

Changes to Teaching and Learning from COVID 19



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

Results of a Survey of Approximately 150 Educators in North Carolina Public Schools conducted April-May 2021

June 2021

Dr. Robert Smith,

Watson College of Education

University of North Carolina Wilmington

& Kylee Maarschalk

English teacher, New Hanover High School, Wilmington and part of UNCW's Master Teacher
program

As light appeared at the end of the COVID 19 tunnel, in, [The genie is out of the bottle: Exploring opportunities to rethink public education](#), we described the major changes that our schools had experienced and the limited window to reexamine educational practices. We wrote that, while the desire to “return to normal” was understandable, it was important to see what we could learn from this significant disruption. We identified ten areas of major change affecting both students and educators.

We created a survey, Changes to teaching and learning from COVID, with questions on the ten areas. The survey was distributed to educators in UNCW’s Watson College’s Professional Development System and it was also posted on EdNC’s web site. Over 150 teachers completed the survey. In addition to hearing from teachers on these topics, we also wanted to bring teachers together so that they could share their ideas for change and possibly find common topics on which to collaborate. We have held two virtual focus group meetings involving approximately 15 teachers in total and plan to continue these meetings in the fall.

Biographic information:

In terms of the grade level of respondents, 36% were high school; 21% middle school; 21% K-5; 11% K-8; and 7% Other. In relation to school districts, respondents were from 21 different districts and two charter schools with the top four districts being New Hanover, Pitt, Duplin, and Brunswick.

Six Key Findings:

- 86% agreed that we need to change our practices to support students in taking more ownership for their own learning.
- 71% agreed that the pandemic made me realize that we need to create more engaging learning experiences.
- 100% agreed that schools need to provide additional supports and resources in the future for students who are economically disadvantaged, low performing, special needs, and ELL’s.
- 85% agreed, “As a result of the pandemic, I feel confident to try new things in my classroom.”
- 29% agreed with “Coming out of the pandemic, I feel invigorated and optimistic about the future of education.”
- 95% agreed that “Collaborating with colleagues to share teaching practices is an important part of my professional development.”

(See Appendix for charts with all results)

Selective participant comments:

Supports and Resources

- In my experience during the pandemic, ELL's and at-risk populations have not had the support they need to succeed academically. There are too few resources and teachers available for these students.
- There are very few students who do not have gaps. Districts need to be strategic about additional support to help fill those gaps without just giving everyone an IT plan and putting it all on the teachers.

Independent Learners

- I think that we as a profession have to help our students take ownership of their own learning. We have had the "crutch" of having them face to face and being able to force them to do the work. When that was taken away it was easy to see how much this has hurt them.
- Engaging learning experiences have always been an important need as well as having students take ownership. This has to be taught - to both educators and students.
- I have been forced to weed out a lot of the fluff from assignments that just take up space or time and focus on what is truly an important concept to teach and learn. I also have had to reassess my learning outcomes and expectations to reach more students in a shorter amount of time. I think that in the future this will provide more opportunities for inquiry and collaboration within my classroom.

Teaching Climate

- The pandemic forced me to try new things and for that I will be forever grateful.
- I feel invigorated for my classroom, growth and development as a teacher and moving forward with my support network of amazing teacher leaders. I am less confident in the system as a whole.
- Public opinion of educators seems to be at an all-time low when teachers are working more than ever. Lawmakers are continuing to introduce bills that will increase the burden on public school teachers and put money toward private schools. It is disheartening to see where education in NC is heading.

Findings for Students:

- 52% of respondents indicated that **most** of my students struggled from home.
- 59% agreed that it is important to provide students with options for whether they learn face-to face, virtually or some combination

- 72% agreed that in my classroom I do social-emotional check-ins with students at least twice each week and will continue to do so in the future.
- 68% agreed that the students in my school have a voice heard by administrators.
- 65% disagreed that students in my school have significant input on important school level decisions that affect them.
- 90% of respondents disagreed with the statement that standardized testing is an accurate measure of what students learn
- 94% of respondents agreed that moving forward, we should create more meaningful ways for students to demonstrate their learning with less emphasis on state standardized tests.

Selective participant comments:

SEL

- Building honest and open relationships with my students is my teaching style. I consider it part of the content of the class.
- While I fully realize that the students' social and emotional needs must be taken care of, it cannot be the focus of my job. Content teachers are not trained for that. We should monitor and refer to counselors when needed.

Student Choice with Face to Face or Virtual

- Parents and students, especially in high school, value choice.
- Providing students with options completely depends on the student. Many would (and did) make a choice that is contrary to what is ideal for their learning. Others would benefit from having an option. For this reason, I do not think leaving the choice up to individual students and families is always best. I also think this is very different to professional teachers having input regarding their work environment.

Assessment

- We are still doing the EOG this year. I believe in some sort of state standardized testing but maybe just short check ins/benchmarks. I think quarterly would be best; nothing cumulative over the whole year. That is way too stressful for students.
- Standardized testing has a place, but it is only one piece of data.

- It was nice and much less pressure to teach this school year without state standardized testing looming over my classroom. I still taught, my students still learned, and I think they were able to get a more well-rounded historical foundation.
- Assessments should be more authentic and involve project-based learning and students' passions.

Findings for Teachers:

- 88% responded that in the future I want all my students to be face-to face.
- 83% agreed that in the future I think teachers should be able to choose their teaching environment preference.
- 83% agreed, I prefer to be in the school building to get work-related tasks accomplished.
- 86% agreed, as a teacher, I am more collaborative and productive when I have a choice in my work environment.
- 82% agreed/strongly agreed that teaching during the pandemic has strengthened my teaching practice and reflection.
- 54% agreed/strongly agreed that changes I made to my traditional content are for the better and will remain even when things get back to normal.
- 81% of respondents said they feel valued in their school.
- 59% of respondents agreed that they feel valued in their community.
- 65% agreed that “I will continue to have autonomy and freedom to determine what to teach and not teach in my classroom.”

Selective participant comments:

Virtual and Face to Face

- The bulk of our students learn better in a face to face environment. Alternatives for those students who may prefer virtual environments, and the teachers who like teaching this way, should be considered at the local level.
- I believe you can have amazing virtual teachers and classrooms and amazing F2F teachers and classrooms, but a hybrid scenario is not offering equality of instruction to ALL.

Workspace Flexibility

- I personally was able to be more focused and on task while at school. I also love the interaction that I have with my students face-to-face.
- While I prefer to be in the building to accomplish work -related tasks, I do not believe that everyone feels that way and I don't see an issue with allowing someone to work remotely if they choose.
- The remote Wednesday was not only beneficial for teachers but also beneficial for students. Teachers were able to complete meetings, tutoring, grading, planning, updating learning modules, connect with students, and have a spiral review for students. For students, the implementation of tutoring and review during normal school hours that some students would not have access to normally, before or after school, has been extremely helpful for students.
- I say I will have freedom; however, I will still be expected to teach the "programs" put in place by the county!

Responses to other items:

- 87% of respondents agreed that my school district sees technology as a valuable tool for redesigning learning.
- 77% of respondents said they know how their school report card is graded.
- 73% of respondents disagreed with the statement that “The current assessment for school evaluation is fitting for my students and coworkers.”
- 92% of respondents agreed that “The current assessment for how schools are evaluated should be updated to reflect the whole learner.”
- The parents of my students have been great about encouraging their children to be successful with schoolwork. 19% few, 50% some, and 29% most.
- As a result of the pandemic, the parents of my students are comfortable approaching me and the school as a whole to explore means of support for their children. 3% few, 41% some, 40% most, and 8% all.

Selective participant comments:

Communication with Families

- My school has reached out multiple ways to parents, some have been successful, much remained difficult.
- This is an area that I see room for improvement in some ways as I don't feel that communication between schools and parents was great..... There is no question that my

7th graders have become much better at self-advocacy and communicating effectively with teachers.

Assessing/Grading Schools

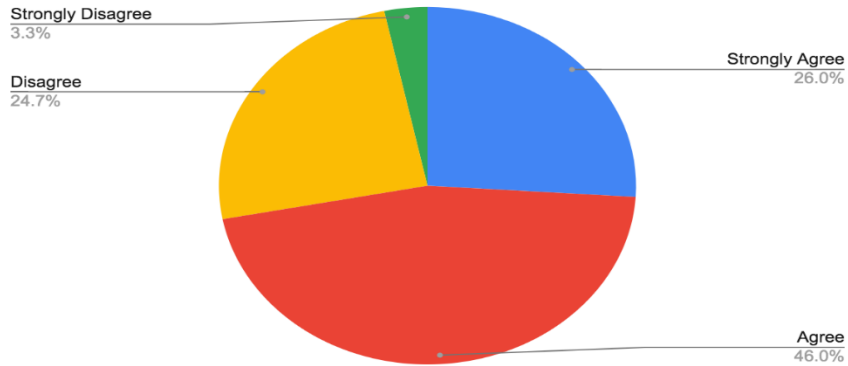
- It [school grades] should not be a measure of students living in poverty, which is what it is right now.
- I think it is extremely limited and only looks at certain data such as ACT, work keys and EOC data and that does not give an accurate picture of the school.
- Teachers need to help redefine what school will be like in the future.

Appendix

Charts of Answers to the Six Key Findings:

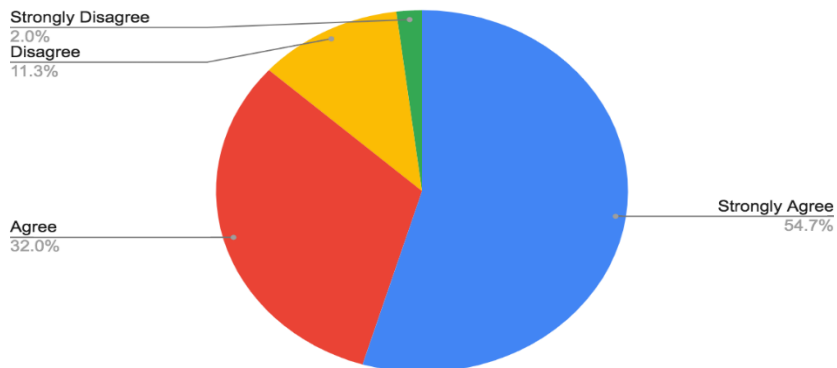
More Engaging Learning Experiences

The pandemic made me realize that we need to create more engaging learning experiences.



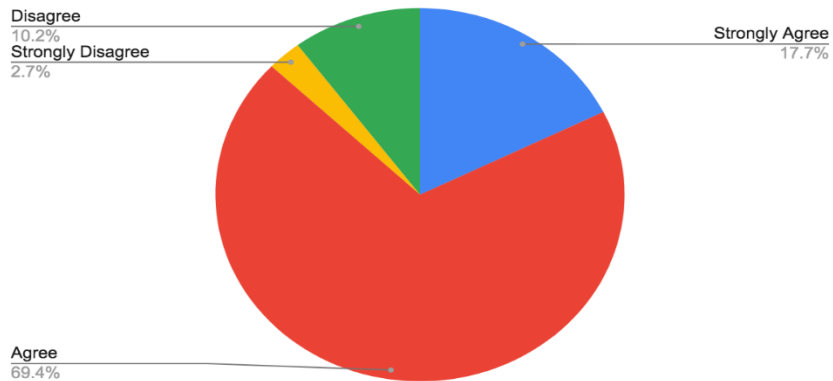
Student Agency

We need to change our practices to support students in taking more ownership for their own learning.



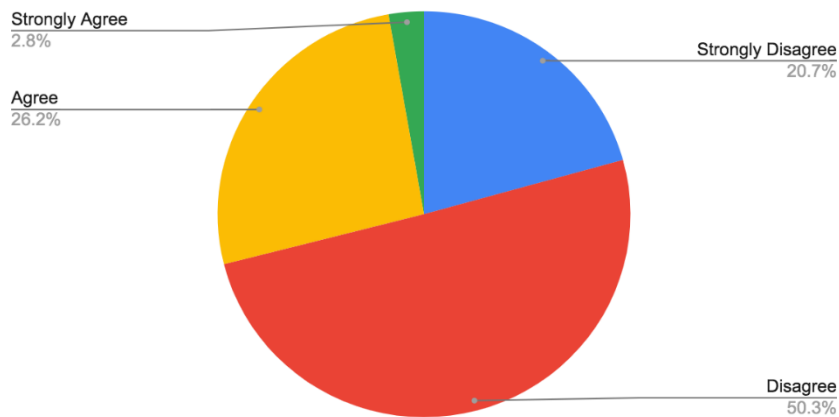
Teaching Climate: Confidence

As a result of the pandemic, I feel confident to try new things in my classroom.



Future of education

Coming out of the pandemic, I feel invigorated and optimistic about the future of education.



Collaborating with colleagues

Collaborating with colleagues to share teaching practices is an important part of my professional development.

