

Back-to-School Safety Concerns Report

Health and Safety Planning and
Coronavirus Readiness for 2020–2021



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Summary

The Back-to-School Safety Concerns Report examined the top challenges for school leaders as they prepare for students, teachers and staff to return to the classroom during the coronavirus pandemic, as well as uncovered what efforts and preparations will be implemented to maintain a safe environment.

The findings show that school administrators, superintendents and other staff members are wrestling with how to start the new academic year in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. Several factors, including funding availability for COVID-19 safety measures and parent preferences, are driving the decision making about how to start the 2020–2021 academic year. But direction from state and local governments, by far, seems to be the most influential driver for back-to-school planning.

As the new academic year starts, what will it look like? Hybrid learning is most likely how classes will be set up when students return to school, so school safety preparedness will need to evolve beyond the classroom. School leaders will also need to find ways to overcome communication challenges that occurred when schools had to quickly pivot to remote learning as COVID-19 cases increased in early 2020. These communication challenges included student access to the Internet and engagement with parents and students.

For students, teachers and administrators who will start the new academic year in school, school leaders ranked social distancing as their top safety concern, followed by the mental and physical health of teachers and staff, and the mental and physical health of students. School administrators, superintendents and others also plan on implementing a range of health and safety methods, including daily temperature checks for students and staff, daily wellness checks for staff and an increase in mental health resources.

These are some of the findings from a recent survey by Rave Mobile Safety. More than 270 respondents included school administrators, school resource/safety officers, superintendents and teachers, as well as staff who work in communications, technology and facilities and operations. They work in schools and districts in rural, suburban and city settings, ranging from under 500 students to more than 10,000 students in public, private or charter schools.

Survey Respondents

ROLE IN SCHOOL SYSTEM

School Administrator	46%
School Resource/Safety Officer	11%
Superintendent	10%
Facilities and Operations	8%
Teacher	6%
Technology	4%
Communications	2%
Other	13%

TYPE OF SCHOOL

Public	69%
Private	18%
Charter	12%
Other	1%

GEOGRAPHIC SETTING (MULTIPLE ANSWERS GIVEN)

Rural	50%
Suburban	37%
Urban	23%

REGIONAL SETTING

Southeast	35%
Midwest	21%
Northeast	19%
Southwest	15%
Pacific	7%
Rocky	3%

SIZE OF SCHOOL OR DISTRICT

Less Than 500 Students	28%
501–1,000 Students	24%
1,001–5,000 Students	27%
5,001–10,000 Students	11%
More Than 10,000 Students	10%

Key Findings



State and local governments will be the major influencers about when schools begin the 2020–2021 academic year.

State and local governments are taking the lead to decide when schools and districts are opening and most will be starting before September.

Hybrid learning is the most likely class model for students and teachers this year.

A combination of learning in the classroom and online will be the model for the majority of schools for this upcoming school year, and schools will need to ensure students and their parents stay engaged and informed.



Social distancing and mental/physical health of school staff are the top health and safety concerns for the new school year as coronavirus evolves.

School leaders will invest in a range of school safety measures, such as signage for social distancing and daily temperature checks.



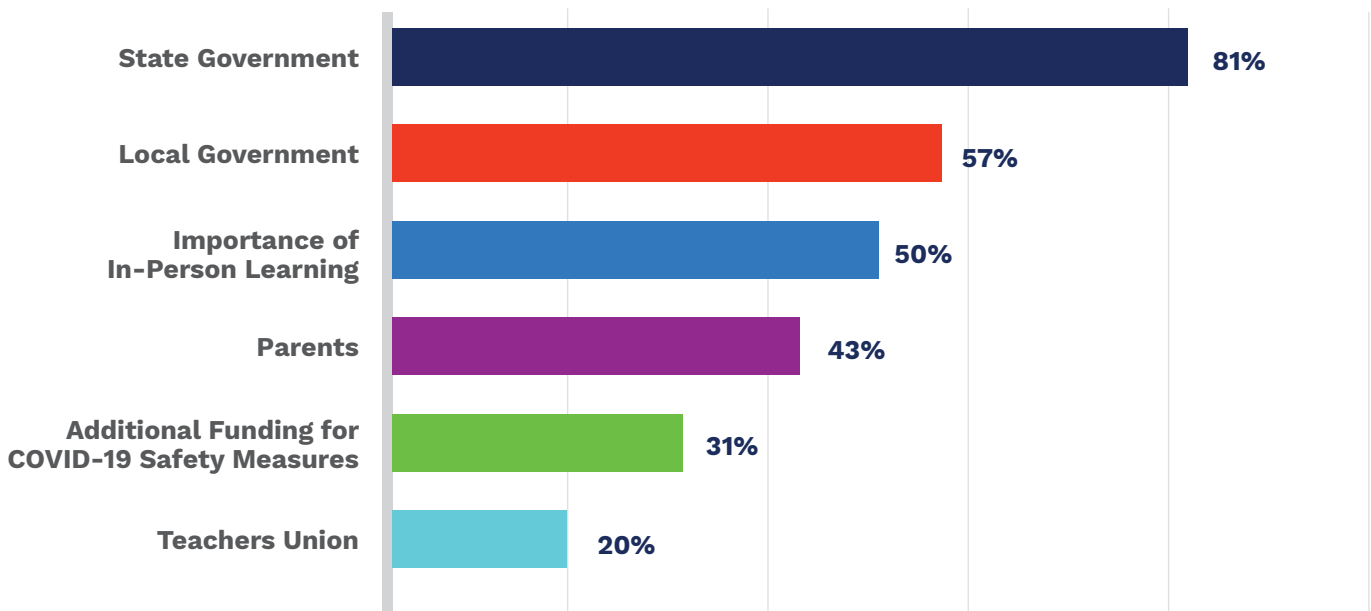


FINDING ONE

State and Local Governments Influencing When Schools Will Reopen

As the new school year approaches, various factors will influence when schools will reopen. From parent preference and the importance of in-person learning to additional funding for COVID-19, safety measures are all impacting when the 2020–2021 academic year will begin, and most school leaders are taking their lead from state and local governments.

Major Influencers Who Will Determine When Schools Will Reopen (Multiple Answers Given)



As for when the school year will begin, **44%** of respondents said their schools and districts are going back before September.

- > **37%** will be returning in the fall (September, October or November)
- > **6%** would return in December or possibly not until 2021
- > **6%** of respondents hadn't decided when they would return



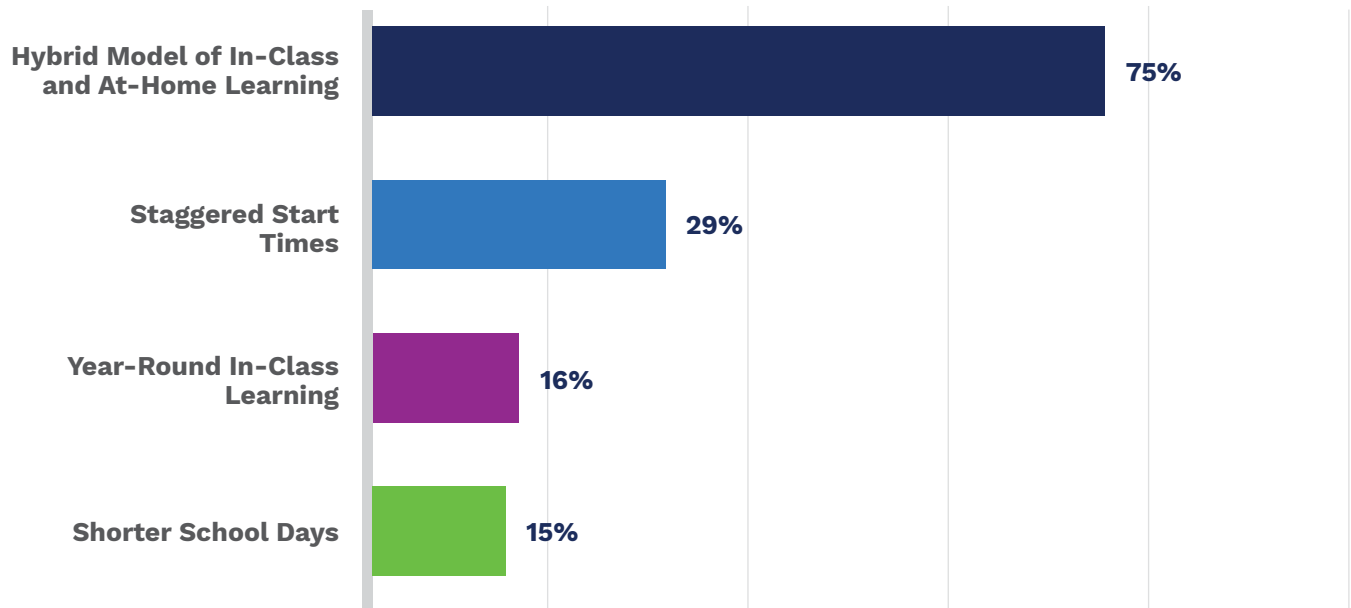
FINDING TWO

Hybrid Learning Setting Up to be New Class Model

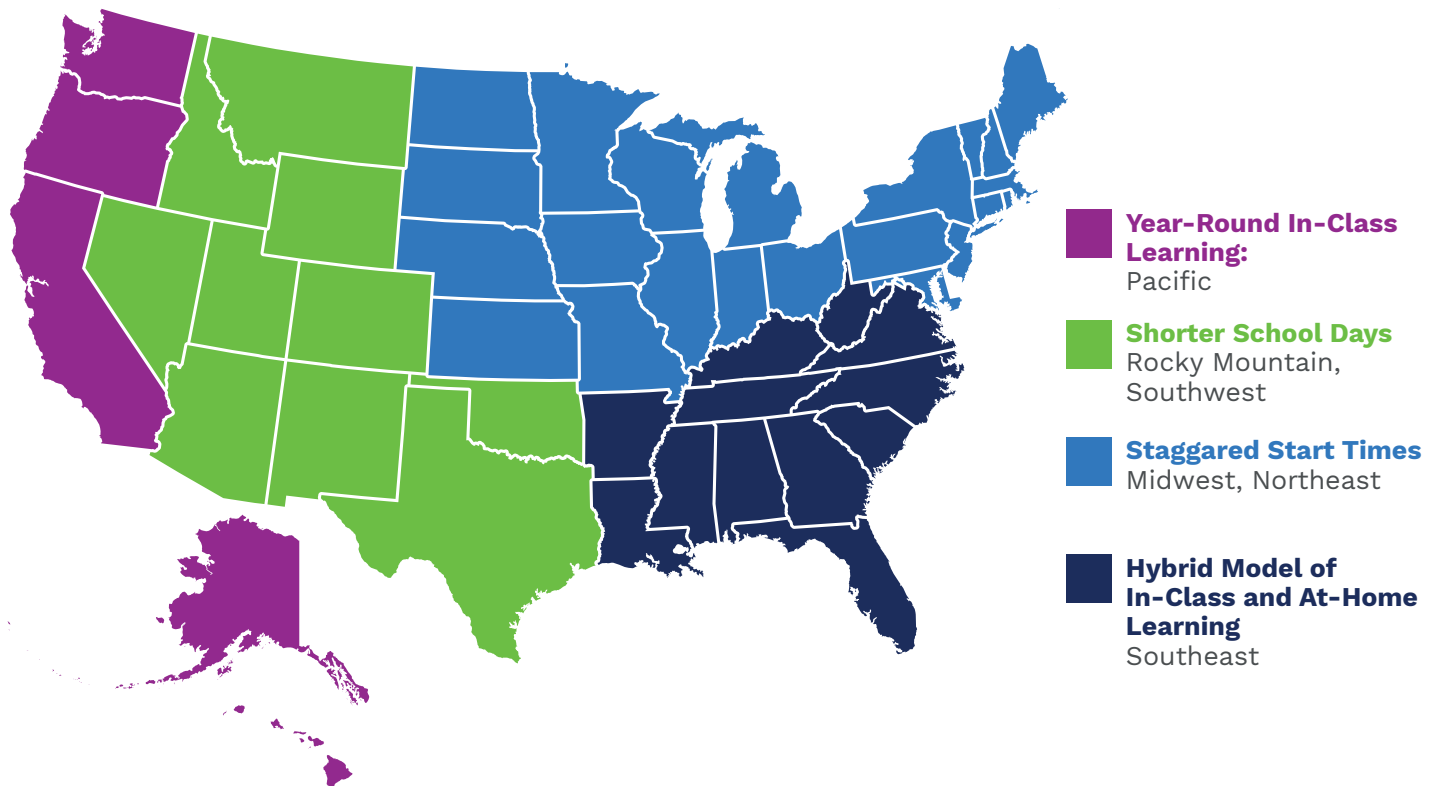
School administrators, superintendents, teachers and other school leaders are grappling with the repercussions of how the 2019–2020 academic year ended. They had to quickly pivot to remote learning as the coronavirus pandemic evolved.

For the 2020–2021 academic year, a majority of respondents said they'll have a hybrid model of in-class and at-home learning. According to various reports, hybrid models include students alternating between learning in the classroom and at home a couple of days a week or every other week, while other schools anticipate having at-home learning during one designated day to keep campuses empty.

Class Model Options for the 2020–2021 School Year (Multiple Answers Given)



Top Selected Class Model Option By Region for the 2020–2021 School Year (Multiple Answers Given)



K–12 school leaders will also need to remedy the communication challenges that developed when education transitioned from the classroom to online at the end of the last school year.

Some school districts offered remote classes over Zoom and other teleconferencing programs, while others provided take-home packets for students. As remote learning began, 79% of survey respondents also shared the biggest communication challenges they experienced as their schools and districts transitioned to remote learning.

- **31%** of those respondents said students lacking Internet access was the top challenge
- **20%** of those respondents said student engagement was a major issue, while **19%** thought parent engagement affected remote learning
- **12%** of respondents identified computer technology and a lack of laptops and other equipment had impacted communication between educators and students and their parents
- **2%** said employee communication was also a challenge in remote learning

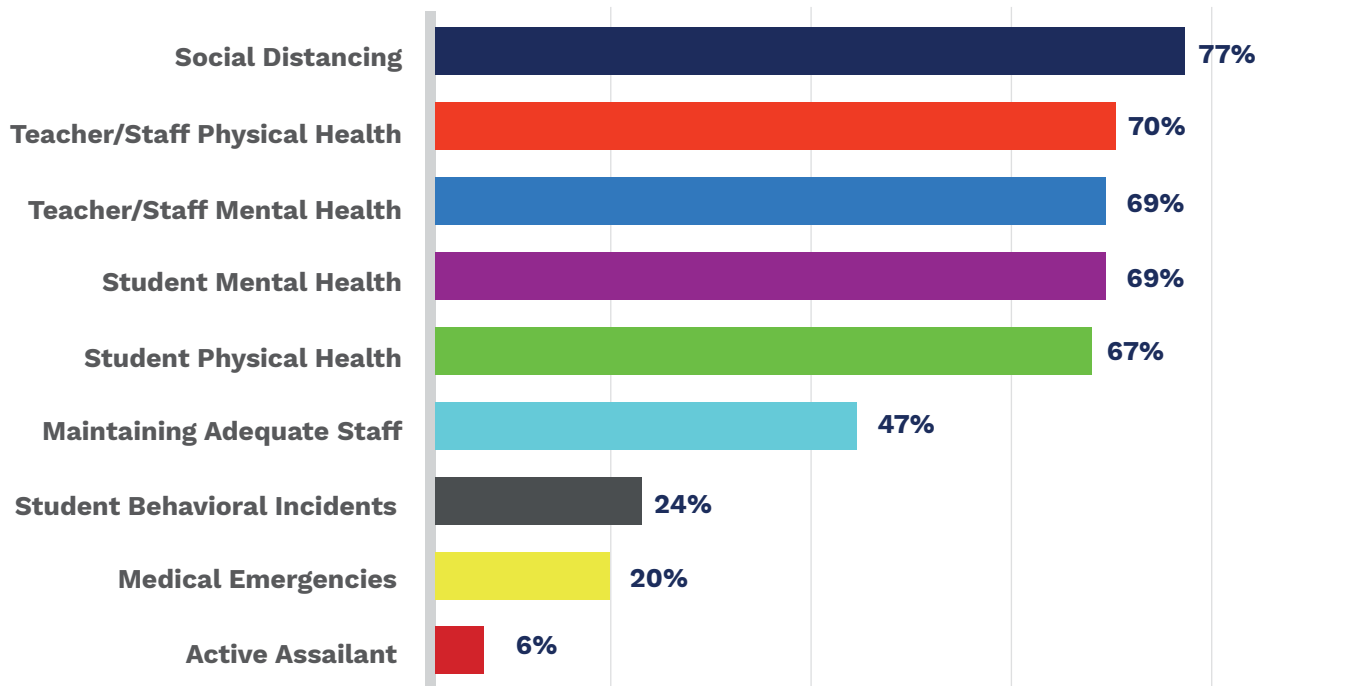


FINDING THREE

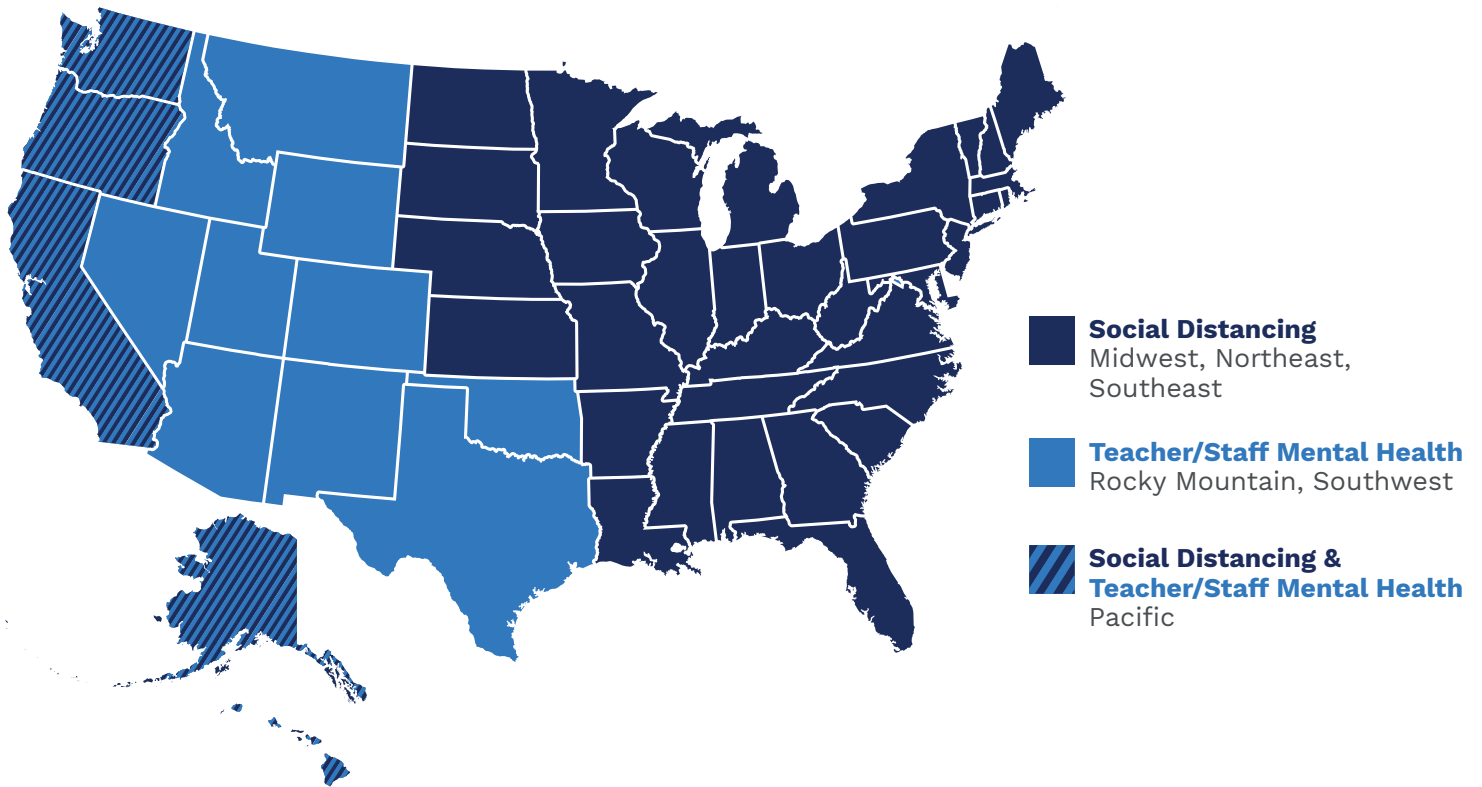
Health and Safety Concerns Impacting In-Person Learning

As schools open for the 2020–2021 academic year, the top safety concern for respondents was social distancing. Other concerns that ranked high included the physical health of teachers and staff, the mental health of teachers and staff, and the mental health of students.

Top Safety Concerns for Returning to School (Multiple Answers Given)



Top Safety Concerns By Region for Returning to School (Multiple Answers Given)

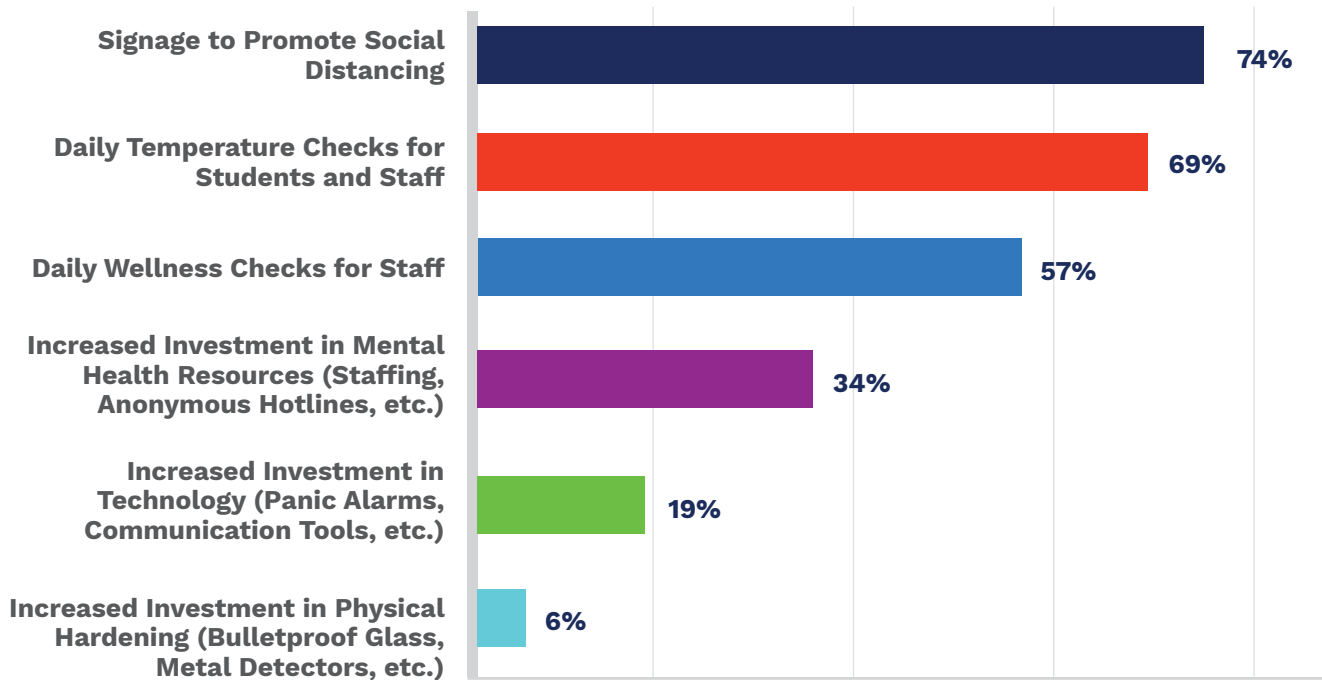


- > The top safety concern for respondents from the Midwest, Northeast and Southeast was **social distancing**
- > Respondents from the Rocky Mountain and Southwest regions indicated the **mental health of teachers and staff** was their major concern
- > School leaders from the Pacific region identified both **social distancing and the mental health of teachers and staff** as their top concerns

As for those students, teachers and staff who are returning to campus, the setup of their schools and their days will be altered. **Signage promoting social distancing (74%)** is how respondents will primarily address these safety concerns.

- **Daily temperature checks for students and staff (69%)** is another safety measure respondents will implement to safeguard against possible coronavirus outbreaks.
- Respondents anticipate increasing investments into mental health resources, such as staffing and anonymous hotlines, to help with anxiety, depression and other issues that students, teachers and staff may endure. Another industry survey from the [EdWeek Research Center](#) found that teachers' morale, for example, dropped as home-teaching lessons ended the 2019–2020 school year. At one point, **72% of teachers said they experienced lower morale than before the pandemic.**

How Top Safety Concerns Will Be Addressed in School (Multiple Answers Given)



About Rave Mobile Safety

Rave Mobile Safety provides the leading critical communication and collaboration platform trusted to help save lives. Rave connects millions to those trusted to protect them, by providing innovative solutions to prepare better, respond faster and communicate more effectively during emergencies.

Our customers include thousands of educational institutions, businesses and public safety agencies. From global corporations to universities with 100,000 students to small private institutions to 9-1-1 centers handling millions of emergency calls for service, we are privileged to work with dedicated security professionals worldwide.

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