

Summary of Spring 2020 National Survey Findings to Inform Support for Physical Education Teachers to Deliver Safe and Effective Physical Education During COVID-19 November 2020

COVID-19 has created the largest disruption of education systems in history. While many new strategies are being utilized to meet educational goals during the pandemic, what remains constant is that education must be designed to meet students' physical, mental, emotional, and cognitive health needs.

Physical education (PE) and physical activity are a critical element of a [whole child education](#)¹. The Active Schools advocacy statement, [Physical Education and Physical Activity are an Integral Part of the Education Process During COVID-19](#), stresses the need to safely and effectively physically educate our children during the pandemic.

Effective teachers are irreplaceable in helping students succeed.² They facilitate two-way teaching and learning processes; they help students learn content through real time responses to questions, make learning fun, shape students' attitudes, exemplify empathy, model teamwork and respect, and build student resilience in several ways.² Successful teachers are irreplaceable in this task – and will remain so in the foreseeable future – but they need to be supported in multiple ways to be effective in unpredictable circumstances.²

The [World Bank Teachers Thematic Group](#) outlined three key principles to teacher effectiveness during and in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, as well as opportunities for long-run improvement: (1) support teacher *resilience*, (2) support teachers *instructionally*, and (3) support teachers *technologically*.

Educators for Excellence, a teacher-led organization, conducted [Voices from the Classroom](#), a nationally representative survey of public school teachers exploring education during this crisis. Specifically, they sought to understand what is working, what is not, what is needed now, and what teachers think the priorities should be when classrooms reopen.

Key findings included:

- Distance learning is profoundly different from the classroom setting, particularly with reduced instructional time and markedly low attendance and participation rates
- Teachers and students lack fundamental resources and support right now
- Students from vulnerable populations are far less likely to have what they need to successfully participate in distance learning
- Teachers want the focus on teaching, support for their students' wellbeing and preparation for future closures
- Schools need to reopen safely and adopt creative ways to best serve all students
- With looming budget challenges in states and districts, protecting effective teachers and the most vulnerable students is a priority

Teachers, students, and families need to feel safe and supported in order for effective teaching and learning to take place. Researchers have conducted, and are conducting, national surveys to learn what PE teachers need.

¹ASCD and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Whole school, whole community, whole child: A collaborative approach to learning and health, 2014.

²World Bank Teachers Thematic Group. Three Principles to Support Teacher Effectiveness During COVID-19, May 2020.

Key Findings from National Surveys of Physical Education Teachers in May 2020

Surveys conducted by [SHAPE America](#), [Online Physical Education Network \(OPEN\)](#), and [University of Kentucky](#)

Instructional practices during the initial months of COVID

- Most used platforms for teachers to communicate with students: Google Classroom (52%), email (28%), paper copies/packets (19%), and Zoom (17%) [UK]
- 51% of teachers reported having students submit assignments [OPEN]
- 37% of teachers reported using pre-recorded videos in their instruction [OPEN]

Challenges and Concerns

Curriculum and Instruction

- Uncertainty as to what to teach and whether it would be valued by students [UK]
- Uncertainty regarding adaptations for online teaching [UK]
- Unique challenges to delivering equitable and effective remote PE instruction to all students [OPEN]
- 67% of teachers were anticipating a hybrid instructional model in fall 2020 [SHAPE America]

Working Conditions

- Job status [UK, SHAPE America]
- Budget cuts [SHAPE America]
- Lack of administrative help/support [UK]
- Lack of technology knowledge and usage [UK]
- Difficult personal working conditions (i.e., poor internet connection, lack of space and equipment for teaching, taking care of own children and family members) [UK and OPEN]
- 20% of teachers felt they were less effective when instructing remotely [OPEN]

Communication and Accountability

- Lack of communication with students/families [UK and OPEN]
- Lack of accountability for attendance and grading led to lack of student participation in PE [OPEN]
- Lack of information about what to expect in fall 2020 [SHAPE America]

Opportunities and Supports

- Teachers are learning to use more technology [UK]
- Teachers are using PE social media groups to share teaching ideas and strategies [UK]
- Teachers felt they were successful in collaborating with others, despite the online environment [OPEN]
- Even amid the uncertainty, teachers said they were eager to deliver positive experiences for their students [SHAPE America]

Desired professional development

- Best practices for teaching PE with social/physical distancing (over 60%) [SHAPE America and OPEN]
- Best practices for teaching PE using low- or no-touch activities (over 60%) [SHAPE America]
- Online assessments [OPEN]
- Learning new technology and how to implement a distance learning environment [OPEN]
- Inclusive learning environment (i.e., students with disabilities; no access to technology) [OPEN]

Additional national surveys of physical education teachers are being conducted in fall 2020. This document will be updated to include key findings from those surveys.

Resources

[CDC COVID-19 Guidance for Schools](#)

[SHAPE America COVID-19 Resources](#)

[Online Physical Education Network \(OPEN\) Physical Education Tools for Right Now \(PE Now\)](#)

[Gopher Physical Education Re-Entry Resources](#)

[Active Schools Partners' No-Cost Resources for Families: Staying Active at Home is Good for Your Physical and Mental Health](#)