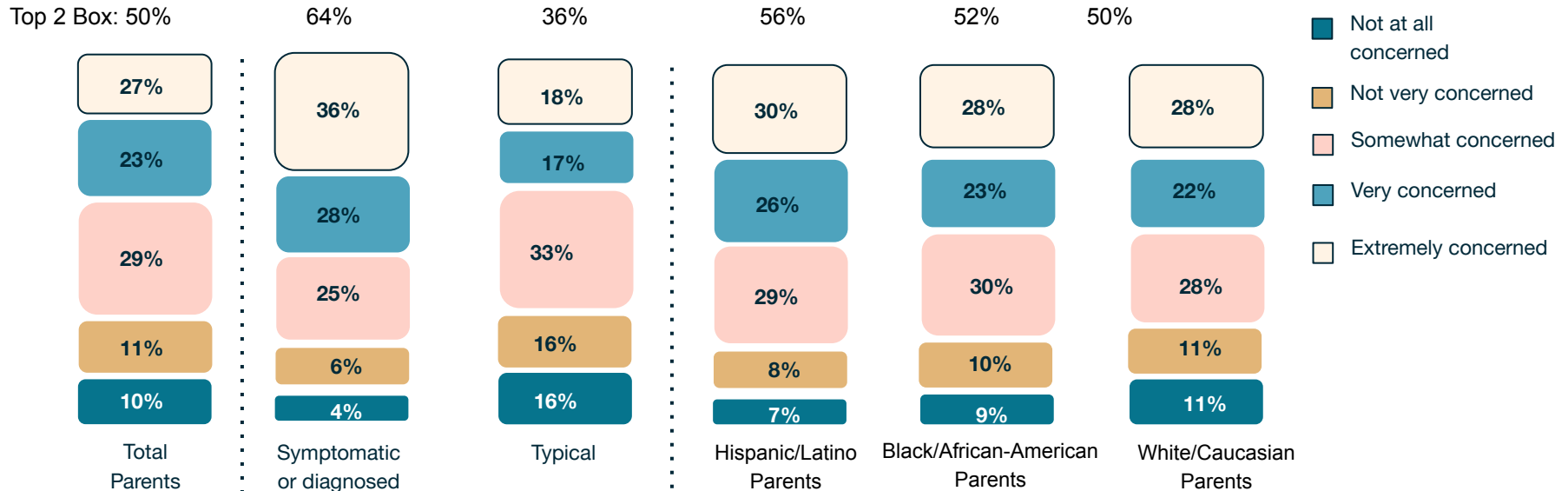
More than 90% of educators are at least “somewhat” concerned about the challenges children might face in the upcoming school year after missing traditional education last year.

Concern Level About Children Facing Challenges in Upcoming Year



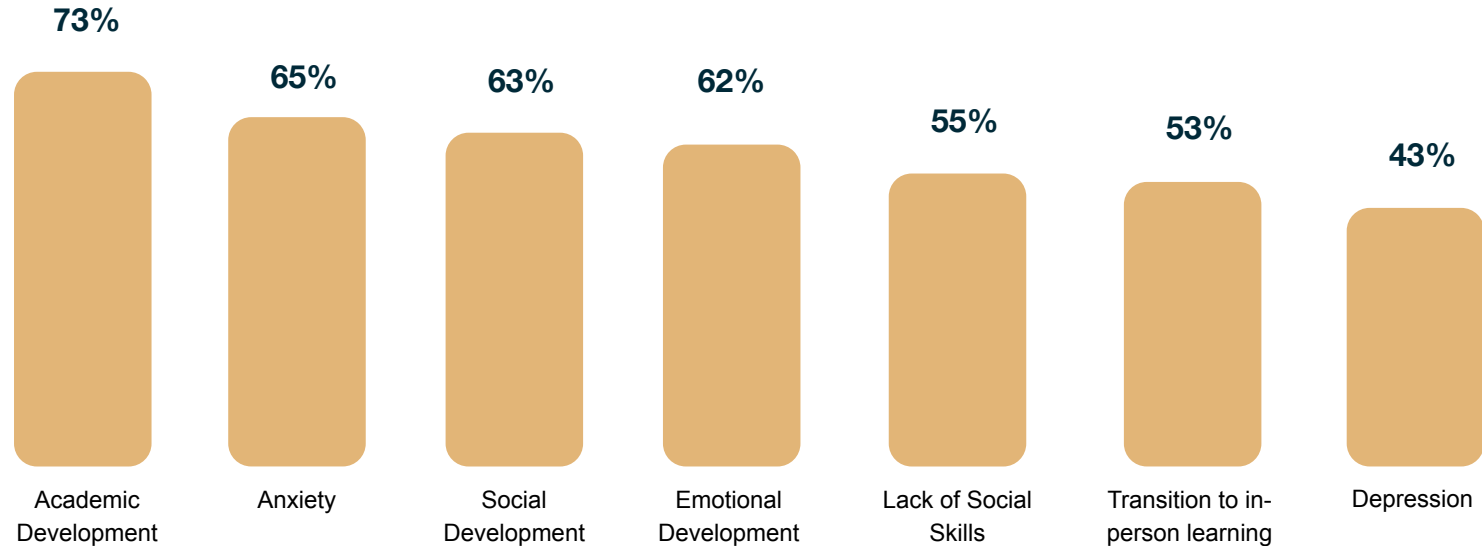
And despite their enthusiasm for in-person learning, 50% of all parents are worried about their child facing challenges because of not having the same education last year due to COVID-19.

Concern Level About Children Facing Challenges in Upcoming Year



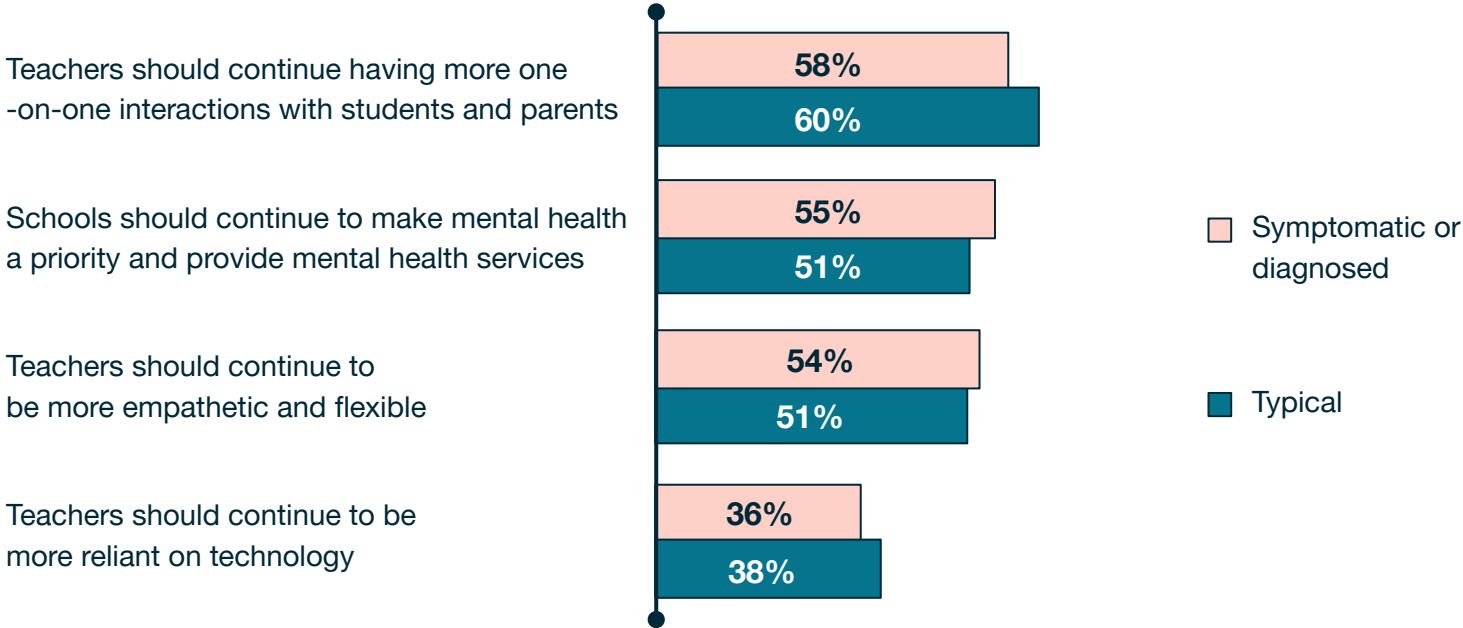
Educators' primary concerns are students' academic development (73%), anxiety (65%), and social (63%) and emotional growth (62%).

Concerns for Students for Upcoming School Year



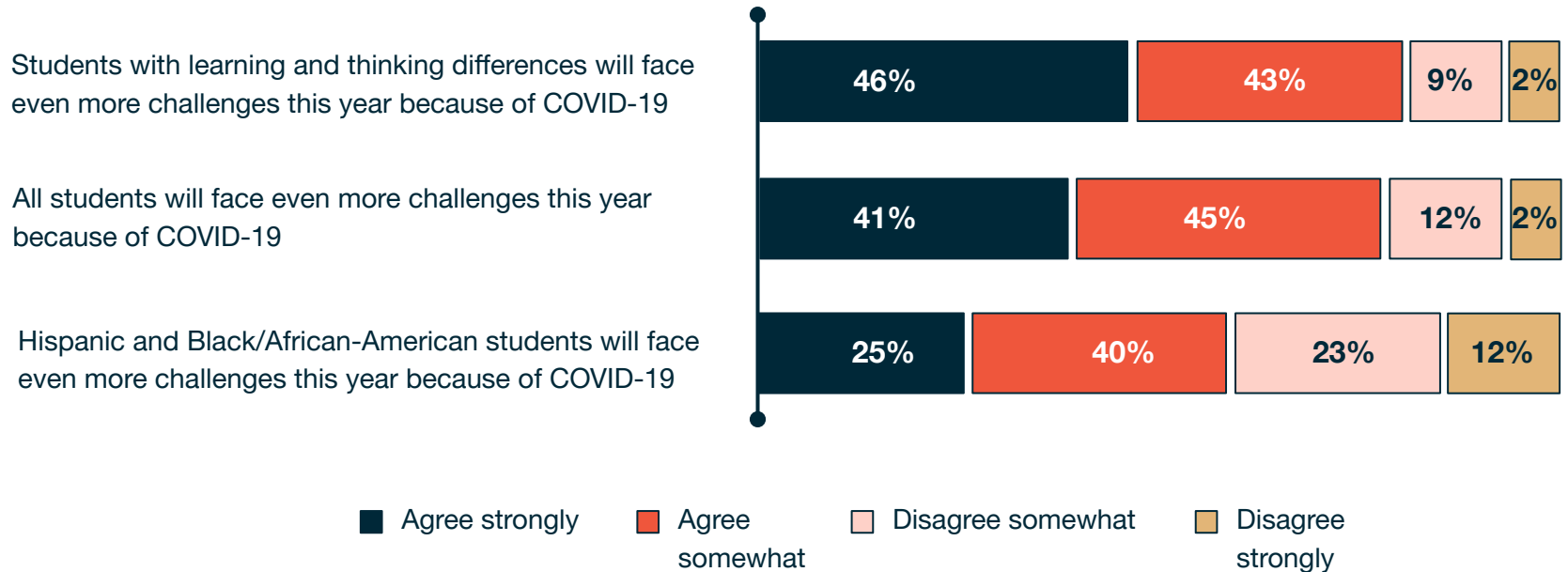
Parents think mental health should be a priority and want more one-on-one meetings with teachers and continued empathy/flexibility.

What Would Change Regarding Interactions with Child’s Teacher



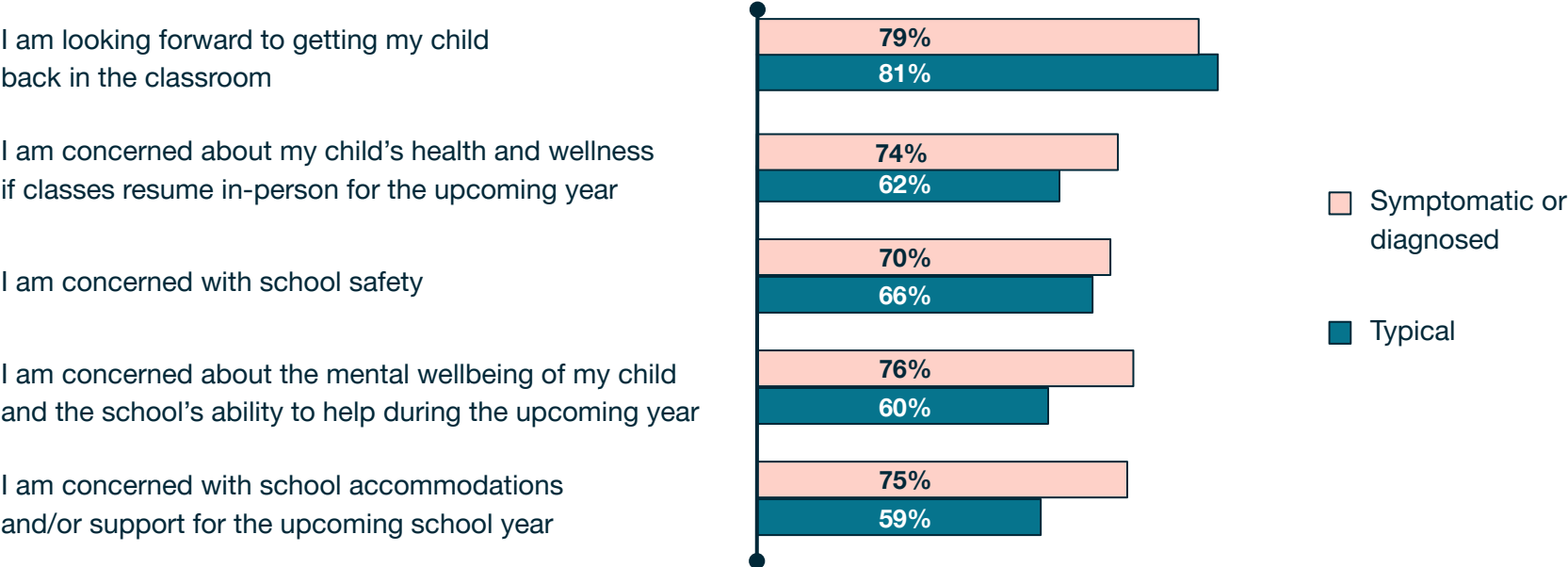
And more than 90% of educators believe children with learning and thinking differences will face increased challenges this year; nearly 90% think the COVID impact will be felt by *all* children.

Impact of COVID-19 on Upcoming School Year



More than 65% of parents of a child with learning and thinking differences worry about their child falling behind academically and 75% are concerned with their child’s wellbeing and school accommodations.

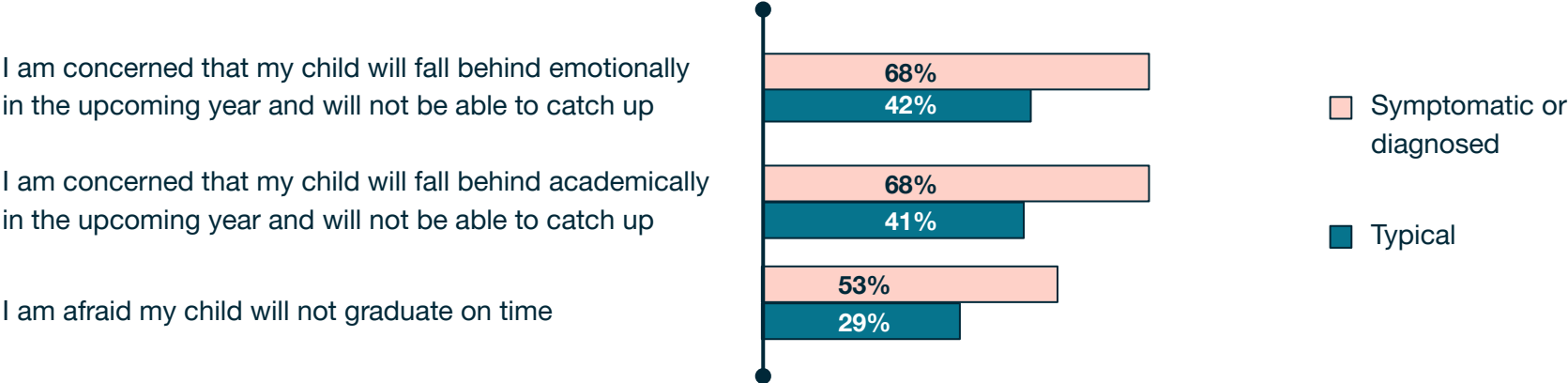
Attitudes towards upcoming year - agree / strongly agree



Thinking about the impact that changes in schooling have had on your child’s development, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the upcoming school year? **Base:** Parents of Symptomatic or diagnosed child(ren), (502); Parents of “Typical” child(ren), (503).

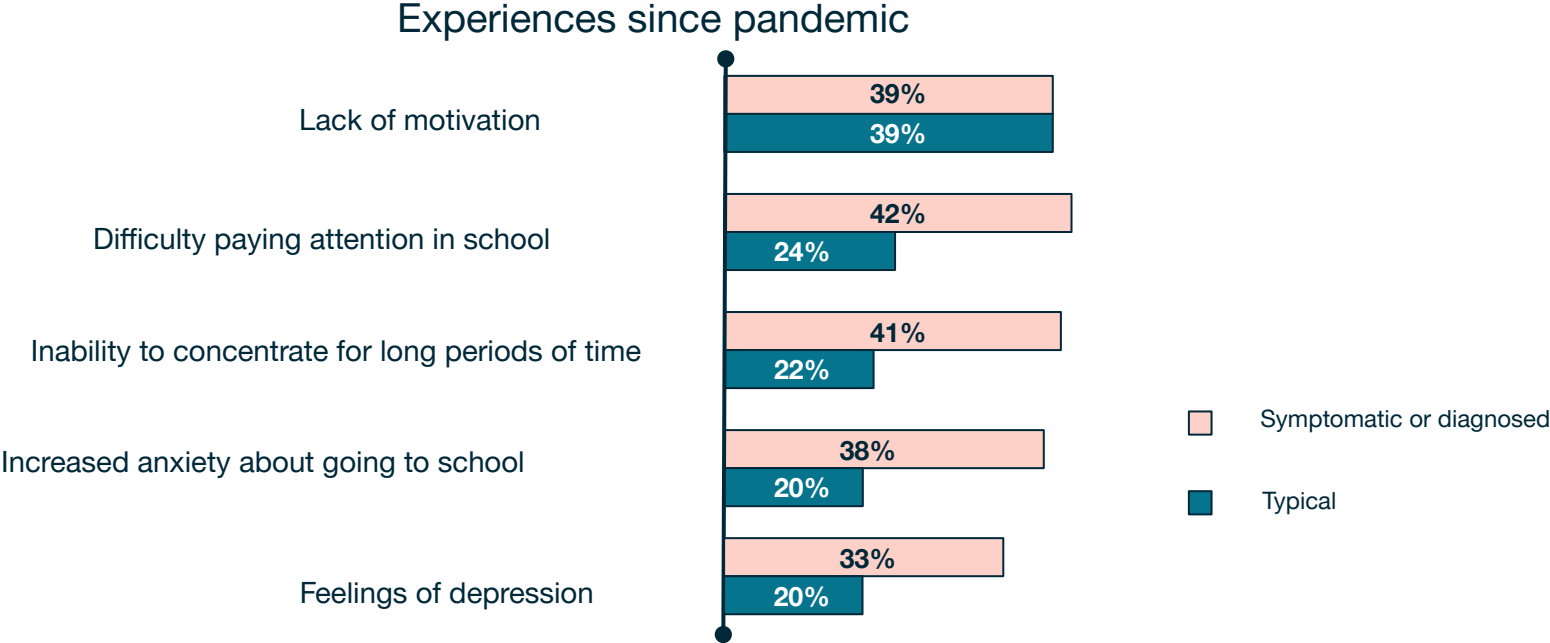
More than 65% of parents of a child with learning and thinking differences worry about their child falling behind academically and 75% are concerned with their child’s wellbeing and school accommodations.

Attitudes towards upcoming year - agree / strongly agree



Thinking about the impact that changes in schooling have had on your child’s development, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the upcoming school year? **Base:** Parents of Symptomatic or diagnosed child(ren), (502); Parents of “Typical” child(ren), (503).

Both children with and without learning and thinking differences have lost motivation since the pandemic, while a greater number of children with learning challenges have experienced additional challenges.

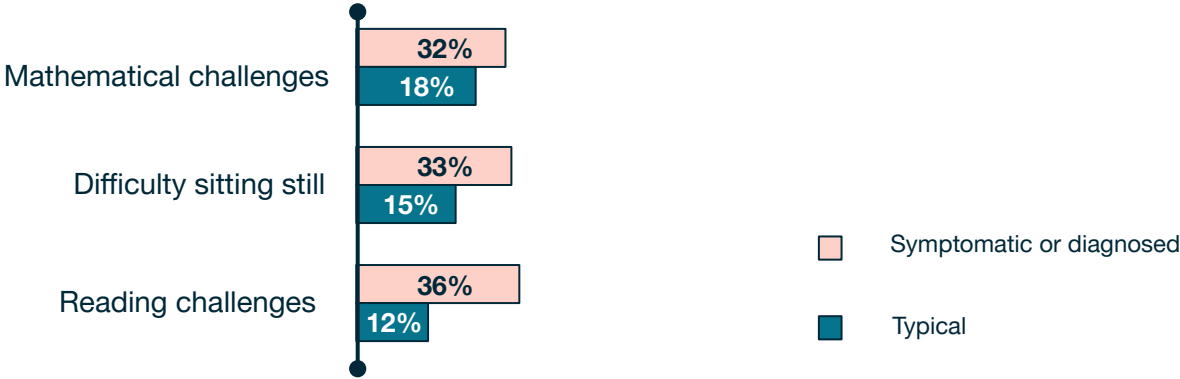


Which, if any, of the following has your child(ren) experienced since the pandemic? Select all that apply.

Base: Parents of Symptomatic or diagnosed child(ren), (502); Parents of “Typical” child(ren), (503),

Both children with and without learning and thinking differences have experienced challenges, particularly those with learning challenges.

Experiences since pandemic



Which, if any, of the following has your child(ren) experienced since the pandemic? Select all that apply.
Base: Parents of Symptomatic or diagnosed child(ren), (502); Parents of “Typical” child(ren), (503),

Reimagining the classroom

More than half of educators have relied more on technology in the past year and have had to reimagine their classroom through innovation and creativity.

Impact of COVID on Way Educators Teach

I have learned to focus mainly on the essentials that are still possible with distance learning – reading, writing, and mathematics

I spent more personal time reading and researching ways to drive engagement and participation

I had to shift my grading practices

I spent more money on resources and tools to engage students

I have become much more reliant on technology that I had not previously used as part of my classroom teachings

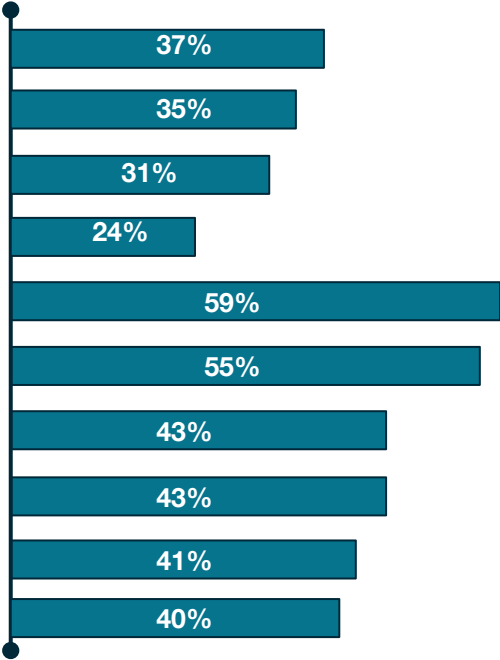
Remote learning has required me to reimagine the classroom and use innovation and creativity to connect with students

I had to shift traditional assignments in the “classroom”, homework and tests

Every minute of instruction now needs to be more meaningful and relevant

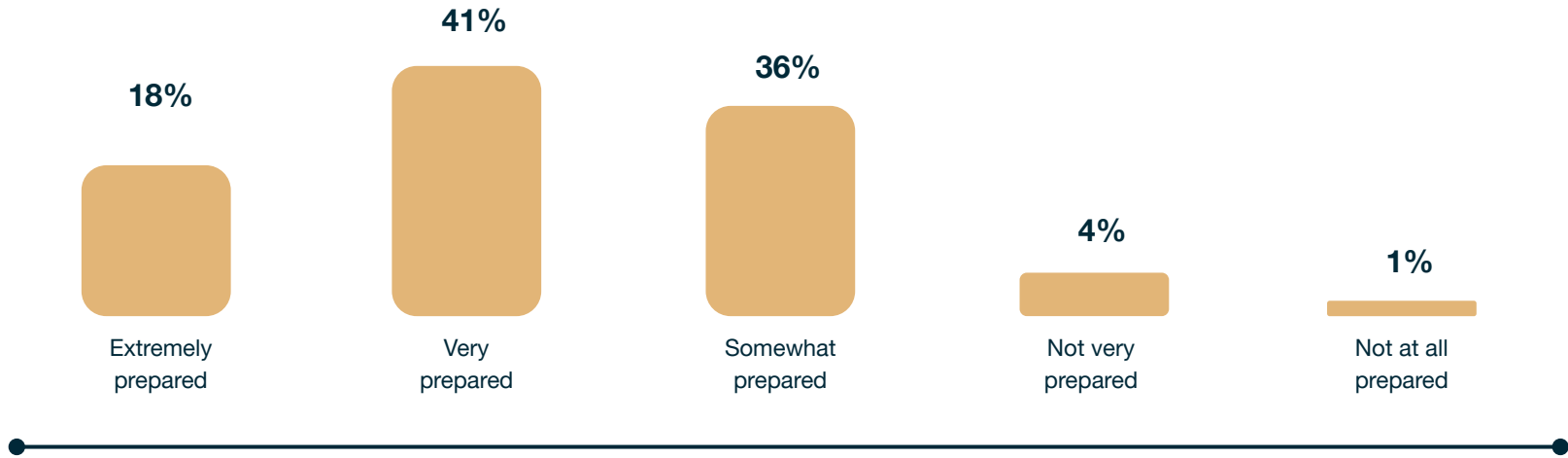
I have communicated with students and/or parents more either by directly reaching out or them reaching out

I needed to spend more time and effort on my lesson plans

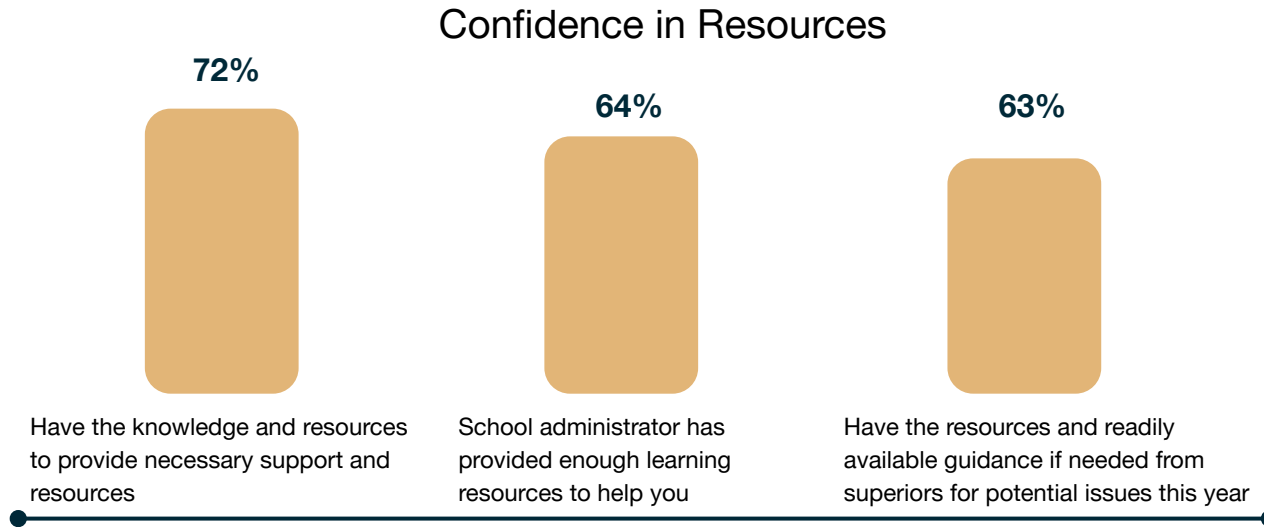


About 60% of educators say they are “extremely” or “very” prepared to provide support around learning challenges. Only 5% feel unprepared.

How Prepared to Provide Support Around Learning Challenges

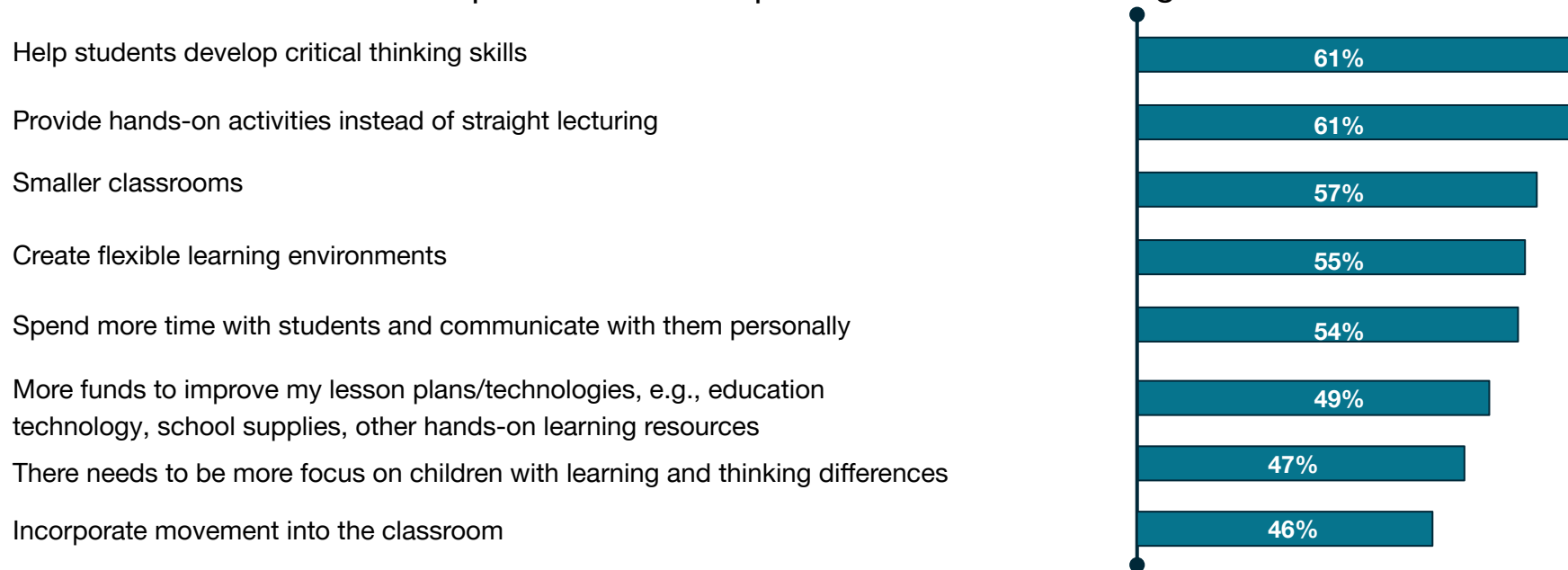


When it comes to providing resources and guidance around learning challenges in the school year, the majority of educators feel they have it. Similarly, a majority of educators feel school administrators/superiors are supportive with resources for learning and thinking differences; a quarter do not.



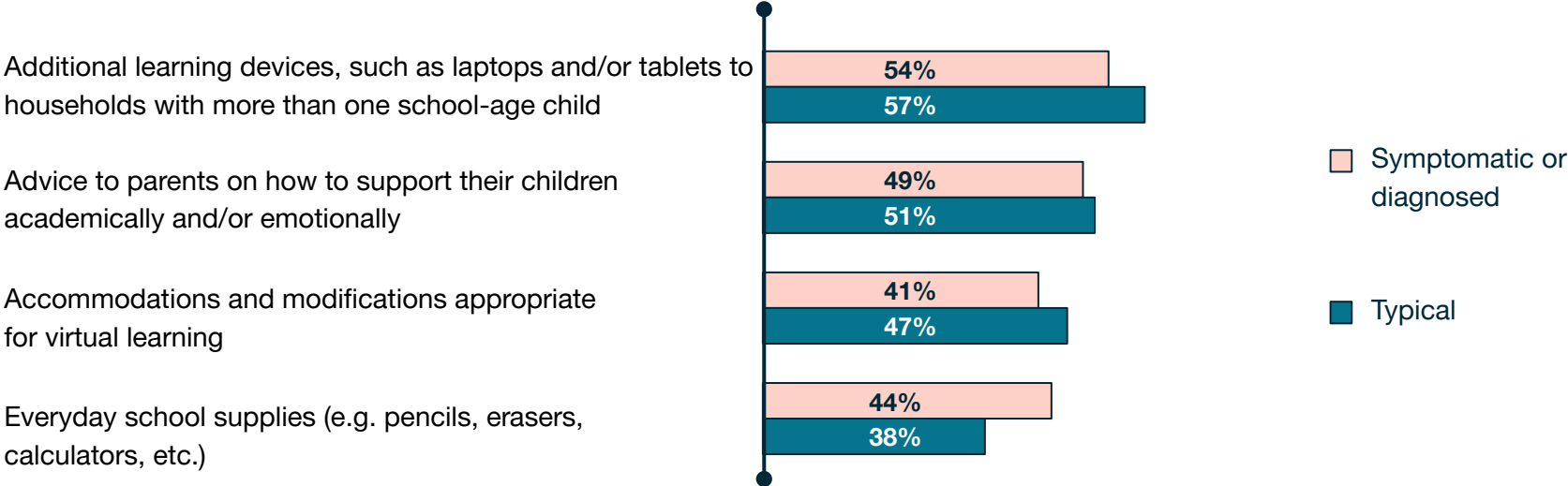
To improve in-person learning, educators recommend steps such as offering more interactive activities (61%), smaller classrooms (57%), and more personal interaction with students (54%).

Steps That Would Improve Classroom Learning



Parents believe that schools can also offer additional learning devices to families with multiple school-aged children and give parents advice on how to support their children.

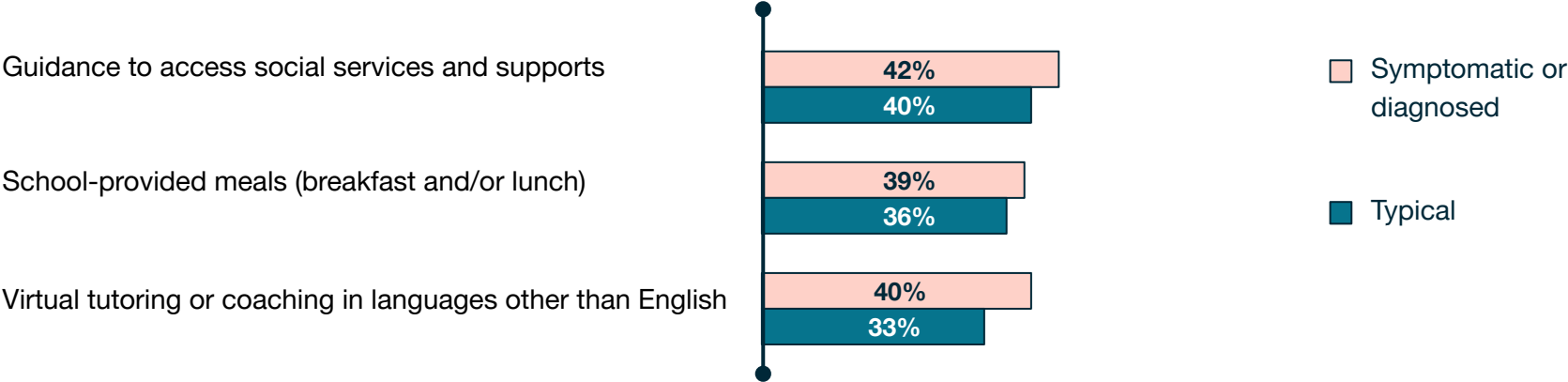
How Schools Can Enhance Learning at Home



What do you believe schools can offer to enhance learning at home if in person learning is halted/virtual learning is arranged? Select all that apply. **Base:** Parents of Symptomatic or diagnosed child(ren), (502); Parents of “Typical” child(ren), (503)

Parents believe that schools can also offer additional learning devices to families with multiple school-aged children and give parents advice on how to support their children.

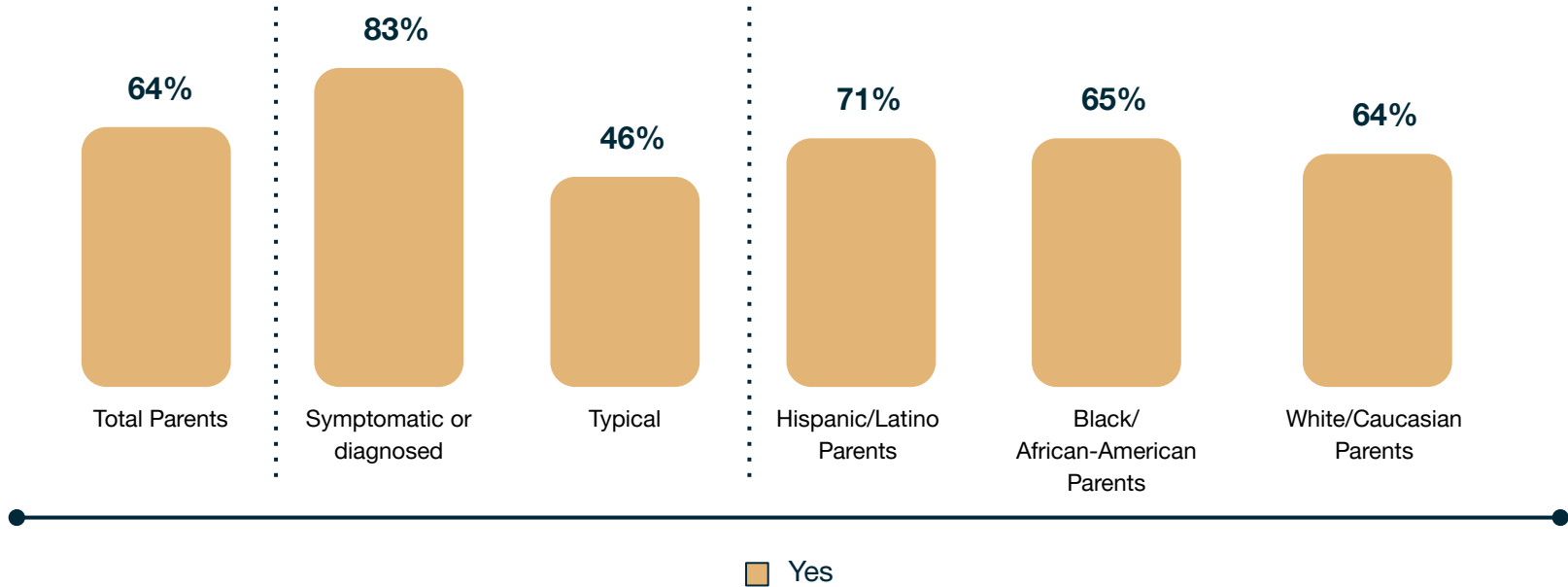
How Schools Can Enhance Learning at Home



Impact of Back to School on Diverse Parents and Children

About two-thirds of total parents (71% of Hispanic/Latino parents and 65% of Black/African-American parents) have noticed their child experiencing learning challenges over the past school year.

Whether Noticed Child Experiencing Learning Challenges



Have you noticed that your child has experienced learning challenges over the past school year? **Base:** Total Parents, (1,005); Parents of Symptomatic or diagnosed child(ren), (502); Parents of "Typical" child(ren), (503); Hispanic Parents (300), Black Parents (186), White Parents (684)

73% of all parents believe that the academic gap for children with and without learning disabilities has widened since the pandemic, including 72% of Black parents and Hispanic/Latino parents. Additionally, 60% of Black parents' and 64% of Hispanic/Latino parents' friends and family believe their children's learning and thinking challenges are a phase.

Agreement with Learning Challenges - Agree Strongly/Somewhat

	Total Parents	Symptomatic or diagnosed	Typical	Hispanic/Latino Parents	Black/African-American Parents	White/Caucasian Parents
Children learning challenges can be managed with the proper assistance	86%	86%	86%	84%	81%	88%
Learning challenges will improve as children return to in-school learning	79%	80%	78%	75%	76%	80%
I know how to get my child evaluated for a learning disability or ADHD	76%	80%	72%	71%	73%	79%
The academic gap between children with learning disabilities and those without has widened since the pandemic	73%	79%	67%	72%	72%	74%
I sought help for my child's learning disability symptoms during the pandemic	67%	75%	52%	64%	68%	69%
My family and friends believe that my child's learning and thinking challenges are just a phase and that he/she will grow out of it	59%	65%	54%	60%	64%	57%
I have anxiety over talking about my child's learning and thinking difference because those around me don't fully understand or accept it	50%	62%	38%	54%	53%	50%

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about learning challenges.

Base: Total Parents, (1,005); Parents of Symptomatic or diagnosed child(ren), (502);

Parents of "Typical" child(ren), (503); Hispanic Parents (300), Black Parents (186), White Parents (684)

Almost half (44%) of parents do not know how to engage with educators around learning challenges. Moreover, 46% of Black parents and 44% of Hispanic/Latino parents think their child may have a learning difference but cannot afford a diagnosis, and nearly 50% of Black and Hispanic/Latino parents say they lack community support.

Agreement with Learning Challenges - Agree Strongly/Somewhat

	Total Parents	Symptomatic or diagnosed	Typical	Hispanic/Latino Parents	Black/African-American Parents	White/Caucasian Parents
My child's teacher doesn't believe my child has a learning and thinking difference, so I've decided not to pursue diagnosis even though I still have doubts	46%	50%	41%	51%	51%	44%
I don't have people I can talk to in my community about my child's learning and thinking differences	45%	55%	36%	48%	50%	45%
I do not know how to start the conversations with educators around the learning challenges my child has experienced	44%	55%	34%	48%	50%	44%
I cannot find Spanish-language resources on learning and thinking differences	44%	53%	34%	44%	63%	42%
I have anxiety over getting my child diagnosed as I think it will reflect poorly on how I brought up my child	44%	55%	33%	47%	48%	43%
I suspect my child may have a learning disability or ADHD but I cannot afford a diagnosis	40%	53%	27%	44%	46%	38%

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about learning challenges.

Base: Total Parents, (1,005); Parents of Symptomatic or diagnosed child(ren), (502);

Parents of "Typical" child(ren), (503); Hispanic Parents (300), Black Parents (186), White Parents (684)

Black/African-American parents (39%) are more likely than Hispanics/Latino parents (27%) to hire a learning specialist, and 42% of Black parents plan to request a new evaluation, compared to only 32% of Hispanic/Latino parents.

Actions Will Take Since Noticing Learning Challenges

	Total Parents	Symptomatic or diagnosed	Typical	Hispanic/Latino Parents	Black/African-American Parents	White/Caucasian Parents
I plan on requesting a new evaluation for my child	36%	41%	27%	32%	42%	34%
I plan on hiring a learning specialist/educational therapist	30%	35%	21%	27%	39%	30%
I plan on speaking with my child’s pediatrician	28%	31%	24%	24%	26%	30%
I plan to reduce the number of hours I work	27%	28%	27%	29%	31%	26%
I plan on requesting distance learning accommodations	26%	27%	24%	24%	32%	23%
I plan on hiring a private therapist/psychiatrist	25%	29%	17%	22%	31%	25%
I plan to leave the workforce to focus on my child	19%	19%	18%	20%	22%	18%
Other	5%	3%	10%	6%	4%	6%

What actions, if any, will you take for the upcoming year since you have noticed your child has experienced learning challenges over the past year? **Base:** Noticed Challenges, (648); Parents of Symptomatic or diagnosed child(ren), (415); Parents of “Typical” child(ren), (233); Hispanic Parents (213), Black Parents (121), White Parents (435).

Struggles without a physical classroom are most common overall. Black/African American parents attributed learning challenges to lack of access to academic resources and overcrowding of classrooms.

Why Child is Experiencing Learning Challenges

	Total Parents	Symptomatic or diagnosed	Typical	Hispanic/Latino Parents	Black/African-American Parents	White/Caucasian Parents
My child struggles when he/she is not in a physical classroom	33%	32%	35%	32%	32%	32%
My child has a learning disability or ADHD	30%	42%	9%	25%	31%	31%
My child struggled to adapt to post-COVID-19 rules and regulations in the classroom	30%	31%	28%	34%	33%	29%
Classes are too crowded and my child does not receive enough one-on-one attention	21%	21%	22%	21%	28%	20%
The pace of the classroom is too fast and my child cannot keep up	21%	23%	17%	18%	20%	22%
My child is easily embarrassed or bullied in front of other students	20%	22%	18%	19%	21%	22%

Struggles without a physical classroom are most common overall. Black/African American parents attributed learning challenges to lack of access to academic resources and overcrowding of classrooms.

Why Child is Experiencing Learning Challenges

	Total Parents	Symptomatic or diagnosed	Typical	Hispanic/Latino Parents	Black/African-American Parents	White/Caucasian Parents
Coursework is not adapted to the individual needs of students with learning disabilities	18%	23%	10%	14%	17%	18%
My child struggles with new technology in the classroom	18%	19%	16%	16%	19%	17%
My child does not have the same type of access to academic resources as other classmates	15%	17%	12%	16%	21%	14%
The school does not have sufficient supplies for my child	12%	14%	9%	10%	12%	12%

Appendix

Demographics

Gender	LDS Parents	Typical Parents	Educators
Female	57%	65%	74%
Male	43%	35%	26%

Age Range	LDS Parents	Typical Parents	Educators
18-24	10%	8%	15%
25-34	34%	26%	32%
35-44	38%	41%	14%
45-54	13%	17%	14%
55+	4%	8%	26%

Region	LDS Parents	Typical Parents	Educators
South	46%	48%	38%
Northeast	19%	18%	23%
Midwest	16%	16%	22%
West	20%	18%	17%

Employment Status	LDS Parents	Typical Parents	Educators
Employed full-time	67%	62%	76%
Employed part-time	15%	13%	17%
Homemaker	8%	12%	0%
Unemployed	6%	8%	1%
Retired	2%	2%	1%
Student	2%	2%	3%
Prefer not to say	1%	1%	1%

**For more
information, visit**
u.org/media-hub