

Survey Report: Classroom Format for Fall 2021 – June 2020

The Office of Educational Research and Statistics (OERS) within the Navajo Nation Department of Diné Education (DODE) conducted two online surveys to capture an overall perception from parents/guardians and Pre-k-12 students. The perception was concerning classroom format for Fall 2021. Both surveys included additional queries regarding demographics and the conditions from virtual education. The results will help guide imperative educational decisions from educational and tribal leaders for Fall 2021.

Both surveys were created using Survey Planet, an online survey tool that allows users to create and design surveys and enables end users to view and interpret the results. Survey links were shared using various methods to obtain a sufficient sample. Those methods included social media, websites, emails to schools, and as a reminder during virtual meetings. Surveys were open for three and a half weeks. The first survey targeted parents/guardians and the second survey were for Pre-k-12 students.

The parent/guardian survey obtained a final sample of 1,055 responses and the Pre-k-12 survey was 541. The outcomes for both surveys are presented below:

Parent/Guardian Survey Results

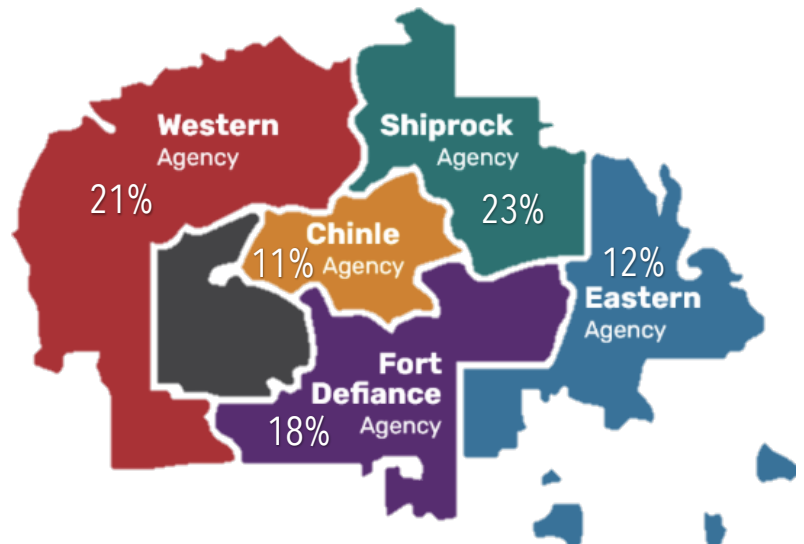
1. My student(s) primarily attend a:

School Type:	Percentage:
Public school	53%
Grant school	12%
BIE school	20%
Private/Parochial school	8%
Charter school	2%
*Homeschool	1%
Other	4%

Notes:

*not an enrolled student with the above options and all instruction is done with non-certified parent/guardian

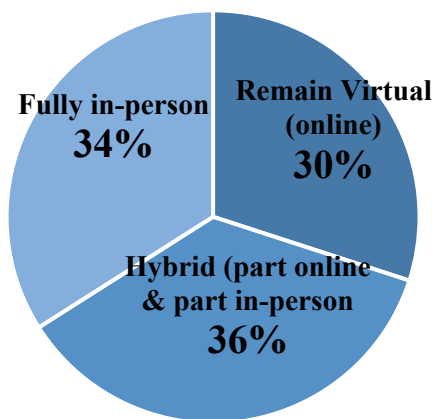
2. I currently reside in:



Bordertown
 (i.e., Farmington, Gallup, Holbrook, Winslow, Flagstaff, Page, etc.) | **15%**

Large Urban City
 (i.e., Phoenix, Albuquerque, Salt Lake, etc.) | **1%**

3. My personal perception for school commencing for Fall 2021 is to:



4. On a scale that measures satisfaction (10 being most satisfied), as a parent/guardian, I was satisfied with how my child(ren)'s school was managed in SY 2020-2021 for academic delivery, such as academic support, homework, etc.



5. On a scale that measures satisfaction (10 being most satisfied), as a parent/guardian, I was satisfied with how my child(ren)'s school was managed in SY 2020-2021 for student support services, such as academic counseling, 1:1 instruction, SPED support, etc.:



6. On a scale that measures communication (10 being most communicative)—How was the communication from your student(s)' school/district this school year?



7. On a scale that measures preparation (10 being most prepared)—I am prepared with academic materials, Wi-Fi, devices, etc., if my child(ren)'s school opts to remain virtual for Fall 2021:



8. From the list below, my **top two (2)** primary concerns developed from school year 2020-2021 as a result of virtual/online learning were:

- Emotional and mental health issues 19%
- Falling behind, academically** 34%
- No academic counseling 9%
- No support counseling 5%
- Poor internet connection** 29%
- SPED-related 5%

9. Since the discussion of “Reopening schools” on the Navajo Nation began, the **top four (4)** things I interpret through the media and from leaders are:


- Schools are unsafe 10%
- Students are safe at home** 19%
- Teachers, staff, and students can be safe at school with mitigation strategies** 16%
- Teachers and staff are unsafe at school 9%
- Schools are incapable of responding to COVID-19 safely and/or responsibly 9%
- Schools are capable of responding to COVID-19 safely and/or responsibly** 14%
- Navajo Nation leaders know what is best for students 11%
- Schools know what is best for students** 12%

10. I define “school reopening” as:

“Schools slowly reopen with COVID-19 mitigation strategies”	“Schools operate as they were before COVID-19”	“I am unsure”
70%	17%	16%

Pre-k to 12th Grade Students Survey Results

11. I feel my local school/district is capable of safely reopening:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
21%	45% 	22%	12%

12. I have read my local school/districts' school reopening plan:

Yes	No	Partly
31%	41%	28%

The parent/guardian survey results illustrate that the personal perception for Fall 2021 school year is neutral. The learning options to remain virtual, resort to hybrid, or fully go in-person were a near 30% with hybrid retaining slightly more preference. Additionally, more neutral results were shown regarding satisfaction with how schools managed SY 2020-2021 in the area of academic delivery and student support services, including the communication of their local school. However, some of the primary concerns that developed from SY '20 were their students having to fall behind, academically and poor internet connection.

Now, the discussion to reopen schools for SY '21 is impending. First, the results show that parents/guardians understand "school reopening" as "schools slowly reopen with COVID-19 mitigation strategies". They feel COVID-19 mitigation strategies is plausible for school reopening, including schools being the directors of reopening their schools. Although 41% indicated they have not read their school/districts' reopening plan, nearly half of the participants agreed that their local school/district is capable of reopening safely. In fact, parents/guardians indicated they feel the communication from their local school/district was fairly well, and if schools remain in a virtual format for SY '21, they are adequately prepared.

The next survey presents the results for Pre-k-12 students. The results indicate that they favor hybrid learning (part online and part in-person) despite viewing SY '20 as difficult, new, and stressful.

1. I am a student who attends a:

School Enrolled:	%:
Public school	65%
Grant school	6%
BIE school	14%
Private/Parochial school	4%
Charter school	1%
*Homeschool	2%
I am unsure	8%

Notes:

*not enrolled in any school type listed above

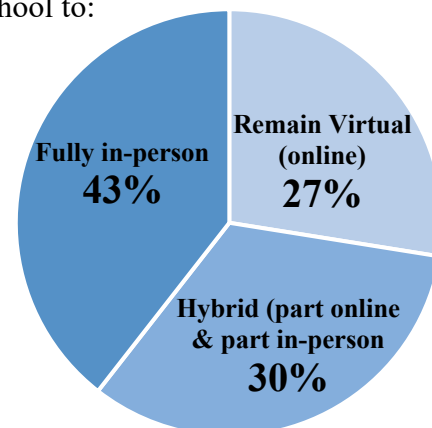
2. My grade is within:

Pre-K to 3 rd grade	25%
4 th grade to 6 th grade	29%
7 th grade or 8 th grade	12%
High school (9 th to 12 th grade)	34%

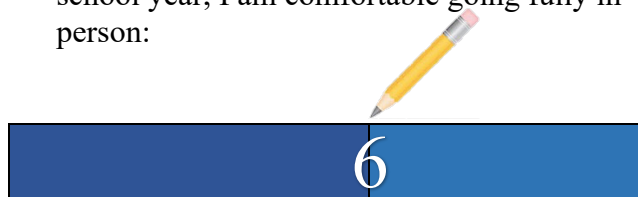
3. During this school year, I was a(n):

Online/virtual only	76%
Hybrid (part virtual & part in-person)	19%
Fully in-person	2%
Homeschooled	5%

4. For next school year, Fall 2021, I want my school to:



5. On a scale that measures comfort (10 being most comfortable)—If schools open for next school year, I am comfortable going fully in-person:



6. As a result of COVID-19, my two (2) greatest challenges during this school year were:

- Mental health (depression, problems at home, etc.) **11%**
- Staying motivated to do my schoolwork** **34%**
- Social and emotional health (not seeing my friends or playing sports, etc.)** **25%**
- Academic burnout **20%**
- Poor teacher relationship (teacher was not responsive to questions or helpful) **10%**

7. The top three (3) words that best describe this school year are:

Difficult



20%

New



16%

Stressful



18%

- Interesting **13%**
- Unsatisfactory **10%**
- Boring **10%**
- Fun **7%**
- Exciting **6%**

8. On the weekends, my family and I travel off the reservation?

All the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not live on the Reservation
7%	33%	42%	14%	5%

Question 9 was open-ended. The question asked: *In 1-2 sentences, what is one message you want to send our Navajo Nation leaders in education about your overall experience this school year?* Of the 541 participants, 264 responded to the question. Following a manual thematic coding process, results show three critical messages: internet issues, better communication, and stressful dispositions. However, additional points to consider were vaccinations and, despite equal argument for in-person or virtual learning, an opportunity to have a choice for hybrid learning.

Students expressed their support for schools to resume virtual learning, others opposed, and some felt they need an option. Many comments from the question advocated for students to be vaccinated to ensure safety and comfort if schools return to in-person learning. For instance, one student claimed, “I’m more computer literate today,” and another revealing, “I felt like I was preparing myself for college and learn how to strongly communicate with my teachers and school employees. I feel like I became to be responsible for my grades and learn when to speak out”. On the other hand, students opposed virtual learning and advocated to return back to school. One student insisted, “please return in person schooling, missed out on social events and staying motivated to do work was hard” and another student sharing that virtual learning had no hands-on activities, and Zoom classes were very short (30 minutes). Although both options demonstrated justified reasons, a call for hybrid learning was apparent. Students felt they should be offered a choice. One student stressed that they live with grandparents and suggested students should have an option to choose to remain online or return to school. These additional points were evident when understanding the three critical messages students had for educational leaders: internet issues, better communication, and stressful dispositions.

Students explicitly addressed the issues pertaining to internet. These issues contained frustration with connectivity and availability, which often reflected their minimal motivation to complete assignments. One student indicated, “staying motivated to do work was hard especially when we had poor internet connection” and another student asserting, “virtual learning on the reservation with no internet has been very difficult for me due to the lack of motivation and my schoolwork piling on top of each other and getting behind”. One suggestion was that “schools need to be better prepared for students who do not have internet access” and consider hybrid learning as it “would be easier to teach, work, and communicate.” Issues about internet connectivity and availability were evident. These limitations hindered students from feeling successful in school, and unfortunately, created stress for some.

Stressful dispositions became another critical message for educational leaders. Students revealed that online school is stressful due to homework overload. Several students adding, “in person learning is more better then online because it’s so stressful and so much work then there was before when there was in person schooling” and “it [virtual classes] was hard, because I didn’t understand much. I wish the work was more spread out through the week, instead of giving me a 30 page packet for a week while I have 5 other classes with the same amount of work”. For another student, they said, “school was hard and stressful. I couldn’t get the help I needed even though my teachers and mom tried helping. Everyone has different ways of learning, I couldn’t do as good teaching myself at home”. Lastly, one student included, “my teachers overwhelmed me with school work causing me to become stressed and losing motivation to do anything”. Overall, it was apparent that virtual learning created extensive expectations for many students, which caused them to be overwhelmed, especially with the poor lack of communication from teachers.

The final critical message from students was for better communication between teacher and student. Students asserted that more support, availability, interaction, and guidance from teachers would accommodate their virtual learning experience. One student argued, “we need help with our

careers and understanding what to do; we cannot call or talk with our counselors at school or get any help with the FAFSA or anything.” Another student added, “teachers needed to be available at all times during the day as if they were in a physical classroom.”. Other students attested, “teacher communication needs work and the homework was a little complicated with no instructions” and teachers need to be “more interactive”. These comments, and others, appeared to convey that experiencing virtual learning had the same expectations as in-person learning. In order to meet the expectations, students wanted continuous, direct services despite most services deferring to virtual platforms.

In conclusion, the perception of parents/guardians and students regarding a viable classroom format for Fall 2021 is neutral. Though the sample size was low and a compelling inference may not be ideal, the argument for virtual learning, in-person learning, or hybrid learning remains reasonable. Data suggests that the Navajo Nation may be at a considerably logical point to explore hybrid instruction for students on the Navajo Nation, granted their parents/guardians have a choice. There is substantial evidence provided in this report that conveys to educational and tribal leaders the importance of considering potential alternatives for schools to examine. As the report illustrates, parents/guardians are concerned their student is falling behind academically, and there is poor internet connection. Many parents/guardians also feel schools can safely reopen and entrust that schools know what is best for their students. Similarly, students realized their need to return to school due to internet issues, stress, and communication from their teachers. Altogether, this report provides credible reasons than prior reports, and each suggests an alternative to only virtual instruction.

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