

Teacher Morale and Student Enrollment Declining Under COVID-19, Survey Shows

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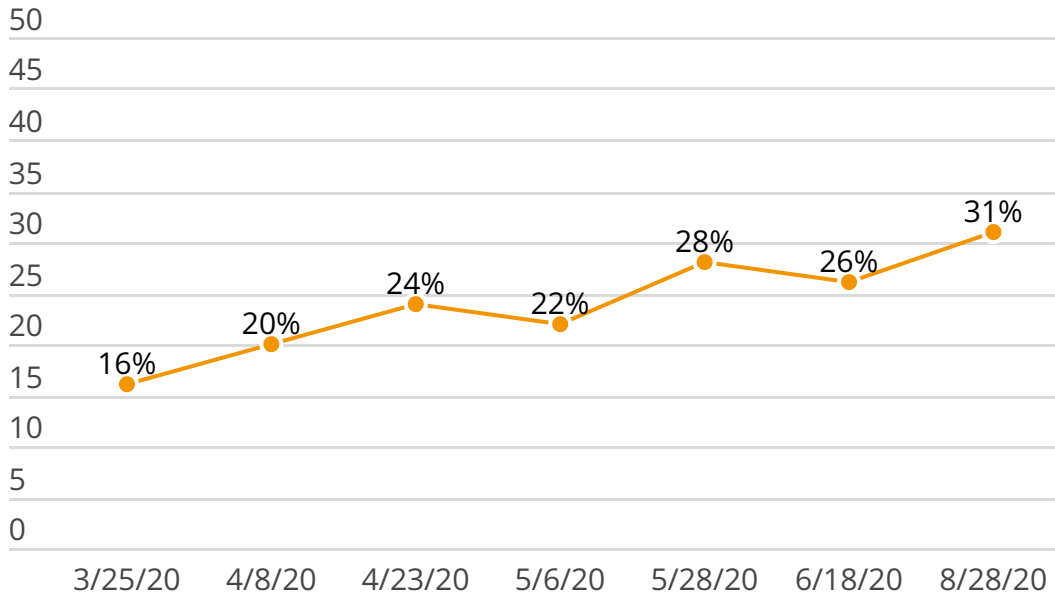
As the academic year begins, COVID-19 is causing declines in student enrollment and teacher morale, an increased likelihood of teacher resignations, and growing concerns about a slowdown in student academic progress.

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With 60 percent of the nation's educators reporting that the 2020-21 academic year is underway and the remainder to follow suit early this month, the EdWeek Research Center fielded a nationally-representative online survey Aug. 26-28 to see what educators are thinking. Following are nine key findings from the survey of 826 K-12 educators, which included 415 teachers, 149 principals, and 262 district-level administrators.

1. As Teacher Morale Declines, Likelihood of Resignations Rises. In August, teacher morale hit its lowest point since the EdWeek Research Center started asking about it in March. Thirty-one percent of teachers and district leaders say that teacher morale is "much lower" than it was prior to the pandemic. That's up from 26 percent the last time we asked about it on June 18, and nearly double what it was on March 25.

Percentage of teachers and district leaders who say teacher morale levels are much lower now.



**Results show responses from teachers and district leaders*

SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center survey, 2020

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In the meantime, 32 percent of teachers are reporting that they are likely to leave their jobs this year even though they would have been unlikely to do so prior to the pandemic. That's up from 26 percent July 23 and 12 percent May 28.

Morale appears to play a part: Fifty-nine percent of the teachers likely to resign as a result of the coronavirus also say that overall teacher morale is much lower now than it was prior to the pandemic. By contrast, that figure is 16 percent for teachers who reported no plans to resign either before or after the pandemic.

Health may also play a role. Compared with their peers who have and had no plans to resign, those who say the pandemic makes them likely to leave are more likely to have a physical condition believed to make people more vulnerable to the effects of the coronavirus (51 percent versus 32 percent) or to live with someone who does (53 percent versus 33 percent).

supported a return to full-time, in-person instruction in the fall and 50 percent said that teachers should be required to participate if in-person instruction does occur. In this most recent survey, more than 60 percent of respondents support implementing full-time, in-person instruction and requiring teachers to participate.

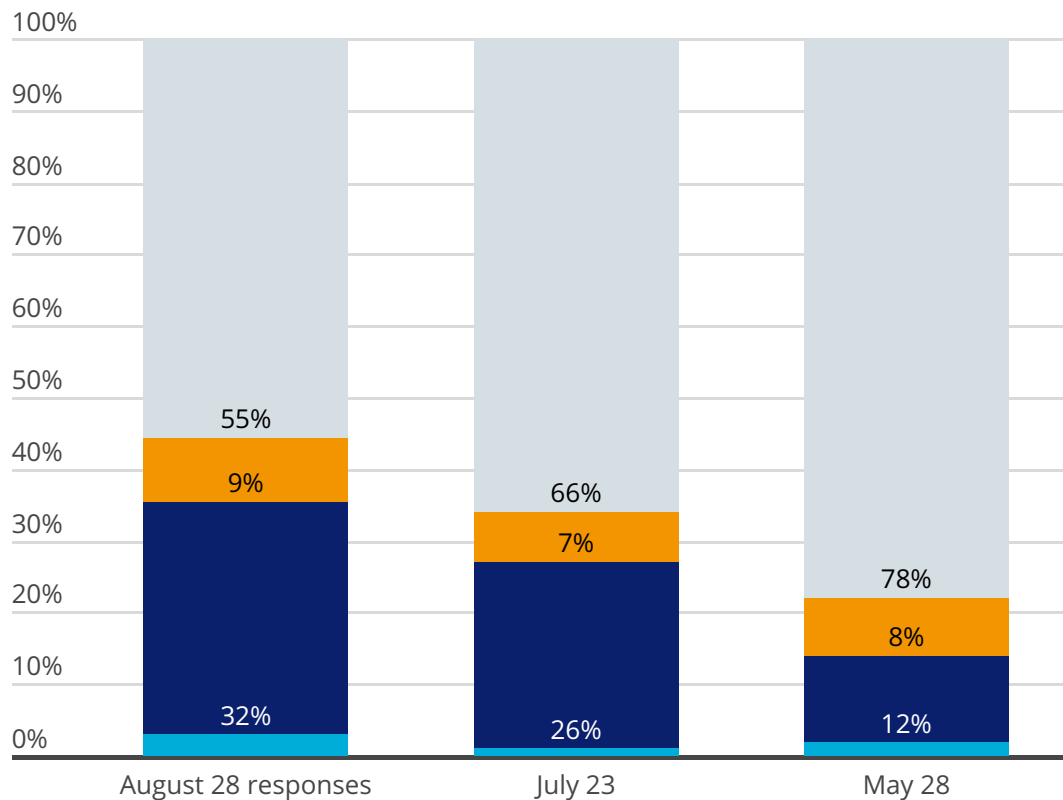
Even as support for in-person instruction has grown, teachers have continued to express more hesitance than administrators. In July, 41 percent of teachers supported full-time, in-person instruction and 39 percent said teachers should be required to participate. Although those percentages have since risen to 54 percent and 53 percent respectively, administrators continue to support in-person instruction at higher rates.

Roughly three quarters of principals and district leaders say teachers should be required to participate in full-time, in-person instruction and more than 2 out of 3 favor full-time, in-person instruction.

Support for full-time, in-person instruction is also stronger in rural areas and towns, where more than 2 out of 3 teachers, principals, and district leaders favor it, compared with roughly 50 percent for educators from urban and suburban communities.

Perhaps due to the **disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color**, 49 percent of nonwhite teachers, principals, and district leaders say all instruction should be in-person, compared with 63 percent of white educators. (Because the educator population is more than 80 percent white, there were too few respondents of races other than white to provide further breakdowns.)

What is the likelihood that teachers will leave their jobs?



Likely to leave before coronavirus, unlikely now

Unlikely to leave before, likely now

Likely to leave both before and after

Unlikely to leave both before and after

**Results show responses from teachers
Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.*

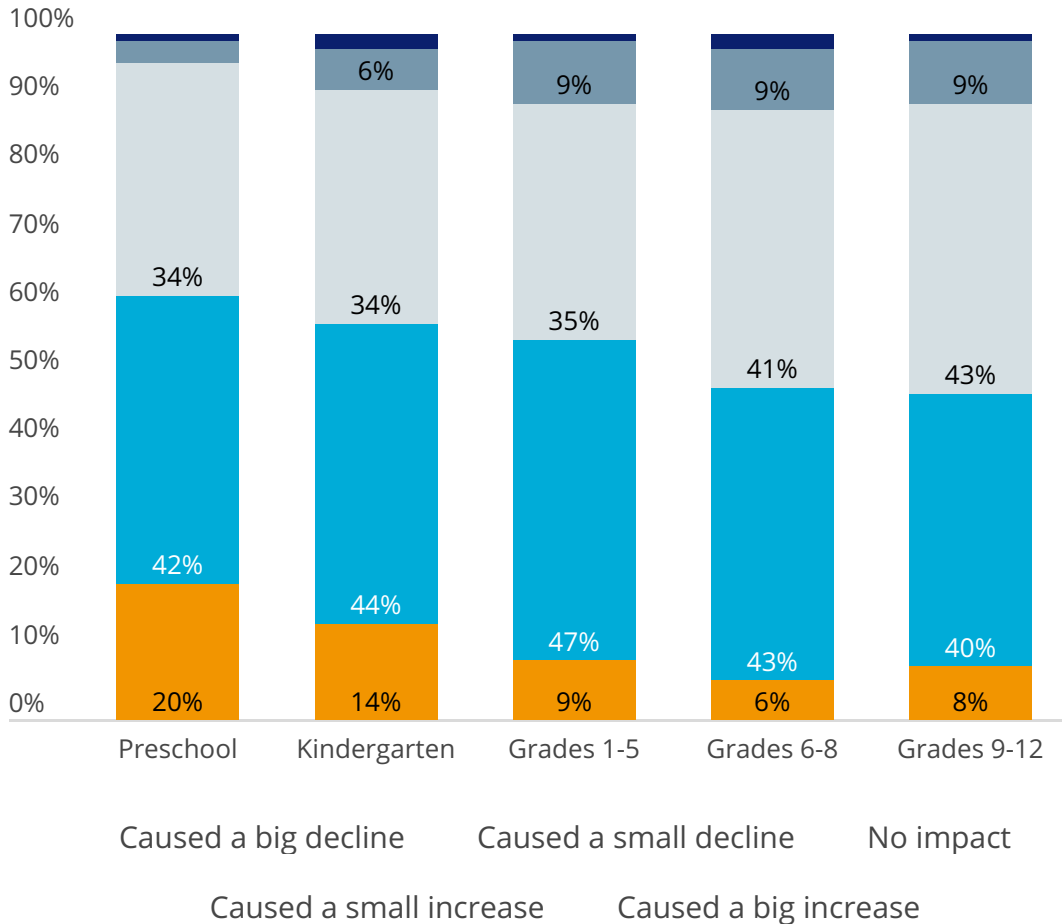
SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center survey, 2020

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2. Administrators Report COVID-19 Is Causing Enrollment Declines. More than half of school and district leaders say that the pandemic has led to declines in enrollment in preschool, kindergarten, and grades 1-5. Close to half say the same for the secondary grades. The trend is most pronounced in

preschool, where 1 in 5 educators say they're seeing big declines, a finding that raises questions about the long-term impacts of children missing out on this **critical period of education**.

How, if at all, is COVID-19 impacting student enrollment in the following grade levels this fall?

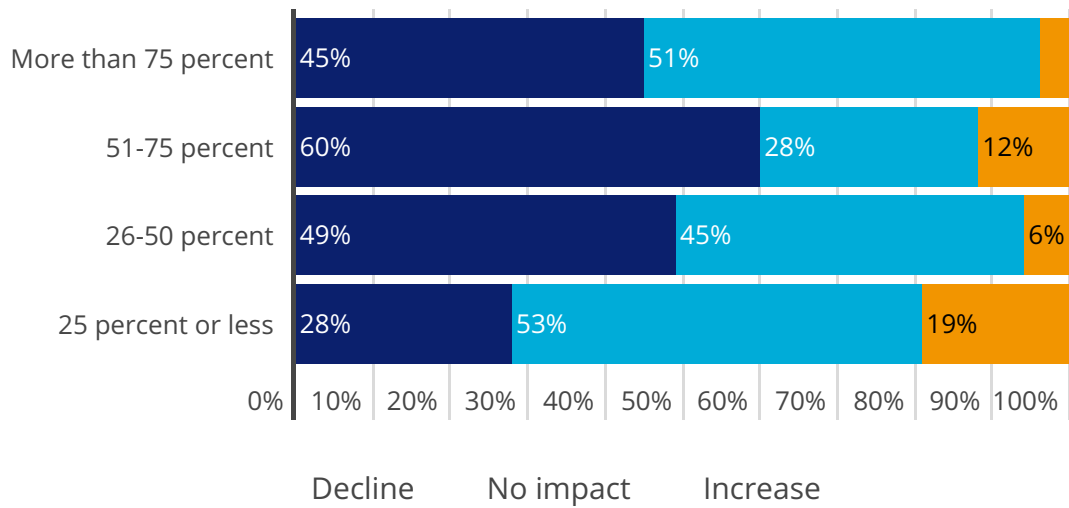


SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center survey, 2020

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Compared with their peers in lower-poverty districts, leaders in higher-poverty districts are significantly more likely to report enrollment declines in the high school and elementary grades during COVID-19. By contrast, leaders in lower-poverty districts are more likely to report enrollment increases at those grade levels.

COVID-19's impact on fall 2020 enrollment in grades 9-12 by district rate of free/reduced-price meals



**Results show responses from principals and district leaders.*

Note: Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center Survey, 2020



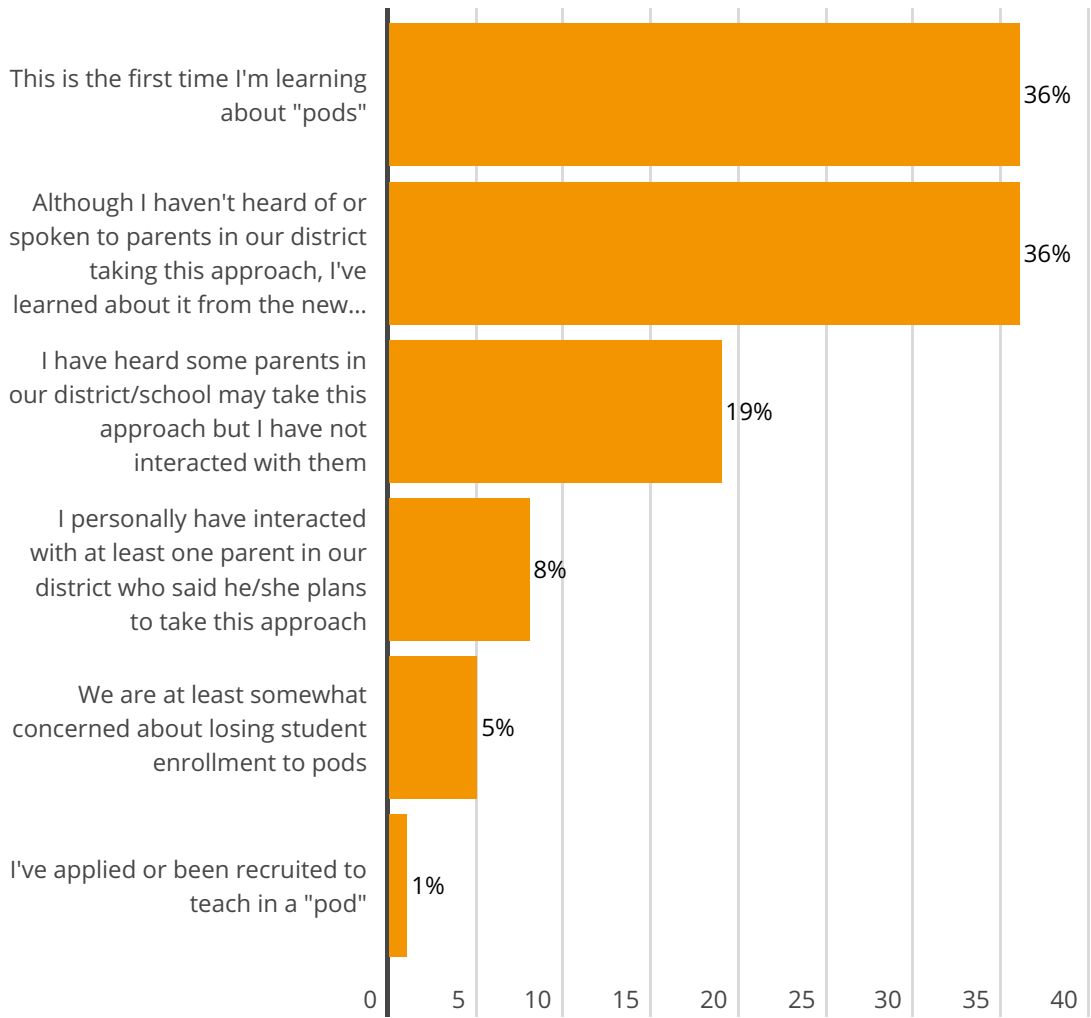
3. 'Pandemic Pods' Appear to Be Rare. "Pandemic pods" are groups of parents who band together to hire teachers to instruct their children at home. Given the expense (hundreds or thousands of dollars per family per month), the practice has understandably raised **equity-related concerns**. Based on the amount of news media coverage about this development, you might have assumed that pods are a major educational trend and an impending threat to equity.

However, just 8 percent of teachers, principals, and district leaders say they have personally interacted with even one parent in their district who plans to take this approach. Only 5 percent say they are at least somewhat concerned about losing enrollment to pods. And just 1 percent have applied for a pandemic pod educator job or have been recruited to work in one.

In fact, more than 1 in 3 teachers, principals, and district leaders say our survey was the first time they were hearing of this new educational practice. And the same share report that they had learned of the idea from the news media and other sources of information, but are unaware of any parents in their districts who plan to participate in pods.

The educator survey results align with those of a nationally representative survey of more than 2,000 parents of K-12 students that the EdWeek Research Center conducted Aug. 17-24. That survey found that just 1 percent of parents planned to "share a privately paid instructor with at least one other family" this fall.

In your district or school, how common are “pods,” groups of parents banding together to hire private instructors (often certified teachers) who teach their children in their homes during the pandemic? Select all that apply.



**Results show responses from teachers, principals and district leaders.*

SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center Survey, 2020



4. Parents See Academic Progress During the Pandemic. Educators Beg to Differ. Compared with the parents of K-12 students that the EdWeek Research Center surveyed Aug. 17-24, teachers, principals, and district leaders are more than twice as likely to say that students are making less progress in

reading/English language arts and in math since the pandemic began. Roughly 1 in 4 parents say their children are making more progress in these core academic subjects than prior to the pandemic. Less than 5 percent of educators agree.

Parent vs. educator perceptions of progress in reading/English language arts

Parent vs. educator perceptions of progress in math

SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center Survey, 2020



The logo for EdWeek Research Center, featuring the word "EdWeek" in blue above the words "Research Center" in a larger, bold blue font.

5. Support for In-Person Instruction Increases. The last time the EdWeek Research Center surveyed educators about the coronavirus on July 23, less than half of teachers, principals and district leaders

Supports full-time, in-person instruction when the 2020-21 academic year begins

> Click on the tabs below to see data within those categories.

Note: Because the educator population is more than 80 percent white, there were too few respondents of races other than white to provide further breakdowns.

SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center survey, 2020



6. Student Mask-Wearing Requirements Grow in Popularity. Eighty-five percent of district leaders say students will be required to wear face masks if and when in-person instruction occurs during the pandemic. That's up from 67 percent when the EdWeek Research Center last asked that question July 23 and from 34 percent on June 18. Promoting hand-washing and making hand sanitizers widely available are still the most frequently reported safety measures, with close to 100 percent of district leaders taking these measures.

Although the majority of Southern leaders (74 percent) say they will require students to wear masks, the region still lags behind the Northeast (98 percent), the Midwest (92 percent), and the West (87 percent).

Just over 1 in 3 leaders say they will offer outdoor instruction, which was included on the EdWeek Research Center's coronavirus survey series for the first time in August. Plans for outdoor instruction are least likely to be reported in the South, where schools typically start earlier and summers are hotter. They're also more common at the elementary level (57 percent) than in high schools (34 percent) and in the lowest-poverty schools (56 percent) than in the highest poverty ones (26 percent).

Which of the following coronavirus safety measures are in place for in-person instruction or will be if and when in-person instruction occurs during the pandemic? Select all that apply.

SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center survey, 2020

7. Educator and Parent Opinions Diverge on Coronavirus Testing, Communication Issues. On two different nationally-representative surveys administered online in August, the EdWeek Research Center asked first parents, then teachers, principals, and district leaders which factors would impact parents' trust or distrust in the ability of their children's schools to safeguard their health if in-person instruction occurs during the coronavirus pandemic.

For the most part, the two groups were on the same page: Both parents and educators were most likely to say that social distancing, mask-wearing, and cleaning protocols impact parents level of trust that schools will keep their children safe during the pandemic. However, the groups diverged when it came to testing students and employees for the virus. While 43 percent of parents said testing would impact their level of trust, just 25 percent of educators agreed.

On the other hand, educators were much more likely to perceive that the amount and quality of communication from the school would make a difference. Sixty percent of educators said it would, compared with 40 percent of parents. Additionally, 45 percent of educators, compared with 27 percent of parents, say that parent perceptions of pandemic safety are impacted by their general level of trust or distrust of educators in the school.

8. Some District Leaders and Principals Will Not Tell Parents About All Coronavirus Cases. More than 1 in 5 district leaders and principals (23 percent) say they won't tell parents about COVID-19 cases in their schools unless they believe a parent needs to know because their son or daughter was directly exposed.

An additional 29 percent of district leaders report that they'll tell parents about any cases in their children's own schools, regardless of the likelihood that the child was exposed, but that they won't share information about cases in other schools in the district. And 1 in 5 leaders say they'll inform parents of cases that occur throughout the district.

Under which circumstances, if any, will you be notifying parents/families that a coronavirus case has occurred?

**Results show responses from principals and district leaders*

SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center survey, 2020

9. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Local Health Departments Are Administrators' Go-To Sources for COVID-19 Research. COVID-19 is a new disease that scientists are still trying to understand. And their discoveries could have major implications for schools. For instance, recent research suggests that the virus is more readily transmitted through droplets in the air than via contaminated surfaces, a finding that had led to an increased emphasis on such safety measures as social distancing, ventilation, and mask-wearing.

Ninety-eight percent of principals and district leaders report that they are making an effort to keep abreast of such developments. More than three quarters say they turn to their state and local health departments and to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the latest information. Other go-to sources include professional organizations for educators, local and national news sources, and education-focused news outlets.

What sources, if any, have you used to keep abreast of the evolving scientific understanding of COVID-19? Select all that apply.

**Results show responses for teachers, principals, district leaders*

SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center survey, 2020

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