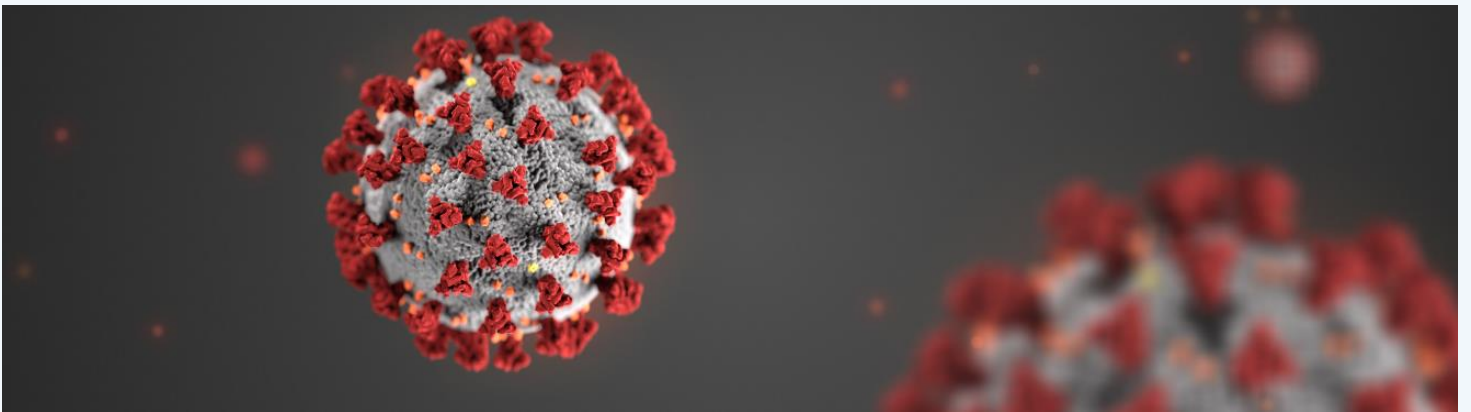# Covid-19
Teacher Impacts and Recommended School Responses

**A report from the
New Orleans Trauma-Informed Schools
Learning Collaborative
June, 2020**

The New Orleans Trauma-Informed Schools Learning Collaborative (NO-TIS LC) conducted a needs assessment to help inform educational policy and the development of resources to address teacher impact and need related to the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey was open from April 30 to May 15, 2020. The primary goals of this needs assessment were to:

- Understand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on teachers, their school community, and their teaching.
- Learn directly from teachers about immediate needs to support their well-being and remote instruction and longer-term needs to prepare for school re-openings and possible re-closings in the future.

This report presents the findings of the needs assessment and makes recommendations for charter network and school leaders to best support the well-being of their teachers so they, in turn, can devote themselves to student learning and well-being. These recommendations take on even greater import in light of the most recent episodes of police and white vigilante violence against Black and Brown people. As this violence is increasingly visible outside our school buildings, we must make every effort to ensure that our schools are safe havens. Schools must join the movement to disassemble the structures of systemic racism. Trauma-informed schools do this in any number of ways, including cultivating a sense of belonging, dignity, and agency among teachers and students and implementing alternatives to exclusionary disciplinary practices.

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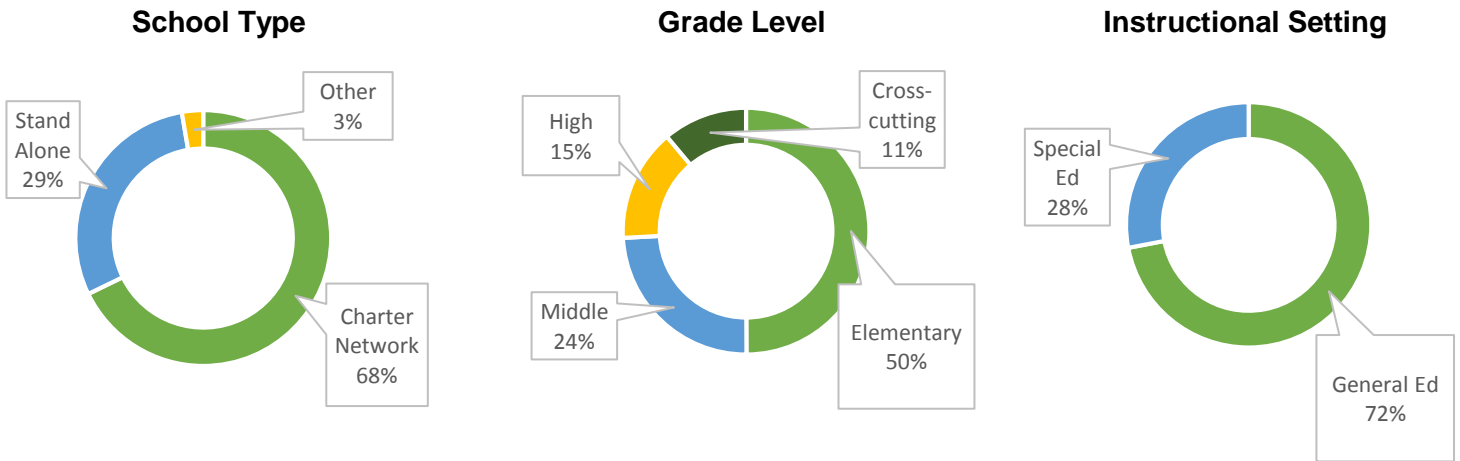Stacy Overstreet, soverst@tulane.edu

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NOLA Teacher Survey Sample

Four hundred and fifty-three teachers from 45 different schools in Orleans Parish completed the survey, which represents about 14% of the total population of teachers and 52% of New Orleans public schools (Cowen Institute, 2020; Teach New Orleans, nd). Teachers from 5 schools comprise 50% of the sample; teachers from another 8 schools comprise 30% of the sample; teachers from the remaining 32 schools comprise 20% of the sample.

Employment Contexts

School Type

Stand Alone 29%
Other 3%
Charter Network 68%

Grade Level

High 15%
Cross-cutting 11%
Middle 24%
Elementary 50%

Instructional Setting

Special Ed 28%
General Ed 72%

The sample represents a variety of school contexts, including school type, grade level, and instructional context.

Employment History

Years in Role

> 16 16%
< 1 13%
11 - 15 11%
1 - 5 38%
6 - 10 22%

Years at Current School

11 - 15 6%
> 16 1%
6 - 10 15%
< 1 26%
1 - 5 52%
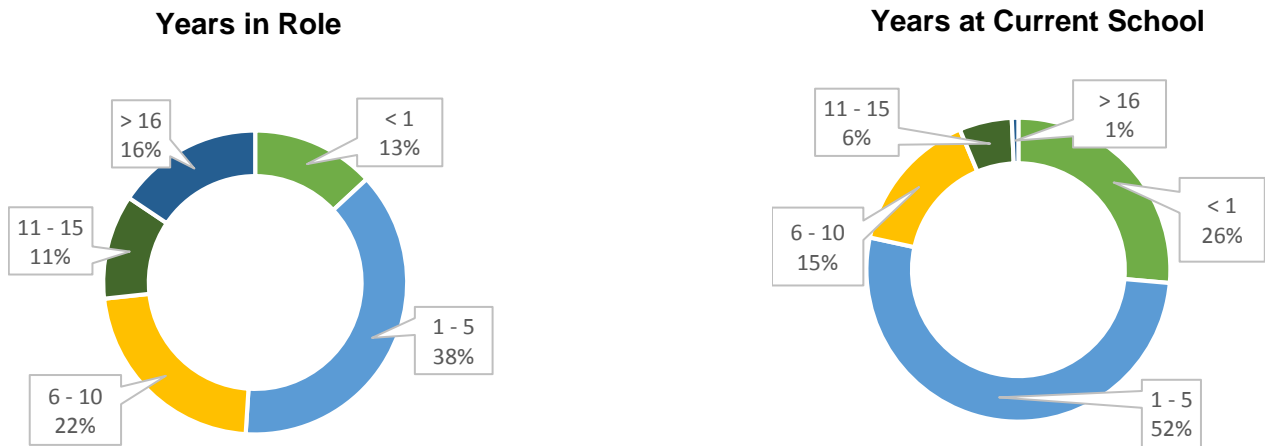
The experience level of teachers in this sample matches citywide data. Just over half of the teachers in our sample (51%) have been teaching 5 years or less and only 16% have more than 15 years' experience (Cowen Institute, 2020).

Teacher Demographics

Race

Latinx 3%

White 32%

Other 11%

Black 54%

Gender

Male 16%

Other 4%

Female 80%

Age

55 - 64 12%

45 - 54 16%

35 - 44 26%

18 - 24 9%

25 - 34 37%
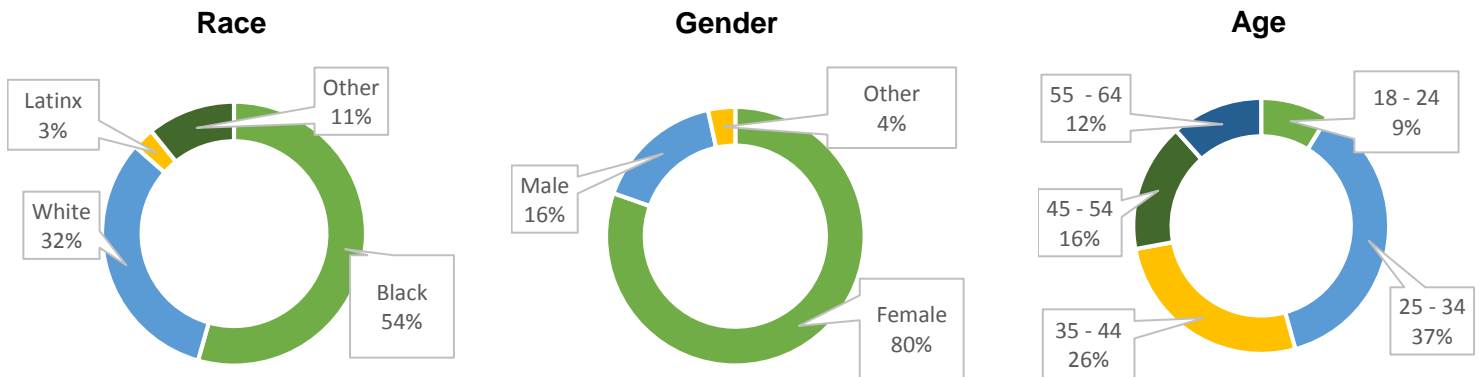
The percentage of Black teachers in our sample matches recent citywide estimates of 53% (Cowen Institute, 2020; New Schools for New Orleans, 2020). Male teachers are somewhat underrepresented in our sample based on estimates that they make up between 26% and 28% of the citywide teacher workforce (Cowen Institute, 2020; New Orleans Education Equity Index, 2017).

Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic: Negative Changes

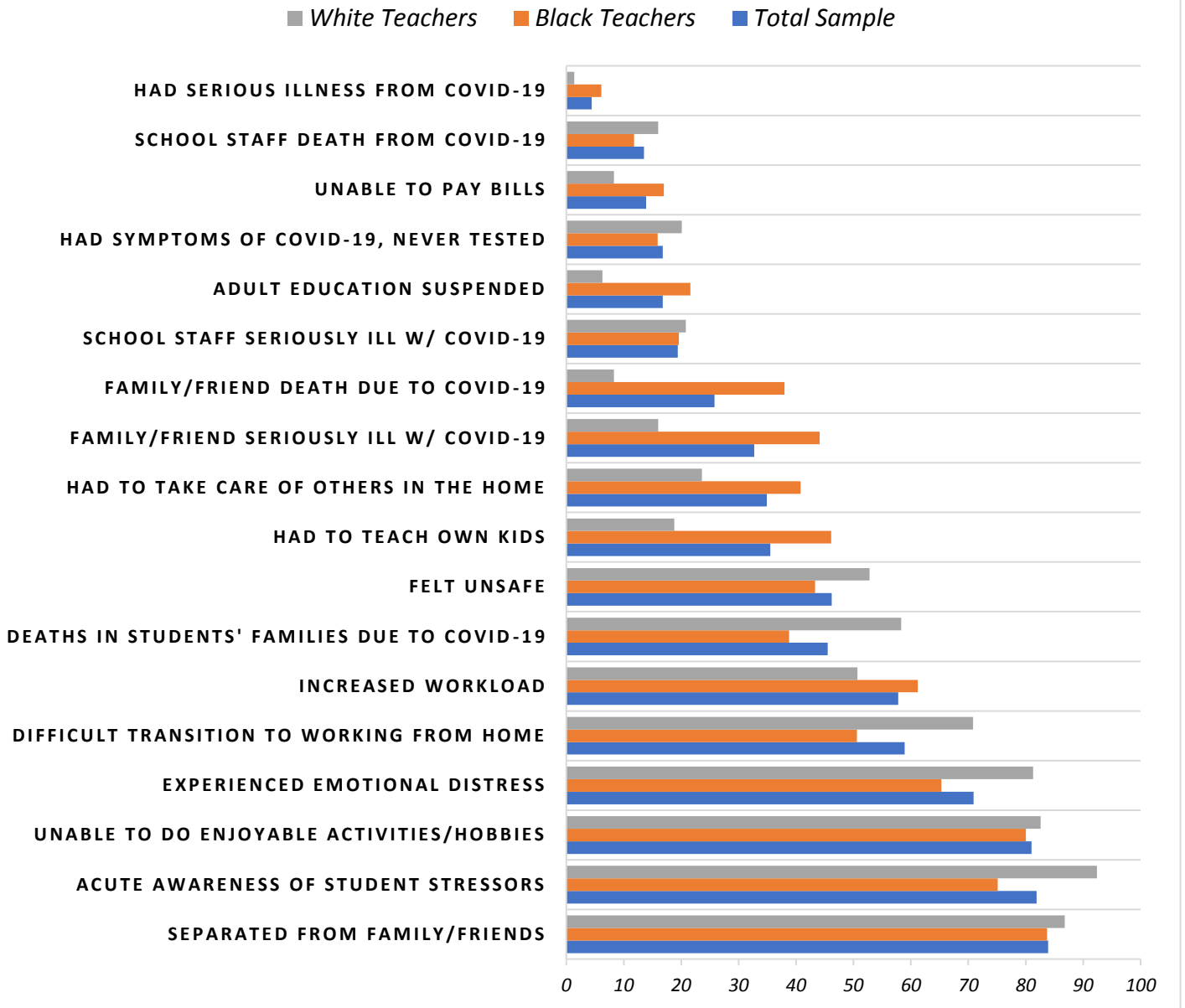Items from the Epidemic–Pandemic Impacts Inventory (EPII; Grasso et al., 2020) were used to learn about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on various domains of work, personal, and family life. The prevalence of specific Covid-19-related stressors is presented in the figure below. Given the racial disparities in health outcomes related to Covid-19, responses to the teacher survey were analyzed by race. Black and White teachers comprised the vast majority of the sample; results are presented for those two groups along with results for the total sample.

The total number of stressors did not differ by race and the universal impacts of the city's stay at home order were clear—the vast majority of teachers reported being separated from family and friends and being unable to engage in enjoyable activities or hobbies.

The experience of other stressors did differ by race:

- Almost 60% of teachers reported an increased workload and difficulty making the transition to working from home. This work transition was complicated by personal responsibilities for Black teachers, who were 1.7 to 2.4 times more likely to have to take care of people in the home or take responsibility for teaching of their own children, respectively, than White teachers.
- Consistent with health disparities associated with Covid-19, Black teachers were 2.7 times more likely than White teachers to have a family member or friend become ill from the disease; *they were over 4 times more likely to receive medical treatment for Covid-19 and to experience the death of a family member or close friend from Covid-19.*
- White teachers were more likely to vicariously experience stressors through their students. They were 1.3 to 1.5 times more likely than Black teachers to report increased awareness of stressors their students faced at home and deaths within the families of their students, respectively.

SINCE COVID-19, WHAT HAS CHANGED?

■ *White Teachers*   ■ *Black Teachers*   ■ *Total Sample*

HAD SERIOUS ILLNESS FROM COVID-19

SCHOOL STAFF DEATH FROM COVID-19

UNABLE TO PAY BILLS

HAD SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19, NEVER TESTED

ADULT EDUCATION SUSPENDED

SCHOOL STAFF SERIOUSLY ILL W/ COVID-19

FAMILY/FRIEND DEATH DUE TO COVID-19

FAMILY/FRIEND SERIOUSLY ILL W/ COVID-19

HAD TO TAKE CARE OF OTHERS IN THE HOME

HAD TO TEACH OWN KIDS

FELT UNSAFE

DEATHS IN STUDENTS' FAMILIES DUE TO COVID-19

INCREASED WORKLOAD

DIFFICULT TRANSITION TO WORKING FROM HOME

EXPERIENCED EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

UNABLE TO DO ENJOYABLE ACTIVITIES/HOBBIES

ACUTE AWARENESS OF STUDENT STRESSORS

SEPARATED FROM FAMILY/FRIENDS
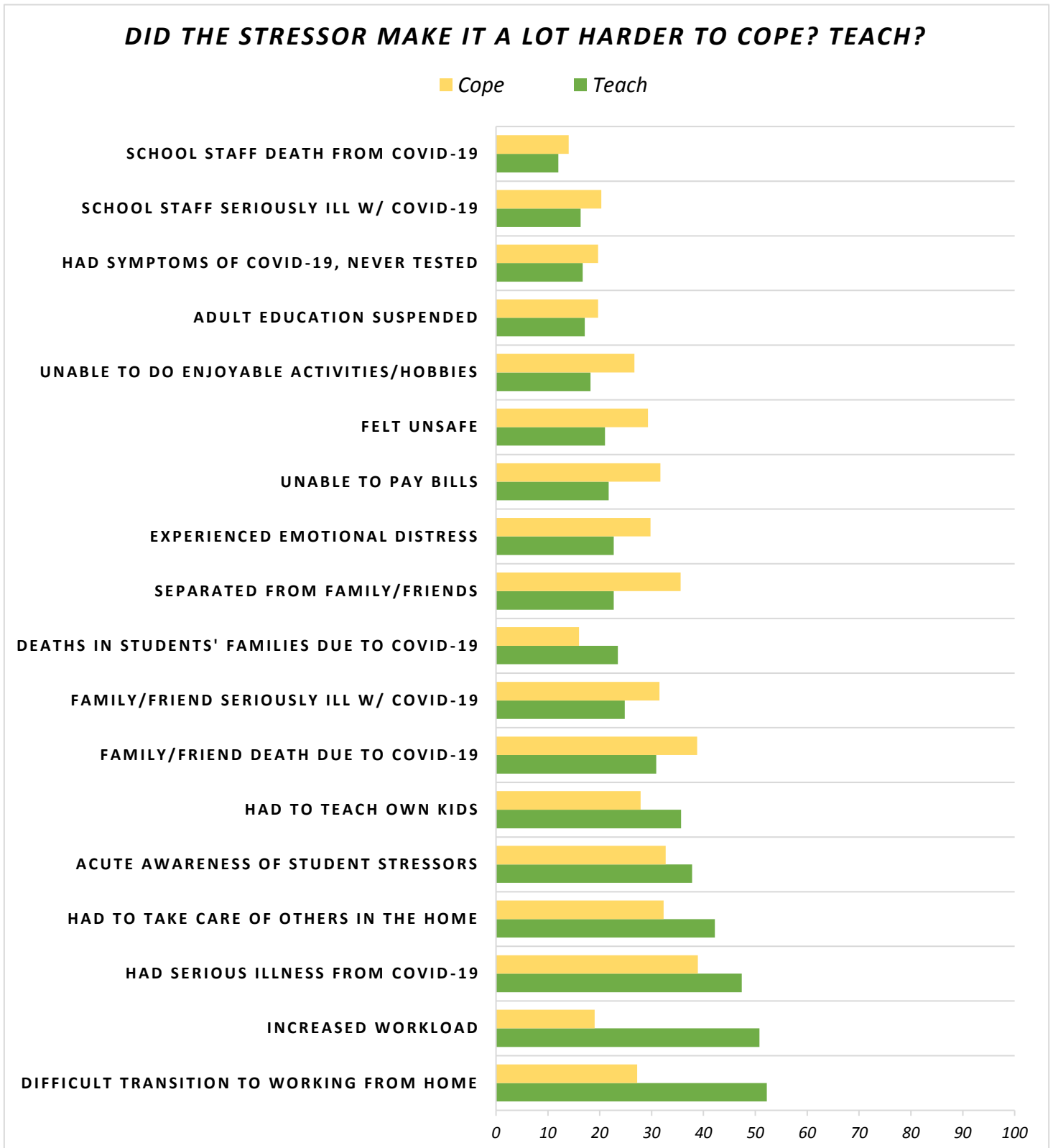
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Note. Stressors are organized from least prevalent to most prevalent based on the total sample (bottom blue bar). The prevalence for Black (middle orange bar) and White (top gray bar) teachers is also presented for each stressor.

On average, teachers reported experiencing 7.39 (SD = 2.83) Covid-19-related stressors.

> 10

0 - 4
15%

5 - 9
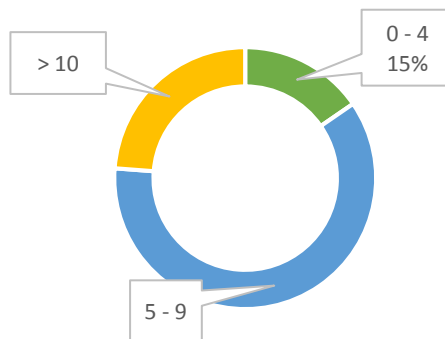
For each stressor experienced, teachers were asked how much harder that stressor made it for them to teach their students and to cope in general. Not surprisingly, the transition to working from home and increased work responsibilities had the biggest impacts on teaching, making it a lot harder to teach for 50% of teachers. Also not surprising, 47% of teachers who reported becoming ill with Covid-19 noted a significant negative impact on teaching.

DID THE STRESSOR MAKE IT A LOT HARDER TO COPE? TEACH?

■ Cope ■ Teach

Stressor	
SCHOOL STAFF DEATH FROM COVID-19	
SCHOOL STAFF SERIOUSLY ILL W/ COVID-19	
HAD SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19, NEVER TESTED	
ADULT EDUCATION SUSPENDED	
UNABLE TO DO ENJOYABLE ACTIVITIES/HOBBIES	
FELT UNSAFE	
UNABLE TO PAY BILLS	
EXPERIENCED EMOTIONAL DISTRESS	
SEPARATED FROM FAMILY/FRIENDS	
DEATHS IN STUDENTS' FAMILIES DUE TO COVID-19	
FAMILY/FRIEND SERIOUSLY ILL W/ COVID-19	
FAMILY/FRIEND DEATH DUE TO COVID-19	
HAD TO TEACH OWN KIDS	
ACUTE AWARENESS OF STUDENT STRESSORS	
HAD TO TAKE CARE OF OTHERS IN THE HOME	
HAD SERIOUS ILLNESS FROM COVID-19	
INCREASED WORKLOAD	
DIFFICULT TRANSITION TO WORKING FROM HOME	

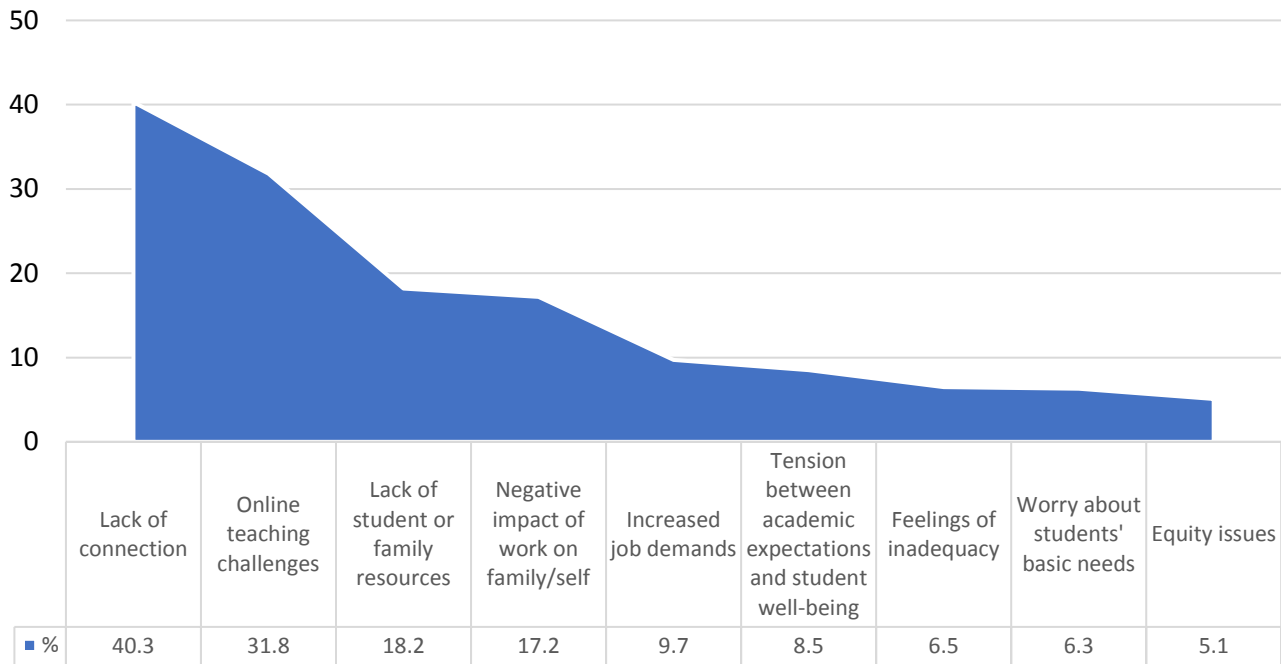0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100

Note. Stressors are organized from least impactful on teaching to the most impactful on teaching (bottom green bar).

Teachers also provided qualitative information about the most difficult aspects of teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic by responding to the question: ***What has been the most difficult aspect of your job during the pandemic?***

About 91% (N = 412) of the sample provided responses. Responses were grouped into 9 larger themes, many of which offer insight into survey results. The percentage of responses that included each theme are illustrated below; percentages do not sum to 100% because some responses contained multiple themes and a handful of responses could not be coded.

Most Difficult Aspects of Teaching during the Pandemic

	Lack of connection	Online teaching challenges	Lack of student or family resources	Negative impact of work on family/self	Increased job demands	Tension between academic expectations and student well-being	Feelings of inadequacy	Worry about students' basic needs	Equity issues
■ %	40.3	31.8	18.2	17.2	9.7	8.5	6.5	6.3	5.1

The following tables highlight the themes that emerged and provide exemplar responses for each theme as well as the percentage of responses related to each theme.

The survey results indicated that about 60% of teachers reported experiencing an increased workload and a hard time making the transition to working from home. Two themes emerged from the qualitative data that provide rich descriptions of the nature of these stressors.

	% of responses
Challenges in the transition to teaching online	**31.8%**
• Adapting to online only learning is also difficult because it is a completely different skill set from what I typically use day-to-day as a teacher. • Creating curriculum has been difficult as it is very time consuming. • I had gotten accustomed to seeing my students every day and switching our learning style from an in-classroom setting to a virtual one has been frustrating. • Transitioning to distance learning using tech. Although I am moderately tech savvy, we had school team members who were not. There are also many students and parents who were not tech savvy either. On top of this, we have a large ELL community who depend on tech for translation. This made it difficult to communicate instructions and expectations: between admin and teachers, as well as between teachers and students/parents/grandparents. • Finding ways to have meaningful visual art instruction and assignments for my students via distance learning. • As a special education teacher it has been extremely difficult for me to find ways to teach my students with disabilities who have so many different individual needs through the screen of a computer/phone.	

Increased job demands	9.7%
- No real hours. Being contacted on all days at all hours and on weekends and holidays too. Feels like I am always on call. - It is very difficult to do everything that we are normally expected to do, plus entirely new ways of teaching online, making sure our families are able to access what they need, plus take care of ourselves, make sure our family is healthy, along with an endless amount of other worries. I'm so tired I can't even elaborate because it's starting to stress me out. - Every day it seems that teachers are given new tasks that feel more like busywork than actual work. - The workload with very short time frame expectations to complete lengthy assignments, the disregard for teacher's personal time and health with the quick timelines of work due dates, on the go planning that changes often as far as teacher expectations and new duties and tasks frequently, as well as overworking teachers with repetitive work that requires teachers to show the same or very similar information in more than one platform and double or triple logging in different tech platforms. Communication expectations over load what most parents are comfortable with in some ways.	

The survey results indicated that about 36% of teachers reported the challenge of needing to take care of people in the home or having to provide instruction to their own children. A similar theme emerged from the qualitative data that included difficulty attending to personal well-being as challenge.

	% of responses
Negative impact of job on family and personal well-being	17.2%
- Trying to home school my children and teach online has been enormously difficult for me. I can only do one or the other, and since one earns my paycheck, I have had to allow my children to watch tv/tablets instead of engage[ing] in meaningful learning. - I've experienced a lot of crying spells and anxiety-ridden nights about how to actually do my job and how to be there for my family. - It is very time consuming; it takes away from time that I could spend taking care of my child and focusing on my own mental health. It also hinders me from checking in with family. - The most difficult aspect of my job during the pandemic is being forced to make phone calls to family multiple times a week to "check-in" on them. When I'm calling there is usually nothing I can immediately do to assist family hardships. Mentally it is draining, stressful, and sad.	

Results from the survey indicated that 83% of teachers reported becoming more acutely aware of stressors students face at home. Several themes related to this awareness emerged from the qualitative data, including how that increased awareness may have contributed to teacher emotional distress, which was reported by 71% of teachers on the survey. Qualitative responses indicated a range of distressing emotions, including feelings of frustration, inadequacy, guilt, hopelessness, sadness, worry.

	% of responses
Lack of student/family resources	18.2%
- Providing students and their families with the supports they need at this time. These supports look very different now that we are learning from home and I want them to be just as successful. - Assisting students with distant learning when they do not have technology. Parents need support in teaching at home. - No hands on/less resources for early education with kids. Technology has been hard to manage and littles aren't meant to be taught this way. - Communicating with parents and getting them to the school to pick up materials has been an ongoing challenge, and we still have probably 40% of our kids who either do not have access to the learning happening online due to tech access, or they have tech access but their families are dealing with bigger issues currently and not able to focus on things like their kids' learning right now. Additionally, it has been very hard to connect with the appropriate supports and resources for our families most in need. Our social worker is working around the clock, but it's hard to keep up and the resources and supports that were available before the city shut down are not necessarily available now, so we have a handful of families who are in crises and we have come up empty handed in trying to connect them with the social services they need.	

Tension between academic expectations and student well-being	8.5%

- It has been a really hard internal balance. On one hand, I feel that if I push academics too strictly, I'm doing a disservice to families who are struggling or experiencing trauma. And on the other hand, I feel like if I'm not providing academics I'm doing a disservice to kids. I'm trying to find the perfect middle ground.
- Many of my students have not been logging on to the devices we gave them. The teacher in me wants to be critical of them for that, but I am also struggling to complete simple tasks- so I don't want to be overly critical of students. When I don't say anything about lack of work completion, however, I feel as if I am still doing students a disservice. It is a repeating circle of negative feelings.
- The most difficult aspect of my job during the pandemic has been learning to balance between supporting students and families and pushing them to get the work finished. I don't believe that all families are able to support their students in completing all of the work that is asked of them, but sometimes they feel like the school is pushing without listening to their needs.
- The most difficult aspect of my job is tempering the expectations of academics with the social-emotional wellness needs of my students and their families, my colleagues, and the community. Remembering the importance of empathy and sensitivity to what is happening around all of us, and thinking about the bigger picture.

Feelings of inadequacy/ineffectiveness	6.5%

- The most difficult aspect of my job during this pandemic has been the constant feeling of failure resulting from my perceived inability to balance my work obligations with assisting my own children with their distance learning. It is almost impossible to do both well, and I am someone who sets very high standards for myself, therefore I constantly feel like I am failing, or worse, a failure.
- Now the challenge is feeling as if I am underserving my students and not doing right by them. I feel guilty when I take time for myself and don't spend every minute on work, but when I do that, my mental health and household are a mess.
- I feel powerless to be able to help my kiddos grow and my families feel safe.

Worry about students' basic needs	6.3%

- Students are home and family members are dying. Changes happen in the household. Not all parents can be around or support the child as much as is required right now. Students with social-emotional needs do not have a regular outlet… Kids need school, and so do I. I miss my students desperately.
- Worrying about my students. Do they have enough food? Do they have electricity and can they stay in their homes? How big will this gap be in education for them? They already had a severe gap in learning, what will become of them?
- The most difficult aspect of my job during this pandemic has been confronting the numerous challenges my students face in their home life. With schools closed, students that depend on school as a safe, neutral place where they get to be the best version of themselves has disappeared. No amount of daily or weekly phone calls with a student can substitute the important role that being in the physical school building has on the child's sense of well-being and development.
- Not being able to see my kids every day, worrying about them a lot, thinking about whether they have everything that they need, and feeling frustrated that I can only give so much from a distance.

Equity issues	5.1%

- Knowing that many of my students do not have access to the same resources and that my black students' families are being affected by the illness at a much higher rate. My classroom online does not reflect the diversity of the school.
- Realizing the disparities that exist within our country, when it comes to access to technology among other things.
- Noticing the faults within the education system and the disproportionate amount of Black and Brown students that will be negatively impacted by this pandemic.
- I also continue to think through issues of equity and access for the students who are often not first considered (i.e. special education) in plans or approaches or design of things and how to best advocate & bring these discussions up.
- It is very important that students with special needs as well as ELL/ESL have equitable access to technology and other materials as the mainstream population of students. This has been the greatest concern for all Special Educators around the U.S.

The difficulty of separation emerged from the survey results, but specifically in relation to separation from family and friends. Qualitative responses indicated that separation from students as well as coworkers was also a significant stressor.

	% of responses
Lack of connection/engagement	**40.3%**

- I would say human contact is missed greatly. I miss my teammates and scholars.
- The most difficult aspect of my job during the pandemic was not being able to see my students. I felt like the distance learning wasn't reaching across to them the way that I normally reach to them in the classroom, academically and emotionally.
- The most difficult time is not being able to have all of my students together in a safe environment with support and learning from one another.
- Honestly, I just miss my kids. They were a key element to the desire to teach. While we are in contact frequently through their parents and video calls, doesn't add up to seeing them in person.

## Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic: Positive Changes

Items from the Epidemic–Pandemic Impacts Inventory (EPII; Grasso et al., 2020) were also used to learn about the positive impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on various domains of work, personal, and family life.

The prevalence of specific Covid-19-related positive changes is presented in the figure below. Consistent with our approach above, results are presented for those two groups along with results for the total sample. Black teachers ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 1.38$) reported significantly more positive changes as a result of Covid-19 than did White teachers ($M = 3.78$; $SD = 1.55$; $F_{(1,379)} = 26.58$, $p < .001$).
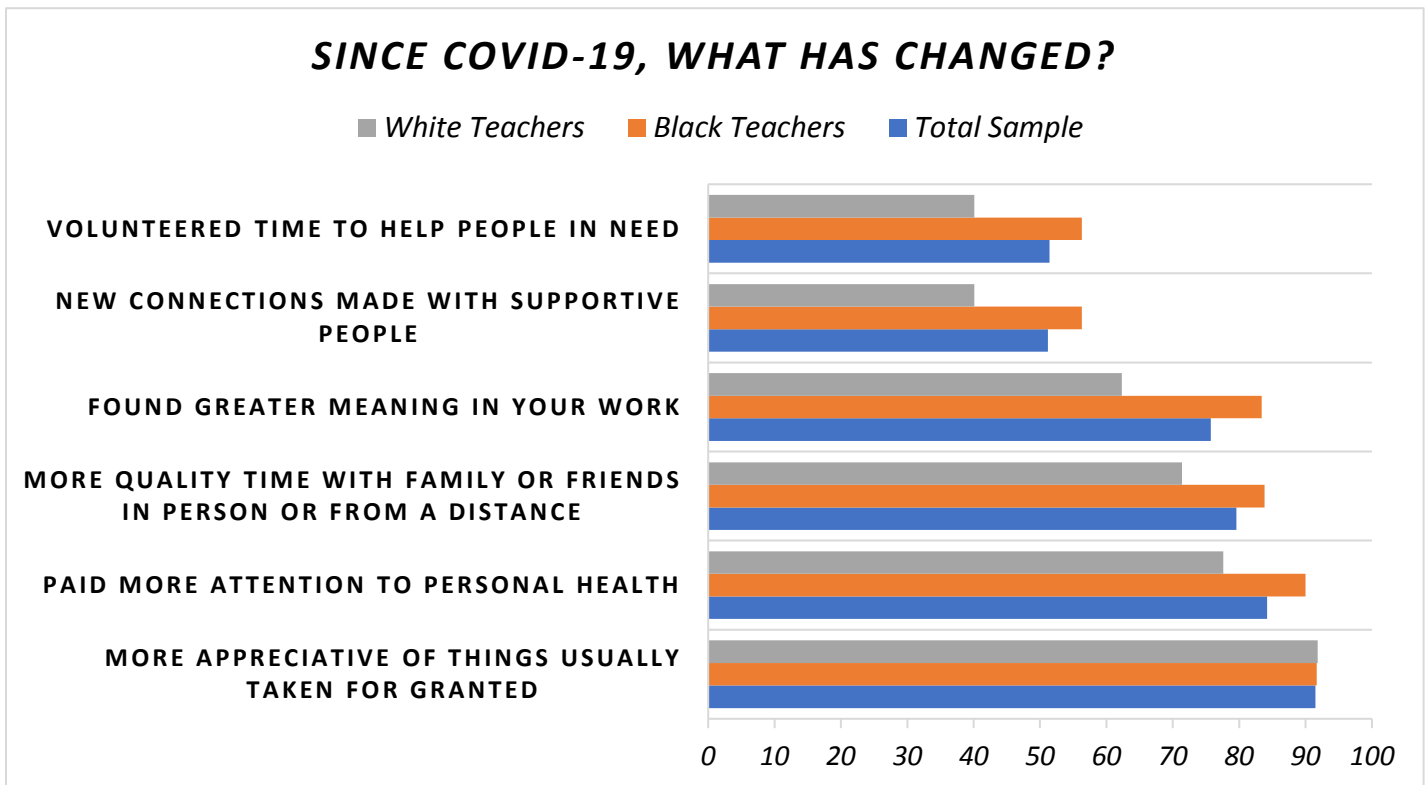

SINCE COVID-19, WHAT HAS CHANGED?

Note. Positive changes are organized from least prevalent to most prevalent based on the total sample (bottom blue bar). The prevalence for Black (middle orange bar) and White (top gray bar) teachers is also presented for each positive change.

On average, teachers reported experiencing 4.29 (SD = 1.50) Covid-19-related positive changes.
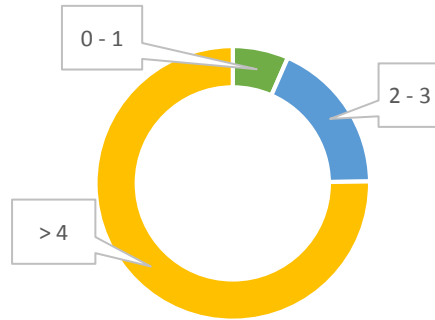
For each positive change experienced, teachers were asked how much easier that change made it for them to teach their students and to cope in general. Positive changes seemed to have greater overall impacts on general coping than on teaching, although 46% of teachers reported that finding greater meaning in their work made teaching a lot easier.
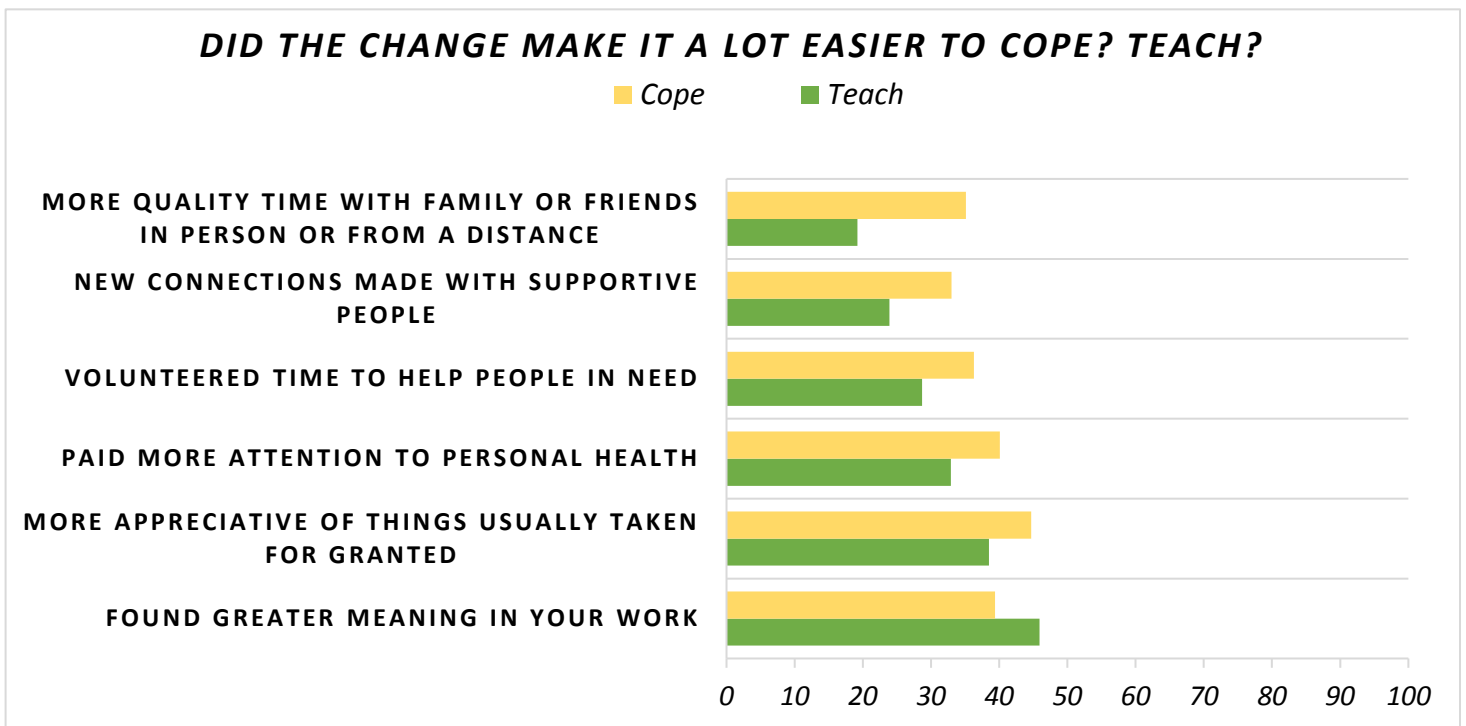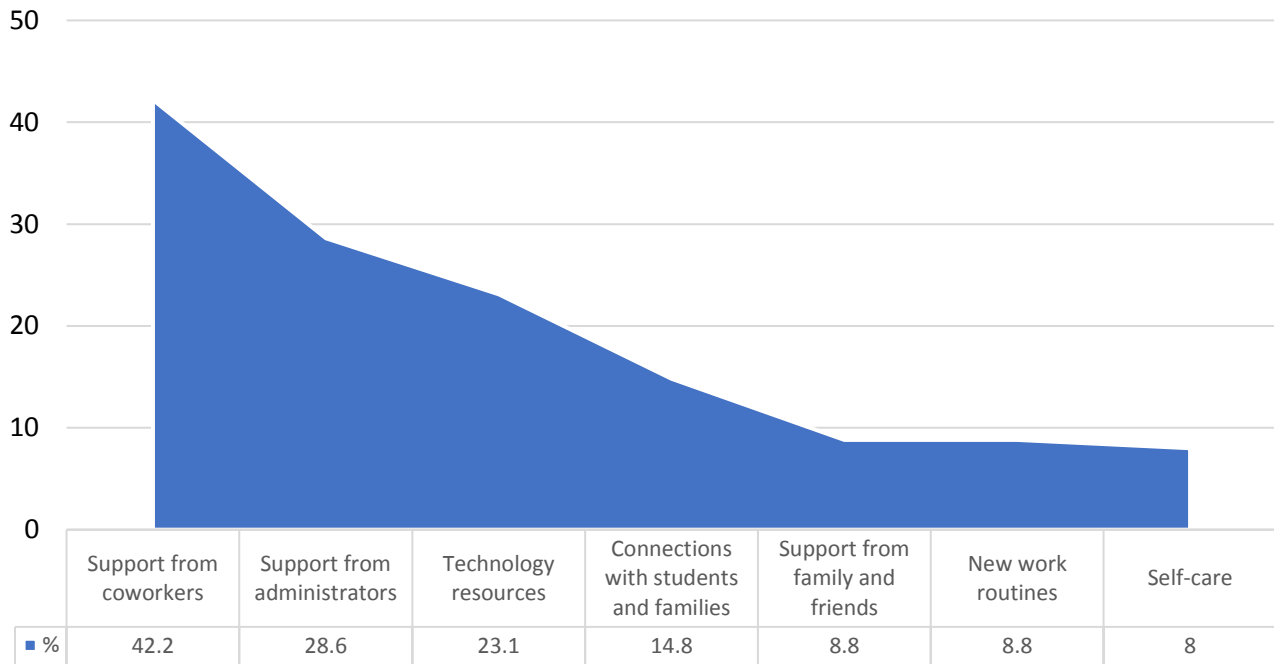

Note. Positive changes are organized from least impactful on teaching to the most impactful on teaching (bottom green bar).

Teachers also provided qualitative information about the most helpful supports for teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic by responding to the question: ***What has been most helpful in facilitating/supporting your work during the pandemic?***

About 88% (N = 398) of the sample provided responses to this question. Responses were grouped into 7 larger themes. The percentage of responses that included each theme are illustrated below; percentages do not sum to 100% because some responses contained multiple themes and a handful of responses could not be coded.

Most Helpful Supports for Teaching during the Pandemic

	Support from coworkers	Support from administrators	Technology resources	Connections with students and families	Support from family and friends	New work routines	Self-care
■ %	42.2	28.6	23.1	14.8	8.8	8.8	8

Although the survey asked about whether teachers had received support from new connections, qualitative responses indicated the importance of support from existing networks, including family and friends, coworkers, and school administration.

	% of comments
Support from coworkers	**42.2%**
• Positive team collaborations from my staff and grade level team has helped support my work tremendously during this time. • Teamwork! Working together with my colleagues has been very helpful. • Working with a group of co-workers that really cares. • Our Self-Care Coffee Chats with the staff facilitated by the School Social Worker and School Counselor help us to all get together, see each other, hear each other and facilitate a portion of "normalcy" to share out, get support, and laugh with each other at the end and beginning of each week.	
Support from administrators	**28.6%**
• Continuing to be paid and have benefits allows me to focus on my job rather than worrying about finances on top of everything else. • The most helpful thing in facilitating my work from home was the manageable workload during the first 5 weeks of school closure. • Flexibility around working in person versus working from home and continuous communication with my direct supervisor.	

• My school has allowed us much personal freedom during this time, and has acknowledged the personal needs of the staff. There is no pressure to work excessively. This is so helpful. • A feeling from admin and other teachers that we are in this together and we're all trying our best. I never got the sense that I was going to be judged based on the work I'm doing right now and this helped me remember not to judge students based on their work during a pandemic. • Members of the school's leadership team were only a phone call away to answer my questions.	
Connections with students and families	**14.8%**
• Families who offered feedback and gratitude toward the efforts made. • Getting to know some of the parents better. • Being able to Zoom with students and parents. Being able to physically see our children's faces and getting confirmation on their well-being. • Connecting better with students and seeing how they are able to work through this difficult time.	
Support from family and friends	**8.8%**
• Having a supportive spouse. • My husband being home has helped because he is not working from home so having him to keep the children entertained while work has been helpful. • Getting to be close to family has been a HUGE support throughout all of this. • Regularly checking in with friends, family that are also dealing with some of the same issues that I am has been helpful over the last seven weeks. • Talking with friends and video chatting with family has been very fun and helpful.	

Although there were many challenges associated with the use of technology and working from home, teachers also noted some benefits.
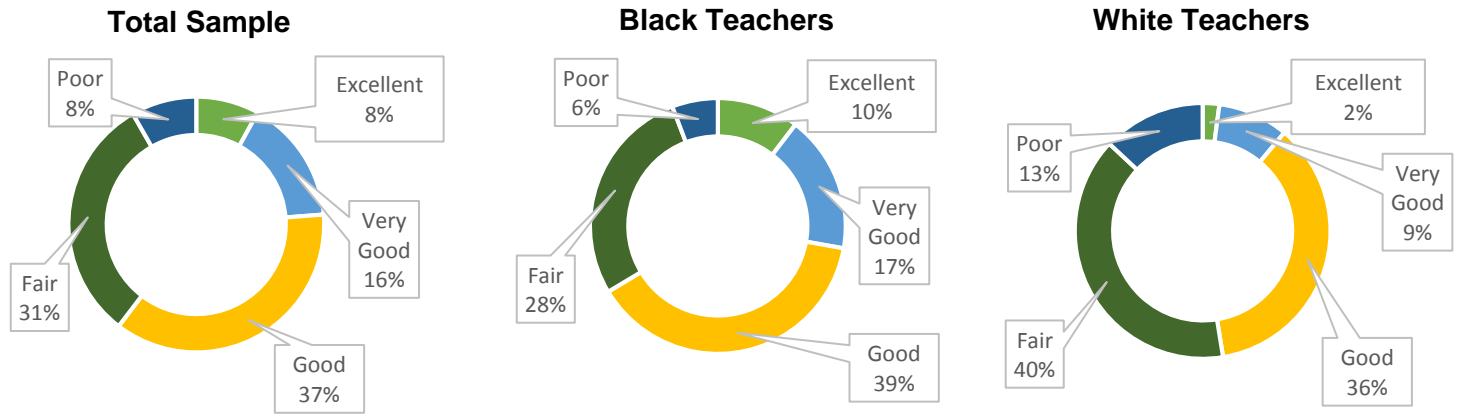
	% of comments
Technology resources	**23.1%**
• My co-teacher and I just keep on adapting and finding new ways to connect to our students and families. We set up a YouTube channel that they seem to really enjoy and I have been FaceTiming my kids once a week to do work and catch up which is really nice too. • Distribution of hotspots and computers. • Twitter and online resources have been great for finding a community of other teachers figuring out distance learning within the US and abroad. • Zoom has been really helpful to connect with students.	
New work routines	**8.8%**
• The most helpful in facilitating/supporting is working from home, being able to gather my thoughts and create my own schedule on a daily basis while still completing task at 100% effort. • Having a log to be accountable for the work I'm doing. • I don't have to spend time on things that aren't my class - every moment of the day is my choosing. I feel wildly empowered to help my students, to learn new systems for them, to check in on them, and to finally teach them. • I really love the flexibility of working from home…Additionally, I am able to focus on training and systems planning without day-to-day crisis.	

The survey results indicated that 82% of teachers reported more attention to personal health. Qualitative responses illustrate the varied ways teachers tended to their well-being.

	% of comments
Self-care	**8.0%**
• The most helpful things for me have been regular check-ins with myself 3 times a day (morning, mid-day, and night-time), getting fresh air and sunshine outside with a daily walk or run, doing meditation & yoga, teletherapy sessions with my counselor, and making sure I'm eating some healthy things to sustain me throughout the day. • Long walks without my work phone. • Taking on passion projects that have been on the backburner. • I have been volunteering at our school feeding [site]. Seeing people and feeling like I am helping in some way has honestly helped to keep me grounded. • Increased time to focus on personal health.	

Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic: Teacher Mental Health

Teachers were asked to rate their overall mental health. Results are presented for the total sample and for Black and White teachers separately.

Total Sample

Poor 8%
Excellent 8%
Very Good 16%
Good 37%
Fair 31%

Black Teachers

Poor 6%
Excellent 10%
Very Good 17%
Good 39%
Fair 28%

White Teachers

Poor 13%
Excellent 2%
Very Good 9%
Good 36%
Fair 40%

Thirty-nine percent of all teachers rated their mental health as fair to poor. In general, White teachers reported poorer mental health compared to Black teachers; they were 2.2 times more likely to rate their mental health as poor compared to Black teachers.

For both Black and White teachers, the total number of stressors was significantly negatively associated with ratings of mental health (r = -.42, p < .001; r = -.18, p < .05, respectively). In other words, experiencing more negative stressors was associated with worse mental health for teachers. To a lesser degree, the total number of positive changes was positively associated with ratings of mental health for Black and White teachers (r = .15, p < .05; r = .15, p < .10, respectively); positive stressors were associated with better mental health.

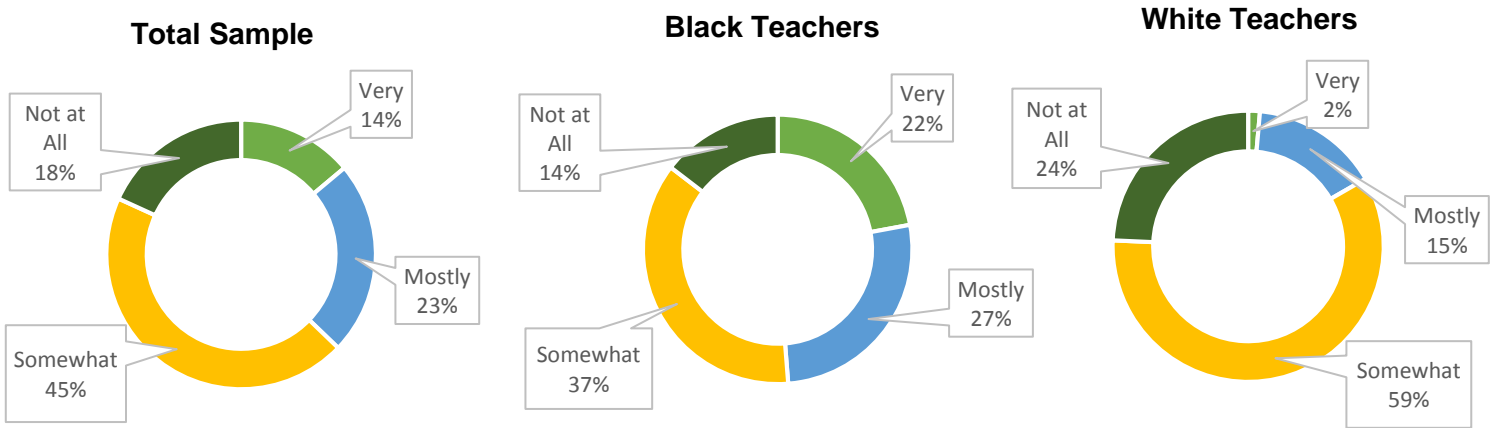## Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic: Thinking about the Future

Teachers were asked to consider two future scenarios: the reopening of school once the Covid-19 pandemic has been contained *and* the need for future closures due to additional outbreaks. Specifically, they were asked to:
- Rate their confidence in themselves and their schools to address needs related to student and teacher well-being.
- Provide qualitative responses regarding resources or strategies that would be necessary to address those needs.
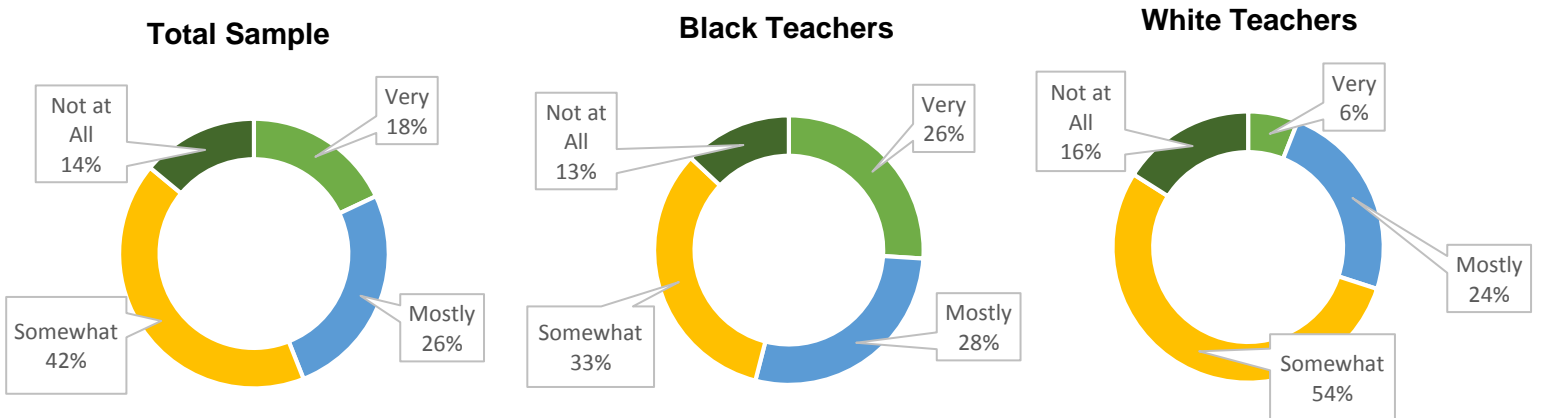
Confidence ratings for reopening and future closures are clustered by question and presented for the total sample and for Black and White teachers separately. Ratings are followed by qualitative responses organized into themes related to needed resources and strategies.

Confidence in Self to Address Student Stress

*How confident are you that **you will be adequately prepared** to address the stress and trauma students likely experienced during the pandemic?*
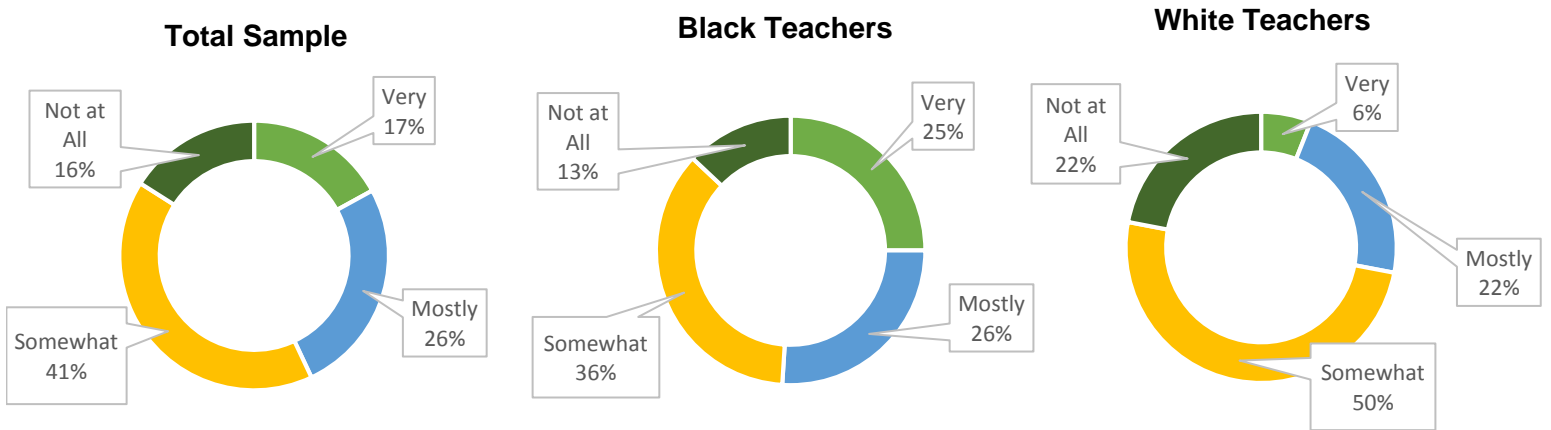
Total Sample

Very
14%

Not at
All
18%

Mostly
23%

Somewhat
45%

Black Teachers

Very
22%

Not at
All
14%

Mostly
27%

Somewhat
37%

White Teachers

Very
2%

Not at
All
24%

Mostly
15%

Somewhat
59%

*How confident are you that **you will be adequately prepared** to address the stress students will experience due to another school closure?*

Total Sample

Very
18%

Not at
All
14%

Mostly
26%

Somewhat
42%

Black Teachers

Very
26%

Not at
All
13%

Mostly
28%

Somewhat
33%

White Teachers
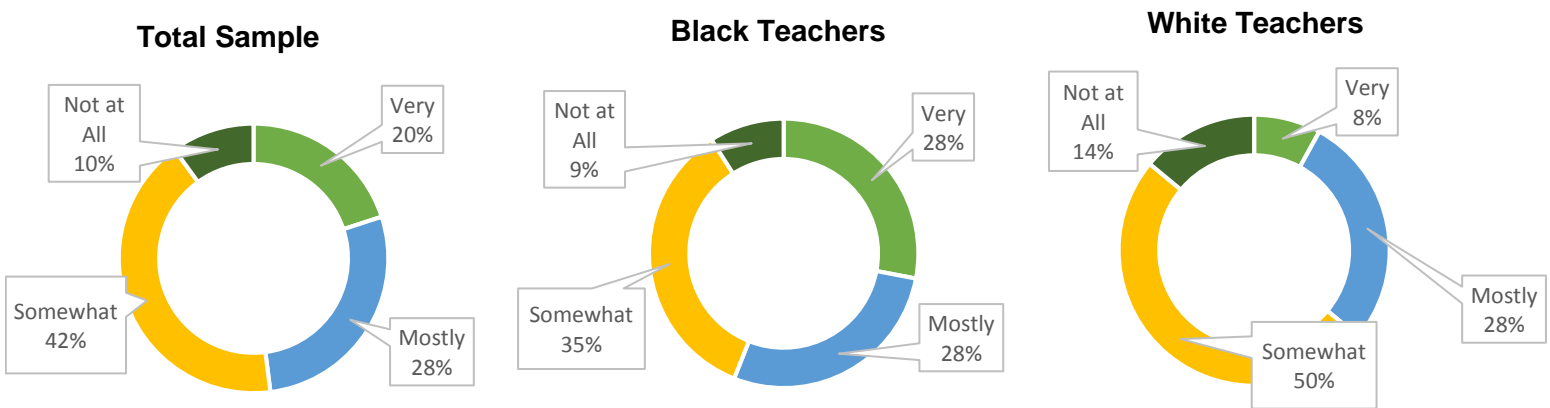
Very
6%

Not at
All
16%

Mostly
24%

Somewhat
54%

For the total sample, between 37% and 44% feel mostly to very confident that they will be prepared to address student needs related to stress and trauma upon reopening and in the event of future closures. Black teachers are more optimistic about their readiness to address student needs (49% - 54% feel mostly or very confident) than White teachers (17% to 30% feel mostly or very confident).

Confidence in School to Address Student Stress and Disruptions in Learning

*How confident are you that **your school will be able to address** the stress and trauma students likely experienced in light of the demands to make up for lost instructional time?*
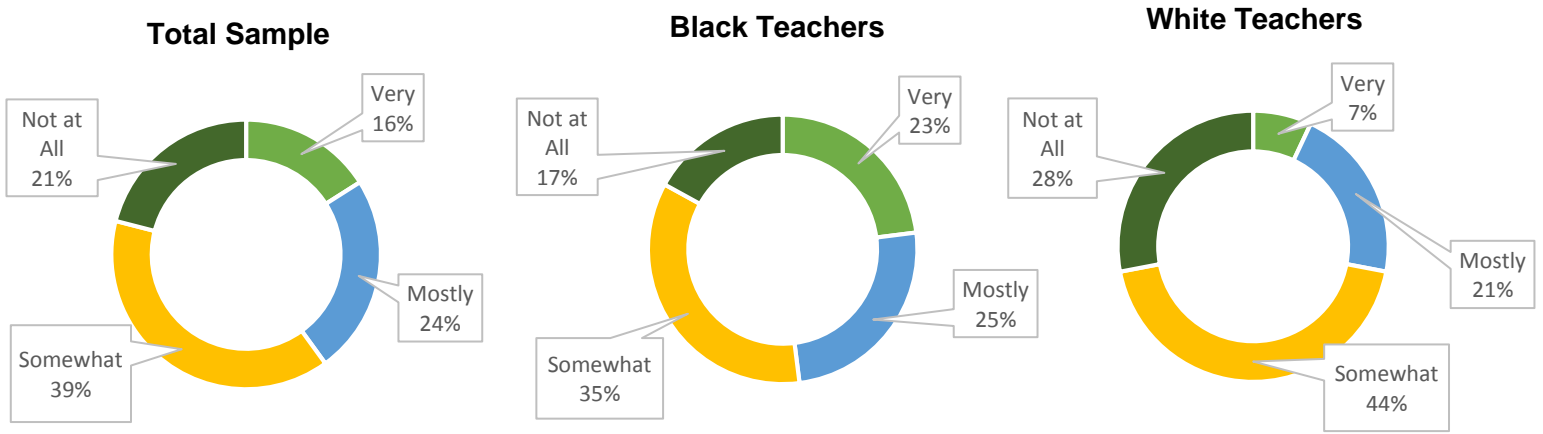
Total Sample

Not at All 16%
Very 17%
Mostly 26%
Somewhat 41%

Black Teachers

Not at All 13%
Very 25%
Mostly 26%
Somewhat 36%

White Teachers

Not at All 22%
Very 6%
Mostly 22%
Somewhat 50%

*How confident are you that **your school will have adequate resources** to minimize disruptions to student learning during another closure?*

Total Sample

Not at All 10%
Very 20%
Mostly 28%
Somewhat 42%

Black Teachers

Not at All 9%
Very 28%
Mostly 28%
Somewhat 35%

White Teachers

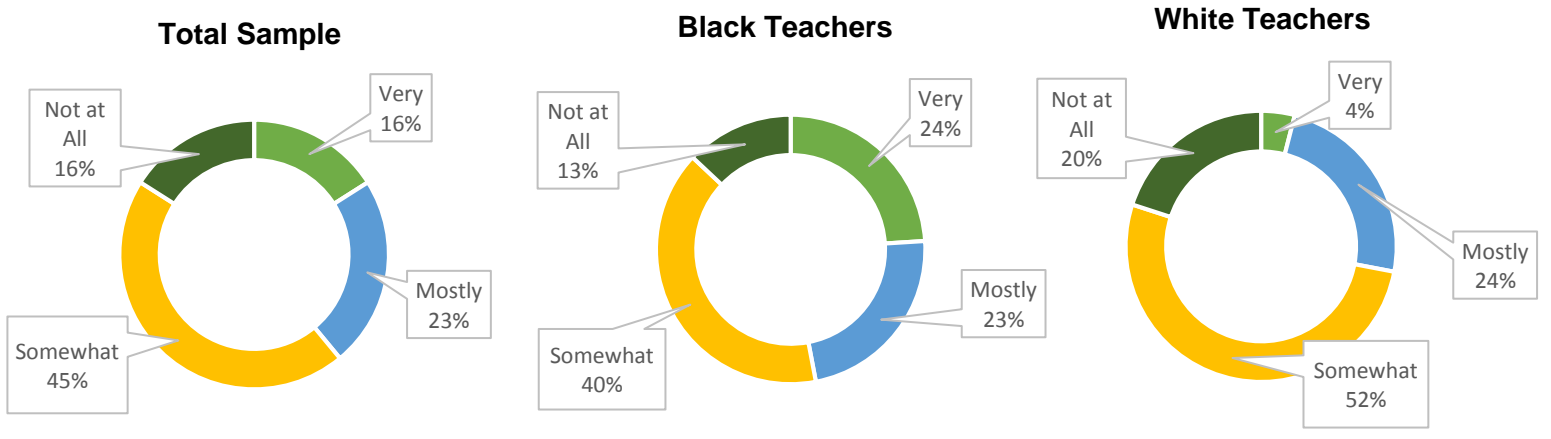Not at All 14%
Very 8%
Mostly 28%
Somewhat 50%

Consistent with the pattern noted above, between 43% and 48% of all teachers feel mostly to very confident that their schools will be prepared to address student needs related to stress and trauma and disruptions in learning upon reopening and in the event of future closures. Black teachers are more optimistic about their schools' readiness to address student needs (51% - 56% feel mostly or very confident) than White teachers (28% to 36% feel mostly or very confident).

Confidence in School to Address Teacher Stress

*How confident are you that **your school will be able to address** the stress and trauma teachers likely experienced during the pandemic?*

Total Sample

Not at All 21%

Very 16%

Mostly 24%

Somewhat 39%

Black Teachers

Not at All 17%

Very 23%

Mostly 25%

Somewhat 35%

White Teachers

Not at All 28%

Very 7%

Mostly 21%

Somewhat 44%

*How confident are you that **your school will have adequate resources** to minimize teacher stress caused by another closure?*

Total Sample

Not at All 16%

Very 16%

Mostly 23%

Somewhat 45%

Black Teachers

Not at All 13%

Very 24%

Mostly 23%

Somewhat 40%

White Teachers

Not at All 20%

Very 4%

Mostly 24%

Somewhat 52%

About 40% of teachers feel mostly to very confident that their schools will be prepared to address their needs related to stress and trauma upon reopening and in the event of future closures. Consistent with the trends noted above, Black teachers are more optimistic about their schools' readiness to address teacher needs (47% - 48% feel mostly or very confident) than White teachers (28% feel mostly or very confident).

Qualitative Responses

Teachers were asked about what resources and supports they and their schools would need to address student stress and trauma and disruptions in learning and to help manage teacher stress and trauma upon school reopening and in the event of future closures. Between 45% and 76% of teachers provided responses to the qualitative questions.

Four broad themes emerged from responses given across questions. The following tables highlight the themes that emerged and provide exemplar responses for each theme as well as the average percentage of responses related to each theme across questions.

Theme 1: *Acknowledging and responding to the stress and trauma experienced by students and teachers*

Responses indicated a need to acknowledge that students and teachers have experienced significant stress and trauma during (and prior to) this pandemic and everyone will need time, space, and flexibility to heal from those experiences before they are ready to resume a focus on instruction and learning. Responses indicated the need for time and space to collectively process the experience as well as adjustments in expectations for teachers and students.

	18.7% of comments
Acknowledgement of the stress and trauma experienced by students and teachers	
- I think the students are probably going to have experienced more hardships and deaths due to this disease than I can even imagine. - I think we need training to truly understand what some of these students experienced during this time - Data on how teachers are affected by COVID-19. - I think there needs to be more of an awareness that some teachers will experience this kind of stress. We are so student-focused that I believe we sometimes forget to give ourselves grace. - Training on the effects...of this collective trauma.	
Time, space, and flexibility to ensure healing	
- An ability (time) to address the emotional need before academic needs. - Time set aside specifically to address emotional concerns/have a break from education and give the students a chance to talk about world issues. - Space & time for staff, families, and students to reflect together and rebuild safe school community. - Patience from administrators (especially at the city and state level) as we catch-up academically, opportunities to just talk to and grieve in person instead of jumping right back in with school work as if everything is normal. - I'm worried that instead of taking a slow and steady approach to returning to work that we are going to dive in and work long, hard hours. I would like to do that, but I don't know how it will affect my mental health/my coworkers' mental health. - The understanding by all parties involved that everyone is behind and not having ridiculous expectations put on them or us by government or school board to instantly make it better. - Not giving a school a negative letter grade due to loss of learning and effects of stress on students/staff.	

Theme 2: *Training and resources*

Given the unprecedented nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is not surprising that the greatest number of responses focused on the need for training and resources. Teachers identified 5 areas of specific need, each of which are described below.

	39.3% of comments
Training and resources specific to Covid-19	
- Complete understanding of the containment of the disease so I am able to explain it to my students to ease their minds as well as my mind about feeling safe being back in school surrounded by hundreds of people. - Resources and guides as to what we should be talking about, and how we should talk to students about the pandemic - Clear signs in the school to show that the building is cleaned properly on a regular basis to reassure staff and students. - I need to know that the school is following current data/trends reported by specialists and scientists. I need to know that measures are put in place to ensure sick students/staff are prevented from entering the premises and that this will be enforced.	

Training and resources in trauma-informed approaches
• I guess that would mean targeted professional development for teachers and staff on trauma-informed instruction and trauma-informed behavior interventions--AND accountability for teachers to actually practice the new policies in their classrooms. • Some sort of webinars or interactive talks where we learn more about how this affects the science of the brain, likely responses to trauma and how to deal with them. • Resources around Trauma Informed best practices. • Lots of trauma informed teaching pedagogy.
Training and resources for social emotional learning
• …Our continued partnership with outside resources to provide a strong SEL curriculum and lots of time in our day to address this with our kids, a good balance between continuing the important academic work, but making sure there is time to address the emotional needs as well. • I would love robust SEL curriculum as well as an SEL instructor or facilitator at school that could come in and work with students and model for teachers. • Ideally, I guess more social time and less instructional time with my students.
Training and resources for distance learning
• Online teaching platforms. • Make sure that all teachers have all the computer/virtual training required and focus PD's on these devices/training. • I need research and proven practices. I am just out here guessing and even the most experienced educator without some sort of research is guessing because none of us have ever experienced something like this. • Pay for our internet/other services we need (i.e. professional Zoom account), provide us with a phone so we don't have to use our personal number and set VERY clear boundaries with students and families. • Plan for technology and support for families. Clear system of accountability for parents/students so that teachers aren't solely responsible for continued communication and work production. • Computer classes offered for all grade levels where they can have access to a certain platform and able to navigate the platform during the school year, in case there is another shut down all students and families will already be familiar with online classes for their child.
Training and resources for academic remediation
• Teacher Assistants to fill in the gap of providing extra support to students who may need additional support for lost instructional time. • Funding for additional programs and materials needed to make up for lost of instructional time. • A full staff of teachers with no gaps in teacher coverage. Some sort of extra push to retain current teachers, because many are leaving due to lack of administrative support (and administrative neglect). • More staff being able to provide instruction especially for students that are in tier 2 or 3 already. • RTI software to assess and address the gaps in student learning due the pandemic.

Theme 3: Mental health and wellness resources for students and teachers

The need for enhanced supports for student and teacher mental health and well-being emerged as a consistent theme across questions.

	31.3% of comments
Enhanced mental health staff, services, and supports for students and families	
• A larger counseling team. I can accomplish only so much with trauma-informed instruction and classroom structures, but I anticipate needs beyond my competency. • Counseling available for students, sessions for students not lead by the teacher, support that doesn't add to the teacher's new workload of catching students up after finding out where they will be etc. • Counselors and social work support on hand at the school. Psychologist and mentors for students. • Specific supports on how to help families recover from the trauma.	
Enhanced mental health staff, services, and supports for teachers	
• Also, support on how to best support ourselves as teachers with the new responsibilities and work ahead and some trauma support for us as we receive our wonderful students back that need us in more ways than one. We won't be able to pour from an empty cup and we can't adequately support without sufficient tools/resources/support.	

- Sessions in which teachers are able to express their own views and feelings about the way the school / network handled the pandemic, rather than just telling us what to do and feel.
- When I feel supported, I am best able to support my students and families. It is that simple for me. When the admin team can be compassionate and understanding to the unique situations that we (the faculty) have been facing and make accommodations so they we can best perform our role, I am able to be more present to my students and their needs
- I would love to have health benefits that enabled me to get mental health help when I need it…It would be great to either have mental health professionals accessible for teachers on-site during the work day or have a better system so I can take time off if I need it to make an appointment to take care of myself.
- Additional social workers or counselors who can meet with teachers OR a list of mental health providers covered by insurance who specifically work with educators.
- The resource our school may need is an Employee Assistance Program.

Supports for community building and teacher well-being

- Staff leaders encouraged to actually support and focus on teachers and their well-being. To emulate the focus and emphasis placed on students and parents but now including the wellbeing of teachers in the mix.
- Provide resources to sustain the person behind/and the teacher. More meetings around SEL, well-being, coping, self-care, etc. to address the person.
- Looking at the expectations being placed on classroom teachers and the workload necessary to maintain the level of excellence that is expected of us and how that impacts the mental health and emotional preparedness of teachers.
- I'm worried that instead of taking a slow and steady approach to returning to work that we are going to dive in and work long, hard hours. I would like to do that, but I don't know how it will affect my mental health/my coworkers' mental health- especially coworkers with children who will be making a huge transition as well.
- Provide opportunities for staff to interact and share experiences, emotions, concerns, fears that this has brought up.
- Extra days off, counseling services, compassion and understanding, going back to school and work slowly

Theme 4: Responsive leadership and planning

A final theme emerged related to responsive leadership and planning. This theme emphasized drawing on collaboration within and across schools and with parents and communicating and enacting a clear instructional plan that allows for flexibility and maintains accountability. Responses also highlighted the need to draw on lessons learned to anticipate challenges and take proactive measures based on current information, context, and interconnectedness of people. Finally, the need to provide supports for basic needs to students and teachers was highlighted as an element of responsive leadership and planning.

	21.7% of comments
Responsive leadership and planning	

- Empathy from leadership, and recognition that lack of strong communication/plans/leadership has added stress to this situation for everyone. We need leaders who come in with a plan and can take some of the stress off of teachers when we come back. Making it up as we go will only cause teachers to have continued trauma from this experience, rather than feeling like we are moving forward and healing.
- Being open and honest.
- …Administrators who know what it's like to be in a classroom as teachers making things happen for kids.

- The staff working together, creating plans to better help and address our student needs.
- Hearing feedback from teachers after this round of closures to know how best to support us.
- Sharing ideas of what teachers/staff did that was successful during this first round of distance teaching and giving us the training and resources to mimic those successes in the next round of virtual learning.
- Connections with other counselors and other school district to collaborate on how to approach this situation.

- A strategic plan needs to be put in place for the seamless transition back to school, as well as a plan to deal with distance learning again should the need arise.

- Better plans in place for students with disabilities and their teachers especially as it concerns to making the plans so rigid with no input from the teachers teaching them so we can't adequately plan for misconceptions or things like that.
- There will need to be academic plans that provide time for the previous year's instruction to be taught prior to moving into grade level content. Students have missed an entire quarter of the school year. Will there be room to bridge the gap?

- Flexible resources that will meet individual student needs.
- Different class set up, smaller class sizes on testing grade levels, realistic goals for students, less of a work load for teachers, hold students and parents accountable, daily scheduling that make sense, consistency.
- Continued contact with parents and, a tiered introduction into school, focusing on rebuilding relationships and addressing basic needs first, possibly reducing academic expectations for the school year.

Providing for the basic needs of students and teachers

- Better support for students and their families regarding housing, health care, food access, and technology access.
- I think there needs to be a consolidated list of basic needs resources. This would SO help to make serving families easier.
- Assurance that teacher salaries will continue…and assurance that health benefits will continue.
- Child-care? Hazard pay if teachers are expected to work in buildings with tons of people and the virus risk is high.
- Money to purchase items needed for home schooling for virtual learning.

Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Teachers: Summary

Covid-19 invaded the city of New Orleans early in the pandemic and ravaged the city with the fastest growth rate of cases in the world during the 13 days following the first confirmed case (Silverman, March 24, 2020). The rampant virus quickly laid bare longstanding health disparities. Roughly 75% of Covid-19 deaths in New Orleans occurred within the Black community, a disparity poignantly described in a recent *New York Times Magazine* cover story (Villarosa, April 29, 2020). The 2-month shutdown of the city brought a second wave of devastation, resulting in a 25% unemployment rate that is well above the national average of 14.7% (Boone, May 8, 2020). For the city's youth, that level of unemployment is likely to usher in a third wave of traumatic experiences, including child maltreatment, domestic violence, homelessness, and food insecurity (Golberstein, Wen, & Miller, 2020).

The planning process for reopening schools in New Orleans is underway. ***Imperative to that planning process is the recognition that both educators and students will be returning to schools under the weight of the collective trauma wrought by Covid-19.*** As the results of this survey indicate, for teachers that weight is heavy.

Like the rest of our city and country, teachers have been separated from family and friends and unable to fully engage with their communities in the typical ways. Although technology has certainly provided novel ways of staying connected, teachers miss the daily connection with their students and colleagues. And that lost connection makes their jobs harder, as indicated by the following response, "The most difficult aspect of my job during the pandemic was not being able to see my students. I felt like the distance learning wasn't reaching across to them the way I normally reach them in the classroom, academically and emotionally". In fact, by far the most common responses to this question had to do with the loss of connection with students and colleagues.

The pivot to distance learning also came with increased workloads and difficulties in the transition to working from home. Teachers were challenged by their lack of familiarity with online teaching formats and rapidly changing approaches required by their administration for contacting students and families, documenting their work, and attending meetings. Many teachers were also tasked with training students and their parents how to engage with online learning, or how to maintain student learning in the absence of technology. All of these demands were made more complicated for teachers who had their own family responsibilities, such as providing instruction to their own children and taking care of others in the home. These extra demands were more common for Black teachers.

Black teachers were also more like to be directly impacted by Covid-19. Typifying the health disparities documented in New Orleans and around the country, Black teachers were 2.7 times more likely than White teachers to have a family member or friend become ill from the disease, 4.3 times more likely to receive medical treatment for Covid-19, and 4.6 times more likely to experience the death of a family member or close friend from Covid-19. Although not a focus of the current survey, these experiences were undoubtedly made more traumatic by the inability to be with loved ones in the hospital or observe mourning rituals.

Covid-19-related stressors had a negative impact on teacher mental health. The majority of teachers (71%) reported experiencing emotional distress, regardless of race, although Black teachers rated their mental health more positively than White teachers. In addition to the stressors already discussed, teachers highlighted other work-related factors that might account for some of the distress reported:

- Some teachers worried about their students' basic needs and felt inadequate to address them, as exemplified by this quote, "Since beginning distance learning, I always feel like I'm not doing enough for my kids. Students are home and family members are dying. Changes happen in the household. Not all parents can be around or support the child as much as is required right now. Students with social-emotional needs do not have a regular outlet. Not all families have equitable access to technology. Kids need school, and so do I. I miss my students desperately".
- Some teachers worried about educational equity, including worry over "…the disproportionate amount of Black and Brown students that will be negatively affected by this pandemic" and "...issues of equity and access for students who are often not first considered (i.e., special education) in plans or approaches".
- Some teachers struggled with maintaining academic expectations given the stressors their students experienced, as summed up by this quote, "It has been a really hard internal balance. On one hand, I feel that if I push academics too strictly, I'm doing a disservice to families who are struggling or experiencing trauma. And on the other hand, I feel like if I'm not providing academics I'm doing a disservice to kids. I'm trying to find the perfect middle ground".

Teachers did also note positive changes related to Covid-19, including finding a greater appreciation for things usually taken for granted (91%) and finding greater meaning in their work (75%), factors that have been shown to foster resilience in the face of crisis (Fredrickson et al., 2003). Teachers also reported greater attention to personal health (84%), which they highlighted as one of the most helpful strategies supporting their teaching during the pandemic. Other helpful supports noted by teachers included the support they received from their colleagues and administration and technology resources that allowed them to stay connected to people and resources.

Schools and Covid-19: Recommendations for Network and School Leaders to Support Teachers

Nearly half of teachers expressed confidence that they and their schools will be prepared to address student and teacher needs when schools reopen and if schools face future closures. However, over 50% of teachers expressed concern that neither they nor their schools will be adequately prepared to address the stress and trauma students and teachers likely experienced during the pandemic. Over 50% also expressed concern that their schools will not be able to sufficiently balance the well-being of their students with the demands to make up for lost instructional time. Although Black teachers were more optimistic about success than White teachers, there is much work to be done to ensure the well-being of students and teachers and to foster effective teaching and learning as we resume schooling in the midst of the pandemic.

The Louisiana Department of Education's (LDOE) Strong Start 2020 Planning Guide includes a specific priority that "the school system will ensure the well-being of all students and educators by providing social and mental health supports…upon return to school". The accompanying Guide to Supporting the Well-Being of Students and Staff outlines several requirements for attending to the social, emotional, and behavioral well-being of students and staff. Many of the requirements are aligned with trauma-informed approaches, which makes sense in view of the collective trauma our community has experienced. Given the focus of this survey, ***our recommendations for network and school leaders are primarily focused on the needs of teachers;***

organized around the key principles of trauma-informed care (SAMHSA, 2014) and drawn heavily from recent guidance from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN; 2020). Similar considerations focused on students are also needed, as illustrated by the guidance provided by NCTSN.

Cultural Humility and Equity

1. **Create school supports for teachers that take into account their individual context, culture, and challenges.**
   a. Check in with teachers to learn what has been most stressful and most helpful to them during the pandemic. This can be accomplished through small teacher discussion groups, school-based surveys, or individual conversations with teachers.
   b. Design supports to meet the individual needs of teachers. In particular, identify ways to support Black teachers who are bearing the brunt of the health impacts of Covid-19 while also facing greater family responsibilities.

   If we are to effectively support teachers, we must be open to seeing the world from their perspective and appreciating that their perspectives, and experiences, vary depending on their social and cultural identities. As was apparent in the different types of pandemic-related stressors reported by Black teachers in this sample compared to White teachers, wide disparities exist in the direct and personal impact of Covid-19 stressors. Thus, school supports for teachers must have a similar variability, taking into account individual context, culture, and challenges. That variability can only come from a willingness of leaders to understand "…how race, gender, socio-economic status and other important identities are sources of both stress and strength…" for teachers during the pandemic (NCTSN, 2020). As recommended by NCTSN (2020), leaders must "resist the desire to treat all [teachers] the same. Different [teachers] have different needs and when we don't acknowledge these unique needs, we risk more significant harm to our most vulnerable [teachers]".

2. **Ensure access to technology and educational resources to all students and teachers.**
   a. Provide a clear plan for how the school will provide access to technology and learning materials to all students, including those receiving special education services and arts education.
   b. Provide opportunities for teachers to share how experiences of inequities are impacting students and their families.
   c. Provide opportunities for teachers to act as advocates for students' needs.
   d. Provide a clear plan and follow-up resources to support teachers' own technology and supply needs for distance learning.

   Another tenet of cultural humility is to recognize power imbalances and work to change them by holding institutions accountable to standards of educational equity. Despite substantial efforts on the part of the district and individual networks and schools, the district estimates that 20% of students either don't have their own computers or tablets, don't have internet access or have neither (Hammer, May 12, 2020). Based on teacher survey responses, students of color and students living in poverty are most likely to be impacted by lack of access to technology. Other inequities noted by the teachers in the survey included access barriers for students in special education and access barriers to materials necessary for arts education. The confrontation of these inequities was a source of stress for some teachers. A related stress for teachers was their own difficulties related to technology access and distance learning, including outdated equipment, the lack of high-speed internet access, the need to use their personal data plans to support their teaching responsibilities, and the need for materials like paper and printer ink.

Safety, Trustworthiness, and Transparency

1. **Develop a school reopening plan based on the latest public health guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control for hygiene, social distancing, and protective equipment.**
   a. Provide teachers with the protective equipment, sanitizing supplies, and monitoring tools they need to maximize physical safety.

b. Describe how implementation of the physical safety plan will be monitored and enforced.
c. Consider flexible work policies that allow vulnerable teachers and staff to work from home and flexible leave policies that support staff who may have been exposed to Covid-19 at work and that allow staff to stay home to care for sick family members.

The experience of trauma disrupts one's sense of being physically secure. Almost half of teachers in the survey indicated feeling unsafe and expressed consistent health concerns related to Covid-19. In order to restore a sense of physical safety, develop and share pandemic plans with teachers.

2. **Create routines and enact a clear instructional plan.**
   a. Acknowledge stress that has resulted from routines that have already changed.
   b. Maintain clear, concise, accurate, and timely communication to increase predictability, a sense of control, and feelings of safety.
   c. Explain that there will likely be future changes to routines and that those will be communicated ahead of time whenever possible.

Trauma threatens psychological and emotional safety by challenging one's sense of predictability. Many teachers commented on work-related stressors due to vacillating policies and procedures with little rationale for the decisions being made by their administration. In contrast, many teachers commented on how helpful it was when leaders used clear communication and provided a strong rationale for their decisions. For example, one teacher hoped leaders would recognize "…that lack of strong communication/plans/leadership has added stress to this situation for everyone…Making it up as we go will only cause teachers to have continued trauma from this experience, rather than feeling like we are moving forward and healing".

Collaboration and Mutuality

1. **Find ways to engage and collaborate with teachers in planning for the future.**
   a. Establish a teacher advisory group to identify instructional successes and challenges to inform planning and to provide periodic feedback on plan implementation.
   b. Send and reinforce the message that teachers, support staff, and administrators "are in this together" (NCTSN, 2020). Create systems of support for teachers so they do not feel like they, alone, are responsible for the learning and well-being of their students. Provide extra supports for teachers struggling to balance work and personal obligations.
   c. Engage teacher expertise as co-developers and co-instructors for professional development trainings.

Individuals who have experienced trauma may blame themselves or develop a sense of guilt for what happened. Teachers in the survey experienced such feelings both in relation to their students (e.g., "It's difficult to really do my job because I know the students are struggling just to get their core assignments done. It makes me sad every day and I feel useless, unhelpful and purposeless") and their own families ("The most difficult aspect of my job during this pandemic has been the constant feeling of failure resulting from my perceived inability to balance my work obligations with assisting my own children with their distance learning"). These experiences can challenge one's sense of dignity and worth. Collaboration and mutual respect communicates to teachers that they are valuable members of the school community and can restore their sense of dignity as individuals who have something to offer. Many teachers expressed hope that leaders would trust them to address their students' needs in ways they see as most important and draw on their teaching successes during the pandemic to inform instructional plans moving forward. That shared trust creates a sense of safety for teachers and communicates that leaders respect their expertise.

2. **Support collaboration with families.**
   a. Ask families about the best times for and methods of communication. NCTSN suggests family surveys, virtual town halls, and other opportunities for families to provide input into what works and what doesn't for staying connected with teachers and the school.

b. Maintain up-to-date contact information for families and provide administrative support to teachers when contact cannot be made.
c. Establish a community advisory group that can help support individual teachers in making and sustaining contact with families and identify community resources available to support family well-being.
d. Offer professional development sessions to provide strategies for teachers to foster partnerships with families to enhance learning and well-being.
e. Create guidelines for family contact that clearly communicate to teachers expectations around their roles in reaching students and families (including time expectations) as well as the limits of their responsibilities.
f. When school campuses reopen, hold training sessions for families to increase their familiarity with instructional technology.

Teachers reported a desire to have more meaningful collaboration with the families of their students. However, they also reported several stressors related to their efforts to support families, including: difficulty contacting families, the need to be accessible outside of traditional work hours, teaching parents how to use instructional technology, and knowing the best ways to engage families without being a burden to them. Teachers also expressed the need for clear role expectations in their non-instructional contact time with students and families and support in setting healthy boundaries around those contacts.

Support from Peers and Administrators

1. **Create rituals and routines that provide opportunities for teachers to connect with one another and with school administrators to develop and sustain positive, supportive relationships.**
   a. Embrace a stance of cultural humility and talk with teachers about the best ways to build a sense of safety, community, connection and hope.
   b. Gauge the success of efforts to create supportive relationships and a positive work environment through the regular assessment of school climate.

Experiences of trauma can result in feelings of isolation and disconnection from others. The support provided by peers and administrators helps individuals feel less isolated and restore their sense of belonging. LDOE recommends schools facilitate meaningful interactions to develop sustaining, strong relationships throughout the school. We agree that relationships are key for healing and learning. Teachers in this survey reported that one of the most difficult Covid-19 stressors was the loss of connection with students and peers—and that one of the most helpful supports that facilitated their teaching during the pandemic was finding ways to maintain those connections.

2. **Provide supports for teacher well-being and mental health.**
   a. Review mental health benefits included in employee health insurance packages with teachers so they know how to activate benefits.
   b. Provide a list of resources for mental health and well-being.
   c. Improve access to mental health services through access to telehealth services, an on-site adult mental health service provider, flex time in teacher schedules, and increasing financial feasibility through benefits packages.
   d. Educate teachers about secondary traumatic stress and strategies for prevention.
   e. Critically evaluate how school climate and culture support teacher wellness. Schools should encourage teachers to take time throughout the school day to manage their stress, utilize professional development time to offer strategies for coping with stress, and sponsor wellness activities such as yoga or meditation.

Supports for teacher mental health and wellness are critical. Teachers have experienced a high rate of direct exposure to pandemic-related stressors and trauma, with the highest rates of direct exposure reported by Black teachers. Teachers have also experienced indirect exposure to trauma (also called secondary trauma exposure) through their increased awareness of student struggles and through learning of deaths in the families of their students. Unsurprisingly, as the experience of stressors increased,

teacher ratings of their mental health worsened. Twenty-three percent of teachers who reported experiencing emotional distress indicated that their distress made it a lot more difficult to teach. This finding is consistent with research that has demonstrated that teachers' own emotional well-being exerts a strong influence over their ability to effectively perform important aspects of the job, including fostering healthy teacher–student relationships (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2009).

Empowerment, Voice, and Choice

1. **Provide training, resources, and time to empower teachers to help their students manage stress and trauma.**
   a. Provide specific guidance for teachers on how to talk with students using developmentally appropriate language about Covid-19 and physical safety guidelines, including changes in routines and social rituals due to safety concerns.
   b. Provide training on the impact of trauma on student learning and behavior.
   c. Incorporate integrative, comprehensive practices into the school day to support students in the classroom, such as trauma-informed approaches or social emotional learning (SEL) programs.
      i. Provide consistent and sacred time in the daily schedule to focus on social emotional learning or trauma-informed practices to remove any tension teachers might feel in balancing academic expectations and student well-being.
      ii. Create accountability systems to ensure the uptake of these practices, such as adding some indicators of these practices to existing classroom observation measures and expanding existing instructional coaching supports to include a focus on instruction using social emotional or trauma-informed practices.

   Trauma is often experienced as an event that is out of our control; trauma happens *to* us. Such experiences challenge one's sense of agency, or the belief that we have control over our actions and their consequences. Disruptions in one's sense of agency can be restored through recognizing individuals' strengths and resilience, creating organizational supports that foster empowerment, and providing opportunities for shared decision making, choice, and goal setting. Teachers indicated a strong desire for training and resources that will empower them to help their students manage stress and trauma. Proactive, comprehensive approaches to support student wellness will be critical because it is unlikely that there will be the financial means or professional capacity to support students through the use of mental health professionals and community partnerships alone.

2. **Provide training and resources to support distance learning and academic remediation.**

   Although teachers experienced many successes in the transition to distance learning, their comments indicated that there is still a lot for them to learn. They indicated a need for further training in the best practices in distance learning. They also indicated a need for additional staff support and tools to assess and address gaps in learning as a result of the pandemic.

Conclusions

Many of the findings of this report are likely already known by network and school leaders, because they have been leading the fight to ensure the continuation of high quality education during the pandemic and because they have undoubtedly been exposed to the same stressors and trauma as their staff. As network and school leaders feel the push to develop operating plans and budgets that will be effective in closing the learning gap that has occurred during the pandemic, we hope they will feel an equal push to develop plans and set aside funds to support the well-being of teachers and students. If we are to assuage a devastating mental health fallout like the one we experienced following Hurricane Katrina (Osofsky et al., 2009), we must attend to the social, emotional, and behavioral well-being of students and staff.

Of course, an impending school funding crisis (Turner, May 26, 2020) makes all planning difficult. We hope that the coordination being provided by NOLA Public Schools will foster collaborations across charter networks

and stand-alone schools to support problem solving and shared resources. LDOE has identified planning priorities that are eligible for competitive funding, although the priority funding guidance does not indicate funding available to support teacher well-being or universal social emotional learning for students. Advocacy efforts must focus on a shift in funding priorities to support student and teacher well-being.

The New Orleans Trauma-Informed Schools Learning Collaborative is developing a webinar and planning tool for network and school leaders to help schools plan for high-quality social emotional supports for school reentry and beyond. We are also working in partnership with local experts to develop a suite of online professional development resources to support many of the recommendations included in this report. Those resources will be available to all schools.

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