

MA Statewide Family Engagement Center Needs Assessment

Summer 2021



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Demographics

A total of 1,418 community members from across Massachusetts started the Family Engagement Feedback survey in a variety of languages. Approximately 34% of responses came from multilingual households, including responses submitted in one of the six translations provided, as well as those who took the survey in English but reported other languages spoken in the home. We received a limited number of educator responses, in large part due to concerns of over surveying and overburdening during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Respondent		Responses
Educator		312
Family	English	1185
	Chinese	94
	Haitian Creole	5
	Portuguese	32
	Spanish	91
	Vietnamese	9
	Arabic	2
	Total	1418
Total		1,730

Grade levels represented

Unlike in previous years, the majority of family responses in 2021 came from those with high school students (42%). As in the past, the majority of educator responses came from elementary school teachers (56%), however we did see an increase in high school teachers as well (30%).

The majority of responding educators had more than 10 years of experience in their district (44%), and were either general classroom teachers (35%) or a interventionist such as a Special Education or English Language Learner teacher (14%).

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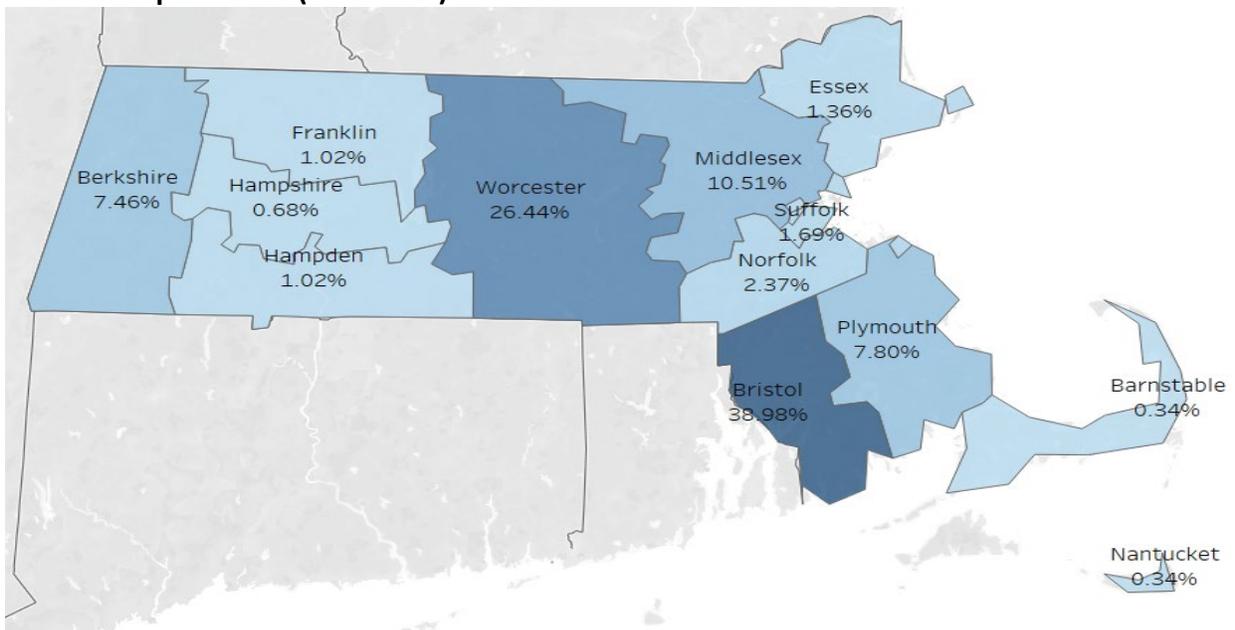
Respondent	Educator	Family
Childcare	13%	6%
Pre-kindergarten	16%	12%
Elementary School	24%	56%
Middle School	15%	29%
High School	42%	30%
Other	10%	2%

Languages spoken by families served

The majority of family responses came from English speaking households (88%), and a small number of Spanish speaking households (12%). Of the total family responses, 34% reported speaking a language other than or in addition to English.

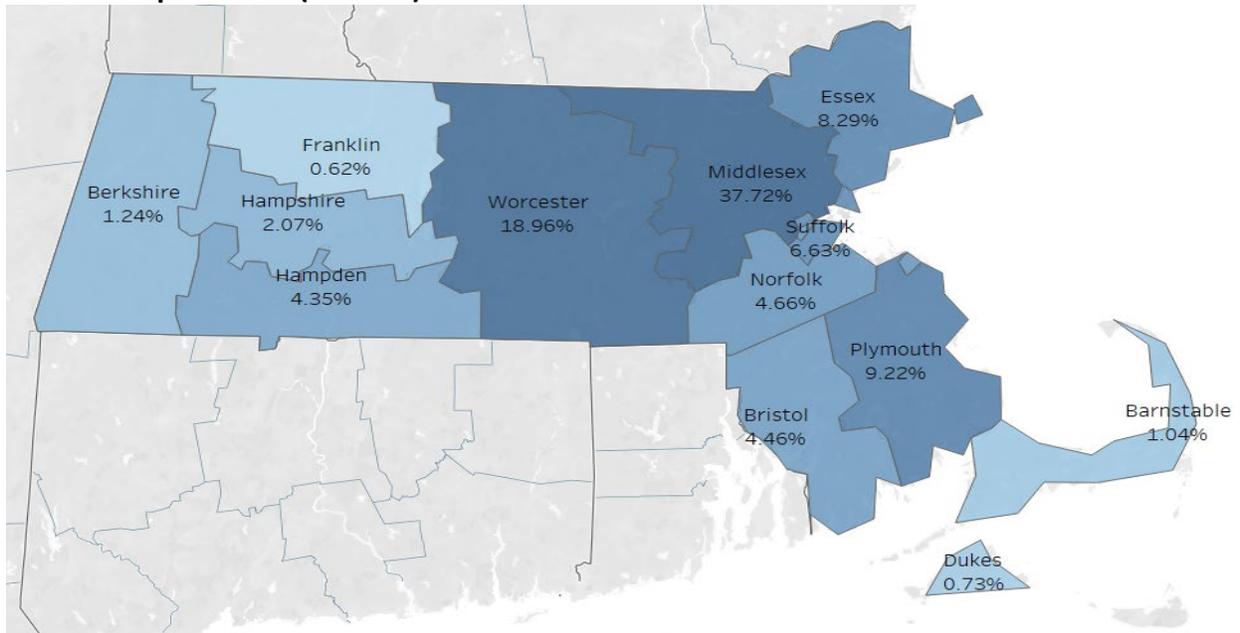
Educators largely reported the home languages of the families they serve to be: English (96%), Spanish (82%), and Portuguese (59%). Additional languages include Haitian Creole (38%), Cape Verdean Creole (29%), Vietnamese (32%), Chinese (21%), and Arabic (21%).

Counties represented (educators)



Educators responding to the needs assessment taught mostly in Bristol (39%), Worcester (26%), and Middlesex (11%) with additional responses from Plymouth (8%), and the Berkshires (8%).

Counties represented (families)



Families responding to the needs assessment shared their experiences with schools in the following counties: Middlesex (38%), Worcester (19%), Plymouth (9%), Essex (8%), and Suffolk (7%).

Creating a Culture of Family Engagement

- The *creating a culture of family engagement* domain is based on the culture and environment created and maintained by the school as the school promotes and accomplishes family engagement efforts. To conceptualize this domain, items consider the mindsets of school staff, the information the school makes available to parents and the community, and how the school involves families.

Family Survey (n=977)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
My family's culture is respected by teachers and staff at my child's school.	3%	4%	7%	50%	36%
My child's school provides my child and our family with a supportive environment.	4%	9%	5%	48%	34%
I trust the teachers and staff at my child's school.	4%	9%	4%	49%	34%
Teachers and staff at my child's school keep me well-informed (e.g. letters, texts, phone calls, emails).	5%	14%	2%	47%	33%
Teachers and staff at my child's school respect the knowledge and experiences of the families they serve.	5%	10%	8%	49%	28%

Educator Survey (n=242)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
Educators at this school respect the cultures of the families we serve.	0%	1%	10%	49%	39%
Educators at this school provide families and children with a safe environment.	0%	1%	5%	45%	48%
Educators at this school provide families and children with a supportive environment.	0%	1%	7%	46%	45%
Educators at this school trust families.	1%	7%	33%	44%	15%
Educators at this school involve families to help build school culture and climate.	1%	8%	25%	44%	21%
Families have authentic opportunities to have their voice heard at this school.	2%	12%	24%	41%	21%
Educators at this school keep families well-informed (e.g. letters, texts, phone calls, emails).	0%	2%	8%	56%	33%
This school shares information with families and the community about family engagement policies.	2%	7%	20%	45%	27%
This school involves families in developing materials and resources to support educators and family members in helping students to achieve.	5%	17%	32%	29%	17%
Administrators at our school support educators in meaningfully engaging with families.	3%	9%	26%	40%	23%

It is important to a school's ultimate success that stakeholders commit themselves to nurturing reciprocal, trusting relationships. A majority of families (83%) and some educators (59%) reported such relationships. However, a number of families (13%) and educators (8%) reported an absence of trust.

The ability for schools and families to communicate effectively depends on consistent and effective systems and structures, which are vital to a school community's success. A majority of families (80%) and educators (89%) report that families are kept well-informed, however it is important to note that 19 percent of families do not believe that they are kept well informed. Analysis did not indicate a pattern with regards to linguistically and culturally diverse families and their responses to these items.

Equity and Family Engagement

- The *equity and family engagement* domain is based on the equitable opportunities the school provides to families and community members. To conceptualize this domain, items consider the mindsets of school staff and the communication efforts implemented by schools.

Family Survey (n=977)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
Staff at my child's school believe partnering with families is important.	4%	11%	9%	48%	29%
My child's school provides my family with a flexible schedule of meetings, events, and activities (e.g. mornings, afternoons, evenings).	5%	17%	5%	52%	21%
At my child's school, I can be involved in decisions that affect my child.	5%	12%	7%	51%	24%
My child's school provides me with information to understand how to partner with teachers and staff to support my child.	6%	21%	7%	46%	20%
My child's school involves families in developing family engagement priorities and activities.	8%	21%	16%	38%	18%

Educator Survey (n=220)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
At this school, engagement of all families is considered a core value.	3	7	19	45	26
At this school, outreach to families is not limited by any factor (i.e. race, religion, gender, language, immigration status).	2	11	6	43	37
This school provides all families with a flexible schedule of meetings, events, and activities (e.g. mornings, afternoons, evenings).	4	7	24	42	23

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
At this school, students are involved in creating and/or planning family and youth engagement opportunities.	5	12	38	34	11
At this school, all families can be involved in decisions that affect their children.	2	7	20	48	23
At this school, educators regularly communicate with all families about how they can help their children.	1	8	18	48	26
Educators at this school provide families with multiple ways to talk about how their child is doing during the school year.	2	6	15	47	30
This school works with educators and families together to develop ways to engage around child development and learning	2	11	20	44	23
At this school, educators have opportunities to reflect on equity, implicit bias, and their connection to how we engage with families	3	8	20	44	26
At this school, discussions around equity and implicit bias are included in all family engagement work.	3	11	32	30	24
Educators and administrators at this school involve families in developing family engagement priorities and activities.	3	13	36	31	18

Families and educators were somewhat mixed with regards to equity and engagement this year. We saw a downward trend in nearly all items, which may be in part due to pandemic conditions. Some families (66%) and educators (67%) felt that their schools provided families with information to understand how to partner with teachers and staff to support their child and engage around child development and learning. Similarly, both families (56%) and educators (49%) were somewhat less positive that educators and administrators involve families in developing family engagement priorities and activities.

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A majority of families (73%) and educators (65%) find that schools provide families with a flexible schedule of meetings, events, and activities. In addition, a majority of families (75%) and educators (71%) believe families can be involved in decisions that affect their children.

A majority of educators (70%) report having opportunities to reflect on equity, implicit bias, and their connection to how schools engage with families, however only 54% of educators felt that discussions around equity and implicit bias were included in family engagement work.

Staffing

- A. The *staffing* domain is based on the efforts and structures schools implement to ensure family engagement efforts inform staffing decisions and school processes. To conceptualize this domain, items consider the work that school staff engage in, the structures staff have to support family engagement and include parents in decisions, and efforts made by schools to build a staff that reflects diversity in the community served by the school.

Family Survey (n=895)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
At my child's school, teachers and staff work to build positive relationships with me.	3%	16%	5%	51%	26%
Staff at my child's school reflect the languages and ethnicities of the families attending the school.	6%	14%	22%	43%	15%
At my child's school, families can be involved in the hiring process for new staff.	25%	21%	37%	12%	4%

Educator Survey (n=205)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
At this school, administrators and educators believe all staff should build positive relationships with families.	0%	2%	8%	43%	46%
At this school, staff have the time, permission, and support to do the work of engaging with families.	4%	25%	22%	29%	20%
At this school, the staff reflect the diversity of the families and students we serve.	9%	24%	18%	30%	19%
At this school, families are involved in the hiring process for new staff.	23%	32%	30%	11%	4%

Research shows that involving parents in the hiring process of new staff can help principals make informed decisions during the crucial period of searching and selecting for qualified, exceptional staff. However, a minimal number of families (16% and educators (15%) believe families can be involved in their school's hiring process. The majority of families either believe they cannot be involved (46%) or don't know if they can be (37%). Similarly, the majority of

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educators either believe families cannot be involved (55%) or do not know if they can be involved in the hiring process (30%).

A majority of families (77%) and educators (89%) believe that school staff should build positive relationships with families, however less than half of educators (49%) report that they have the time, permission, and support to do family engagement work. A small majority of families (58%) and some educators (49%) believe staff reflect the diversity of the families and students the schools serve, indicating that there is substantial room for improvement. It is important to note that this is also a decrease from previous years, and may in part reflect changes in the educator workforce due to COVID-19.

Training and Professional Development

- The *training and professional development* domain is based on the training opportunities made available by the school and the actions schools and staff take as a result of training and best practice. To conceptualize this domain, items consider the different opportunities educators and parents can take part in and the engagement activities that may or may not take place.

Family Survey (n=892)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
My child's school provides training to families (e.g. literacy night, math night, English language classes).	13%	22%	34%	25%	7%
My child's school provides me with information on opportunities to build relationships between families and the school.	8%	25%	18%	38%	11%
I wish my child's school would provide more training opportunities for parents and families (e.g. literacy night, math night, English language classes).	4%	21%	19%	36%	20%

Educator Survey (n=205)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
This school provides training opportunities to all families (e.g. literacy night, math night, English language classes).	4%	29%	35%	22%	9%
This school educates teachers, pupil personnel, principals, and other staff in strategies to build relationships between families and the school.	3%	18%	28%	35%	16%
At this school, staff have access to professional development opportunities that help staff work with families from other cultures, languages, and belief systems.	5%	20%	24%	36%	14%
At this school, staff have access to professional development opportunities that explore systemic and individual racism and implicit bias.	3%	15%	24%	38%	19%
At this school, administrators and educators actively involve families in the design and provision of training and professional development.	15%	33%	32%	14%	7%
At this school, staff members have opportunities to learn about research findings on family engagement efforts.	6%	24%	34%	26%	9%
At this school, staff members have opportunities to practice skills they learn through family engagement trainings.	7%	24%	31%	27%	10%
I think this school should provide more training opportunities to help educators better understand effective family engagement.	4%	8%	23%	38%	26%

Unlike previous years, a substantial number of educators and families indicated that they were unsure of their responses to items relating to training. A majority of families (56%) and educators (64%) reported a desire for more training opportunities to be offered at their school. In considering traditional offerings that schools provide, only 32% of families and only 31% of educators believe schools provide trainings like literacy and math night. A substantial number

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of families either disagree that these offerings are provided (35%) or don't know they are provided (34%).

Only one in five educators (21%) believe that families are involved in planning the trainings and professional development opportunities provided by schools. In considering training opportunities provided to educators, half of educators (50%) reported having access to professional development opportunities that help staff work with families from other cultures, languages, and belief systems however only 37% reported having the opportunity to practice skills they learn through family engagement trainings.

Resource Development

- The *resource development* domain is based on engagement resources schools make available to educators and families. To conceptualize this domain, items consider the efforts schools make to provide educators and families with resources available from the school and community.

Family Survey (n=835)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
My child's school dedicates tools and resources to family engagement (i.e. technology, space, time).	5%	20%	25%	34%	15%
My child's school provides information on local and state organizations that help support families (e.g. Head Start, Community Health Centers, shelters).	6%	21%	26%	32%	15%
My child's school provides supports to make it easier for my family to engage with the school (i.e. accessibility, refreshments, stipends, childcare, language services).	8%	24%	26%	31%	12%
My child's school informs me of leadership opportunities at the school that are open to parents (e.g. volunteer and paid positions).	9%	30%	21%	28%	11%
I know about the community and family resources available to me that can help my family.	5%	20%	20%	39%	16%
My child's school provides me with information on what my child should learn and be able to do in each grade in school.	10%	24%	7%	44%	15%

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
My child's school connects families to leadership and/or learning opportunities within the community (e.g. volunteering, job training, businesses, town administration, council positions).	13%	37%	27%	16%	7%
Teachers and staff at my child's school connect families to opportunities that expand personal and professional interests (e.g. peer networking, volunteering, internships).	13%	35%	27%	18%	6%

Educator Survey (n=191)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
This school provides staff members with tools and resources to help engage all families (i.e. technology, space, time).	3%	20%	19%	44%	14%
This school connects families to local and state organizations that help support families (e.g. Head Start, Community Health Centers, shelters).	2%	6%	19%	51%	22%
This school provides all families with supports to make it easier for them to engage with the school (i.e. transportation, stipends, childcare, language services).	4%	12%	20%	46%	19%
This school provides families with leadership opportunities (e.g. volunteer and paid positions).	7%	24%	35%	27%	7%
Families of children at this school know where to access community and family resources available to them.	2%	11%	34%	42%	11%

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
At this school, all families receive information on what their student should learn and be able to do in each grade in school.	2%	13%	24%	45%	16%
This school provides all families information to understand how to monitor a child's progress in their learning.	1%	12%	24%	50%	13%
Educators and administrators at this school connect families to opportunities that expand the personal and professional interests that families have (e.g. peer networking, volunteering, internships).	5%	16	44%	27%	8%

A small majority of families (59%) and educators (61%) believe schools provide families with the information they need to understand what their children are learning and growing toward in each grade. In a substantial decrease from prior surveys, only 39 percent of families believe their child's school informs them of leadership opportunities available to them, while only 34% of educators believe families have such opportunities.

Families and educators report that there is room for growth in providing families with appropriate supports to make it easier for them to engage with the school. In a reverse from last year, families (49%) were less positive than educators (65%) when asked if schools provide them with supports like transportation, childcare, and language services to enable them to engage with the school indicating that there may be room for improving communication of resources. Similarly, only 47% of families reported that their schools connected them with local and state organizations that could provide support, whereas 76% of educators were aware of their school connecting families with organizations such as Head Start and community health centers.

Safety

- The *safety* domain is based on efforts to ensure students attend schools that create caring, safe, and secure environments. To conceptualize this domain, items consider the efforts schools make for students to feel physically and emotionally safe and efforts to build relationships between families and school staff.

Family Survey (n=835)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
My child feels physically safe in school.	2%	5%	4%	51%	38%
My child feels emotionally safe in school.	5%	12%	6%	49%	29%
I believe that my child likes to attend school.	6%	10%	3%	49%	33%
I believe my child has at least one trusted adult at school to speak with about any concern.	3%	8%	13%	42%	34%
I have at least one contact at my child's school who I can speak with about any concern.	4%	10%	5%	46%	35%
I trust that the school provides my child with what is needed to be a successful learner.	8%	17%	5%	44%	25%

Educator Survey (n=186)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students at this school feel physically safe in school.	0%	2%	14%	44%	40%
Students at this school feel emotionally safe in school.	0%	2%	14%	49%	35%
Students at this school like to attend school.	1%	6%	14%	47%	32%
All students at this school have at least one trusted adult at school to speak with about any concern.	0%	2%	10%	47%	42%
Parents and guardians have at least one contact at this school to speak with about any concern.	1%	2%	11%	46%	41%
This school provides students with what is needed to be successful learners.	2%	5%	11%	48%	33%

Safety was by far one of the most positive sections of the survey for both families and educators. Families (89%) and educators (84%) felt that children feel physically safe, and 76 percent of families and 89 percent of educators believe that students have at least one trusted adult that they can speak with about any concern.

Virtual

- The *virtual* domain is based on efforts to capture feedback on the unique learning needs and experiences of educators and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Educators and families who indicated that they participated in virtual learning were provided with items pertaining to the accessibility of information and technology, online learning environments, and supports for educators, students, and their families.

Family Survey (n=560)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
Every child in my home has access to the resources they need to complete their schoolwork (e.g., internet, desktop computer, laptop, space).	2%	6%	1%	45%	48%
I know where to find information about my child's virtual learning.	3%	11%	2%	57%	27%
My child's school supports my child when virtual learning is difficult.	9%	15%	7%	50%	19%
The amount of time my child spends on virtual learning is appropriate for his/her grade level.	12%	24%	7%	43%	13%
The support provided by my child's school has been effective.	2%	6%	1%	45%	48%
My child is able to consistently access the instructional materials provided by the school (e.g., learning platforms, work packets, resources).	5%	13%	3%	43%	25%
Someone is available to help my child with virtual learning when help is needed.	8%	19%	5%	48%	19%

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
My child is able to keep up with assigned schoolwork, at least as much as he/she was before the COVID-19 crisis.	14%	22%	5%	40%	19%

Educator Survey (n=225)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
All of my students have access to the technology they need to complete their schoolwork (e.g., internet, desktop computer, laptop, space).	3%	19%	11%	43%	25%
My school provides information on remote learning that is accessible to all families.	1%	9%	15%	50%	25%
My school supports families when virtual learning is difficult.	1%	4%	21%	46%	28%
Teachers have enough time to complete the work our school is asking us to do during virtual learning?	19%	25%	20%	28%	8%
My school's administration provides the support teachers need to be effective during virtual learning.	6%	15%	28%	39%	12%
My students are learning as much now as they were prior to switching to virtual learning.	26%	33%	22%	16%	4%

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither or I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers in my school receive the help we need to support teaching and learning during virtual instruction.	7%	21%	29%	36%	8%
Teachers in my school have remained as effective in our roles during virtual learning as we were before?	7%	30%	22%	32%	9%
I am satisfied with the virtual learning education provided to my students.	11%	24%	25%	33%	8%

While mixed on some items, families generally reported positively with regards to the supports received during virtual learning during the 2020-2021 school year. Families were less positive with regards to the amount of time spent on virtual learning (56%), their child’s ability to keep up with schoolwork (59%), and the availability of personal support (67%).

Educators were far more negative about their experiences teaching virtually, particularly with regards to educator support for virtual instruction (44%), perceptions of educator effectiveness (41%), and generally satisfaction with online education (41%).