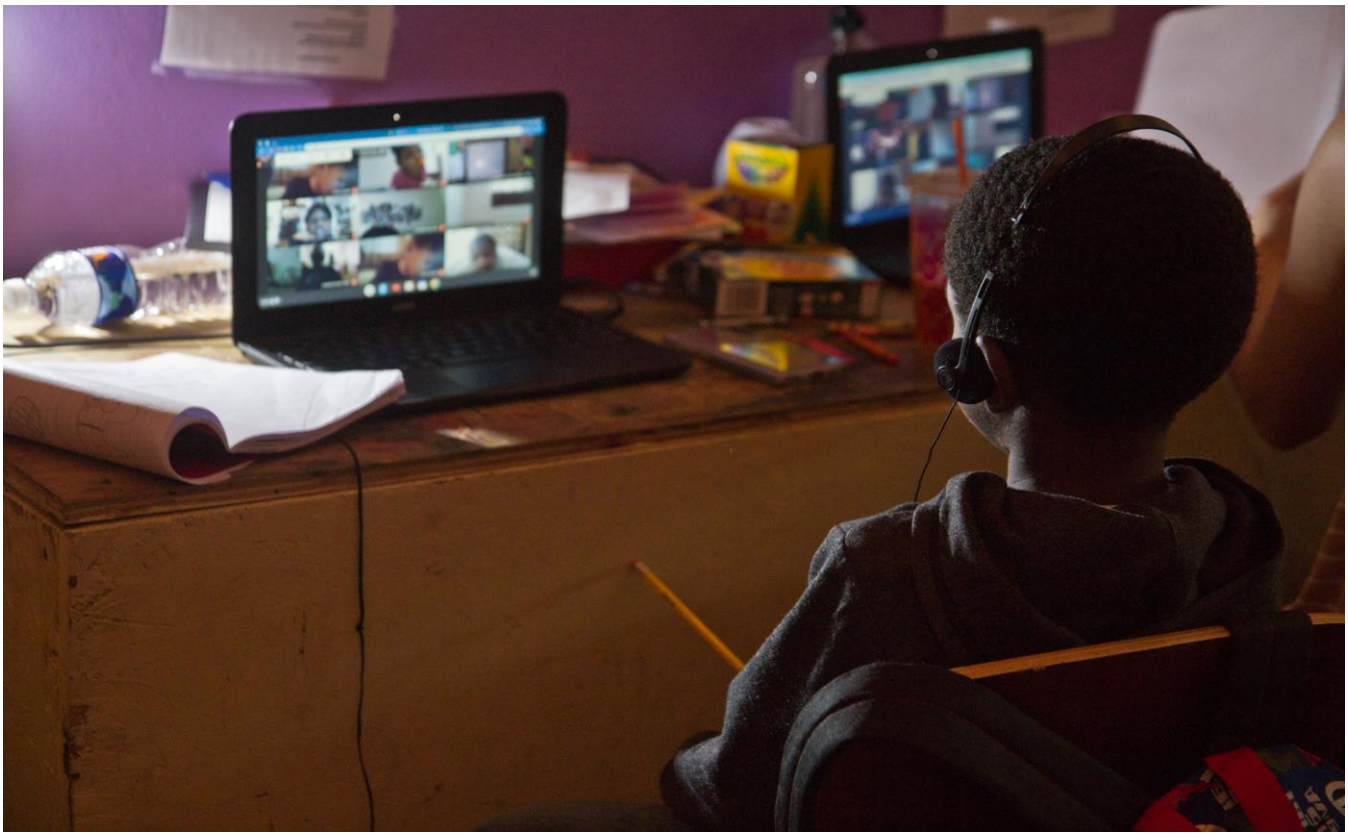
Paterson Public Schools Full Service Community Schools Evaluation Report 2020 – 2021

Second Pandemic Special Report

September 30, 2021



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Executive Summary

This is a final report of the evaluation conducted by ActKnowledge of a Federal Full Service Community Schools Grant received by the Paterson Public School District for year school year 2020 - 2021. However, unlike the past ten years of evaluation, this report focuses on what the FSCS initiative and staff were faced with, and how they responded during a full year of online learning and no face-to-face in person access to learning or services. School 2, and JFK High School are the focus of the evaluation funding However, the role of Paterson's full service community school program was instrumental as a whole during this unprecedented pandemic year of online learning. Therefore, the evaluation goes beyond the schools funded for evaluation, to commentary and assessment of the unique role of the community school in both highlighting and ameliorating the extremely under-resourced and challenged circumstances of low income families and school districts.

In a nutshell, we found two major facts that jumped out at us as crucial for future roles for community schools:

1. The educational gap between low income students in under-resourced districts and their more resourced counterparts is not a gap, it is a chasm of huge proportions. The programs of community schools in Paterson (and elsewhere) do a stupendous job of mitigating the shortfall in opportunity for many students. But their funding and capacity limit their ability to reach all students.

2. Paterson's community schools and the FSCS structure have matured to the point where they were not only able to function with only virtual capacity, but able to develop many creative new ways to help with practical problems (e.g. computers and internet); learning through after-school programs; emotions and trauma through counseling and workshops and group activities. Their performance didn't falter in eighteen months. They faced challenges, they didn't succeed in getting attendance for every idea and some schools and staff are a bit better at performing than others. But overall, the initiative as incredibly impressive. This kind of capacity can clearly be built and scaled up.

In addition, we found that with school health clinics closed, the health service still managed to find locations, refer parents to health services and assist in many ways to provide health care.

What we don't know, and won't know for at least a year, is where student learning stands. How many students maintained their level? How many regressed? How many improved? How many were lost for a year and a half? So, this report does not address academic progress. It addresses emergency response.

As this report period comes to end, we find the FSCS staff ready but apprehensive about the level of trauma and behavioral problems their students will bring back to school with them.

They have prepared programs and social/emotional health programs and workshops. The schools' focus in September 2021 and thereafter will be helping students navigate returning to school. After-school and learning programs will still operate as well, but are curtailed by lack of access to buildings by staff after school hours as part of safety protocols. How the fall of 2021 will be experienced by students, parents, staff, teachers and partners is the subject of much planning. The schools are prepared but the level of need is not fully knowable. Fortunately, with their high level of involvement with families during the pandemic thus are, many types of problems and traumas are known, so planning is not being done in the dark. Rather, they face September 2021 with a deep knowledge of their communities and of the constraints and opportunities afforded by the district, their space, their successes and their funding.

Our overall finding is the impressive performance of the Paterson FSCS initiative, albeit with not enough capacity (or parent/student interest) to reach everyone. For all the previous evaluations describing impressive results with the health service, some academic improvements and the myriad services to students and families, this year stands out as showing lessons for education in general and the depth and strength of the Paterson FSCS system.

1. Introduction

This is a final report of the external evaluation conducted by ActKnowledge of a Federal Full Service Community Schools Grant received by the Paterson Public School District for year school year 2020 - 2021. School 2, and JFK High School are the focus of the report. However, the role of Paterson's full service community school program was instrumental as a whole during this unprecedented pandemic year of online learning. Therefore, the evaluation goes beyond the schools funded for evaluation, to commentary and assessment of the unique role of the community school in both highlighting and ameliorating the extremely under-resourced and challenged circumstances of low income families and school districts.

The report presents results of a student survey of behavioral and perception measures for School 2, which differs from previous student surveys to ask about online learning and their overall pandemic situation. We do not report on academic achievement in 2020 – 2021, as we could not in 2019 -2020, because standardized tests were suspended and so many students were not in regular attendance of all online classes. What we learned was more about the flexibility and ability to make radical transitions and keep students engaged. Effects on learning should begin to become apparent in 2021 -2022, as school as returned to "normal". We quote "normal" because there is really so much not normal in returning to school after an 18 month absence, many students having lost family members, new safety protocols in place and the fear of an outbreak that could cause another closure, as has already happened in several cities.

As one FSCS partner said "we shouldn't spend the first months back to school worried about learning loss, as we have to deal with trauma, social re-integration, mental health issues and social and emotional coping". We agree with this and will focus the fall semester evaluation on these issues and turn to academics by the end of June 2022.

The external evaluation uses a new type of draft of the Paterson Public Schools (PPS) – Full Service Community Schools (FSCS) Theory of Change (ToC). The initial ToC was developed in 2010. By 2019, with new staff, new schools funded, a new basis for goals and planning was begun through a participatory approach with key stakeholders and ActKnowledge. That draft is in this report. It provides a stark contrast to the theories of change emerging as we asked people, for the first time, not about their long term goals but just about the goals for getting back to school in the fall.

The report also outlines a set of conclusions and recommendations for sustaining the Full Service Community Schools in Paterson as well as the very highlighted issue of education inequality and the role of community schools.

1.1 Overview of Paterson Public Schools (PPS) – Full Service Community Schools (FSCS)

Paterson Public School District was successful in securing a Federal Full Service Community School grant in 2010, which led to the establishment of the Paterson Public Schools (PPS) – Full Service Community Schools (FSCS) initiative. The PPS FSCS initiative comprises five public schools, each of which is partnered with a lead community-based organization to plan, implement and sustain services to support the well-being and development of children, their families and the wider community. The first FSCS established under this initiative was School 5 in 2011, followed by Rev. Dr. Frank Napier School and New Roberto Clemente School in 2012, and Schools 6 and 15 in 2014.

Some schools received additional grants since the first grant in 2010. Napier in 2013, and NRC and School 6 in 2015, received School Improvement Grants (SIG). The SIG grant provides support for professional development and extended school day hours. Four schools experienced leadership change during this period with new principals appointed at Napier in 2014 and at Schools 5, 6 and NRC in 2015. Currently, School 6. School 2, School 15 and JFK have five year FSCS grants and are therefore funded for the current evaluation.

Beginning in March 2019 and extending until September 2021, the FSCS have operated with online learning, a transition no one was ready to make. However, the community schools had the organization, staff commitment, understanding of their constituents and program adaptability to step in immediately to help students and parents adjust online learning. Nonetheless, they could only reach families that wanted to be reached. The report discusses these efforts and their results in Program Implementation and Findings.

1.2 The Community School During Covid

Full-service community schools operate from a simple central concept: learning does not and cannot happen in a vacuum. Students who are hungry cannot concentrate in their classes; those who are homeless cannot do homework. Families who experience periods of food scarcity or lack electricity because of financial instabilities cannot support their children in their learning to the extent that will allow those children to thrive—and neither can families who are grappling with drug addiction, incarceration, or the threat of deportations. The community schools model, first defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), seeks to draw together the elements of communities needed for the widest range of students possible to thrive and uses schools as the point of coordination for those services. That adaptive responsiveness has positioned full-service community schools to be a vital part of school systems' ability to provide what much larger swaths of communities have found they need in the unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding for the American Rescue Plan specifically targets community schools. Clearly, the pandemic has highlighted the systemic inequities built into our educational systems; with that starker understanding of community needs has come a complementary understanding of which

programs scale best to meet the needs of the community now and, ideally, moving forward into whatever 'new normal' different segments of our society might experience in the coming years.

The full-service community school model is seen as particularly effective and appropriate for those students (and their families) facing circumstances connected to poverty. Copious studies, including the Department of Education's longitudinal evaluation of Title I schools , MDRC's look at two years of case management at 24 low-income urban schools, and the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation's study of East Allegheny, PA middle schools—have shown the model's efficacy in those circumstances. Most recently, the Department of Education noted that:

> according to a 2020 RAND Corporation Study of New York City community schools (the study uses the term "community school" rather than "full-service community school"), the approach had a positive impact on student attendance in elementary, middle, and high schools and across all three years that outcomes were measured (2015–2016, 2016–2017, and 2017– 2018). The study also found positive and significant impacts on elementary and middle school students' on-time grade progression and suggested a reduction in disciplinary incidents for elementary and middle school students. The study found that the community schools had a positive impact on students' mathematics achievement in the final year of the study. Further, based on a comprehensive analysis of 143 studies, 6 the Learning Policy Institute concluded that well-implemented community schools lead to improvement in student and school outcomes and contribute to meeting the educational needs of struggling students in schools with high poverty rates.

With the COVID epidemic and the economic shutdown that has accompanied our national response, schools have found that the community school approaches are now needed to help an even wider spectrum of students and families—and community schools have been "particularly well-positioned to respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including by working closely with partner organizations to address community needs." (DOE) That need is leading schools – from the REACH Academy elementary school in the Oakland, California, Unified School District, to Peoria, Illinois, public schools, and Asheville City Schools in North Carolina–to embrace the model as a more foundational building block in terms of strategies and partnerships; the success of their efforts points the way toward a more connected and empathetic approach to how schools can coordinate and deliver the services every student and every family deserves.

While there are several different articulations of the pillars of community schools, perhaps the most important feature is that the "community" nature of the program works both in terms of supports being delivered ***to*** communities and in terms of supports being defined by the specific needs ***of*** each community, ensuring community schools have the flexibility to be most effective ***for*** each community. The ESEA defines a full-service community school as "a public elementary or secondary school that:

(a) Participates in a community-based effort to coordinate and integrate educational, developmental, family, health, and other comprehensive services through community based organizations and public and private partnerships; and

(b) Provides access to such services in school to students, families, and the community, such as access during the school year (including before- and after-school hours and weekends), as well as during the summer.

The National Education Association (NEA) takes the further step of defining six "pillars" it feels are key: 1) strong and culturally relevant curriculum; 2) high quality teaching and learning; 3) inclusive leadership; 4) positive behavior practices (including restorative justice); 5) family and community partnerships; 6) coordinated and integrated wraparound community support services. Each of those pillars is to be keyed to the needs of the community through a community school coordinator, school stakeholder problem solving teams, and a community school stakeholder/partner committee. Using the data from a needs and assets assessment, that triad is able to understand what the students and families in their school need and then work to provide it. Those priorities might lean toward English language learning for students and for parents, college and career readiness, nutrition services, community service, social / emotional health, or supports for students who are chronically absent, suspended, or expelled—all depending on what the particular needs are.

Our children's' needs have been revealed in particularly stark terms over the past two years because of the COVID pandemic. The ways in which inequities have been revealed by the pandemic, in 2020, "more than 1 million children did not enroll in local schools." Unsurprisingly, many of those children were 5-year-olds in low-income neighborhoods – some of our society's most vulnerable members. And as the country moved toward unending Zoom meetings, the digital divide hit students of need more strikingly than at any other time: "Nearly one in five students between kindergarten and 12th grade do not have computers or speedy Web connections, according to data compiled by the Pew Research Center in 2018, the latest available, which said this "homework gap" disproportionately plagues low-income families and people of color." The Learning Policy Institute notes that "School buildings are closed for nearly all of the country's 50.8 million public school students, and those being hit the hardest are the nation's most marginalized students—more than 52% in 2016–17. For these students, school closures can mean the loss not only of precious learning time but also of essential services such as meals and medical and mental health services that mitigate the stresses of poverty." This is an inequity that might be papered over in normal times; in the COVID era, however, this has left students literally shut off from both academic instruction and social-emotional support that schools offer.

Community schools, fortunately, have shown that their structures are scalable in the face of larger disruptions, so these approaches and partnerships may offer a more comprehensive vision for the years ahead. These schools have been able to use their coordinators and their understanding of the students, families, and staff, to build support structures to design strategies for moving instruction online, building meaningful professional development, and helping counselors reach absent students. As the pandemic and school closures have worn on,

schools have been able to work toward closing the learning gaps from that lost time through multi-tiered systems of support. In addition, community schools have been working to maintain that sense of connectedness to school, whether that be in terms of helping families to get computers and internet service, finding new ways to engage parents, providing continuing counseling, or providing connections to health care. The Berea Independent School District's Full-Service Community Schools in Berea, Kentucky have provided "evidence-based interventions" to respond to students' social and emotional needs. Other schools have set up food deliveries from food pantries to families that did not have transportation, set up socially-distanced home visits, and identified families that had not reached out to teachers or logged into technology platforms.

All of these strategies build on the family information that community schools see as their most valuable resource in supporting the students and families so that learning happens. In addition, these strategies build on the belief that learning cannot happen in a vacuum—for any child—and that the strategies deployed for our most vulnerable students can work for our society at large. As a PACE policy brief from early in the pandemic reasons:

> Given the extreme variability in how students and families have been affected by COVID-19, educators must be made aware that educational disparities will be inevitably exacerbated. This means that seemingly established practices of teaching—for example, assessments and grading—must be reexamined, not to prioritize standardized efficiency but to understand meaningfully the learning goals and success criteria for each student. The most responsive community schools develop "individualized learning plans" or "personalized learning plans" for each of their students—borrowing from the standard requirements for students qualifying for special education services—to identify specific learning goals with students and their families, and to use the plan to guide instruction, specialized support, partnerships, and evaluation of progress.

The American Rescue Plan's $122b investment in K-12 school relief—which specifically allows the money to be used for community schools—shows that the current administration agrees that community schools are a model for the bumpy road ahead. In addition, the administration is calling for $443m in next budget years for the same program. Community schools point the way toward a better future: a united and purposeful approach for all students and families to get the support they deserve.

Public schools, according to American educational reformer Horace Mann, can be "the great equalizer"--spaces in which students from different socio-economic backgrounds encounter one another and thrive, setting each student and, subsequently, that student's extended community, on a path toward success. The operating reality has, of course, been far short of that mark; schools are one of the many places in our society where we have seen widening inequality between those with socioeconomic resources and those without. In the Covid era,

those inequalities have become more obvious and more severe, given the ways in which disadvantaged students rely on schools as a source for their food and health care, not to mention all of their educational needs; on top of that, the choice of whether and when to return to schools, along with the nature of hybrid or virtual schooling, set up a dynamic that has increased the insecurities of disadvantaged students while students of means have not suffered those losses.

Systemic evidence of this increased inequality can be seen in the workings of those companies that provide the services most needed in disadvantaged communities. Revolution Foods distributes over 2 million meals per week to public school students in 400 U.S. cities; 75% of those students qualify for free and reduced lunch programs. CEO and co-founder Kristin Richmond says:

> One of my biggest fears is that as systems are closed and schools are disrupted, that creates a disproportionate burden on families who are most vulnerable: workers who depend on shifts, workers who live for each paycheck. It's all one circle because these are the parents of the kids that we're serving in schools.

In California, the organization Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) has documented student learning losses and, therefore, growing inequities. Looking at students in language arts and math, their study showed the most significant learning lag in grades 4-6 –a lag of between 5% and 25% behind when compared to a typical year. Those figures, however, reveal even more devastating evidence of lags when they are broken down by income level: lower-income students in most grades are further behind than higher-income students—and in some grades lower-income students have fallen behind while the learning of higher-income students has accelerated. Students who are currently learning English, moreover, are showing substantially more learning lag (30%) than students who are native English speaking (10%). The impact is most certainly larger than can be measured—k-12 public school enrollment has declined by 3%--five times more than the recent pre-Covid annual rate of enrollment decline. Given what's known about the instability of living conditions experienced by under-resourced communities, it is likely that students of need comprise a much larger part of that 3% (or 160,000 students). These findings are echoed in a nationwide study looking at data from almost every k-12 public school in the United States tracking in-person visits by students from January 2019 to December 2020: "Our findings reveal that school closures from September to December 2020 were more common in schools with lower third-grade math scores and higher shares of students from racial/ethnic minorities, who experience homelessness, have limited English proficiency and are eligible for free/reduced-price school lunches. The findings portend rising inequalities in learning outcomes."

Older students, meanwhile, have struggled with mental health and isolation, leading to greater disengagement and consequences:

- In Sacramento City Unified School District, 10 times more students are significantly disengaged compared to last year. And in Los Angeles Unified, the number of Ds and Fs in grades 9-12 increased by 8.7 percentage points in the fall

compared to the same time period last year, with greater increases among Black (23.2%) and Latino (24.9%) students.

- "There is something wonderful in being in contact with other humans, having a human who tells you, 'It's great to see you. How are things going at home?'" Fernando Reimers (Ford Foundation Professor of the Practice in International Education and director of Harvard GSE's Global Education Innovation Initiative and International Education Policy Program) said. "I've done 35 case studies of innovative practices around the world. They all prioritize social, emotional well-being. Checking in with the kids. Making sure there is a touchpoint every day between a teacher and a student." Given that many more young students of color live in remote-only districts, these effects are then seen as part of the racial inequities propagated in US school systems.
- Harvard Graduate School of Education (GSE) Dean Bridget Long reports that "Teachers are doing a phenomenal job connecting with students [online]...But they've lost the whole system — access to counselors, access to additional staff members and support. They've lost access to information. One clue is that the reporting of child abuse going down. It's not that we think that child abuse is actually going down, but because you don't have a set of adults watching and being with kids, it's not being reported."

The factory model of public school, with its "one-size-fits-all approach […] wasn't working very well before, and it's working less well now," observes Paul Reville, Harvard GSE, pointing toward the need for community solutions to meet students' needs by understanding "where students are" in terms of the needs society expects schools to take on. The solutions, say Reville, "are going to come from our community. This is a civic problem."

This is a long quoted segment from the same article which highlights community supports, but these are, I believe, NOT community schools' efforts – I wanted you to see them and confirm that they are not where we want to go:

He applauded one example, the Somerville, Mass., public library program of outdoor Wi-Fi "pop ups," which allow 24/7 access either through their own or library Chromebooks. "That's the kind of imagination we need," he said.

On a national level, he points to the creation of so-called "Children's Cabinets." Already in place in 30 states, these nonpartisan groups bring together leaders at the city, town, and state levels to address children's needs through schools, libraries, and health centers. A July 2019 "Children's Cabinet Toolkit" on the Education Redesign Lab site offers guidance for communities looking to form their own, with sample mission statements from Denver, Minneapolis, and Fairfax, Va.

Already the Education Redesign Lab is working on even more wide-reaching approaches. In Tennessee, for example, the Metro Nashville Public Schools has launched an innovative program, designed to provide each student with a personalized education plan. By pairing these

students with school "navigators" — including teachers, librarians, and instructional coaches — the program aims to address each student's particular needs.

In conclusion, the United States is facing a situation in which the educational effects of the pandemic may have been inflicted in a bounded period of time, but the will be felt for generations by those least able to afford them. One long-range study by Yale economist Fabrizio Zilibotti, for example, "predicts that one year of school closures will cost ninth graders in the poorest communities a 25% decrease in their post-educational earning potential, even if it is followed by three years of normal schooling. By contrast, their model shows no substantial losses for students from the richest 20% of neighborhoods."

1.3 Evaluation Methods

This evaluation uses a participatory mixed-methods approach involving collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. The implementation of the community school services at the schools is based on a model that hypothesizes what it takes to reach goals. The evaluation, in turn, tests whether the assumptions of that model were correct or not, and whether the outcomes identified are being achieved.

As a participatory evaluation, the evaluator and program practitioners ensured that key stakeholders were involved in setting goals, which they did as participants in Theory of Change workshops conducted by the evaluator during the summer season. Key stakeholders also helped identify and collect data, collaborated in the logistics of site visits and collection of materials, and participated in feedback meetings with the evaluators.

Because of COVID and online learning, and the increased gap between higher and lower income students, this evaluation also included an extensive desk review about education inequality and community school roles to alleviate it.

Theory of Change

The evaluation in prior years has been guided by a comprehensive Theory of Change for the Initiative and for the constituent schools. The process of developing and refining the Theory of Change was carried out from 2010 to 2014 through a series Theory of Change sessions facilitated by ActKnowledge and the National Center for Community Schools, as detailed below:

Many FSCS model stakeholders participated in these sessions, including principals, teachers, parents, community school directors from each school; lead agencies (New Jersey Community Development Corporation (NJCDC), St. Paul's Community Development Center, and Boys and Girls Club of Paterson and Passaic); key personnel from Paterson Public School District and Paterson Education Foundation and providers of health services. The sessions were co-led and facilitated by ActKnowledge and the technical assistance provider from the National Center for Community Schools.

For this 2020 – 2021 school year we tried something different. As schools and coordinators faced uncertainty and unexplored mental health, learning and re-integration needs, we asked schools to just state goals for their first couple of months back in school. Those are presented in this report.

Site Visits

Comprehensive site visits were made by ActKnowledge each grant year, using a set of interview protocols designed to elicit the views of stakeholders on how the community school was developing, including changes, achievements, challenges, and factors facilitating or hindering progress. This involved:

- Interviewing all community school directors and program staff.
- Interviewing principals and/or assistant principals.
- Focus group interviews with parents and/or parent coordinators.
- Focus group interviews with students.

This year, "site" visits were conducted exclusively via Zoom, as no school buildings were open.

Student Surveys

ActKnowledge developed a survey questionnaire to elicit the views and perceptions of students (focusing on 3rd grade and up) in the full service community schools (identified through the initiative's Theory of Change and through the education research literature) relating to their experience with attending online, their challenges getting online, the demand within a household for multiple members to use a computer, and how much help they needed or received.

2. Implementation

2.1 Implementation of Programs, Supports and Services During a Full Pandemic Year

Academic work and activities for students and parents can only work if the students and parents log on. Many challenges, such as lack of wifi, lack of computer, multiple sharing within the household are barriers even to those who want to participate. The Paterson School District and the FSCS staff worked before the 2020 - 2021 school year began to get internet access and computers to anyone who needed it. So, in the sense of reaching more families, 2020 – 2021 was far more successful than the end of the 2019 – 2020 school year when the pandemic started.

First, it's important to state that "To get kids to stay on computer all day and to stay for mental health and extra stuff, they just want to get off". Numerous students are sliding and mostly, it's a struggle to keep them online and learning. Notes from coordinators and partners include:

- We provide the services but can't force them to come. Very small population participating. School has 2400 and get less than 1%
- Students who show up are invested but burnt out and struggling
- Kids have lost parents; kids will need so much help. One of first things to address. Take an inventory. Who needs emotional support.
- Will come back with more baggage than before and that will be priority,
- Try to get them to grade level when they aren't participating now.
- Credit recovery in summer. But will kids who are way behind repeat or go on?
- District decision.
- Grief work for death but also time, learning, social skills
- How will social distancing affect grief groups, what will physical capacity be?

Coordinators outreached extensively to families and found it hard to communicate when parents are working and some students are home alone and don't want to get up. Coordinators found more parents reaching out for help then students. Reaching out to those with Medicaid helped 150%, which began in January 2021.

With FSCS partners on a committee on chronic absences with principals, they found Chromebook issues, where the Chromebook didn't have everything needed to reach online teaching. They did the following:

- Got students wifi and new computer.
- Went to homes to meet the parents. .
- Coordinators helped with applications.
- Conducted programs for immigrants in three languages to help them with two psychologists.

Go above and beyond
The JFK nth graders have never even seen the school. The coordinator can't make contact with freshman because they don't have names and addresses. Academies have list but have no capacity to call all freshman. They expect 600 more freshman and 600 sophomore who were never there before in September 2021. These students are mentally still in middle school, so their transitions is even more severe than in the elementary schools.

FSCS staff remained connected with each other, had continuing updates, and maintained a full structure and real community.

Two things coordinators felt they learned:

- Services are life-changing.
- Financial aid workshops taught many parents things about their money they never knew
- Reaching parents virtually worked better in some cases than regular parent outreach during a normal school year. The lessons of new ways of parent outreach will inform FSCS moving forward wherever school is held.

Although this is an evaluation funded for School 2 and JFK, coordinators were interviewed, virtual site visits held, and Theory of Change workshops conducted with Schools 2, 5, 6, Napier, New Roberto Clemente and JFK. We highlight activities and challenges at each school, as they all filled in major gaps for students and parents.

School 2
At School 2, for a long time, the coordinator has been trying to create an early morning program and a safe space for the children who arrive early before school. The goal is to have a place where the parents can drop off their kids before work and make sure that they waiting in a safe place and not out on the street. The coordinator believes that the FSCS program has to reach out to more students as well as serve more students. The students need to know about the services and help that is available to them. This pertains to the health clinic as well. The health clinic has to serve more students and make sure the students know what they provide. Not only does FSCS have to inform the students, but they have to increase parent outreach as well. The parents need to be informed and educated about the services provided. For school 2, the online parent workshops resulted in positive response, so more are planned for the future.

School 5
At School 5, there was a lot of concern and focus on the parents. There is the need to educate parents on attendance and the importance of going to school. A question that was asked was how can the school make parents feel safe on sending their children to school when they themselves are afraid to come. The school knows that they have to provide support to the parents. With all the new challenges they face, the staff and faculty have to also make students

feel safe throughout the entire time, which will be an added challenge while they are getting acclimated to a new school environment.

School 6

The coordinator and FSCS want to provide the students with a sense of security so that they can feel safe that coming to school. They would like to provide comfort to parents and make sure they know that it is safe to send their children to school. Another goal is to get parents more involved. They will put a parent distribution list by email. It has been more difficult to reach parents since the school went virtual. The school would like to have parents at the forefront. Sessions with both students and parents is something that would like to be seen in the future. The students have to be up to date on health care needs. Helping families and overcoming trauma is a goal for the school.

NRC:

At NRC, one of the main concerns is attendance. After spring break, 70 percent of the 8th graders had trouble attending online classes or didn't come back at all. In order to reward the students who did attend class, the school held 8th grade celebrations. Another problem that is occurring is that there is a high turnover of administration, as well as a new principal. This means that the FSCS staff have to constantly start from the beginning by building new relationships and getting support for the program with every new administration. As well as this issue with administration, there is also a lack of space for the FSCS program. They report the need for a bigger behavioral health unit in the school in order to attend to more students.

Napier:

At Napier, students will have to follow the health and safety guidelines that will be enforced during the pandemic, while the staff and faculty make sure that the building and the environment is safe for the students. The school is concerned that this new environment will cause an increase in anxiety and health issues throughout the different grades. Because of the virtual system last school year, the incoming first graders will be entering an in-person school environment for the first time. Having experienced their first year of school virtually, it will be a challenge for them as well as the incoming kindergarten class. There is a worry that there will also be an increase in kindergarten social anxiety.

JFK High School

At JFK, there is a focus on supporting and assisting students that have experienced trauma since the pandemic began. Because there is a six month wait to see the psychiatrist, FSCS wants one in the clinic. The school believes that helping the trauma will help with social emotional, learning, attention spans, improved mood, quality of life and interpersonal relationships and communications. Handling trauma will also lower substance abuse. They will have to assess the level of trauma and the care that is needed. Trauma is often mis- diagnosed as ADHD because of the similarity in symptoms. FSCS wants to break this cycle by using the clinic. Mr. Hill started restorative practices, which is where you work through problems in school and are not sent out

of school. Maintaining quality programs, having no gap or lag in services, and providing field trips are believed to be ways to lessen the developmental losses that the students may be facing. The school hopes to reach at least one-third of the community with their virtual full service open house with the principal of operations. After the students graduate, FSCS would like to continue their student ambassador program, which has been very successful. They would also like to provide a credit recovery program during the summer. FSCS provides the living room, which is a safe space for students to open up and seek therapy. Because the number of students who are going to the living room is increasing, they have to find ways on providing more services throughout the day. The students and staff have experienced a lot this past year, which is a reason to provide emotional assessments for adults. School staff needs training to be aware of what the social emotional response is going to be. The team is always committed to doing what is necessary.

The Health Component

When schools shut down in March because of the Covid-19 virus, a great number of students experienced profound loss. Not only did they lose educational opportunities; they lost structure, routine and meals. Students who once used school to escape chaotic home lives no longer had an escape. One seventh grader, who has been attending clinic since third grade and has a poor relationship with her mother (who often started sentences about her daughter by screaming “I didn’t have to have her, I could have had an abortion.” – Denise Hajjar) The daughter became suicidal while schools were closed and was taken by ambulance to the hospital one Sunday afternoon when her mother refused to take seriously her daughter’s suicidal thoughts. The health center remained a steady, calming support to the mother and child as they navigate resources. Both the mother and the child have health center support, as does the outside agency that is providing the child with counseling twice a week. Health services were in place to help support the child as well as to keep her linked in to the school. This is a crucial hole health services have played beyond health to keep families and students connected to learning.

Many times the health center acted as a lifeline to the families. They located food pantries, covid testing sites, chrome books, homework packets and helped parents navigate the school websites, many for the first time. Sometimes the lifeline was for the children; many times for the entire family.

The clinic has helped via phone during the middle of family crises and arguments, and assisted families with COVID-19 ill family members. This has gone beyond health to rental assistance and finding food.

Conclusion of Key Points on Implementation

All schools and FSCS staff worked non-stop to help parents and get students and parents engaged. There was more focus than ever on parents and it worked. Lessons from what worked will last well beyond the pandemic. All schools and health services provided innovative

programming on arts, trauma, emotional/mental health issues and practical skills. They did things for fun to get students and parents online.

Although only a few hundred of the full student body was reached, it was probably hundreds more than would have been without FSCS. In addition, any student that needed computer and internet help from the district was assisted. Attendance was a problem everywhere. As noted above, at New Roberto Clemente, 70 percent of 8th graders had trouble who didn't attend and older students at JFK high school were also likely to just drop off the grid. We don't have district-wide numbers of how many students participated in online learning and the attendance taking method was not, in our opinion, reliable as students could log on at attendance and then disappear. However, we do know that the FSCS programs online were well-attended in most cases and the schools know how many they served, which was often at capacity.

The on-going organized FSCS community filled an enormous gap for students and families and the key goal of any district, not just Paterson, should be to make these programs available to all.

2.2 Full Service Community Schools Model and Theory of Change

The U.S. Department of Education has defined a full service community school as:

…a public elementary or secondary school that works with its local educational agency and community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and other public or private entities to provide a coordinated and integrated set of comprehensive academic, social, and health services that respond to the needs of its students, students' family members, and community members.

The federally funded FSCS is an important recognition of the validity and success of the community school movement across the United States over the past 20 years. The community school model has been seen as an ongoing strategy for marshaling community resources around student success. Through extended hours, services and—crucially—the building of relationships and effective partnerships, the community school model conceives of education as a coordinated, child-centered effort in which schools, families and communities work together to support student's educational success, build stronger families and improve communities.[1]

This holistic approach has been shown to be particularly important to children living in poverty, who need a variety of family and community resources, including intellectual, social, physical,

[1] The National Center for Community Schools provides a very comprehensive conceptual definition and outline of the community school model in its publication *Building Community School: A Guide for Action*, 2011.

and emotional supports, to have the opportunity to attain academic success. As noted by the U.S. Department of Education:

> Many children live in communities that lack not only high-performing schools, but also the supports needed to be ready and able to learn when they start school. School-community partnerships can be key strategies for providing resources to these individual students. A variety of organizations can help provide the missing resources for children living in poverty and, therefore, begin to transform struggling schools and communities.[2]

A key premise of the full service community school model is that a whole set of 'preconditions' or intermediate outcomes, will need to be met before student success outcomes (that embrace academic progress but also social, emotional and health development) can be achieved. These preconditions have been elaborated in the PPS FSCS Theory of Change developed through the participatory process described earlier.

PPS FSCS afterschool programs provide support for academically at-risk students. Paterson FSCS schools made progress in aligning afterschool programming with regular school day activities and curriculum. Each school had a lead teacher synchronizing afterschool with school day by communicating with teachers regarding homework, grades and student progress. In School 6, AmeriCorps members assist 2nd – 6th grade teachers in the classroom during the school day.

The installation of FSCS Community Health Centers in the schools began in 2012 at School 5, New Roberto Clemente in 2013, Napier in 2014, and School 6 and School 15 in 2015.

Services provided through the Health Centers include primary medicine (for example, immunization), vision (including optical examination and glasses), dentistry, behavioral health and nutrition education. Treatment coordinators in each center connect children and families across all service areas.

We found in the academic year of 2018 through 2019, that the three elementary schools (2,6, and 15) had increased services, particularly within the community school offices, with goods and services for families, and with increased social and behavioral health expertise.

2.3 Theory of Change – The Process

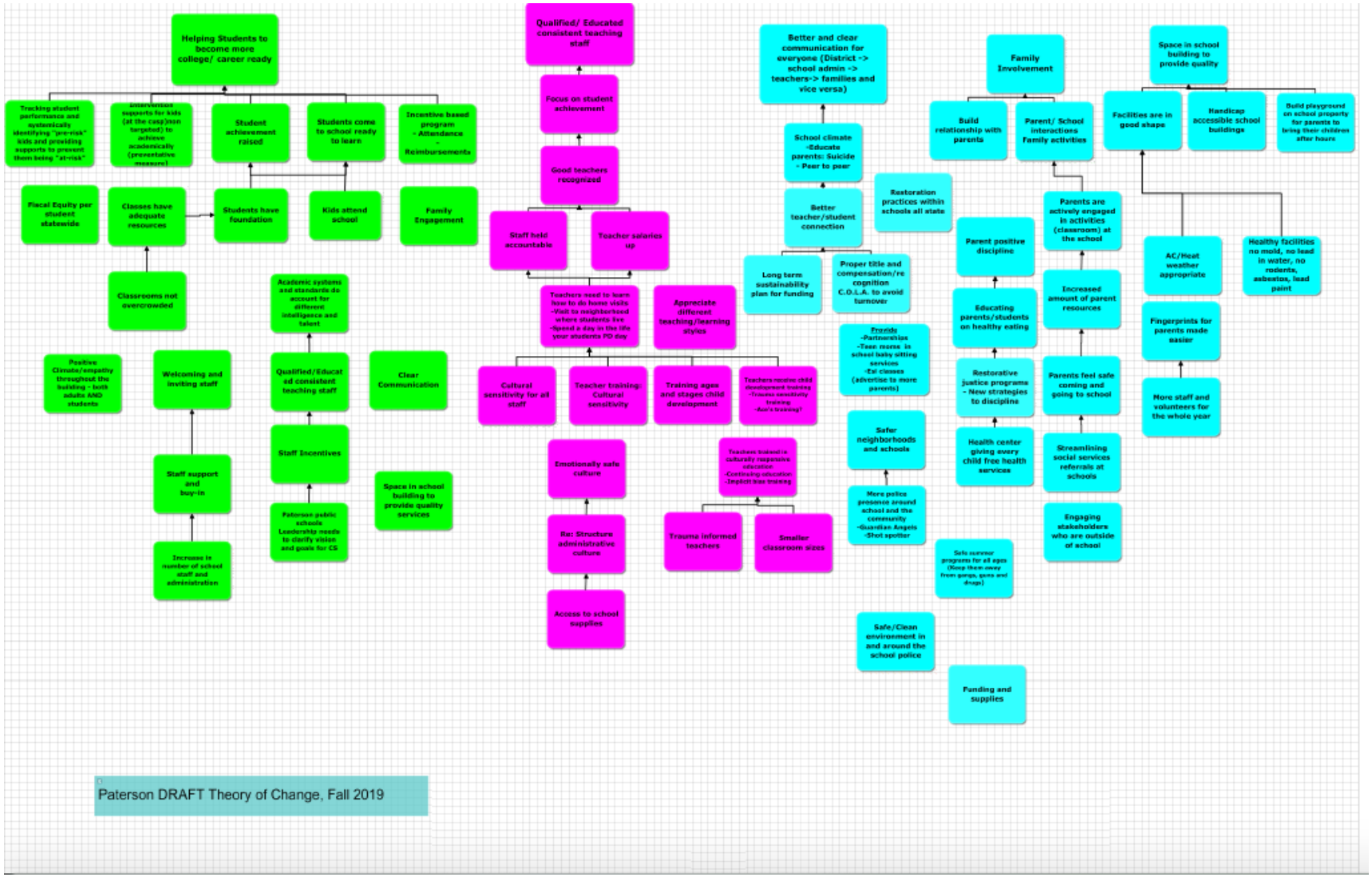
The Theory of Change workshops prior to the pandemic were very participatory and hands-on. Representatives of all schools discuss and brainstorm their goals for their schools and what it will take to achieve them. They start with identifying the current set of problems students, families and schools face, and then identify conditions for change. Radically changed by virtual workshops, Theory of Change sessions were held on Zoom. To our amazement, they were well-

[2] U.S. Department of Education. https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2014/05/06/2014-10361/applications-for-new-awards-full-service-community-schools-program#h-4

attended and stakeholders were fully engaged. The resulting very sparse theories for returning to school reflect the question we posed and the uncertainly everyone faced. In summer 2021, we asked each school (all the schools, not just School 2 and JFK) ***to state their goals just to get students transitioned back into school***. We suggested a three month timeline. What we found is the coordinators are ready for the small spaces to be overwhelmed, as they are already full normal times; many more mental health and trauma problems; and students who were detached from school and those who experienced profound loss. Their theories reflect short term plans to face the impact of the last 18 months.

To contrast the long-term academic and behavioral goal-setting that was possible before the pandemic, we present the Theory of Change being drafted in 2019 when the pandemic hit, with the very short-term "theories" possible by summer 2021.

Figure 1: Full Service Community School Theory of Change – 2019 Revisiting Where We Are (First draft)



Theories of Change
During Pandemic Out of School Learning
Concerning Goals for Returning to In School Learning in September 2021

Introduction
These descriptions, presented graphically, represent the expectations, challenges and plans the Community School Coordinators, Behavioral Health, Social Work and Health teams have as of late spring and summer of 2021 for students returning to school after a year of online school.

It is important to note that while most Theories of Change have long time goals for students (and schools, families, teachers and community), in this transitional and unprecedented situation, the "theories" are much more immediate. The staff plan to encounter numerous traumatized students and families (as they have throughout the pandemic), to find many students fallen behind academically, and an increase in behavioral, emotional and learning problems. So, their "theories" are about what to expect and how to handle it.

The theories also reflect that the FSCS staff at all levels and specialties, have learned a lot about what is going on with students and families and what is working.

We present the first iteration of discussion at six schools in this brief report, and will compare these expectations and plans with what actually happens in fall 2021, and how it compares, and maybe disrupts, the past theories about long-term academic goals for students.

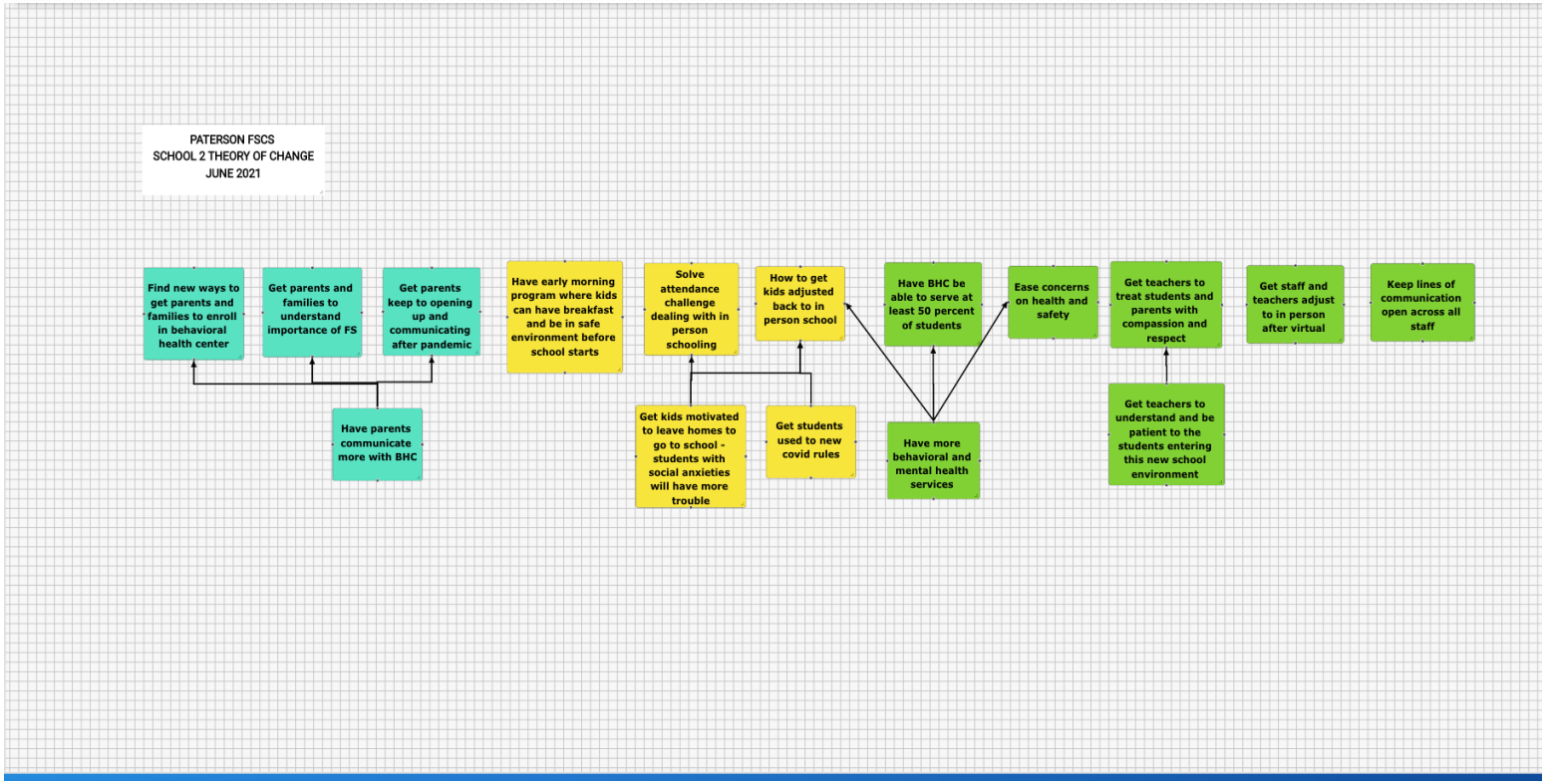
<u>Analysis to date</u>
One thing that is readily apparent is that none of the schools have a single long-term goal anymore (such as graduation). Of course, these goals still exist, but the immediate situation has required the staff to think through goals of how to reach students, parents, teachers and principals. So, they have several immediate goals, to get to as many students as possible as quickly as possible.

A strong focus in every school is the expectation that behavioral health needs to be attended to for every student. It will mean increasing space, hours or staff for handling more students than usual. Another common theme is how disconnected even the best students are likely to feel after over a year at home. The community schools have done an amazing job of offering online programs, counseling, talk groups, art activities and more, but many students don't log on. Some can't as they have to share computers at home and some have drifted away from school.

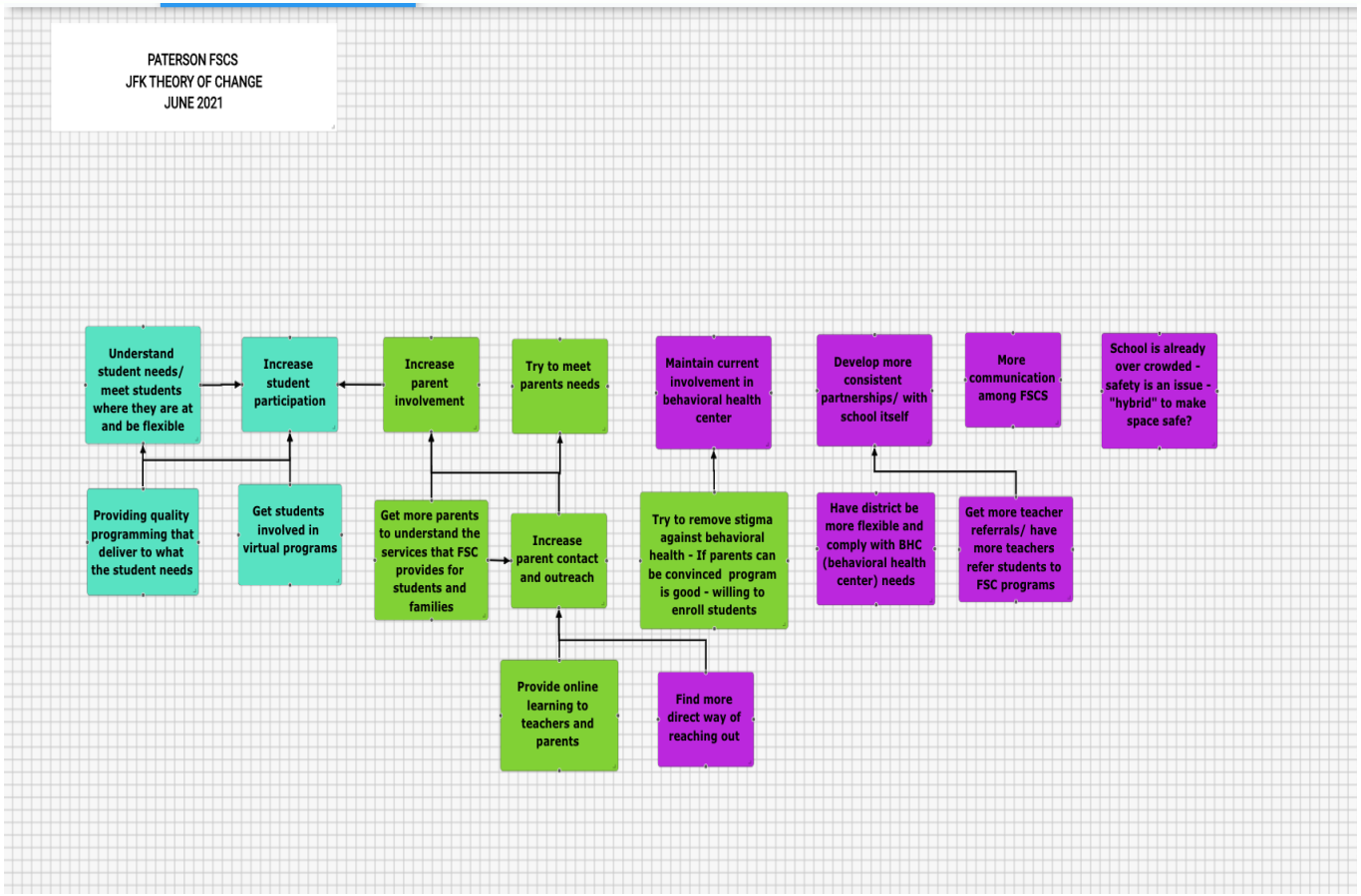
Outreach to parents is planned to expand as well.

FSCS staff expect to need to provide both online and in school opportunities, and help students deal with rules around COVID. They also know of many families who have had COVID deaths, lost jobs and increased despair. Students and families are dealing with something like post-traumatic stress, except the end of the stress has not come yet. Staff aren't sure, as of the end of the Spring 2021 semester if in school will be all days, or alternate with students coming in two days a week and learning from home the other days. This staggering would allow students to sit further apart. And parents will probably have an option to keep their students at home.
The rise of the delta variant and its danger to young people is likely to change school district plans again.

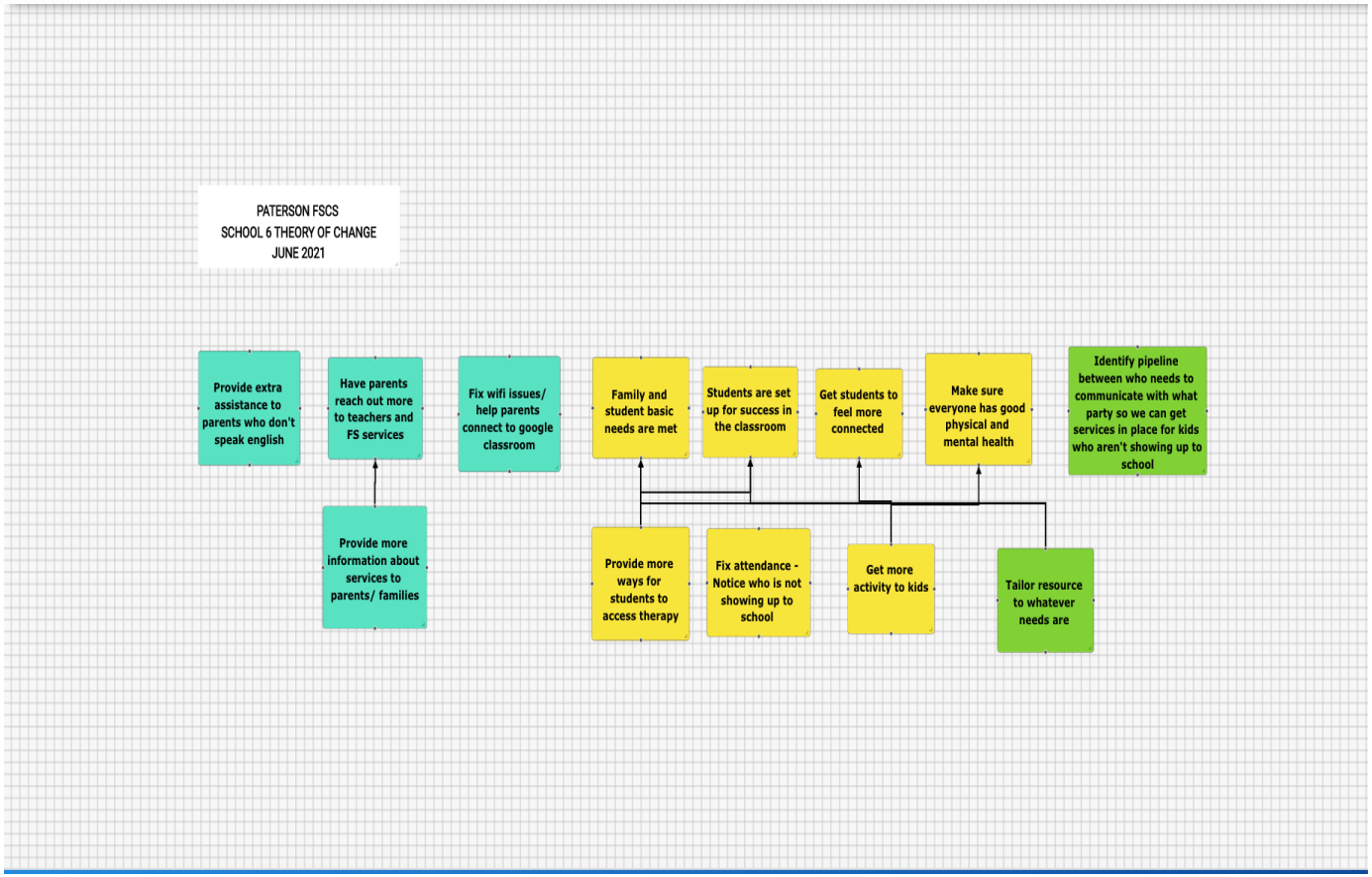
The Theories of Change also show the worry that teachers need to assess each student in terms of their mental health and their learning loss, and have plans to bring students back up to where they were and eventually advance.


PATERSON FSCS
SCHOOL 2 THEORY OF CHANGE
JUNE 2021
Find new ways to get parents and families to enroll in behavioral health center
Get parents and families to understand importance of FS
Get parents keep to opening up and communicating after pandemic
Have parents communicate more with BHC
Have early morning program where kids can have breakfast and be in safe environment before school starts
Solve attendance challenge dealing with in person schooling
How to get kids adjusted back to in person school
Get kids motivated to leave homes to go to school - students with social anxieties will have more trouble
Get students used to new covid rules
Have BHC be able to serve at least 50 percent of students
Have more behavioral and mental health services
Ease concerns on health and safety
Get teachers to treat students and parents with compassion and respect
Get teachers to understand and be patient to the students entering this new school environment
Get staff and teachers adjust to in person after virtual
Keep lines of communication open across all staff

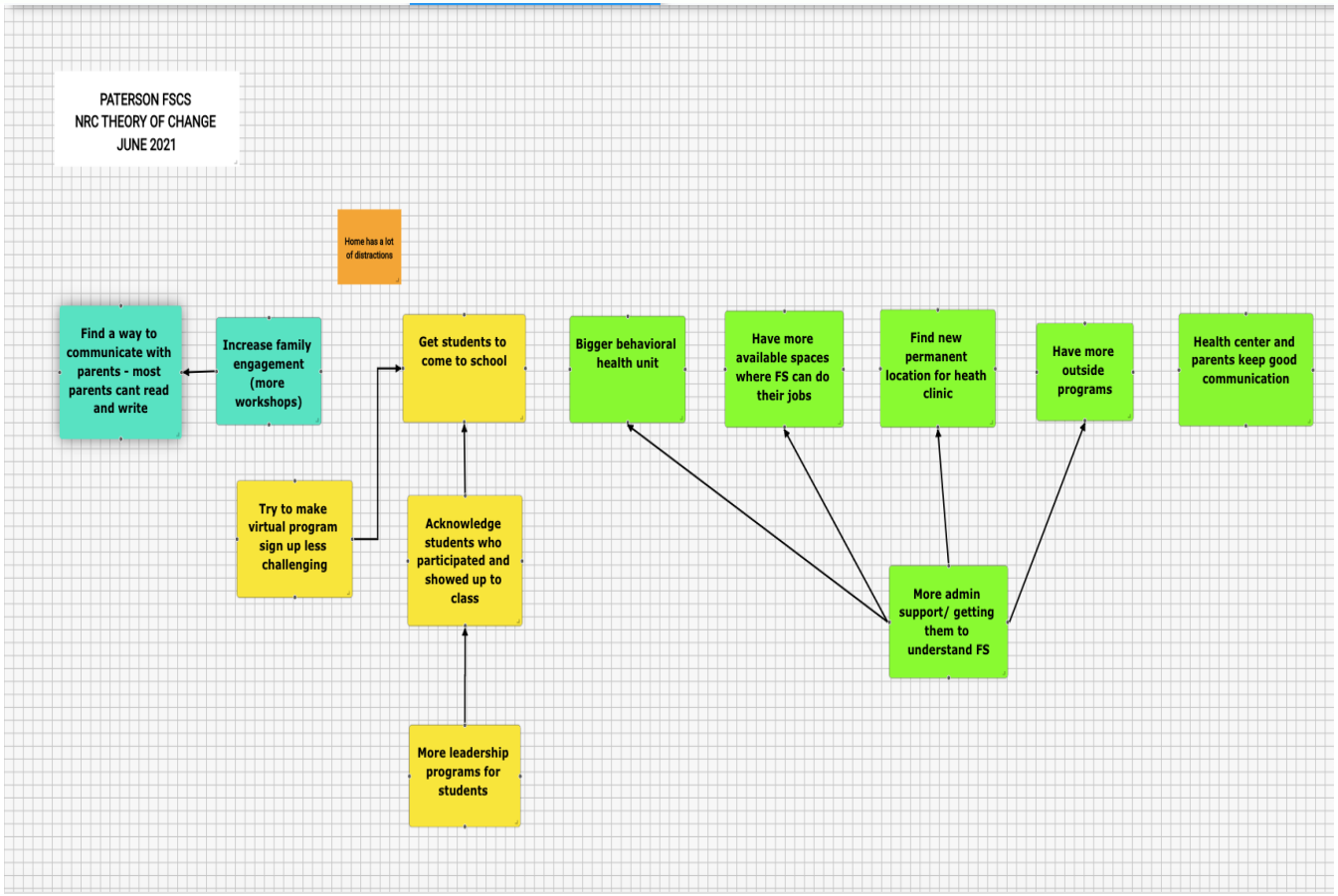
SCHOOL 2


PATERSON FSCS
JFK THEORY OF CHANGE
JUNE 2021
Understand student needs/ meet students where they are at and be flexible
Increase student participation
Increase parent involvement
Try to meet parents needs
Maintain current involvement in behavioral health center
Develop more consistent partnerships/ with school itself
More communication among FSCS
School is already over crowded - safety is an issue - "hybrid" to make space safe?
Providing quality programming that deliver to what the student needs
Get students involved in virtual programs
Get more parents to understand the services that FSC provides for students and families
Increase parent contact and outreach
Try to remove stigma against behavioral health - If parents can be convinced program is good - willing to enroll students
Have district be more flexible and comply with BHC (behavioral health center) needs
Get more teacher referrals/ have more teachers refer students to FSC programs
Provide online learning to teachers and parents
Find more direct way of reaching out

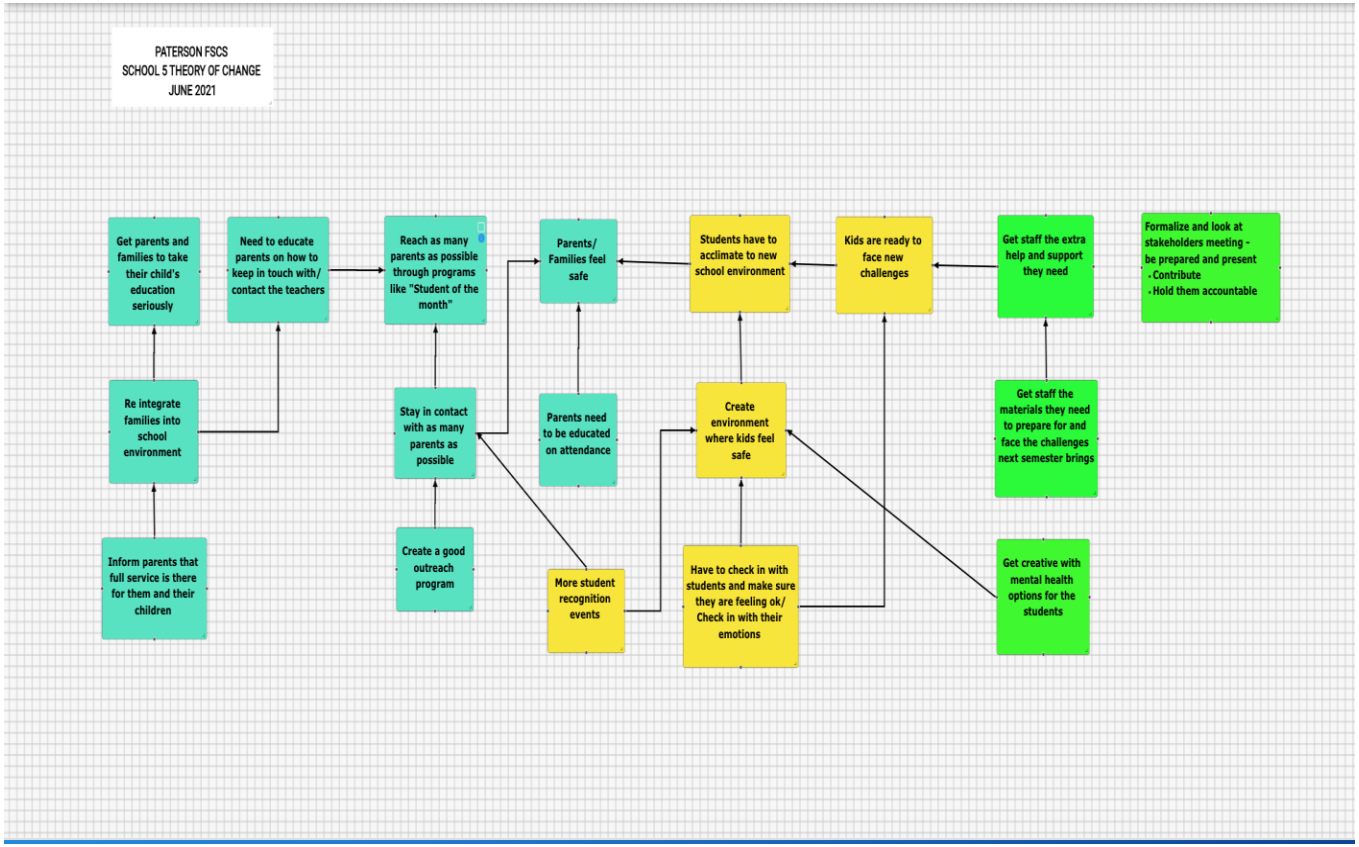
JFK


PATERSON FSCS
SCHOOL 6 THEORY OF CHANGE
JUNE 2021
Provide extra assistance to parents who don't speak english
Have parents reach out more to teachers and FS services
Fix wifi issues/ help parents connect to google classroom
Family and student basic needs are met
Students are set up for success in the classroom
Get students to feel more connected
Make sure everyone has good physical and mental health
Identify pipeline between who needs to communicate with what party so we can get services in place for kids who aren't showing up to school
Provide more information about services to parents/ families
Provide more ways for students to access therapy
Fix attendance - Notice who is not showing up to school
Get more activity to kids
Tailor resource to whatever needs are

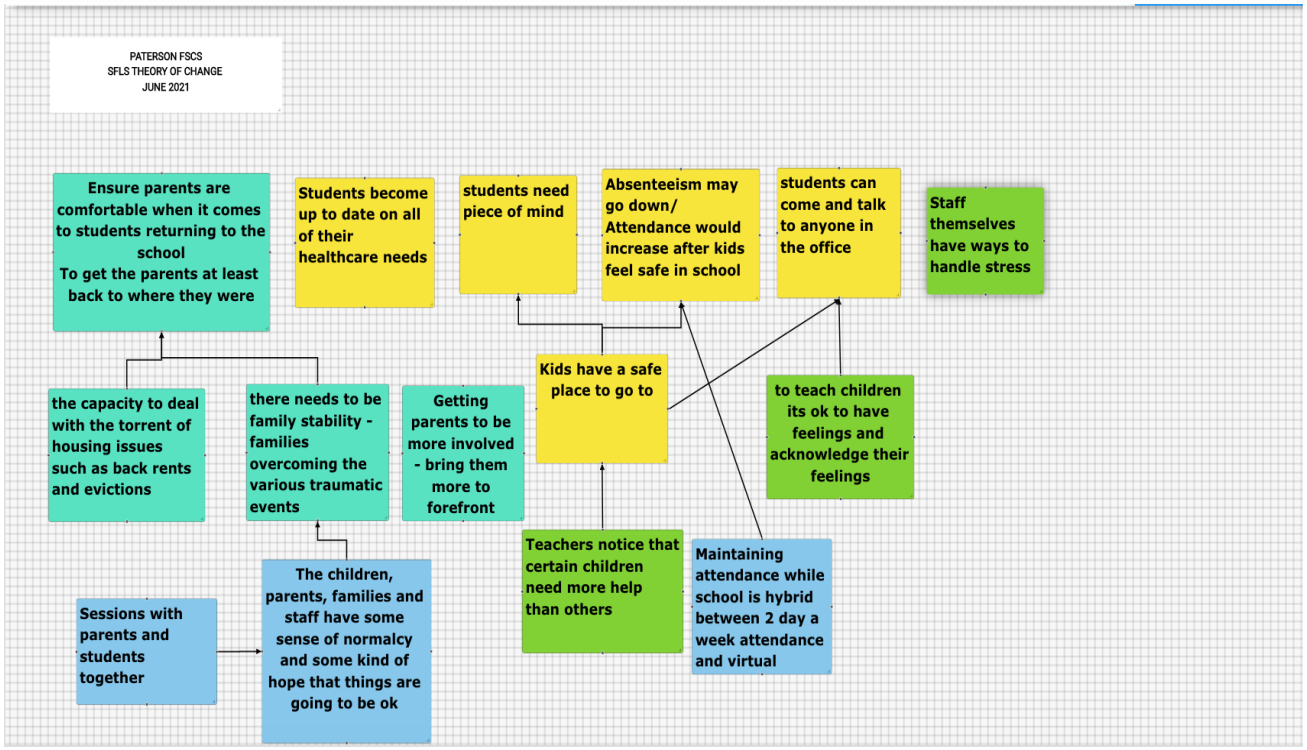
SCHOOL 6



NEW ROBERTO CLEMENTE


PATERSON FSCS
SCHOOL 5 THEORY OF CHANGE
JUNE 2021
Get parents and families to take their child's education seriously
Need to educate parents on how to keep in touch with/ contact the teachers
Reach as many parents as possible through programs like "Student of the month"
Parents/ Families feel safe
Students have to acclimate to new school environment
Kids are ready to face new challenges
Get staff the extra help and support they need
Formalize and look at stakeholders meeting - be prepared and present
- Contribute
- Hold them accountable
Re integrate families into school environment
Stay in contact with as many parents as possible
Parents need to be educated on attendance
Create environment where kids feel safe
Get staff the materials they need to prepare for and face the challenges next semester brings
Inform parents that full service is there for them and their children
Create a good outreach program
More student recognition events
Have to check in with students and make sure they are feeling ok/ Check in with their emotions
Get creative with mental health options for the students

SCHOOL 5



SENATOR FRANK LAUTENBERG

3. Findings

3.1 Student Surveys in Spring 2021 After All Year in Remote Learning

Student Survey Results

The following surveys were taken by students at School 2 at the very end of the 2020 – 2021 school year. A surprising large number of students completed the survey so we have an N = 123. Of the 123 students who participated, the largest group were fourth graders with the other grades fairly evenly represented, except for fifth grade. Hardly any fifth-graders participated in the survey.

Overall, as evaluators we were surprised at the positive leaning of the answers. We used "word clouds" for open-ended questions and they show a very wide mix from good to bad to describe their online learning experience. Over 85 percent of students reported they continued learning (see Question 2). Nonetheless, two-thirds reported having problems (see Question 13) and most attributed the problems to internet and computer problems.

We were particularly interested in whether students were more settled and used to online learning by September 2020. When they left school in March 2020, many families had no internet connection, students needed computers, and there was a sense of chaos. The district stepped in and provided internet and computers to many and curriculum got regularized. Community school staff got a lot of summer programs going. We anticipated that September would be easier for students, but in fact only 30 percent students found the second school year at home easier. Another 30 percent reported it was harder and approximately 40 percent said it was about the same (See Question 4).

Only 20 percent of students actually preferred online learning, and 40 percent said it was worse than in school learning. A third reported they were about the same.

Half of students reported needed extra help with online learning and a vast majority reported getting the help they needed and remaining connected to teachers. (See Questions 6, 8, 9, 10, 11). Unfortunately, responses were less positive regarding friends. In response to Question 7, half the students reported having fewer friends and only approximately 12 percent reported having more friends.

Students reported getting help from their teachers and many reported getting help from their parents, with help with homework being the most common answer from parents.

While the results are more positive than one might expect with so many initial barriers, it is important to note that students who chose to answer they survey online are already connected to the internet, the computer and school. There is a fairly large proportion of students who fell off the radar and disconnected, so the positive results here are the self-report of the most connected students. Even taking the self-report bias into consideration, the number of

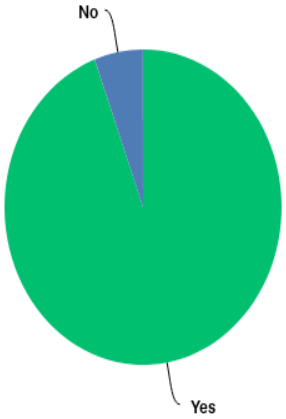
responses was very large and does demonstrate a large sample of students who decided to respond.

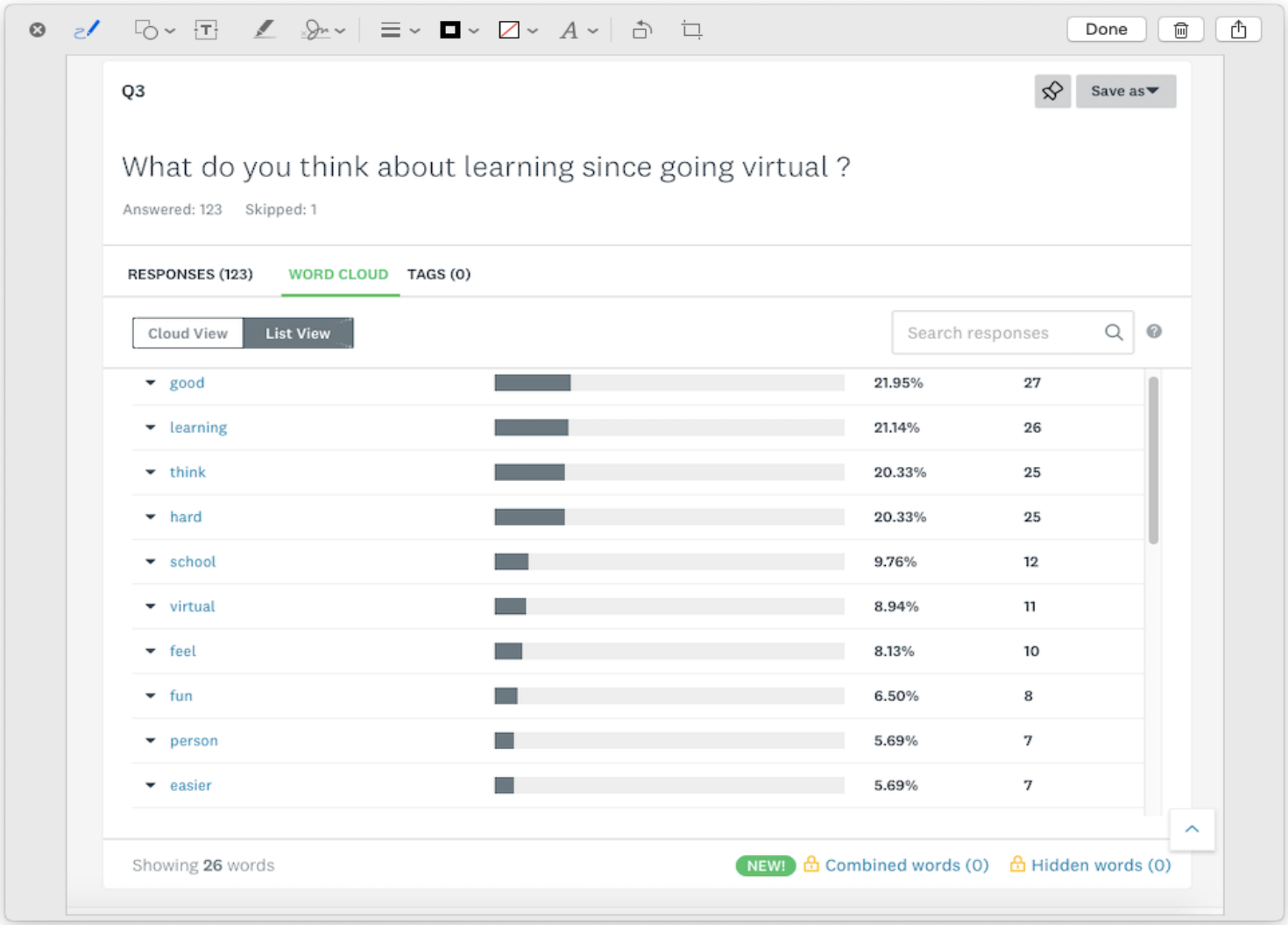
Q1How, are you doing in school and at home since last March when schools closed?

WORD CLOUD

virtual school okay ok kind hard want go fine home since last school well good went im pretty bad school home since great pretty well since last March little bored

Q2 Have you been able to keep learning?

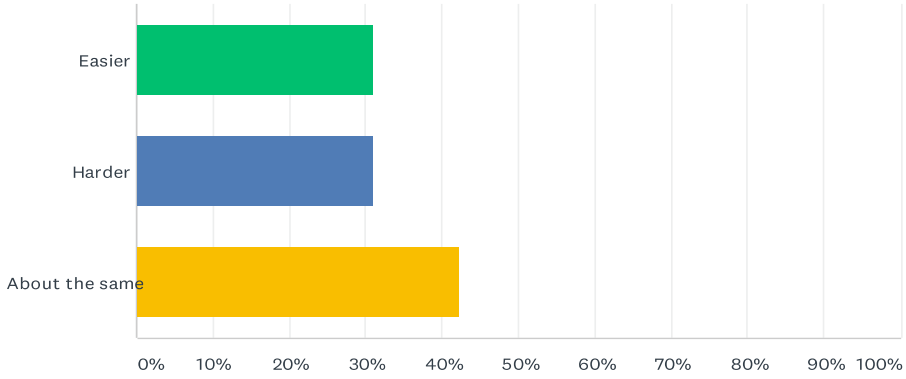



Done
Q3
Save as
What do you think about learning since going virtual ?
Answered: 123 Skipped: 1
RESPONSES (123)
WORD CLOUD
TAGS (0)
Cloud View
List View
Search responses
good 21.95% 27
learning 21.14% 26
think 20.33% 25
hard 20.33% 25
school 9.76% 12
virtual 8.94% 11
feel 8.13% 10
fun 6.50% 8
person 5.69% 7
easier 5.69% 7
Showing 26 words
NEW!
Combined words (0)
Hidden words (0)

Paterson Full Service Community School Spring 2021 Youth Survey

Q4 Has school gotten easier or harder since last September compared to last spring?

Answered: 123 Skipped: 1



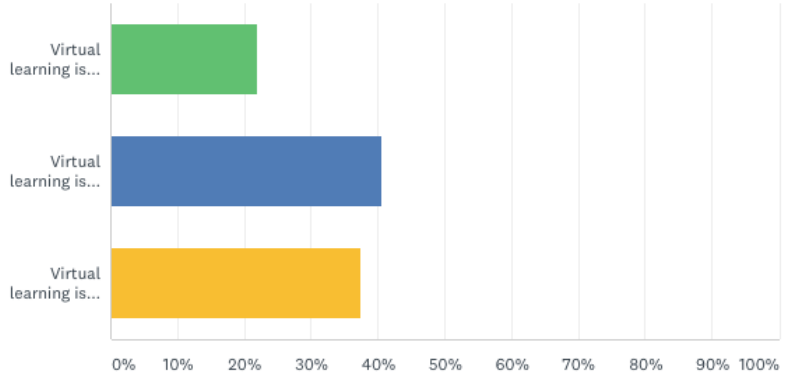
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Easier	30.89%	38
Harder	30.89%	38
About the same	42.28%	52
Total Respondents: 123		

Q5

Customize Save as

Which do you choose?

Answered: 123 Skipped: 1



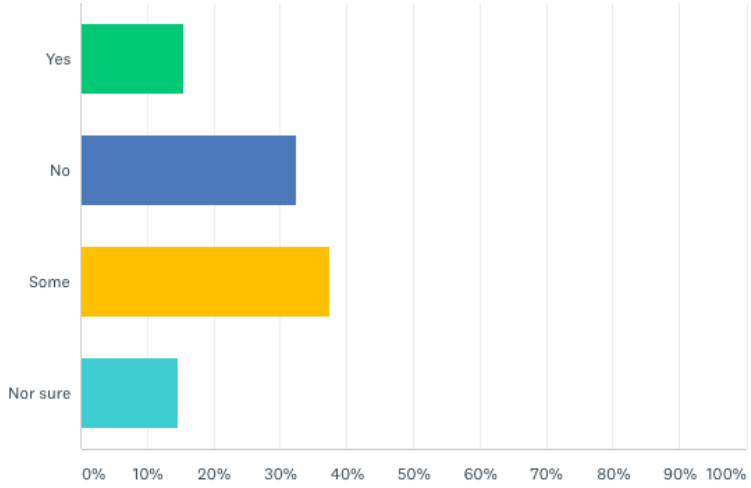
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Virtual learning is BETTER than in person learning	21.95%	27
Virtual learning is WORSE than in person learning	40.65%	50
Virtual learning is ABOUT THE SAME as in person learning	37.40%	46
TOTAL		123

Q6

Customize Save as

Do you need extra help while virtual learning?

Answered: 123 Skipped: 1



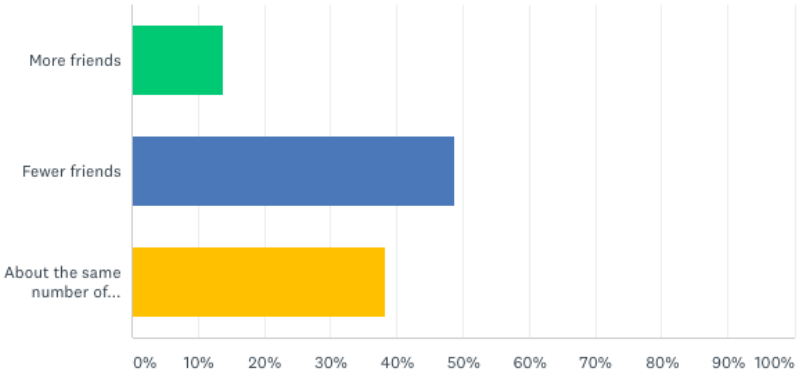
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	15.45%	19
No	32.52%	40
Some	37.40%	46
Nor sure	14.63%	18

Q7

Customize Save as

Do you have more or fewer friends since going virtual?

Answered: 123 Skipped: 1



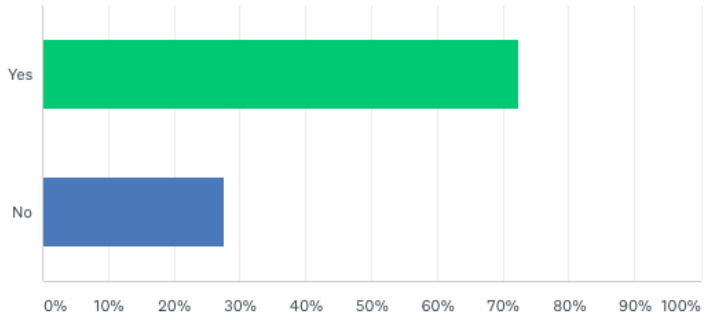
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More friends	13.82%	17
Fewer friends	48.78%	60
About the same number of friends	38.21%	47
Total Respondents: 123		

Q8

Customize Save as

Do you feel connected to teachers?

Answered: 123 Skipped: 1



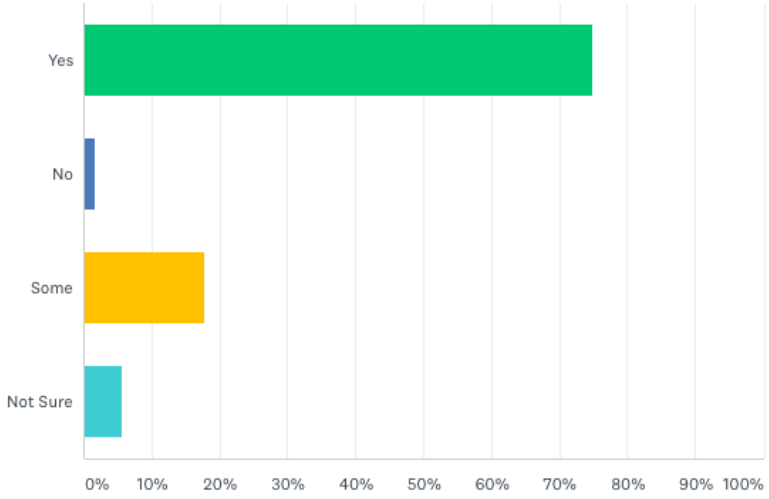
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	72.36%	89
No	27.64%	34
TOTAL		123

Q9

Customize Save as

Did your teachers reach out to you and help you?

Answered: 123 Skipped: 1



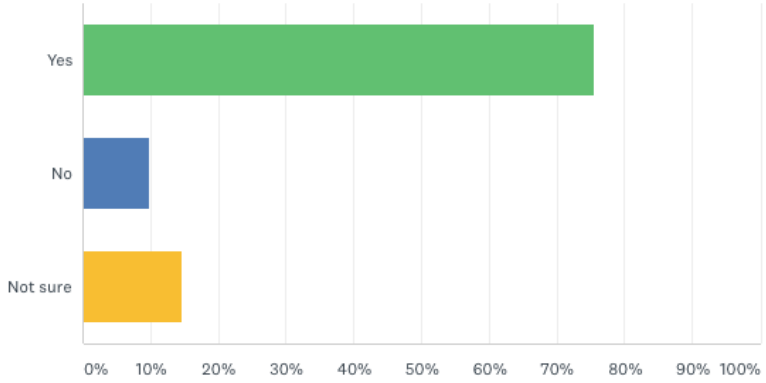
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	74.80%	92
No	1.63%	2
Some	17.89%	22
Not Sure	5.69%	7
TOTAL		123

Q10

Customize Save as

During virtual learning, have you ever asked for help?

Answered: 123 Skipped: 1



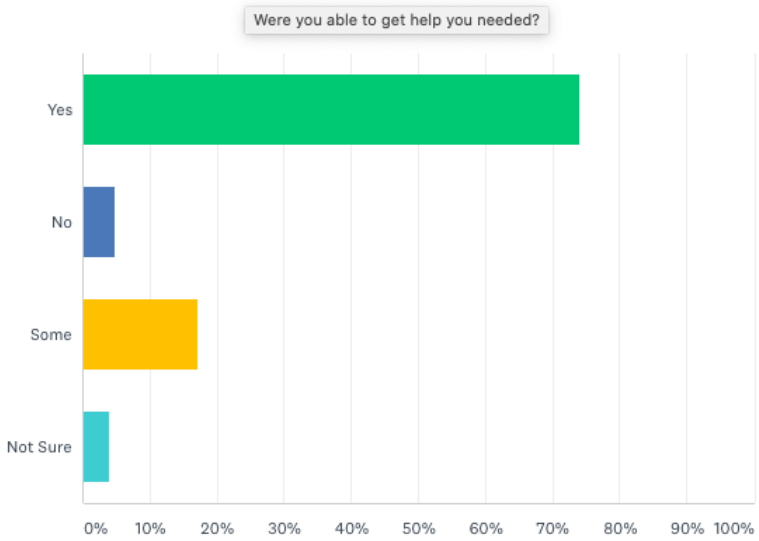
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	75.61%	93
No	9.76%	12
Not sure	14.63%	18
TOTAL		123

Q11

Customize Save as

Were you able to get help you needed?

Answered: 123 Skipped: 1



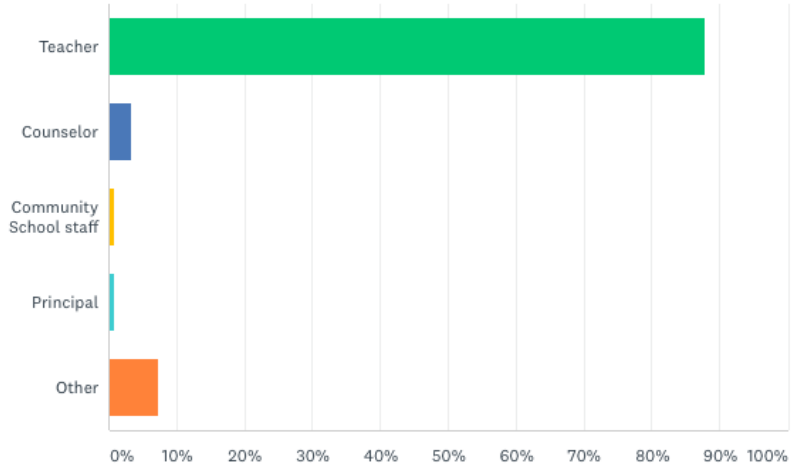
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	73.98%	91
No	4.88%	6
Some	17.07%	21
Not Sure	4.07%	5
TOTAL		123

Q12

Customize Save as

If you received help, who helped you?

Answered: 123 Skipped: 1

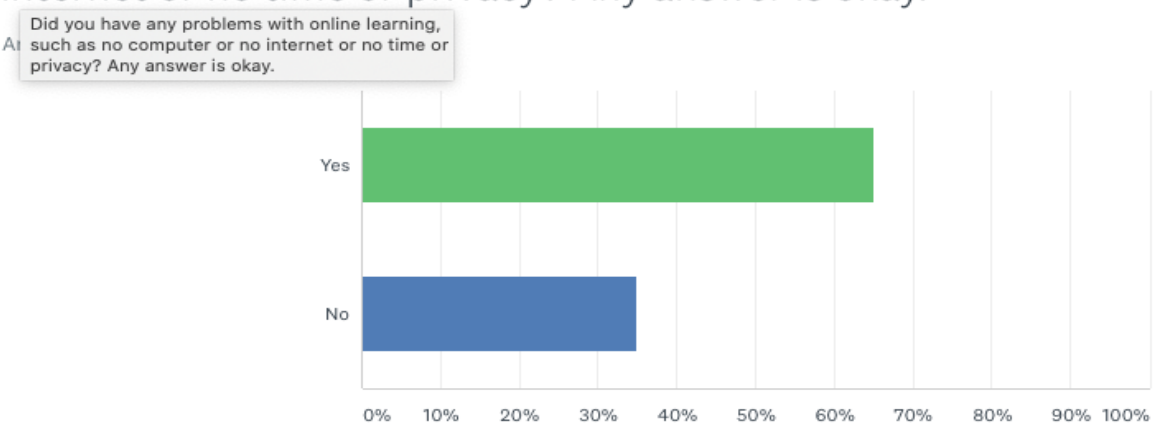


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Teacher	87.80%	108
Counselor	3.25%	4
Community School staff	0.81%	1
Principal	0.81%	1
Other	7.32%	9
TOTAL		123

Q13

Customize Save as

Did you have any problems with online learning, such as no computer or no internet or no time or privacy? Any answer is okay.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	65.04%	80
No	34.96%	43
TOTAL		123

Q14

Save as

If any, what problem did you have?

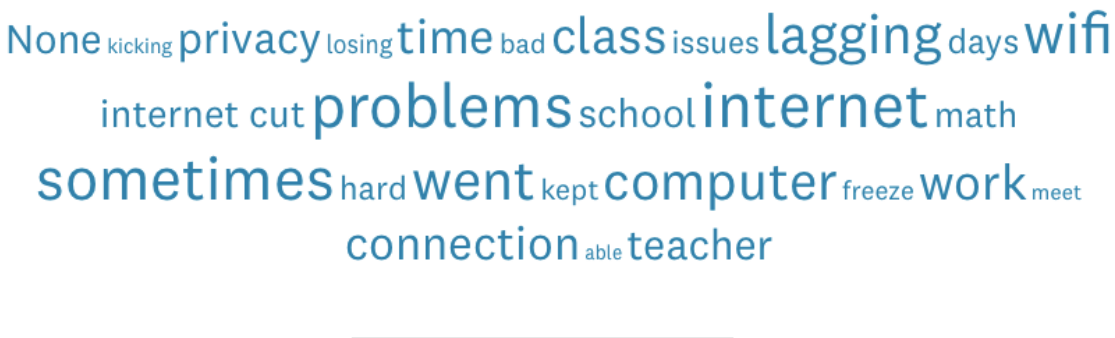
Answered: 112 Skipped: 12

RESPONSES (112) WORD CLOUD TAGS (0)

Cloud View List View

Search responses

Customize

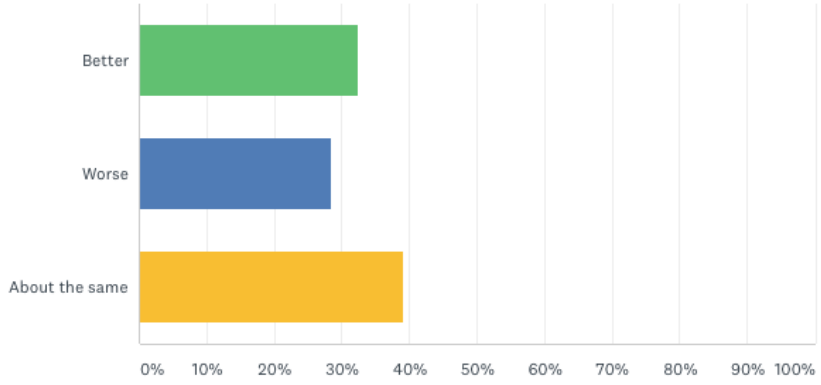


Q15

Customize Save as

How has school been since virtual learning resumed this September? (Is it better, worse, or the same as the spring?)

Answered: 123 Skipped: 1



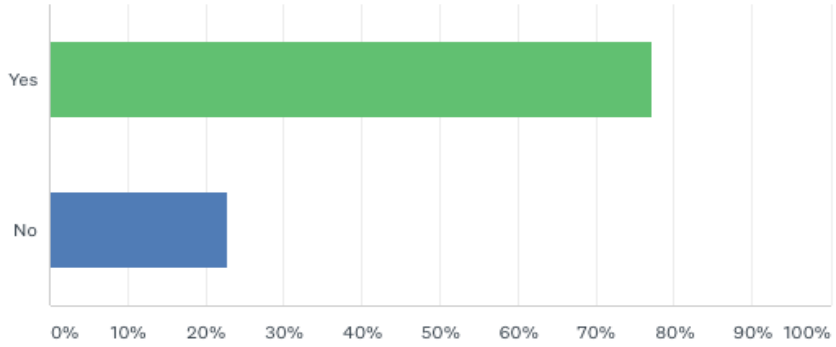
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Better	32.52%	40
Worse	28.46%	35
About the same	39.02%	48
TOTAL		123

Q16

Customize Save as

Are your parents helping you with your school work when you need help?

Answered: 123 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	77.24%	95
No	22.76%	28
TOTAL		123

Q17

Save as

In what ways do your parents help you??

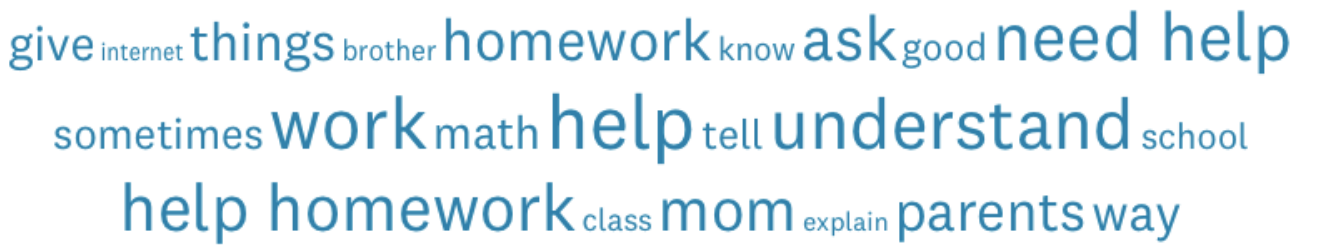
Answered: 123 Skipped: 1

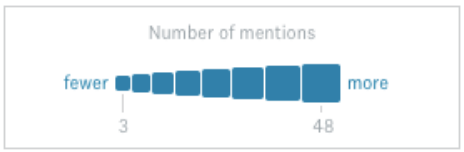
RESPONSES (123) WORD CLOUD TAGS (0)

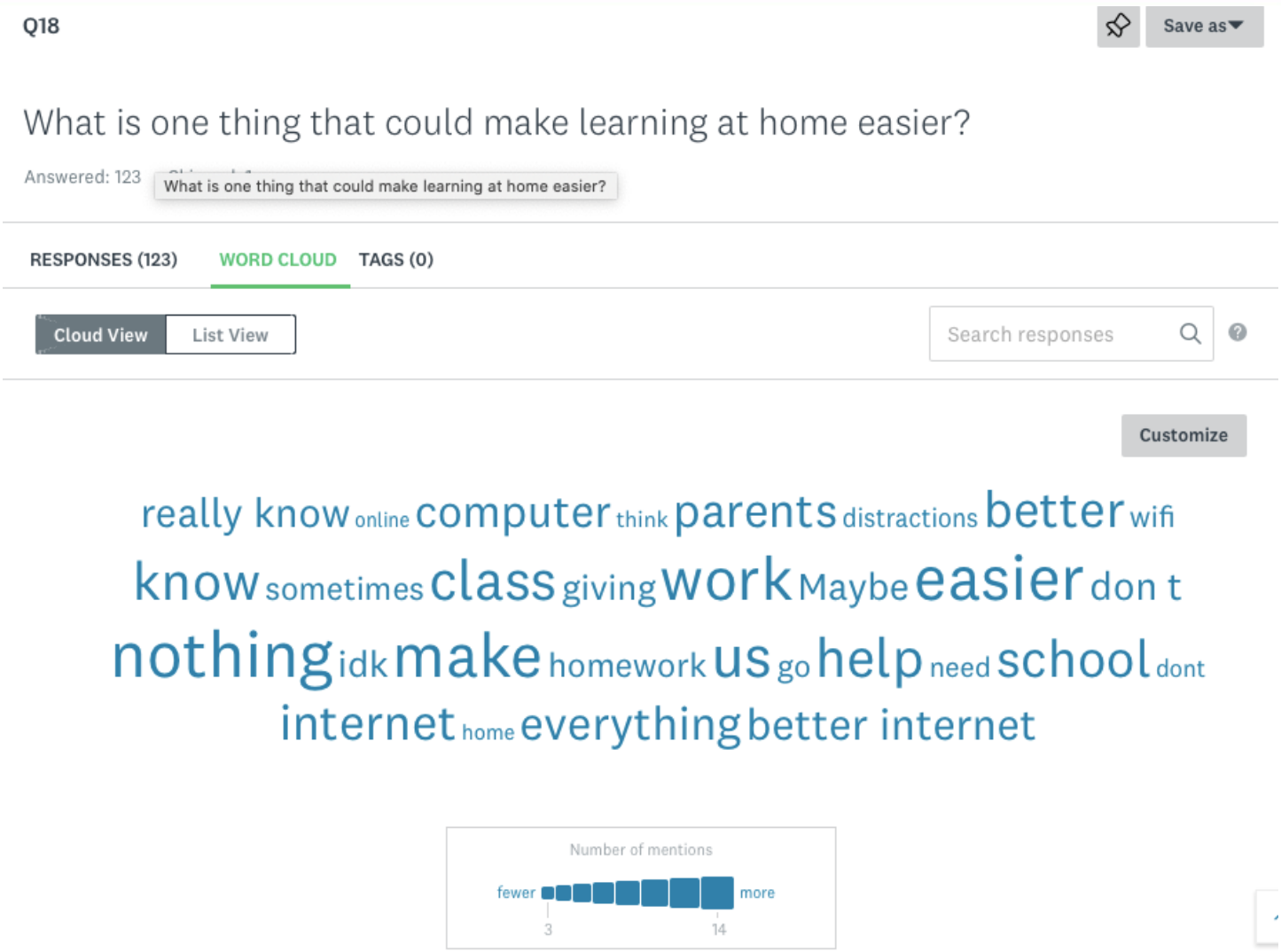
Cloud View List View

Search responses

Customize







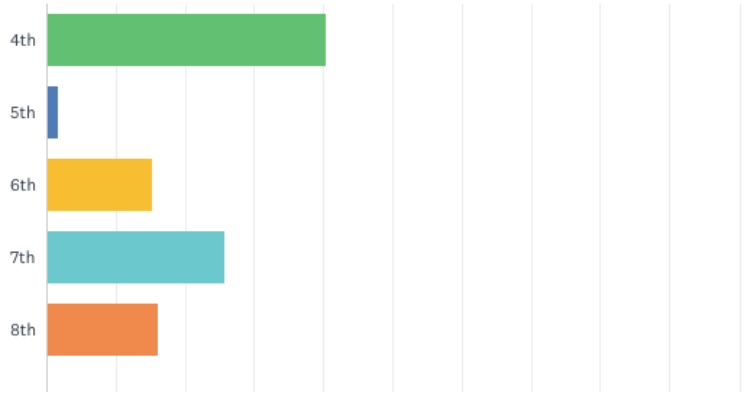
Question 19 asked which school the student attended and all respondents are from School 2.

Q20

Customize Save as

What grade are you in now?

Answered: 124 Skipped: 0



Q21

Save as

What activities would you like to have in school when we return in person?

Answered: 123 Skipped: 1

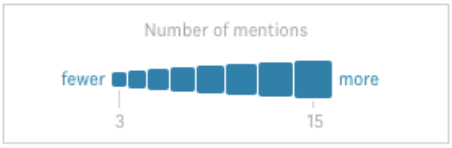
RESPONSES (123) WORD CLOUD TAGS (0)

Cloud View List View

Search responses

#12 Most important word
Occurrences : 5 (4.07%)

Customize



4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

The FSCS program in Paterson consistently, from March 2019 through the present, served hundreds of families and students. They switched and adapted quickly to online programs, and became creative in how to reach parents, which worked.

We can't tell how much this helped keep many students learning, or from falling behind. That will emerge over the next two years. What we do know is that the FSCS staff are focused now on returning students' mental health, trauma, readjustment and on their own ability, with limited space and staff to meet the need.

The performance of the initiative as a whole confirmed our belief in the importance of community schools, but also surprised us with its strength and resiliency. Staff were going through the same pandemic as the rest of us, and had losses, child care issues, work-at-home issues, and they still worked non-stop to reach families and were largely successful (within their level of funding and staffing).

The gap community schools fill by making it possible for students to learn in normal years, was revealed to be a deep chasm. Nonetheless, the FSCS initiative was ready to step in. We need, as a society, to recognize that the magnifying glass the pandemic put on family problems for immigrants, low income or unemployed parents, mental health of parents and children under conditions of extreme poverty, crowding and lack of access to services shows that all students and families need community school type support.

4.2 Recommendations

1. Society and policy-makers must take educational inequality seriously and make all schools community schools, with resources to reach all students and families. This can be done by expanding the community school model or by districts making all schools community schools. Pretending family and student trauma, poverty, malnourishment, lack of hope, poor English, violence and discrimination are not suitable areas for schools to take on only perpetuates the poor or non-existent education for millions of students. The cost to society of these students not maturing into citizens with marketable skills and an engagement with community will (and has) cost us far more than assuring all students equal opportunities.

2. Fund existing programs to have more staff and space, so their capacity is not limited to one or two hundred students.

3. FSCS should continue to maintain it's structure of meeting, working with partners, having good health services and being a firm community. They are doing an excellent job of it and their performance during the pandemic was inspiring. A less-committed initiative and staff could easily have been too inundated with uncertainty and their own problems.