Understood study reveals academic, emotional, and financial realities and implications of remote learning

Nearly 60% of Parents of Children with Learning and Thinking Differences Say Children Year Behind and May Never Catch Up vs. Just 16% of Typical Parents

Parents Report Children with Learning and Thinking Differences Three Times Likely to Experience Depression Due to Remote Learning

43% of All Parents Facing Financial Burden Because of Children’s Remote Learning

NEW YORK (MAY 17, 2021) – Understood, a social impact organization and the only lifelong guide for those who learn and think differently, unveiled a study today with insights on how the shift to remote learning and the pandemic has affected children and families academically, emotionally and financially.

Understood’s “Pandemic Learning Impact Study,” which surveyed 1,500 parents, found that those with children who have learning and thinking differences, like ADHD, or specific learning disabilities like dyslexia, are experiencing considerably more challenges than children without learning and thinking differences.

“As we look to the next normal while still in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we need to understand the full impact remote learning had on our nation’s children, especially those with learning and thinking differences,” said Fred Poses, CEO of Understood. “Our study findings validate that those with learning and thinking differences are especially vulnerable at this time and that our mission to help these kids thrive is more important than ever today and moving forward.”

Academic Repercussions
The study unveiled that in the remote learning environment, nearly three-quarters (72%) of parents have become aware of or noticed their children may have learning challenges or differences. And an astounding 59% of parents of those with learning and thinking differences say their children are a year behind because of the pandemic and may never catch up, while only 16% of typical parents — those whose children have not exhibited signs or have not been diagnosed with a learning difference — believe their children are behind in their studies.

In addition, 44% of parents of children with learning and thinking differences say their child’s legal right to access an equitable education has been abandoned since the move to remote learning.

**Emotional Consequences**

Children with learning and thinking differences have been particularly impacted emotionally by the pandemic’s schooling changes, which has driven high levels of concern and anxiety at home.

Almost half of all parents (48%) have noticed behavioral changes in their children since the start of the pandemic and an equal percentage (48%) of those with learning and thinking differences report suffering high to extreme levels of school-based anxiety since the pandemic, more than double the rate among typical children. The study also found:

- Children with learning and thinking differences are also about three times as likely to have experienced depression related to schooling changes.

- The stress related to distance learning has been much higher for those with learning and thinking differences versus those without (65% vs. 44%), resulting in emotional distress (61% vs. 36%), physical symptoms (57% vs. 30%), avoidance of attending classes (47% vs. 23%) and more.

**Financial Implications**
Additionally, 43% of all parents say they are facing a financial burden because of their children’s remote learning.

However, when comparing the two parental groups, almost twice as many (56% vs. 30%) parents of children with learning and thinking differences say providing their child with the academic supports they need has put a major financial burden on their family.

- 77% of parents are investing a significant amount of both time and money to support their children with learning and thinking differences to keep pace academically amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Buying supplemental software and apps, hiring personal tutors, and cutting back hours at work are the most common steps that parents have taken to support their children during the pandemic.

- Twice as many (49% vs. 25%) parents of children with learning and thinking differences are concerned about the “summer slide,” the loss of academic skills and knowledge during summer vacation, compared to those of typical children.

- The majority (86%) of parents of children with learning and thinking differences are planning on summer academic supports compared to just half of parents of typical children.

Conducted in April 2021, Understood’s “Pandemic Learning Impact Study” leveraged quantitative data from a total of 1,500 parents of both neurotypical children and those with learning and thinking differences across the U.S. to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted children academically and emotionally. The survey polled parents of children between the ages of 5-18, with 62% identifying as White/Caucasian, 25% as Black/African American, 5% as Asian and 1% as Native-American. Twenty-five percent of the parents identified as Hispanic/Latino.

Full study results are available upon request.
About Understood

1 in 5 Americans have learning and thinking differences, such as ADHD and dyslexia. They are often misunderstood, undiagnosed, and dismissed, and these differences are viewed as a weakness. This leaves many on a journey that is stacked against them and costs society more than $500 billion. Understood is the only lifelong guide for those who learn and think differently. Today, we help more than 20 million people each year discover their potential, how to take control, find community, and stay on a positive path along each stage of life’s journey. When others join this journey, and people are broadly embraced, everyone thrives. Understood is a 501(c)(3) private operating foundation based in New York. For more information, or to become a partner, visit u.org/media and follow us on Twitter @UnderstoodOrg