



RESEARCH BRIEF

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Reopening of Schools in the 2020-2021 School Year: Teacher Survey Results

Results at a Glance

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) began the development and planning of various models for the reopening of schools in 2020-2021 following school closures and distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Reopening of Schools Teacher Survey was developed and distributed to M-DCPS instructional personnel. The survey asked various questions regarding the respondents' preferences and attitudes toward the reopening of schools. A total of 18,622 respondents completed the survey out of the 19,250 instructional personnel who were sent the invitation to participate.

Results from the survey indicate that the majority of respondents have no impediments for returning to work either virtually or physically. Overall, the survey showed teachers' willingness to get back to work and their inclination toward a physical or combination of physical and virtual delivery of instruction. Differences in preference for returning to work were found when examining this preference by grade level grouping. Survey respondents in the Elementary, K-8, and Other grade level groupings believe students would benefit the most from attending school all days of the week in shifts should the school buildings reopen. On the other hand, those in Middle and Senior High school grade level grouping believe students would benefit the most from attending on alternate days. Most teachers agreed with a series of preventative measures M-DCPS is considering for physical attendance including temperature checks, washing hands, wearing face masks, and one-way movement in school buildings; less support was found for eating meals in classrooms.

The Reopening of Schools Teacher Survey gathered valuable input needed by M-DCPS leadership. It provides a better understanding of the teachers' opinions and feedback regarding the reopening of the schools that can be utilized in the planning for the 2020-2021 school year.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) began the development and planning of various models for the reopening of schools in 2020-2021 after an extensive period of school closure and distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this process, M-DCPS wanted to collect the opinions and feedback of various groups of stakeholders. To that end, a survey was developed and distributed to M-DCPS instructional personnel to solicit their input on the reopening of schools in the 2020-2021 school

year. The Reopening of Schools Teacher Survey was deployed online on Thursday, June 4th, and closed on June 10th, 2020. M-DCPS teachers and other instructional personnel were sent emails to their District’s email accounts inviting them to complete the survey. Additionally, the United Teachers of Dade (UTD) sent reminders to their members asking them to participate.

The survey asked teacher-specific questions, such as grade level taught, teaching assignment, and certifications. In addition, the respondents were asked about their home resources, preference for returning to work, agreement with various disease prevention measures being considered, and their attitudes toward issues related to the reopening of schools in light of the pandemic. A total of 18,622 respondents completed the survey out of the 19,250 instructional personnel who were sent the invitation to participate.

Respondent Demographics

The respondents were asked to provide the grade levels they taught during the 2019-2020 school year. Table 1 shows the breakdown by grade level; respondents were asked to select all that apply; therefore, percentages do not add up to 100 percent.

Table 1. Grade Level Taught During the 2019-2020 School Year

Grade Level	Frequency	Percent
PK-2	4882	26%
3-5	5296	28%
6-8	3683	20%
9-12	4143	22%
Adult/Other	256	1%
Not a classroom teacher	2356	13%

For further analyses, grade level(s) taught were grouped into the mutually exclusive groups based on the grade level taught: Elementary (K-5), Middle (6-8), K-8, Senior High (9-12), and Other. The Other category included any combination of grade levels taught that did not correspond to any of those previously mentioned, as well as the respondents who indicated that they were not classroom teachers.

The first set of questions in the survey provided us with a better understanding of our respondents. In addition to grade level taught, information was collected about the respondents’ teaching assignments during the 2019-2020 school year and their areas of certification. Tables 2 and 3 show the frequency and percentages for these two questions. Respondents were asked to select all that apply; therefore, percentages do not add up to 100 percent. Also, it is important to note that the number of teaching assignments in Table 2 does not necessarily match the number of certifications for specific subjects in Table 3; this may happen as some teachers who taught a particular course may be certified in other areas. As seen in Table 2, Language Arts/Reading (26%) and Elementary Education (23%) teaching assignments had the highest number of respondents. The list of teaching assignments provided to the teachers was not exhaustive; therefore, as can be seen in Table 2, 20% of teachers selected Other as their course or subject taught. Table 3 shows that most teachers had a certification in Elementary Education (50%), followed by Special Education and Language Arts/Reading (19%). As with teaching assignment, the list of

certifications did not necessarily include all of those available to the teachers, and as seen in Table 3, 30% selected Other as their area of certification.

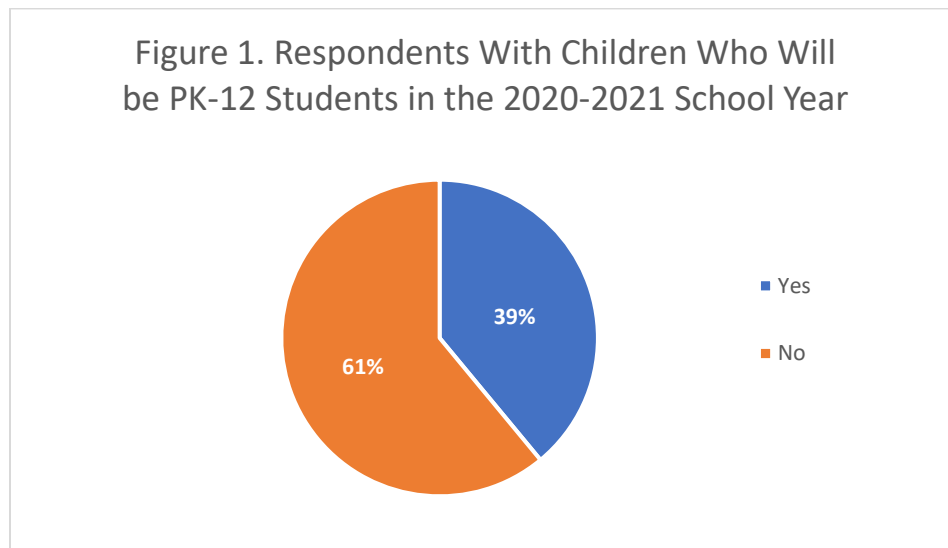
Table 2. 2019-2020 Teaching Assignment

Course/Subject	Frequency	Percent
Language Arts/Reading	4863	26.1
Mathematics	4000	21.5
Science	3441	21.5
Social Studies	3426	18.4
Elementary Education	4315	23.2
Electives	1914	10.3
Special Education	2747	14.8
Gifted	881	4.7
Adult/Vocational	411	2.2
Other	3795	20.4

Table 3. Area of Certification

Course/Subject	Frequency	Percent
Language Arts/Reading	3679	19.2
Mathematics	1961	10.5
Science	1411	7.6
Social Studies	1703	9.1
Elementary Education	9386	50.4
Electives	1688	9.1
Special Education	3693	19.8
Gifted	1956	10.5
Adult/Vocational	448	2.4
Other	5520	29.6

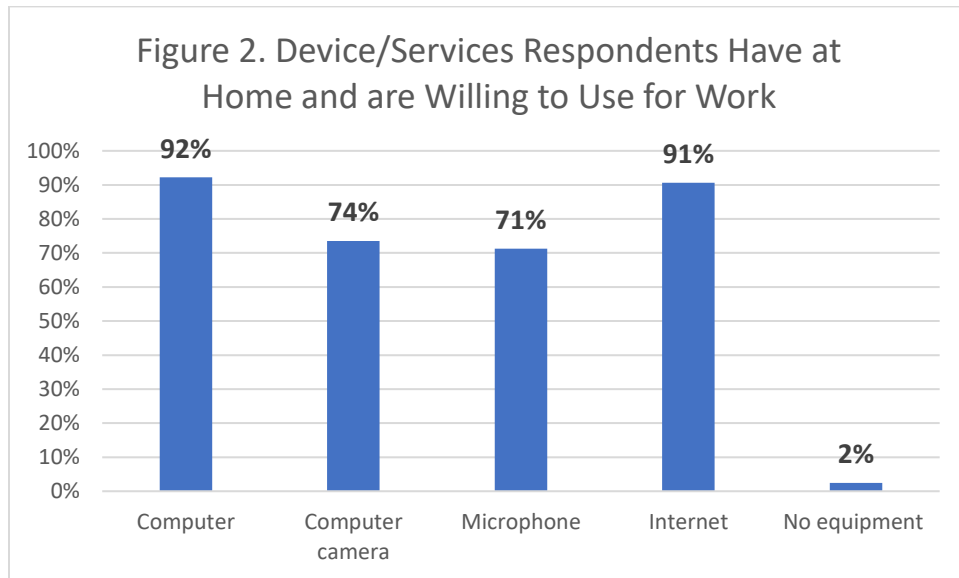
Reopening schools and going back to work physically does not only impact teachers¹ themselves, but also their families. To better understand the impact of the school reopening on teachers, survey respondents were asked if they have children who will be PK-12 students at any school in the 2020-2021 school year and their future grade level. Over half of the respondents (61%) do not have a child who will be a student in the next school year (see Figure 1). Of respondents who indicated they have a child(ren) (n= 7,326) who will be a student in the next school year, 13% of these students will attend grades PK-2, 11% grades 3 to 5, 13% grades 6-8 and 17% grades 9-12.



¹ For simplicity, in the rest of this Research Brief, we use the terms “instructional personnel” and “teachers” interchangeably.

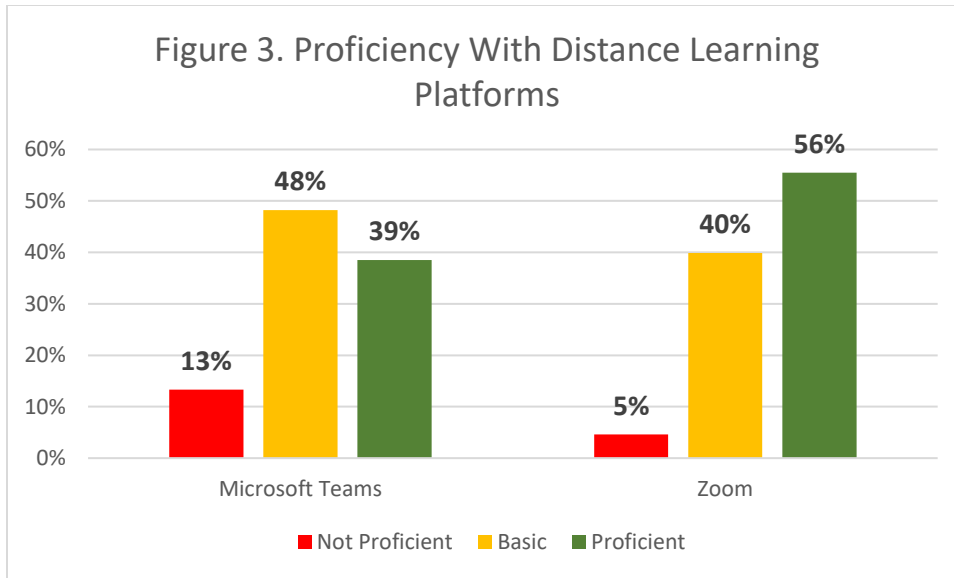
At Home Resources and Distance Learning

For the last nine weeks of the 2019-2020 school year, teachers delivered instruction through distance learning and might be required to do so again in the event of a surge in COVID-19 cases in the upcoming school year. Therefore, to better understand the resources teachers have at home, we collected information regarding the devices/services they have access to at home and are willing to use for work purposes. As can be seen in Figure 2, the majority of respondents have access to a computer, computer camera, microphone, and the internet, and are willing to utilize these devices/services for work.

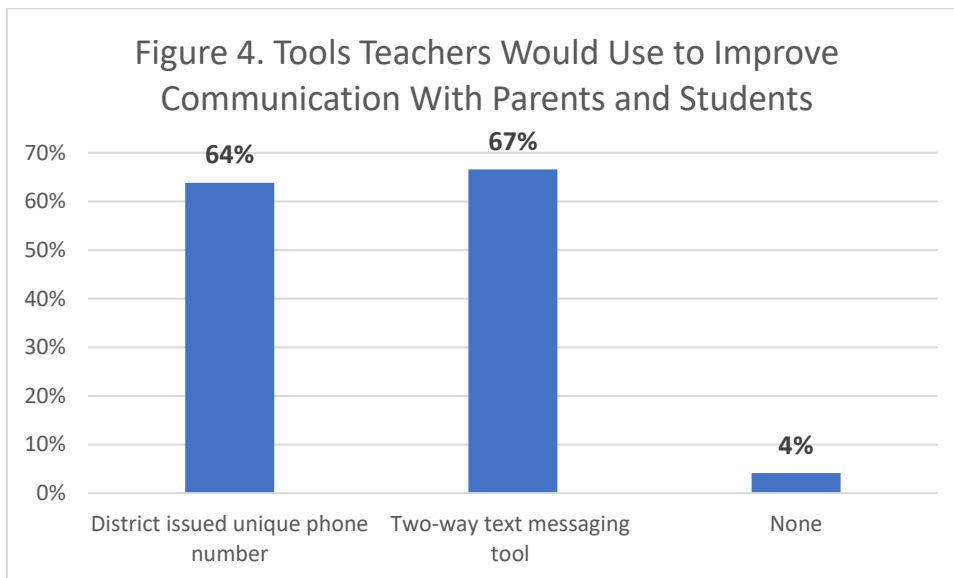


Following the closure of schools in March 2020, M-DCPS provided teachers with training on Microsoft Teams, a communication and collaboration platform that facilitates the delivery of instruction. During the last nine weeks of the 2019-2020 academic year, teachers have been utilizing this platform along with Zoom. To better understand their comfort with these two, we collected data on their level of proficiency. Teachers were asked to select for each of them among “*Not Proficient*”, “*Basic*”, and “*Proficient*”. “*Not Proficient*” was described as not having working experience and/or training with the platform and not feeling comfortable using the platform for distance learning. “*Basic*” was defined as being familiar with the platform but potentially benefiting from additional training; “*Proficient*” was defined as having working experience with the platform and/or having had training, this level of proficiency involves feeling comfortable using the platform as part of distance learning.

As shown in Figure 3, a higher percentage of teachers indicated being proficient with Zoom (56%) compared with Microsoft Teams (39%).



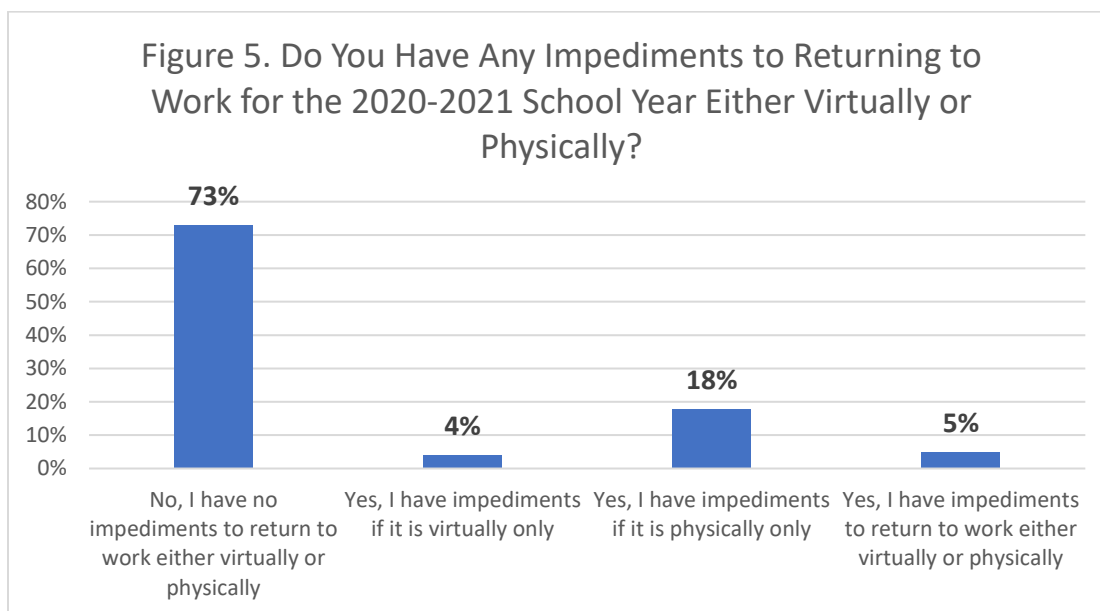
Given the possibility that distance learning might be necessary for the 2020-2021 school year, it is important that teachers continue to communicate with parents and students and have resources that can facilitate and improve the delivery of instruction. Since the typical modes of communication, such as face to face meetings, are not available during distance learning, M-DCPS is looking into other tools that can be utilized for this. Figure 4 displays the percentage of teachers who would utilize each of the tools to improve communication with parents and students. Teachers were asked to select all that apply; therefore, percentages do not add up to 100 percent. Over half of the teachers would utilize both a two-way messaging tool (67%) and a district-issued unique phone number (64%). A small number of teachers (4%) indicated they would continue using their current tools.



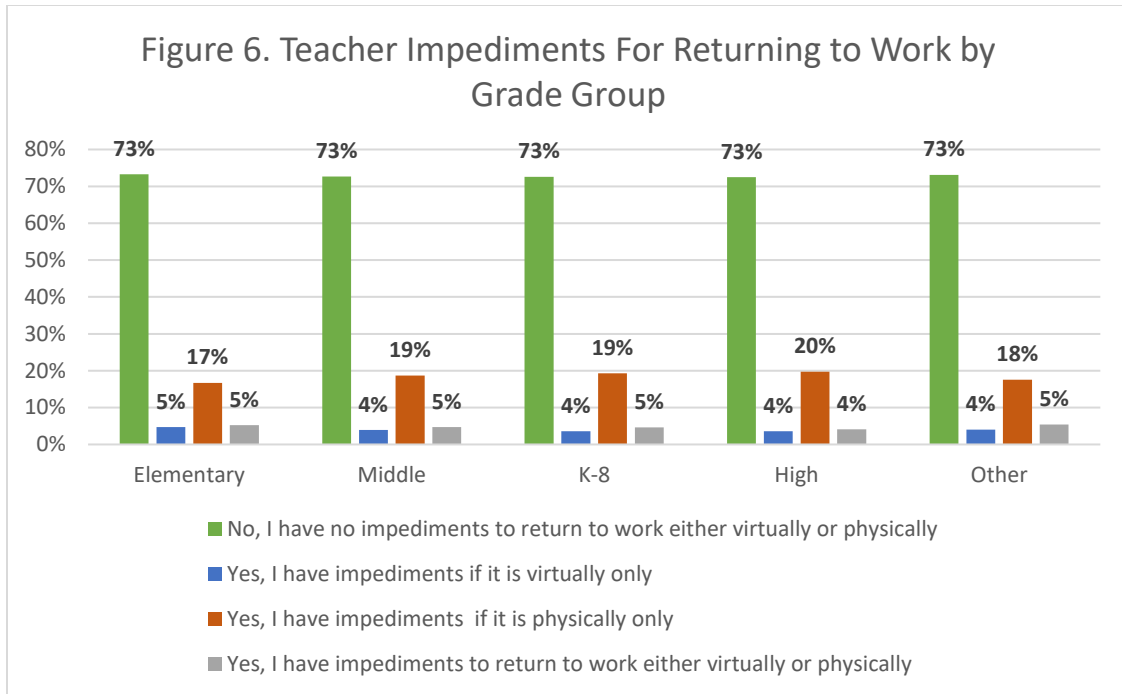
Since the District is considering several options to enhance distance learning, teachers were also asked if they would benefit from courseware that is subject-specific should M-DCPS need to continue with distance learning. Such courseware would include instruction, practice, feedback, and assessment; most of the survey respondents, 66%, indicated they would benefit from having this. Responses to this question did not vary by the grade grouping defined earlier.

Preferences for Returning to Schools/Work

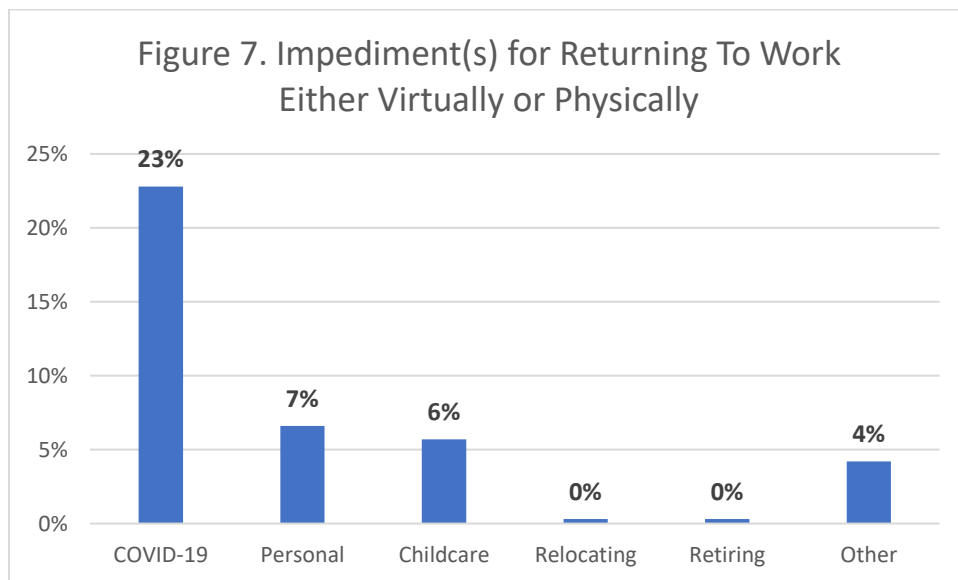
While Miami-Dade County has started the phased reopening of the county, there is still uncertainty surrounding the pandemic and the reopening of workplaces and schools. While teachers might want to return to work, some of them might feel a preference for doing so physically while others might prefer doing that virtually. Respondents were asked if they had any impediments for returning to work for the 2020-2021 school year either virtually or physically assuming that all guidelines for school reopening have been met.



As seen in Figure 5, the majority of respondents (n= 13,595, 73%,) have no impediments to return to work in either modality, 18% (n= 3,320) have impediments for returning physically, 5% (n= 917) have impediments physically or virtually, and 4% (n= 790) have impediments to return only virtually. Teacher responses to this question were further explored by looking at their choices by grade grouping. Results did not vary in any appreciable manner as seen in Figure 6.

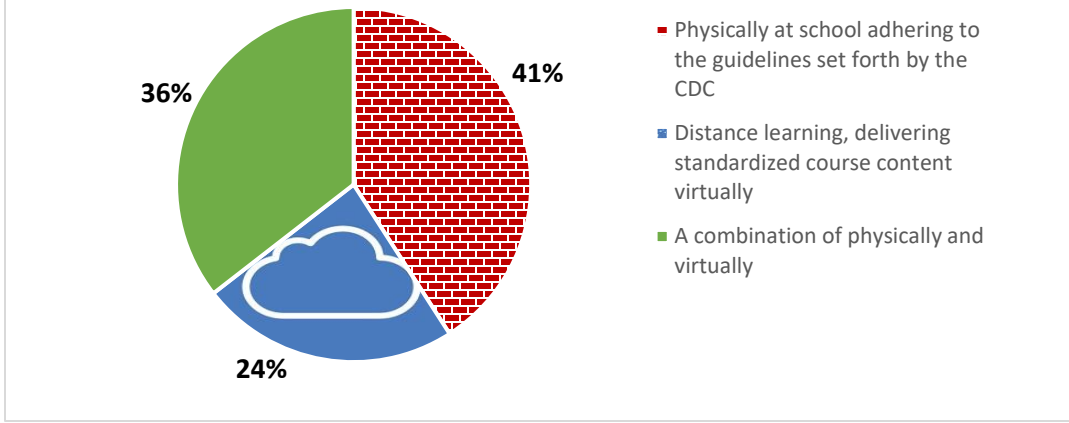


Teachers who indicated having an impediment for returning to work were asked to indicate the nature of their impediment(s). As seen in Figure 7, most teachers indicated concerns regarding COVID-19 (23%), followed by personal reasons (7%) and childcare (6%).



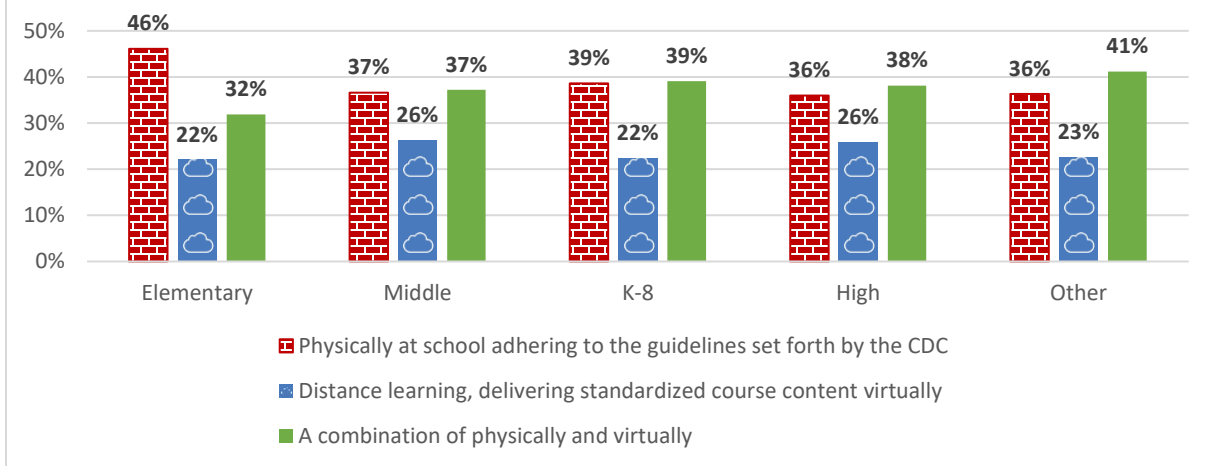
Based on several models being considered by the District, teachers were asked how they prefer to deliver instruction in 2020-2021. As seen in Figure 8, respondents were closely split between preferring to deliver instruction physically at school adhering to the guidelines (41%) and delivering instruction through a combination of physically and virtually (36%). A smaller percentage of teachers (24%) preferred continuing with distance learning, delivering standardized content virtually.

Figure 8. Preferred Method For Delivering Instruction in 2020-2021



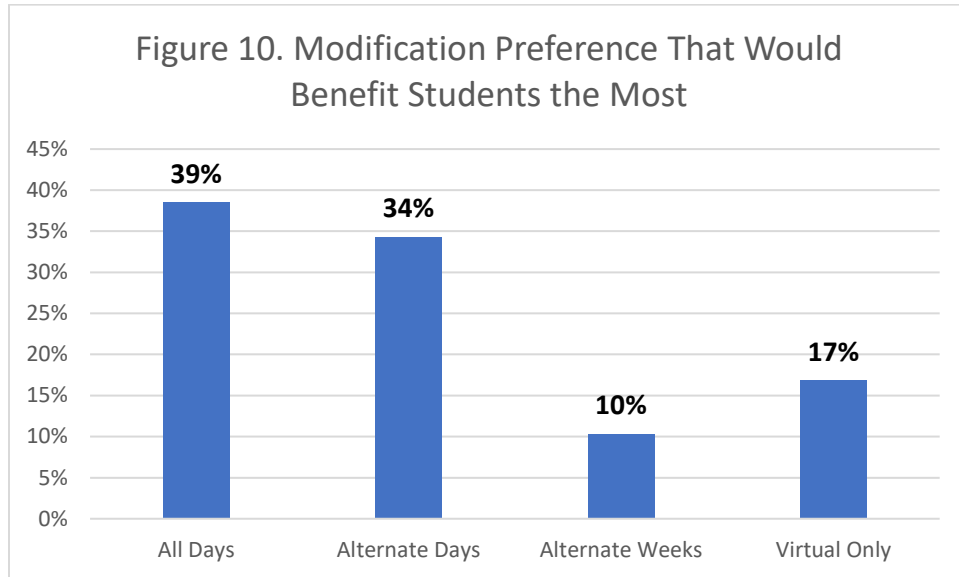
To further explore the preferences for delivering instruction during the 2020-2021 school year, survey responses were analyzed by the grade grouping. As seen in Figure 9, Middle, K-8, and Senior High groups had similar preferences among physical attendance and a combination method. However, in the Elementary group, more teachers preferred to deliver instruction physically at school (46%) over the other two options.

Figure 9. Preference for Delivering Instruction in 2020-2021 by Grade Group

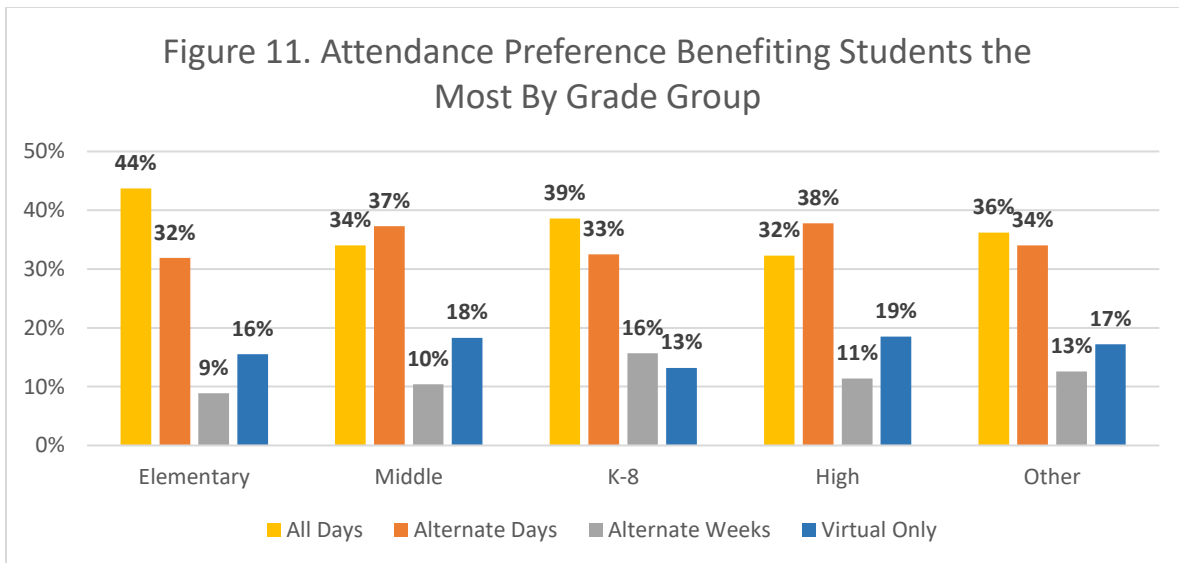


The District is considering several models for attendance modifications if schools reopen physically, to maintain a balance between the concerns for student learning and development vs. disease prevention. Figure 10 illustrates that most teachers believed that students would benefit academically the most from attending school all days of the week but instituting two shifts during the day (39%), followed by attending

school on alternate days (34%). Not as many teachers believed that attending school only virtually (17%) or on alternate weeks (10%) would be beneficial to students.

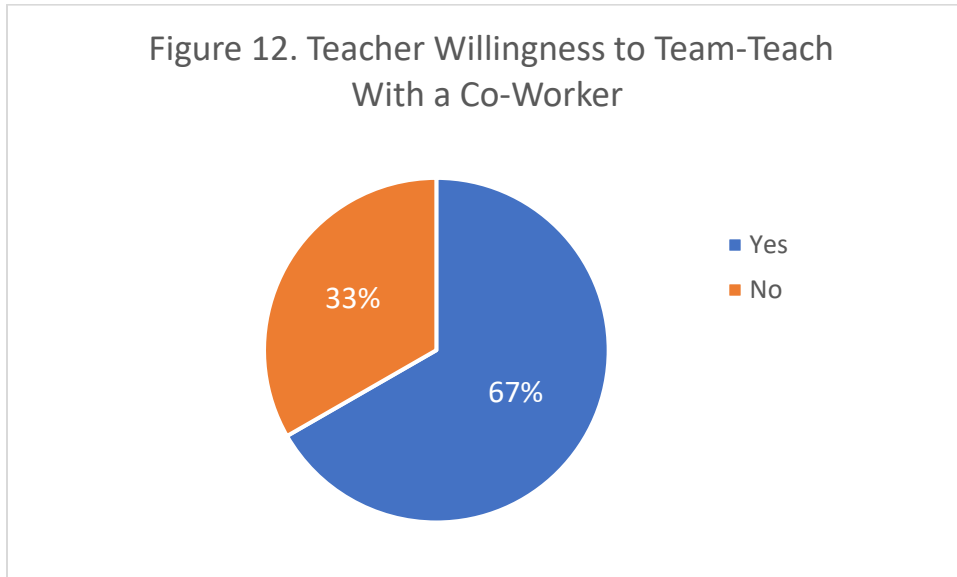


Next, we examined attendance modification preference by grade groupings. As seen in Figure 11, in Elementary, K-8, and Other groups, the largest percentages of the teachers believed students would benefit the most from attending schools all days of the week in shifts to maintain smaller class sizes and social distancing (44%, 39%, 36%). However, in Middle and Senior High groups, teachers believed students would benefit the most from attending school physically on alternate days (37% and 38% respectively) while engaging in distance learning on other days.



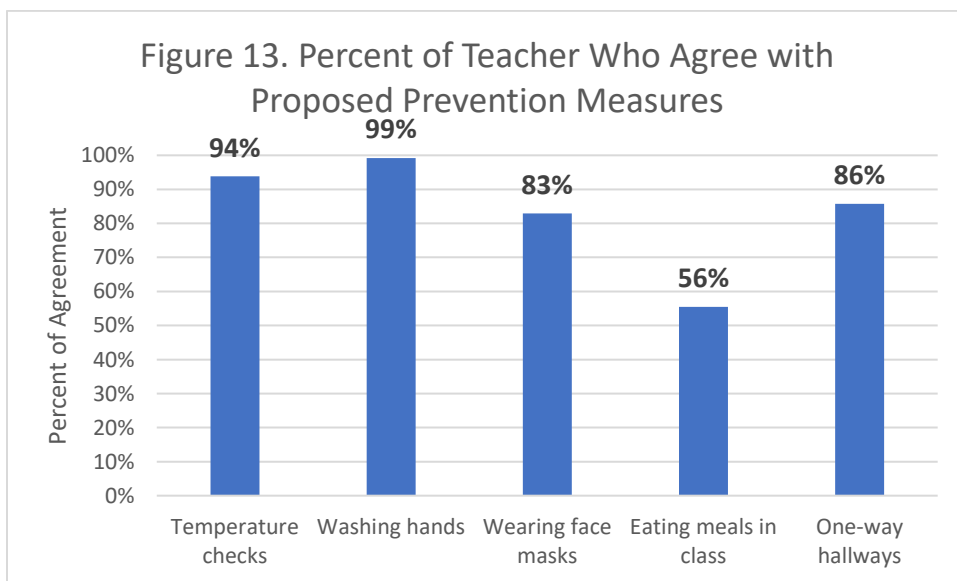
Another model being considered by the District involves team-teaching, where one teacher instructs students face-to-face, and the other teaches remotely, thus helping students to transition between both modalities if a combination of physical and distance learning is needed. Figure 12 illustrates teacher

agreement with team-teaching with a co-worker. The majority of the teachers (67%) would be willing to team-teach. Responses did not vary when examined by the grade groupings.



Prevention Measures

Teachers were asked if they agreed with a variety of preventative measures the District is considering including temperature checks, washing hands, wearing face masks, eating meals in the classroom instead of in the cafeteria or teachers' lounge, and one-way movement in the school hallways. Figure 13 displays the teachers' agreement with each of the proposed prevention measures. Over 80% of teachers agreed with each of the prevention measures, except for eating meals in the classroom instead of the cafeteria or teacher's lounge, with only 56% of the teachers agreeing with that measure.



Respondent Attitudes on Reopening of Schools

Observations from other countries that have begun the reopening of their schools show that support and agreement for such decisions are associated with people’s attitudes on various topics. For example, some feel that schools should be among the first institutions to reopen, while others think they should be among the last.

Table 4 lists three questions on attitudes regarding the reopening of schools. On two of the three questions, teachers selected answers that closely mirror the belief that schools should be among the last institutions to reopen. On the question regarding how the reopening of schools can impact student learning and development, teachers’ answers align with the belief that schools should be among the first institutions to reopen. They think that students can have serious learning loss because of online learning.

Table 4. Questions on attitudes and beliefs concerning the reopening of schools: frequency and percent of teachers.

Which of the following statements do you believe the most about the public health risk of COVID-19?			
		Frequency	Percent
A	Risks for children and teachers to get the virus (even when not showing symptoms) is low	3,425	18.4
B	Risks for children to get the virus is moderate; reopening of schools still is seen as a risk because the virus can be spread without having symptoms	7,368	39.6
C	Reopening of the schools can put children and others at high risk of getting the virus	7,829	42.0
	Total	18,622	100.0
Which of the following statements do you believe the most about how reopening schools can impact student learning and development?			
		Frequency	Percent
A	Students can have serious learning loss because of online learning especially for at-risk students; students staying home all day can experience other problems, such as lack of nutrition, or domestic violence in the home	9,086	48.8
B	Online learning works for some subjects and grade levels; in-person lessons required for others	6,844	36.8
C	Online learning allows students to continue learning at their grade level	2,692	14.5
	Total	18,622	100.0
Which of the following statements do you believe the most about the ability to make schools safe?			
		Frequency	Percent
A	Health & Safety measures (such as cleaning and social distancing) can lower the risk of getting the virus in schools	6,972	37.4
B	Health & Safety measures (such as cleaning and social distancing) are not enough to prevent the spread of the virus in schools	2,319	12.5
C	It is very difficult to make schools safe because children can be careless (not covering mouth or social distancing)	9,331	50.1
	Total	18,622	100.0

Summary

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) conducted an instructional personnel survey regarding the reopening of schools following the closure due to COVID-19. Over 18,000 respondents, who were teachers and other instructional personnel, provided input. The respondents were asked about at-home resources

and distance learning, any impediments for returning to work, their preference for delivering instruction during the 2020-2021 school year, and what type of schedule modification would work best for student learning. Teachers indicated that they were more proficient with Zoom than Microsoft Teams. Regarding at-home resources if distance learning continues, teachers would like to utilize both a two-way messaging tool and a district-issued unique phone number to improve communication with parents and students. Also, their instruction would benefit from having a fully developed subject-specific courseware.

The majority of the teachers reported having no impediments for returning to work either virtually or physically. However, 18% did indicate that they would have an impediment returning to work physically. Concerns with COVID-19 was the reason for the impediment most teachers reported. Regarding their preference for delivering instruction, respondents were closely split between delivering instruction at school physically while adhering to guidelines and delivering instruction through a combination method of physical and virtual instruction. Differences in preference were found by grade level grouping. Middle, K-8, and senior high teachers' preferences were similar for delivering instruction physically at schools and for a combination method. For the elementary level, more teachers preferred to deliver instruction physically at school, and for the Other group, more teachers preferred a combination than any of the other options. With regard to modified attendance options for the students, Elementary, K-8, and Other groups' teachers believed students would benefit academically the most from attending schools all days of the week in shifts to maintain social distancing. However, in Middle and Senior High groups, teachers believed students would benefit the most from attending school on alternate days, where they would receive face-to-face instruction on some days and continue with virtual learning on the other days. This difference in attendance preference might be related to the idea that younger students require consistent and greater guidance, whereas older students are more capable of following online instruction with minimal supervision.

Lastly, teachers expressed their agreement with a variety of preventative measures being considered by the District. Most teachers agreed with temperature checks, washing hands, wearing face masks, and one-way movement in the school hallways. A lower percentage of teachers agreed with eating lunch in the classroom as opposed to the cafeteria or teachers' lounge.

Having the support from teachers when it comes to the reopening of schools is crucial and observations from other countries where schools have already reopened show that support and agreement for such decisions are associated with people's attitudes toward public health, perceived impact on students learning, and ability to keep individuals safe when reopening. Teachers agreed with the notion that schools should be among the last institutions to reopen because of the public health risk associated with reopening the schools and the ability to keep schools safe for students, teachers, and staff. On the other hand, teachers expressed a less stringent attitude when related to the impact that the closing of schools and distance learning is having on students learning and development. In this case, teachers' beliefs align with the idea that schools should be among the first to reopen. The difference in the support and agreement related to these topics reflect the uncertainty associated with the pandemic.

The Reopening of Schools Teacher Survey gathered input needed by M-DCPS leadership. It provides a better understanding of the teachers' opinions and feedback regarding the reopening of the schools that can be utilized in the planning for the 2020-2021 school year. Overall, the survey showed teachers'

willingness to get back to work and their inclination toward a physical or combination of physical and virtual delivery of instruction.