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COVID'S EDUCATIONAL IMPACT ON GEORGIA FAMILIES

A Survey Of How The Average
Georgia Family Is Navigating
Education During The Pandemic



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Georgia Center for Opportunity commissioned a poll to better understand the virtual learning experiences of parents and students during the COVID-19 shutdown in the spring of 2020. We also wanted to know how those experiences impacted schooling decisions at the start of the 2020 school year. Additional questions were asked about support for possible grants to assist families experiencing additional costs due to virtual learning, using federal emergency relief funds.

The Georgia School Shutdown Survey was conducted by online panel interviews from August 28 - September 4 among a random sample of 721 Georgia parents. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 3.7 percentage points. Results are weighted.

Students, parents, and educators faced unprecedented challenges in the spring of 2020. The pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus forced school doors to close across the country, thrusting children and teachers into the world of digital learning, with parents playing a significant role during the school day.

The absence of face-to-face learning continued as the 2020-2021 school year began. School districts across Georgia delayed the start of classes and most of the largest systems, representing hundreds of thousands of students, only offered digital classes. The prolonged closure of these schools caused parents and families to face significant stress and hardship in their work schedules. For many families, the lack of in-person instruction caused significant financial costs.

Across the state, civil society sprang into action. Churches, non-profits, and businesses opened their doors to assist students with their schooling. Education “pods” popped up organically, organized via on-line forums. These “pods” allowed parents to work while providing a safe place for students to complete their daily assignments. An adult, or even a certified teacher, was hired to oversee the daily activities of the “pod.” As you can imagine, all of these actions taken by civil society cost money, and received little or no assistance from the local school system.

Several states have used pandemic relief funds, made available through the federal CARES Act, to assist parents in covering these unexpected educational expenses.

Our survey showed overwhelming support from parents for such a program being created in Georgia. Eighty-one percent of respondents said they support using some of the CARES Act money to help parents cover some of the unexpected educational costs. Additionally, 25.1% of parents said one-time grants of \$1000 per child would change where they send their child to school, while another 33.7% said they already chose an alternative school setting, and the grant would assist in covering the costs. Currently, Governor Brian Kemp is considering proposals for such a program.

Looking back to the spring semester, 54.5% of parents felt their child’s school did well or very well during the shutdown. Many parents (65.9%) agreed or strongly agreed their school provided enough resources during the pandemic shutdown.

The burden on parents of overseeing the school day was significant for many. Fifty-seven point four percent of parents experienced “moderate” or “much work” and another 10.6% felt it was “far more work than I imagined it would be.”

Of great concern is the perception many parents had that their children were not learning what they needed to during the spring shutdown. Fifty-seven point three percent of parents said their child learned “less” or “far less” than when they had been in school.

Fears about the pandemic, however, remain on the minds of many parents. Of those who said they changed their child’s school setting and gave their reasons why, fear of their child becoming infected or bringing the virus home to infect the family was concern for 75.4% of respondents.

However, 17.8% of parents discovered homeschooling and/or digital learning worked well for their student. It is therefore reasonable to expect these educational options to see continued growth.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced change on many areas of American society. Many of our public institutions are under stress as a result. Georgia’s schools are not immune to these stresses. As our survey shows, parents feel their schools did the best they could during the spring shutdown. However, concerns about gaps in their child’s education are on the minds of many. With a rough start to the 2020-2021 school year, it’s reasonable to assume these concerns have only increased.

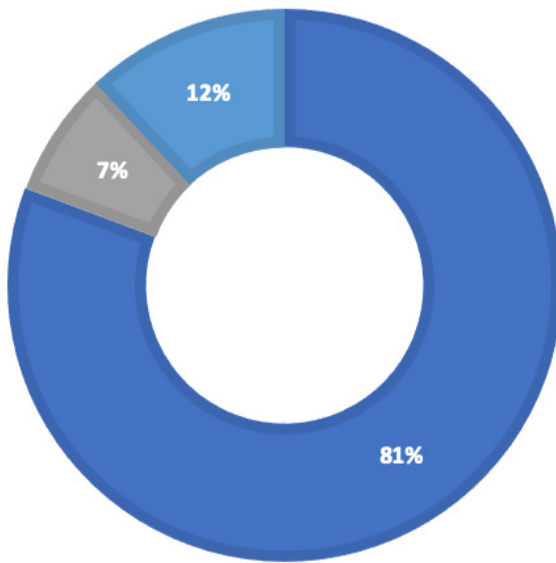
As many schools remain closed to face-to-face learning, and many parents remain concerned about sending their children back to school, urgent attention must be directed toward the quality of the education students are receiving. Also of grave concern are students who lack access to computers and reliable internet connections. As mentioned previously, in many ways civil society is stepping in to meet the need, but at a cost that could keep low income students out.

If these concerns are not urgently addressed, students could suffer long-term negative outcomes long after the COVID-19 pandemic is a memory.

THE PROPER RESPONSE?

PARENTAL SUPPORT FOR USING FEDERAL EMERGENCY RELIEF FUNDS TO HELP COVER EDUCATIONAL COSTS

■ Support ■ Not support ■ Don't know



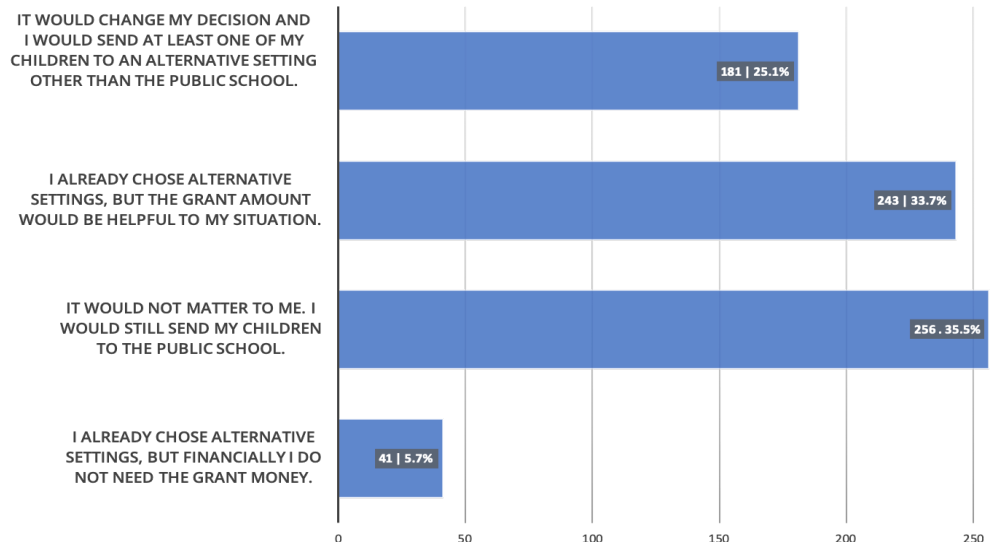
PARENTS OVERWHELMING SUPPORT USING FEDERAL GRANTS TO HELP PARENTS

An overwhelming majority of parents (80.7%) would be in favor of using some of the federal emergency relief funds to help parents cover some of the costs associated with private school or homeschool expenses.

ONE-TIME GRANTS OF \$1,000 WOULD HELP OR CHANGE DECISION FOR MOST

If Georgia offered one-time grants of \$1,000 per child to families to assist with education expenses using the federal emergency funds, 25.1% it would change their decision on where they would send their children to school, and 33.7% said they already chose an alternative setting but the one-time grant would help.

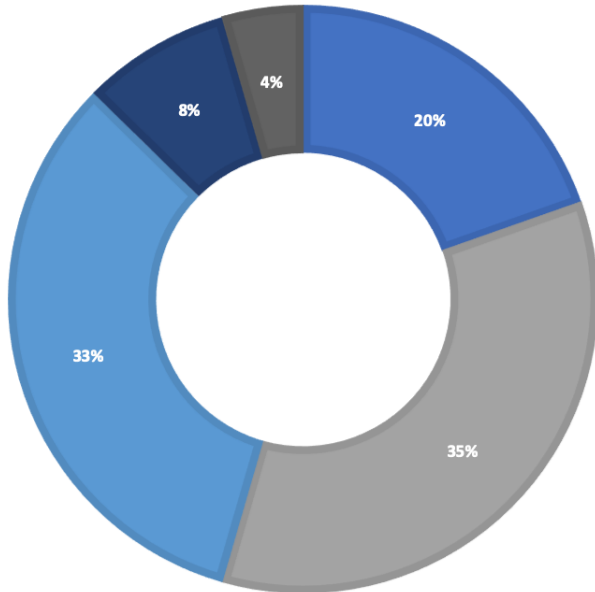
One-Time Grants of \$1,000 to Help Families with Educational Costs



PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL'S RESPONSE

How Well Did Your Child's School Do During the Pandemic Shutdown?

Very Well Well So-so/Neutral Badly Very Badly



SCHOOLS GENERALLY DID OK DURING SHUTDOWN PERIOD

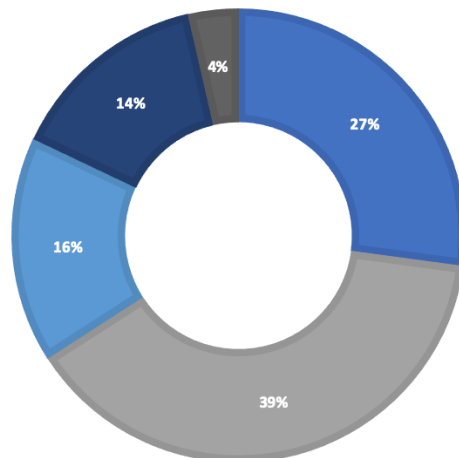
Other than for children who were homeschooled last school year, most parents (54.5%) said their children's schools did well or very well during the shutdown period starting last March.

SCHOOL RESOURCES SEEMED TO BE READILY AVAILABLE FOR MOST

The general consensus was that schools provided enough resources with as many as 65.9% saying they agreed or strongly agreed.

My Child's School Provided Us with Enough Resources during the Pandemic Shutdown

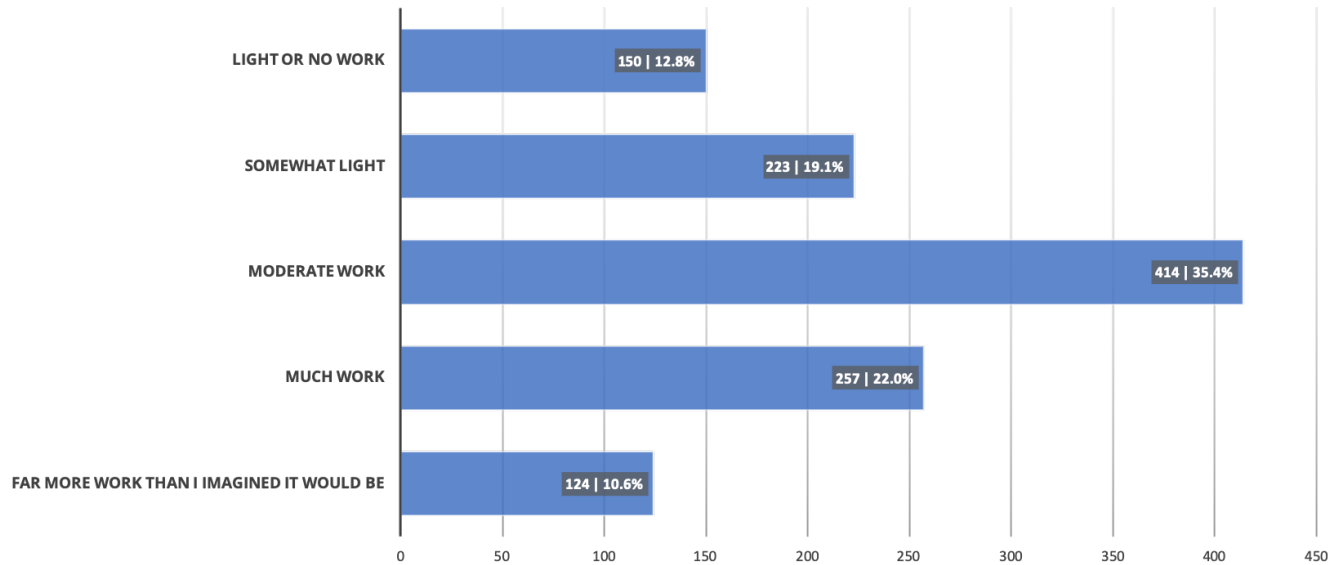
Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree



Number of Children in School per Responses = 1,168

IMPACT ON THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

Amount of Work for the Parent with Child's Schoolwork during the Pandemic Shutdown

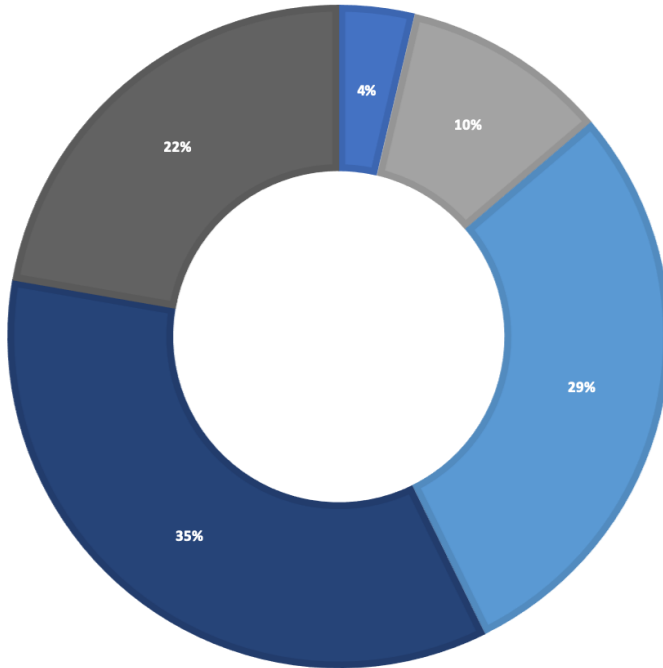


PARENTAL BURDEN

While parents felt that schools were providing adequate resources, most parents (57.4%) said the burden on them was moderate or much work, and another 10.6% felt it was "far more work than I imagined it would be."

How Much Has Your Child Learned In The Current Environment Versus In School

■ Much more ■ More than ■ About the same ■ Somewhat less ■ Far less



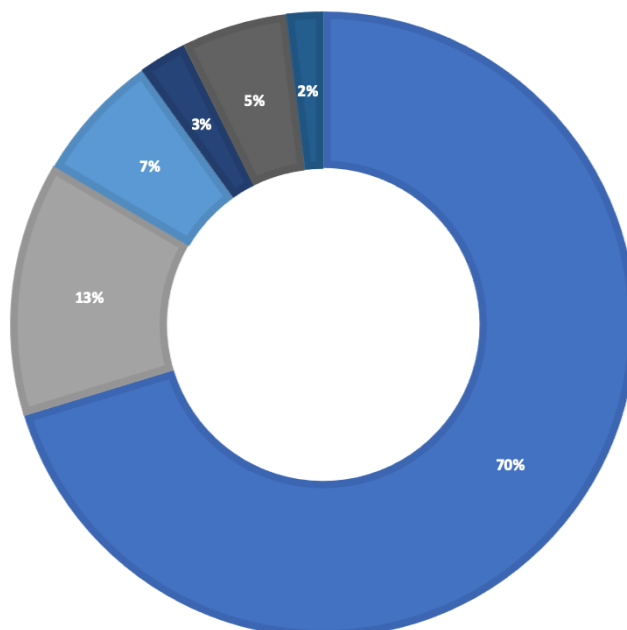
Number of Children in School per Responses = 1,168

BUT CHILDREN GENERALLY DID NOT LEARN

Most parent said their children learned less or far less than had they been in school (57.3%)

Where Parents are Sending Their Children This School Year

■ Public School ■ Private School ■ Cyber School ■ Charter School ■ Homeschool ■ This student graduated from high school



MOST PARENTS WILL SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO PUBLIC SCHOOL THIS YEAR

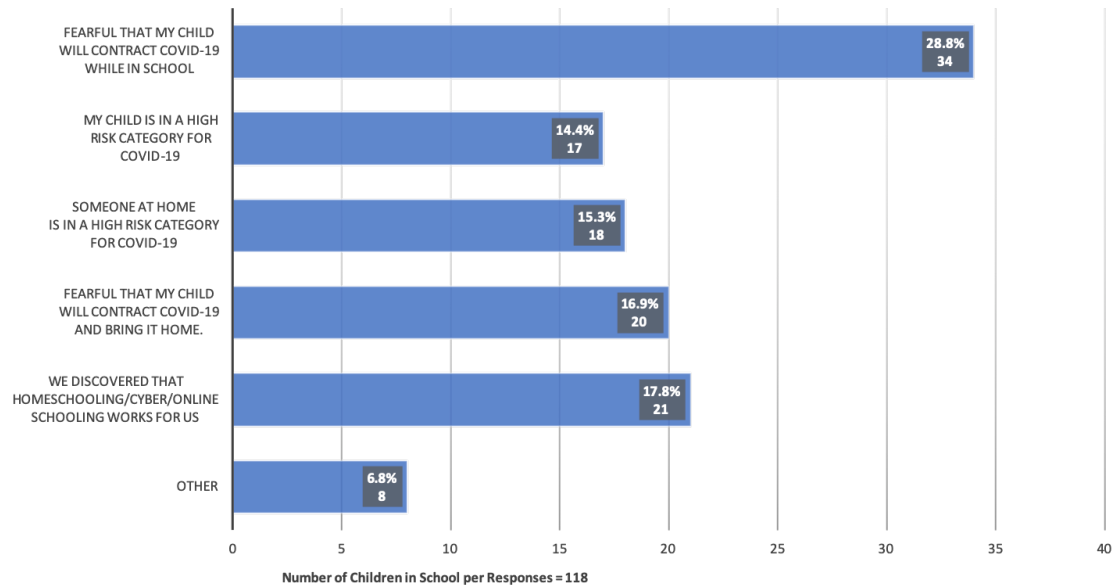
Most parents (70.3%) are sending their children to public schools this school year

Number of Children in School per Responses = 1,168

COVID-19 BIG REASON FOR PARENTS CHANGING THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOL SETTINGS

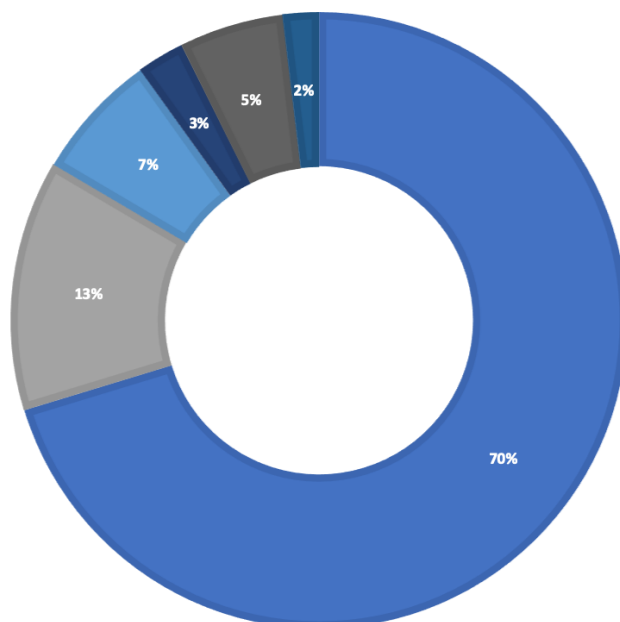
The vast majority of parents (75.4%) who changed their children's school settings listed Covid-19 as the major reason why.

Reasons For Parents Changing Their Children's School Settings



Where Parents are Sending Their Children This School Year

Public School Private School Cyber School Charter School Homeschool This student graduated from high school



Number of Children in School per Responses = 1,168

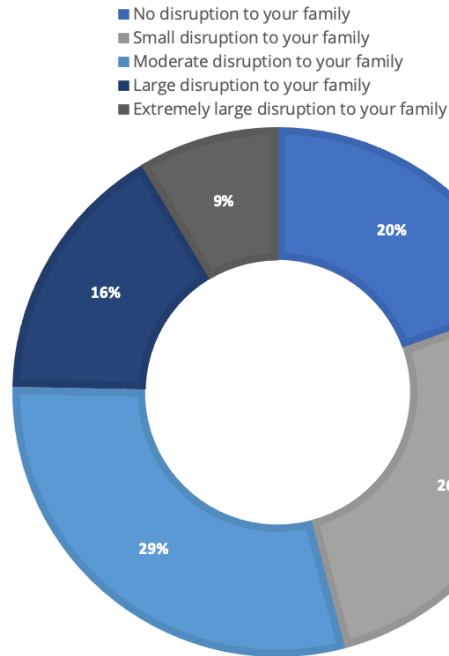
LESS PARENTS WILL SEND THEIR NEW KINDERGARTENERS TO PUBLIC SCHOOL

With parents having children starting Kindergarten this school year, only 61.9% said they are sending their children to public schools.

MOST PARENTS DO NOT SEE HYBRID EDUCATION AS A MAJOR DISRUPTION

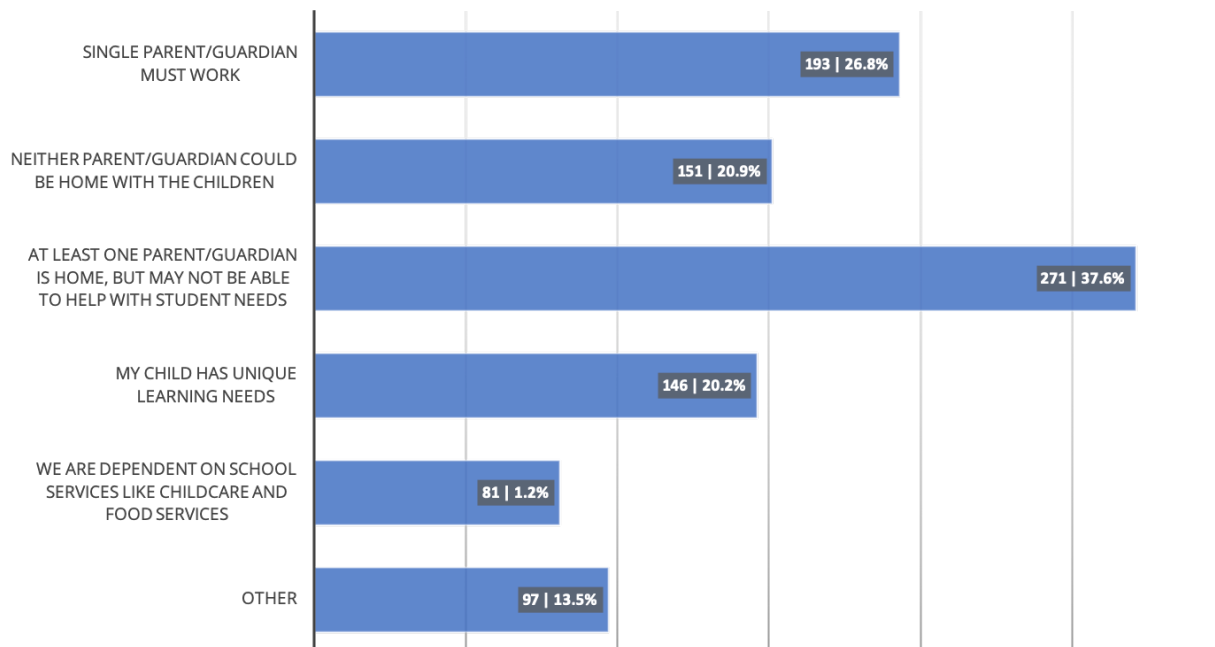
How Much Would Hybrid Education Disrupt Your Family?

Most parents (55.8%) see the hybrid education model (some classes online and some in-person) as a small disruption or moderate disruption.



Respondents = 721

Reasons Why Hybrid Education Would Be Disruptive



Parents cite their need to work and inability to help students as the biggest obstacles to hybrid education.

The stress on the public institution of education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic can not be underemphasized. As a result, parents are both understanding and concerned about the response the education system in Georgia will have moving forward. While we all are navigating this the best we know how, it will be imperative to make sure that assistance comes to parents and schools during this time.

The concerns about the quality of education our students are receiving must be at the forefront of the minds of educators, legislators, and parents. Likewise, more must be done to address inequalities for parents in low-income situations. These parents are facing a much steeper barrier to keeping their children engaged in school and emotionally healthy.

The lack of flexibility in the style and delivery of education prior to the pandemic is being highlighted as we are forced into a situation that is less than ideal. We can and should learn from this experience so that more methods and additional options are available in the education space.

Ensuring that all of Georgia's students are able to learn - even in the face a of world-wide pandemic - should be a driving force for future change.



For more information on
educational opportunities visit:
GeorgiaOpportunity.org