Paula Tibbitts

From: Anita Murphy <anita.murphy@neric.org>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 8:45 AM
To: 2nd Patterson email address (pgreen6415@gmail.com); Aaron Bochniak - Schenectady City; Alicea, Jaime; Anibal Soler Jr (asoler@bataviacsd.org); Brian Bailey - RCS; Brian Dunn - Middleburgh; Carl Mummenthey - Cobleskill-Richmondville; Carol Pallas - Schalmont; Cosimo Tangorra - Nisky; David Blanchard - Schoharie; David Perry - South Colonie; Frank Macri - Voorheesville; Jack Etter (jetter@gccs.us); James Niedermeier; Jeffery Ziegler - Duanesburg; Jennifer Spring - Cohoes; Jody Monroe - Bethlehem; Joseph Corr - North Colonie; Joseph Dragone; Joseph Kardash (jkardash@rcsd.k12.ny.us); Kaweeda Adams - Albany City; Kimberly Ross - Green Island; Lori Caplan - Watervliet; Lynne Wells; Marie Wiles - Guilderland; Maureen Long - Menands; Oliver Robinson; Patrick McGrath - BH-BL; Patterson Green - Sharon Springs; Reardon, Thomas; Rebecca Stone; Shannon Shine - Mohon; Slentz, Kenneth; Susan Swartz - S-G; Tarkan Ceng (tceng@jeffersoncsd.org); Tim Ryan; Timothy Mundell - BKW
Cc: Jennifer Bennett; Adrienne Leon; Lauren Gemmill; Mark Jones; Michael Doughty
Subject: Statewide Thoughtexchange - Expanded Report
Attachments: Statewide Thoughtexchange Report 6122020.pdf

Good morning,
Please see as follows from Nassau BOCES (an expanded thought exchange report statewide) that might be helpful to go along with the report that Communications did and that we distributed last week.
Thank you,
Anita

nassau BOCES

Statewide Virtual Conversation Regarding Reopening Schools

Data reveals 13 themes

June 2020

By
Dr. Robert R. Dillon
District Superintendent

Exchange Leader
Angela Marshall
Public Information Officer

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Acknowledgements

Thoughtexchange Staff

Nicole Senior
Customer Success Manager

Kathrine Millar
Success Enablement Manager

Rita MacLeod
Team Lead

Introduction

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, public school districts throughout New York State began closing school buildings and turning to remote instruction the week of March 8, 2020. On March 16, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that all public schools would be closed for in-person instruction for two weeks. He continued to extend the closure until May 1 when he announced that schools would be closed for in-person instruction until the end of the school year.

Schools turned to remote instruction for Kindergarten through 12th grade, including students in special education and English as a New Language. Instruction was provided in a number of ways, ranging from academic paper packets to live virtual instruction.

Many families were impacted by the building closures. In addition to continuity of instruction, school districts provide families with childcare and meals. School districts stepped up to offer solutions to all of these issues, providing remote instruction, pre-packaged breakfasts and lunches, as well as resources for childcare for essential workers.

There was an equity issue regarding distance learning. Capacity for delivering instruction was on a continuum from very low to very high. Two factors most often defined the continuum – the wealth or location of the district.

The Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) – which were created by the New York State legislature to provide shared educational programs and services to school districts within their boundaries – created a statewide online virtual conversation to understand the thoughts and concerns of community members and staff regarding reopening school buildings. There are 37 BOCES throughout New York State, each led by a District Superintendent who represents not only the BOCES and its component school districts but also serves as liaisons to the New York State Commissioner of Education. The District Superintendents believed that a survey-like virtual conversation would help to gather the information needed to build credible and realistic reopening plans.

Executive Summary

The BOCES used the virtual conversation tool Thoughtexchange to crowdsource thoughts and ideas regarding how community members feel about returning to school in the fall or whenever it is possible. The question – "What ideas and thoughts do you have as you think about a return to in-person schooling?" –gathered thoughts from more than 60,000 participants.

After a participant shared their thoughts, they were encouraged to rate at least 30 of the thoughts submitted by other participants. This way, the thoughts that resonated with the most participants would rise to the top. More than 80,000 thoughts were shared, resulting in more than 2.2 million ratings. The exchange is the largest in Thoughtexchange's history.

Because the exchange was anticipated to be large, it was released slowly over a number of days, and was open from May 15 to May 29. The BOCES asked the school districts throughout their regions to share the exchange and encourage participation. Each participant was asked to identify their BOCES so that the data could be sorted by region.

This initial statewide data analysis is based on just over 1,000 of the top-rated thoughts from the exchange divided into the most discussed themes. The data includes the top 30 thoughts from each of the 37 BOCES.

In addition, the top 300 thoughts from each BOCES was sorted using the same themes as the statewide data. If a BOCES did not have 300 participants, all thoughts from the BOCES were included. Participation by BOCES ranged from 170 at Franklin-Essex-Hamilton to 10,902 at Nassau BOCES. See participation chart in the appendix for more information.

Five areas emerged as the most important to participants statewide:

- Participants felt it was important for in-person schooling to be held in the fall, even if it is not full-time. Issues included:
  - Parents are not trained to teach
  - Teacher/student interaction is an important component of learning
  - Peer interaction is an important component of learning
  - Students do better with structure
  - Students have different learning styles and some thrive on hands-on learning
- The impact of CDC guidelines was discussed thoroughly. Issues included:
  - Likelihood that students would not be able to maintain social distancing or wear masks all day
  - Inability to maintain social distancing in current classrooms
  - Feeling that it is important not to eliminate programs like art, gym and music
  - Need for personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff

- There was overall dissatisfaction with remote instruction/learning. Issues included:
  - Inequitable access to Wi-Fi and technology
  - Not enough live instruction
  - Hard for teachers to assess strengths and weaknesses
  - Lack of participation by students
- Participants called for significant cleaning and disinfecting practices. Issues included:
  - Sanitizing all surfaces daily
  - Ensuring busses are cleaned between runs
  - Having hand sanitizer available
  - Need to teach proper handwashing/hygiene techniques
- Participants were concerned about the need for socialization and students' mental health. Issues included:
  - Students are struggling with depression, anxiety and isolation
  - Address mental health when students return
  - Get students back together as soon as possible
  - Social interactions are important to development

Question: "What ideas and thoughts do you have as you think about a return to in-person schooling?"	
61,453 Participants	The participant count includes people who took part in one or more of the following exchange activities: reading the introduction, sharing thoughts, rating thoughts or exploring thoughts.
80,541 Thoughts	Thoughts are the ideas shared by participants.
2,220,617 Ratings	Participants were asked to rate about 30 thoughts. Thoughts are rated on a five-star scale – one star being the lowest rating and five being the highest, in terms of importance or agreement. Throughout the report, the term "star rating" is referring to the average rating a thought received by participants. The participants self-identified which BOCES they lived in. Participants were only able to view and rate thoughts from their BOCES.

Survey Questions

Participants were asked to complete four survey questions before participating in the exchange.

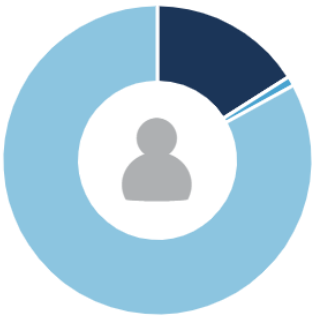
What is the MOST IMPORTANT role you play related to public education?

%		
61%	(31,319)	Parent/Guardian of current student
33%	(16,895)	Faculty/staff
2%	(1,271)	Administrator
0%	(274)	Board member
4%	(1,968)	Other

What school level do you primarily associate yourself with?

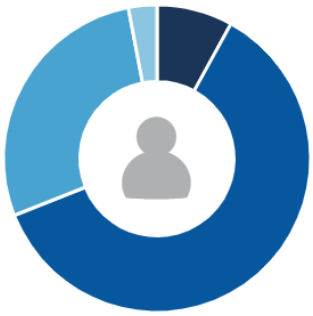
%		
41%	(21,442)	Elementary School
16%	(8,195)	Middle School
28%	(14,295)	High School
15%	(7,628)	Districtwide

If you are a parent, is your child receiving services in the following programs?



%		
16%	(8,275)	Special Education
0%	(186)	English as a New Language
1%	(265)	Both
83%	(42,002)	Not applicable
0%	(8)	Answer not available

What is your age range?



%		
8%	(3,987)	Under 32
61%	(31,038)	32-48
28%	(14,319)	49 and over
3%	(1,705)	Prefer not to answer
0%	(5)	Answer not available

Participants had the ability to request a language translation.

%		
100%	(61404)	English
0%	(16)	Unknown
0%	(15)	Spanish
0%	(12)	Unknown
0%	(8)	Japanese
0%	(5)	Korean
0%	(2)	Russian
0%	(2)	Unknown
0%	(2)	Vietnamese
0%	(1)	Ukrainian
0%	(1)	Arabic

Statewide Overview

Top themes

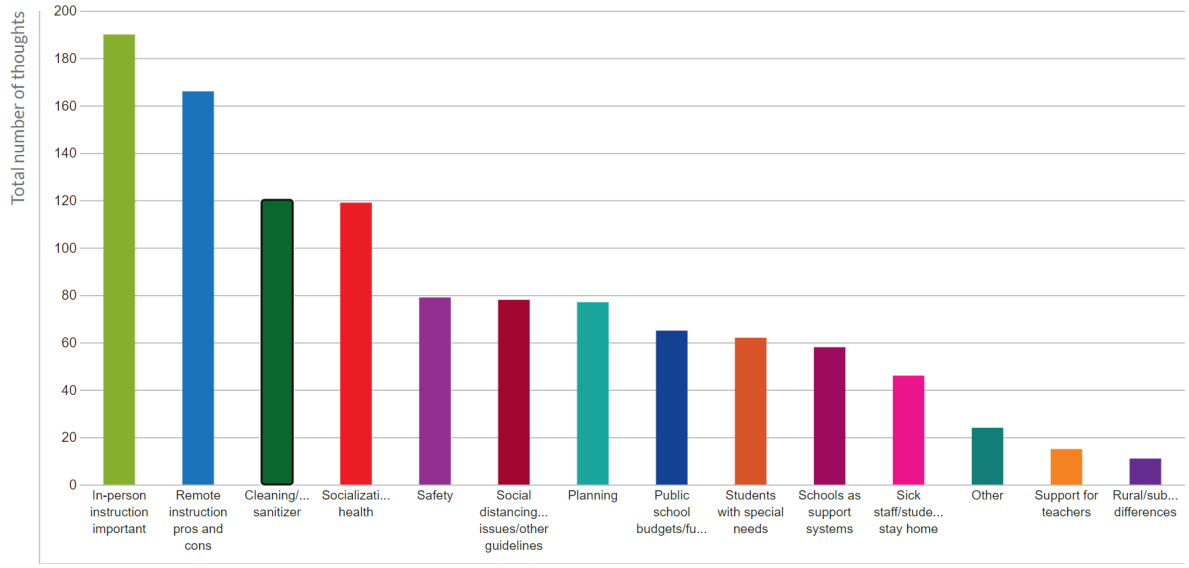
After an exchange closes, the exchange leader reviews the top responses to determine the "Themes" that have emerged from the conversation. Those themes are used to sort the thoughts and make it easier to spot trends in the data. Think of the themes like a system of buckets that you can use to sort like data. Some thoughts mention multiple themes. In this case, the person conducting the theming places it in the theme that receives the most emphasis in the thought. This exchange was themed by the exchange leader and two Thoughtexchange customer success managers, who specialize in theming and analytics.

Thirteen themes emerged from the data. A fourteenth category – Other – was created for thoughts that did not fit into one of the 13 themes. The results below, listed alphabetically, are based on analyzing the top 30 responses from each of the 37 BOCES, equaling 1,110 thoughts statewide.

- Cleaning/disinfecting/hand sanitizer (120 thoughts, 4.5 star rating)
- In-person instruction important (190 thoughts, 4.4 star rating)
- Other (24 thoughts, 4.4 star rating)
- Planning (77 thoughts, 4.4 star rating)
- Public school budgets/funding (65 thoughts, 4.5 star rating)
- Remote instruction pros and cons (166 thoughts, 4.4. star rating)
- Rural/suburban/urban differences (11 thoughts, 4.4 star rating)
- Safety (79 thoughts, 4.4 star rating)
- Schools as support systems (58 thoughts, 4.4 star rating)
- Sick staff/students stay home (46 thoughts, 4.5 star rating)
- Social distancing/mask issues/other guidelines (78 thoughts, 4.3 star rating)
- Socialization/mental health (119 thoughts, 4.4 star rating)
- Students with special needs (62 thoughts, 4.4 star rating)
- Support for teachers (15 thoughts, 4.4 star rating)

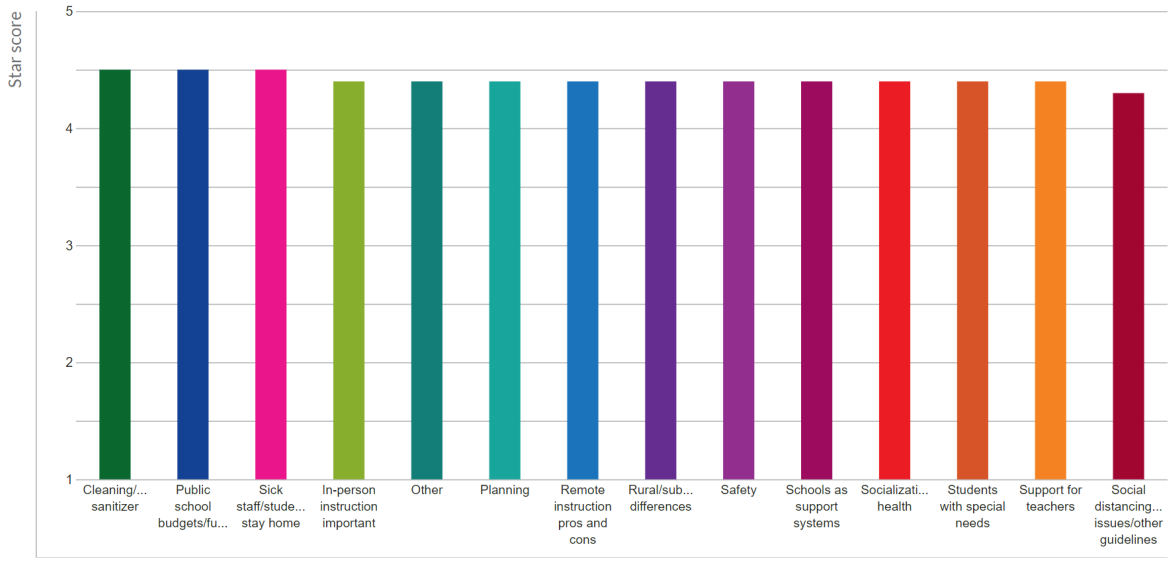
Two of the themes are very small. "Rural/suburban/urban differences" has 11 thoughts and "Support for teachers" has 15 thoughts. The exchange data team debated eliminating these themes and putting the thoughts in "Other." They decided against that because the thoughts in these themes received such high star ratings. They were both singled out in the Regional data below.

Top themes based on number of thoughts



Statewide, the "In-person instruction important" theme received the most thoughts with 190 of the 1,110 thoughts placed in this category. This represents about 17% of the thoughts. Conversely, "Rural/suburban/urban differences" only received 11 thoughts, or less than 1% of the thoughts.

Top themes based on star ratings



Statewide, three themes tied for the highest start rating at 4.5 stars, "Cleaning/disinfecting/hand sanitizer," "Public school budgets/funding" and "Sick staff/students stay home." The theme "Social distancing, mask issues/other guidance" received the lowest of the star rating at 4.3. For the purpose of this analysis, the focus was on any thoughts that had a star rating of 4.0 or higher.

Top 3 thoughts from each theme

Cleaning/disinfecting/hand sanitizer

- All classrooms should have cleaning products, tissues and hand sanitizers. We need to continue practicing clean hygiene. – *Eastern Suffolk*
- Schools need to disinfect as many surfaces as possible daily. Many schools do not disinfect daily. – *Questar III*
- Hand Sanitation should have always been in practice. Continuing to have hand cleaning options around the building, especially before eating, should absolutely be a continue practice. – *Orange-Ulster*

In-person instruction important

- I think getting back to in-person schooling is very important and we need to figure out a way to make this happen safely and as quickly as possible. Students cannot be educated in the way they need through online education, especially students who struggle or have a disability. – *Erie 2*
- Some form of in person instruction needs to occur in the fall of 2020. – *Erie 2*
- Students succeed at a higher level when they are in the classroom. This is important because the teacher can get to know the students and how to help/remediate and challenge the students if they are in school. – *Erie 1*

Other

- Allow Gym class to be outdoors whenever possible. Fresh air, distancing, getting back to the old ways of kids spending more time outdoors. – *Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego*
- School nurses are NOT mandated in NY public schools. NYS should mandate all districts to staff one registered school nurse per school building at minimum! To provide proper & appropriate medical care. – *Orleans-Niagara*
- State assessments should be postponed for the next academic school year. Take the stress off of parents, students, and teachers. – *Otsego-Northern Catskills*

Planning

- Educators need to be a vital part of the plan. We know what real learning needs. – *Broome-Delaware-Tioga*
- Educators need to be part of the decisions. Schools need to look different for a bit, but how should be up to educators. Not. Politicians or $Having a billionaire "rethink" schools is stupid. We need parents and educators to be driving these discussions. – *Broome-Delaware-Tioga*
- Faculty and staff need to be included in the conversation on how to safely reopen schools. They are the ones in the trenches dealing with the day-to-day logistics of schools. – *Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex*

Public school budgets/funding

- Schools will need additional funding from the government, not less. Schools will need more faculty/staff and more computers so that resources are not shared and classes can be smaller. – *Questar III*
- Fully FUND OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS NOT CUT!!! Districts are laying off teachers in the midst of the biggest crisis a generation has ever faced kids need strong supports in place from their schools. – *Greater Southern Tier*
- Budget cuts are not the answer! You can't expect us to provide services to our students and yet take our funding from us. – *Jefferson-Lewis-Hamilton-Herkimer-Oneida*

Remote instruction pros and cons

- Kids learn in different ways such as hands on learning with labs. Not all kids benefit from viewing things online, they require more interactive learning. – *Greater Southern Tier*
- A screen cannot take the role of a teacher. A live connection is needed. – *Nassau*
- A digital format cannot replicate in any way the millions of teachable moments that arise from in person learning. Teachable moments and strong class discussions do not happen in a digital format. – *Capital Region*

Rural/suburban/urban differences

- Rural schools with little to no Internet suffered. We have a 70% low-income population and school is where these students connect to technology. Our students without technology at home have suffered. – *Otsego-Northern Catskills*
- The State guidelines need to be effective for rural New York public schools as well as the larger New York public schools. Rural NY has different needs than the NY city schools. – *Otsego-Northern Catskills*
- Schools located upstate are in a much different position than downstate schools. We need different solutions for each area. It is important to treat upstate and downstate differently according to the needs in each area. A "one size fits all" solution will NOT work. – *Genesee Valley Educational Partnership*

Safety

- I'm concerned about the health and safety of the students and teachers. It is important for the school district to implement extra cleaning procedures and social distancing measures. – *Erie 1*
- Safety. I just want the entire school to be safe; teachers, students etc. – *Nassau*
- The safety of students and staff need to be the number one priority. – *Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex*

Schools as support systems

- How are working parents going to manage home schooling, child care and supporting their family if we Institute part-time in-school learning? This is already a difficult situation for many working families. – *Erie 1*
- For some children, school is their only outlet from abuse and neglect at home. Teachers, and peers, know their students and friends. Teachers are the frontrunner to see abuse/ neglect and able to help the child. – *Orange-Ulster*
- School severs as a protective factor for some children in poor home environments. School is a safe haven for some children who live in a home filled with drugs, abuse, and other undesirable environments. – *Greater Southern Tier*

Sick staff/students stay home

- Parents should NOT be allowed to send students to school sick! If they are sick keep them home. So they don't infect anyone else! – *Orange-Ulster*
- Students/staff stay home when sick Prevent spread of germs. – *Questar III*
- Students with a fever should be sent home immediately. Fever is a sign of infection. Also, parents should be told not to give their children medication for a fever and then send them to school. – *Sullivan*

Social distancing/mask issues/other guidelines

- It's going to be nearly impossible to make kids wear a mask all day. – *Questar III*
- To see the possible guidelines outlined for the 20-21 academic year by the CDC is frightening and scary. Schools do not have the space to meet the guidelines. Not to mention, the guidelines go against everything in person schooling is built upon. – *Questar III*
- I think it would be extremely difficult to enforce kids to wear masks for an entire school day. I think there would be a lot of discipline issues. – *Capital Region*

Socialization/mental health

- Physical health and mental health must be taking into consideration equally. Both are large factors in a student's ability to learn. – *Erie 2*
- The children need the social aspect of schooling. It's really difficult to build and sustain relationships in the online learning setting. – *Greater Southern Tier*
- The interactive nature of a classroom encourages motivation, healthy competitiveness and determination in children. It encourages thought processes. Children need the social interactions in school to learn self-regulation, manners, social norms, etc. – *Eastern Suffolk*

Students with special needs

- Crucially important. School is a safe area for a lot of students. Special education services are nearly impossible to implement remotely. – *Erie 2*

- Special education and related services do not work well virtually. Children with IEPs need in-person services. Period. It is exponentially more difficult to distance modify, monitor and assess progress well virtually. – *Jefferson-Lewis-Hamilton-Herkimer-Oneida*
- Distance Learning is not beneficial to my high need special ed students. They need more than academics. They need the routine, self-care, hygiene, life skills, social interactions, service providers for PT, CBT job skills. – *Jefferson-Lewis-Hamilton-Herkimer-Oneida*

Support for teachers

- Teachers will need more support, not less. While teachers did an amazing job switching to online school in 24 hours, it takes much time, collaboration, and more work than being in school. – *Questar III*
- Teachers are under estimated, they are a lot more than just an educator. Teachers in person can make sure students get it, retain it and apply it! – *Greater Southern Tier*
- We appreciate the teachers and staff during this time thank you for being so wonderful and doing all you can for our children. – *Greater Southern Tier*

Statewide data word clouds

Based on the number of thoughts the word appears in

Based on the rating of the thoughts the word appears in

Differences example

Side A

As a parent and a staff member of the public school system, I believe we should return to normal operations. I would like to see modifications or alternatives other than virtual schooling. In person schooling provides so much that is lost by virtual schooling

★ 4.8 ★ 1.3

Schools should reopen in fall to full capacity. The education online does not match in classroom. Students are not engaged, know that 'they will not fail' and are not taking it seriously.

★ 4.8 ★ 1.2

Schools need to go back to normal in the fall. Kids need this normalcy. They need the structure of school, the socialisation, and sports. They are not getting the education they deserve and need.

★ 4.9 ★ 1.6

In person school is important Fosters relationships, sense of community, friendship

★ 4.9 ★ 1.7

Honestly, just bring them back. I'm not overly concerned about all of this. Clean the schools and open them up. It's important that the kids get back to normal quicker than not. They are the ones that will suffer the most. Adult can adult and handle it.

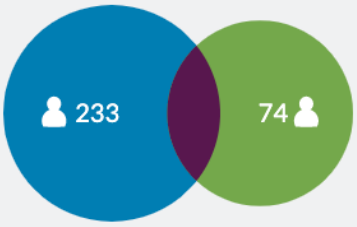
★ 4.9 ★ 1.1

In Person School needs to OPEN! Receiving an in- person education is ESSENTIAL! Parents can choose to send them or not to, just as you choose many other avenues in their life.

★ 4.9 ★ 1.6

things need to go back to the way they were and let the kids have their normal day back with socializing with friends. No change other then cleaning After talking with my kids doctor it was blown out of proportion and by September risk will may be almost gone. Kids need social interaction/normalcy

★ 4.9 ★ 1.3



Show more

Side A/B Common (high)

The distance learning model leaves a large number of children out, as in this rural area they have difficulty gaining access to internet resources. There needs to be equity in public education, with all children having access to the same resources.

★ 4.7 ★ 3.6

Remote learning does not support students with special needs! There are too many factors and not enough hours in the day. Educators are doing everything they can, but it feels impossible to do the job well enough

★ 4.9 ★ 3.8

The safety, physical heath, and mental health of students and staff are of the utmost important Students need to have a safe and sanitary place to learn, while faculty and staff need the same to support students.

★ 4.6 ★ 4.9

If we go back in the Fall, the guidelines need to be reasonable and doable.

★ 4.6 ★ 3.7

If you're sick, please stay home It's the right thing to do

★ 4.8 ★ 4.4

Many students do not have actively involved parents at home, therefore rendering home instruction far less effective than in school instruction If viral infection is a risk, parents and teacher should have options for who is best suited for at home instruction.

★ 4.5 ★ 4.0

Side B

Would you rather be annoyed or heart broken? I get our kids need to have social interaction, but why would you want to currently send your child to a school where multiple families are entering?

★ 1.1 ★ 5.0

I think we should do online schooling next year I have a young child who's going to start kindergarten and I do not want her exposed to these viruses

★ 1.0 ★ 4.6

I think schools should not reopen until the risk from COVID-19 is close to negligible. Kids should be as protected as any other group or more so because 1) we owe them the best protection and 2)they will become vectors for the virus

★ 1.4 ★ 4.8

I feel that it is too soon to attend school until we find a vaccine to protect us.

★ 1.2 ★ 4.8

The structure of school is important, but the health and safety of my child is far more important. Until there is a vaccination or a solid plan in place that will ensure safety I am not comfortable with my child returning to school.

★ 1.5 ★ 5.0

i believe remote learning would be the beat choice

★ 1.1 ★ 4.8

I would prefer to wait to return to in-person schooling until there is a safe and reliable cure for COVID. With the uncertain effects of this virus on our children, I think it is important to wait to return until we have more information and a treatment.

★ 1.5 ★ 4.9

I don't think it should happen next year I am too concerned over my childrens safety

★ 1.4 ★ 4.8

Differences

The Thoughtexchange system also provides the ability to look at the polarization and commonalities that manifested in the conversation. An example is provided on page 13. This helps to identify areas of division and areas of agreement throughout the exchange. In the example, the system analyzed the starring pattern/behavior of two groups, placing these thoughts into two different groups: "Group A" and "Group B." At the top of the screen is a bar graph showing the approximate size of each sub-group (Group A and Group B). Below each thought is the average rating assigned to it by each sub-group, Group A scores are on the bottom left and Group B scores are on the bottom right.

Here is an example of one of the primary groupings identified in the report's algorithm:

Please see first thought on the left column (under "Side A"):

- THOUGHT – "As a parent and a staff member of the public school system, I believe we should return to normal operations. I would like to see modifications or alternatives other than virtual schooling. In person schooling provides so much that is lost by virtual schooling"

Group A (Side A) rated this thought high (Avg 4.8)

Group B (Side B) rated this thought low (Avg 1.3)

Please see first thought on the right column (under "Side B"):

- THOUGHT – "Would you rather be annoyed or heartbroken? I get our kids need to have social interaction, but why would you want to currently send your child to a school where multiple families are entering?

Group A (Side A) rated this thought low (Avg 1.1)

Group B (Side B) rated this thought high (Avg 5.0)

The Common ratings show a list of thoughts that the sub-groups rated the same (either high or low). These thoughts show agreement.

Please note that this is a high-level view of ONE of the many sets of differences and common ratings identified state-wide, and the system has the ability to break this down at a BOCES level.

Top thoughts by demographic

There are many similarities in the responses between those who identify themselves as parents/guardians in general to those who identify themselves as parents of students with special needs or students for whom English is a new language. In the top five responses for each category, returning to in-person learning and cleaning processes are emphasized.

Top five thoughts by those who identified themselves as a parent/guardian

- In person schooling is needed for the social growth and construction of knowledge. Students need other students to learn how to interact positively and build a deep understanding of content. – *Capital Region*
- Classrooms need to be cleaned and disinfected daily. Kill viruses and germs to reduce risk of infection. – *Dutchess*
- Students succeed at a higher level when they are in the classroom. This is important because the teacher can get to know the students and how to help/remediate and challenge the students if they are in school. – *Erie 1*
- Having hand sanitizers in all classroom and common areas. Practice hygiene guidelines. – *Nassau*
- At home, computer-based learning is NOT a substitute to being in the classroom. As a teacher, it is clear to me that the level of engagement by students is in free-fall. – *Erie 1*

Top five thoughts by parents of students with special needs

- If virtual learning continues, or a staggered approach is begun, special ed. services need to be provided with frequency written on IEP. Condensed services are causing regression of skills, larger gap between my child and her peers with no plan to make up services. – *Capital Region*
- I believe it is imperative for our kids to return to in-person schooling. Kids need to be around other kids. They need direction from an adult, and teachers usually get a different response than parents from their children. – *Nassau*
- Hand sanitizer stations throughout school building. Hand sanitizers stations and extra masks available. – *Nassau*
- I think it is important for the children to be back in classes. They need the socialization. Not all children learn the same. It is important to have that teacher/student interaction especially for children with IEP. – *Erie 2*
- Teachers need the ability to connect with students. Teachers understand the social & emotional needs of every child. They need to see them to be able to nurture these needs. They cannot do that online. – *Nassau*

Top five thoughts by parents of student with English as a new language

- When you lack exposure to germs and people your immunity weakens. Like atrophy for a muscle. We are doing this to our kids right now. Time to go back. Clean more, Sanitize it all, Keep sick kids and teachers Home, But lets get those who can back in classes. – *Erie 1*
- This appears to have an undertone of pushing a new phase of technological distanced learning in the future. ...Just in time for the 5g explosion. The negatives for this will outweigh the positives if we don't resume normalcy. No school will force a parent home and further kill the economy. – *Erie 1*
- Kids need to be in school- They are losing valuable education and equally as important socialization skills while stuck in the house all day w Family. Flatten The Curve we all understood. It made sense. Then it changed to Stay Home Save Lives. Now we lock it down in an OBVIOUS political narrative. – *Erie 1*
- ELL students and Special Ed students especially need to return to schools. Students who need extra supports CANNOT get them adequately online. At-risk populations should be considered first when thinking about returning. – *Monroe 2-Orleans*
- We need to balance medical safety with overall well-being. Keeping children healthy is important, but it needs to be balanced with other needs. Those needs cannot be met through a computer screen. – *Monroe 2-Orleans*

Regional Data

The data for each BOCES was also sorted separately into the same themes used for the state data. It includes the top 300 thoughts for each of the 37 BOCES where available. Two BOCES did not have 300 thoughts, Franklin-Essex-Hamilton (198 thoughts) and Champlain Valley Educational Services (200 thoughts).

There are 10 regions of the state often used by the BOCES and New York State Council of School Superintendents. Below is a breakdown of the responses for each region. The regions each have three or four BOCES within their boundaries.

Statewide, the theme "In-person instruction important" dominated all other themes, with 80% of regions showing that this theme attracted the most thoughts. The theme "Social distancing, mask issues, other guidelines" led in the other 20% of regions and was in the top three in 60% of regions. "Remote learning pros and cons" only led in one region, but it was in the top three in 60% of districts.

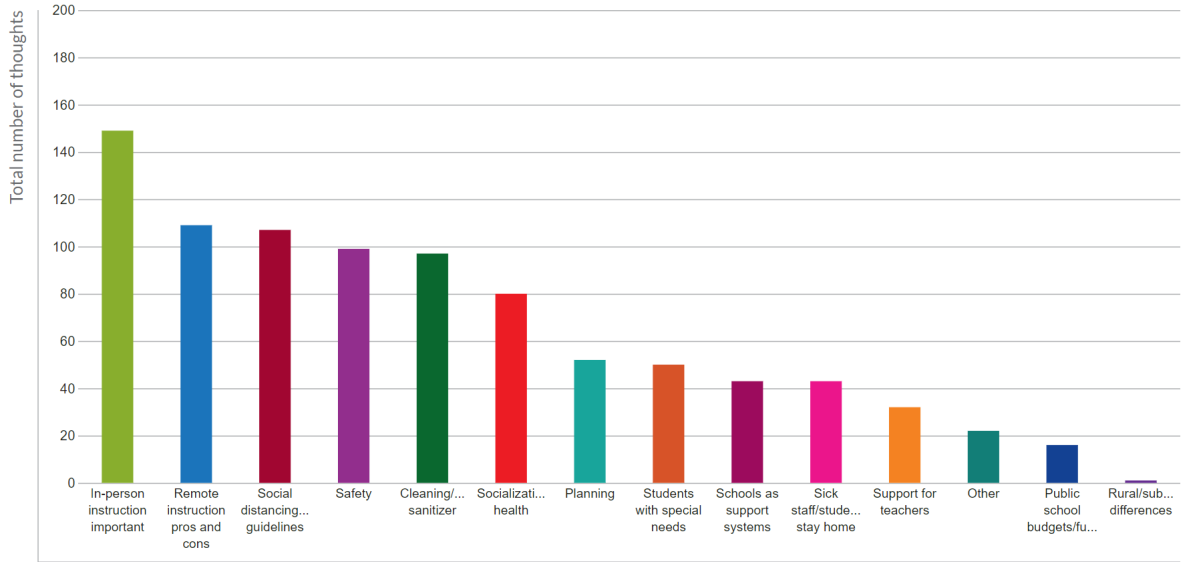
Although "In-person instruction important" received the top number of thoughts in 80% of the regions, it only received the highest star rating in one region. Again, participants rate thoughts on a scale of 1 to 5 stars based on how much they agree with an idea, how relevant it is to them, or how important they think it is for the leaders of the exchange to consider. "Public schools budget/funding" was the top theme in 50% of the regions star ratings, but even then it was often tied with other themes for the top spot. Participants felt so strongly about the majority of the themes that 60% of the time there was a tie between two or three themes for the top star rating.

Capital Region

(Capital Region, Questar III and Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex)

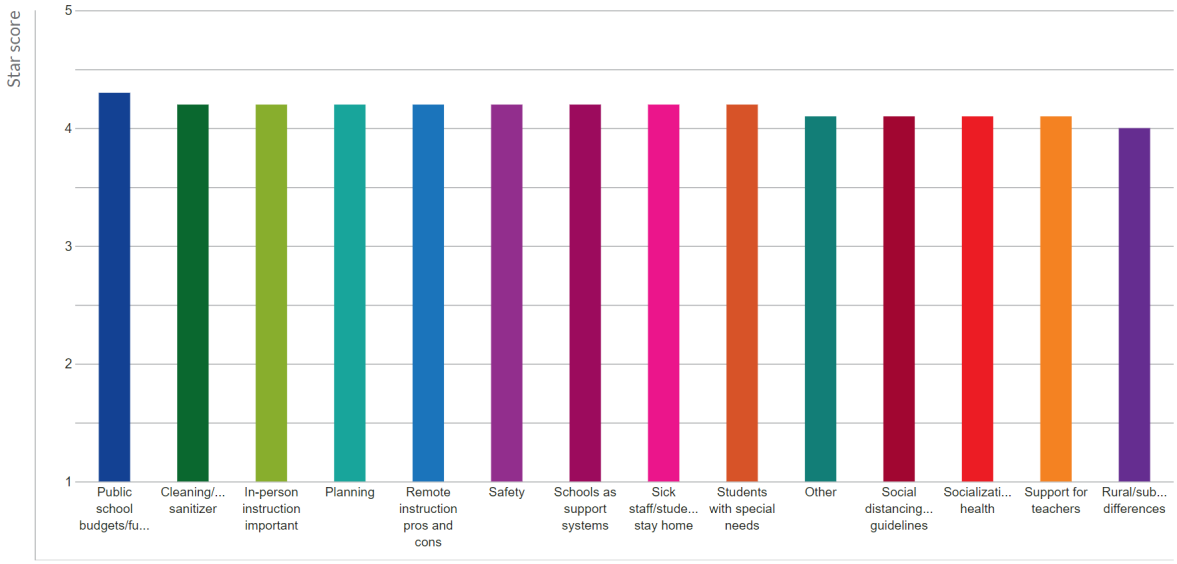
The Capital Region is made up of three BOCES. Therefore 900 thoughts were rated for this region, 300 from each BOCES.

Top themes based on number of thoughts



In this region, "In-person instruction important" theme received the most thoughts with 149 of the 900 thoughts placed in this category. This represents about 17% of the thoughts. Conversely, "Rural/suburban/urban differences" only received 1 thought, or less than 1% of the thoughts.

Top themes based on star ratings



In this region, “Public school budgets/funding” received the highest star rating at 4.3. The theme “Rural/suburban/urban” received the lowest of the star rating at 4. For the purpose of this analysis, the focus was on any thoughts that had a star rating of 4.0 or higher.

Top two thoughts for each BOCES in the region

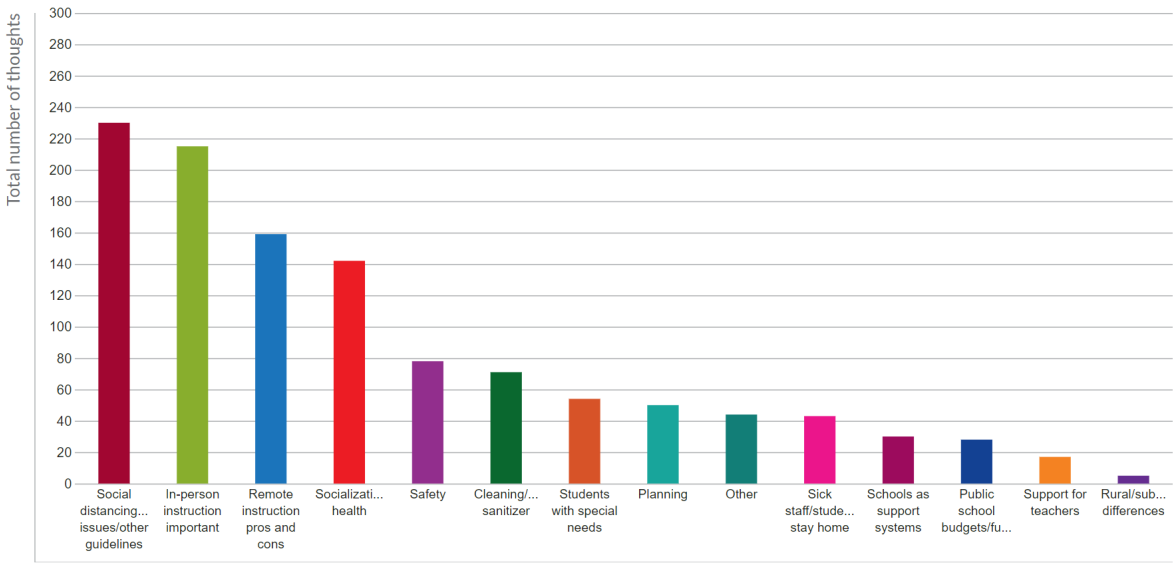
- Having kids physically present in the classroom is extremely important. Learning is easier for them w teacher present and easier to get access to help. It’s too easy for kids to fall between the cracks w online learning – *Capital Region*
- Now more than ever we will need AIS, Reading, and Special Educators. When cuts are made, these are the areas that get reduced first. – *Capital Region*
- Schools will need additional funding from the government, not less. Schools will need more faculty/staff and more computers so that resources are not shared and classes can be smaller. – *Questar III*
- Schools need to disinfect as many surfaces as possible daily. Many schools do not disinfect daily. – *Questar III*
- Faculty and staff need to be included in the conversation on how to safely reopen schools. They are the ones in the trenches dealing with the day-to-day logistics of schools. – *Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex*
- I give the educators of this state a round of applause because they switched to a distant learning system very quickly. Bravo to them. Teachers are an important part of our children's lives. – *Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex*

Central New York Region

(Cayuga-Onondaga, Onondaga-Cortland-Madison, CiTi-Oswego, Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga)

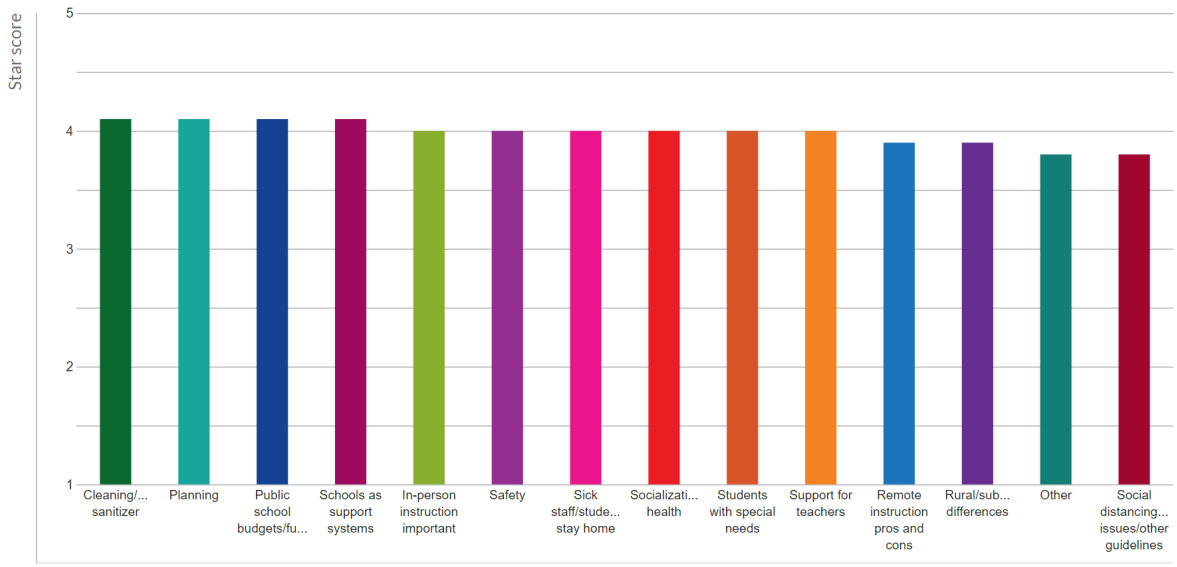
The Central New York Region is made up of four BOCES. Therefore 1,200 thoughts were rated for this region, 300 from each BOCES.

Top themes based on number of thoughts



In this region, the "Social distancing, mask issues, other guidelines" theme received the most thoughts with 230 of the 1,200 thoughts placed in this category. This represents about 19% of the thoughts. Conversely, "Rural/suburban/urban" only received 5 thoughts, or less than 1% of the thoughts.

Top themes based on star ratings



In this region, three themes tied for highest star rating at 4.1 -- “Cleaning/disinfecting/hand sanitizer,” “Planning” and “Public school budgets/funding.” The theme “Social distancing/mask issues/other guidelines” received the lowest of the star rating at 3.8. Star ratings between 3.5 and 3.9 still show a significant level of agreement by the participants.

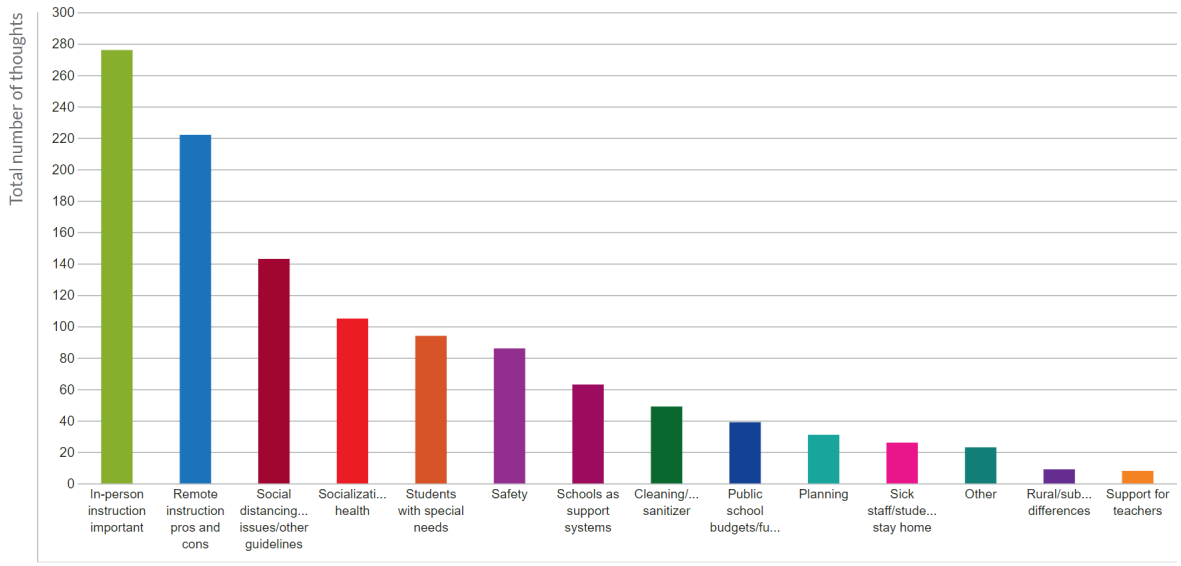
Top two thoughts for each BOCES in the region

- I feel it’s imperative that the kids get to go back to school. Socializing and hands on learning is important for younger children. Routine and support helps them grow into functional adults. – *Cayuga-Onondaga*
- My son is lacking social interaction My son went from a happy, outgoing, and motivated kid, to a lazy, depressed, and introverted kid. His mental health is being compromised. – *Cayuga-Onondaga*
- I think that there should be teachers on the team that comes up with the plan to reopen. This is important because the higher up administration and government do not truly know what a teacher does day to day and all that goes into teaching. – *Onondaga-Cortland-Madison*
- I don't think anything can replace the in-person school experience for our children, however, safety comes first. – *Onondaga-Cortland-Madison*
- I believe that students need to be in a classroom to get engaged in their education students need socialization and hands on learning as well as interaction with peers – *CiTi*
  I want to make sure all my students are safe and healthy. – *CiTi*
- Maintain school funding. Teachers are heroes too. They are working hard to keep education going through the worst global crisis in decades. – *Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga*
- More funding for education is crucial when we consider what changes may need to be made for a safe return to school Schools cannot meet students' needs during and following a crisis without adequate funding – *Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga*

Finger Lakes Region
(Genesee Valley Educational Partnership, Monroe 1, Monroe 2-Orleans, Wayne-Finger Lakes)

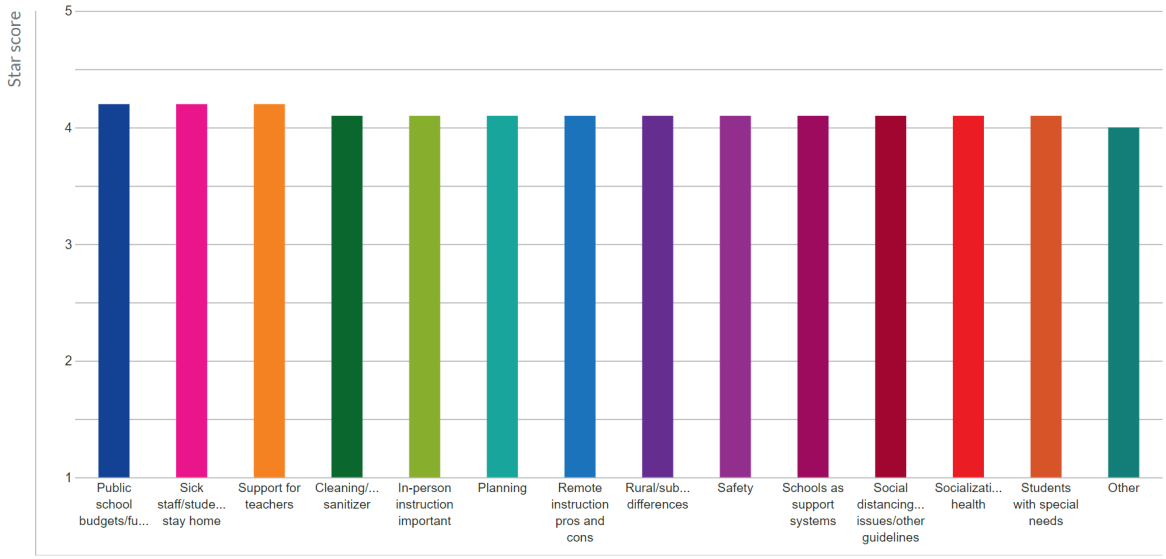
The Finger Lakes Region is made up of four BOCES. Therefore 1,200 thoughts were rated for this region, 300 from each BOCES.

Top themes based on number of thoughts



In this region, the "In-person instruction important" theme received the most thoughts with 276 of the 1,200 thoughts placed in this category. This represents about 23% of the thoughts. Conversely, "Support for teachers" only received eight thoughts, or less than 1% of the thoughts.

Top themes based on star ratings



In this region, three themes tied for highest star rating at 4.2 – "Pubic school budgets/funding," "Sick staff/students stay home" and "Support for teachers." The theme "Other" received the lowest of the star rating at 4.0. For the purpose of this analysis, the focus was on any thoughts that had a star rating of 4.0 or higher.

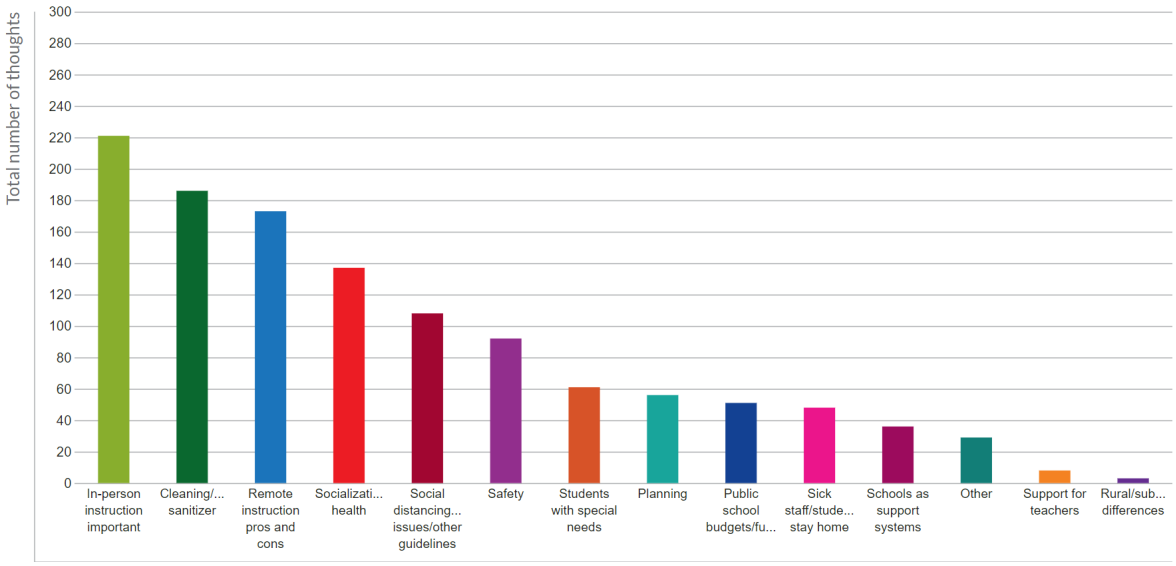
Top two thoughts for each BOCES in the region

- School is a safe zone for many students. They are at risk of harm without school, and parents face increased stress levels without school. W/ out attending school in person communities, schools, child welfare cannot keep children as safe as if school were in session. School is essential! – *Genesee Valley Educational Partnership*
- Schools located upstate are in a much different position than downstate schools. We need different solutions for each area. It is important to treat upstate and downstate differently according to the needs in each area. A "one size fits all" solution will NOT work. – *Genesee Valley Educational Partnership*
- Pre-existing conditions should be considered If a child or a child's caretaker have a condition that makes them higher risk they should have options to continue distance learning from home. – *Monroe 1*
- I hope that students can return to school in the fall in a safe way, instead of remote learning. Kid's need socialization to learn and grow. – *Monroe 1*
- Parents and staff need to know it is OK to stay home if you are feeling ill or might be contagious. – *Monroe 2-Orleans*
- Need to consider our students with special needs and how we can support them They have a right to the same support they would receive in a classroom. – *Monroe 2-Orleans*
- Funding to schools should not have been cut!!!! Teachers and schools need to stand up for parents and students!!! Our children deserve the best education! Cuts can be made elsewhere. – *Wayne-Finger Lakes*
- Students with disabilities school day looks very different compared to a typical student. Students with disabilities require assistance from skilled professionals to ensure their physical, emotional, and developmental needs are met. – *Wayne-Finger Lakes*

Long Island Region
(Eastern Suffolk, Nassau, Western Suffolk)

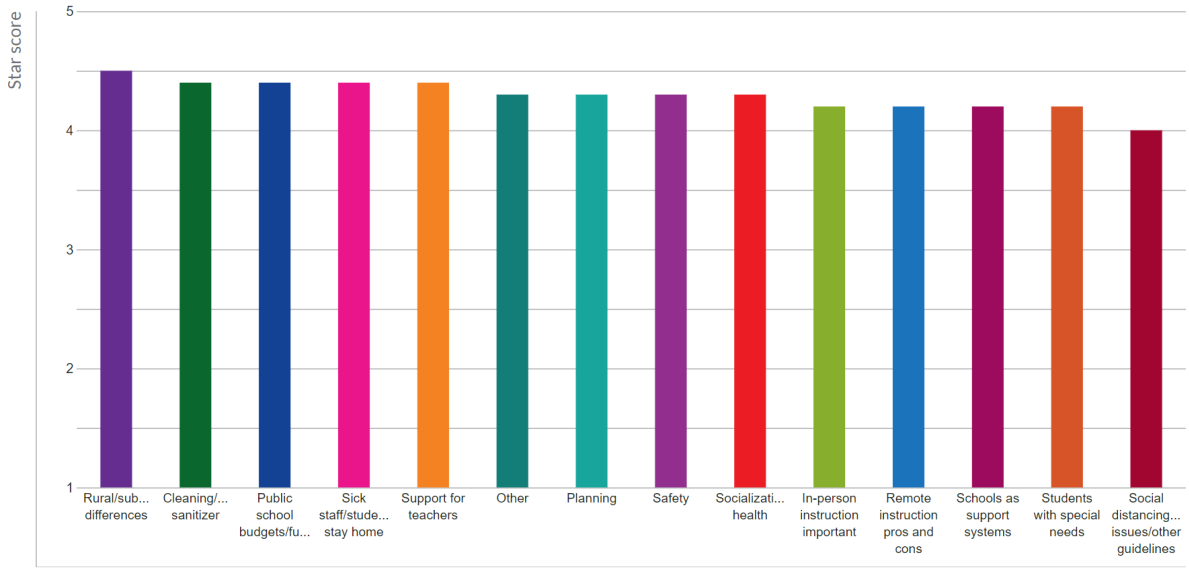
The Long Island Region is made up of three BOCES. Therefore 900 thoughts were rated for this region, 300 from each BOCES.

Top themes based on number of thoughts



In this region, the "In-person instruction important" theme received the most thoughts with 221 of the 900 thoughts placed in this category. This represents about 25% of the thoughts. Conversely, "Rural/suburban/urban differences" only received three thoughts, or less than 1% of the thoughts.

Top themes based on star ratings



In this region, “Rural/suburban/urban differences” received the highest star rating at 4.5. The theme “Social distancing/mask issues/other guidelines” received the lowest of the star rating at 4.0. For the purpose of this analysis, the focus was on any thoughts that had a star rating of 4.0 or higher.

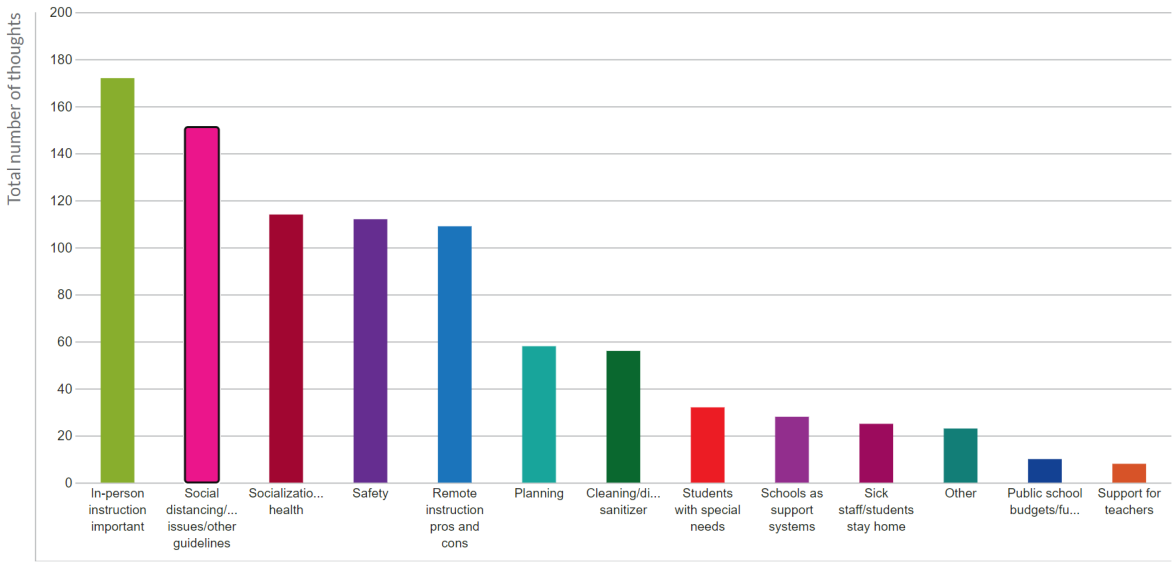
Top two thoughts for each BOCES in the region

- All classrooms should have cleaning products, tissues and hand sanitizers. We need to continue practicing clean hygiene. – *Eastern Suffolk*
- Education needs funding not cuts. Students need to interact and move. Not sit in one room all day. – *Eastern Suffolk*
- Cleanliness How will the rooms, bathrooms, halls, busses, furniture, etc be kept clean on the surface between each use? – *Nassau*
- A screen cannot take the role of a teacher A live connection is needed. – *Nassau*
- I’m concerned that Bill Gates is involved in decisions regarding education. The introduction of Common Core was a mess. Please include TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, and SUPERINTENDENTS in decisions regarding education. They are the experts. – *Western Suffolk*
- Having educators in the decision-making process. When you live it you know the nuances and systemic ripple effects. – *Western Suffolk*

Lower Hudson Valley Region
(Putnam-Northern Westchester, Rockland, Southern Westchester)

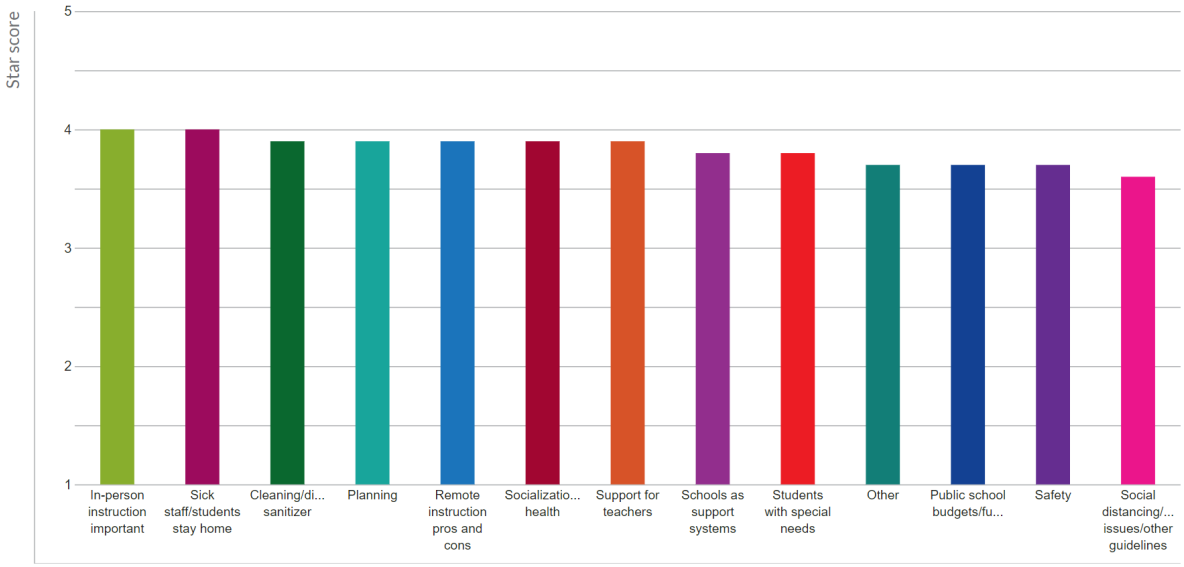
The Lower Hudson Valley Region is made up of three BOCES. Therefore 900 thoughts were rated for this region, 300 from each BOCES.

Top themes based on number of thoughts



In this region, the "In-person instruction important" theme received the most thoughts with 172 of the 900 thoughts placed in this category. This represents about 19% of the thoughts. Conversely, "Support for teachers" only received eight thoughts, or less than 1% of the thoughts.

Top themes based on star ratings



In this region, two themes tied for highest star rating at 4.0 -- "In-person instruction important" and "Sick staff/students stay home." The theme "Social distancing/mask issues/other guidelines" received the lowest of the star rating at 3.6. Star ratings between 3.5 and 3.9 still show a significant level of agreement by the participants.

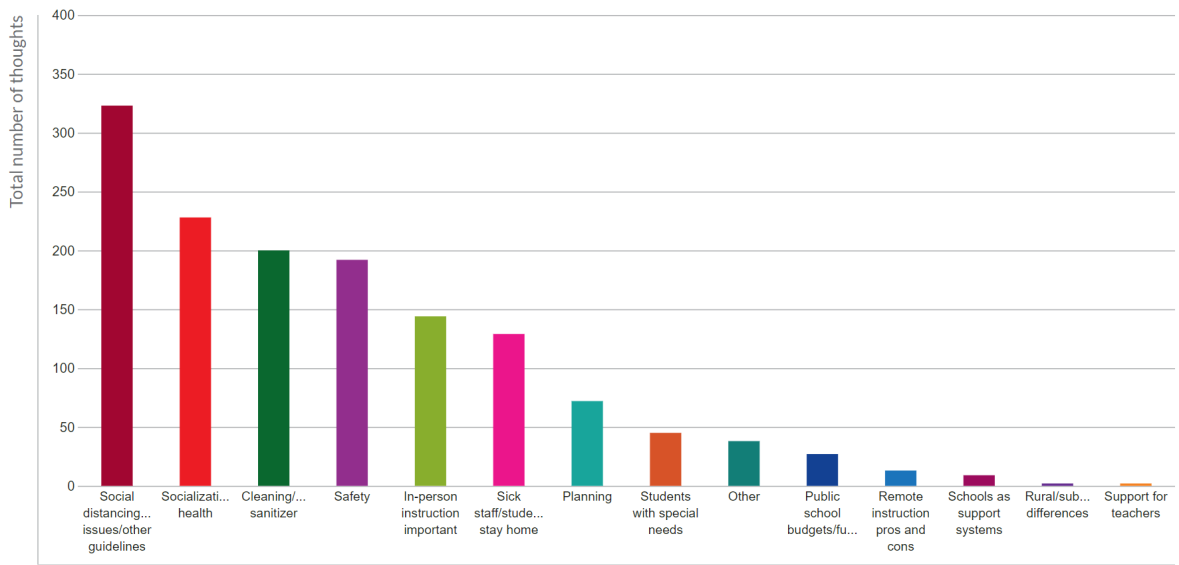
Top two thoughts for each BOCES in the region

- I favor in person schooling I don't feel "distant learning " is sustainable. I feel you will struggle to engage students long term. – *Putnam-Northern Westchester*
- Parent s must agree to adhere to DOH and CDC guidelines regarding keeping sick children home from school. Sending sick children to school will spread illness to others. – *Putnam-Northern Westchester*
- Protocols and plans put in place in the event there is a resurgence of the virus in any location Policies must be clear and in place before implementing any plan and updated as more information is obtained. – *Rockland*
- Children miss the social aspect and need to have more interaction with each other and their teachers. There are many concepts that can be introduced and emphasized at home but socialization needs to be practiced with others. – *Rockland*
- Communication from school administrators to parents is critical. So much has been undecided and unknown, so open lines of communication can alleviate many concerns on both sides. – *Southern Westchester*
- I think there needs to be a detailed plan for school schedule as a teacher in another Westchester district, I need to plan for child care. – *Southern Westchester*

Mid-Hudson Valley Region
(Dutchess, Orange-Ulster, Sullivan County, Ulster)

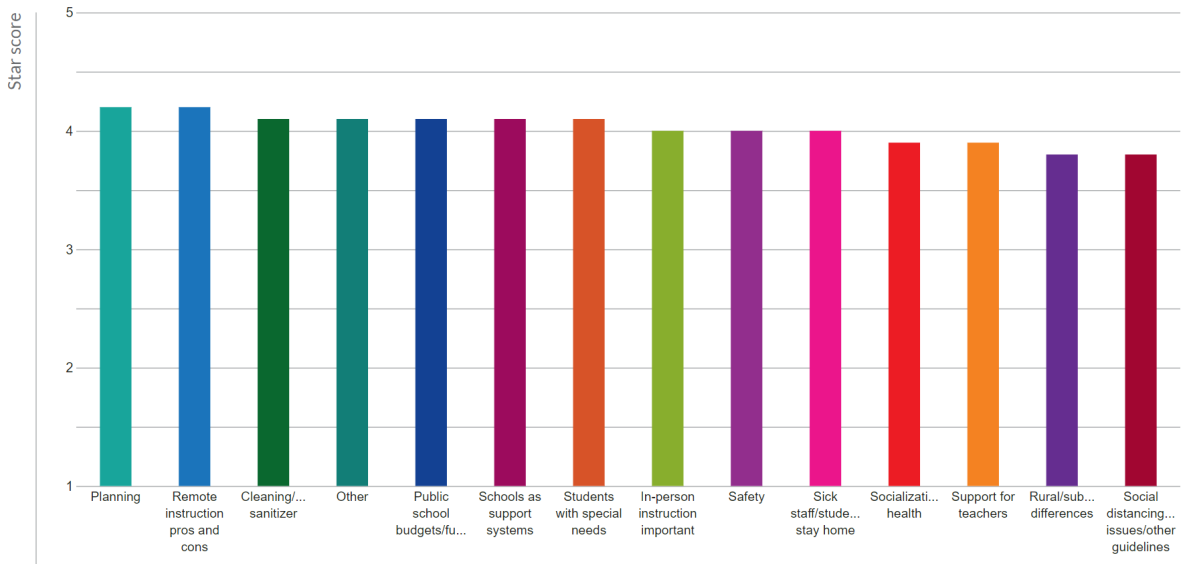
The Mid-Hudson Valley Region is made up of four BOCES. Therefore 1,200 thoughts were rated for this region, 300 from each BOCES.

Top themes based on number of thoughts



In this region, "Social distancing/mask issues/other guidelines" theme received the most thoughts with 323 of the 1,200 thoughts placed in this category. This represents about 27% of the thoughts. "Support for teachers" and "Rural/suburban/urban differences" only received 2 thoughts each, or less than 1% of the thoughts.

Top themes based on star ratings



In this region, two themes tied for the highest star rating at 4.2 -- “Planning” and “Remote instruction pros and cons.” The theme “Social distancing/mask issues/other guidelines” received the lowest of the star rating at 3.8. Star ratings between 3.5 and 3.9 still show a significant level of agreement by the participants.

Top two thoughts for each BOCES in the region

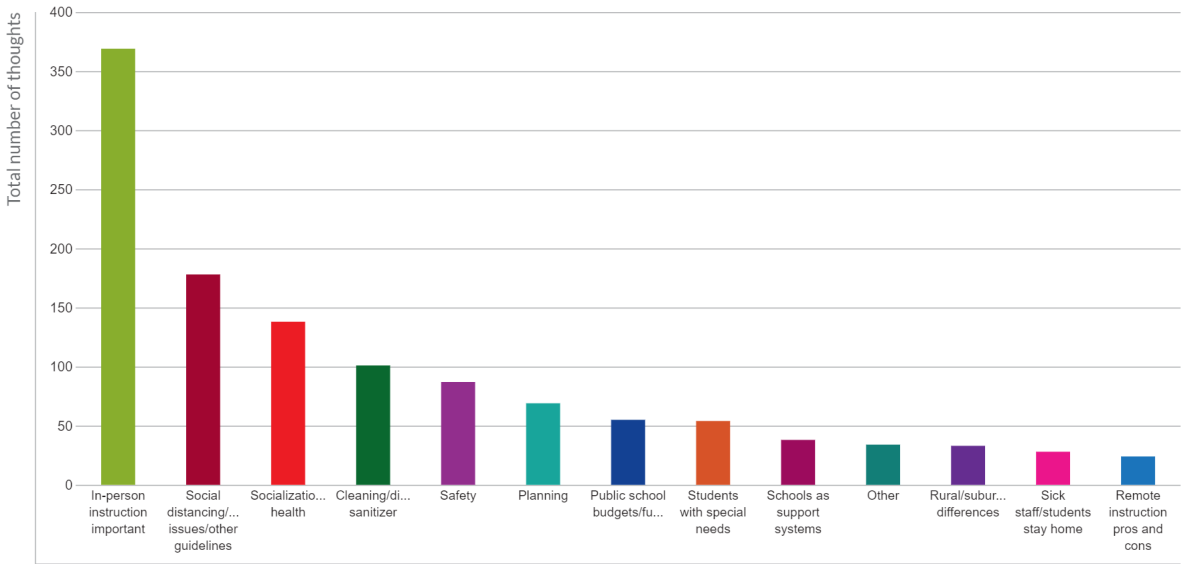
- Classrooms need to be cleaned and disinfected daily. Kill viruses and germs to reduce risk of infection. – *Dutchess*
- Solutions need to be realistic. – *Dutchess*
- Parents should NOT be allowed to send students to school sick! If they are sick keep them home. So they don’t infect anyone else! – *Orange-Ulster*
- Hand Sanitation should have always been in practice. Continuing to have hand cleaning options around the building, especially before eating, should absolutely be a continue practice. – *Orange-Ulster*
- Students with a fever should be sent home immediately. Fever is a sign of infection. Also, parents should be told not to give their children medication for a fever and then send them to school. – *Sullivan*
- Classrooms need to be cleaned daily with cleaning supplies, this means all surfaces and desks. Prevents germs. – *Sullivan*
- Assessment will need to change to reflect an adjustment of curriculum if moving to a blended model. We need to think carefully about what we expect students to be able to do and how we measure it (especially if moving to blended models). – *Ulster*
- Masks and hand soap and hand sanitizer must be available for anyone who needs it. To ensure health of the students, faculty, administration. – *Ulster*

Mohawk Valley Region

(Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery, Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego, Madison-Oneida, Oneida-Herkimer-Madison)

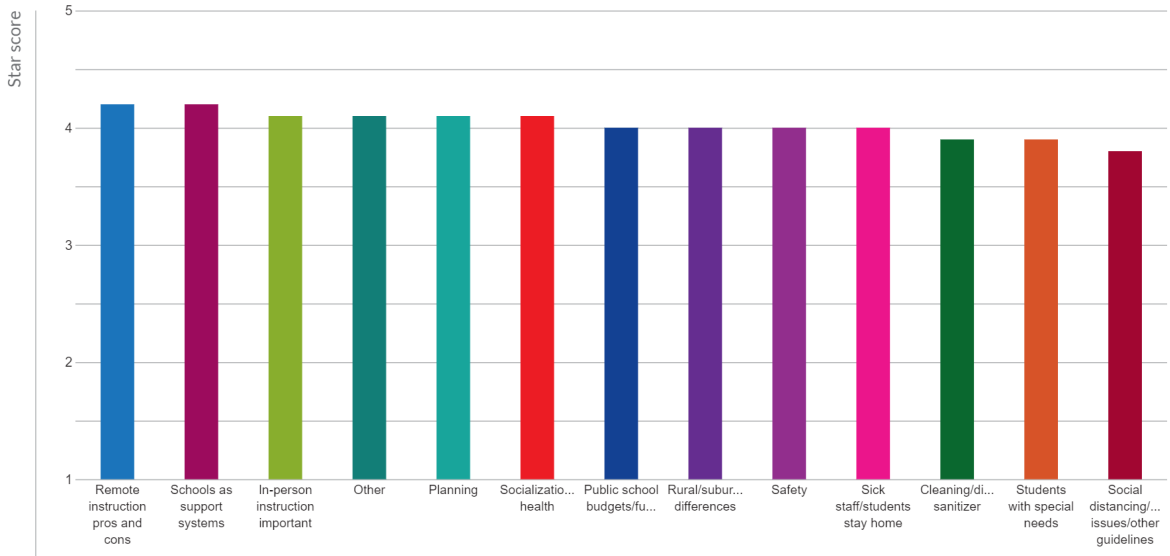
The Mohawk Valley Region is made up of four BOCES. Therefore 1,200 thoughts were rated for this region, 300 from each BOCES.

Top themes based on number of thoughts



In this region, the "In-person instruction important" theme received the most thoughts with 369 of the 1,200 thoughts placed in this category. This represents about 31% of the thoughts. Conversely, "Support for teachers" only received 24 thoughts, or 2% of the thoughts.

Top themes based on star ratings



In this region, two themes tied for highest star rating at 4.2 -- “Remote instruction pros and cons” and “Schools as support systems.” The theme “Social distancing/mask issues/other guidelines” received the lowest of the star rating at 3.8. Star ratings between 3.5 and 3.9 still show a significant level of agreement by the participants.

Top two thoughts for each BOCES in the region

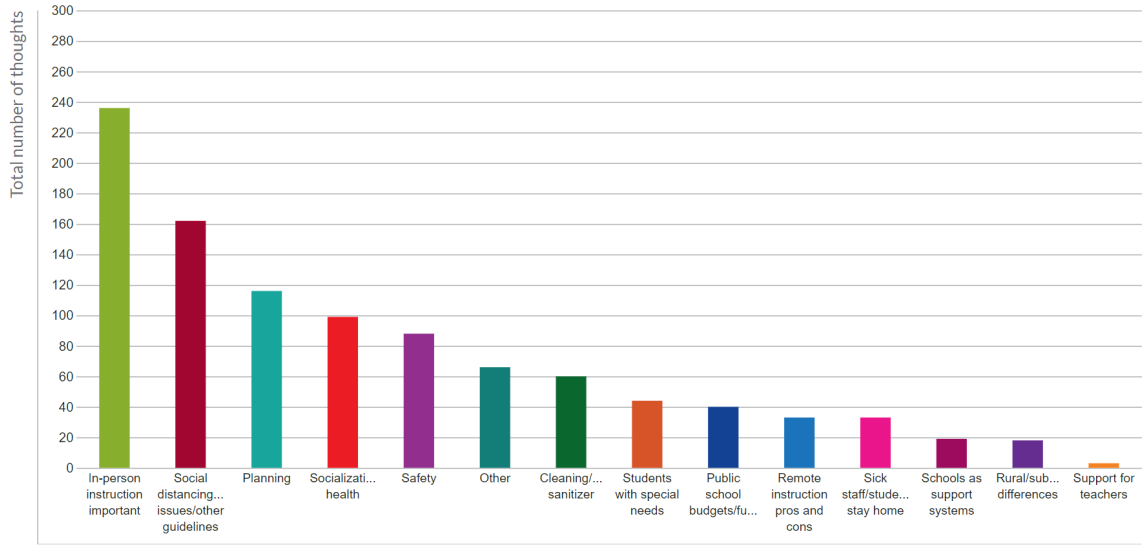
- We cannot lose instructional positions. In person instruction and relationships cannot be replaced. – *Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery*
- Don't cut our staffing – We need special educators and remedial services! Remedial/special education services are going to be more important than ever with this extended “summer slide”. – *Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery*
- Allow Gym class to be outdoors whenever possible Fresh air, distancing, getting back to the old ways of kids spending more time outdoors. – *Herikimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego*
- We must keep in mind that education is more than delivering instruction. It is the development of the whole child: socialization, belonging/purpose.. Though teachers have been sufficing with virtual instruction, those methods cannot be the sole activities of a quality public education. – *Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego*
- At no time should any staff or student be present in school if they are not healthy. No exceptions. Safety of others is most important. – *Madison-Oneida*
- The safety of the students is most important. In addition to all people involved. – *Madison-Oneida*
- Provide funding, businesses get help, schools should not get cuts. – *Oneida-Herkimer-Madison*
- Our children need to be back in a classroom in September. Not only do they learn more from qualified and amazing educators but they need the social interaction with their peers and teachers. – *Oneida-Herkimer-Madison*

North Country Region

(Champlain Valley Educational Services, Franklin-Essex-Hamilton, Jefferson-Lewis-Hamilton-Herkimer-Oneida, St. Lawrence-Lewis)

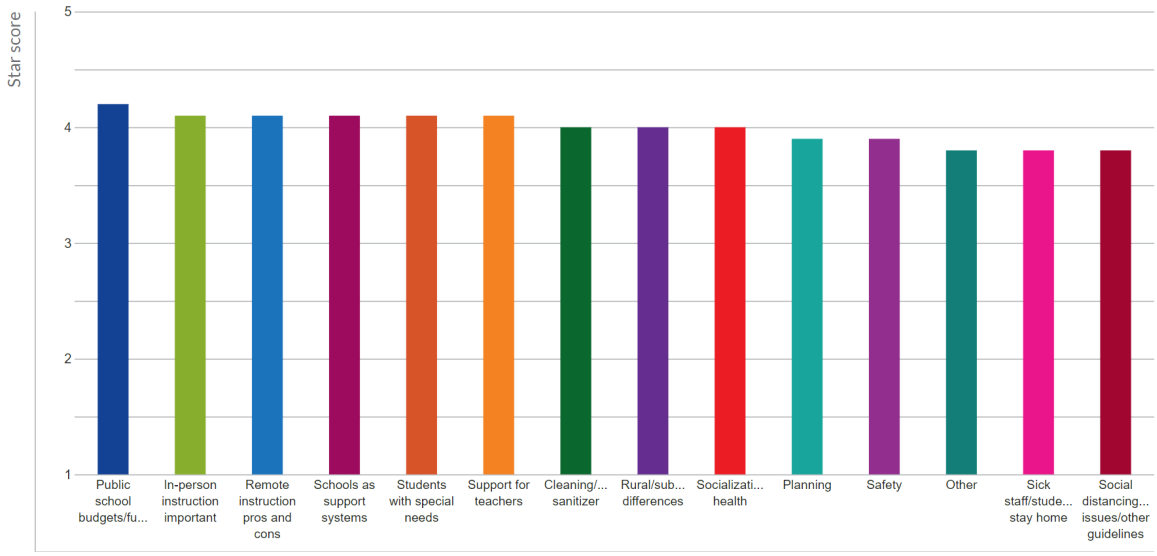
The North Country Region is made up of four BOCES. Three hundred thoughts were rated for two of the BOCES. However, Champlain Valley Educational Services and Franklin-Essex-Hamilton only received 200 and 198 thoughts respectively. Therefore, there were 998 thoughts rated in this region.

Top themes based on number of thoughts



In this region, "In-person instruction important" theme received the most thoughts with 236 of the 998 thoughts placed in this category. This represents about 24% of the thoughts. Conversely, "Support for teachers" only received three thoughts, or less than 1% of the thoughts.

Top themes based on star ratings



In this region, “Public school budgets/funding” received the highest star rating at 4.2. Three themes tied for the lowest star rating at 3.8 – “Other,” “Sick staff/students stay home” and “Social distancing/mask issues/other guidelines.” Star ratings between 3.5 and 3.9 still show a significant level of agreement by the participants.

Top two thoughts for each BOCES in the region

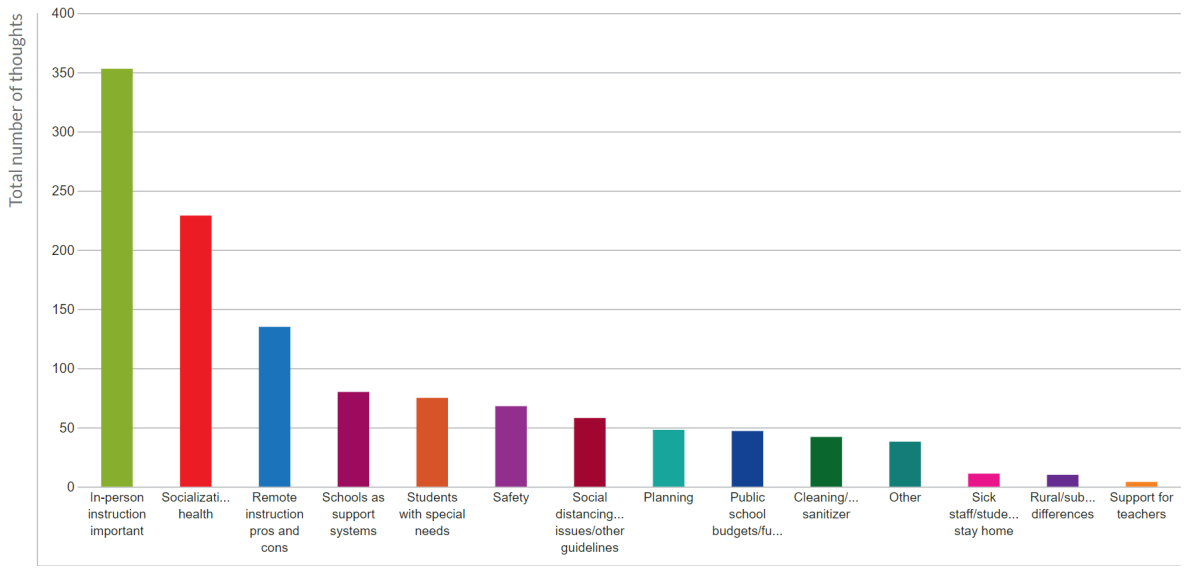
- The overall safety of students and staff is very important to me. – *Champlain Valley Educational Services*
- Parents are not teachers. The longer we are out, the more frustrated everybody is. Also, the more children don't engage in classes. – *Champlain Valley Educational Services*
- Kids should have face-to-face education. It is important for many reasons. Kids need interaction with people other than their household. Kids need to learn how to interact with other kids and adults. – *Franklin-Essex-Hamilton*
- Children do not learn as well without direct instruction. – *Franklin-Essex-Hamilton*
- Budget cuts are not the answer! You can’t expect us to provide services to our students and yet take our funding from us. – *Jefferson-Lewis-Hamilton-Herkimer-Oneida*
- Special education and related services do not work well virtually. Children with IEPs need in-person services. Period. It is exponentially more difficult to distance modify, monitor and assess progress well virtually. – *Jefferson-Lewis-Hamilton-Herkimer-Oneida*
- Have hand-sanitizer available at all classroom doorways. Increase school sanitation measures including cleaning desks and chairs daily. – *St. Lawrence-Lewis*
- Have hand-sanitizer available at all classroom doorways. Increase school sanitation measures including cleaning desks and chairs daily. – *St. Lawrence-Lewis*

Southern Tier Region

(Broome-Delaware-Tioga, Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego, Greater Southern Tier, Otsego-Northern Catskills)

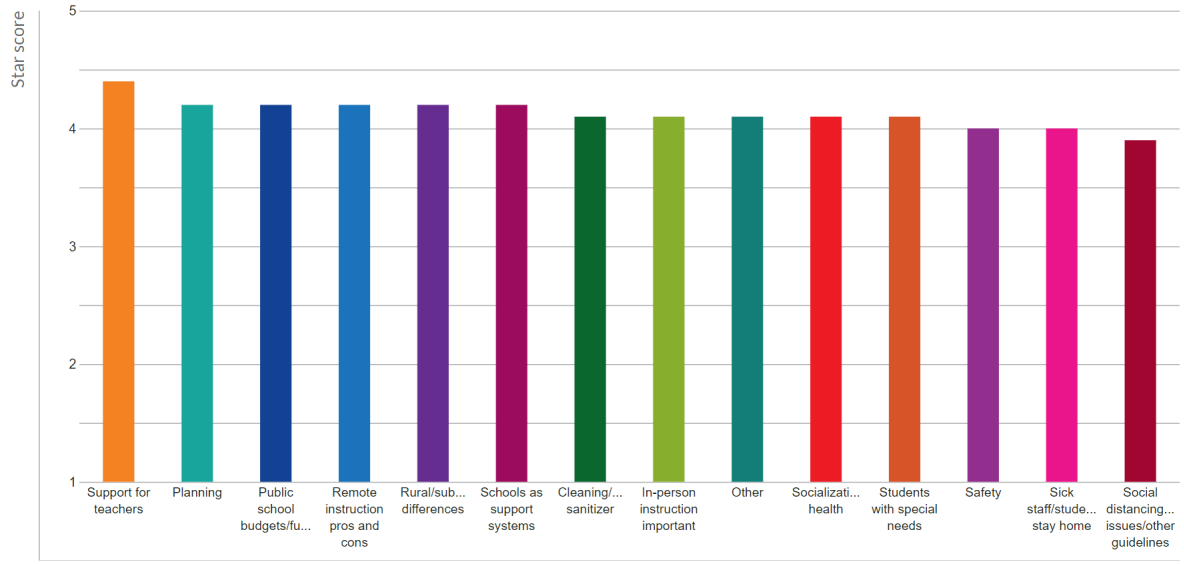
The Southern Tier Region is made up of four BOCES. Therefore 1,200 thoughts were rated for this region, 300 from each BOCES.

Top themes based on number of thoughts



In this region, "In-person instruction important" theme received the most thoughts with 353 of the 1,200 thoughts placed in this category. This represents about 29% of the thoughts. Conversely, "Support for teachers" only received four thoughts, or less than 1% of the thoughts.

Top themes based on star ratings



In this region, “Support for teachers” received the highest star rating at 4.4. The theme “Social distancing/mask issues/other guidelines” received the lowest of the star rating at 3.9. Star ratings between 3.5 and 3.9 still show a significant level of agreement by the participants.

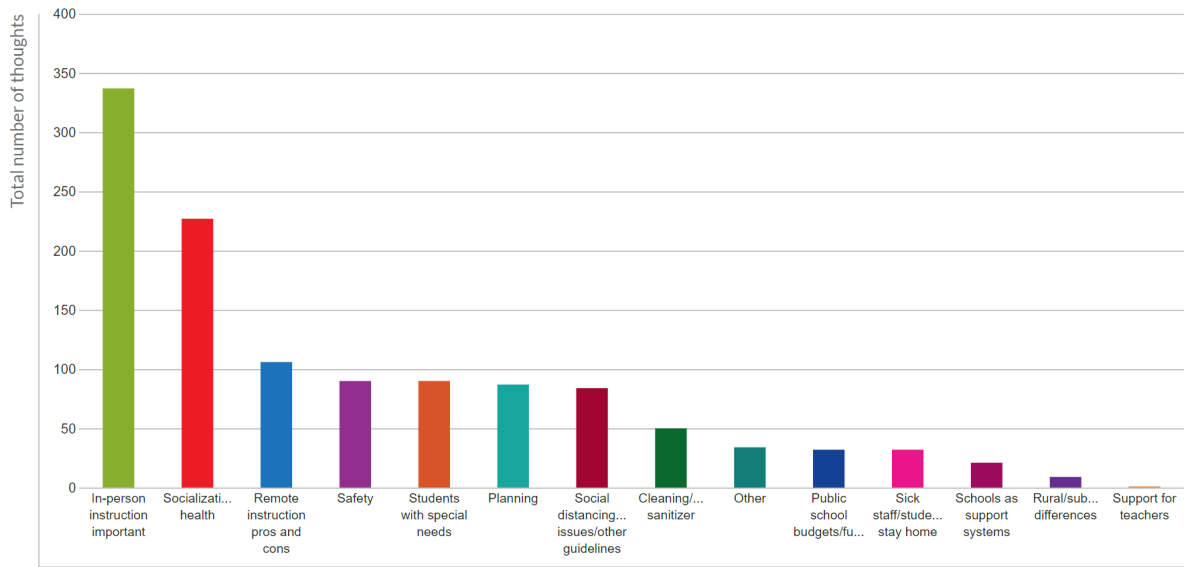
Top two thoughts for each BOCES in the region

- Educators need to be a vital part of the plan. We know what real learning needs. – *Broome-Delaware-Tioga*
- Educators need to be part of the decisions. Schools need to look different for a bit, but how should be up to educators. Not. Politicians or $ Having a billionaire “rethink” schools is stupid. We need parents and educators to be driving these discussions. – *Broome-Delaware-Tioga*
- Continue to fund education as a priority Students need a wide variety of programs to support their learning, and in essence, our country's future. – *Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego*
- Distance learning is even more difficult for ELLs and students with disabilities. – *Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego*
- Fully FUND OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS NOT CUT!!! Districts are laying off teachers in the midst of the biggest crisis a generation has ever faced kids need strong supports in place from their schools. – *Greater Southern Tier*
- Kids learn in different ways such as hands on learning with labs Not all kids benefit from viewing things online, they require more interactive learning. – *Greater Southern Tier*
- Rural schools with little to no Internet suffered. We have a 70% low-income population and school is where these students connect to technology. Our students without technology at home have suffered. – *Otsego-Northern Catskills*
  Budget The State's Education Budget must fully fund schools. Educating our children is one of the most important societal functions a State provides. – *Otsego-Northern Catskills*

Western New York Region
(Cattaraugus-Allegany-Erie-Wyoming, Erie 1, Erie 2, Orleans-Niagara)

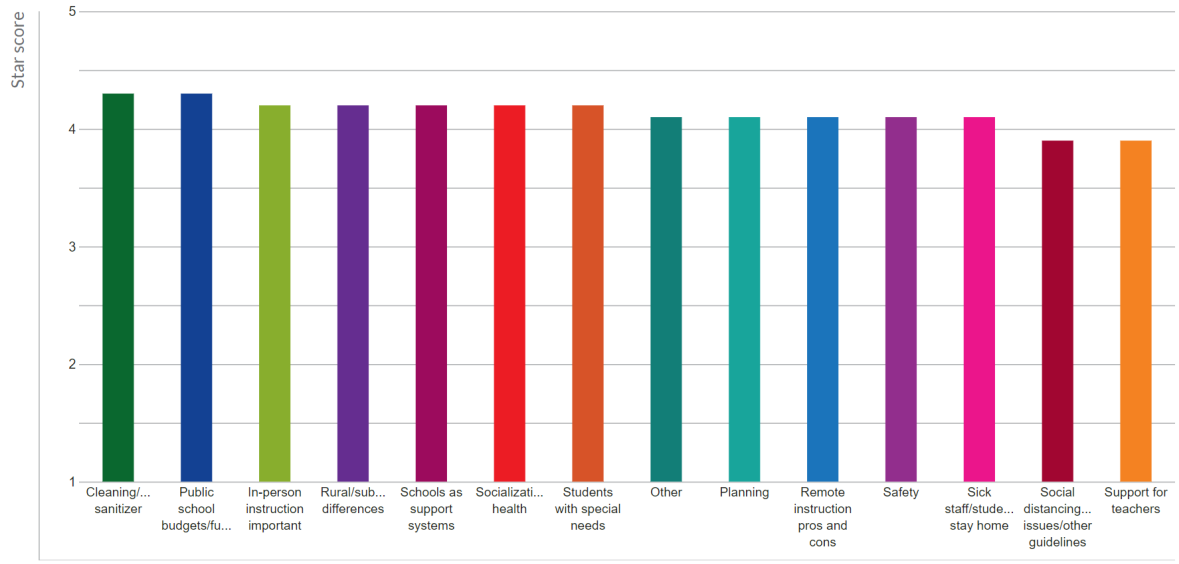
The Western New York Region is made up of four BOCES. Therefore 1,200 thoughts were rated for this region, 300 from each BOCES.

Top themes based on number of thoughts



In this region, "In-person instruction important" theme received the most thoughts with 337 of the 1,200 thoughts placed in this category. This represents about 28% of the thoughts. Conversely, "Support for teachers" only received 1 thought, or less than 1% of the thoughts.

Top themes based on star ratings



In this region, two themes tied for the highest star rating at 4.3 – "Public schools budget/funding" and "Cleaning/disinfecting/hand sanitizer." The themes "Support for teachers" and "Social distancing, mask issues/other guidance" tied for the lowest of the star rating at 3.9. Star ratings between 3.5 and 3.9 still show a significant level of agreement by the participants.

Top two thoughts for each BOCES in the region

- Remote learning does not support students with special needs! There are too many factors and not enough hours in the day. Educators are doing everything they can, but it feels impossible to do the job well enough. – *Cattaraugus-Allegany-Erie-Wyoming*
- If you're sick, please stay home It's the right thing to do – *Cattaraugus-Allegany-Erie-Wyoming*
- I'm concerned about the health and safety of the students and teachers. It is important for the school district to implement extra cleaning procedures and social distancing measures. – *Erie* 1
- Students succeed at a higher level when they are in the classroom. This is important because the teacher can get to know the students and how to help/remediate and challenge the students if they are in school. – *Erie 1*
- I think getting back to in-person schooling is very important and we need to figure out a way to make this happen safely and as quickly as possible. Students cannot be educated in the way they need through online education, especially students who struggle or have a disability. – *Erie 2-Cahutauqua-Cattaraugus*
- Physical health and mental health must be taking into consideration equally. Both are large factors in a student's ability to learn. – *Erie 2-Cahutauqua-Cattaraugus*
- Budgets Unless we get a lot more funding from the state/fed, we won't have enough buses and teachers for proper social distancing in classrooms. – *Orleans-Niagara*
- Here in Orleans Co., there are many areas that do not have Internet access. We have had to rely on our cell hot spot for Internet. Unless we get better Wi-Fi access, online learning will be difficult for some students. This will cause an unfair disadvantage for them. – *Orleans-Niagara*

Participation by BOCES

BOCES	Participants	Thoughts	Ratings
Broome-Delaware-Tioga	1,057	722	19,957
Capital Region (Albany-Schoharie-Schenectady-Saratoga)	9,678	13,007	381,146
Cattaraugus-Allegany-Erie-Wyoming	877	1,135	27,183
Cayuga-Onondaga	1,135	1,423	35,350
Center for Instruction, Technology & Innovation (CiTi/Oswego)	281	322	6,658
Champlain Valley Educational Services (Clinton-Essex-Warren-Washington)	262	200	3,894
Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego	1,803	2,350	69,575
Dutchess	1,511	1,967	52,179
Eastern Suffolk	667	642	15,751
Erie 1	4,467	5,268	141,724
Erie 2 (Erie-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus)	2,337	3,156	89,362
Franklin-Essex-Hamilton	170	198	3,229
Genesee Valley Educational Partnership (Genesee-Livingston-Steuben-Wyoming)	830	1,151	34,876
Greater Southern Tier (Schyler-Steuben-Chemung-Tioga-Allegany)	1,774	2,547	76,940
Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery	926	1,406	37,950
Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego	541	827	19,981
Jefferson-Lewis-Hamilton-Herkimer-Oneida	779	1,103	27,591
Madison-Oneida	1,319	1,808	57,660
Monroe 1	1,606	1,783	45,604
Monroe 2-Orleans	1,299	2,058	49,259
Nassau	10,902	14,872	412,400
Oneida-Herkimer-Madison	788	894	20,646
Onondaga-Cortland-Madison	2,262	3,185	94,490
Orange-Ulster	2,969	3,799	114,062
Orleans-Niagara	341	472	12,253
Otsego-Northern Catskills (Otsego-Delaware-Schoharie-Greene)	536	664	17,317
Putnam-Northern Westchester	556	599	13,359
Questar III (Rensselaer-Columbia-Greene)	1,247	1,715	49,350

BOCES	Participants	Thoughts	Ratings
Rockland	359	357	8,527
Southern Westchester	1,744	2,415	64,200
St. Lawrence-Lewis	748	839	22,556
Sullivan	395	582	13,856
Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga	588	940	24,871
Ulster	1,045	1,257	27,972
Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex	1,277	1,609	42,548
Wayne-Finger Lakes (Ontario-Seneca-Yates-Cayuga-Wayne)	1,633	2,472	66,250
Western Suffolk	674	797	20,091