

PREPARING FOR THE "COVID-19 SLIDE"

A SURVEY OF EDUCATORS ON DISTANCE LEARNING &
PLANS TO COMBAT SUMMER LEARNING LOSS



Report by

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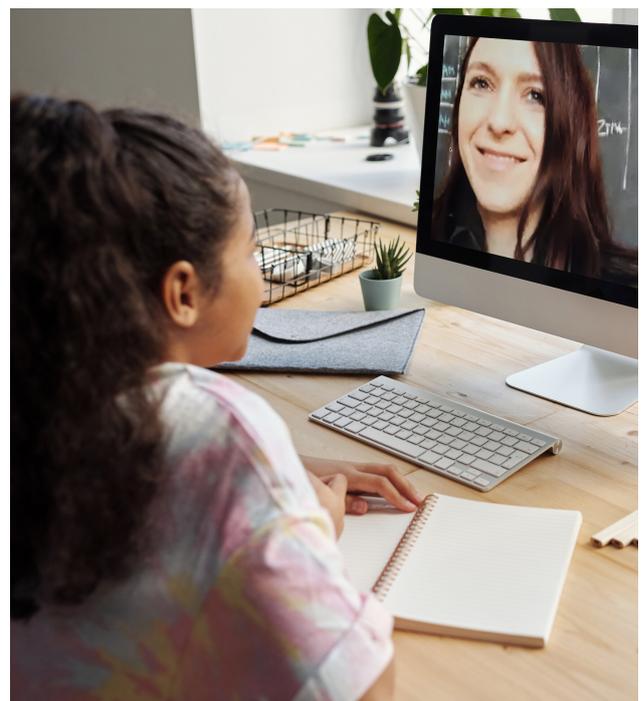
Introduction



COVID-19 has had far-reaching ramifications for students and educators around the world. According to research from [Education Week](#), coronavirus-related school closures have impacted at least 55.1 million students in U.S. public and private schools. [UNESCO](#) estimates that school closures have affected almost 70% of the global student population. During this time, many school districts transitioned to distance learning to minimize educational disruption.

55.1 MILLION STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY SCHOOL CLOSURES.

As we approach the end of the school year, teachers are concerned about the impending "summer slide." "Summer slide" refers to students' decline in reading and math skills over summer vacation. To learn how COVID-19 has disrupted education and how educators are preparing for an "extended summer slide," we conducted a survey of 271 teachers who use News-O-Matic. Our survey highlights some of the pressing issues teachers faced in the transition to distance learning, as well as how they are preparing for students' learning over the summer and beyond.



Key Takeaways 02

There's a lot we don't know about the future of K-12 education in the wake of COVID-19—but our survey has identified some of teachers' top concerns about the summer slide and beyond, as well as ways to stop the slide.

1. Most teachers don't know when they'll be back in the classroom.

According to most of the teachers surveyed, schools have been closed since March and will not reopen again before the end of the academic year. While a few respondents reported that their schools will open for in-person instruction, distance learning, or a combination of the two in the fall, 82% are still unsure of what the future holds.

2. Summer slide is a major concern for most teachers.

About two-thirds of teachers are “very concerned” or “extremely concerned” about the effects of summer slide on students' reading abilities.

3. Age-appropriate nonfiction reading is the most helpful resource for teachers.

Out of five choices, teachers were most likely to choose “age-appropriate nonfiction reading” as the top resource that would be helpful in combating summer slide.

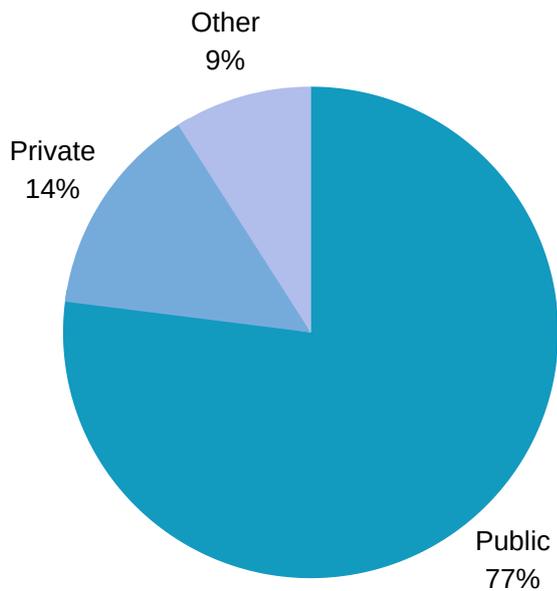
4. Teachers are acting now to prevent summer learning loss.

Although teachers are still uncertain about their districts' plans for summer and fall, many are actively working to ensure that students do not lose their academic progress. About half of teachers will maintain access to distance learning resources for students to use over the summer. They also noted that they would want to use resources that offer different reading levels, develop background knowledge, and are intuitive enough for kids to use on their own.

5. Teachers want to keep using distance learning tools and assess students' academic knowledge at the start of the year.

The instructional format of the 2020-2021 school year is still an open question. Many teachers anticipate that instruction will be fully or partially online next year, so their feedback overwhelmingly focused on maintaining access to digital resources long-term. Teachers are also likely to use assessments to gauge students' academic level and the effect of learning loss since the onset of COVID-19.

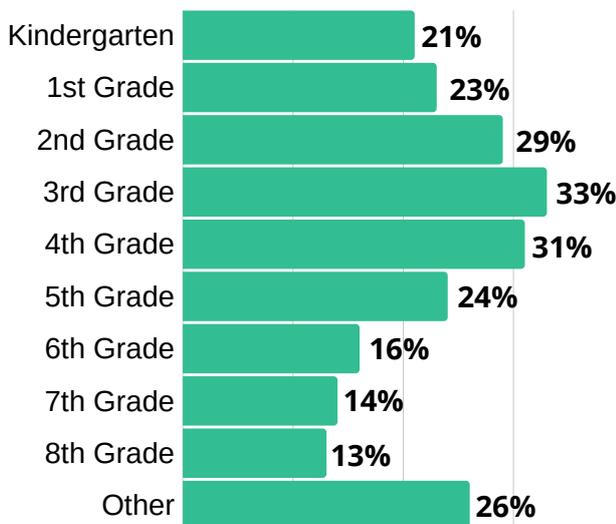
03 The Teachers



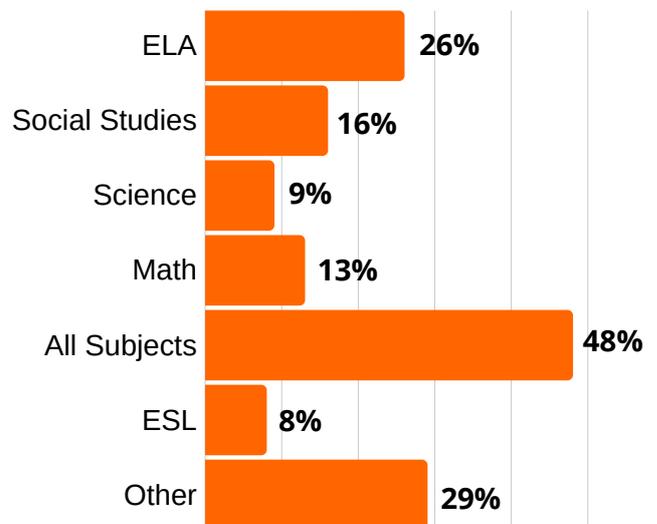
PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE SCHOOLS

From May 5-10, 2020, we surveyed 271 teachers who are current or former users of News-O-Matic. Among all respondents, 88% were from the U.S. and 7% were from Canada. More than three-quarters (77%) identified as public school teachers, while 14% were private school teachers and 9% designated as “other,” such as home school or charter school teachers.

While teachers from pre-K through adult education participated in the survey, 74% teach at the K-8 level. Many teachers noted that they teach multiple grade levels and multiple subjects. About half (48%) teach all subjects, while 26% teach ELA, 16% teach social studies, 13% teach math, and 9% teach science.



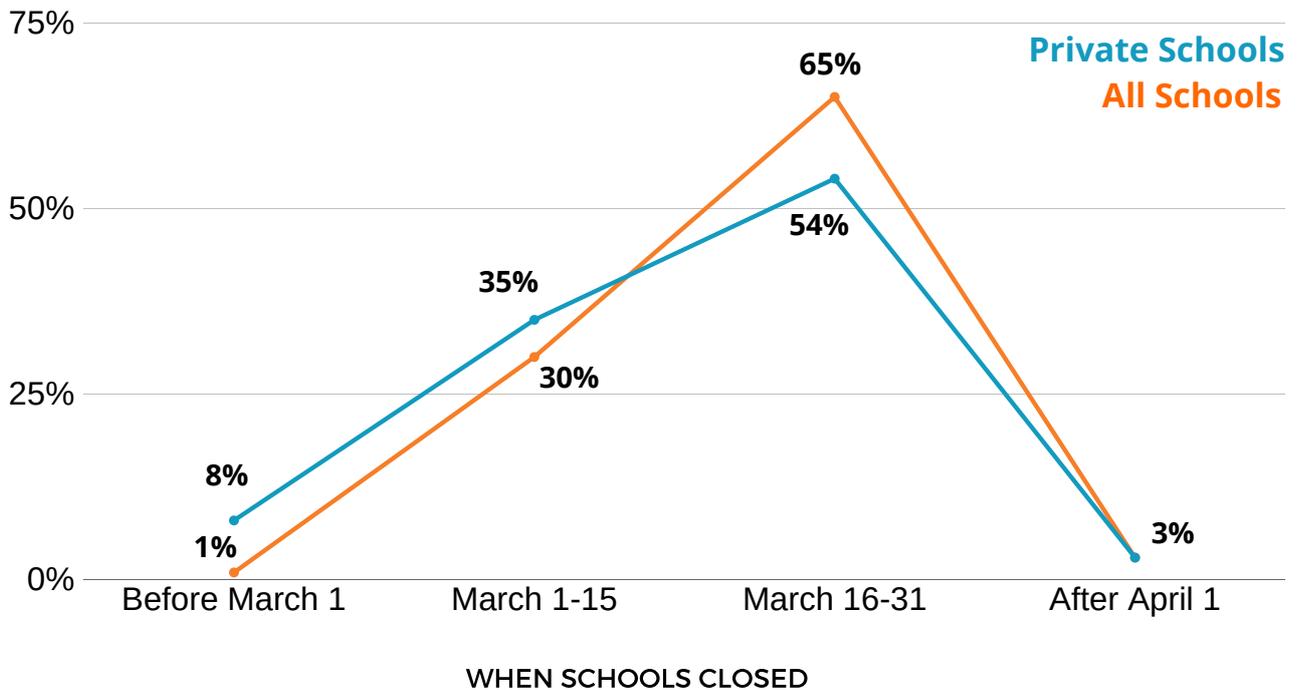
GRADE LEVELS



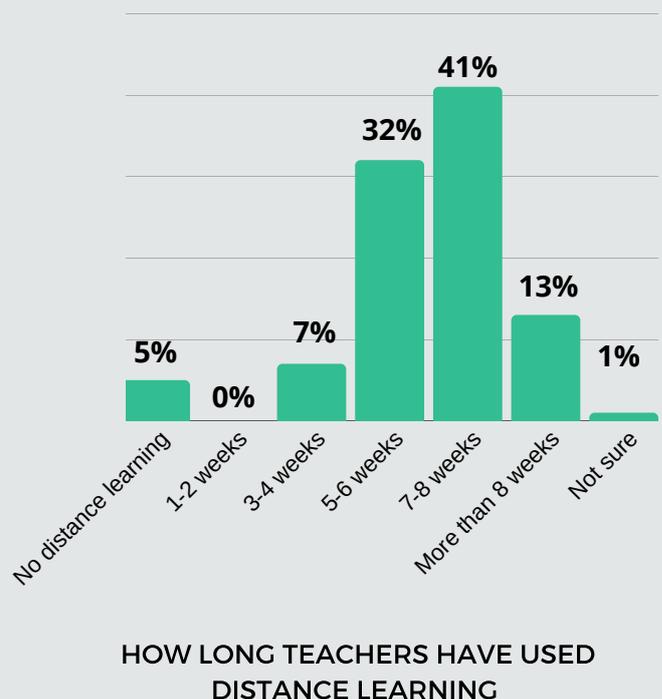
SUBJECTS TAUGHT

Distance Learning

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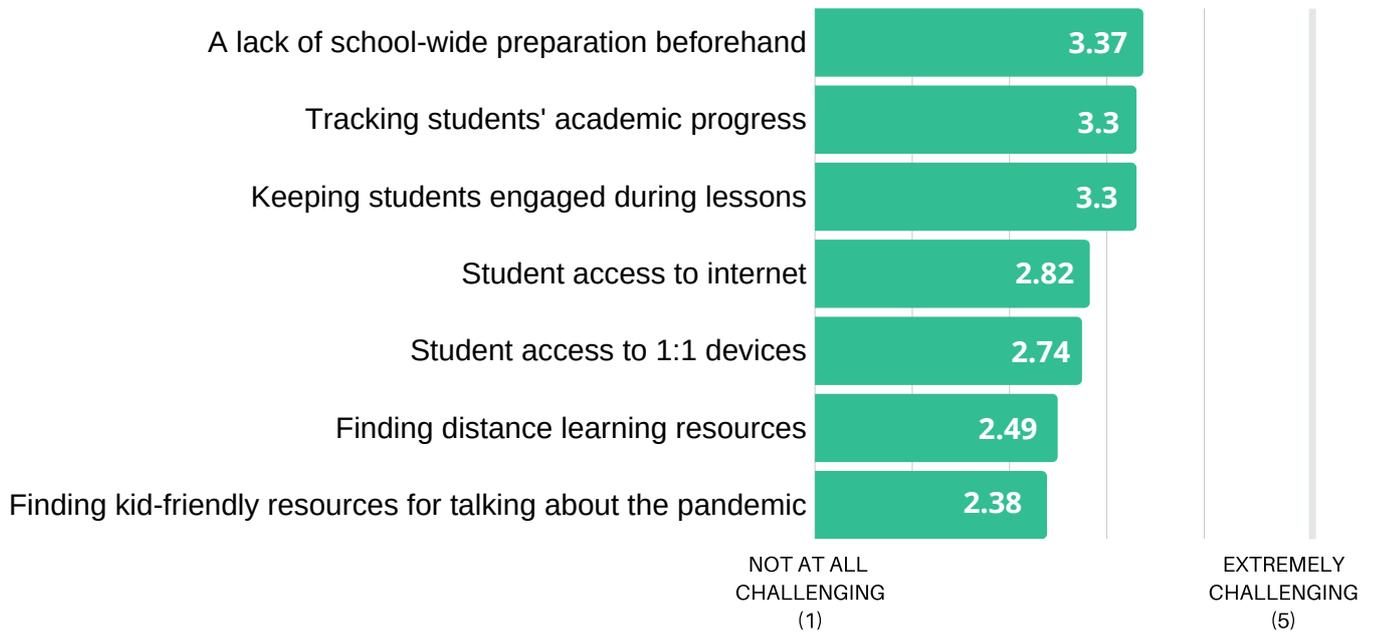
In the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, schools around the world temporarily closed their buildings. However, most transitioned to online instruction. According to the survey, 95% of respondents transitioned to distance learning at some point in March. Private schools were more likely to close sooner, with 43% closing before March 15, compared with 31% of schools overall. As of early May, 5% of respondents noted that their schools did not use distance learning, while more than half had been using it for at least seven weeks.



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Distance Learning Challenges

We asked teachers to weigh how challenging different factors were during the transition to distance learning, on a scale from not at all challenging (1) to extremely challenging (5). A lack of school-wide preparation was the most significant challenge. Other highly challenging factors included “keeping students engaged” and “tracking students’ progress.”

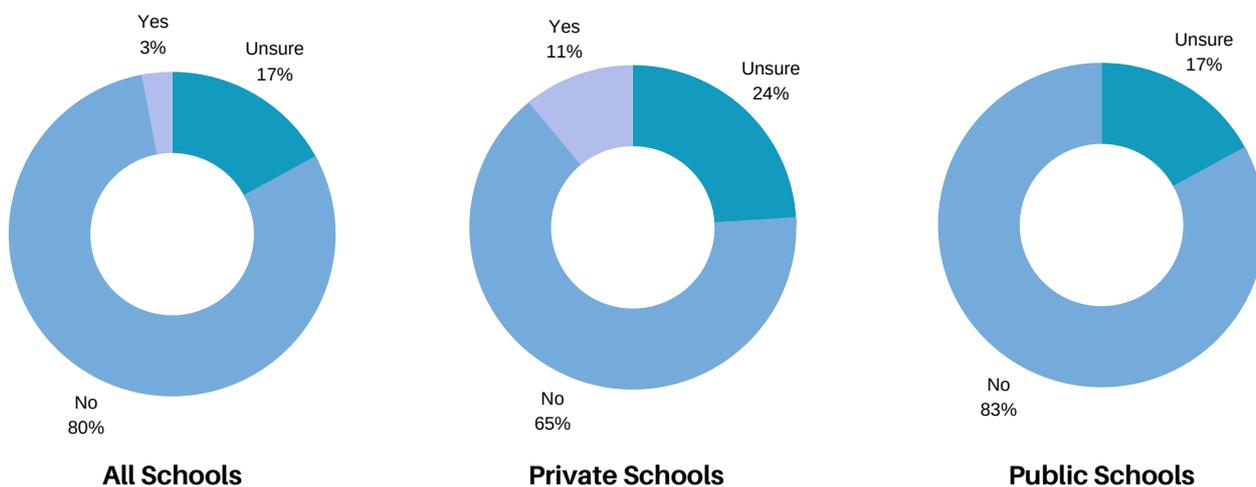


CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING DISTANCE LEARNING

What School Will Look Like in the Future

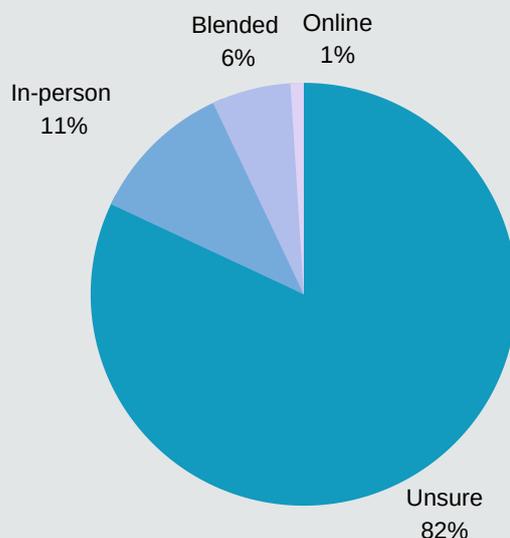
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For the overwhelming majority of teachers, schools are closed for the rest of the academic year—and possibly beyond. Only 3% of teachers overall responded that their schools planned to reopen before summer vacation. While none of the public school teachers indicated that their schools would reopen before summer, 11% of private school teachers did.



PLANS TO REOPEN SCHOOLS BEFORE SUMMER, BY SCHOOL TYPE

Furthermore, school status in the fall is still an open question for most teachers. According to the survey, 82% of respondents were “unsure” if school buildings would reopen for the 2020-2021 academic year. Only 11% expected that schools would hold in-person classes, and 6% expected blended (in-person/online) learning.

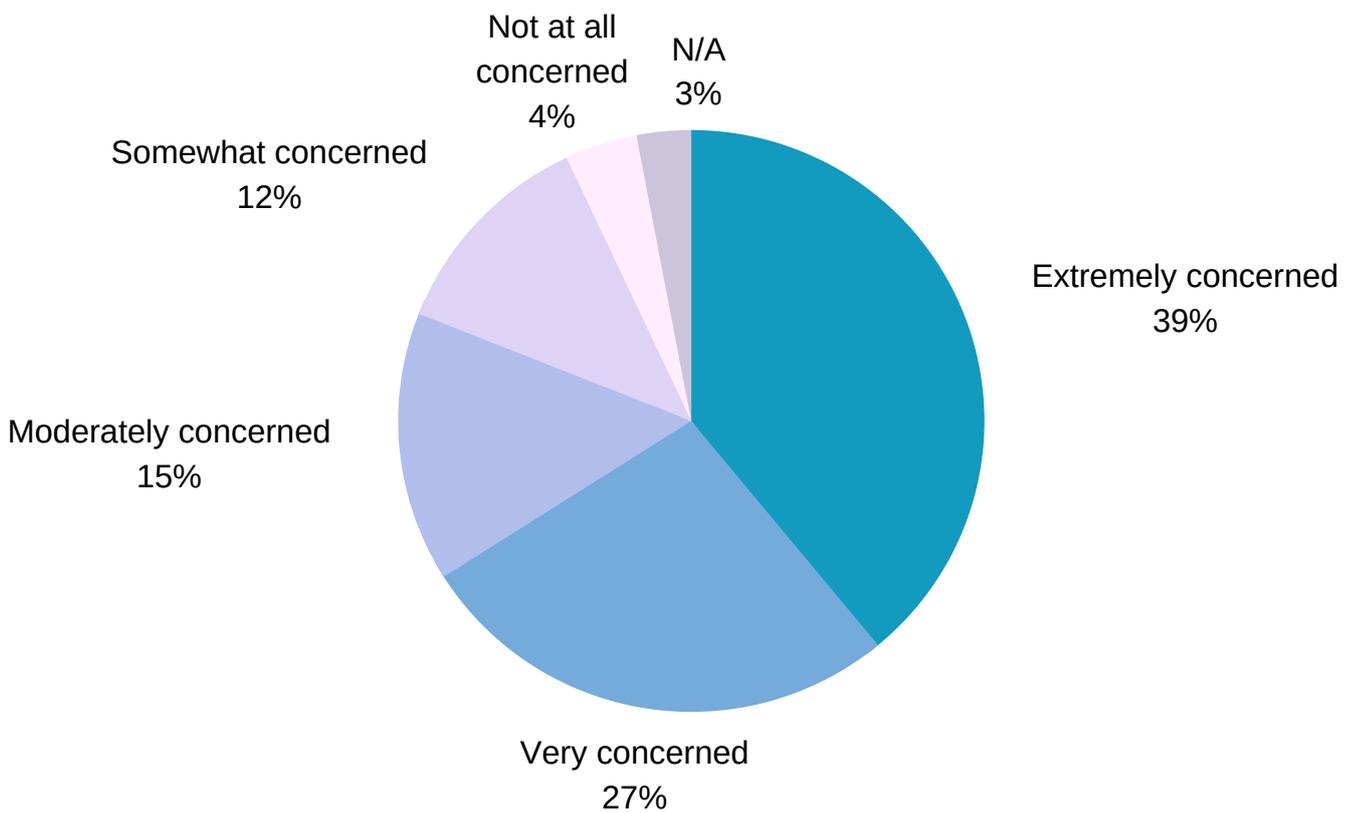


EXPECTED SCHOOL FORMAT IN FALL

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Extended Summer Slide

With summer quickly approaching, many teachers are concerned about how school closures will affect students' learning loss over the next several months. More specifically, 66% of respondents were "very concerned" or "extremely concerned" about the effects of the COVID-19 summer slide on their students' reading abilities.

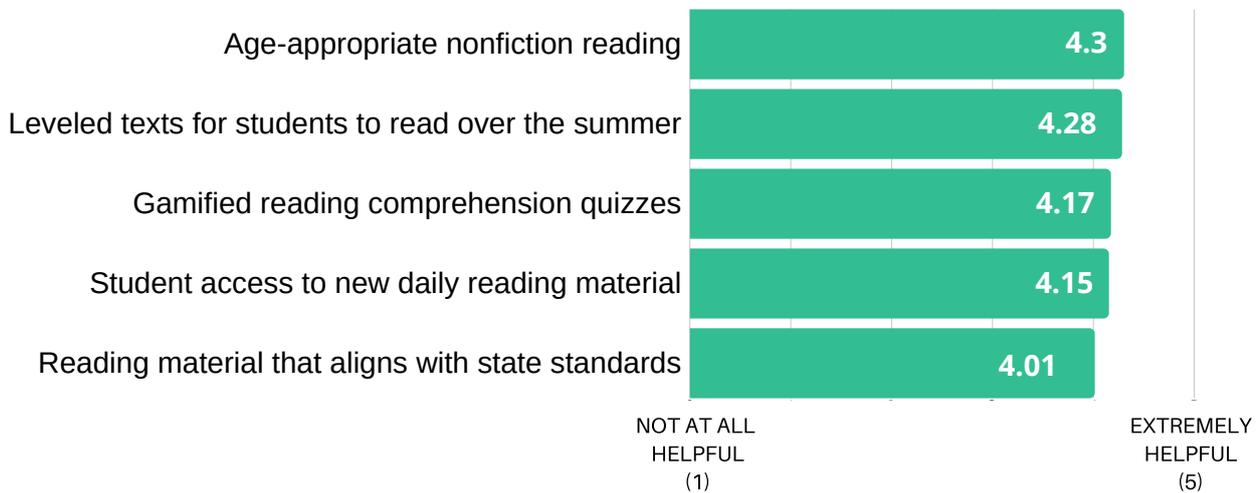


TEACHER CONCERNS ABOUT THE EFFECT OF SUMMER SLIDE ON STUDENTS' READING ABILITIES

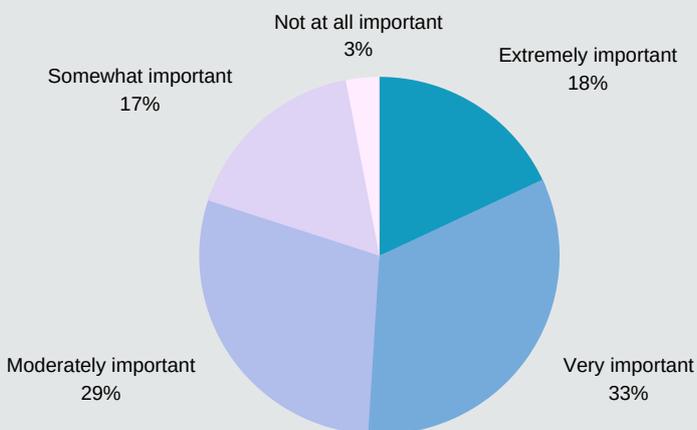
Preventing Summer Slide

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We asked respondents to weigh five resources in combating the effects of “summer slide,” on a scale of not at all helpful (1) to extremely helpful (5). While all of the factors were rated higher than 4 (“very helpful”) on average, “age-appropriate nonfiction reading” outweighs the other resources. Another important resource is “leveled texts for students to read over the summer,” reinforcing the need for differentiated materials to match students’ abilities.



HELPFULNESS OF DIFFERENT RESOURCES TO COMBAT SUMMER SLIDE



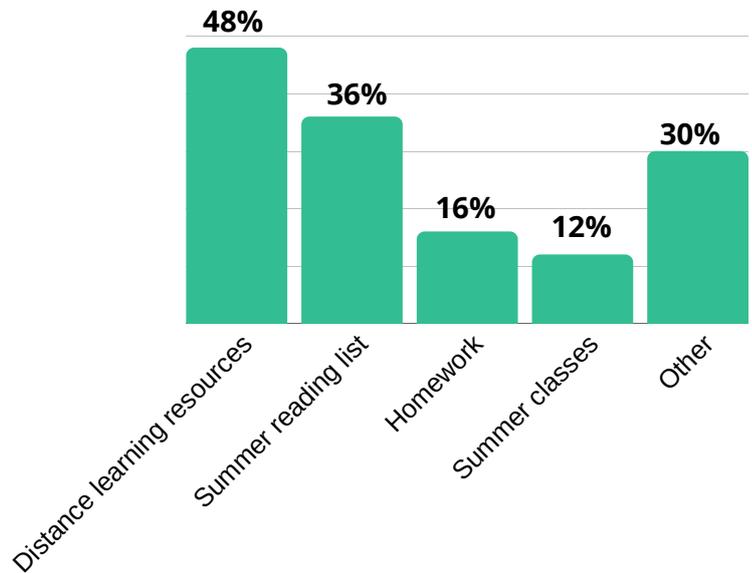
IMPORTANCE OF STUDENTS
READING THE NEWS EVERY DAY

Further underscoring the importance of nonfiction, more than half of teacher respondents believe that it’s “very important” or “extremely important” for students to read the news every day, including over the summer. Age-appropriate news is an excellent resource for kids to develop an interest in nonfiction, as well as daily reading habits.

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Preparing for Summer

The time to act is now. Many teachers are getting prepared this spring to prevent learning loss over the summer. While only 12% of survey respondents are planning to hold summer classes, 48% are maintaining access to distance learning resources for students during summer vacation. Among those who selected "other" in the survey question about preparation for summer, many teachers noted that they are awaiting decisions from their districts or haven't put anything in place yet.



WHAT TEACHERS ARE DOING NOW TO PREVENT SUMMER SLIDE

“LEVELED TEXTS THAT ADDRESS SPECIFIC SKILLS AND STRATEGIES TO HELP STUDENTS MAINTAIN AND HOPEFULLY STRENGTHEN THEIR KNOWLEDGE TO BE PREPARED FOR SEPTEMBER 2020.”

K-5 SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER

Qualitative feedback further emphasized that teachers wanted to provide online learning resources for students to use on their own. Since not all districts with 1:1 devices will allow students to borrow the devices over the summer, any resources that teachers recommend for their students should be accessible from personal computers or in a print format. Teachers noted that helpful resources would offer leveled reading, develop background knowledge, and be easy enough for kids to use on their own.

Preparing for Fall 10

Teachers don't know what school will look when it starts again in August or September. However, teachers' qualitative feedback overwhelmingly focused on the importance of maintaining access to digital resources going into the next school year. Other frequently mentioned topics included assessments to determine students' academic level upon returning to the classroom, materials and texts that build comprehension skills, and highly engaging reading activities.

WHAT TEACHERS SAY THEY WANT FOR FALL

"Ways to assess where they left off."

8th-grade public school social studies teacher

"Access to the digital resources in order to incorporate this form of learning if and when we are back to the 'In school' learning environment."

4th-grade public school teacher

"All the resources we have been using during distance learning and more technology."

3rd-grade public school teacher

"High engagement reading resources."

K-5 public school computer teacher

"Materials that promote curiosity and love of learning. Activities that encourage engagement. Activities that support student choice."

3rd-grade private school science teacher

ABOUT

The logo for News-O-Matic features the word "news" in a multi-colored font (red, purple, blue, orange), a stylized "O" with a black and yellow circular design and three blue curved lines above it, and the word "matic" in a multi-colored font (green, purple, blue, orange).

News-O-Matic is an educational resource designed to make nonfiction accessible and engaging for readers in grades K through 8. Every weekday, News-O-Matic publishes interactive daily news content that teaches children 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, media literacy, and global awareness. The news stories are written across various reading levels and are available in English, French, Spanish, and Arabic — in text and audio. Thousands of schools incorporate News-O-Matic articles into their literacy and social studies curricula. News-O-Matic has more than 5 million downloads from the App Store in 148 countries. It has also been recognized as a 2020 Teachers' Choice Award Winner. News-O-Matic is available on the web, in the App Store, and on Google Play.