



SSLA Digital Learning Survey Results, 2020

Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management

Key Findings

- 27% of teachers reported that they experienced technical issues almost daily or every day, and 45% reported that their students had issues almost daily or every day. However, only 9% of parents reported their child having technical issues most or all of the time.
- 80% of teachers reported that technical issues were resolved in 24 hours or less.
- At least 40% of teachers had challenges helping students and parents log in, having persistent technical problems and/or helping students and parents navigate the technology platforms.
- In terms of other challenges with online learning, the top challenge teachers reported was students being distracted by their surroundings during class time.
- Teacher confidence in teaching online and using Teams and i-Ready platforms for instruction increased dramatically after the SSLA program.
- The top resources SSLA teachers said all teachers need to be successful are time to practice teaching online, training on best practices, training for parents and students, and on-demand technical support for teachers, parents and students.
- Parents who completed the SSLA survey were largely positive about the program and reported few technical or online learning challenges. 70% of parents felt their child learned as much or more during the online SSLA program compared to a normal school year.
- In open-ended feedback on how SCS can improve online learning in the fall, parents and teachers were closely aligned on: 1) knowing how to enable and disable platform features to keep students engaged but limit distractions; and 2) incorporating frequent breaks and a variety of interactive strategies to keep younger students focused.

Overview

In July 2020, 1,766 K-5 students participated in Shelby County Schools' annual Superintendent's Summer Learning Academy (SSLA). Given that SSLA students and teachers were among the first to experience fully virtual instruction, the Department of Research & Performance Management disseminated surveys to participating parents and teachers to learn about their experiences with online learning, especially regarding students in early grades. This report serves to summarize themes, best practices and lessons learned from SSLA to inform District-wide virtual learning efforts this fall. In total, 70 teachers and 559 parents responded to the respective surveys. The parent version was offered in English and Spanish.

Teacher Survey Results

Seventy respondents completed the SSLA teacher survey in August 2020. Each grade level between K-5 had at least 10 respondents with 5th grade having the fewest respondents (10) and 1st grade having the most (20). All respondents reported that their students were somewhat (40%) or very (60%) engaged throughout the sessions.

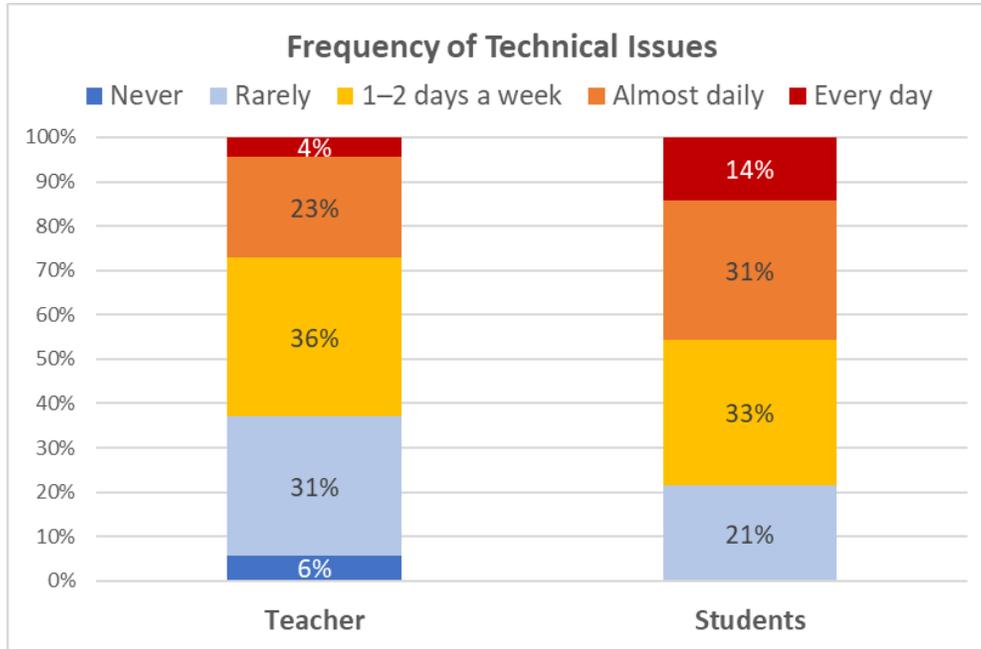
Technical Issues

37% of SSLA teachers reported that they themselves never or rarely experienced technical issues, and 21% felt this was true for their students for the most part. Another 27% of teachers reporting

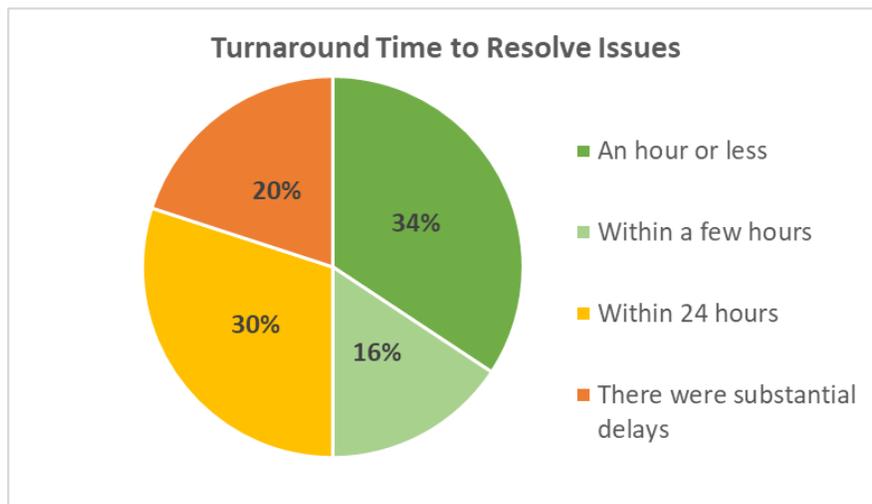


SSLA Digital Learning Survey Results, 2020
Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management

having technical issues almost daily or every day, and 45% felt this was true for their students. Teachers reported a higher frequency of technical issues compared to those surveyed as part of the online summer school program and End-of-Year Connect Event.



One third of teachers reported that they/SCS administrative staff were able to resolve technical issues within an hour, and 80% reported issues being resolved in 24 hours or less.



Student Interactions

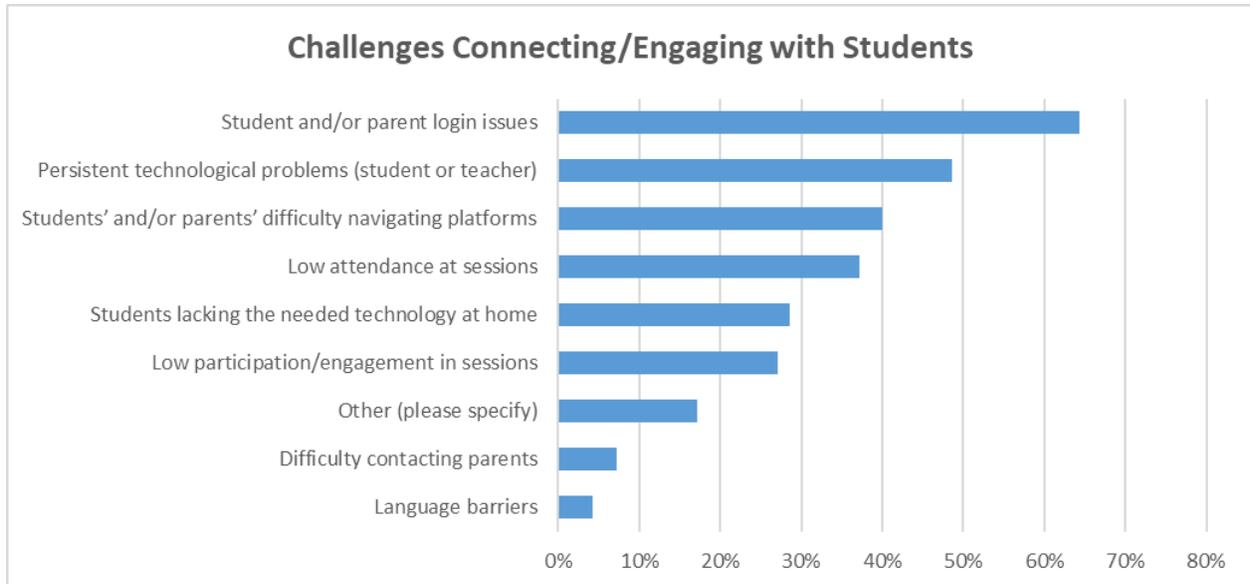
Teachers were asked to identify whether they had experienced any of the challenges in the chart below related to connecting and engaging with students. About two thirds of teachers had some challenges helping students and parents log in. Other more common issues were persistent technology issues, helping students and parents navigate platforms, and low attendance at SSLA sessions. In the “Other” category, the most frequent challenges teachers reported were students not



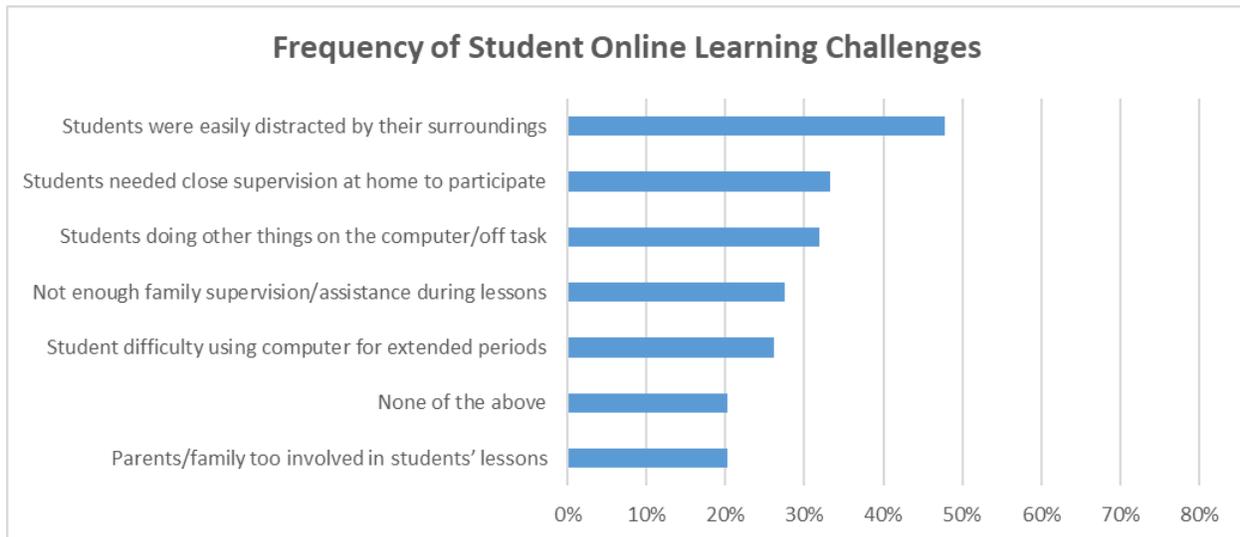
SSLA Digital Learning Survey Results, 2020

Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management

being able to use their cameras and navigating Teams features like chat and being able to simultaneously monitor students and present content.



Teachers were also asked if they experienced other types of interaction challenges with students, especially since SSLA was targeted toward elementary-aged students this year. Fewer than half of respondents reported experiencing any one issue, and 20% did not experience any of the challenges listed. The top three challenges all had to do with keeping students on task, dealing with distractions and students getting adequate support and supervision from others at home to participate.



Comfort and Resources Using Technology

Similar to what summer school teachers reported, SSLA teachers noted dramatic improvements in their comfort level with online instruction and key platforms over the course of the Summer Learning



SSLA Digital Learning Survey Results, 2020

Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management

Academy program. 84% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the training they received on Microsoft Teams in particular was useful in preparing for online instruction.

	% Agreement Before SSLA	% Agreement After SSLA	Net Change
Somewhat or Very Comfortable Using Technology	60%	98%	+38 points
Advanced or Expert Using Microsoft Teams	7%	76%	+69 points
Advanced or Expert Using i-Ready	48%	84%	+36 points

Teachers were asked to identify up to five resources they consider most important to be successful in an online teaching setting. Over 60% of respondents identified the same four resources – all of which having to do with training and support using technology. Consistent with other survey and focus group feedback, SSLA teachers emphasized having opportunities to practice using platforms and delivering online instruction prior to initiating classes with students. Teachers also want to have more training on best practices for online instruction, training targeted for families about appropriate practices for digital learning, and on-demand technical support accessible to both teachers and families.



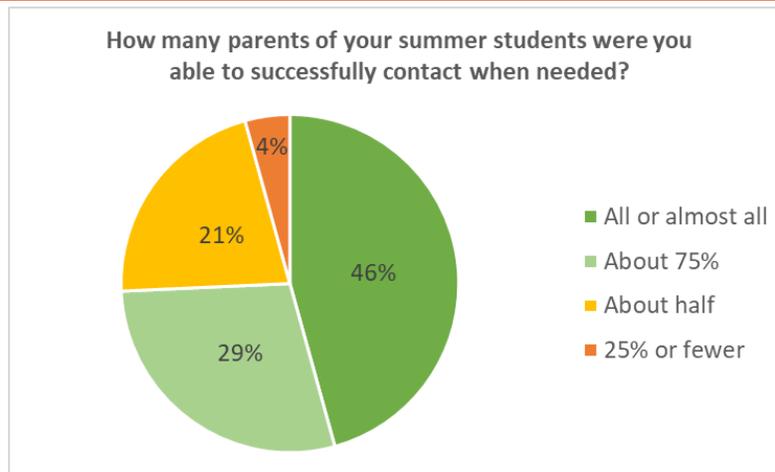
Parent Contact

SSLA teachers tended to be more successful contacting parents when needed than summer school teachers. Nearly half of SSLA teachers reported being able to contact all or nearly all parents of participating students, and 96% reported being able to contact at least half of parents when needed. In terms of frequency, 14% of respondents attempted to reach parents daily, and 97% of respondents attempted to reach parents at least once a week. Similar to summer school teachers, SSLA teachers primarily used email, text and phone calls to get in touch with parents.



SSLA Digital Learning Survey Results, 2020

Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management



Teacher Feedback and Recommendations

At the end of the survey, 53 teachers (76%) shared open-ended comments on how SCS can make virtual learning successful this fall, noting major challenges and solutions they discovered during SSLA. The most prominent themes teachers raised were about maintaining a low-distraction, high-engagement online learning environment (21 comments, 39%). The two underlying issues they reported related to enabling/disabling key features in Teams and working with parents to ensure students were in a quiet, focused setting to learn at home.

Some examples of feedback about Teams features are as follows:

- “Helping students and parents to know the importance of using the mute; teaching them to raise hand and be recognized when to unmute to speak;... parents and students complained about not having the camera to see others;”
- “I personally feel disabled SCS computers was a great idea because at first, students were doing all types of things with the chat box. Maybe start off with cameras on and see if problems arise, if they do, disable that students camera.”
- “I think the mute button was somewhat of a distraction. Even after expressing several times before and during the lesson the students still un-muted themselves at will. I think that function needs to be teacher control only.”
- “I was unable to see my students. Since I had first graders it would have been nice to see them. Students always wanted to share their work or pictures of their arts and crafts.”
- “Younger students must have cameras on their devices. Without them, it is extremely difficult to make connections with the students.”

Teacher feedback about working with parents to create a good online learning environment includes:

- “Students would listen to music or their parents were talking on the phone and would at times unmute their mics. This was a major distraction. I had to stop sharing my screen, go back to the class, and manually mute students.”
- “Making sure parents would send communications to the teacher instead of interrupting the lesson and taking away instructional time from students in the class.”



SSLA Digital Learning Survey Results, 2020

Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management

- “More structure from the home environment, parents not making the environment suitable for learning, and parents not respecting the fact that their children are online and not disrespecting others online with their inappropriate language and conversations.”
- “When teaching kindergarten this summer, it was important for students to have someone there to help with them with the technology pieces. Often parents or older sibling were helping too much by providing students with the answers instead of letting the teacher help the student.”

Another prominent theme was for SCS to consider instructional formats that allow for more breaks between shorter lesson periods and encourage teachers to use multiple strategies to keep younger students engaged during learning time (17 comments, 32%).

- “Incorporate some movement during the instruction so that students will not be sitting for long periods of time-example-do exercises to math facts, take short standing breaks to stand, move around, go to the restroom and prepare for the next class.”
- “I enjoyed the summer session. It helped me to actually see and do the virtual learning. I love how the lesson were spaced out and not back to back. It gave me a chance to deal with the technology issues and regroup for my next lesson.”
- “The duration of lesson time should be shortened, no more than 60 minutes. Allow time for transitions. Multiple breaks throughout the day. Some sort of staggered entry should be put in place for younger children and parents in general.”
- “Students were engaged but sitting for long periods of time is difficult for young students-I can't image a whole day. I miss the opportunity for students to go to the carpet, teacher table, computers, rotate groups, and brain breaks.”
- “Nearpod... definitely kept my students more engaged during class. They especially liked the interactive games that we would play via Nearpod (Time to Climb). -Crafts and hands on activities during the classes (primarily the field trips). My students LOVED the crafts and sending pictures to show off their projects.”
- “Keeping your tone engaging and upbeat and allowing students to consistently engage in the lesson via sharing your screen, replying in the chat, allowing them to talk, keep them involved.”

Some teachers also echoed feedback like that of online summer school respondents, namely that they often used two devices to monitor students while presenting content and emphasized the importance of regular communication with parents and providing resources and training to parents about technology platforms to help students acclimate.

Parent Survey Results

In August 2020, 559 respondents participated in the SSLA parent survey with 534 responding in English and 25 responding in Spanish. Each grade level between K-5 had at least 70 respondents with kindergarten having the fewest respondents (74) and 1st and 2nd grade having the most (126 each).

Technical Issues

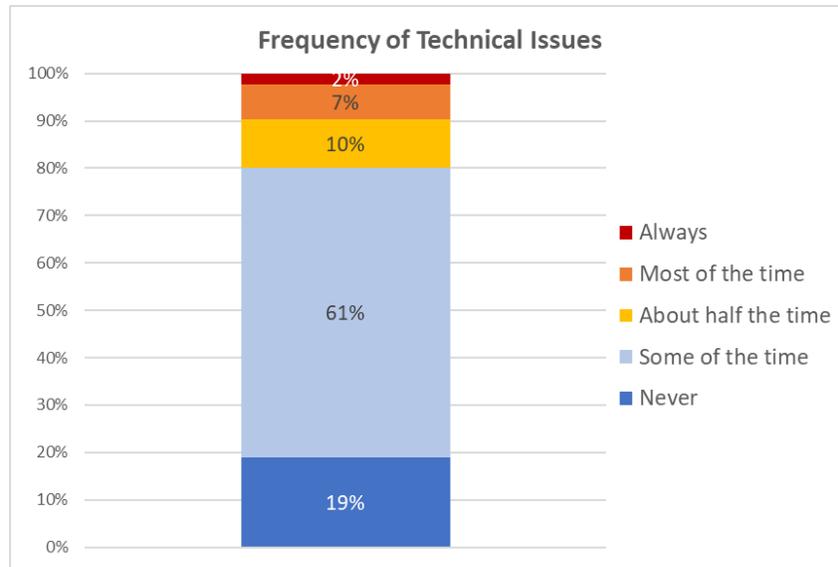
Although 81% of parents reported that their child experienced technical issues at least some of the time, only 9% reported that technical issues occurred most or all of the time during SSLA, which



SSLA Digital Learning Survey Results, 2020

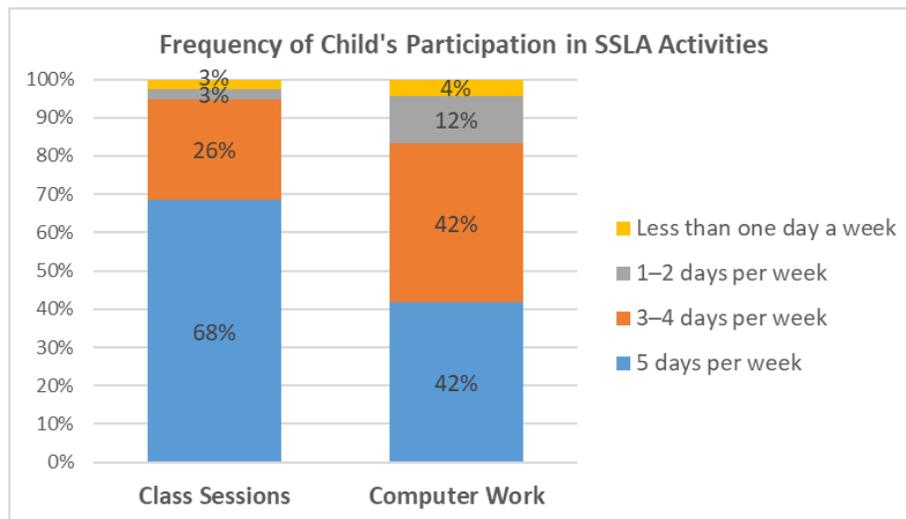
Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management

contrasts sharply with 45% of teachers reporting that students had technical issues nearly or every day.



Learning and Engagement

Most parents who completed the survey reported that their child participated frequently in SSLA class sessions with teachers and in other classwork on the computer. 68% of parents reported their child participated in sessions with teachers daily, and 94% reported participation at least three times a week. 42% reported that their child did additional classwork on the computer daily, and 84% reported their child doing classwork at least three times a week.

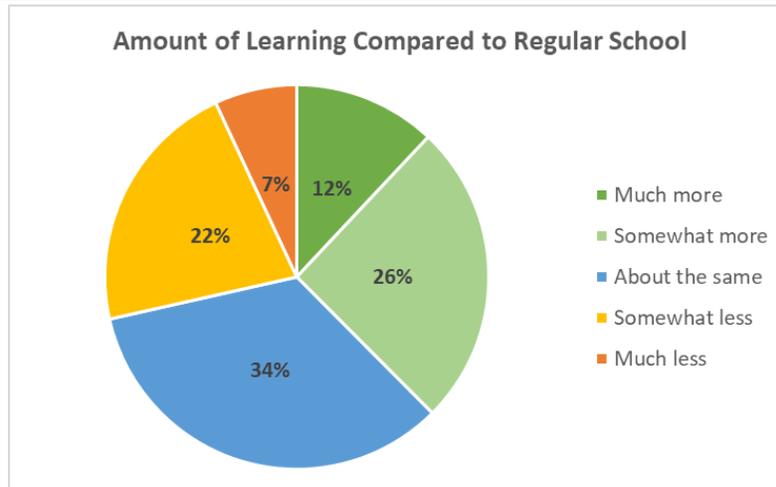


More than 70% of parents felt that their child learned as much or more during the SSLA online program compared to regular school while 29% felt their child learned less.

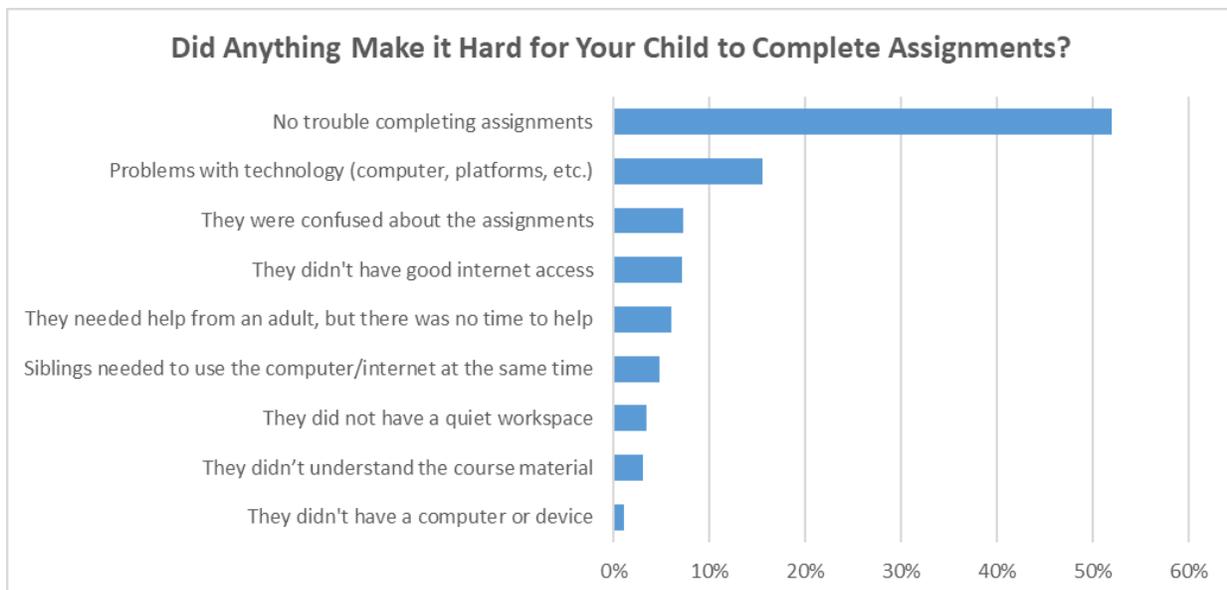


SSLA Digital Learning Survey Results, 2020

Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management



When asked if their child experienced any major issues completing assignments during the SSLA program, over half of parents said they did not have any issues, and the most frequent issue, technology problems, was reported by just 16% of parents. This again contrasts with teachers' perceptions of technology problems, distractions during instruction and the need for adult supervision to help guide young students during online instruction. Possible reasons for the disparity are that teachers more closely and regularly observed students during instruction and/or that parents responding to the SSLA survey are more likely to be highly engaged and accessible via technology than other parents whose children participated. One other consideration is that even though teachers reported having frequent technical issues, they rarely mentioned issues with device or platform malfunctions in their open-ended comments. Instead, they focused mainly on features that they wanted to enable or disable in Teams such as chat, video and the ability to monitor students while also presenting content via screen-sharing, so they may have defined this issue differently than parents did.

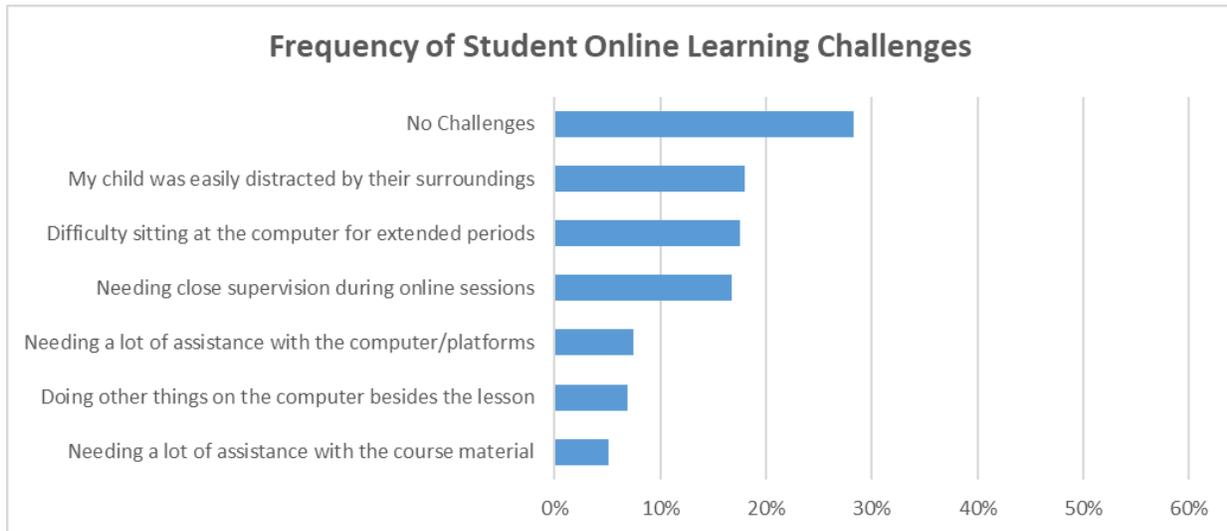




SSLA Digital Learning Survey Results, 2020

Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management

When asked about challenges their child may have had with online learning during the summer in general, 28% of parents reported no major challenges while 17-18% reported their child becoming distracted by their surroundings, having a hard time sitting at the computer for an extended period, and needing close supervision during online sessions.



Parent Feedback and Recommendations

At the end of the survey, 325 parents (58%) shared open-ended comments on how SCS can make virtual learning successful this fall, especially for younger students. The most common themes were for teachers to use a variety of activities and interactive teaching strategies to keep students engaged and to limit the amount of instruction by incorporating breaks and opportunities for students to get up from the computer throughout the day (101 comments, 31%). Several parents shared examples of how their child's SSLA teacher kept the class engaged. Some examples include:

- “Engage the students often...call on them to answer questions to ensure they're paying attention. Take a break(s) to get them up and moving during each subject/session.”
- “Short classes periods with brain breaks. Interactive lesson. Ensure the teachers calls on all students and not the same one all the time because they know they will get the answer correct.”
- “10 mins breaks after every lesson would be nice for the younger kids because summer learning times were great reading at 9-10:45 and math was at 12:30 to 1:35 that gave the kids a break in between each session”
- “Make learning fun. Try playing games and the virtual trips were awesome. Keep engaging the kids. After lessons are taught let each student teach their groups to make sure they understand. I love the small groups for that extra help.”
- “Our summer learning academy teacher would teach a couple of problems allow them to answer in the chat and reward them with a break, via a song, go noodle, a stretching activity or something fun off subject for about 1.5-2 minutes and then return to the lesson. This helps a lot.”



SSLA Digital Learning Survey Results, 2020

Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management

- “Teachers are going to need to be prepared and figure out how to engage the children. They cannot just play videos and teach lessons that don’t allow for back and forth interaction with students. They will need to be intentional that their lessons are engaging.”

Similar to teachers’ feedback, parents expressed the need to enable and disable some Teams platform features to encourage engagement but also limit distractions (84 comments, 26%). Some examples include:

- “The teacher needs to be able to mute everyone and take a person off mute when they raise their hand. Chat boxes should be turn off for young kids to avoid Unnecessary posting of YouTube videos or images.”
- “There was 1-2 children who kept their computer unmuted so we heard their surroundings as well as the teacher and that became a huge distraction for my child. Also, the teacher, because she couldn’t see the children couldn’t really gauge if the kids were following along or simply logged in. My son required one of us to be there to answer his questions because she was going at her own pace or the pace of the 2 children who didn’t mute their computers.”
- “Training on the platform and instructional design will be essential to online learning moving forward. The teacher didn’t have a full grasp of the technology and age appropriate expectations; therefore, noise in the background of other classmates’ homes were distracting and the teacher never muted the entire class... Also, the children’s cameras were never enabled therefore the important essence of nonverbal communication, in accessing learning, was lost.”
- “Most of the kids’ s videos were disabled but a few could use theirs. Should have been all or none. The teacher had technical issues practically every day. Not able to show the correct screen, audio trouble, etc. Overall, we made it through and I am glad my grandson was able to attend.”
- “The student's video cameras were off during the Summer Program. This was not a good idea as the students could not see their peers and that is what kids miss the most about not physically going to school. The students should be allowed a chance to interact with each other or time for each student to speak and say what they would like to share with the class.”

Another theme was about technical issues with internet connectivity, devices, platform functionality/navigation and the ability to resolve technical issues. 78 comments (24%) identified one or more of these issues. Some examples include:

- “My issue was internet connection. I have internet but it was an issue when all 3 of my children was on at the same time. I will need a better modem. My current modem can’t power 3 devices. But, I can’t afford to upgrade my plan.”
- “It was sometimes difficult figuring out what were problems on our end, the teacher’s end or Microsoft’s part. Sometimes the teachers blamed internet connections and wanted us to log out and back on, even though almost all other kids across the city were having the same issues. I understood, though.”
- “Microsoft Teams had a lot technical issues, shutting down doing class time, unable to log in, not being able to use the chat feature so many issues related to the TEAMS platform.”
- “Parent IT helpline number. We weren’t allowed to talk to IT with tech issues. Which overwhelmed the teacher. She couldn’t teach for calling IT for parents.”



SSLA Digital Learning Survey Results, 2020

Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management

- “I have a 2nd grade student that couldn't get on the online platform because it wouldn't allow our other computer to access. I reached out to administration for assistance in hopes of getting it resolved. They suggested that I call the Board to get a school computer. When I called the school board, they said that I was told the wrong thing. They didn't have any computers to give out. They instructed me to go back to the person that told me that and have them rectify the problem by giving them the number on the bottom of our computer. It was too much back and forth, so we gave up trying.”

One final major theme was that many parents reported having positive experiences overall with the SSLA program and saw it as an important opportunity to prepare their students for more online learning in the fall (69 comments, 21%). Another theme referenced in many of these comments and others was the importance of adult supervision at home with younger students to help them acclimate to online learning and navigate technology (37 comments, 11%). Some examples include:

- “I enjoyed the curriculum that was used to explain the information for students. My daughter receives special education services and her teacher really implemented her learning goals. My daughter enjoyed the sessions, virtual field trips, and assignments. I have seen a drastic improvement in her learning abilities because of this virtual program. Thank you.”
- “If the parents take a day to sit an actual do a walk through with the child and ask all questions that he or she don't understand. This system and program can run smoothly. I am for this all the way”
- “My child enjoyed her teacher. The teacher made learning fun and was very accommodating to students who may have had technical issues or didn't understand the assignments. My child was able to easily figure out any technical kinks such as volume or disconnection issues. Platform easy to navigate.”
- My daughter is going to 2nd grade. She was in Ms. [Redacted]'s 1st grade summer learning academy class. She loved it! She learned a lot and looked forward to participating every day. She was able to talk to classmate after class even though they weren't able to see each other. They all pretended to be animals one time and used their imagination to play games with each other. She was able to log in and do her iReady assignments without problems. I was able to ready her teacher whenever I had a questions. I'm really glad I enrolled her in the SLA. She was able to refresh her memory on everything she learned in 1st grade, and she also was able to see what it will be like to virtually learn at home. We developed a routine, and stuck to it. She got up on time, washed up and got dressed for school, ate breakfast, and logged in by herself on her computer 10 minutes before class. Her and I both loved it.”
- “The teachers and virtual class setting were amazing. I was surprised how they found ways to keep the children interested and organized without being in the classroom. I tell everyone I know the program made me more at ease about the new virtual school year. Hats off”
- “The remote learning experience for my daughter was very helpful. For younger students, remoter learning requires a lot of discipline which is something that is needed in life. In addition, the parents have to be involved in the learning process. My child really enjoyed herself.”