



THE PANDEMIC AND PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN FIVE CHARTS



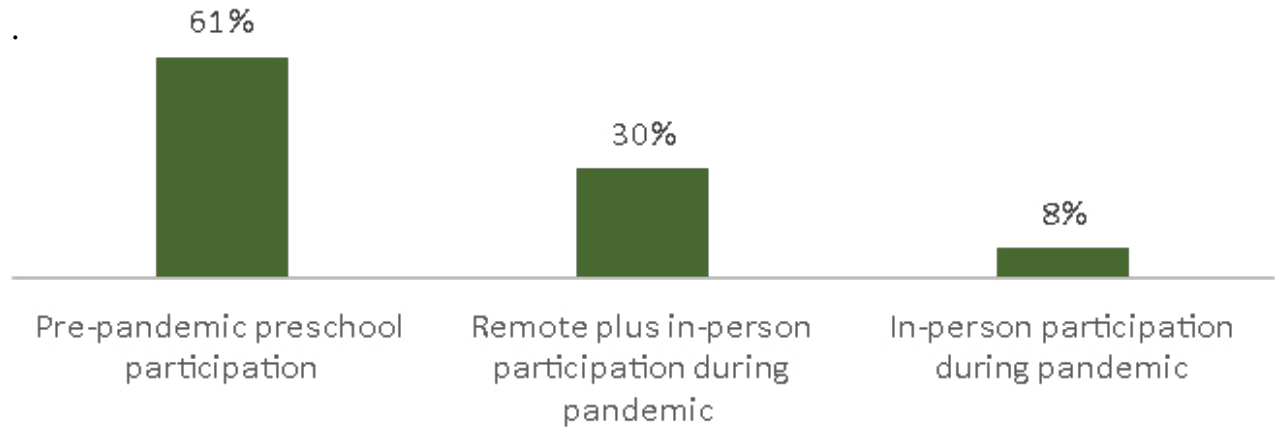
Research [clearly indicates](#) that high-quality preschool programs are one of the most successful education reforms, leading to as much as \$17.07 in long-term savings for every dollar invested, by increasing high school and college graduation rates, decreasing arrest rates, and producing other long- and short-term benefits. Yet as the pandemic has shuttered schools across America, preschools have been especially hard hit. For one thing, online education is challenging for young children (picture a group of three-year-olds on a video conference!) who learn best through hands-on activities. The public preschool programs that are particularly vulnerable to shrinking state budgets typically prioritize students from low-income families in order to help close opportunity gaps. Children who live in poverty are also less likely to have access to technology like devices and adequate broadband.

Additionally, children with disabilities are entitled by federal law to receive special education preschool services designed to provide early assistance to help these children long into the future. With therapists and teachers sheltering in place, parents were asked to take on these unfamiliar roles.

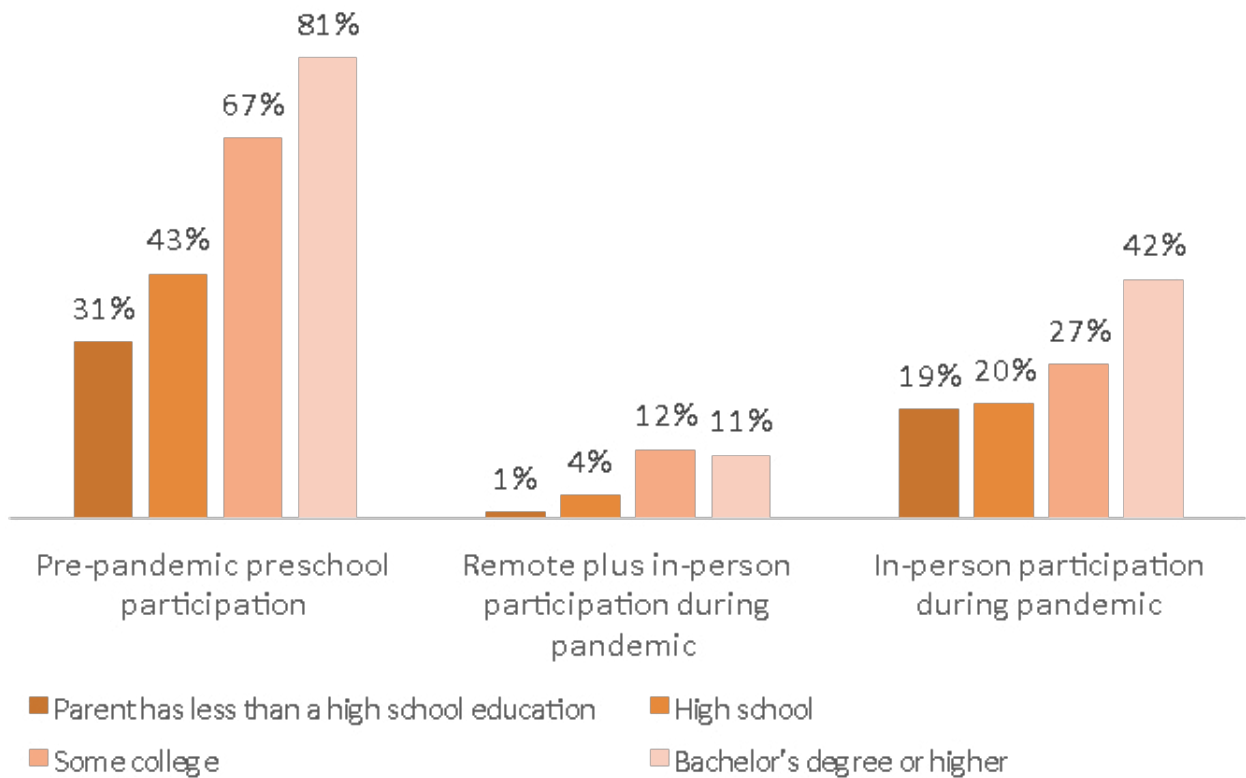
In a [report](#) published this summer (and updated this past month), NEPC Fellow [W. Steven Barnett](#) of Rutgers and [Kwanghee Jung](#) of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) sought to quantify some of these impacts, via a NIEER nationwide survey, administered in May and June to 945 households of children aged three to five who were not yet enrolled in kindergarten. The charts below draw upon that survey and the NIEER report to tell the story of the pandemic's impact on the nation's youngest students. All are based exclusively on the NIEER survey results, with the exception of the final chart, which also includes data from the [2019 National Household Education Survey](#), conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics. The picture they paint is bleak, with Barnett and Jong predicting that closures could lead to "negative

long-term consequences” that could continue to grow if schools remain closed—unless early childhood programs receive additional funding and resources to facilitate remote instruction, help parents teach their children at home, and compensate for the learning time that has already been lost.

1. Preschool participation rates for three- to five-year-old pre-kindergarteners have plunged during the pandemic.

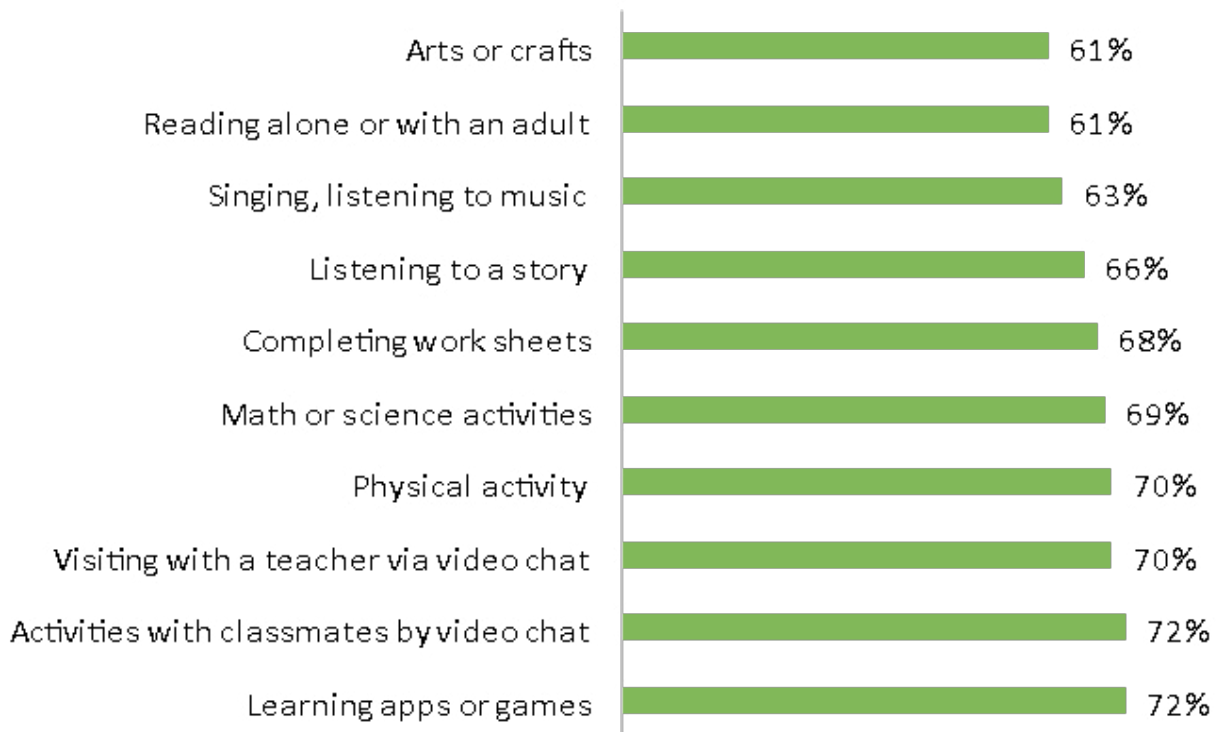


2. Pre-existing inequities have persisted.

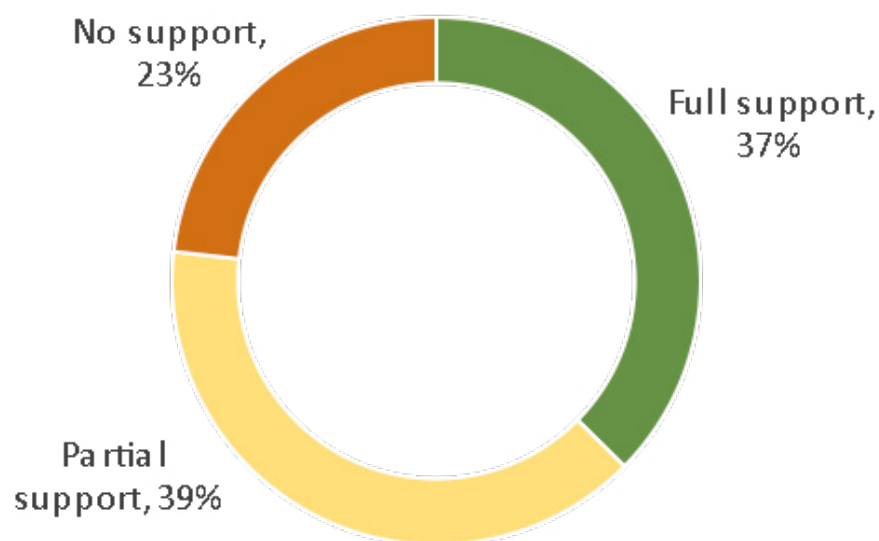


3. Parents say they have received limited remote support from their children's preschools.

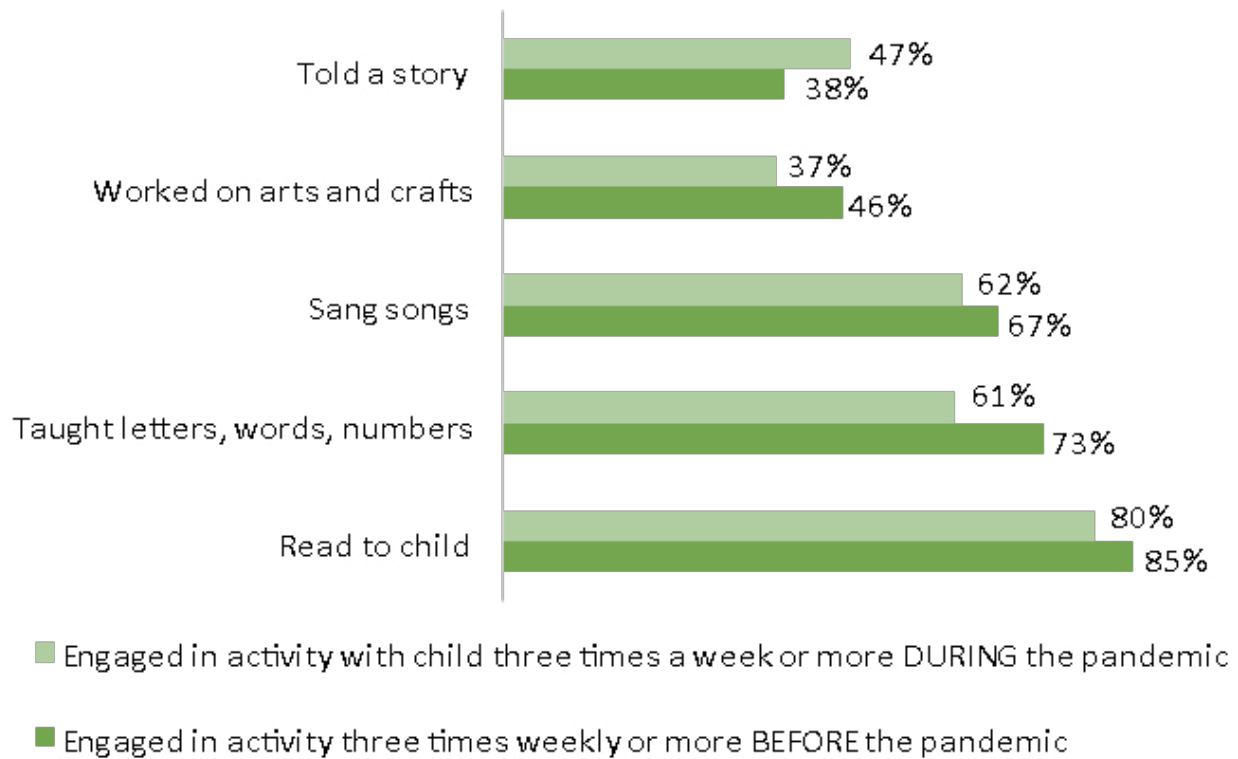
Percent who reported type of support less than once a week



4. Most parents of children with Individualized Education Programs said their children did not receive the full support they were entitled to under the law.



5. The amount of time parents spend on learning activities hasn't really changed since the pandemic—which means that mom and dad have been unable to fill the void left by pre-school closures.



Again, the full NIEER report authored by Barnett and Jung is available [here](#).

NEPC Resources on Early Childhood Education

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