

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT SURVEY ANALYSIS

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINAL RESEARCH REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2021, Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) sought to understand the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement of students in the virtual and/or hybrid learning environments necessitated by COVID-19. To this end, HCPS conducted research and administered a survey to students in Grades 3-12, all teachers, as well as school and central office staff to identify engaging practices and to analyze responses to the survey's closed- and open-ended questions.

This analysis will support HCPS in identifying best practices to engage future virtual learners and develop guidance for virtual and/or hybrid programs that may be developed at the county and/or state level.

This report answers the following research questions:

- 1. What feedback do students have about their engagement during virtual or hybrid instruction?
- 2. What strategies did educators use in virtual or hybrid instruction that had a positive impact on students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement?
- 3. What did educators find challenging about engaging students (cognitively, emotionally, behaviorally) during virtual or hybrid instruction?
- 4. What digital tools/resources did respondents include in their open-ended responses? (For manually coded responses, only)

METHODOLOGY

HCPS administered the anonymous Student Engagement Survey in spring 2021 and received a total of **11,825** from K-12 students. Of the **11,825** responses, **4,580** (39%) are from elementary school students, **4,384** (37%) are from middle school students, and **2,897** (24%) are from high school students as indicated in the table below. Of the **11,825** responses, 5,580 (47%) provided comments for the open-ended question which was the last question on the student survey. Please note that the 5,580 comments received from students is before data cleaning, a process for removing incomplete, irrelevant, or duplicate comments from the raw survey data.

| STUDENT ENGAGEMENT SURVEY | RESPONSE COUNT | NUMBER OF RAW COMMENTS | | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Elementary Schools (ES) | 4,580 | 2,305 | | | | | |
| Middle Schools (MS) | 4,348 | 2,135 | | | | | |
| High Schools (HS) | 2,897 | 1,140 | | | | | |
| All Levels (ES, MS, HS) | 11,825 | 5,580 | | | | | |

HCPS also administered an Educator Survey on Student Engagement in spring 2021 and 1,721 educators responded to the survey. Educators included teachers, principals, assistant principals, teacher specialist, and central office staff and supervisors.

| EDUCATOR ENGAGEMENT SURVEY | Response Count |
|---|----------------|
| Instructional Staff (e.g., teacher, reading specialist, special educator) | 1,394 |
| Support Staff (e.g., Educational Support Professional, secretary) | 245 |
| School-based administrator (e.g., principal, assistant principal) | 59 |
| Central office staff and administrator (e.g., content supervisors) | 23 |
| All Educators | 1,721 |

The total number of raw (not cleaned) comments (2,691) received from the Educator Survey on Student Engagement are provided in the table below according to the open-ended questions included in the survey.

| QUESTIONS (OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS) | NUMBER OF COMMENTS (NOT CLEANED) |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Q14: Which additional strategies did you utilize in virtual instruction that had a positive impact on the cognitive engagement of students? | 658 |
| Q23: Which additional strategies did you utilize in virtual instruction that had a positive impact on the emotional engagement of students? | 434 |
| Q30: Which additional strategies did you utilize in virtual instruction that had a positive impact on the behavioral engagement of students? | 305 |
| Q31: What is challenging about engaging students (cognitively, emotionally, behaviorally) during virtual or hybrid instruction? | 1,294 |
| All Open-Ended Questions | 2,691 |

This report also interprets the close-ended response charts and analyzes the open-ended responses from the raw data file using manual coding or topic modeling. Prior to analyzing the open-ended responses, HCPS removed blank, irrelevant, or repeated open-ended responses during data cleaning. In addition, charts displaying the close-ended response data are provided in the appendix of this report.

MANUAL CODING

Manual coding of open-ended responses is appropriate when the question asked of respondents is broad, when there are fewer than 500 responses, and/or when the responses are too varied. Manual coding of a sample of responses was therefore chosen for five of the seven open-ended survey questions. To identify the sample, HCPS randomized the cleaned responses and selected at least the first 10 percent of the randomized responses for manual coding. Figure 0.1 provides sample information for each manually coded open-ended response question.

| QUESTION | TOTAL CLEANED RESPONSES | CODED RESPONSES |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Educator – Cognitive Strategies | 601 | 132 (22%) |
| Educator – Emotional Strategies | 380 | 132 (35%) |
| Education – Behavioral Strategies | 250 | 132 (52%) |
| Elementary Student Comments | 1,249 | 460 (37%) |
| Middle School Student Comments | 2,136 | 422 (20%) |

Figure 0.1: Number of Manually Coded Responses per Question

HCPS reviews survey responses for major themes, ensuring each response will have an accompanying code that communicates the central theme of the respondent's comments. Finally, the analysis portion of this qualitative methodology allows HCPS to determine quantitative measurements for the qualitative data: HCPS counts the number of responses related to each theme to determine the theme's frequency.

TOPIC MODELING

Topic modeling analysis is a statistical model for identifying "topics" that occur in a collection of open-ended survey and written responses.¹ Topic modeling categorizes documents (i.e., responses) based on the frequency of co-occurring words and is best suited for open-ended survey questions, for large sample sizes over 500, and for open-ended responses that are limited thematically. Results for topic modeling display groups of responses that are most related to one another, a list of commonly occurring words in those topics, and the percentage of the total responses that the topic makes up. In this report, topic

¹ Feinerer, I., K. Hornik, & D. Meyer. (2008). Text Mining Infrastructure in R. *Journal of Statistical Software*, 25(5), 1 - 54.

modeling analysis is used to analyze open-ended comments from **1,042** high school students as well as **1,273** educator responses related to engagement challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND OVERALL KEY FINDINGS

The key findings and recommendations below reflect a synthesis of responses, from the student engagement survey and the educator survey on student engagement, across grade levels and roles.

It is important to also note another finding in the report that showed the significance of physical activity during the school day and how it contributes to academic achievement and engagement. Knowing this information could help enhance lesson planning and would be beneficial to all educators.

- 1. **Incorporate games and competitive activities into virtual learning.** Survey responses from educators and students across all school levels identify games and competitions as highly engaging.
- 2. Offer opportunities for elementary and middle school students to collaborate but provide high school students with greater autonomy and flexibility. Elementary and middle school students prefer learning activities that allow them to work with their peers, while high school students prefer learning activities that are flexible and allow them to choose how to use their time.

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- 3. Ensure that virtual learning has non-virtual and non-academic components. Students across grade levels indicate a desire for outdoor lessons, and both student and educator responses indicate a need for connection and socialization to balance academic demands.
- 4. Encourage high school educators to assign work and implement policies that are empathetic to student needs and situations. Particularly during the pandemic, high school students say they took on greater responsibility at home and had competing priorities between school and family. Notably, high school students' perceptions do not align with educators' responses, which suggest that teachers personalized learning and took into consideration the interests, stressors, and preferences of their students.
- 5. Conduct additional research to better understand the discrepancy between student and educator perceptions of student engagement and participation in a virtual environment. Ninety-one percent of elementary students, 90 percent of middle school students, and 85 percent of high school students report being present and participating in class. In contrast, only 60 percent of educators felt that students were cognitively engaged in lessons, 53 percent of educators felt students were engaged emotionally, and 60 percent felt students were engaged behaviorally.
- 6. Identify supports for educators who struggle to implement concurrent instruction and/or adapt to virtual instruction. In addition to less favorable perceptions of virtual student engagement and related strategies across the three domains (i.e., cognitive, emotional, and behavioral), educators express concerns about the ability to meet the needs of their students and effectively manage their own time in a non-traditional learning environment.

SECTION I: STUDENT KEY FINDINGS

In this section, HCPS analyzes closed- and open-ended student responses by school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high).

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Elementary school students show a strong preference for **competitive and gaming activities** and **prefer group and partner work** over independent or teacher-led activities. Notably, watching a video of the teacher providing instruction was the least favorable activity amongst elementary students at 34 percent.

Additionally, many elementary students report positive attitudes toward **brain breaks**, **virtual field trips**, and **working outside**. They have positive perceptions of using paper, crayons, and glue for projects, but are less positive about creating and presenting problem-solving models to the class. Their open-ended responses highlight their desire for more non-academic activities, such as recess, throughout the virtual day, and the highest percentage of open-ended responses (26 percent) indicated a preference for a return to in-person learning. Other common themes in open-ended responses included more individual support from teachers (11 percent of responses), changing the amount of time for different subject areas (10 percent), miscellaneous responses (10.2 percent), more socializing with other students (7 percent), and opportunities to do work outside (5.9 percent).

Overall, most elementary students feel connected to their teacher and class and also report being present and participating in the virtual environment (81 percent connected and 91 percent present and participating).





Figure 1.1 provides key takeaways from the close-ended elementary student responses, and Figure 1.2 presents sample student comments related to each theme identified during manual coding. Additional charts for all closed-ended responses, for elementary schools, are provided in Appendix B.

Figure 1.1 Elementary Student Close-Ended Responses

Over 55 percent of students would like it if told they were doing a virtual activity with their classmates in a small group that day, compared to just over 20 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 62 percent of students would like it if told they would be playing virtual learning games independently by their teacher that day, compared to just over 18 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 69 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher they would be having a virtual competition that day against their classmates, compared to just over 17 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 41 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher they would be making sight word cards or math fact cards using index cards that day, compared to just over 30 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 34 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher to "watch the video I made of myself teaching and ask questions if you have any," compared to just over 24 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 53 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "this week, you will be making your own video to show me what you've learned," compared to just over 29 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 71 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "today, we are going to have a guest speaker present to the class, and then well go on a virtual field trip," compared to just over 16 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 76 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "today, we will be doing a project using paper, crayons, scissors, glue, tape, paint, and markers, and then upload it to its learning," compared to just over 10 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 68 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "sometime, during class, we will all take a brain break, like doing jumping jacks, running in place, stretching, or breathing exercises," compared to just over 10 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 83 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "today, we will be doing all our work outside," compared to just over seven percent of students who would not like it.

Over 54 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "today, you are going to be presented with a problem, research a solution and build a prototype or model of the solution," compared to just over 22 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 49 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "today, you are going to present a prototype or model of the solution to the class," compared to just over 25 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 85 percent of students reported being actively connected to learning materials because of strategies their teachers use, compared to just under 15 percent who do not.

Over 81 percent of students feel connected to and feel valued by their teachers, peers, and school, compared to just over 18 percent who do not.

Over 91 percent of student report being present in their classes, putting effort into participating in discussions, and completing tasks and assignments, compared to just under nine percent who did not.

Figure 1.2: Sample Elementary Student Verbatim Comments by Theme

| THEME | SAMPLE COMMENTS | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| Preference for In-Person 23% | "As a student I did not like virtual learning. I wish things would go back to normal." "I'd rather be in the classroom." "I like in-person learning the best." | | | |
| Preference for Virtual Learning 3% | "Virtual learning was great." "We loved learning virtually because her teacher was very committed to making sure the virtual students got the same care and attention as students physically in." "I love virtual learning." | | | |
| More Non-Academic Activities (e.g., Recess) 17% | "We need longer free play, less virtual activity, and more craft projects." "I think we could do more of guessing games or games in general." "I would like for more recess." | | | |
| Change Amount of Time on Different Subject Areas 9% | "I want more science time for class and a longer lunch and lastly a longer freeplay." "I think that our breaks should be a little bit shorter so that kids can have more time to do school, and so that they learn more." "A bit more science than social studies." | | | |
| Mental/Physical Health Emphasis (e.g., Breaks) 5% | "Maybe we should do more breathing exercises so we can concentrate more." "In class sometimes we should have a brain break so that way we are not staring at a screen all day." "Try having more breaks to rest our minds." | | | |
| Better Technology Uses and Training 4% | "Keep in mind that everyone is not tech savvy, so uploading and finding work will not be an easy task." "I would use something other than Teams because it would lag out very often." "Find more fun ways, like Tik-tok was something my teacher used, that she learned from, use current trends and implement them into learning to make your classes more fun." | | | |
| Opportunities to Do Work Outside 5% | "I think we should have specific days where we do some work outside so we can get fresh air." "I think I pay attention better when we are learning outside. I don't know why but it makes it more fun and helps me to focus." "I like to learn outside." | | | |
| More Socializing with Other Students 6% | "Make a way to have the kids at school and the kids at home have a way to talk." "I wish I could have had time to talk with kids in class." "Every 2 weeks switch lunch seats so you can socialize with people you have not met in the class." | | | |
| Individual Support from Teachers 10% | "I think it would be awesome if teacher would let us choose if we could do an assignment online or in our notebooks." "Not to leave any students out or call on other students more than other students." "I would like my teacher too describe more about the problems we do in math and reading because i do not really understand some of them." | | | |
| Positive Feedback 2% | "I have nothing bad to say and don't change." "My year was really good the teachers were nice the kids were nice everyone was nice so i had a good school year." "Overall I think the virtual learning program was really good given the circumstances. The teachers did a great job at keeping students engaged and on track. However, I am excited about physically going to school in the fall." | | | |
| Other 10% | "That for all virtual students to have their camera on so you could know if they are gone or playing a game or not." "Guest speaker Friday." | | | |

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Like elementary students, middle school students show a strong preference for activities involving games or competitions and have positive perceptions of field trips, brain breaks, and classes outdoors. In general, middle school students have less favorable perceptions of independent activities and projects, with only 26 percent reporting they would like to work on flash cards, 30 percent reporting they would like to make a podcast or other creative project, and 28 percent reporting they would like to the class.

In general, a significant number of middle school students report feeling connected to their teacher and class and also report being present and participating in the virtual environment (75 percent connected and 90 percent present and participating). Additional charts for all closed-ended responses, for middle schools, are provided in Appendix B.





The highest percentage of open-ended responses (23 percent) indicated a preference for more engaging/fun assignments. The second-most common theme among open-ended responses highlighted respondents' desire for accommodating individual needs (20 percent). Other common themes in open-ended responses included a preference for in-person learning (17 percent), preference for more group work (11 percent), miscellaneous responses (11 percent), more socializing with peers (8 percent), and mindfulness/mental health activities (8 percent).

Figure 1.3 provides key takeaways from the close-ended middle school student responses, and Figure 1.4 presents sample student comments related to each theme identified during manual coding.

Figure 1.3 Middle School Student Close-Ended Responses

Over 48 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "today, you'll be doing a virtual assignment where you can work with your classmates in a small group," compared to just over 23 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 66 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "today, you're going to be playing virtual learning games. You'll be playing these by yourself independently," compared to just over 12 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 77 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "for today's lesson, you'll be playing a virtual competition game, and you get to play against your classmates," compared to just over eight percent of students who would not like it.

Notably, only just over 26 students would like it if told by their teacher, "for today's lesson, you'll get to make virtual flashcards to help you study," compared to over 39 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 35 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "I've made a video of me teaching today's lesson. You'll be watching it on your own, but you can ask me any question you want at any time," compared to over 31 percent of students who would not like it.

Just under 30 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "this week, you'll be making your own video, podcast, presentation, video, etc. to show me what you've learned," compared to almost 50 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 66 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "today, you're going to have a guest speaker present to the class. Then we'll be going on a virtual field trip," compared to just over 13 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 61 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "today, you're going to be mostly off your computers. You will be doing a project using household items like glue, tape, paint, crayons, and markers to make something. Then you'll take a picture of it and submit it," compared to over 16 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 49 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "from now on, for a few minutes at the start or in the middle of class, we'll all be doing something physical. Maybe jumping jacks, running in place, stretching, breathing exercises, or something like that," compared to just over 15 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 76 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "today, we will be doing all our work outside," compared to over seven percent of students who would not like it.

Over 42 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "today, you are going to be presented with a problem, research a solution and build a prototype or model of the solution," compared to over 26 percent of students who would not like it.

Just under 28 percent of students would like it if told by their teacher, "today, you are going to present a prototype or model of the solution to the class," compared to almost 43 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 81 percent of students felt they were actively connected to the materials based on strategies that their teachers used, compared to over 18 percent that were not.

Over 75 percent of students felt connected to and valued by their teachers, peers, and their school, compared to over 24 percent that were not.

Almost 90 percent of students responded that they were present in their classes, put effort into participating into discussions, and completed tasks and assignments, compared to just over 10 percent that did not.

Figure 1.4: Sample Middle School Student Verbatim Comments by Theme

| THEME | SAMPLE COMMENTS | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| Preference for More Group Work 11% | P • "I really like working with groups or partners." "Allow student to work in small groups and don't force them to present." "I really like working with other classmates." | | |
| Preference for In-Person Learning 17% | "I want to go back to school." "I personally don't like virtual. I prefer learning physically." "I like learning in school better than learning at home on my computer." | | |
| Preference for More Learning Outside 6% | "I'd think it'd be fun if we went outside to do our work." "We go outside for class more often." "All of them don't seem bad but the one I would enjoy the most is working outside." | | |
| Preference for More Engaging/Fun Assignments (e.g., games) 23% | "We should play games to either review for a test or make fun and cool assignments to keep people engaged." "More creative ways of learning." "More games and more breaks." | | |
| Accommodating Individual Needs 20% | "I feel like the teachers could have made the virtual students feel more included." "Don't pile work over and over just slow it down a bit so you can actually talk to people." "Have the teachers pay more attention to virtual kids." | | |
| Positive Feedback 3% | "I liked how [teacher] asked how we were doing and feeling over this distance learning." "I liked how this school makes learning fun and being able to learn to use a locker." "This learning experience for me has been the best possible, just keep what you are doing and I should be great for the rest of this year. I want this year of the last month of 7th grade to be my best." | | |
| More Socializing with Peers 8% | "Homework buddy or student match for each class so if you do not get feedback right away from teacher, you could ask you buddy." "I would love overall more interaction with the class outside of group projects." "One thing I would do is just let the students talk to one another a lot more than we can in class. Like put us into groups." | | |
| Mindfulness/Mental Health Activities (e.g., Breaks) 8% | "I believe at like 10 minutes before every class ends if you are finished all your work you can play a game. It would help relieve stress." "I think that giving a small 5-minute break in between lessons would be nice." "There's not a lot we can do with covid but I would like if we took a few minutes of class to stand up, stretch, or dance to keep us engaged." | | |
| Other 11% | "Overall, I enjoyed virtual learning and would love to have an asynchronous day next year even if we're in person." "Get grades higher than 90." "Try to act as if you were in class, participate!" | | |

HIGH SCHOOL

High school students are less likely to want to do group virtual projects than their elementary and middle school peers, with 40 percent of high school students indicating they would not like to work with classmates on assignments. Even more high school students (60 percent) do not express interest in creating a podcast, presentation, or video. Instead, high school students have the most interest in hands-on activities, rather than working at a computer. Having class outside received the second highest positive response. Additionally, a majority of high school students would like to compete in games with their classmates.

In the virtual setting, high school students are less likely to feel connected to their teachers and classmates than their elementary and middle school counterparts. **Only 62 percent of high school respondents reported feeling a connection in the virtual setting**, compared to 75 percent and 81 percent for middle school and elementary school, respectively. **High school students did report a high level of participation and attendance, however, with 85 percent of students indicating they were present for class and attempted their work.** Additional charts for all closed-ended responses, for high schools, are provided in Appendix B.





In terms of open-ended comments, 40.9 percent of high school students indicated a desire for more time to manage academic tasks and personal life, including requests to continue asynchronous/flex Fridays and to have less work. The second-largest set of open-ended comments pertained to respondents' perceptions on why virtual learning is undesirable (35.1 percent). These comments often cited a general lack of motivation to engage in course works and a lack of interesting group assignments. The last set of comments expressed a desire for their teachers to understand what students are going through and to modify assignments and projects accordingly (24.0 percent).

Figure 1.5 provides key takeaways from the close-ended high school student responses. Figure 1.6 presents the results of the topic modeling analysis, and Figure 1.7 presents sample student comments related to each topic.

Figure 1.5 High School Student Close-Ended Responses

Only about 28 percent of high school students like doing virtual assignments where they can work with their classmates in a small group, compared to over 40 percent that dislike such work.

Over 48 percent of high school students like playing virtual games by themselves, compared to almost 22 percent who do not.

Over 61 percent of high school students like playing virtual games against their classmates, compared to just over 15 percent who do not.

Over 24 percent of high school students like creating virtual flashcards to study, compared to over 40 percent who do not.

Over 35 percent of high school students prefer to watch pre-recorded videos of lessons and ask questions if they have them during class, compared to over 39 percent who do not.

Only just over 15 percent of high school students like to show what they have learned by creating their own video, podcast, presentation, video, etc., compared to almost 60 percent who do not.

Over 42 percent of high school students enjoy listening to guest speakers and/or taking virtual field trips during class, compared to just over 24 percent who do not.

Over 66 percent of high school students prefer to complete hands-on activities during class as opposed to working on the computer, compared to just over 11 percent who do not.

Over 36 percent of high school students like to do physical activities at the beginning or in the middle of class such as jumping jacks, stretching, or breathing exercises, compared to just over 28 percent who do not.

Over 63 percent of high school students like having class outside where they can complete work, compared to just over 10 percent who do not.

Over 31 percent of high school students would like it if told by their teacher, "today, you are going to be presented with a problem, research a solution and build a prototype or model of the solution," compared to over 30 percent of students who would not like it

Over 21 percent of high school students would like it if told by their teacher, "today, you are going to present a prototype or model of the solution to the class," compared to over 33 percent of students who would not like it.

Over 68 percent of students felt they were actively connected to the materials based on strategies that their teachers used, compared to over 31 percent that were not.

Almost 62 percent of students felt connected to and valued by their teachers, peers, and their school, compared to over 38 percent that were not.

Almost 85 percent of students responded that they were present in their classes, put effort into participating into discussions, and completed tasks and assignments, compared to just over 15 percent that did not.

Figure 1.6: Topic Modeling Analysis of High School Student Comments



| Figure 1.6: Sample High School Student Verbatim Comments by Topic | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| THEME | SAMPLE COMMENTS | | | |
| Need more flexible time to manage academic tasks and personal life | "I really enjoy flex Fridays, it reduces my stress and gives me time to complete any work I need to complete from throughout the week." "One thing I liked about virtual learning was the extra time on Flex Fridays that we got for completing the week's work. It really helped me catch up in all my classes." "keep asynchronous Friday and the no homework thing. Its much better for the kids mental health to not be constantly stressed with school work and outside of school activities, AND homework." "Please keep asynchronous Fridays. Everybody likes them. It's nice to have a 3-day weekend (kind of), and they also help us catch up on some sleep." | | | |
| Reasons why virtual learning is undesirable | "People that have learning issues are having an extremely hard time with virtual learning. I know I need to be in person so I have the materials in my hand and that I will stay on track, at home I have a tendency to find something else to do that is hands on. Virtual is like a chore, I feel as if I do not learn a single thing when I take virtual classes and its a waste of time." "If I'm gonna be honest, I and many others had no motivation to do work until we went into in-person learning. Although, some people excelled at it. It varied from person to person. Some prefer using laptops in school, some like paper. Some like being at home with virtual, some don't." "Too much use of computer only or electronic learning. I do not learn well this way and it is ABSOLUTELY BRAIN NUMBING. It is not engaging, nor effective" | | | |
| Want teachers to understand student experience and structure assignments and projects accordingly | "I was set up to fail for my junior year. I was overloaded with multiple AP courses because I trusted my teachers recommendationsI felt lectured to and blamed by a lot of my teachers. It didn't seem to matter how hard I tried to pay attention or how long I worked. My tutor made feel smart again." "In times like this pandemic, I just wish some teachers had not assigned late points to work. Many kids are stuck at home babysitting siblings, or cooking for their family because their parents are back at work but the children can't all go to school, or stuck at home sick due to COVID. School isn't necessarily a top priority, although it is important. Students aren't going to be motivated if work is constantly thrown at them. To improve student engagement, I would suggest having deadlines to help students schedule their work, but getting rid of things like late work points." "I don't enjoy giving presentations or submitting video responses so other classmates can see. is it possible to not do those assignments it gives me really bad anxiety." "I feel like mental health check ups for students like every month is a good idea and if students do have and issue then don't make them be ashamed of it have a serious discussion about it and provide options resources and at the same time if the student is has a mental health issue and there grades are slipping don't say that they are having a mental health issue because they may have a mental health issue"." | | | |

SECTION II: EDUCATOR KEY FINDINGS

This section of the report provides the analyzes of closed- and open-ended educator survey responses.

COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT

More than half of educators feel their students were cognitively engaged during virtual instruction and that providing student choice during instruction was helpful. Utilizing tools like Kahoot! or Quizzizz appear to be most effective.

For all other cognitive engagement strategies referenced in the survey, fewer than 50 percent of educators found them to be very or extremely effective. The strategies perceived as least effective for cognitive engagement include using technology to provide authentic experiences and utilizing break-out rooms, each at 32 percent. Surprisingly, in the open-ended responses, break-out rooms and small group instruction appeared as the second most common engagement strategy, with almost 30 percent of educators utilizing that instructional method.

Educators also highlighted specific online platforms in their open-ended responses, such as Quizizz and Kahoot!, as effective additional cognitive engagement strategies (38 percent). Other common themes in open-ended responses included miscellaneous responses (13 percent), games/rewards (11 percent), and instant feedback (9 percent).

Figure 2.1 provides key takeaways from the close-ended educator responses about cognitive engagement, and Figure 2.2 presents sample educator comments related to each theme identified during manual coding.

Figure 2.1: Educator Close-Ended Responses – Cognitive Engagement

Over 60 percent of educators felt that many or most of their students were cognitively engaged during virtual instruction.

Only 31.6 percent of educators felt using technology and virtual resources to provide authentic experiences, such as virtual field trips, asynchronous video, escape rooms or simulated applications of content were very or extremely effective.

Only 38.4 of educators felt providing opportunities for students to create videos, audio recordings, and other forms of multi-media expression to demonstrate learning was very or extremely effective.

47.7 of educators felt connecting with student's previous knowledge and experiences was very or extremely effective.

Only 37.4 percent of educators felt highlighting the value and personal relevance of assignments was very or extremely effective.

43.6 percent of educators felt utilizing hands-on materials for students to construct creative products was very or extremely effective.

Only 31.7 percent of educators felt utilizing break out rooms to provide student-student and student-teacher interaction was very or extremely effective.

52.1 percent of educators felt providing student choice was very or extremely effective.

48.8 percent of educators felt providing videos, tutorials, audio recordings, and other online resources for students' parents/caregivers to help their child engage in learning was very or extremely effective.

5. How many of your students did you feel were cognitively engaged during virtual instruction?

| Response | Frequency | Percent | 0 | 20 | 40 | 60 | 80 | 100 |
|---|-----------|---------|---|----|----|----|----|-----|
| Few of my students (between 0% and 25%) | 124 | 7.2% | | | | | | |
| Some of my students (between 26% and 50%) | 549 | 31.9% | | | | | | |
| Many of my students (between 51% and 75%) | 694 | 40.3% | | | | | | |
| Most of my students (between 76% and 99%) | 342 | 19.9% | | | | | | |
| All of my students (100%) | 12 | 0.7% | | | | | | |

Figure 2.2: Sample Educator Open-Ended Responses by Theme - Cognitive Engagement

| THEME | SAMPLE COMMENTS | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Using Specific Technologies 38% | "Using Classkick, utilizing the chat for answers, showing answers on a whiteboard through the screen." "Classkick so you can see them engaged and working. Also providing instant feedback to them while they are working on Classkick." "Sharing of screen, used web-cam to provide instruction at board." | | | |
| Games/Rewards 11% | "Connecting or using video games resulted in about 25% engagement, which was peak for the year." "Games and applying student interests to content." "Establishing a positive classroom environment; some ideas marble jar, rewards, virtual lunch bunches, etc." | | | |
| Communication with Parents/Guardians 7% | "Home visits/porch conversations, porch drop-off of materials." "The most effective strategy was to make phone calls and send texts to families during instruction to help get their child on-line or off of other apps when they were supposed to be learning." "I spent a lot of time reaching out via telephone and email to to work with students and parents individually." | | | |
| Instant Feedback 9% | "Using web-based platforms like www.goformative.com where I can see students' work in real time and give them immediate feedback. It made a night/day." "Any number of applications that gave student or teacher feedback in real time." "Immediate feedback via Classkick." | | | |
| Breakout Rooms and Individual/Small Group Instruction 30% | "Break out rooms and flex Friday 1:1." "Made every assignment very personal to their needs." "Extension for turning in assignments late, office hours on Friday's, recap of all work due posted on Fridays with an extension for turning it in." | | | |
| Interactive Activities 6% | "Peer assessment, individual demonstration of skills, discussion-based learning." "Using readers theatre stories in the reading program LLI." "Using topics such as current video games as visuals for math and other lessons." | | | |
| Student-Driven Learning 6% | "Giving students the opportunity to talk and collaborate just like we would in a live classroom. Also giving students flexibility in how they complete assignments and submit them allowed them the opportunity completed assignments ensured greater success." "Allowing students to express opinions and emotions about the topics presented." "Students randomly selected to answer questions throughout the lesson." | | | |
| Student Cameras On 4% | "STRONG encouragement to use camera (not required) to involve students. When students were on camera they were involved and didn't check out." "Requesting cameras be turned on." "Making it mandatory to keep camera on, quite and designated work place." | | | |
| Other 13% | "Co Teaching" "I do not work with any specific students so I did not give virtual instruction." "Virtual instruction is not how students learn. Too many tech problems. Loss of instructional time was tremendous." | | | |

EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Approximately half of educators report that students were emotionally engaged during virtual instruction and found that prompting students to share interests, one-on-one sessions with teachers, and integrating students' interests and strengths in lessons are effective instructional practices for emotional engagement. Similarly, in the open-ended responses, educators found simply talking with students to have the most impact on emotional engagement (24 percent). The second-most common additional emotional engagement strategy was providing opportunities for students to share interests and feelings (18 percent). Other common themes in open-ended responses include class meetings (17 percent), using technology (16 percent), and miscellaneous responses (12 percent).

Figure 2.3 provides key takeaways from the close-ended educator responses about emotional engagement, and Figure 2.4 presents sample educator comments related to each theme identified during manual coding.

Figure 2.3 Educator Close-Ended Responses – Emotional Engagement

53.5 percent of educators felt that many, most, or all of their students were emotionally engaged during virtual instruction.

Only 33.2 percent of educators felt establishing team-building routines and rituals by having students take on class roles was very or extremely effective.

44.3 percent of educators felt incorporating social-emotional check-ins was very or extremely effective.

59.1 percent of educators felt prompting students to share interests was very or extremely effective.

59.8 percent of educators felt building strong relationships through one-on-one or virtual meetings with students was very or extremely effective.

60.6 percent of educators felt integrating students interests and strengths was very or extremely effective.

45.1 percent of educators felt using technology to provide feedback and praise was very or extremely effective.

33.0 percent of educators felt using challenges to increase motivation was very or extremely effective.

15. How many of your students did you feel were emotionally engaged during virtual instruction?

| Response | Frequency | Percent | 0 | 20 | 40 | 60 | 80 | 100 |
|---|-----------|---------|---|----|----|----|----|-----|
| Few of my students (between 0% and 25%) | 193 | 11.2% | | | | | | |
| Some of my students (between 26% and 50%) | 608 | 35.3% | | | | | | |
| Many of my students (between 51% and 75%) | 612 | 35.6% | | | | | | |
| Most of my students (between 76% and 99%) | 294 | 17.1% | | | | | | |
| All of my students (100%) | 14 | 0.8% | | | | | | |

Figure 2.4: Sample Educator Open-Ended Responses by Theme - Emotional Engagement

| THEME | SAMPLE COMMENTS |
|---|--|
| Opportunities for Students to Share Interests and Feelings 18% | "Sharing such as show and tell." "Question of the day to promote socialization & opportunities to learn more about the students." "Giving the students time to share a personal story about a pet or special activity." |
| Class Meetings 17% | "Morning meetings and closure meetings that incorporated team building activities and social emotional learning." "Class Meetings and Celebrations, Mailing Students Letters, Drive By Social." "Team Meetings that were not just for instruction." |
| Communication with Parents 8% | "Frequent emails to parents, daily check in with individual students, notes mailed home to students (valentine cards, bookmark's, postcards)." "Reminding students and parents of available resources within HCPS." "Building relationships with caregivers." |
| Talking with Students 24% | "Taking time to talk with students or give students time to talk with other peers during virtual time." "Meeting with students one on one, sending individual emails, giving specific feedback." "I am a good teacher and talk to my students during class. I played sick beats in the beginning of class." |
| Using Technology 16% | "They loved breakout groups and live meetings/ live activities." "Interactive online activities." "Likes in chats and positive virtual messages." |
| Rewards 3% | "Virtual lunch bunch, Class Dojo for rewards/incentives, Show & Tell, virtual celebrations, etc." "Sending post cards and small mailable prizes to students homes as part of our PBIS." "Virtual prize boxes to reward students; delivering Student of the Month signs to students' yards; video Shout-Outs each Friday." |
| Student Engagement with Other Students 7% | "Gave them 5 minutes in chat room with peers to socialize at beginning of class." "Lunch bunch, break box free play where the kids stayed logged in and played with toys with mics on to promote conversations." "Incorporating partnerships or small group activities where students were able to interact with one another also seemed to reach students on an emotional level." |
| Games 6% | "Dress up days, games, asynchronous time, incorporated the weather (snow) into lessons, scavenger hunts." "Ending class a few minutes early to play a game." "Playing games that connected with instruction were very effective." |
| Other 12% | "Virtual relaxation rooms." "Providing resources for students for who maybe too shy to share." "Providing frequent opportunities to de-stress (school and not-school-related)." |

BEHAVIORAL ENGAGEMENT

Approximately 60 percent of educators perceived their students to be behaviorally engaged during virtual instruction. Most also report that establishing class norms is very or extremely effective, and that tools like Class Dojo are particularly effective in helping to monitor behavioral engagement. Some teachers (17 percent) reported using rewards and reviewing expectations as an effective means of behavior management. Notably, few educators found student collaboration through web tools or integrating activities aimed at self-management to be effective behavioral engagement strategies.

Figure 2.5 provides key takeaways from the close-ended educator responses about behavioral engagement, and Figure 2.6 presents sample educator comments related to each theme identified during manual coding.

Figure 2.5 Educator Close-Ended Responses – Behavioral Engagement

59.9 percent of educators felt that many, most, or all of their students were behaviorally engaged during remote instruction.

57.1 percent of educators felt that establishing class norms was very or extremely effective.

43.8 percent of educators felt that establishing individual norms was very or extremely effective.

42.9 percent of educators felt that using virtual resources to build a more relevant learning experience (virtual field trips, social media, video clips, gamified learning etc.) was very or extremely effective.

Only 29.2 percent of educators felt that facilitating student collaboration through collaborative documents and web tools was very or extremely effective.

Only 32.5 percent of educators felt that integrating activities and strategies which supported student developing self-management was very or extremely effective.

24. How many of your students did you feel were behaviorally engaged during virtual instruction?

| Response | Frequency | Percent | 0 | 20 | 40 | 60 | 80 | 100 |
|---|-----------|---------|---|----|----|----|----|-----|
| Few of my students (between 0% and 25%) | 160 | 9.3% | | | | | | |
| Some of my students (between 26% and 50%) | 528 | 30.7% | | | | | | |
| Many of my students (between 51% and 75%) | 603 | 35.0% | | | | | | |
| Most of my students (between 76% and 99%) | 407 | 23.6% | | | | | | |
| All of my students (100%) | 23 | 1.3% | | | | | | |

Figure 2.6: Sample Educator Open-Ended Responses by Theme - Behavioral Engagement

| THEME | SAMPLE COMMENTS | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Using Technologies 23% | "Using One Note to see student work in real time and be able to ask why they had not started yet." "Relaxing website with music, relax exercise and support to talk to different people about their life." Daily tasks pages on itsLearning, dojo points, using whiteboards, using hand symbol on computer." | | | |
| Collaborating with Parents 15% | "Effort ratings and communicating with students and families regularly." "Provided a weekly checklist with links to all the assignments on itsLearning and Savvas, communicated with families often." "Providing students and families with a weekly visual checklist of assignments along with videos of how to navigate itsLearning." | | | |
| Small Group and Individual Work 5% | "Small group time to review expectations." "Daily small group opportunities." "Completing collaborative assessments with additional support tools (dictionaries, text to speech, highlight and extract tools, etc.)" | | | |
| Rewards 17% | "Still using our school PBIS program to engage and motivate students." "Checklists and class reward days." "Lots of verbal praise and breaks." | | | |
| Reviewing Expectations 17% | "Providing multiple means (written, verbal, video) for directions and understanding." "Allowing students to explore online tools and setting class norms before using them for instruction." "Parent involvement and routine behavior reminders." | | | |
| Relationship-Building, Communication, and Check-Ins 15% | "Questions of that day (unrelated to content but engaging and finding interests of students)." "Daily jokes with kids to break the ice at the beginning of class." "Frequent check-ins, brain breaks." | | | |
| Student Ownership of Work 16% | "We had a class management system. Cotton balls in the mason jar. They loved it and worked hard to earn cotton balls, then class rewards." "Providing jobs for students; creating motivation and excitement for students." "Gave students a daily opportunity to share with the class how they are doing, new things going on in their life, etc." | | | |
| Mindfulness/Mental Health Activities (e.g., Breaks) 7% | "Frequent breaks and family participation." "Giving them chat time with peers to socialize at beginning of class, reduced the chat line during instruction." "Taking a break or doing movement." | | | |
| Other 8% | "Using mastery assessments, assigning basically nothing, and accepting all late work forever." "Team teaching, cooking lessons." "Co-treat and co-teach with other related services and special education teachers." | | | |

ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGES

Educators were asked the following open-ended question regarding challenges to student engagement: What is challenging about engaging students (cognitively, emotionally, behaviorally) during virtual or hybrid instruction?

Approximately one-third of educators (36 percent) cited issues specific to the implementation of concurrent instruction. Respondents struggled to divide their attention and provide support to virtual and in-person students at the same; additionally, the increased planning and organization required for concurrent instruction led to decreased instructional time. Educators also report that while the current camera policy is understandable, when students turn off their cameras, educators cannot use facial expressions and body language as feedback on the student experience.

The second set of open-ended responses reported a general lack of consequences for students who are not engaged with their learning (33 percent), and the third set of responses pertained to student home environments (30 percent). These comments often talked about distractions in students' homes and a lack of parental support/supervision that resulted in decreased student engagement.

Figure 2.7 presents the results of the topic modeling analysis, and Figure 2.8 presents sample educator comments related to each topic.



Figure 2.7: Topic Modeling Analysis of Educator Comments - Engagement Challenges

Figure 2.8: Sample Educator Open-Ended Responses by Topic – Engagement Challenges

| TOPIC | SAMPLE COMMENT | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| Implementation of virtual and hybrid classrooms | "It's hard to personalize and keep kids engaged when you can't see their facial expressions. I don't have the visual cues needed to adjust and fine tune my delivery for the class as a whole or based on an individual's body language" "Teaching in a hybrid model is an almost impossible tasks. An effective teacher's attention cannot be that heavily divided and continue deliver personal instruction" "It is very difficult to meet the needs of the at home students in a hybrid setting" "Hybrid - if you engage the in-person students, you overlook the virtual ones, and vice versa. Hybrid is much more challenging that all virtual or all in-person" | | | | |
| Lack of accountability and administrative support for lack of student engagement | "There was no support or follow through from administration to require students to engage and attend online sessions. There were no consequences for student disengagement except the teacher taking additional time outside of class to call/email/ message students and parents to do so" "Not requiring students to turn their cameras on allows them to disengage easily and not attend lessons. Hard to hold them accountable when we cannot see them" "Besides grades, there was no accountability for being in class. There were no consequences for not being in class besides their grade that reflected it. Even then, we were told to accept all late work so students were working on it at their own pace without signing into class" | | | | |
| Student home environment not conducive to learning | "Many students had distractions in their homes such as cell phones, TVs, video games, younger siblings that prevented them from giving all of their attention to instruction. Parents did not monitor the home environment to make sure it was conducive to learning." "They are at home with toys and distractions. They would rather pay attention to those things if their parents don't help them set up a good learning environment." "There is only so much we can do being on the other side of the computer screen. We had a lot of parents hindering the growth of their child. For example parents answering questions for their child or having them do other things instead of focusing on learning. Noisy environments and just an all around lack of structure." "They are very stressed out about what is happening in other classes (disorganization, punitive grading, lengthy lectures, etc.) and what is happening at home (watching dogs, watching siblings, fighting parents, loud lawn mower, internet or power being out, etc.)." "It is challenging because you can't control the home environment. It can make it harder for students to focus with the at home distractions." | | | | |

APPENDIX A: DIGITAL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The following digital tools and resources were referenced by students and/or educators during manual open-ended coding:

- Blooket
- Boom Cards
- Class Dojo
- ClassFlow
- Classkick
- Desmos
- Edpuzzle
- Gizmo
- Go Formative
- GoNoodle
- itsLearning
- Kahoot!
- LessonPix
- Microsoft OneNote
- Nearpod
- Padlet
- Pear Deck
- PhET
- Quizizz
- Savvas
- Seesaw
- Socrative
- Whiteboard
- YouTube

Important Notes:

• The above list of digital tools and resources were referenced in the comments section of the surveys (student and staff) and are not necessarily approved by HCPS or available to use.

What Digital Tools and Resources are Available to Use?

- The following link provide a list of digital tools and resources, approved by HCPS, that are available to use.
 - https://hcps365.sharepoint.com/sites/OrganizationalDevelopment/InsTech/SitePages/Digital-Tools-&-Resources.aspx

Approved HCPS Digital Tools and resources

The list below is updated as of Wednesday, September 22, 2021, see the SharePoint link on the next page for an updated list.

| Tool/Resource | Status | Subscription Type | Integration | Audience |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Book Creator | Approved | Free;#School Subscription Available | Clever | K-12;#All |
| Canva | Approved | Free | Clever | K-12;#All |
| ClassFlow | Approved | District | Other | K-12;#All |
| ClassFlow | Approved | District | Other | K-12 |
| ClassKick | Approved | District | Clever | K-12;#All |
| Code.org | Approved | District | Clever | K-12;#Library Media |
| Comics Plus | Approved | School Subscription Available | Clever | K-12;#Library Media |
| CommonLit School Essentials | Approved | District | Clever | RELA;#6-12 |
| Conovor | In Process | | | |
| Creative Curriculum Cloud | Approved | District | Other | K-2 |
| Culture Grams | Approved | District | Clever | K-12;#All |
| Discovery Education | Approved | District | Clever | K-12;#All |
| DreamBox | Approved | District | Clever | K-5;#6-8;#Math |
| EdPuzzle | Not Approved | | | |
| Equatio | Approved | District | Other | K-12;#All |
| First in Math | Approved | District | Clever | Math;#2-8 |
| FlipGrid | Approved | District | Office 365 | K-12;#All |
| Follett/Destiny | Approved | District | Other | K-12;#Library Media |
| Formative | Not Approved | | | |
| Freckle | Approved | District | Clever | 6-8;#RELA;#Math |
| Gale | Approved | District | Clever | K-12;#Library Media |
| Generation Genius | Approved | District | Clever | 3-5;#Science |
| Gizmos | Approved | District | Clever | 6-12;#Math;#Science;#5 |
| HMH Collections (gr 6-7) | Approved | District | Other | RELA |
| HMH Collections (gr 8-10) | Approved | District | LTI | RELA |
| iStation | Approved | District | Clever | K-5;#6-8 |
| Labster | Approved | District | Other | Science |
| Layered Earth | Approved | District | Other | Science |
| Legends of Learning | Approved | District | Clever | Science;#6-8 |
| Microsoft Forms | Approved | District | Office 365 | K-12;#All |
| Naviance | Approved | District | Clever | 6-12;#Counseling |
| NearPod | Approved | District | Clever | K-12;#All |
| NewsELA | Approved | Free | Clever | K-12;#RELA |
| Padlet | Approved | District | Office 365 | K-12;#All |
| PebbleGo | Approved | School Subscription Available | Clever | К-5 |
| Phet | Approved | District | Clever | 6-12;#Science;#Math |
| Pivot | Approved | District | Clever | 9-12;#Science |
| Prodigy | Not Approved | | | |
| ProQuest | Approved | District | Clever | 9-12;#Library Media |

| Tool/Resource | Status | Subscription Type | Integration | Audience |
|---------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Quizziz | Approved | Free | Clever | K-12;#All |
| Read and Write Tool | Approved | District | Other | K-12;#All |
| Savvas (Pearson) | Approved | District | Other | K-12;#All |
| ScholasticGo | Approved | District | Clever | K-12;#All |
| SIRS | Approved | District | Clever | 6-12;#Library Media |
| Smore | Approved | Free;#School Subscription Available | | K-12;#All |
| Sora by Overdrive | Approved | District | Clever | K-12;#Library Media |
| TeachTown | Approved | District | | K-5 |
| ThingLink | Approved | District | LTI | K-12;#All |
| Turnitin | Approved | District | LTI | 9-12;#RELA |
| Virtual Job Shadow | Approved | District | | Special Education |
| WeVideo | Approved | Free;#School Subscription Available | Office 365 | K-12;#All |
| Whiteboard.fi | Not Approved | | | |
| World Book Online | Approved | District | Clever | K-12;#Library Media |

Note: See the below SharePoint link for an updated list of approved HCPS digital tools and resources: https://hcps365.sharepoint.com/sites/OrganizationalDevelopment/InsTech/SitePages/Digital-Tools-&-Resources.aspx

APPENDIX B: CLOSED-ENDED RESPONSES

I. Student Engagement Survey: Closed-Ended Responses

The links below provide access to the close-ended response charts broken down by student survey respondents at the elementary, middle, and high schools. Click any of the links below to view closed-ended survey responses by school levels.

- Elementary Schools: Closed-Ended Responses: https://www.hcps.org/superintendent/docs/Elementary_Schools_HCP_Survey_on_Student_Engagement_Closed_En ded_Responses.pdf
- Middle Schools: Closed-Ended Responses: https://www.hcps.org/superintendent/docs/Middle_Schools_HCP_Survey_on_Student_Engagement_Closed_Ended_ Responses.pdf
- High Schools: Closed-Ended Responses: https://www.hcps.org/superintendent/docs/High_Schools_HCP_Survey_on_Student_Engagement_Closed_Ended_R esponses.pdf

II. Educator Survey on Student Engagement: Closed Ended Responses

The following link provides access to the close-ended response charts for teachers, school and central office educators. Click the link below to view closed-ended survey responses for staff.

• Educator Survey on Student Engagement: Closed-Ended Responses: https://www.hcps.org/superintendent/docs/HCPS_Educator_Survey_On_Student_Engagement_Closed_Ended_Resp onses_Final.pdf