



## **CENTER TO CLOSE THE OPPORTUNITY GAP**

Identifying Best Practices to Ensure Student  
Achievement in California's K-12 Schools

**CSU** The California State University

**SPRING 2021 EDUCATOR SURVEY**

# **COVID-19 CHALLENGES AND PRESSING NEEDS FACING TEACHERS**

**Report prepared by Corinne Martinez, Diana Porras, and Analía Cabral**

**D**uring the spring 2021 semester, the CCOG launched the “COVID-19 Challenges and Pressing Needs Shared by Teachers” survey to learn about and respond to the experiences and urgent needs of local teachers. The survey focused on three areas: a) the challenges teachers experienced during the lockdown, b) their urgent needs as they transition to in-person and/or hybrid instructional models, and c) the resources they currently have access to support their work.

The results revealed strong calls for educators to be included in the decision-making processes that impact school policies and practices. There was also consistent agreement across grade levels and school types that students' emotional well-being needed to be supported as school communities return to in-person or hybrid instruction. Moreover, survey results suggested teachers need access to meaningful professional development to support the academic and mental health needs of students.

# SPRING 2021 EDUCATOR SURVEY: COVID-19 CHALLENGES AND PRESSING NEEDS FACING TEACHERS

*I feel that in general teachers have always been taken for granted. It's so much worse now.*

--Public elementary school teacher with over 20 years of experience

## I. INTRODUCTION

On March 19, 2020, Gov. Newsom issued a statewide stay-at-home order in response to the rapid spread of the Coronavirus among Californians. By then, numerous school districts in Southern California had already canceled in-person classes, and a vast number of teachers were scrambling to transition to online instruction. Over the next year, education leaders and policymakers across the state and around the country struggled to adequately support students and educators as they faced unprecedented physical, technological, and emotional challenges.

The purpose of the CCOG Spring 2021 Educator Survey was to better understand the challenges, pressing needs, and access to resources experienced by teachers on the ground. This work is especially timely given that school communities continue to adapt to their new schooling realities where in-person, online, and hybrid models are being implemented in light of an ongoing pandemic. Our survey results shed light on the experiences and insights of educators, mostly those situated in Southern California, and help to inform the actions and responses of school leaders, education researchers, and others who seek to respond to the needs of educators in meaningful and effective ways.

As captured in the opening quote above, survey respondents convey a strong need to listen and respond to the voices of educators at this critical moment. This report draws on information gathered from the CCOG's inaugural educator survey. The questions centered on the challenges they faced when they first went into lockdown, pressing needs as they return to some form of in-person instruction, and access to resources to support themselves and students in their evolving schooling reality.

Core results from our survey find:

- Teachers want and need to be included in decision-making processes
- They want *meaningful* professional development to support the academic and mental health needs of students
- They want empathetic school leaders who are effective communicators, transparent, and visible

The remainder of this report is presented in four sections. First, we discuss the background and characteristics of respondents who completed our survey, including the

grade level they teach, type of school, position held, years of experience, and current mode of instruction. Second, we outline the responses from the survey. Specifically, we examine the challenges respondents encountered during the abrupt transition to remote learning, the urgent needs they are currently facing as they transition again, and their access to critical resources at this time. Third, we draw on results to discuss how school leaders could better support teachers and what respondents feel still needs to be understood about their new reality. Finally, we conclude with actions to take to best support educators in their work moving forward.

Because we were interested in knowing about teachers’ experiences, as well as potential differences in experiences based on grade level or school type, our report discusses disaggregated information across these two groups.

## II. SURVEY OF CURRENT EDUCATORS

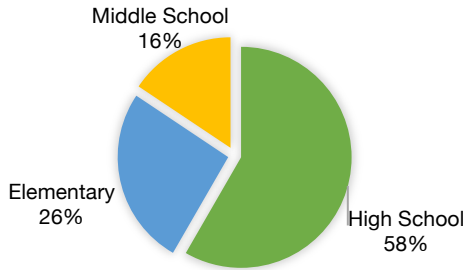
In this section, information about respondents is presented to provide a clearer picture of the individuals who shared their ideas and experiences. We received responses from every grade level with various positions and years of experience from public, private, and charter schools. A large portion were traditional public high school teachers with considerable experience. However, there were other smaller groups of elementary and middle school respondents and private school respondents. A detailed description of grade levels, positions held, years of experience, current modes of instruction, and school locations are discussed below.

### ***Grade Level***

Of the 85 persons who responded to our survey, more than half taught at the high school level. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution across grade levels. For clarity and simplicity, preschool and elementary categories were combined into one, and continuation/alternative high school was grouped with the high school category.

Respondents were allowed to select all the grade levels in which they taught, and 10 respondents selected more than one grade level. Of these 10, one selected preschool and elementary (which were combined into one category), one selected elementary and middle school, two selected elementary, middle, and high school, three selected middle and high school, and three selected high school and continuation/alternative high school (which were combined into one category). The responses of these 10 participants appear in each of the grade levels they selected.

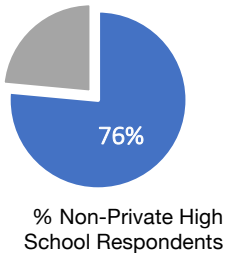
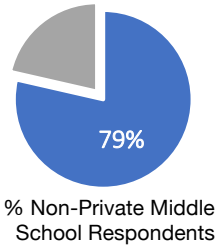
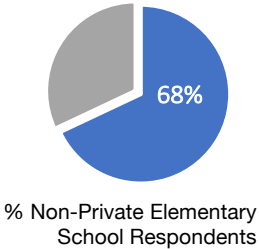
**Figure 1.**  
**Percent of respondents by grade level.\***



*\*Note: Respondents allowed to select more than one grade level; 10 respondents selected multiple levels and appear in more than one grade group.*

**School Types**

A majority of respondents represented traditional public schools. This held true for each grade level; almost half of all elementary school respondents and nearly 70% of high school and middle school respondents selected “traditional public school” as the type of school where they taught.



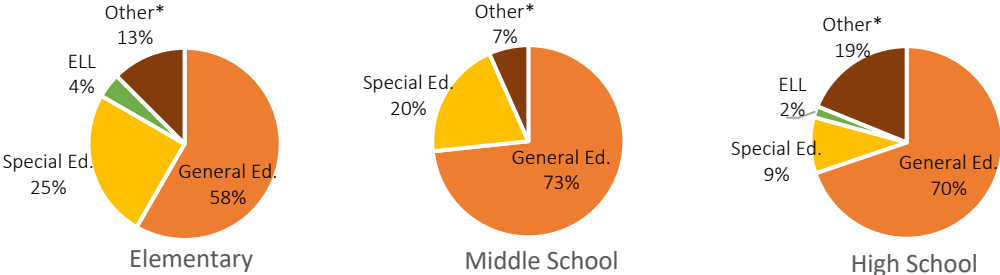
While respondents were allowed to select more than one choice to describe the school where they taught, most (80%) selected only one choice, twenty percent did select more than one response; however, most of these seemed to describe their public school in greater detail. For instance, seven respondents selected “traditional public school,” “Title I,” and “majority students of color.” Four selected “traditional public school” and “Title I.” Another three selected “traditional public school” and “dual immersion,” and one selected “traditional public school” and “magnet school.” Interestingly, two respondents selected public and private schools. This suggests they might hold more than one teaching job or switched school types sometime between 2020 and 2021.

When combined, 74% of respondents fell into a non-private school category comprised of “traditional public school,” “Title I,” and other non-private school selections. From this, we can infer that most of the voices captured in our survey came from individuals who taught in a non-private school setting. We also found that 21% of respondents indicated they were at a Title I school, and 13% said their schools served majority students of color.

**Position Held**

The majority of respondents in every grade level indicated they were general education teachers. Survey takers were able to select more than one position, and nine did. Still, these nine respondents selected “general education teacher” along with another option (e.g., “certificated support staff,” “ELL teacher,” “instructional content coach”). Twenty-five respondents selected a position other than “general education teacher.” These included special education teachers, instructional coaches, and paraprofessionals. Thus, the results from this section of the survey indicate that at every grade level, a majority (74%) of our respondents were general education teachers.

**Position Held by Respondents\*  
Elementary, Middle School, and High School**

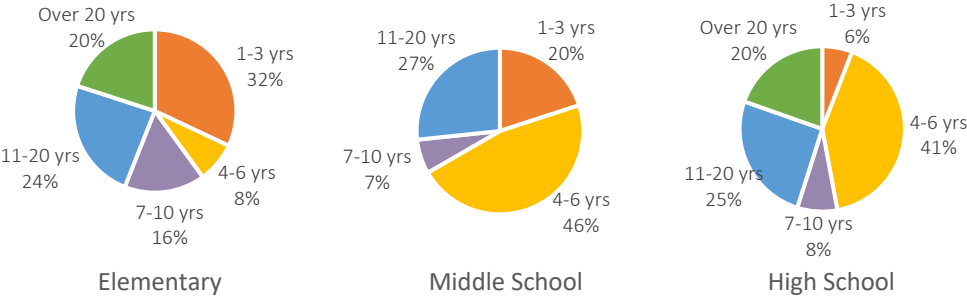


\* Respondents could select more than one grade level thus the same person might appear in more than one grade level group.

**Years of Teaching**

In addition to grade level and teaching position, we also asked respondents how many years they had been teaching. A majority of respondents had been teaching for at least 4 years. This was the case by grade level, where nearly 70% of elementary, 80% of middle school, and 94% of high school respondents had at least 4 years of experience. The pie charts below provide specific years of experience among elementary, middle, and high school respondents.

**Years of Experience by Grade Level\*  
Elementary, Middle School, and High School**



\* Respondents could select more than one grade level; thus, the same person might appear in more than one grade level group.

**Current Mode of Instruction**

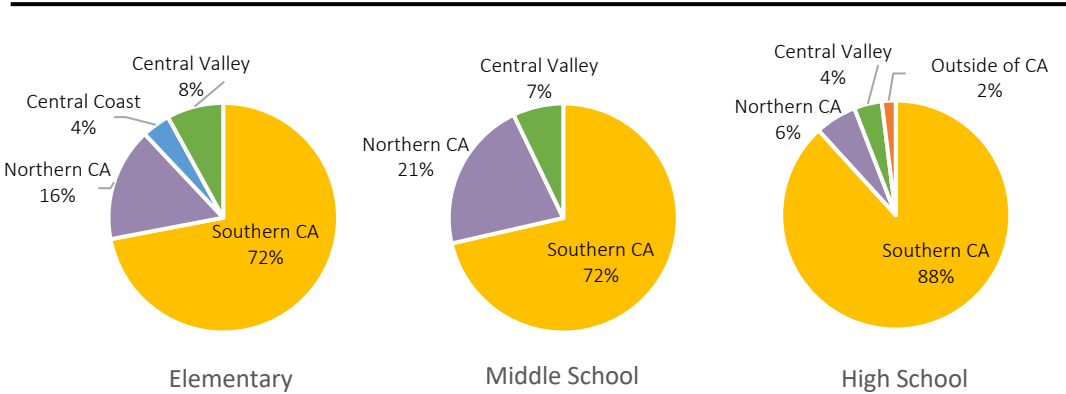
A majority (58%) of survey respondents were teaching in a hybrid model, a mix of online and in-person instructional modes. When disaggregated by grade level, elementary and middle school respondents overwhelmingly selected hybrid. High school respondents were more closely divided between hybrid (53%) and entirely online (41%). Two respondents were teaching entirely in-person, and another two selected “other.” Among

the other respondents, one wrote they were teaching in-person and online at the same time. The other wrote they were support staff.

**School Location**

Most survey respondents (82%) were from the Southern California region. Thirteen respondents were from other parts of California, and two respondents were from outside of California. The charts show respondents by region, disaggregated by grade level.

Region of Respondents by Grade Level\*  
Elementary, Middle School, and High School



\* Respondents could select more than one grade level thus the same person might appear in more than one grade level group.

Overall, most survey respondents were Southern California traditional public high school educators with 4 or more years of experience who were currently teaching either hybrid or entirely online. The elementary school group, while smaller, was still mostly from traditional public schools in Southern California with substantial experience teaching, and most of them were using a hybrid instructional mode. The middle school group was small and mostly comprised of Southern California general education teachers who had significant experience and were mainly using a hybrid model.

The following section delves into the responses shared by respondents. Beginning with the challenges they faced while teaching during the immediate lockdown, the section also discusses the urgent needs and resources accessible to teachers as they transition to a new schooling reality in the coming year.

### III. RESULTS: CHALLENGES, PRESSING NEEDS, AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Our survey focused on three areas: a) the challenges teachers experienced during the lockdown, b) their urgent needs as they transition to in-person and/or hybrid instructional models, and c) the resources they currently have access to support their work. We chose these areas as a means to understand what had been educators’ greatest obstacles to reaching and teaching students in Southern California during the initial quarantine period, and what resources and support they regarded as critical during the current transition.

The results convey a strong need for educators to be included in decision-making processes and social and emotional support for students as school communities return to in-person or hybrid instruction.

Results from each segment of the survey are discussed next.

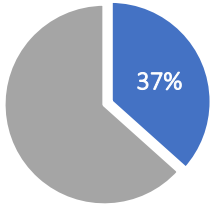
#### CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED DURING an ABRUPT TRANSITION

To get a sense of the challenges educators encountered during the initial phase of the lockdown, teachers were asked to reflect on the extent to which they and their students had access to the tools and resources necessary to effectively participate in remote instruction. Below are the results concerning technology, social and emotional needs, and supplemental learning opportunities.

##### *Technology*

Most respondents agreed they had the hardware, software, bandwidth, Internet speed, and tech support needed for remote learning. Most respondents also agreed that their students had the hardware (60%) and software (65%) needed for online learning.

However, 54% of respondents disagreed that students had the bandwidth or speed needed. Also, they were split on whether students had the technical skills and knowledge needed for remote learning; 36% agreed students had the skills and knowledge, 52% disagreed. Disaggregated results by non-private and private schools as well as by grade level parallel these overall outcomes with some exceptions.



% agreed students had the tech skills and knowledge needed for remote learning

**Technology access and support among non-private schools.** An overwhelming majority of non-private school respondents in every grade level agreed that teachers had the hardware needed for remote teaching. Elementary and high school respondents from non-private schools also widely agreed they had the software and had been provided with the training and tech support they needed. At the middle school level, however, the responses were nearly split. Only 60% of non-private middle school respondents agreed

they had the software they needed; 50% agreed they had the bandwidth and speed they needed, and only 40% agreed they had been provided with the training and tech support they needed. It is unclear why middle school educators felt less supported when it came to technology, but the results are important to note.

An overwhelming number of elementary, middle, and high school respondents from non-private schools agreed that students had the hardware and software needed for remote learning. Still, one-third of high school respondents and more than one-quarter of middle school respondents disagreed that students had the hardware needed. Another fifth of middle and high school respondents from non-private schools disagreed that students had the software they needed.

Results regarding student bandwidth and speed were mixed between grade levels. Nearly half of elementary school respondents at non-private schools agreed students had the bandwidth and speed needed. However, less than one-third of middle school and fewer than 10% of high school respondents at non-private schools agreed students had the bandwidth and speed needed. The tech skills and knowledge of students also varied between grade levels. While 50% of middle school respondents at non-private schools agreed students had these skills and knowledge, only one-third of elementary and less than one-fifth of high school teachers agreed students had these skills and knowledge.

**Technology access and support among private schools.** Results for private school respondents were similar to those of non-private schools. An overwhelming majority across grade levels agreed they had the hardware needed for remote teaching. A majority also agreed they had the internet speed and bandwidth they needed. Middle and high school respondents from private schools widely agreed they had the training and tech support they needed and private elementary school respondents agreed they had the software they needed. Interestingly, half of middle and high school respondents from private schools agreed they had the software they needed, and one-quarter or more disagreed they had the needed software. Also surprising was the third of private elementary school respondents who said they did not have the training or tech support they needed.

Interestingly, results related to student access to technology and support were mixed among private school respondents. Private school respondents across grade levels agreed students had the appropriate hardware and software required for remote learning; however, one-fifth disagreed students had these critical tools. Also, a little over one-third of private school respondents agreed that students had the bandwidth and speed they needed, and another third disagreed that students had the skills and knowledge required for remote learning. In fact, one-quarter of private middle school and more than 30% of private high school respondents disagreed students had the bandwidth, speed, knowledge, or skills necessary for remote learning.



### ***Social and Emotional Needs***

Approximately one-third of respondents disagreed that they were prepared to respond to students' social and emotional needs. Another third disagreed *they* were provided with the social and emotional support *they* needed during the lockdown.

**Social and emotional needs among non-private schools.** Educators at non-private schools were nearly split on whether they were prepared to respond to the social and emotional needs of students. At the elementary school level, more than 40% agreed they were prepared, but nearly 30% did not feel prepared. Fifty percent of middle school respondents felt prepared, but more than one-quarter did not. Among high school non-private respondents, 39% felt prepared, and 48% did not feel prepared. These results suggest that many non-private school educators did not feel prepared to respond to students' social and emotional needs. Providing training for teachers would be critical, especially as students' social and emotional needs will persist in the new academic year.

Similarly, many non-private school educators did not feel they were provided with the social and emotional support *they* needed during the lockdown. Only at the elementary school level did a majority of respondents feel they were supported. Still, more than one-third disagreed that they were provided with support. Half of middle school and nearly one-third of high school educators from non-private schools felt supported. This lack of support was also reflected in the write-in questions posed at the end of the survey, where educators conveyed their need for support given the exposure and experiences they have lived through during the pandemic.

**Social and emotional needs among private schools.** Disaggregating responses by grade level reveal elementary and high school level educators at private schools felt prepared to respond to the social and emotional needs of students. Meanwhile, only one-quarter of middle school respondents agreed they were prepared to respond. Also noteworthy, nearly one-third of elementary educators, one-quarter of middle school educators, and nearly one-fifth of high school educators at private schools disagreed that they were prepared to respond to students' social and emotional needs. These results suggest private school educators, like their non-private school peers, could benefit from training to feel more confident about supporting students' social and emotional needs.

Teachers at private schools were also split on whether they were provided with the social/emotional support they needed during the lockdown. While half of elementary educators at private schools agreed they had been provided with this crucial support, nearly one-third disagreed. Similarly, more than 60% of high school educators at private schools felt supported, but one-fifth disagreed. Also, half of all middle school respondents at private schools disagreed that they had been provided with social and emotional support.

### ***Supplemental Learning and Dedicated Space***

Most respondents (57%) agreed that their students were provided with supplemental learning opportunities during the pandemic. At the same time, more than one-fifth

disagreed that such opportunities had been provided to students. Most notable were middle school respondents, where nearly one-third disagreed that additional opportunities had been provided to students.

Nearly 20% of respondents agreed students had the dedicated space needed for remote learning; however, 50% disagreed that this space existed for students.

**Supplemental learning and space among non-private schools.** Interestingly, a majority of non-private school respondents across grade levels agreed students had been provided with supplemental learning opportunities. Still, one-fifth of elementary and high school respondents, and more than a quarter of middle school respondents from non-private schools disagreed that these opportunities had been provided to students. Also, a majority of non-private school respondents in every grade level *disagreed* that students had the dedicated space they needed for remote learning.

**Supplemental learning and space among private schools.** Like their non-private school counterparts, a majority of private school educators across grade levels agreed students had been provided with supplemental learning opportunities. In fact, 67% of elementary, 75% of middle school, and 62% of high school respondents from private schools agreed these supplemental learning opportunities were in place for students.

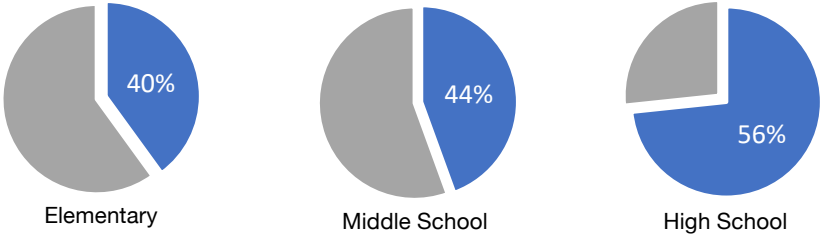
At the same time, there was wide variation on whether students had dedicated physical space; private elementary school respondents were split 50/50 whether students had a dedicated space. Nearly one-quarter of private high school respondents disagreed that students had a dedicated space. Three-quarters of middle school respondents could not agree or disagree, suggesting these educators did not know whether students had the space they needed for remote learning.

## **PRESSING NEEDS: EFFECTIVE ADAPTATION TO NEW MODES OF INSTRUCTION**

To gauge the urgent needs sought by educators, respondents were asked to rank six policies and practices from most to least pressing. The list consisted of supplemental learning, teacher training and resources, mental health services for students, and emotional support for teachers. The highest and lowest ranked policies and practices are discussed next, disaggregated by school type and grade level.

***Top Ranked Priorities.*** The top priorities selected were mental health and other support services for students, trauma-informed training and resources, and supplemental learning interventions. Specifically, 40% of respondents identified supplemental learning as the number one priority that needed to be in place as students and teachers transitioned to in-person or hybrid learning. Additionally, 55% selected mental health as their 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> priority; 78% chose it as one of their top three priorities. Trauma-informed training and resources was selected as another high priority among respondents; 62% of respondents chose trauma-informed training as one of their top 3 priorities.

**% Selected Mental Health Support Services for Students as First or Second Priority by Grade Level\***



*\* Respondents could select more than one grade level thus the same person might appear in more than one grade level group.*

These priorities were true across grade levels where elementary, middle, and high school educators ranked mental health for students as either their 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> priority, followed by trauma-informed training and resources for adult staff, and supplemental learning interventions for struggling students. Once results were disaggregated by school type, however, results differed somewhat.

**Top priorities among non-private schools.** Interestingly, once school types were disaggregated, mental health support services from students emerged as the top priority among non-private school respondents. Trauma-informed training and resources was also selected as a top priority among non-private school respondents. Non-private school elementary, middle school, and high school educators each selected trauma-informed training and resources and mental health support services for students as their top two priorities.

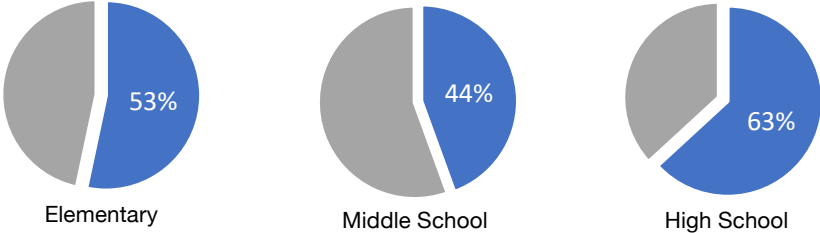
**Top priorities among private schools.** Supplemental learning interventions was the highest ranked priority among private school respondents. The next highest priority was mental health support services for students. These were the top priorities selected by private school respondents at every grade level.

**Lowest Ranked Priorities.** Most respondents (59%) selected antiracist training as their last or next to last priority. Similarly, few respondents selected culturally responsive, sustaining training and resources as a top priority. In fact, many (49%) selected it as their last or second to last priority. This was true across grade levels. Surprisingly, elementary school educators also ranked social and emotional support for teachers as a low priority, nearly as low as training and resources on culturally responsive and sustaining instructional practices.

Interestingly, these results contradict later responses when reporting that culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy (CRSP) would be critical to nurturing equity. These conflicting outcomes may be due to respondents forced to rank mental health and trauma-informed needs above other needs. However, CRSP training could still be

counted as critical, especially when coupled with responses provided in the survey’s fillable section; CRSP seems to carry importance for some survey respondents.

**% Selected Antiracist Training and Resources as Lowest or Near Lowest Priority by Grade Level\***



*\* Respondents could select more than one grade level thus the same person might appear in more than one grade level group.*

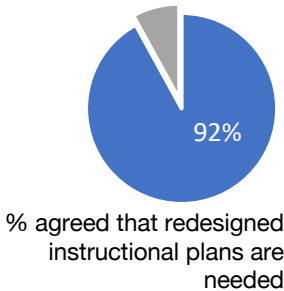
**Lowest ranked priorities among non-private schools.** Antiracist training was the lowest ranked priority for elementary, middle, and high school non-private educators. As mentioned above, these results contradict later comments written in by participants. Elementary and high school respondents from non-private schools also ranked training on culturally responsive and sustaining instructional practices as a low priority. Meanwhile, non-private middle school educators ranked supplemental learning interventions as a low priority.

**Lowest ranked priorities among private schools.** Similar to non-private school respondents, private school respondents ranked antiracist training as a low priority. Across each grade level, antiracist training was ranked low, if not the lowest of priority. Elementary and high school teachers at private schools also ranked training in culturally responsive and sustaining instructional practices as a low priority.

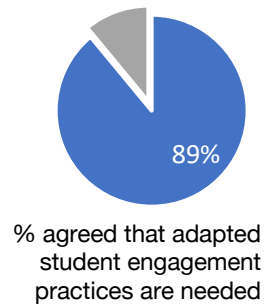
The low ranking of antiracist training is somewhat surprising given the renewed calls for racial justice. Still, of the list of six priorities, educators across grade levels at private and non-private schools ranked mental health services for students as a top priority.

***Supporting Students Academically***

When asked to reflect on the aspects of schooling that could help students academically as they transition to in-person instruction, most school respondents across grade levels agreed that redesigning instructional plans would be critical. Additionally, over 90% of elementary and high school respondents also agreed COVID-safe student engagement protocols would be needed to support students academically. Among middle school respondents, 90% agreed tailored extended-day learning opportunities would be needed.



**Supporting students academically among non-private schools.** Responses among non-private school educators mirrored overall results. In fact, 91% of non-private elementary school teachers agreed or strongly agreed that redesigned instruction plans and adapted student engagement practices that maintain COVID-safe protocols were needed to support students academically. These results were further illustrated in a write-in response from a teacher that stated, *“Teaching online and in person at the same time is not fair to either student. I have done all three in person, all online, and both. It can be done but it isn't a good practice.”*



Similarly, 83% of non-private middle school teachers agreed instructional plans would need to be redesigned to support students. Additionally, 83% of non-private middle school teachers agreed or strongly agreed that students would be best supported with tailored extended-day learning opportunities to address identified learning loss.

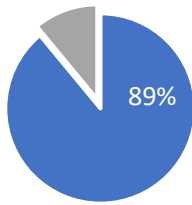
Among non-private high school teachers, 88% agreed or strongly agreed a redesigned instructional plan was needed to support students’ academics. Additionally, 85% agreed or strongly agreed in adapted student engagement practices that maintain COVID-safe protocols. These results were echoed in a response from a high school educator who wrote, *“We need a model that addresses the needs of all students. We took too long to devise a hybrid learning schedule and plan.”*

**Supporting students academically among private schools.** All private school respondents agreed it was essential to focus on redesigning instructional plans. All private educators also agreed that adapted student engagement practices would also be critical. A majority of private school educators (82%) agreed that they and other school staff needed specialized training to effectively teach in a hyflex format.

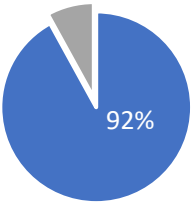
Based on our collective experiences in education, we believe that the reason the data shows a large majority of K-12 teachers needed instruction plans to account for an evolving learning reality is not particularly related to COVID-19 but has been voiced prior to the pandemic and is a high need for teachers in public schools. Most teachers across grade levels also believe that adapted student engagement practices that maintain COVID-safe protocols are necessary, which could be due to the overwhelming changes teachers went through trying to engage students virtually and hybrid learning models.

***Supporting Students Socially, Emotionally***

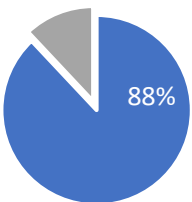
Overall, most respondents agreed or strongly agreed with each statement about social, emotional supports for students. Specifically, respondents agreed that strong, trusting relationships (92%) and consistent, reliable on-campus professional support (89%) would be needed to support students socially and emotionally. Most respondents also agreed training in trauma-informed practices (88%), redesigning processes and practices (83%), and supports for teachers (80%) would be needed to support students.



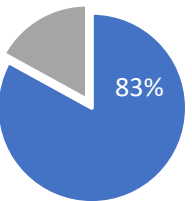
% agreed that consistent, reliable on-campus professional support are needed



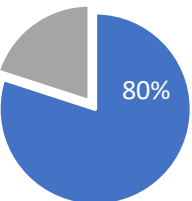
% agreed that trusting relationships with families, colleagues, across campus are needed



% agreed that professional training in trauma-informed practices are needed



% agreed that redesigned processes and practices to nurture well-being are needed



% agreed that social and emotional support networks for teachers are needed

Among elementary school educators, *all* agreed that trusting relationships and professional training on trauma-informed practices would be essential; 90% of middle and high school educators agreed trusting relationships were needed as well as consistent, reliable professional support for students.

**Supporting students socially, emotionally among non-private schools.** All non-private elementary school respondents agreed that they needed redesigned processes and practices that nurture students’ social and emotional well-being. They also agreed professional training on trauma-informed practices and strong, trusting relationships with families, colleagues, and across the campus community would be needed to support students.

Among non-private middle and high school teachers, 100% agreed consistent, reliable on-campus support for students was needed as well as strong, trusting relationships with families, colleagues, and across the campus community.

**Supporting students socially, emotionally among private schools.** *All* private elementary and middle school teachers and 91% of private high school teachers agreed that strong, trusting relationships with families, colleagues, and the campus community would be needed to support students who struggle socially and emotionally. Similarly, 88% of these educators agreed that they needed training on trauma-informed practices that provide teachers with explicit strategies and approaches to support all students effectively.

Close to 75% of private school teachers agreed it would be necessary to redesign processes and practices that nurture students’ social and emotional well-being in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its residual impacts. A majority (90%) of private elementary teachers felt this was important, and 75% of private high school teachers agreed this was necessary to support struggling students. In comparison, only 66% of private middle school teachers indicated a need to improve practices and processes.

Interestingly, 66% of private middle school teachers and 75% of private high school teachers indicated that they needed access to social and emotional networks to support educators as they return to in-person instruction. While 100% of elementary school teachers agreed they needed access to such networks.

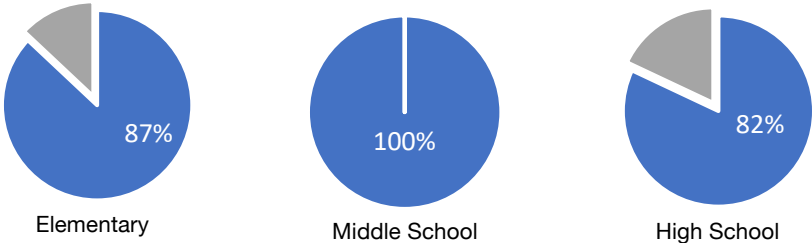
As students, educators, and school staff return to their respective campuses, just as much attention (if not more) must be placed on social and emotional well-being as on academics. Survey results across school types and grade levels reflected this sentiment. Many respondents agreed strong, trusting relationships with families, colleagues, and across the campus community would be needed to support students socially and emotionally. Moreover, elementary school educators recognized the need to be trained in trauma-informed practices and to redesign engagement processes and practices. Among middle and high school teachers at non-private schools, consistent, reliable on-campus professional support for students was recognized as important. While not as highly ranked, there was also some agreement across grade levels and school types that access to social and emotional networks to support teachers would be important.

Schools were already struggling to provide students with appropriate and ample social and emotional supports pre-pandemic. The survey results suggest these needs have not only intensified, but they have also expanded. Along with on-campus professional support, educators need trauma-informed training and redesigned processes and practices to be equipped to help students transition healthfully.

***Nurturing Equity in Classrooms, Across Campuses***

Nearly 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that tailored academic interventions would nurture equity in classrooms and across campuses. Respondents also agreed or strongly agreed that professional development in culturally responsive, sustaining pedagogy (86%) and knowledge of the larger sociopolitical contexts of students’ lives (83%) would be needed to nurture school and classroom equity. Additionally, there was strong agreement that effective school and district leadership (83%) and authentic partnerships (78%) would be essential to nurturing equity.

**% Agree Culturally Responsive, Sustaining Prof. Dev. Needed by Grade Level\***



*\* Respondents could select more than one grade level thus the same person might appear in more than one grade level group.*

Professional development in culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy and authentic school-community partnerships each received 87% agreement by elementary school teachers, followed by knowledge of larger sociopolitical contexts impacting students’ lives and learning, effective school and district leadership, and tailored intensive academic interventions.

Among middle school educators, 100% agreed that culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy would nurture equity. A majority (80%) also agreed that knowledge of larger sociopolitical contexts, effective leadership, authentic partnerships, and tailored intensive academic interventions would also be important.

High school educators most strongly agreed tailored intensive academic interventions would nurture equity (90%). Meanwhile, more than 80% of high school respondents agreed with knowledge of sociopolitical contexts, effective leadership, and professional development in culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy.

Faculty learning circles ranked last among each grade level. While a majority still agreed these would be important to nurture equity, one-quarter of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed they would be needed, and 14% disagreed they would be needed.

**Nurturing equity among non-private schools.** Overall, non-private school teachers noted they need knowledge about the larger sociopolitical contexts that impact their students' lives and learning, professional development in responsive pedagogy, and tailored academic interventions. Specifically, non-private elementary school teachers, 91% agreed that professional development in culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy and knowledge about the larger sociopolitical context in which their culturally diverse students live and learn would be needed to support equity.

Among non-private middle school teachers, 100% agreed that professional development in culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy would be needed to nurture equity.

Finally, 85% of non-private high school teachers agreed that availability of tailored intensive academic interventions for struggling learners (e.g., before/after school enrichment, summer school, intersession learning opportunities) and knowledge about the larger sociopolitical context in which their culturally diverse students live and learn is needed to nurture equity.

**Nurturing equity among private schools.** Like non-private school teachers, most private school teachers agreed that knowledge about larger sociopolitical contexts impact students' lives (92%), and professional development in culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy (87%) would nurture equity within classrooms and across campuses. All middle school teachers reported on the need for building capacity in culturally and sustaining practices, followed by 91% of high school teachers and 75% elementary school teachers.

Additionally, 100% of private middle and high school teachers and 75% of private elementary school teachers reported they need access to tailored intensive academic interventions for struggling learners (e.g., before/after school enrichment, summer school, intersession learning opportunities).



Also unique among private school respondents was their agreement that effective school and district leadership that embodies an authentic and unyielding belief in all students' potential to succeed (87%) would be needed. Similarly, 72% of these teachers agreed that authentic school-community partnerships that operate from a place of trust, respect, and openness would be needed to nurture equity in their classrooms and across their campuses.

Fewer than 55% of elementary and high school teachers believed they needed Faculty Learning Circles dedicated to cultivating/nurturing cultural competence across campus.

The renewed calls for racial/ethnic justice across the country over the last year have been coupled with the bright light of inequity the pandemic shone on our nation's public schools. When asked how best to nurture equity, non-private and private school survey respondents overwhelmingly agreed that professional development in culturally and sustaining pedagogy would be needed. Similarly, educators in all grade levels and school types agreed that knowledge about the larger sociopolitical context in which their culturally diverse students live and learn would nurture equity. Given these outcomes, district and school leaders and teacher preparation programs are best positioned to respond by providing the training and knowledge to support current and future educators.

Additionally, high school educators across school types agreed tailored, intensive academic interventions would be critical. Policymakers who control school and district purse strings could ensure before and after school, summer, and intersession enrichment opportunities are provided to students.

### **(LACK OF) ACCESS TO CRITICAL RESOURCES**

To support students as they adapt to a new schooling reality, teachers need access to critical resources. We asked respondents the extent to which they currently had access to some of these, including professional development, partnerships, and classroom support personnel. The results were concerning.

Fewer than half of all respondents agreed that any of the resources listed were available to them. "Partnerships between teachers and families," received the most decisive response as 48% of respondents agreed they currently existed. Another 34% of respondents agreed that partnerships with community agencies and nonprofit organizations currently existed. However, more than one-quarter of respondents *disagreed or strongly disagreed* that partnerships with families, community agencies, or nonprofits existed. This finding is troubling given that these were the same supportive partnerships that would be needed as students transition back to an in-person or blended instructional mode after a traumatic 18-month period.

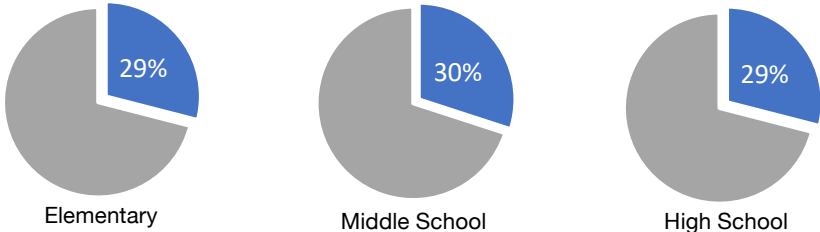
#### ***Resources Needed***

Many respondents disagreed that they had access to meaningful professional development (P.D.). Specifically, 53% disagreed they had been provided with P.D. to

support their students academically during the transition; 48% disagreed they had been provided meaningful P.D. on trauma-informed practices. Half of respondents also disagreed they had been or would be provided with additional classroom support personnel.

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**% Agree Meaningful P.D. Had Been Provided to Prepare for Face-to-Face, In-Person Instruction by Grade Level\***



*\* Respondents could select more than one grade level thus the same person might appear in more than one grade level group.*

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**Needed resources among non-private schools.** Among non-private school respondents, 60% of elementary school teachers reported not having meaningful professional development on trauma-informed practices provided at their school.

Another 67% of non-private middle school teachers strongly disagreed that they had been provided with meaningful professional development to prepare for the transition to face-to-face, in-person instruction. Similarly, 67% of this group of teachers reported not having meaningful professional development on trauma-informed practices provided at their school. When asked about partnerships, 67% of non-private middle school teachers reported that strong partnerships exist between teachers and families.

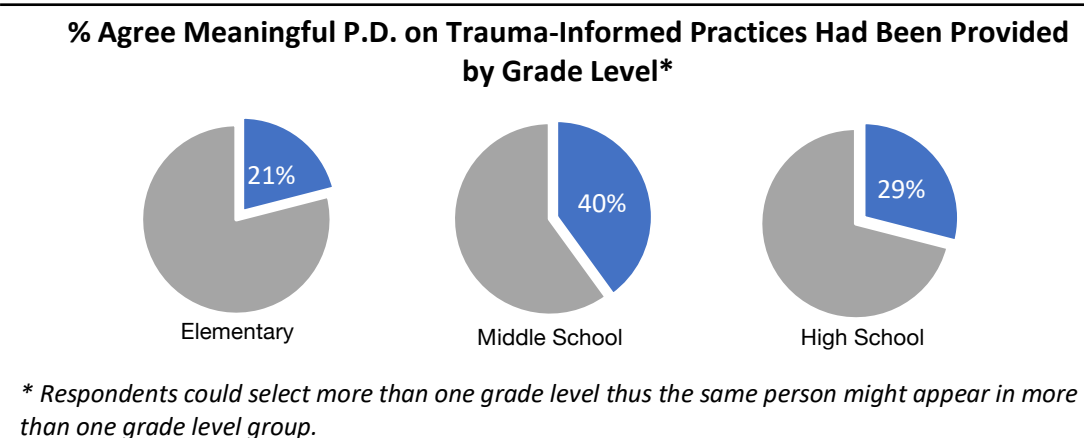
Also, 52% of non-private high school teachers stated they did not currently have access to additional classroom support personnel or meaningful professional development on trauma-informed practices. This further illustrates the need for meaningful professional development on trauma-informed practices. The pandemic’s impact has not only brought new traumas experienced by students, but it has also highlighted the existing gap in teacher training in this area. Trauma-informed instructional practices and resources should be provided to support the educational community holistically; here we find these resources currently do not exist for many non-private school educators.

**Needed resources among private schools.** More than 50% of elementary and high school teachers and 66% of middle school teachers reported that they did not have access to meaningful professional development to prepare teachers transitioning to face-to-face, in-person instruction to support students academically. Additionally, 41% of private school teachers reported they did not currently have access to meaningful professional development on trauma-informed practices.

A majority of private school teachers (59%) also reported they did not currently have additional classroom support personnel to help with students in classrooms.

Interestingly among private school educators, 100% of elementary teachers and 66% of middle school teachers reported strong partnerships between teachers and families. In contrast, only 33% of private high school teachers reported that such partnerships existed in their schools.

Similarly, all private school elementary teachers and 66% of middle school teachers reported that strong collaborative partnerships with community agencies and nonprofit organizations are currently available to teachers and staff.



Across school types, elementary school teachers did agree that strong partnerships existed between teachers and families (71%) and strong collaborative partnerships with community agencies and nonprofit organizations also existed (50%). Unfortunately, this was not the case among middle and high school respondents, where half or far fewer agreed such partnerships existed. Moreover, access to meaningful professional development was also missing for a good portion of educators across grade levels. These results suggest an opportunity for leadership and organizations that provide such training and support to step in, create partnerships, and work together to support teachers and students and families during this critical moment.

#### **IV. IN THEIR OWN WORDS: WHAT LEADERS AND RESEARCHERS CAN DO TO BETTER SUPPORT EDUCATORS**

Two fillable questions were included in the survey to provide respondents with an opportunity to write-in their thoughts on how to best support educators at this moment. Specifically, they were asked what leaders could do to support teachers’ work and what additional information is needed to better understand educators’ needs. This next section discusses the insights expressed by respondents.

## HOW LEADERS CAN SUPPORT TEACHERS

Responses about what school leaders could do fell into three categories: policies, practices, and resources. While specific aspects within each of these categories varied across grade levels, what emerged were the concerns and needs of teachers from leaders. Moreover, the responses closely aligned and complemented the results from earlier survey questions.

### ***Safety Policies Implemented by School Leaders***

Across all grade levels, respondents expressed a need for school leaders to implement and ensure the safety of students, teachers, and staff on-campus. For instance, one elementary charter school educator wrote, “*School leadership can be certain that safety procedures are in place and that routines are kept as much as possible for students and staff to feel secure,*” a middle school teacher wrote, “*be strict about COVID protocols and maintaining us safe.*” A high school respondent said, “*have a secure place to work from.*” These calls for COVID-safety policies complemented results earlier in the survey when respondents across grade levels agreed COVID-safe engagement protocols were needed to support students during the transition. Additionally, they reported they had not been provided with professional development to prepare for the transition to in-person instruction.

***“Train us in how to accommodate for the many levels of need.”***

-- Title I public high school teacher with 11-20 years of experience

### ***Resources from School Leaders***

High school educators were especially vocal about wanting more P.D. provided by school leaders. Training in trauma, new procedures and tools, antiracism, culturally-based learning, and wellness practices were types of professional development and training explicitly mentioned by high school respondents. These calls complemented earlier results where respondents said P.D. in these areas would be needed to support students during the transition period and to nurture equity. Conversely, respondents said they currently lacked P.D. in these areas.

High school respondents also wanted leaders to provide wellness services for teachers and social, emotional support for students. These responses align with previous survey responses in which high school respondents (and elementary and middle school respondents) largely agree consistent, reliable on-campus professional support for students would be needed to support students. Another 80% agreed social and emotional support networks for teachers would be needed during the current transition period.

A smaller group of high school respondents asked that leaders provide planning and collaboration time. These calls were conveyed in one educator’s response, “*Planning time is crucial as well as collaboration time. Everything takes longer to do and there is*

*the learning curve to account for as well*" (traditional public high school educator with over 20 years of experience). Finally, a few high school educators wanted safe, secure schools, higher pay, and classroom aides.

Middle school respondents echoed many of the same calls made by high school respondents. In terms of resources, middle school educators wanted classroom aides and mental health services.

Many elementary educators also called for more resources from school leaders. Specifically, they sought social and emotional support services for students, and technology support. The calls for safety and social and emotional support for students are reflected in earlier survey results, where an overwhelming number of elementary school teachers agreed redesigned instructional plans were needed.

### ***Practices of School Leaders***

Nearly 40% of comments mentioned practices respondents wanted their school leaders to embody. Specifically, respondents said leaders needed to be transparent, good listeners, effective communicators, understanding, visible, and responsible. Another 12% wanted leaders to be clear about their expectations and communicate effectively. Additionally, 9% of respondents asked that leaders give teachers time and space to adapt to their new realities. These responses were found across grade levels.

High school educators wrote about an array of practices they wanted in their school leaders. Top among these was a leader who was understanding, transparent, and an effective communicator. For instance, high school respondents wrote, *"inform teachers of possible upcoming changes ASAP," "be understanding and have patience," and "Transparency in planning and setting clear schedules and expectations (as much as possible) is helpful."*

***"Clear communication, visit classrooms, understand how it looks in reality and not in theory."***

-- Public high school teacher with 4-6 years of experience

Middle school teachers paralleled the high school responses. *"Listen and be trustworthy and forthright,"* one middle school teacher wrote. Another wrote, *"Be understanding and have patience."* *"Be clear in expectations and in the expectation that flexibility is required as we continue to be in a state of flux,"* wrote one more middle school teacher.

Responses from elementary school teachers were similar to those of middle and high school educators. *"Give us grace,"* wrote one elementary school respondent. Another wrote, *"check in on teacher wellness. Do as much as [possible] to limit extra responsibilities."*

***"Emphasize social and emotional well-being and resilience"***

-- Elementary school teacher with 11-20 years of experience

Examining the policies, practices, and resources respondents said they wanted from leaders alongside the other results from survey questions, a more complete picture begins to emerge about the needs of teachers. For instance, high school respondents said they wanted leaders to provide more training, support services, and clear expectations. At the same time, they did not have access to training and support services. Moreover, they regarded the training and support services as critical to the transition.

Similarly, middle school educators wanted school leaders to provide mental health support services and COVID-safe protocols. They also wanted leaders to be trustworthy and forthright. Simultaneously, middle school teachers agreed trusting relationships and consistent, reliable on-campus professional support for students would be essential during the transition. They also reported not having access to meaningful training in trauma-informed practices and nearly half reported not being provided social or emotional support during the lockdown period.

Finally, teachers at elementary schools said they wanted school leaders to implement safety measures and to provide social and emotional supports for students and technology help for educators. They also wanted leaders who were responsive and effective communicators. These calls were conveyed in earlier results, such as elementary school teachers' strong agreement for COVID-safe student engagement protocols. Moreover, more than half of elementary school teachers reported not having access to P.D. on trauma-informed practices, something that would strengthen the social and emotional support provided to students.

## **MORE NEEDS TO BE UNDERSTOOD**

When asked what additional information is needed to better understand the needs of teachers at this moment, respondents provided an array of answers. The most common comment (29%) conveyed a desire to be included in decisions and to be asked about their experiences and needs. Some respondents mentioned needing more empathy and understanding (26%). Another quarter centered on understanding *student* needs (23%) including special education student needs, the needs of students who continue with remote learning, and the well-being and counseling needs of all students. Additional interests were in hybrid teaching (9%), creating new physical spaces (6%), and reforming schooling (3%).

To better understand the needs of this moment, most comments (40%) suggested that teachers simply be asked, as one middle school respondent wrote, *“Ask us!”* Respondents also wanted teachers to be included in the decisions made about needs. This sentiment was captured by one public high school respondent who wrote, *“We have no choice and no voice in what supports are given. We feel like we are on our own,”* and another wrote, *“ask teachers what they need*

***“Actively listen to teachers’ needs and actually put in the work to support them.”***

-- Title I charter school teacher with 1-3 years of experience

*rather than leaving it up to them to figure out how to proceed with no support.*” These comments captured the dual function of *listening*, as a tool to truly understand teacher needs *and* as a way to demonstrate support for teachers. All of the respondents who expressed these ideas were high school and middle school instructors; they also had four or more years of teaching experience.

A second common response reflected a need to understand what educators were going through. For example, one public elementary school teacher wrote, “[the] *personal trauma experienced as a result of the pandemic, and how it might impact their professional responsibilities.*” Another comment by a public high school teacher captured the need for understanding and empathy, “*We are working so much more and harder and carrying way more emotional baggage; we need empathy above all else.*” These and additional comments in this group suggest a need to better understand the social and emotional impact the pandemic and ongoing challenges are having on teachers and their impact on teaching and learning. Respondents who expressed these ideas were in preschools, elementary schools, and high schools. They also ranged in years of experience, from being in their 1st three years to over 20 years.

***“We are working so much more and harder and carrying way more emotional baggage; we need empathy above all else.”***

-- Public high school teacher with 1-3 years of experience

The two ideas of 1) asking teachers directly about their needs and 2) understanding the social emotional impacts on teachers, suggest, at least across survey respondents, there is some interest among educators to share their stories. Gathering insights and experiences directly from teachers would be a critical path toward healing and supporting educators.

***“If our students are taken care of, teachers will be fine – more counseling and services for students”***

-- Public high school teacher with over 20 years of experience

The third group of responses centered on better understanding of students’ situations and emotional states. Here, respondents conveyed a link between student well-being and teacher well-being. As one high school educator wrote, “*If our students are taken care of, teachers will be fine – more counseling and services for students.*” Respondents in this group wanted to understand *student* needs, including special education student needs and the needs of students who continue with remote learning. For example, one elementary school teacher wrote, “*In our district, special education was completely left*

*to fend for themselves in regard to support from the district level. And now, as we begin coming back and seeing specific students' needs, they continue to avoid our needs in supporting these students by giving blanket protocols. It has been very disheartening."* Other elementary school teachers wrote, *"challenges of hybrid learning and how to effectively meet the needs of learners in this situation,"* and another offered, *"that 'hybrid' models where we are teaching both in-person and online is simply not sustainable. It is far more difficult to work with individual students and be the best teachers we can be."* These respondents were in elementary and high schools; they also had 7 or more years of teaching experience. As captured by this set of responses, students who will continue with remote learning and those who will be returning to campus need explicit, intentional, and tailored supports. Blanket protocols likely will not meet the needs of all students given the unique and specific contexts of diverse students such as special education students, English learners, and various other student subgroups engaged in a variety of different instructional modes.

A small number of respondents indicated physical spaces and technology skills of teachers needed to be further understood.

## **V. SUPPORTING TEACHERS AT THIS CRITICAL MOMENT**

The events of 2020 have forever altered our educational system. The educators whose experiences and voices are at the heart of this report clearly understand that a new reality is upon us. The survey results convey educators' recognition that their students' social and emotional well-being and students' access to academic and social-emotional supports will directly influence their ability to transition successfully.

Educators' top concern was the availability of mental health support and supplemental learning interventions for students. These results were captured in Likert-scaled questions as well as in fillable responses provided by educators. Respondents overwhelmingly supported reliable, on-campus professional support for students. Moreover, educators overwhelmingly agreed that professional development in trauma-informed instructional practices will be critical to support students during the current transition.

Also revealing was the gap in access to these important resources. Few educators in elementary, middle, or high school had been provided meaningful P.D. to help prepare them for in-person instruction or on trauma-informed practices. In fact, educators, in particular high school teachers, wanted school leaders to provide them with training in trauma, wellness, and other areas.

These results signal a need to supply educators with meaningful training and preparation to support students' academic and social and emotional needs in the upcoming school year and beyond. The survey results also suggest educators support providing students access to professional counselors and other experts who are formally trained in mental health and trauma.



Educators also felt strongly that instructional plans and student engagement practices would need to be redesigned in light of the ongoing threat of COVID-19. They also wanted school leaders to continue to enforce measures to ensure the safety and well-being of students, educators, and staff.

Beyond these areas, respondents shared their thoughts on nurturing equity. Here, elementary, middle, and high school respondents widely agreed that knowledge of sociopolitical contexts in which their students live and learn and professional development in culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy would be essential. While these were not highly ranked priorities, a majority of educators agreed developing skills in these areas would address inequity in classrooms and across school campuses. These conflicting outcomes indicate a need to clarify connections between trauma (which was highly ranked by respondents in every grade level), sociopolitical contexts, responsive pedagogy, and equity.

Also notable were the few but powerful comments from respondents whose calls expressed a need to recognize teachers for the professionals, educators, and members of institutions that they are. This group reminds us that teachers are also human beings who have experienced their own personal trauma and have witnessed first-hand the upheaval of their students and families.

As school systems in California and across the country work to repair the harms caused by the pandemic and subsequent socioeconomic impacts, it is critical that teachers have a say on how to move forward. As those on the ground level, living through the everyday challenges and struggles, educators are uniquely positioned to help construct a new schooling apparatus. As an elementary school teacher wrote in our survey, “the way education has been is not how it should continue.” We are at a significant moment in history, where the path toward educational equity for *all* of our youth is through immediate and intentional action and investment informed by teachers’ voices and experiences.