

# Feedback about Digital Learning from Non-Instructional School-based Staff: Results from the Fall 2020 Survey

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## Background and Context

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) began the 2020-21 school year with a 100% digital learning model for all District students in grades K-12. The Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) created and administered surveys to students, parents and guardians, teachers, principals, and non-instructional school-based staff about their experiences with digital learning during the first months of the 2020-21 school year. This brief reviews the feedback collected from the non-instructional school-based staff survey.<sup>1</sup>

### What do we mean by “non-instructional school-based staff”?

Non-instructional school-based staff work in schools but do not deliver direct instruction in that same way as teachers. Rather, they support teachers, school administration, and students in a variety of ways in and outside the classroom. They include counselors, nurses, secretaries, classroom assistants, and climate staff.

## Survey Administration and Respondents

The survey was open from September 24 to October 15 via a link that was posted on SDP’s website. There were a total of 173 surveys with at least one completed response. Respondents were asked to select their role from a list of common non-instructional school-based staff titles or select “Other” and type in their role (Table 1). The largest category of respondents were school climate staff who comprised 17% of the overall sample, followed by aides who comprised 13%. Although 23% of respondents selected “Other,” no more than five respondents within that category identified themselves as having the same occupation (see Table 1 note).

Across the District, there are over 3,500 employees that fill a non-instructional support staff role, meaning that the response rate for this survey is only about 5%. While reading this brief, the reader should keep in mind that this is a very low response rate and that the vast majority of support staff did not complete the survey and are therefore not represented in the data.

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<sup>1</sup> A similar report that reviews the feedback from the parent/guardian survey can be found [here](#).

Table 1. Number and percentage of respondents by role

<b>Role</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents</b>
Other (please specify)*	40	23%
School Climate Staff	29	17%
Aide	23	13%
Secretary	15	9%
Special Education Assistant	13	8%
Nurse	11	6%
Counselor	6	3%
1:1 Special Education Assistant	6	3%
Classroom Assistant	6	3%
Paraprofessional	6	3%
Climate Liaison, Manager, Specialist	5	3%
Occupational therapist	5	3%
School psychologist	5	3%
Bilingual Counseling Assistant	3	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100%</b>

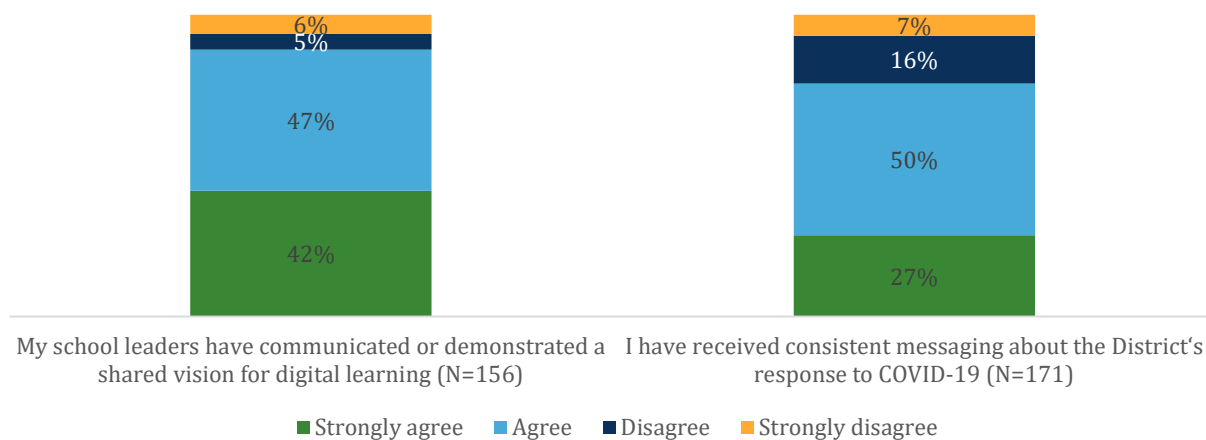
\* Roles that were typed under “Other” more than once included Food Services (N=5), School Aide 3 (N=3), SSA (N=3), Community Partnership Coordinator (N=2), Supportive Services Assistant (N=3), STEP Team (N=2).

## Key Findings

**For the most part, non-instructional staff members who responded to the survey said that there is clear communication regarding their school’s vision for digital learning and the District’s response to COVID.**

The survey asked two questions about communication and messaging with regards to digital learning and COVID. Most respondents (89%) reported that their school leaders have communicated or demonstrated a shared vision for digital learning. Over three-quarters of respondents (77%) reported that they received consistent messaging about the District’s response to COVID.

Figure 1. Non-instructional staff responses to questions related to communication and messaging  
Thinking about your experience with digital learning this fall, how much do you agree with the following statements?\*

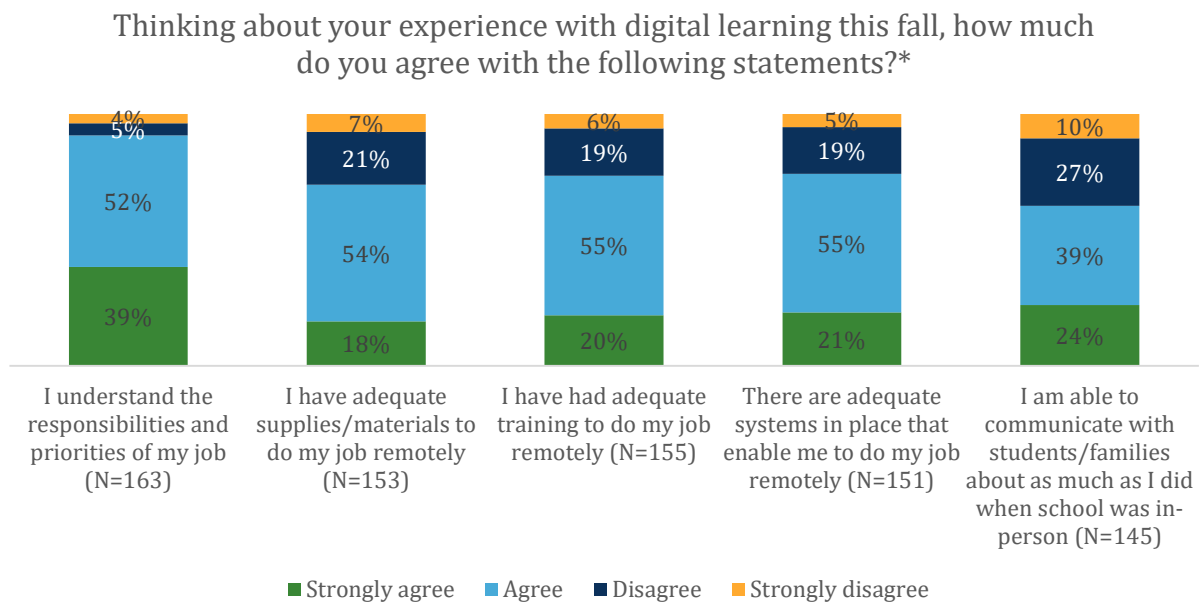


\*Excludes “Does not apply” responses

**About a quarter of non-instructional staff respondents reported that they do not have the supplies/materials, training, and systems that they need to do their jobs remotely.**

The survey also asked respondents about whether or not they have what they need to continue to do their jobs remotely (Figure 1). Nearly all respondents (91%) reported that they understand the responsibilities and priorities of their job. About three quarters of respondents reported that there are adequate systems in place (76%), adequate training (75%), and adequate supplies/materials (72%) for them to continue to do their job remotely. Fewer respondents (63%) reported that they are able to communicate with students and families as often as they did when school was in-person.

Figure 2. Non-instructional staff responses to questions related to their ability to work remotely

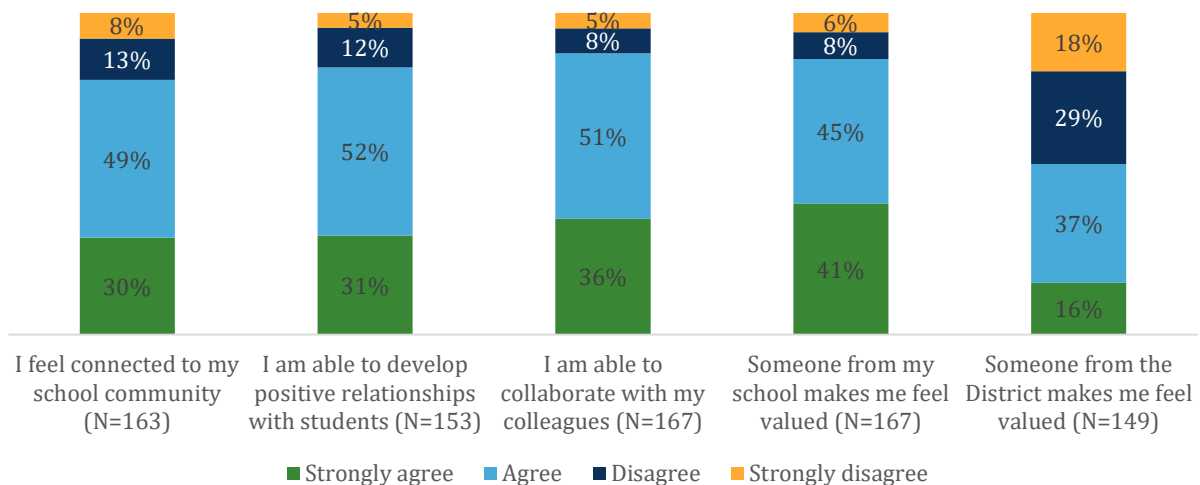


\*Excludes “Does not apply” responses

**Most non-instructional staff members said they feel connected to their school community despite working remotely, but only half said they feel valued by District staff.**

The next set of questions solicited feedback around how connected and valued staff feel while working remotely. In regards to connectedness, 79% of respondents reported feeling connected to their school community, 87% of respondents reported that they are able to collaborate with their colleagues, and 83% reported that they are able to develop positive relationship with students. In response to questions about feeling valued, 86% of respondents reported that someone from their school makes them feel valued, whereas only 53% of respondents reported that someone from the District made them feel valued.

Figure 3. Non-instructional staff responses to questions related to school connectedness  
Thinking about your experience with digital learning this fall, how much do you agree with the following statements?\*



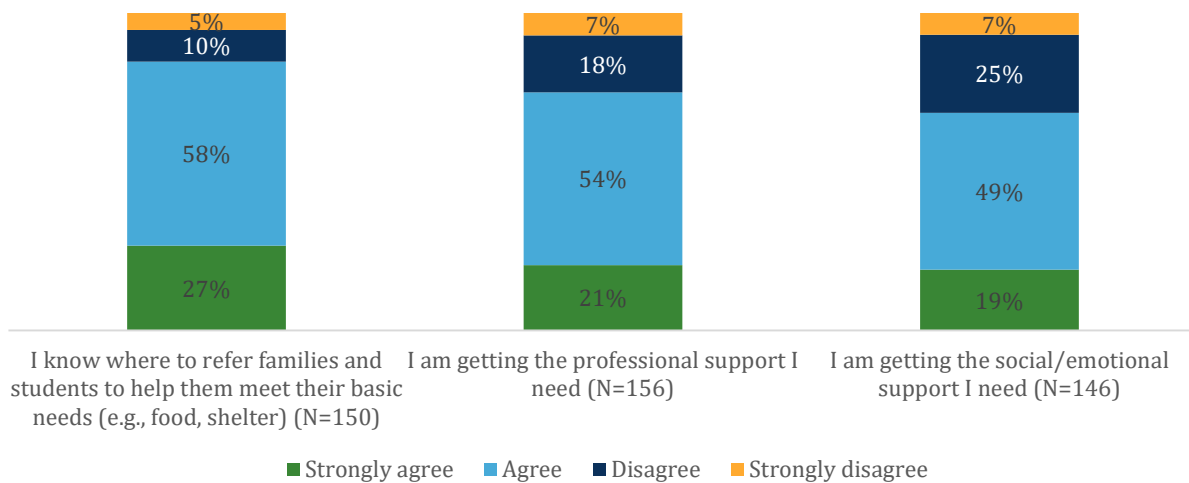
\*Excludes “Does not apply” responses

**Although most non-instructional staff said that they know where to refer families for support, a third said that they are not getting the social/emotional support that they need.**

We also asked questions about the ability of non-instructional staff to support students and families as well as whether staff members are getting the support that they need. Most respondents (85%) reported that they know where to refer families and students in order to help them meet their basic needs. In terms of their own support, 75% of respondents reported that they have the professional support that they need. Fewer (68%) reported that have the social/emotional support that they need.

Figure 3. Non-instructional staff responses to questions related to support

Thinking about your experience with digital learning this fall, how much do you agree with the following statements?\*



\*Excludes “Does not apply” responses

## Conclusion

Non-instructional school-based staff had the opportunity to complete a survey about their experience with digital learning during the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, and 173 staff members answered at least one question. This represents less than 5% of staff eligible to complete the survey. When asked about communication, the majority of respondents agreed that there was clear communication regarding their school’s vision for digital learning (89%) and the District’s response to COVID (77%). However, about a quarter of non-instructional staff respondents reported that they do not have the supplies/materials, training, and systems that they need to do their jobs remotely. While most respondents said they feel connected to their schools (79%) and that someone from their school makes them feel valued (83%), just about half said that someone from the District made them feel valued (53%). In response to questions about the support they receive, 75% of respondents reported that they have the professional support that they need and 68% reported that have the social/emotional support that they need.