A total of 96 students participated in this PON online survey during August and September 2020.

- **Race/Ethnicity:**
  - Latinx/Hispanic students account for 98% of survey participants. The LAUSD student population consists of about 77% Latinx students. (California School Dashboard 2019)
  - African American students account for only 1% of survey participants when they make up of 8.5% of the LAUSD student population, so the needs of these students are underrepresented in our policy recommendations.

- **Gender:** 59% (57) were female, while 41% (39) were male.

- **Income:** 98% reported qualifying for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

- **Education Programs:**
  - 30% (29) reported participating in an English Language Development (EL) program.
  - 20% (19) reported receiving special-education services.
  - 49% (47) mentioned having taken Advanced Placement (AP) and/or Honors courses.

- **Age:** 65% of completed surveys came from high school students ages 14-18, though some elementary, middle school and college students also participated.

### Schools and Districts

- A total of 42 schools are represented in our survey.
- Most student survey participants attend schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) (56%), followed by Long Beach Unified School District (24%). Within LAUSD, its Local District Central was the most represented, with Local District South the least represented.
- Four schools accounted for 27% of all 96 students from our survey. These schools are:
  - Polytechnic High School (Long Beach Unified)
  - Camino Nuevo Charter Academy (Miramar) High School (LAUSD Local District Central)
  - New Open World Academy K-12 (LAUSD Local District Central)
  - Aragon Avenue Elementary School (LAUSD Local District Central)
RESOURCES AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Devices
88% of students have some type of reliable device that includes a decently sized screen and keyboard they could type from, while 10% only had a smartphone or a tablet. However, 2% of students surveyed do not have any electronic device to use for distance learning.

Type of Devices
The most popular device in use by students included smart phones, followed by Chromebooks and laptops. 28% reported having a printer at home.

Internet Access
26% (25) of students reported having internet access only through their cell phone, or no access at all.

Also, 22% of students who do have internet access at home reported that their internet service is frequently (“always” or “usually”) unreliable, slow and/or disrupted in some way.

“There is wi-fi in the house, but it is very slow and turns off sometimes because I have four siblings who also use it ... even turns off in the middle of class, and when that happens, I just use my phone.” - Camino Nuevo Charter Academy student
INSTRUCTION

Attendance
• 60% of students answered that they attend school 5 days a week.
• 70% of students reported attending school “always,” and 18% said they log in “often.”

Workload
Data suggest that the workload was challenging but yet manageable for most students, with 15% reporting that the workload was “very heavy.” However, for high school students, the number reporting a “very heavy” workload jumped to 20%, which suggests that high school students may be more overwhelmed by their class assignments than younger students.

Learning
• 58% of students report not fully comprehending instructional material delivered via distance learning, or only grasping it occasionally, often depending on the teacher.

“Sometimes [I understood the material] because some teachers would explain it or give lectures, but others wouldn’t explain at all.”

“I believe I understood it but not the best. It was hard to get things that I didn’t really understand.”

“Felt like I could work better at my own pace [if I] wasn’t rushed to finish anything that exact moment.”

Learning Subjects Online
When asked which subjects were easier to learn online, answers varied according to student’s favorite class. Subjects they liked were easier to learn online, but for subjects they disliked, they had a harder time learning on a virtual platform. 51% of students responded that English/Language Arts was easiest to learn, but those struggling with Math or Social Studies found learning these subjects more difficult.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Easiest to Learn Online</th>
<th>Hardest to Learn Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Language Arts</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grades
• While 76% of students reported that their grades remained the same or improved with distance learning, 24% reported grades going down.
**Teacher Communication and Responsiveness**

- 63% of students reported providing feedback to their teachers about workloads and assignments. Also, 37% reported their parents also providing feedback to teachers.
- 45% reported that teachers modified lessons after receiving feedback from students and/or parents.
- 82% of students reported that their teachers responded to questions within one day.
- Students responded as follows when asked, “What did your teachers do to make distance learning easier?” and, “What can your teachers do to make distance learning easier in the Fall?”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>What worked for some students</th>
<th>Recommendations for Fall 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>▪ Communicated often&lt;br&gt;▪ Over the phone, received a personal phone call&lt;br&gt;▪ Over e-mail</td>
<td>▪ Find more ways to communicate, maintain strong communication&lt;br&gt;▪ Understand students, families, and their current situations&lt;br&gt;▪ Provide regular updates on grades&lt;br&gt;▪ More one-on-one online sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When teachers communicated, students interpreted it as “they care.”</td>
<td>▪ Explained concepts well and answered questions completely&lt;br&gt;▪ Focused teaching on what students actually needed to know&lt;br&gt;▪ Helped with homework&lt;br&gt;▪ Used different tools to teach&lt;br&gt;▪ Asked for student feedback and checked for understanding&lt;br&gt;▪ Modified lectures based on student and parent feedback&lt;br&gt;▪ Was organized&lt;br&gt;▪ Made class fun</td>
<td>▪ Explain concepts thoroughly and in different ways, using examples&lt;br&gt;▪ Provide a combination of lectures, workshops, group projects, tutoring, and optional opportunities for extra credit&lt;br&gt;▪ Solicit input on which material is most important for students to learn&lt;br&gt;▪ Allow more time for Q&amp;A&lt;br&gt;▪ Make content more organized, fun, and interesting, to keep students engaged&lt;br&gt;▪ Use YouTube videos, but curate these&lt;br&gt;▪ Go slower when explaining material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instruction</strong></td>
<td>▪ Reduced homework&lt;br&gt;▪ Did not lower grades</td>
<td>▪ Assign less homework&lt;br&gt;▪ Provide more time to complete work&lt;br&gt;▪ Do not increase student workload&lt;br&gt;▪ Count homework as part of learning&lt;br&gt;▪ Give instructions and resources to help finish and understand homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We appreciate all you do.”</td>
<td>▪ Listened to and worked with parents to support students&lt;br&gt;▪ Made themselves available and offered tutoring as needed</td>
<td>▪ Provide help when requested&lt;br&gt;▪ Frequently ask if students need help&lt;br&gt;▪ Provide assistance with online platforms&lt;br&gt;▪ Get student input on class schedules</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:**  **Bold red font** indicates that 7 or more students made a similar comment.  
**Bold black font** indicates that between 3 and 6 students made a similar comment.
Do Your Teachers Understand You?
When asked this question, 35% of students responded that they mostly or completely do, but 24% say they did not.

How Schools Can Improve in Fall 2020
Additional recommendations students made that were different from what they recommended to teachers included:

- **Distance Learning**
  - Ensure all students have devices to use for learning.
  - “Better technology or wi-fi so we can run smoother and better classes through webinars.”
  - “Offer online programs similar to the ones that were held prior to the switch to distance learning.”
  - “Shorten school days.”
  - “[Do] not make workload too heavy [or] have hours which are too extreme, to avoid Zoom fatigue or, in general, computer fatigue.”

- **Improve communication between school and students, teachers and students**
  - “The school can also have better communication in terms of our senior graduation, trips, sports, class, etc.”
  - “Give us a day to talk to our teachers personally.”
  - “Provide clear rules and procedures for Zoom calls.”
  - Engage Alumni: Recent graduates wanted to help current high school students.

- **Support teachers**
  - “Instruct teachers with the same information and grading rubric or grading [process].”
  - “Give the teachers adequate training and the proper utilities needed to teach online.”
  - “Communicate with teachers to see if they are doing their job and check up on students [so they can] give feedback.”

**EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING**

*Motivation Levels:* Many students (57%) reported a loss of motivation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher 12%</th>
<th>Lower 57%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I learned new strategies to cope and learn.</td>
<td>Mental-health issues: Feeling stress, anxiety, and/or fear of coronavirus; experiencing mood changes; needing therapy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I experienced fewer distractions at home.</td>
<td>No social interaction with students or teachers and were tired of isolation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I took responsibility for my learning.</td>
<td>Did not like the virtual experience because students did not understand the lessons; teachers did not have strategies for this platform; students were tired of looking at the screen all day; some students did not know enough English to excel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same 31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Distractions
Students reported that the home environment has many distractions which impact learning. When asked what the greatest distractions were, they identified siblings and noise in general as top choices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distraction</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV, Radio, Phone</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family members</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pets</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To reduce noise, they turned off TVs, radios, and phones. Whenever possible, students moved to a different room or area within the home. They did best when they had access to headphones and a room where they could be alone. This included working in bedrooms and living rooms, but restrooms, closets and backyards were also mentioned. Some like having music playing in the background to help mask other noise.

Support
- 45% of students claimed that their parents completely or mostly understood how they felt; 15% stated their parents did not understand.
- These data points reinforce the open-ended answers describing the effort parents made to help students by being engaged in their education, trying to provide a home environment conducive to learning, and monitoring well-being.
  - Engaged in Student Education
    - During Spring semester, parents monitored attendance, students connecting to class and their attention level, and homework completion.
    - For Fall semester, a few students asked parents to communicate with their teachers, requested that teachers be easily understandable, and continue helping with reminders about homework.
  - Provided Environment Conducive to Learning
    - In the Spring, parents helped students by providing “alone time” during school hours, reducing noise and sibling distractions, designating separate learning areas in the home, purchasing headphones and internet service, scheduling breaks, limiting chores, and providing meals.
    - For Fall, students who did not receive all the needed tools want support in obtaining learning supplies, including hotspots and reliable internet connections. Overall, they want parents to continue giving them a quiet study space to learn while reducing distractions. Some recommendations they offer for parents are: Enforcing “phone-free” time during school hours; knowing their class schedules; and understanding that some students need additional quiet study time than others.
  - Monitored Student Well-Being
    - In Spring semester, parents gave students more attention, actively listened, and/or asked if they needed help. Some reported being encouraged often by their parents to continue doing well.
Now students want support with getting more sleep, exercise, and energy. They also want parents to understand that they are not constantly doing homework, that grades may fluctuate, and that they take their schoolwork as seriously now as they did during in-person instruction.

Social Life
• 60% of students reported that they “very much so” miss seeing their friends.

“*It is tough not being able to go out and talk to friends. You start to feel lonely and left out, with no energy to do anything after a while.*”

Receiving Mental-Health Support
• 44% of students asked parents, teachers, or others for help with managing their emotions.
• Of the students who requested help, 92% reported receiving it.
• Of the students who did not request help, 48% still received some type of support.
• In all, 77% of students received support from someone, and 57% received support from more than one person, or got more than one type of support.
• Types of support received by students:
  o Friend or significant other (37)
  o Parent or family member (29)
  o Nonprofit or community organization (12)
  o School counselor (12)
  o Healthcare provider (7)
  o School peer support (6)
  o Faith-based organization (5)

Mental-Health Support Effectiveness and Preferences
• When asked if the help received made the students feel better, 45% responded, “very much so.”
• When asked what type of help they would prefer to receive, the most frequent answers were:
  o Academic support (tutor) (9)
  o Therapy or Psychologist (9)
  o Counselor or Mentor (5)
  o Teachers (4)
  o Seeing their friends (4)
  o Someone they could feel comfortable talking with (4)
• Two students mentioned that financial support to pay for reliable internet service would really help.
SILVER LININGS OF DISTANCE LEARNING, RECOMMENDATIONS

Silver Lining of Distance Learning

**Family**
“*I learned about the importance of family.*”
“*I am enjoying being with my family.*”
“*I want to learn to live with my siblings better.*”

**Working on Self**
“*I can set my own pace.*”
“*It gave me time for self-care.*”
“*I’m working on my self-image.*”
“*I’m learning about self-discipline.*”
“*I feel like there is more time for other stuff. I’m taking driver-ed courses.*”

**Less Exposure to Virus**
“*I am at less risk of getting infected.*”

Student Recommendations
Participants were asked to select the top two resources they would benefit the most from receiving. The overwhelming majority (65%) believe “improving teacher communication” was most important in enhancing the effectiveness of distance learning. Next was having more electronic devices for learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
<th>31% (29)</th>
<th>43% (40)</th>
<th>45% (42)</th>
<th>47% (44)</th>
<th>65% (60)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improving access to internet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional support counselors/services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Different class times</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>More electronic resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving communication with teachers</td>
<td>31% (29)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PON Recommendations
1. **Increase internet access:** Offer stipends to pay for internet service and/or provide hotspots.
2. **Strengthen instruction:** Students want concepts explained thoroughly, in different ways, with examples, curated videos, and allowing enough time for question and answers. Provide a combination of lectures, group projects, tutoring, and opportunities for extra credit.
3. **Provide greater support for students struggling to learn in their classes, especially Math.** The greatest reported benefit was for one-on-one sessions with teachers, including tutoring as needed.
4. **Provide students with more time and flexibility to turn in assignments.** Give less homework overall while designing assignments and projects to be more meaningful for students.
5. **Provide students with scheduling alternatives, including the ability to change classes if needed.**
6. **Require teachers to have more personal communication with students and parents, supporting them in doing so.** Student want teachers to call them, have one-on-one sessions to check in, and understand them, their families, and situations. This also includes talking regularly with parents.
7. **Strengthen teacher support and feedback loops:** Assist teachers in standardizing grading rubrics; provide training on distance-learning tools; share information about class and school events; and request feedback from students, parents and teachers on how well distance learning is working.
8. **Improve student mental health by offering sessions with psychologists, counselors, mentors and peer support, along with academic support utilizing tutors and academic counselors, to assist students in meeting graduation requirements and in navigating the college-application process.**