



Dover Schools Student Focus Groups

Ted Hall June 2020

Overview: In late June 2020, Ted Hall conducted student focus groups with students from each of the schools in the Dover School District. Students were contacted by the deans (or principal) from the schools and were gathered through approximately one-hour Zoom calls. A set of similar questions was used for each of the levels:

	Elementary Schools	Middle School	High School
1	What worked well for you while you were doing school at home this spring?	What worked well for you while you were doing school at home this spring?	What worked well for you while you were doing remote learning this spring?
2	What is an example of your best learning during this time?	What are some examples of your best learning during this time?	What are some examples of your best learning during this time?
3	What would you do differently if you had to go back to doing school at home again next year?	What would you do differently if you had to go back to doing school at home again next year?	What would you do differently if you had to go back to doing remote learning again next year?
4	What could teachers do differently if you had to go back to doing school at home again next year?	Which of your classes worked best for you this spring?...Why?	Which of your classes worked best for you this spring?...Why?
5	What was the hardest thing for you about doing school at home this spring?	Which of the classes didn't work out so well for you this spring?...Why?	Which of the classes didn't work out so well for you this spring?...Why?
6	What do you want your principal and teacher to know about your learning this spring?	What was the hardest thing for you about doing school at home this spring?	What was the hardest thing for you about school this spring?
7	What should I have asked you that I didn't?	What could teachers do differently if you had to go back to doing school at home again next year?	How much help were you able to get from other students in the classes you were in?
8		What do you want your principal and other administrators to know about your learning this spring?	What could teachers do differently if you had to go back to remote learning again next year?
9		What should I have asked you that I didn't?	If we had to go back to remote learning again, what advice would you give the school to increase your success?
10			What should I have asked?

Below is a summary of the participation in each school:

School	Make up of groups	Total number of students
Horne Street	2nd grade (4) 3rd grade (8) 4th grade (7)	19
Garrison	2nd grade (3) 3rd/4th grades (7)	10
Woodman Park	2nd/3rd grades (7) 4th grade (10)	17
Dover Middle School	5th/6th grades (20) 7th/8th grades (8)	28
Dover High School	9th/10th/11th grades (7) plus one student emailed an additional response after	7

Key Findings

- Across all levels, students asked for more contact with teachers through more Zoom meetings. They liked connecting with the teachers live rather than through posted assignments. Some students preferred smaller group meetings rather than the full class, but universally throughout the district, students were asking for more Zoom meetings.
- When asked what worked well this spring, the comments were mostly positive. The students seemed to have figured out what they needed to do and were able to have positive feelings about the experience.
- When asked what they would do differently if they had to go back to remote learning, many students commented that they would be more organized and have a clearer schedule for themselves, including finding a good space to do their work in the home. This came up at every level in different ways.
- When asked either what didn't work well or what classes didn't go well, most of the comments focused on either confusing work, work that was not that challenging, or work that seemed like busy work.
- The topic of the level of challenge came up at every level. Many of the students indicated they thought they could have done more challenging work and gone beyond what they thought was mostly review.
- Student responses indicated there was a lot of variability about what students were experiencing from teacher to teacher. This was more pronounced in the high school than anywhere else. The students really notice the inconsistencies from class to class. mAt the middle school and high school, students talked about the wide variance in what teachers

were expecting of them, from how often to show up for Zoom meetings to how much work was expected.

- When asked what worked well, many students commented that they enjoyed doing work on their own schedule where they could take breaks when needed.
- Several students made comments about how Google Classroom worked well for organizing assignments and would have liked to have more of their teachers make use of this.
- A number of students had comments about the involvement of family members. In some cases, it was positive interactions with their parents in helping them. There were also plenty of comments about how their siblings sometimes didn't help things.
- Students at all levels clearly missed seeing their classmates and their teachers. That came up over and over again.