

Dover Family Online Focus Groups

Remote Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Spring 2020

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NH Listens

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Dover School Board Meeting

*Summary Report will be Available Online
via the District Website and Facebook*





Our Vision

We envision a New Hampshire where residents are connected, engaged and heard in decisions that impact their lives and where all have equitable access to justice, opportunity, and liberty.

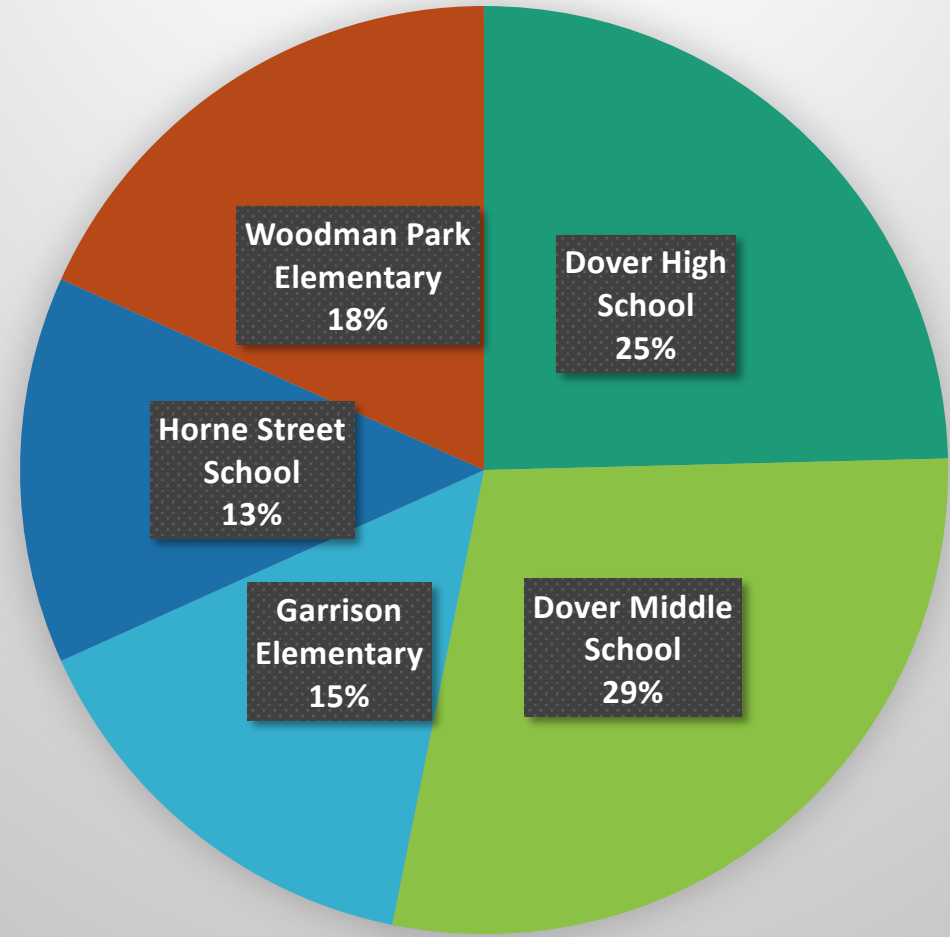
Our Mission

Our mission is to help New Hampshire residents talk, listen, and act together so communities can work for everyone.

In June 2020 NH Listens staff conducted 6 online focus groups for Dover families to reflect upon remote learning in spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- *122 parents, representing 115 families and 142 students.
- The percentages show the distribution of participation based on where child(ren) attended.
- Most participants had 1 or 2 children in the Dover School System. A small group had 3 to 4, and some parents did not say.

Online Focus Groups on Remote Learning Participation Overview by School*



Questions Posed to Each Group

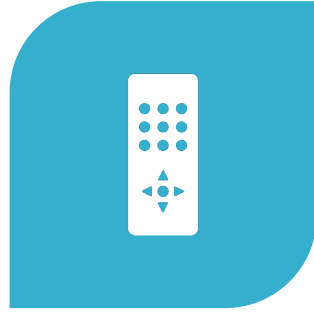
1. Introductions: Ages of kids and which schools are represented?
2. What was your experience with your child and remote learning?
3. What were some of the challenges and barriers?
4. What were some of the things that worked for your child?
5. What kinds of strategies or approaches impacted you as the parent/family member supporting a student?
6. As the school district plans for fall, what are your concerns?
7. Do you have any ideas or hopes to share with the re-entry planning group?
8. Anything else you want us to know?



Strategies that Worked



FOOD BUSSES AND EXTRA ACCESS TO
FOOD WAS IMPORTANT



CONSISTENT AND CLEAR MENUS,
AGENDAS AND SCHEDULES FOR
REMOTE LEARNING.



ZOOM LESSONS AND MEETINGS WITH
THE WHOLE CLASS, SMALL GROUPS,
AND ONE ON ONE WERE HELPFUL



GOOGLE CLASSROOM BECAME EASIER
FOR PARENTS ONCE TEACHERS SET IT
UP AND WHEN SKILLED AT USING IT



DAILY PROGRESS AND UPDATES
ABOUT STUDENTS' LEARNING



HEALTHIER FOR SOME STUDENTS TO
BE AWAY FROM THE SCHOOL
ENVIRONMENT



YOUNG CHILDREN HAD MORE TIME
TO PLAY OUTDOORS.



LATER START ALLOWED TEENAGERS
TO SLEEP IN A LITTLE LONGER

- Access to Chromebooks
- Kindness and empathy from teachers
- Communication and quick adaptations at the beginning, as well as flexibility
- Weekly announcements made by principals – helped with normalcy and togetherness
- Meeting students and families where they are
- Family could create a schedule together and spend more time together
- After-school program was helpful as well as connections among parents in neighborhoods or online



- Self-pacing at home worked for some students who appreciated the flexibility and little need for synchronous learning
- Helped with their children's ability to learn responsibility
- Parents could see how well their children functioned, their natural strengths and tendencies.
- Students found success when they carved out time to collaborate with their peers.
- Some students were able to raise their grades during this time.

Challenges, Needs, and Suggestions

Technology Access, Integration of Multi- Modal Learning, and Enhanced Skills and Teaching Online

- Access to devices, materials, and adequate internet
- Training needs, resources, and preparation time for teachers
- More teaching and support via asynchronous, synchronous, and/or 1:1 sessions – small groups and 1:1 felt more successful. Kids liked seeing classmates and teachers
- Kinesthetic or hands-on alternatives based on learning style or age
- Too much screen-time
- Need extra-curricular activities and classes in person (ex. sports, wood shop, ROTC, ceramics, music)

Accountability and Clear Structure to Remote Learning is Desirable

- Developing a consistent schedule and manageable workload for students that parents can support
- Student performance and individualized learning needs (ex. Funding, streamlined expectations, structures, and consistency, differentiation)
- Students with IEPs faced further inequities and need well-organized supports
- Funding to address resources and disparities – children/families with limited resources
- Communication from teachers and schools need improvements
- Students are falling behind, more new content



Diverse Needs of Students and Families

- Not every family has access to the same resources
- Some students are isolated
- Lack adequate internet or technology
- Have special needs that require 1:1 supports both remotely and in-person
- Parents' diverse work schedules at home and out of the home that complicate online learning
- Parents who are also teachers and the potential for mismatched schedules
- Not all parents feel confident they can teach their children the content, and they want their kids to learn new content and move forward



Parenting, Teaching, and Work

- Worried about childcare situation for teachers – teacher parent – business owner in Dover had to go. If teachers have to go in, what will happen with kids at home?
- Hybrid model – how do you coordinate with other districts? (parent-teacher who teach in another district than the one their child is in)
- What logistical nightmares will occur for people balance hybrid models and working and scheduling community-wide and across communities?
- If teachers are to report to the school and remote learning for children can we hear how that would look? How does this effect their families?
- But what do to with the kids whose parents work 5 days per week, not from home? (x2). Even for those of us who do work from home. It's not sustainable to be WFH and remote learning. At least not for us.
- Will school be a full year? Are vacations still going to be counted in? Snow days will not be a thing?
- Ready for their kids to return – socializing, returning to normal, in-school learning activities



“My husband has worked outside of the home the entire time, and I go back to my office on Tuesday, neither of us will have the option to work from home this Fall. I would like for someone to please tell me what I am supposed to do if we do not open? If I find a daycare to take my 8-year-old, how will they individually teach the kids all in different grades and classes? They can't. Am I supposed to come home at 5:30 at night, and tell her, “I haven't seen you all day but now we have to do schoolwork to do until bedtime?” I would love to hear answers to these questions.” – Parent response

Health and Safety – Social and Emotional

- Concerns about social isolation, need for interaction, mental health, and overall well-being
- Need transition plan for students starting or moving to new schools and new grades/classes
- Noticeable differences in motivation, engagement, and learning among students – some students disappear, some self-pace, and there are many experiences in between

Health and Safety – Logistics

- Considerations and choices for high-risk families
- How will social distancing work in schools
- Dealing with increases in absenteeism
- If we don't go back to remote learning, what is the learning experience going to be like with partitions and masks?
- Need to think about different schedules, bus routes, longer transportation
- All school districts need to have a Disaster Recovery plan in place should a situation present that closes the facilities. This plan should focus on eliminating any downtime and facilitating a smooth transition for all students to a remote (technological or non-technological) style of learning. Remote learning can be done.
- What if there is a second wave after opening?



Strategies and Suggestions for Next Year

- Have a merit-based attendance (zoom attendance) policy...if you're not doing the work, you have to go to class and if you're completing the work, you get to be more leisurely.
- Don't want it to be an all or nothing decision – some time on campus for students. Do some kids go back certain days, or certain buildings?
 - Bring younger grades back in
 - Middle school – hybrid Green/White days
 - High Schools pivot to online learning
 - Then focus on bringing students in for hand-on activities and clubs
- Have shifts at school – half the week at school, half the week out of school.
- Plan for different virus scenarios
- Learn from other schools (Rochester) and from the university regarding online learning strategies and a coded/tiered approach to re-entry.
- People who have home-schooled their children.



Continue to Communicate with Families

- When does the district expect to release its final decision about how the fall will look? Will parents find out the plan in early August so they can plan?
- When does the district expect to release a final decision about the fall plan?
- Who else is on the re-opening committee? Any other members beyond administrators?
- Parents want clear and consistent communication about plans for 2020-2021
- Need to bring people in and listen to ideas – rather than listen and then go with their plan



Harness
opportunities to
work together
and support
others in the
community:

- A technology gift fund?
- Continuous strategies for feedback and input – responsive shifts
 - Bringing the community together more often for feedback and conversation about the process?
 - Student discussions?
 - Focus groups or conferences just based on grade level or school-level groups.



Final Thoughts

Design that Centers Students at the Margins that helps to Accommodate Everyone – Equity and Universal Design

Timely, equitable, and flexible design that also provides opportunity for consistency and predictability

Lessons Learned from a Design Challenge with Univ. California Berkley - <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/56195/how-students-benefit-from-a-school-reopening-plan-designed-for-those-at-the-margins>

The Dover School District Strategic Plan Aligns with Themes and Key Considerations brought forth by parents -

<http://www.ci.dover.nh.us/Assets/government/boards-commissions/city-council/orientation/CCSB%2001%20Strategic%20Plan%20-%20School.pdf>

