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# BRIDGES Parent Distance Learning Survey

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## Results from the Survey

Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County

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### Introduction:

Amid many transitions needed during COVID-19, BRIDGES Summer Reading Program Steering Committee felt the need to explore parents' experiences during distance learning in order to best serve them in summer 2020.

Children's physical presence in the classroom ended on March 13, 2020. Then "distance learning" took effect following student's usual spring break on March 31, 2020 and remained in effect for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year ending on May 29, 2020. With school closed from mid-March without the potential of reopening until after summer, the amount of time learning from home doubled for Palm Beach County students. Individual homes are not equitably equipped to support home learning. This means we are apt to experience the biggest summer slide ever with vulnerable and struggling students hit hardest ([Mandery, 2020](#); [Press, 2020](#)). Early evidence of this is seen through the demographics of students who logged into the Palm Beach County School District's distance learning portal. An average 92% of K-2 students not receiving free and reduced lunch accessed the school district's digital learning portal daily; yet, this drops to 76% for students receiving free and reduced lunch ([School District of Palm Beach County, 2020](#))<sup>1</sup>.

In order to learn how parents having been experiencing distance learning BRIDGES deployed a brief [survey](#) with its members. The survey was conducted between May 18 – 22, 2020 and received 392 completed responses. It was offered in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole.

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<sup>1</sup> There was a notably sharp drop-off for both groups during the final weeks of school. [See data](#).

**Results:**

First, we wanted to know parent’s overall impression of how distance learning was going. Nearly 70% of parents responded that distance learning was going well, while a quarter indicated it is not going well, and five percent indicated it’s not happening.

**Table 1.**

**How is Distance Learning Going?**

Response	Frequency	Percent
It’s not happening.	18	4.6%
It’s not going well.	101	25.8%
It’s going well.	273	69.6%
Total	392	100.0%

We also asked parents to explain why they gave their response. Respondents were allowed to submit the survey without providing a narrative response. Of the 392 surveys submitted, 146 parents elaborated on their feelings and experiences of distance learning (37.2%).

The parents who had a good experience with distance learning saw their child was completing assigned tasks and making progress in their learning. Parents noted factors that facilitated this were teacher communication, establishing a schedule or routine, or that they were equipped to take on the experience for other reasons related to their child as an individual or their situation. This was not without challenges. Even parents who described the experience as “going well” indicated some challenges, such as not having enough devices for all students in the home and the time parents need to put in to have distance learning be successful is too much, especially for working parents and parents with multiple children. Here are highlights from the parents who responded that it is [going well](#):

**“My kids doing great I have no complaints.”**

**“I am usually hands on with my kids school work and learning with them at home.”**

**“Everyone is on track.”**

**“It's going well but requires too much time from me. I have to be involved in mostly all activities especially for my kindergarten child.”**

**“It's going well for the most part, However the computer provided to us does not work properly, and it's the only computer we have for 3 students .”**

**“The transition is much smoother, I have created a routine that fits my child so he won't be overwhelmed.”**

“Sometimes it's going well and at other times it's a challenge helping [child name] complete his work while trying to work as well.”

“[Child name] is at Northmore Elementary gets on every morning and does not miss a day. Teacher keeps her up on what is going on and provides a weekly summary.”

“For the most part she is learning and her teacher is very active. Her teacher is making it easy. That is the reason it is going well because of the teacher being active.”

“It's going very well because the best part is that my daughter understands her work and her computer.”

“Kids are getting the work done but it can be a bit overwhelming at times.” “

“I'd say it's going ok. I have 2 in pre-K at different schools and one is ESE/special needs so I'm having difficulty with it but I don't feel it's going bad. It's as good as its gonna get for me being one person.”

“Because the teacher is working with me.”

“My daughter understands her computer.”

“Daughter likes to learn.”

“I have not had any problems my son was able to finish his work on his own.”

“Its not easy with having other kids but its going fine. Its very stressful when I have mother duties to do and I'm running back and forth from one child to the next.”

“Its going well now but in the beginning was hell.”

“My daughter is completing all assignments, and her teacher is always available to help. “

“Its going well but my daughter is struggling with math without being in a classroom.”

“We are taking it one day at a time and following a schedule similar to the school schedule.”

“The children are progressing, they do not have any problems.”

“It was very stressful at the beginning. My oldest child was using google classroom in class before so he was very familiar and help me and my other child to understand better.”

“The children do their assignments and speak with the teacher.”

“Because my older son took care of it for me. He helps my 9 yrs old with classroom and homework.”

For parents who said things are [not going well](#), many parents expressed feeling overwhelmed juggling work and home schooling responsibilities and the overall time commitment. The need for multiple device for families who have multiple children came across loud and clear. Not having effective teacher communication, nor active instruction was a factor for parents who said distance learning was not going well. Internet connection, parent knowledge and familiarity with computers, child adjustment, the home environment not being as conducive to learning, distractions and keeping the child on task we all noted as issues.

**“It’s quite time consuming especially when trying to work from home also. The kids are getting too much work to complete.”**

**“I have 7 kids and Belle Glade Elementary only gave me 1 computer.”**

**“We have bad internet connection.”**

**“Both my kids have to get on back to back and then there are so many assignments to turn in each day while I also keep a 3 year old entertained.”**

**“Time management issues with working from home. Other parent doesn't have the knowledge to help navigate assignments on the computer. The free internet doesn't allow access to google classroom. We have to use hot spot from our cell phones which runs out.”**

**“You Can't Get In Touch With The Teachers.”**

**“One computer for 4 children. The computer that was provided by the school does not work. Went and bought another computer but one computer is not enough for all the children.”**

**“Following the schedule from 2 schools is difficult-the environment is not good for the kindergarten-need social interaction -environment not conducive.”**

**“I'm an essential worker with 4 kids ranging from 16 years old to 6 months old. The oldest kids I do not have a problem with because they were able to figure it out. However, if I have to go to work and I have my 16 year old watching all the kids including the 6 month old she isn't really going to be adequate enough to help the younger ones in Google classroom. Then, when I come home from my essential job - thanking God I have a job- I'm extremely tired and frustrated with the day already and then I want to relief my daughter and take my 6 month old which leaves the kindergarten and 3rd grade to still wondering about classwork or homework. In addition only one of my teachers actually taught a lesson every day the rest of them just had you sign on explain how to use Google classroom and that was it. My daughter and I were the teachers. Then I had to spend my stimulus money to buy 2 more laptops because the school district only gave out 1 laptop our household and I have 3 kids in school.**

Nobody thought this through obviously but thanks to BRIDGES at Northwood they were there step by step.”

“She does not want to do it and I'm not a teacher.”

“Distance learning was totally overwhelming for my kids and I. The tablets I bought them for Christmas weren't compatible with the school districts software. Then the school district only gave each household that they could reach one laptop. I even called the Superintendents office for the north and central schools and was told that, "I should be happy that I at least have 1 laptop, because there are families with none." So obviously, they were aware of the pandemic going on with the shortage of laptops but wasn't that concerned. In addition, I had to teach my kids at home while working from home. One child is in kindergarten and was assigned 7 assignments daily not including fine arts and the other child is in 2nd grade with the lesser schedule. Both teachers only logged on after the 3rd of virtual learning and expected us as the parents and students to know exactly what was going on but then themselves had no clue on how to use Google classroom. It is supposed to be one week of left of school and report cards and grades were due in but teachers are still assigning assignments. I'm way OVER the virtual learning. Thank God for BRIDGES at Northwood and especially the Motivating Mommies group.”

“My 5 year olds attention span is too short for an hour long session.”

“I have a 1st & 4th grader, I also work from home it gets overwhelming at times.”

“I'm not a teacher, I'm a parent!”

“I'm a single parent, still working full time, with 2 school aged children and a toddler. I try to stay on top of everybody's learning but it's proving difficult as my older kids get distracted with YouTube and online gaming.”

“Working full- time and can't be there to ensure that child is doing what needs to be done.”

“Son in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade is ok, but for daughter in kindergarten it is hard because she can't read and stay focused. Too many distractions.”

“5 kids and only working on one laptop. Teachers giving too much work. Can't look for job because of time needed to work with the children.”

“I feel that teachers should be required to actually teach the kids via an online video conferencing outlet such as Zoom. Simply uploading assignments and leaving students to "go it alone" is not acceptable. Also, it is absolutely unacceptable for teachers to not reach out to the parent may it be by telephone or email to notify them if a student has any grades below a C, by not doing so parents don't have the necessary knowledge to intervene and try to assist their children to keep their grades up.”

"It's too much for me at one time. I have 3 children, one w/ special needs and this is just too much!"

"I am having problems keeping my children on task."

"Been having technical difficulties, lack of teachers assistance at the time you need help, and more work than before distance learning."

"Being a single mother with a full-time career, and internet issues ...we haven't been able to do a lot"

"It's a bit complicated I have 3 children and only 1 computer for all 3 and sometimes they need to be on line at the same time and it is not possible because it is only 1 device per family and it is a bit difficult since I do not know much about doing work on the computer and at times it is difficult to help them."

"My son is in second grade and although the teacher has a lot of patience with him he is struggling in completing his work. I can't understand English so it is hard for us to help him with his work."

"My daughter's tablet has problems."

"They do not learn as they would directly from the teacher."

"Lack of internet"

"Because there are times when the connection goes down three times and her daughter has trouble with her vision"

"I have a child in 1st grade and the other in 4th grade and at the beginning it was very difficult because we did not know anything, not even how to communicate with the teachers. Now we feel a little better."

"It becomes complicated because we do not know how to use a computer."

"Because there is little time and parents must face this and they have to work."

"Not able to read and not able to help very much"

"Because I am limited and do not know how to use the computer more or less"

"Having the children at home I cannot help with the computer, because mother does not know about computers"

"Certain things I just can't help with."

Similar issues were presented among parents who responded distance learning is “not happening” as those that said it was “not going well”, yet were more extreme as they were either not able to participate in distance learning, or struggled significantly to have it be effective in their home. There were a few parents indicating that their children are missing out on their VPK experience. Here are responses from parents who indicated distance learning is [not happening](#):

**“My child attends North Grade Elementary School, his teachers are no longer excepting him communicating via telephone. I applied for internet a week ago and it will be installed by Tuesday 6/2, but I am concern about my child missing too much work and has fallen behind.”**

**“Never received a working laptop”**

**“No matter what's going on children need/want to play with other children. That's how they learn to socialize as an adult. As for in google classrooms, I don't see it happening because not all kids are on the same learning level.”**

**“I'm trying to but it's difficult.”**

**“Because of the fact that mothers work, it is not the same as the teacher is not present. It is more work.”**

**“Because there are no program on the internet, the child is in VPK.”**

**“My child is in VPK”**

To get another level of understanding about families distance learning challenges, parents were asked to quantify their level of frustration with the resources and supports needed in order for their child to effectively participate during distance learning. These items were measured on a 5-point scale, where parents could note ratings which ranged from:

- 1 – “No frustration, everything is fine”
- 2 – “A little frustrated”
- 3 – “Sometimes frustrated”
- 4 – “Frustrated”
- 5 – “Extremely frustrated, I’m done!”

The most parents expressed some concerns related to their children’s adjustment and well-being with 57% of parents indicating at least a little frustration. Supporting their children with classwork received the second highest prevalence of parents rating it as problematic (49%), which many parents detailed examples of in their response narratives. Several other items regarding distance learning demonstrated a similar prevalence of parent frustration, including not having a quiet space (49%), school district technology (47%), and internet access (46%). All items presented some level of frustration for more than a third of parents who responded.

**Table 2.**

**How frustrated are you when it comes to:**

Response	% Frustrated	Average
Internet connection and/or lack of internet access	46.2%	1.86
School District Technology (Google Classroom, SuccessMaker, i-Ready, etc.)	47.2%	1.88
Technology Devices (Laptop, tablets, Smart phone, etc.)	37.5%	1.74
<b>Not having a quiet study space for Child/Children to work</b>	<b>48.5%</b>	<b>1.88</b>
Not having adequate school supplies to complete assignments	43.1%	1.80
<b>Child/Children adjustment and well-being during this time</b>	<b>57.4%</b>	<b>2.08</b>
Lack of communication with the Teacher	38.2%	1.69
Not able to read/Literacy	34.7%	1.63
<b>Supporting child with classwork (time, ability, or resources)</b>	<b>48.7%</b>	<b>1.96</b>

**Conclusion:**

Nearly 400 parents provided their perspective on distance learning and what it’s been like supporting their child’s education at home. With many summer camps closed or operating virtually it means a much greater number of parents will be continuing to oversee their children’s learning at home for at least the next nine weeks of summer. Seventy percent of parents did report distance learning was going well, and the facilitating factors were: communication and active engagement with the teacher and reasons related to their child as an individual or their situation. Even parents who said, “it’s going well” described significant challenges. For more than 30% of parents, distance learning is not going well, or not happening. More devices are needed, and parents noted each student in the home needs a device. Additionally, reliable internet access is essential in order for children to be able to participate in virtual learning opportunities. Parents and children need individualized support based on their situation, familiarity with technology, literacy-level. Finally, parents and children want to be actively engaged not passively given assignments. Working parents and parents with multiple children especially note needing more active support engaging their children in learning activities.

## **References:**

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National Summer Learning Association. *The Achievement Gap: Summer by the Numbers*. Retrieved 6/5/2020 from <https://www.summerlearning.org/>

Press, J. (2020, May 11). *Tackling the COVID Slide: Keeping students from falling behind may be simpler than we think*. Philadelphia Citizen, Retrieved from <https://thephiladelphiacitizen.org/covid-slide-education-tips/>

School District of Palm Beach County. (2020). *Digital Learning Portal Usage Summary*. Retrieved from <https://sites.google.com/palmbeachschools.org/icpdatachats> on 6/4/2020.

**Appendix:**

**Figure 1.**

Percent of K-2 Students Accessing Palm Beach County School District’s Distance Learning Portal by Free and Reduced Lunch Status.

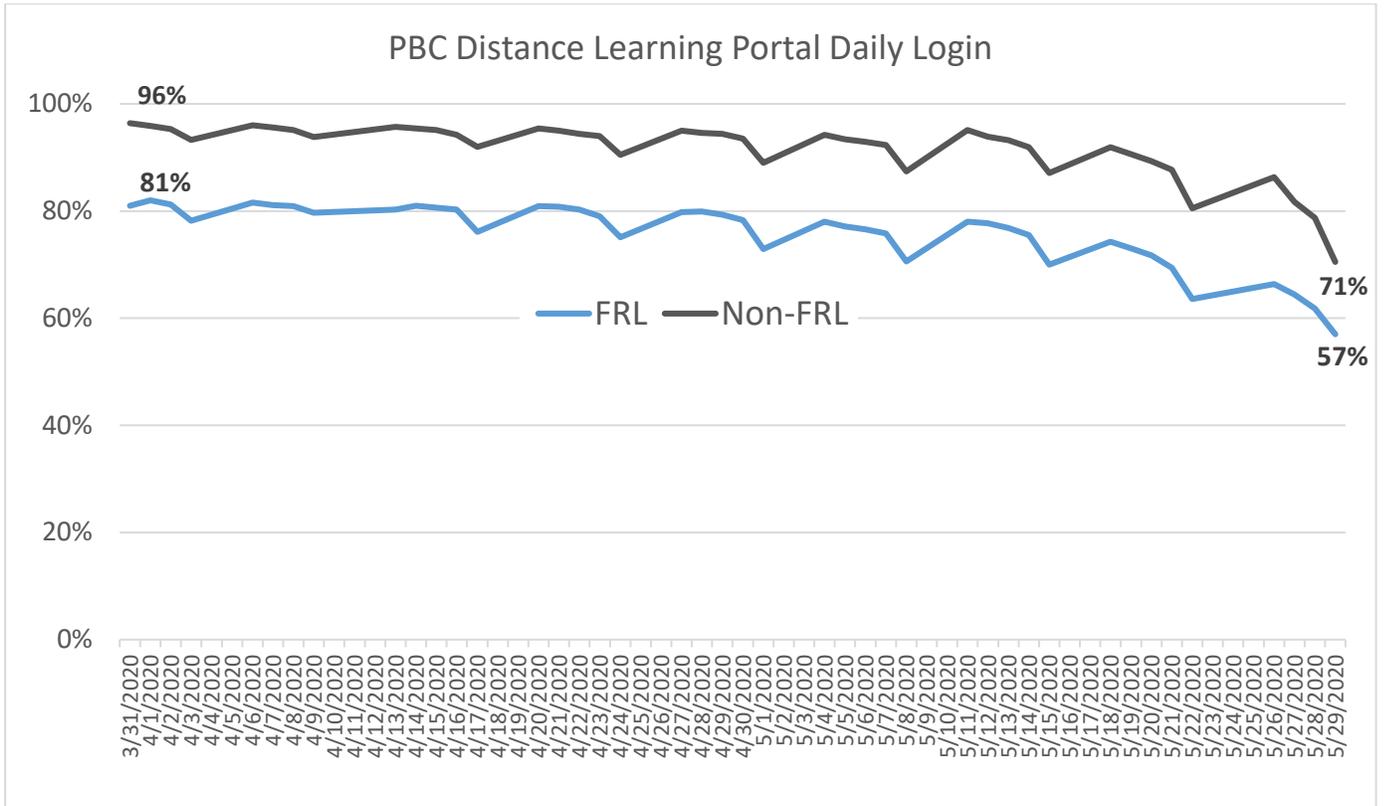


Table 3 displays the language in which the surveys were completed. In many cases, parents completed the survey independently online via the link shared by BRIDGES staff. In some cases where literacy, language, or accessibility was an issue, BRIDGES staff completed the survey via phone and entered responses into the survey platform.

**Table 3.**

Language Preference

Language	Frequency	Percent
English	265	67.6%
Haitian-Creole	50	12.8%

Spanish	77	19.6%
Total	392	100.0%

Table 4 displays the number of responses by the BRIDGES location where the parent identified being a member. For more information on the BRIDGES sites, activities offered, how to partner with BRIDGES, or become a member go to: [bridgesofpbc.org](http://bridgesofpbc.org)

**Table 4.**

BRIDGES Site Membership

Location	Responses
BRIDGES at Belle Glade	39
BRIDGES at Boynton Beach	25
BRIDGES at Highland	9
BRIDGES at Lake Park	49
BRIDGES at Lake Worth	65
BRIDGES at Lake Worth West	15
BRIDGES at Northwood	39
BRIDGES at Pahokee	52
BRIDGES at Riviera Beach	37
BRIDGES at West Palm Beach	62
Total	392