Distance Learning Connectivity and Communication Survey (April 2020)

Open-Ended Survey Question on Improving Distance Learning
Students and parents were asked what the school or district could do to improve distance learning. A summary of emerging themes is provided directly below, followed by a few, select representative quotes by respondent group.

Emerging Themes for Areas of Improvement
1. Attendance Taking
2. Compassion/Understanding
3. Interaction and Communication Between Students and Teachers
4. Consistent Interface
5. Heavy Student Workload

1. Attendance Taking
Parents and students report that attendance procedures are cumbersome and time consuming. They would like a uniform policy and procedure for collecting attendance once per day that does not detract from teaching and student learning.

Parent suggestion: Streamline the attendance taking process.

"Having them log in to attendance for each class each day is too much. Once a day for all classes should be sufficient"

"Some teachers are having the kids check in before noon each day for attendance. Since we have to do school on the weekends and only some weekdays, it would be helpful to allow either a later check-in or to check-in on any 5 days during a week."

Students suggestion: Implement an attendance process that is less repetitive and time consuming.

"Make it so daily attendance is just a push of a button instead of a whole google form…I could be using that time to be starting my schoolwork."

"The district could streamline attendance. I have to do six [attendance forms] every day."

2. Compassion/Understanding
Parents and students feel the current circumstances surrounding distance learning warrant a departure from previous expectations concerning due dates and grades.

Parent suggestion: Allow for more flexibility as families are adjusting to distance learning.

"District- give grace with grading and lowering expectations of work output at this time. Entering week 3 of virtual learning teachers and families are still working out glitches and settling into routines."

"Please allow more flexibility on assignment due dates, allow makeup work, and continue sending parents updated information if students are missing any assignment or missing attendance. Things can be easily overlooked without physically being in the classroom."

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Student suggestion: Allow for more leniency with due dates and grades.

> "Give more time to complete assignments, also be more lenient on late work."

> "The school could give students more time and understanding about grades considering the situation."

3. Interaction and Communication Between Students and Teachers
Parents and students expressed the need for increased interaction between students and teachers.

Parent suggestion: Increase the amount of real-time contact from the teacher and between students.

> "I expected more teacher engagement and teaching via zoom or some sort of video from the actual teacher…It is not teaching but rather a facade in which it seems to provide some sort of work that parents need to actively do with their child. No actual videos or lessons from the teacher are provided but rather links to YouTube videos that then follow with a practice…1 zoom video in 2 weeks for about 10 minutes seems to be a bit unacceptable.

> "More interaction with the class and teacher, especially for younger kids. The kids feel very disconnected."

Student suggestion: Provide more opportunities for collaboration and interaction with teachers and classmates.

> "We should have a class period at least once a week on zoom. Sometimes students teaching themselves and reading things themselves doesn't always help. They need that extra push from their teachers that they can't get at home or from reading things on a page."

> "Have more teachers do actual lessons/lectures through Zoom, then add extra videos to further explain the topic if students deem necessary for further clarification."

4. Consistent Interface
Parents describe challenges with using multiple learning platforms, which can be confusing and time-consuming to navigate. Students expressed the need for increased guidance concerning their assignments.

Parent suggestion: Implement a more streamlined distance learning interface across the district as a whole. The multiple interfaces being used are very confusing, especially for families with multiple children.

> "For perspective, my husband and I are college graduates who work in highly technical fields and our children are typically straight A students. Nevertheless, we are struggling right now. The whole district should be using all of the same systems. We're having to learn different platforms for different students in the same household. Zoom vs. Google Classroom Meet. Assignments listed in Google Classroom vs. Think Central and Wonders. Etc…parents are expected to keep track of all of these different systems while juggling massive amounts of change and stress."

> "Since my children are in different grades we've found it difficult to navigate the different portals, sites, and links to find all the assignments…It would have been good to have it more uniform for all and to have one location where all assignments were posted. My kids have been frustrated because they were missing assignments they didn't even know they had."

Student suggestion: Reduce the number of online platforms used in distance learning.

> "I think the school district could have the teachers use less platforms for its students to use because a few students are getting confused with all of the apps or platforms we have to use for our daily lessons."

> "Find a more centralized program that we could use for every class instead of using different platforms for each individual class."

5. Heavy Student Workload
Parents and students feel the workload assigned to students is overwhelming.

Parent Suggestion: Reduce the amount of work assigned to students, as many parents are either working from home or physically going to work and find it challenging to help their children with their assignments.

> "Reduce the overall required coursework and eliminate unnecessary assignments. Parents are working full time jobs and do not have the time to help young kids navigate through all the different programs and ensure all assignments are completed."

> "The workload is insane for our children and us as parents. It is extremely difficult to manage our jobs from home as well as assist our 3 children with their work which has been 6 plus hours a day for each child."

Student suggestion: Reduce the amount of work assigned to students as they are adjusting to a new way of learning, stress, and family responsibilities.

> "Assign less work because during this crisis a lot of students are working in order to provide for their families or have to take care of their siblings and don't have enough time to do all their assignments"

> "Please stop assigning so many assignments. This time is already stressful enough as is and this just makes it so much worse. Online school is much harder than real life school and it shouldn't be that way."