



Continuing to Learn During a Pandemic:

Lessons from Michigan school districts and educators for 2020-21

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

EPIC focused on three main research questions related to K-12 education during the COVID-19 pandemic

1. What plans did school districts put in place for finishing the 2019-2020 school year after the suspension of face-to-face instruction?
2. How did educators respond to the transition to distance learning?
3. How might the pandemic and associated suspension of face-to-face instruction have differential impacts on groups of students?

DATA SOURCES

EPIC used a combination of public and collected data

New Data Collected by EPIC Researchers

Continuity of Learning (COL) Plans

- All LEAs and PSAs submitted COL plans to their ISDs and then MDE.
- E.O. 2020-35 & 65 required plans to describe 14 elements of operation including: mode of instruction; monitoring student learning; maintaining relationships with students; and ensuring access to learning for all students.
- EPIC coded and then constructed a database of the content of all 813 COL plans

Educator Surveys

- EPIC surveyed K-8 teachers & principals in May-June 2020

District Characteristics from Outside Sources

State Education Data

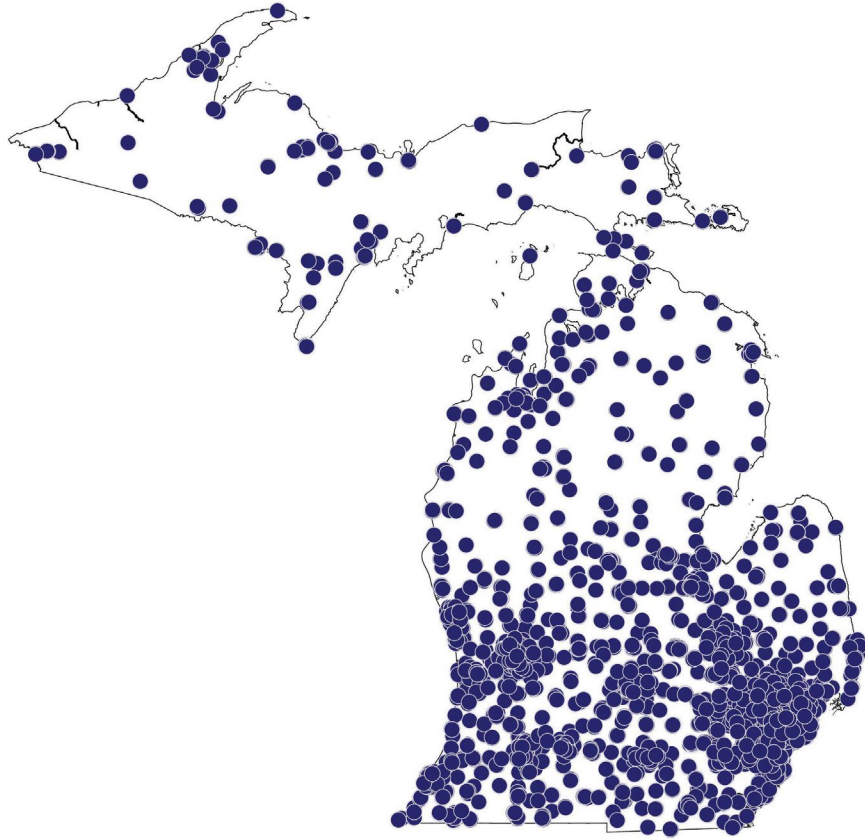
- Sector & Locale of District
- Student demographic composition (percent economically disadvantaged, underrepresented minority)
- Average student achievement (M-STEP ELA)

U.S. Census Data

- Percent of households with broadband internet subscriptions

EDUCATOR SURVEY SAMPLE

The survey sample was generally representative of Michigan teachers and principals



SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

8,881 K-8 educators from 752
(**90%**) Michigan school districts

- **16%** of all eligible teachers
- **12%** of all eligible principals

The survey sample is representative of MI educators; slightly higher proportions of educators who are...

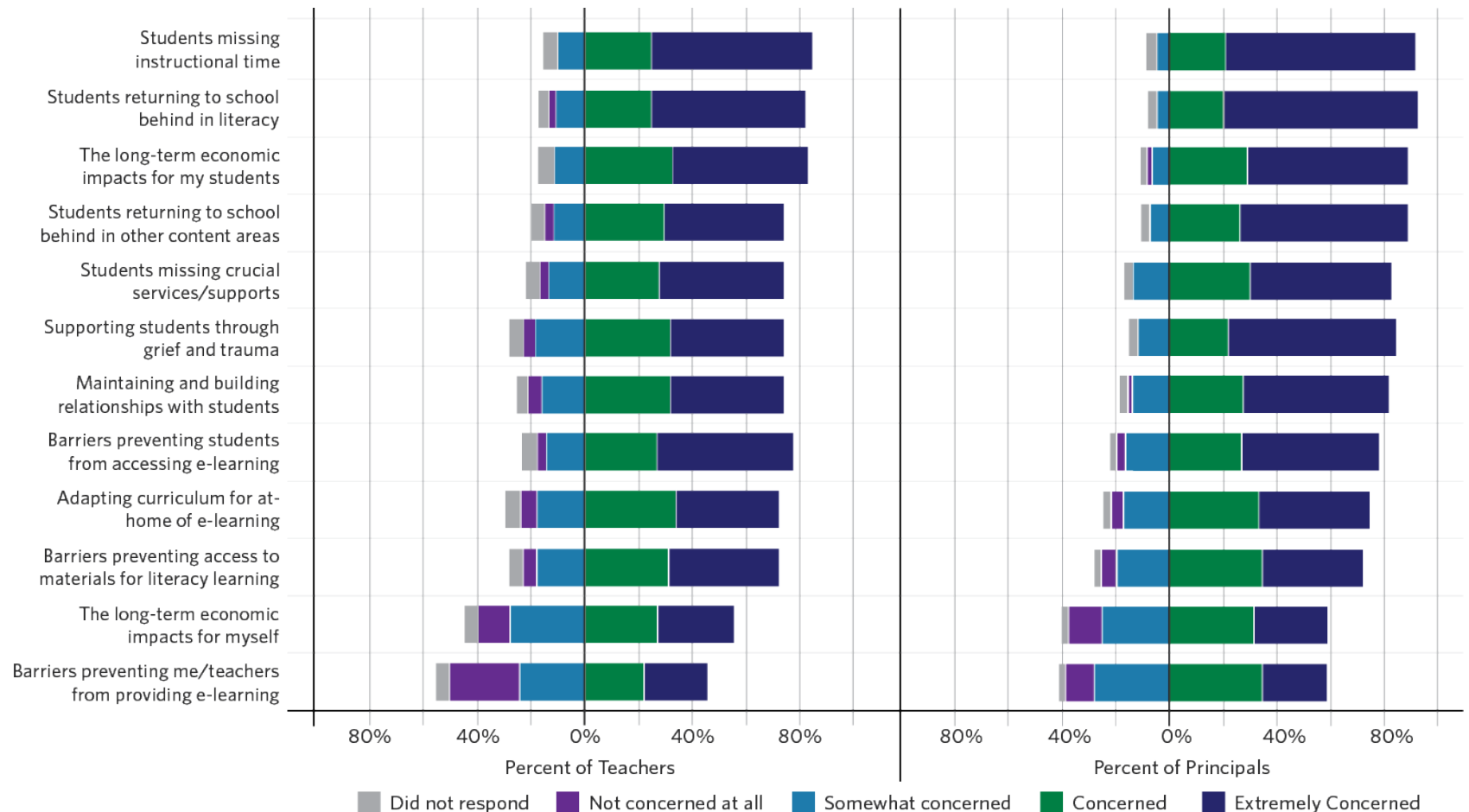
- Female;
- Hired within the last 5 years;
- Elementary-certified; or
- Endorsed in ELA

CAVEATS

- We coded district's **initial** Continuity of Learning plans. Not their final plans, nor the actual implementation of those plans.
- Districts **learned and evolved** as the semester unfolded.
- Survey responses are **limited** by the questions asked and who answered them and when.
- We will **continue to work** with MDE and districts to understand instruction and learning during the pandemic.

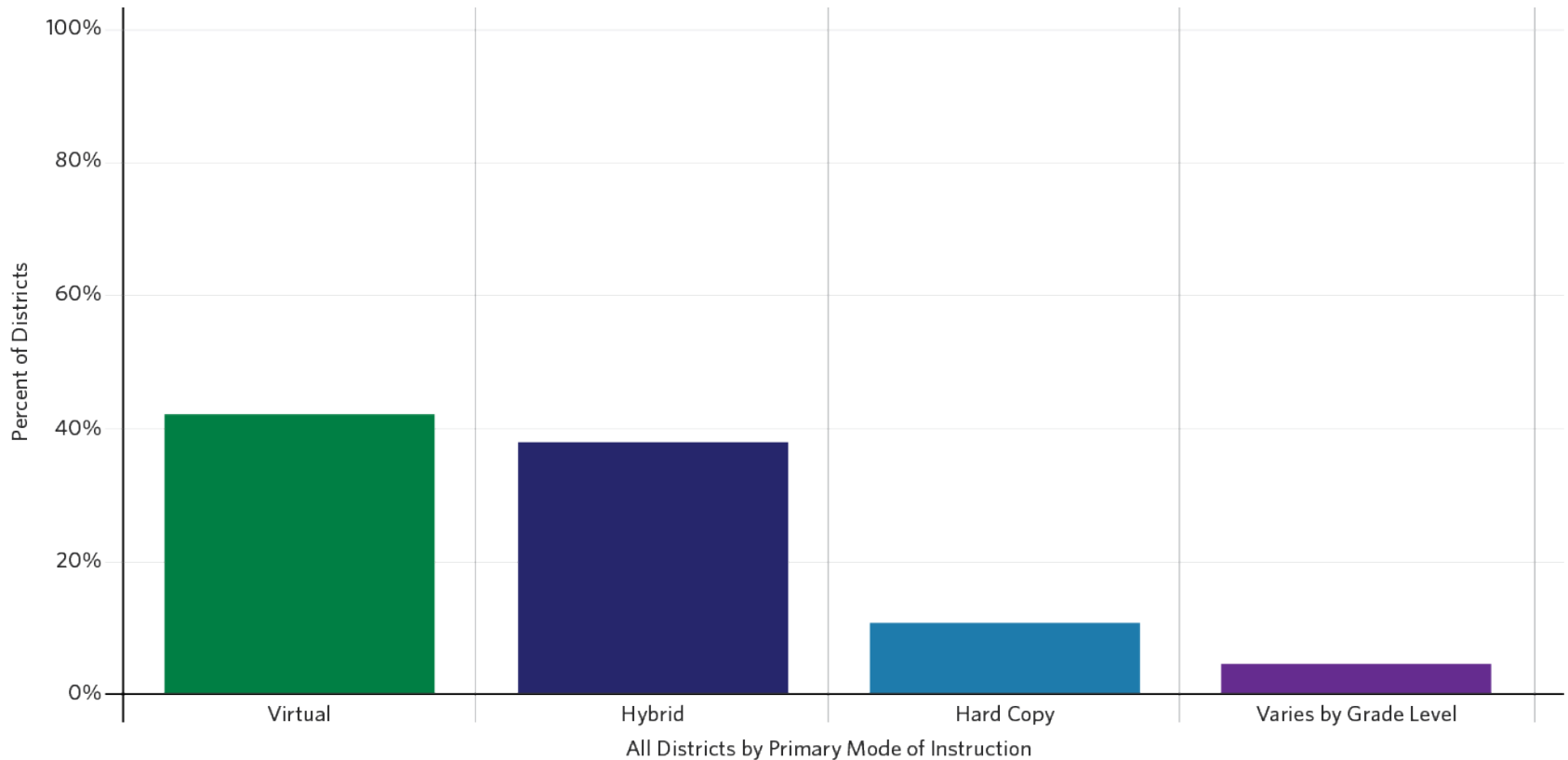
EDUCATORS' CONCERNS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

Educators expressed deep concern about the ways in which the suspension of face-to-face instruction would impact students' learning and well-being



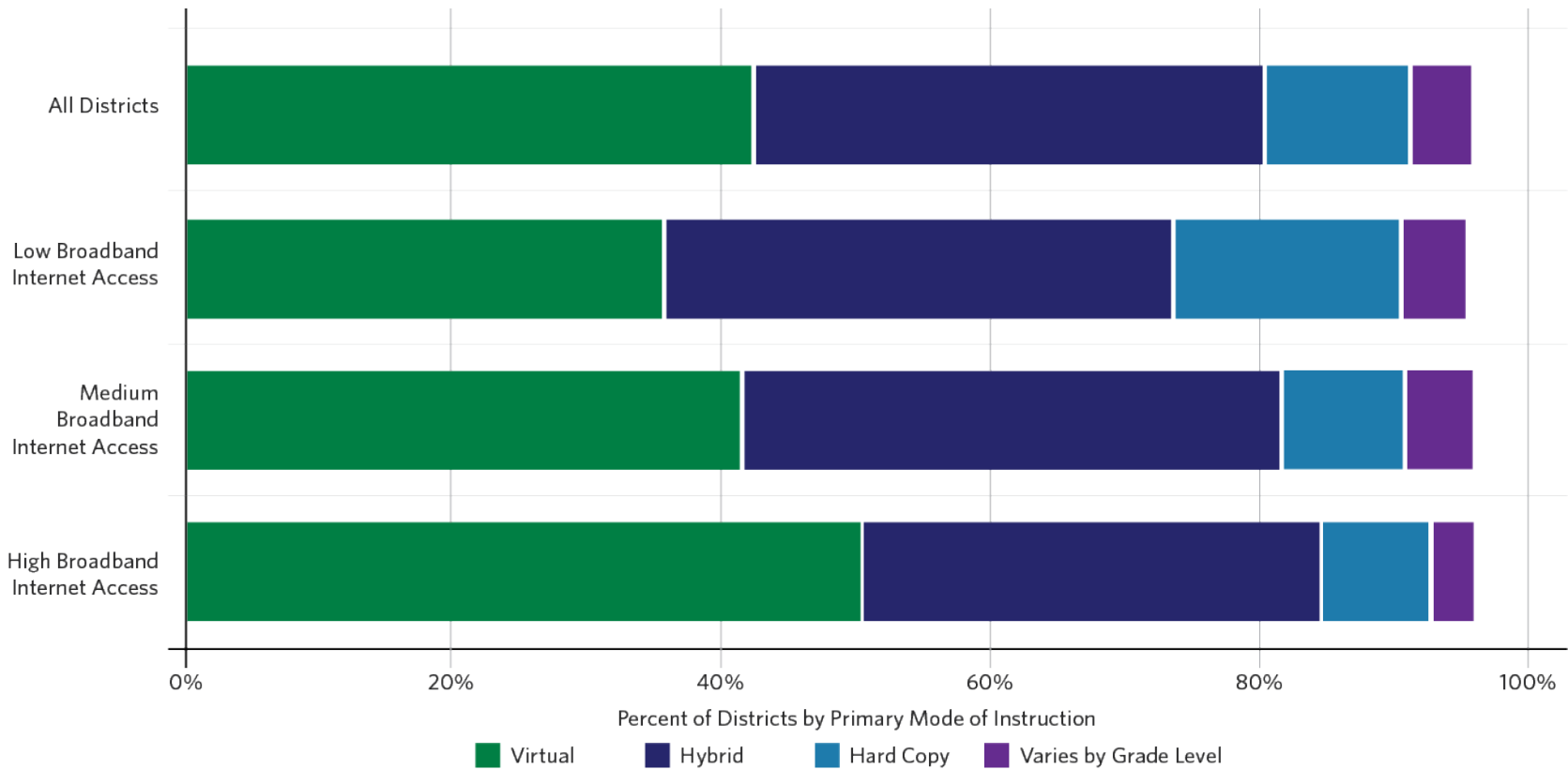
PRIMARY MODE OF INSTRUCTION

Most districts planned on using virtual instruction entirely or in part to educate students in spring 2020



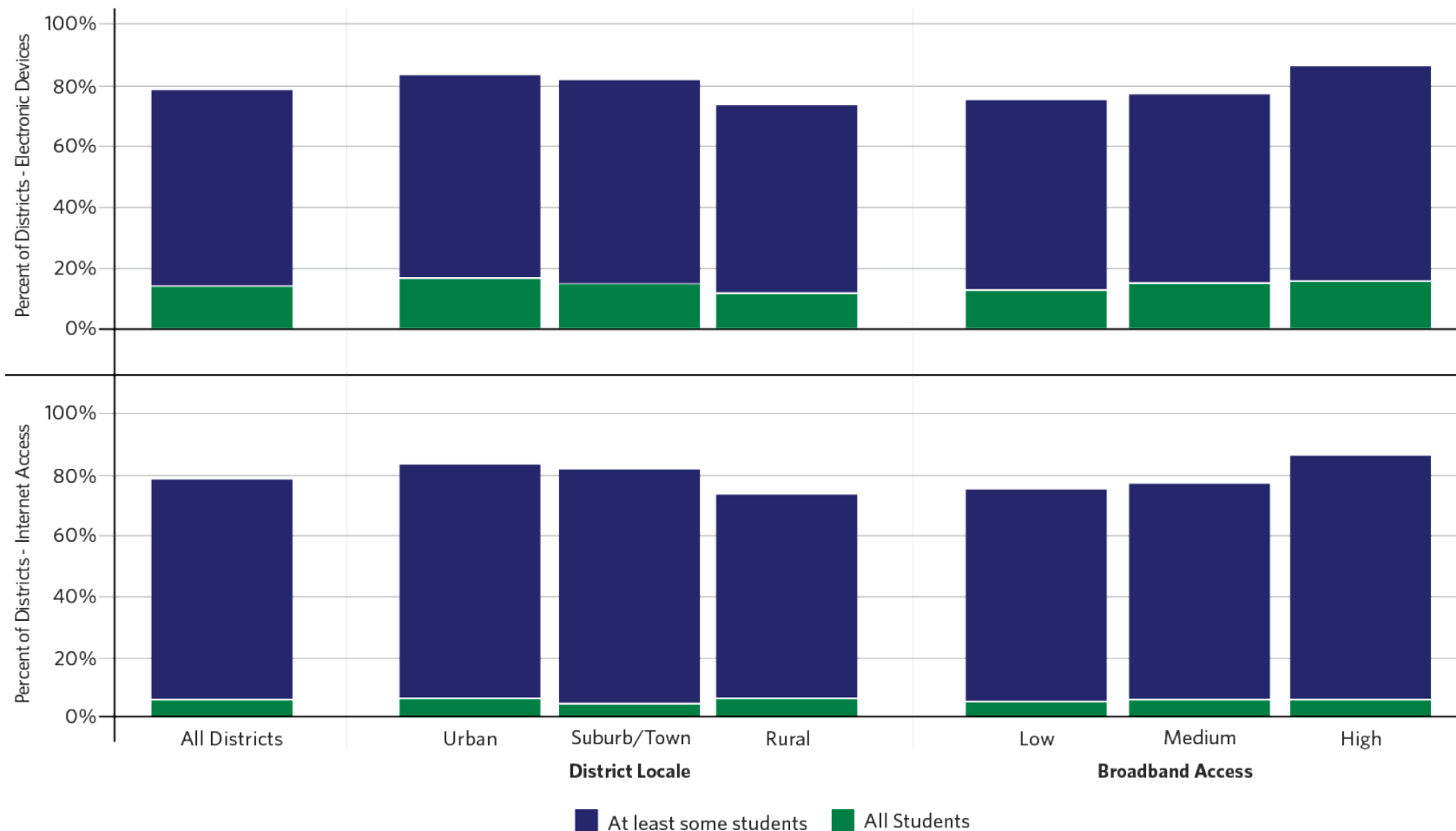
PRIMARY MODE OF INSTRUCTION

The planned use of virtual instruction varied by broadband internet access



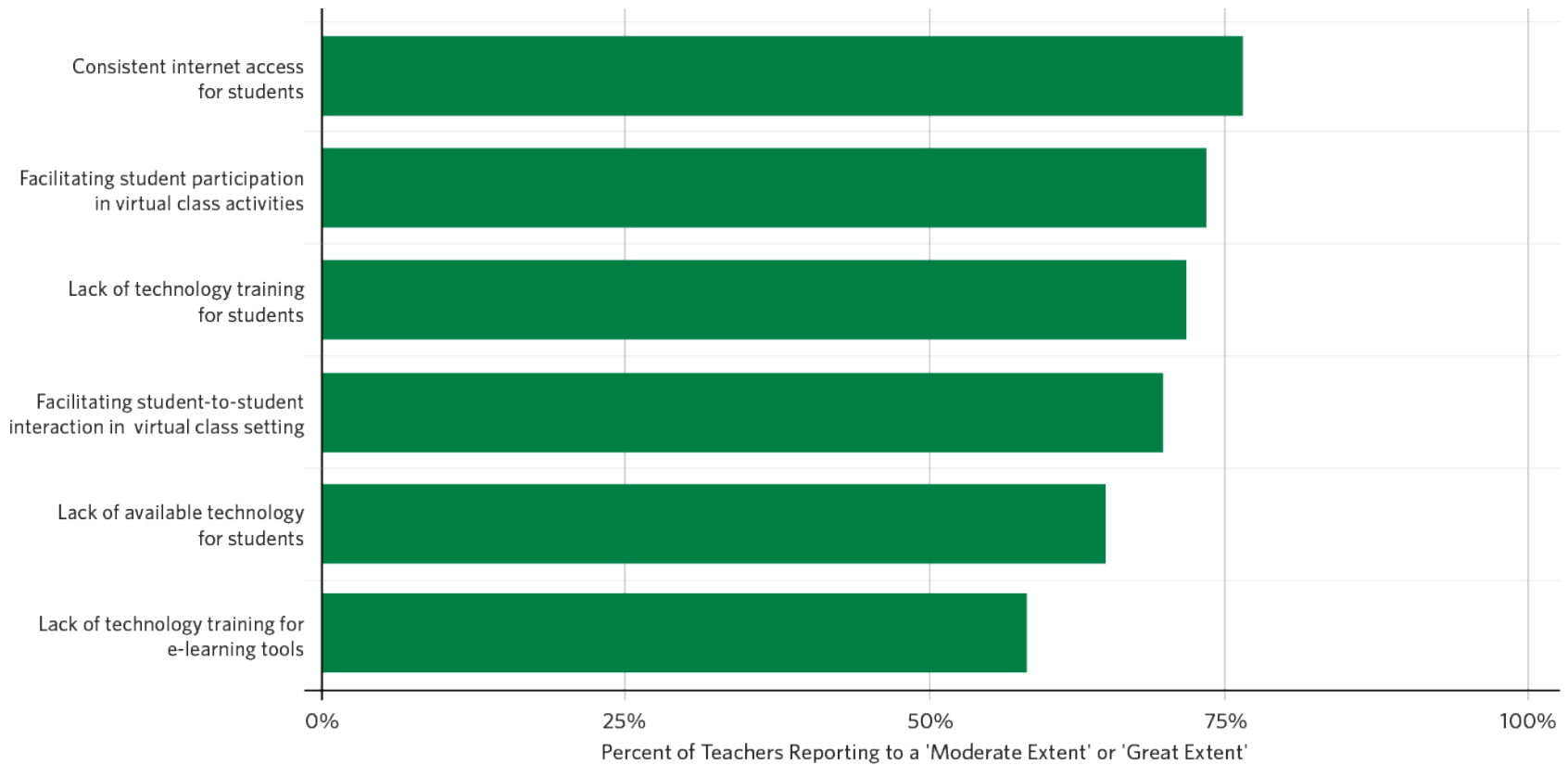
DISTRICT-PROVIDED ELECTRONIC DEVICES AND INTERNET ACCESS

Most districts provided students with devices and internet access, although this varied by broadband access and locale



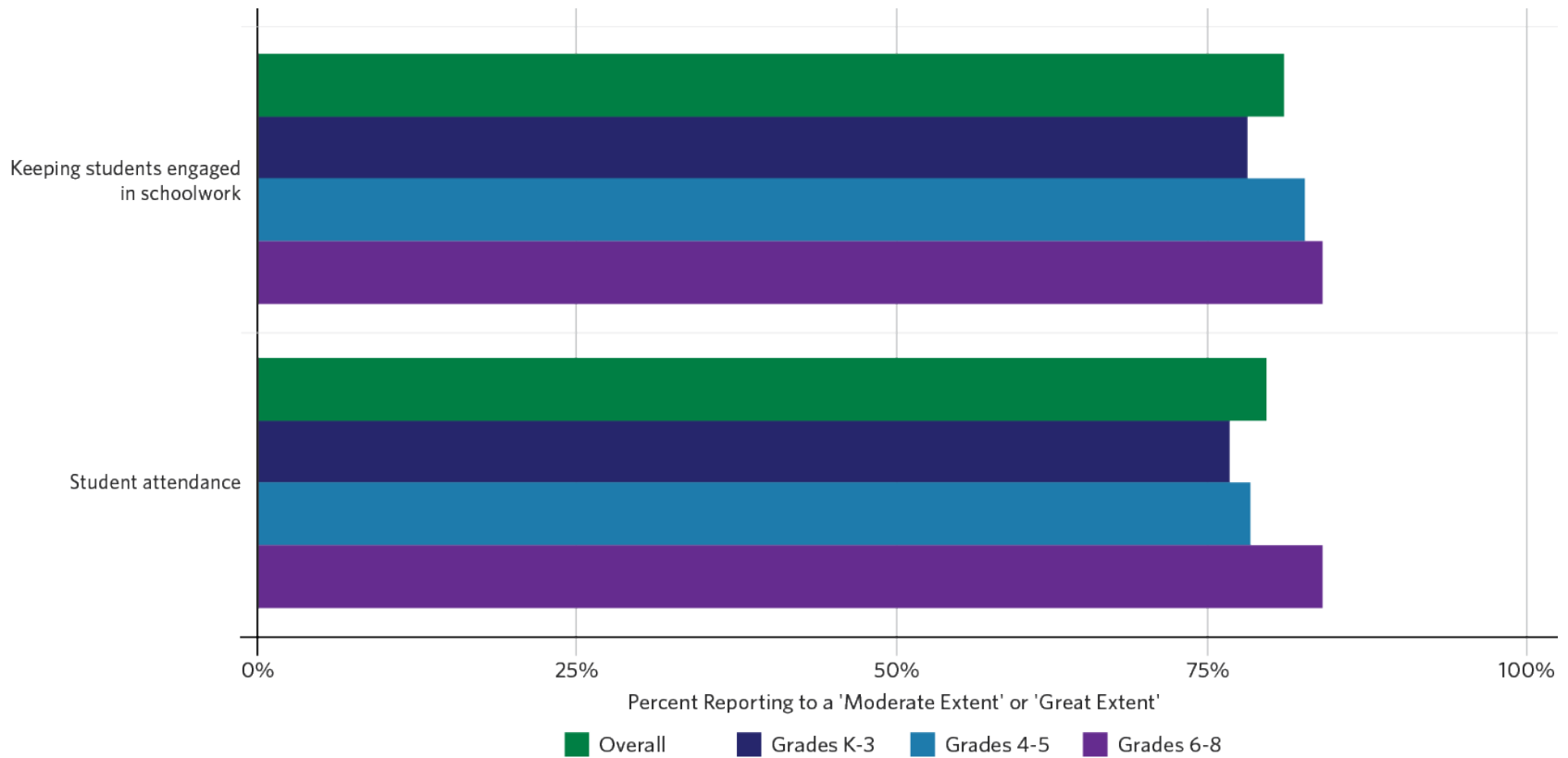
CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS

Teachers reported substantial challenges with technology and virtual instruction when transitioning to remote learning



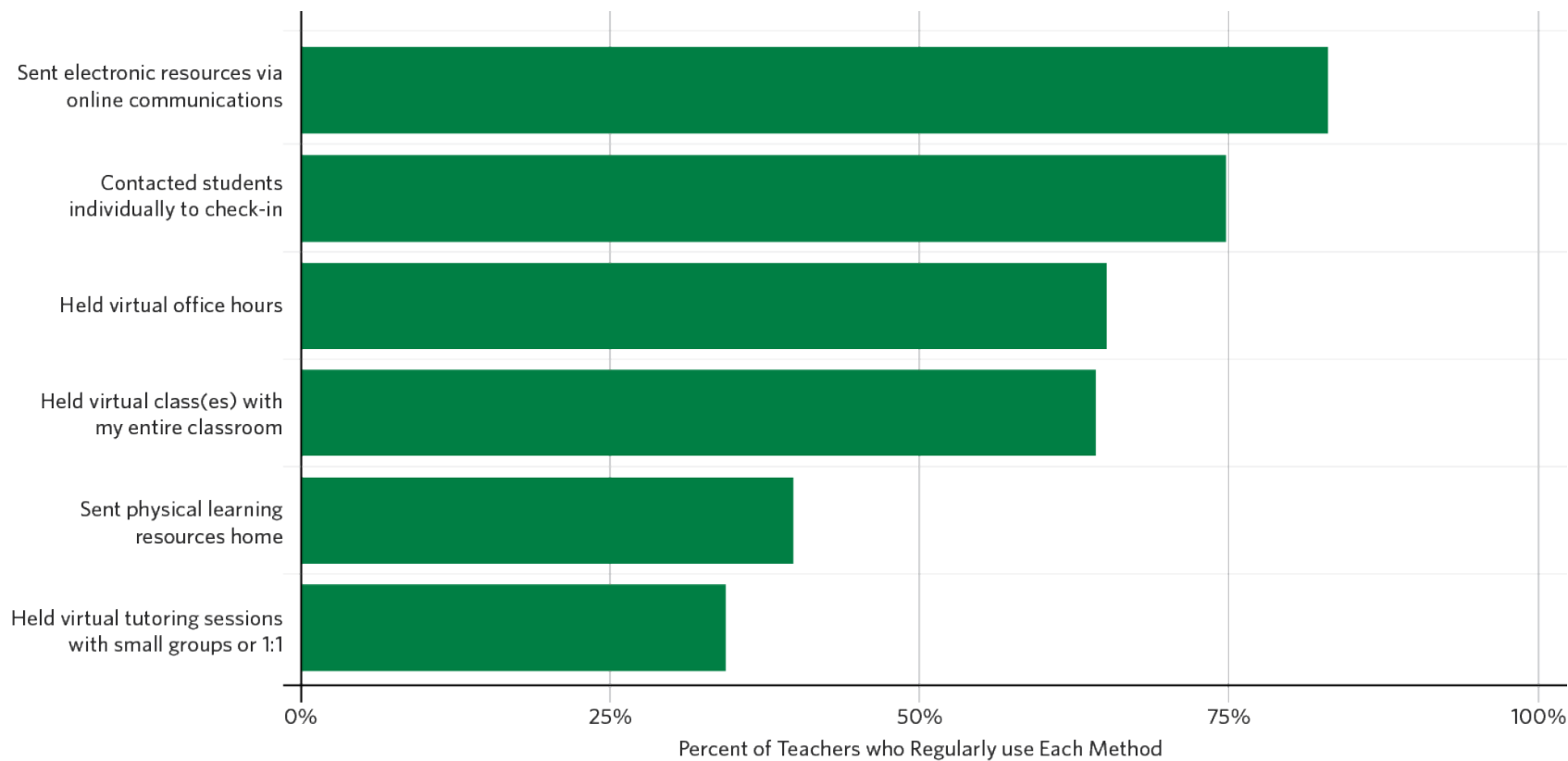
CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS

Teachers were particularly concerned with student engagement and attendance, especially for older grades



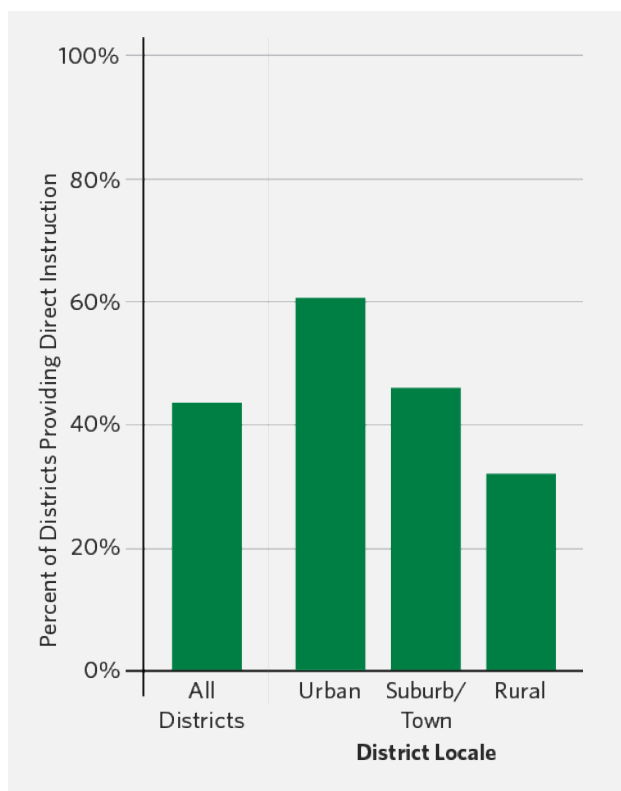
METHODS OF ENGAGING WITH STUDENTS

Most teachers reported using online and virtual instruction; fewer sent physical learning resources home



DISTRICTS PROVIDE DIRECT INSTRUCTION

Districts' plans for providing student instruction suggest less direct engagement than usual



9% of plans specified hours or lessons of direct instruction

- Average time: **11.3 hours** / week
- Average number: **5-6 lessons/week**

16% of plans specified expected time on independent learning and school work

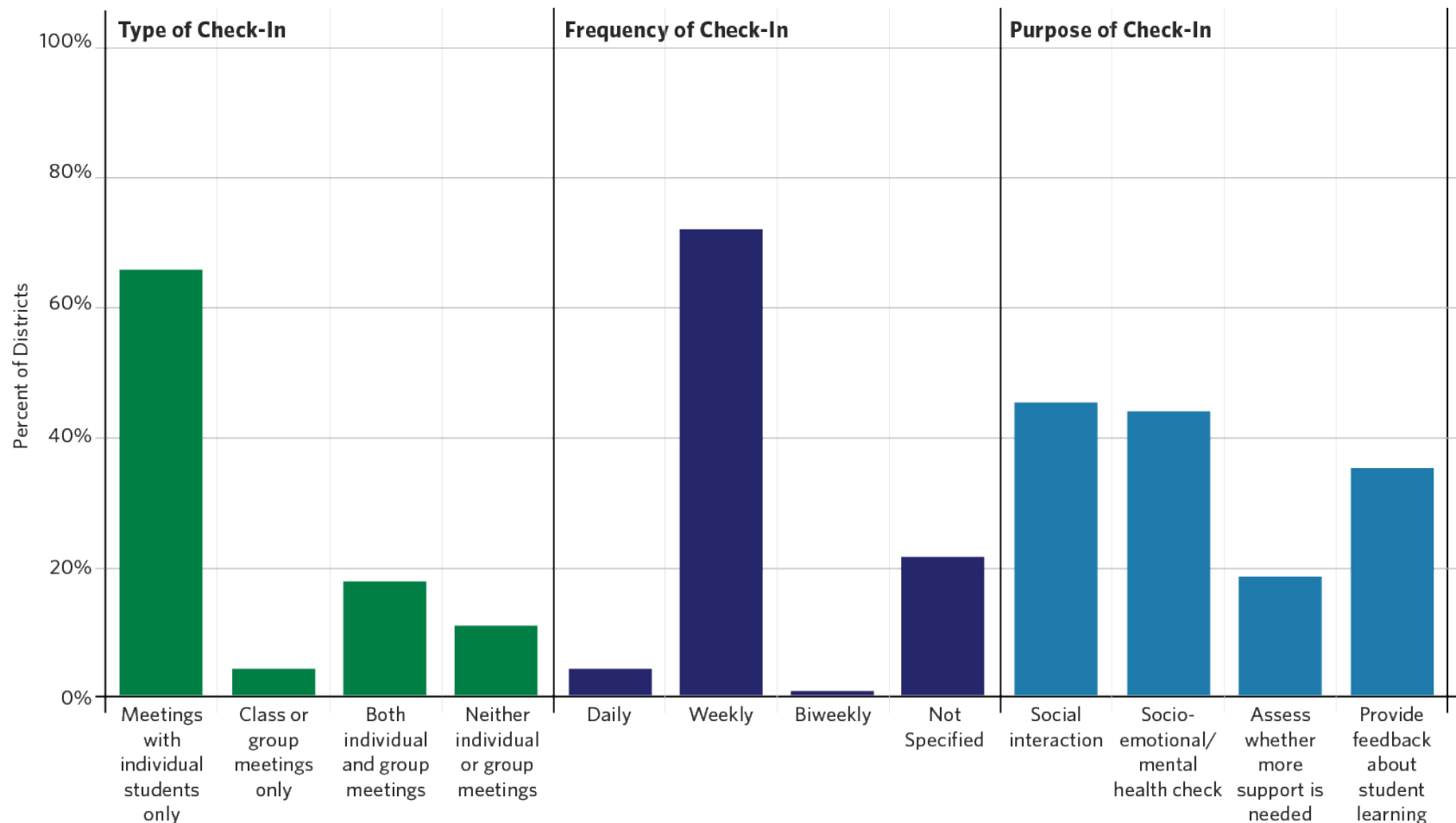
- Average time: **12.2 hours/week**

Younger students were provided with less instructional time/lessons

Rural districts planned for fewer hours/lessons

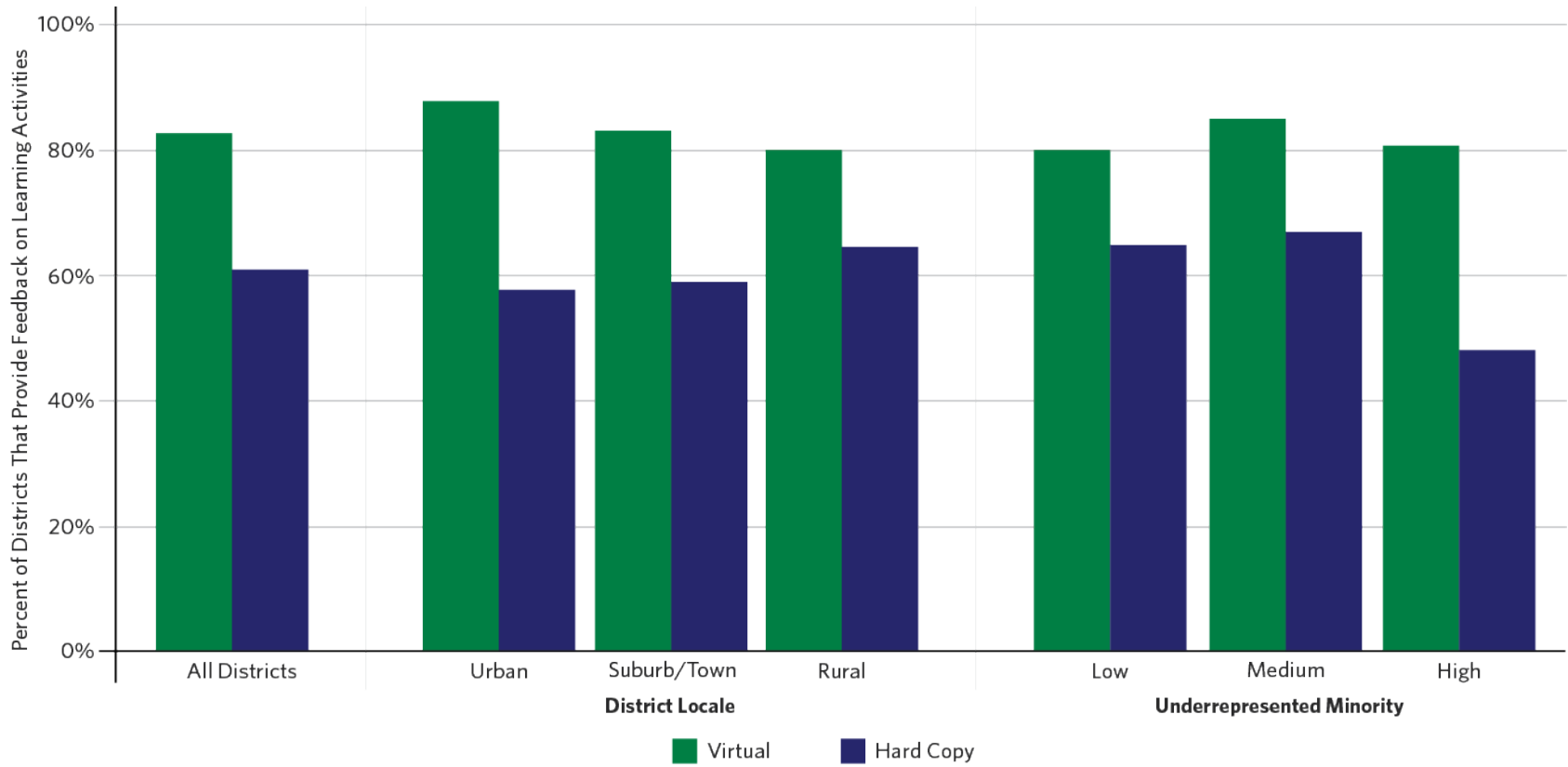
TEACHERS' MEETINGS WITH STUDENTS

Districts intended for teachers to have frequent contact with and provide feedback to students even when buildings were closed

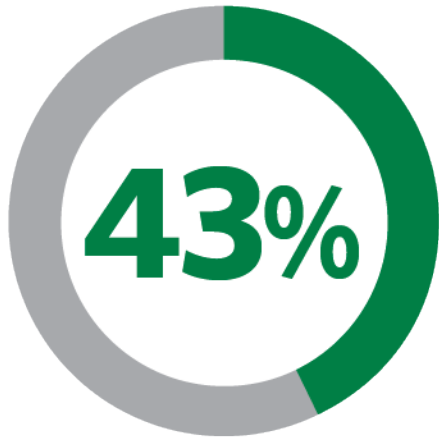


FEEDBACK ON LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Districts planned to provide differing levels of teacher feedback on student work depending on instructional modality



DISTRICTS WERE FLEXIBLE WITH FINAL GRADING POLICIES



43% of district plans explicitly indicated that at least some students would receive a **final grade** for the year

OF THOSE DISTRICTS:

71% of these districts chose to adopt a **binary or categorical** grading system

34% of these districts used a **"no harm"** grading policy

6% of these districts indicated students **could be retained** if they did not earn a passing grade

CONCERNS WITH THE CONTINUATION OF LEARNING FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS OF STUDENTS

TEACHERS' Reported Challenges

64% reported challenges with continuing to provide supports and services to students with IEPs/504 plans

39% reported challenges with continuing to provide supports and services to English Learners

69% reported challenges with continuing to provide access to literacy intervention services

■ VS ■

DISTRICT Plans Reported

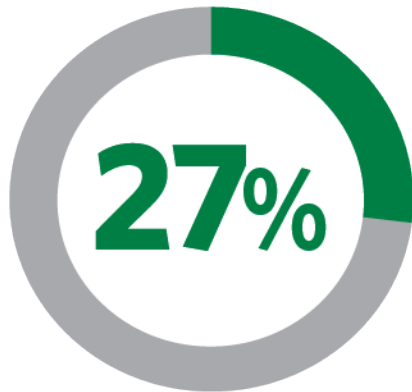
70% noted accommodations for students with IEPs/504 plans

26% discussed accommodations for English Learners

4% addressed accommodations for students with "reading deficiencies" or IRIPs

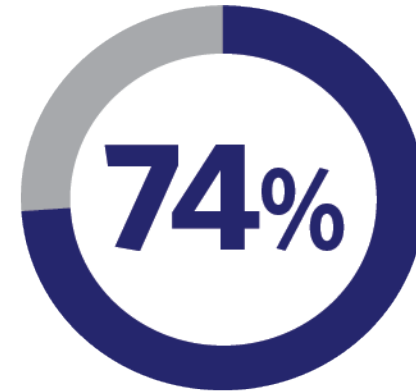
SUPPORT TO FACILITATE REMOTE INSTRUCTION

Teachers wanted more support to facilitate their delivery of remote instruction



27% of DISTRICTS included educator training and PD as part of their COL plans.

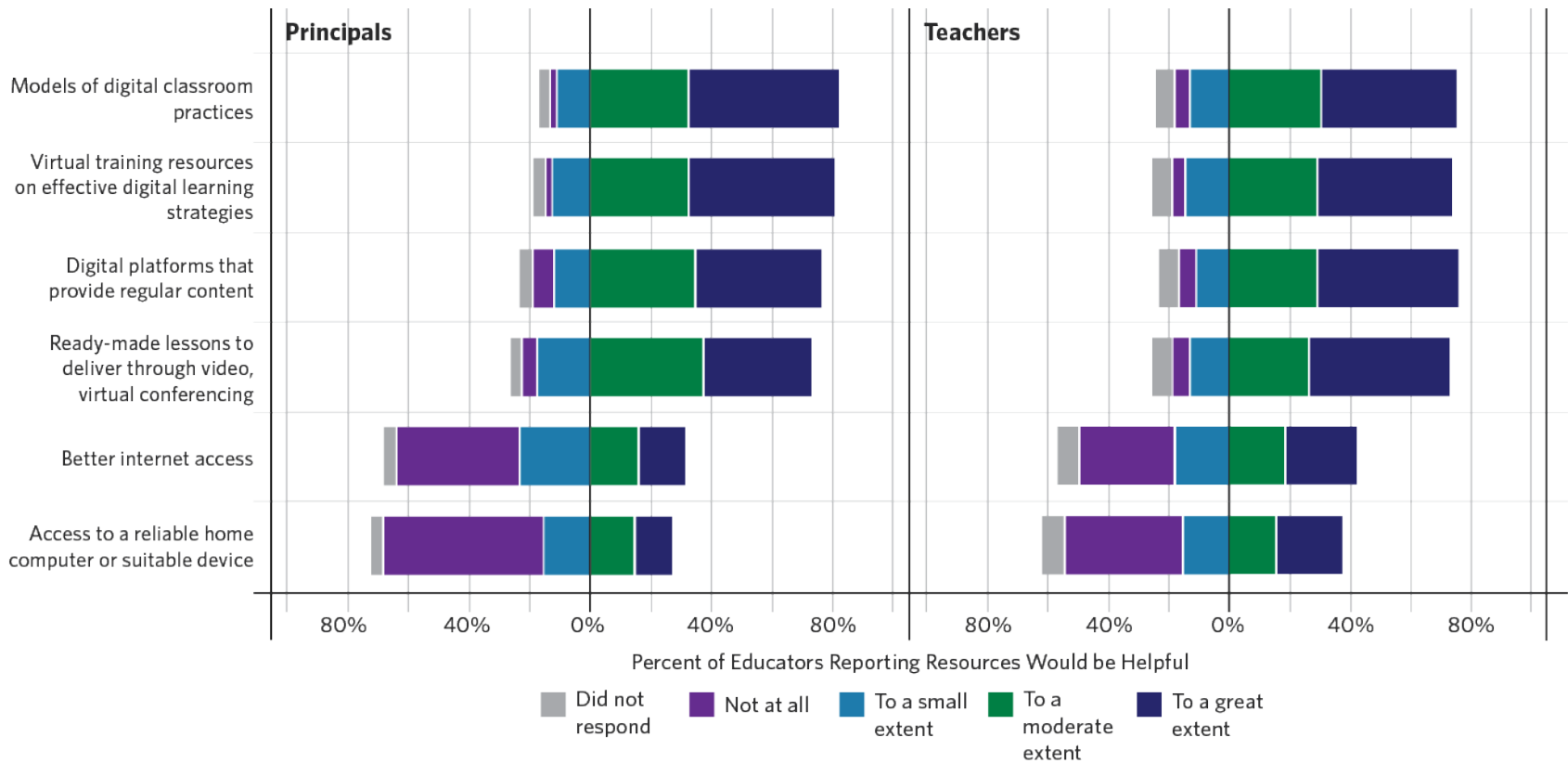
■ VS ■



74% of TEACHERS wanted more virtual training resources.

RESOURCES TO HELP EDUCATORS PROVIDE REMOTE INSTRUCTION

Educators wanted virtual resources that provide content, training, strategies, and ready-made virtual lessons



TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS WERE CONCERNED ABOUT STUDENT WELL-BEING

79% and **83%**
of teachers of principals

were concerned about students **missing crucial services/supports** while school buildings are closed

79% and **85%**
of teachers of principals

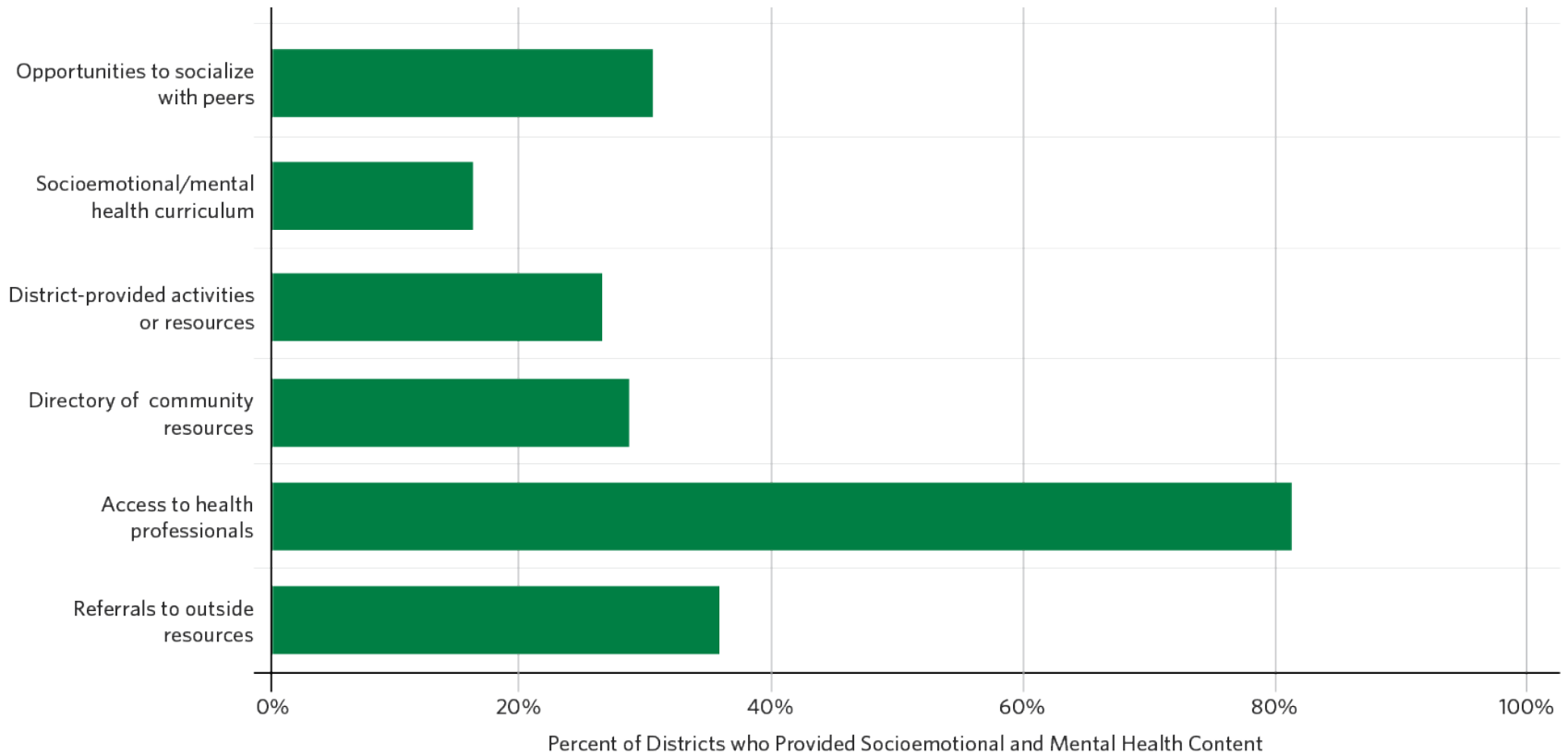
were concerned about **supporting students through grief and trauma** related to COVID-19

83% and **89%**
of teachers of principals

were concerned about **long-term economic impacts** of the pandemic on their students

SOCIOEMOTIONAL LEARNING AND STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

Most districts planned to provide students opportunities to socialize and access mental health supports



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Important lessons can be learned from educators' perspectives and districts' COL plans to inform the upcoming school year

- Keep equity of opportunity at the forefront when planning for high-quality instruction.
- Equip all students with the necessary learning materials to allow them to fully engage in remote instruction.
- Continue to focus efforts on both instruction and student support services, particularly in lower-achieving, economically disadvantaged districts.
- Build on current efforts to provide direct instruction and frequent contact between students and teachers.
- Expand access to virtual training and distance learning resources for educators.



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<https://epicedpolicy.org/covid-19-education-policy/>

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