

International School Response to COVID-19 Survey Supplementary Report

General Observations

This report is supplementary to the US School Response to COVID 19 Survey (April 2020). As such, it is designed to do the following: 1) make general observations about international schools and their response to the COVID 19 pandemic, and 2) draw out interesting differences between those schools as a distinct group versus the ACSI US member response. These differences help us learn about our member schools, their challenges, and unique needs. This supplementary report offers a few interesting observations in addition to those offered in the US report.

The timing of the two surveys (US and International) is a factor with a few of the questions. US member schools took the survey in April and the international schools took it in May. Even a few weeks between taking the surveys means that international schools may have made different decisions about how they were responding to the coronavirus than the US schools did. This should be taken into consideration as you read this report.

Survey Demographics for International Schools

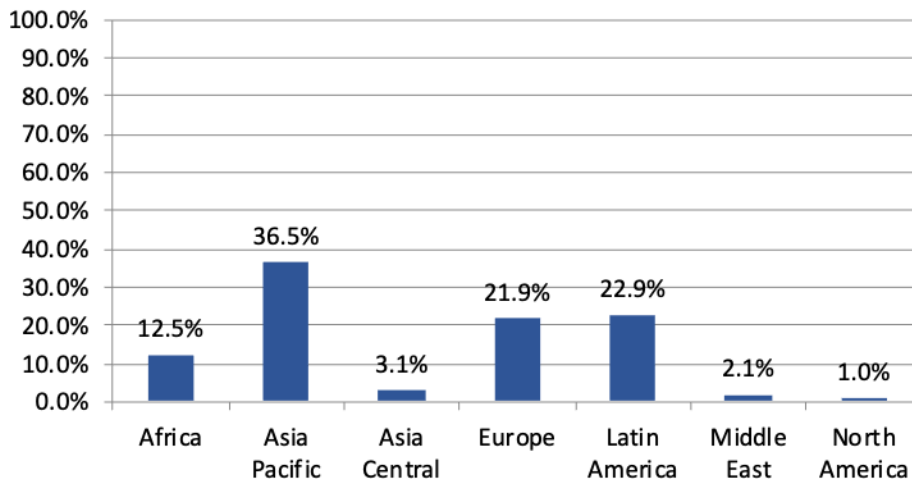
The COVID response survey was sent to 170 International Schools. 87 unique schools responded, giving a response rate of 51%.

There are 2300 US member schools. A total of 790 unique US schools responded to the survey with a response rate of 42.4%.

Eighty-five percent of the international survey respondents were heads of school, whereas 63% of respondents in the US were heads of school.

Regional Demographics

What region is your school located in?



The regional numbers of international participants closely follow the numbers of members in each region. For example, the Asia Pacific region had the most survey participants as that region hosts the most

international schools. This demonstrates good membership participation across all regions.

It was interesting to note that the international schools that took the survey were largely K-12 schools. In the US it appears that there were many more schools that offer either K-8 or some other configuration. For example, 92.5% of international schools indicated they offered high school while only 68% of US schools indicated they had a high school program. This may imply that once an international school starts, they tend to move toward a full program right through high school as there are not viable options in their city for students to transfer for an equivalent high school education.

Likewise, you can see that there are more EE programs in the US (73%) than in our international school membership (61%). However, it is interesting that more EE programs have emerged in international schools over time. This indicates two things, we need to take a closer look at these EE programs to determine if we are serving them, and two, a proper survey of our schools would tell us the real story.

Another fascinating point is that 18.9% of the international respondents indicated they have “Residential Boarding/Homestay”. Knowing that nearly 20% of the international school members that took the survey have a residential program (boarding or homestay or both) is worth investigating. Where this is occurring and what type of residential programs are offered was outside the scope of this COVID survey, but this points out that it is time to do a comprehensive survey of our international schools for data like this, EE programming, and others.

We do not have the School Size by Enrollment data.

Responding to COVID 19

At the time of the survey, most international schools were closed (moved to learning online at home) but a few schools were still offering face-to-face school ranging from 4%-11%. We cannot tell from the survey what “open” means from the results (full days, partial, social distancing measures, etc.). The US data on this point was not provided.

Regarding missed instructional days due to COVID 19, the international schools were able to respond rapidly to the pandemic with most schools (86%) missing only five days or less and 42% missing no days at all. Thirty-four percent of US schools missed no days.

Grade Level	No days missed	Less than 3 days missed	Less than 5 days missed
Early Education	45.3% (15.7)	77.4% (25.2)	81.2% (11.7)
Elementary	41.6% (4.8)	81.9% (17.4)	88.4% (5.9)
Middle School	41% (5)	80.7% (13.9)	87.1% (2)
High School	40.5% (5.4)	82.4% (16.7)	87.8% (1.3)
Average	42.1% (7.7)	80.6% (18.3)	86.1% (5.2)

Numbers in parenthesis represent the percentage spread above the US schools

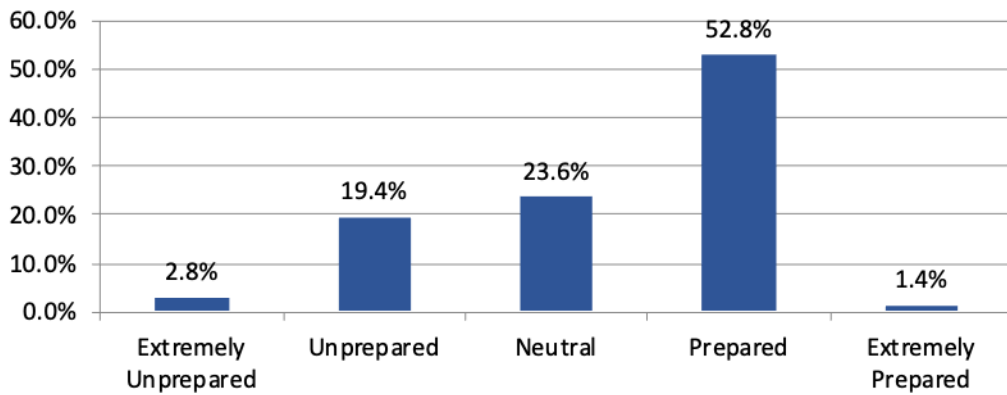
When comparing hours of distance learning across grade levels, international schools on average have been providing longer hours of instruction as compared to their US counterparts. International schools in Asia may be a leading factor in this as they likely felt a stronger need than other regions to mimic face-to-face hours and levels of instructions due to the demands of their parent population and higher tuition rates.

Levels of Preparedness

Most international schools (52.8%) felt prepared to make the transition to learning remotely at home with

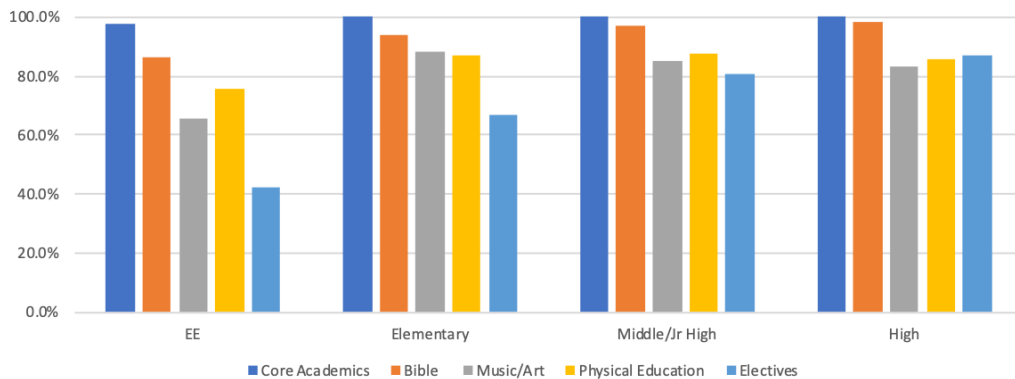
only 1.4% feeling extremely prepared to make that adjustment. This contrasts with only 35% of US schools feeling prepared and 9% of US schools feeling extremely prepared for the change. The other levels of preparedness were similar between the two groups.

Please rate your level of preparedness for transitioning to distance learning.



Courses Offered During COVID 19

In all categories, the international schools showed much higher percentages for offering Core Academics, Bible, Music, PE, and Electives. One hundred percent of international schools offered Core Academics during this online phase, whereas the US schools had wide disparity on this point. For example, in the High School section, approximately 65% of US schools offered Core Academics, while 100% of international schools were offering core subjects. The other areas of Bible, Music/Art, PE, and Electives held similar higher responses internationally. This shows a VERY strong commitment on the part of international schools to continue to provide a similar education at home as on campus. This may indicate the demands of the international and expat community of families for this level of education.



Standardized Testing Feedback

At the time of the survey, 45% of international schools said they do not intend to test this year, 22.5% were unsure, while 32.4% said they intended to test. According to international school Zoom conversations, there was some uncertainty on this decision from most. As leaders learned more about new emerging testing options, this number may have changed since the survey was taken. The US data on this point was not provided.

Regular Feedback Mechanisms During COVID 19

There was a high value placed on gaining feedback from students (77.5% of schools), families (80.6%), and faculty (84.7%) in the international schools. These were all slightly higher than US schools.

Ways of Staying Connected

Like the US schools, international schools utilized all sorts of mechanisms to stay connected with their communities – regular emails, media, phone calls, chapels, and others. The use of email communication was similar for international and US schools. However, it is notable that international schools used the options of phone calls and videos far less than their US counterparts. Our observation is that international schools likely used more group texts on apps like WeChat and WhatsApp to communicate to their communities far more than the US. Apps like these were not offered as an option in the survey.

Graduation Plans

This question probably shows the greatest differences between international schools and US schools but this difference should not surprise us given the nature of the two communities. At the time of the survey, only 6% of international schools indicated they would reschedule their graduation ceremonies, while 33% of the US schools were choosing that as their option. Rescheduling graduation would be very difficult for international schools, given the nature of their mobile and expat community, the international college plans of many graduating seniors, and the problem of many students who left the school community due to COVID 19 to continue learning from their passport country. Bringing seniors (and parents) back for a rescheduled ceremony would prove nearly impossible.

Similarly, only 5.6% of US schools were moving ahead with a virtual ceremony (at the time of the survey), while 43.4% of international schools were! Fifty-one percent of US schools were uncertain about plans, while only 24% of international schools were uncertain about graduation plans. Again, international schools would have been forced to make graduation plans sooner to help their mobile or dispersed communities with planning.

Emergency Financial Assistance

Only 47% of international schools indicated they were providing tuition relief for families in need (May results), while 67.3% of US schools were already doing that in April. This difference is intriguing. See further points below.

On the question of “Is your school providing tuition refunds or discounts to families?”, international schools offered far less on this point than US schools. Seventy percent of international schools indicated “None of the above” to offering refunds or discounts, whereas 56.7% of US schools said they offered no discount.

On the question of furloughed staff, only 14% of international schools had furloughed staff, while 26% of US schools had already done so by April. Similarly, 8% of international schools had permanently laid off staff, while 13% of US schools had taken these measures.

The differences noted above might be accounted for in part within the member “MK schools” (Missionary Kid schools). These schools may have less reserves to offer financial assistance or discounts; likewise, they may not need to lay off or furlough staff as cost-cutting measures since those staff members are not a budgetary item due to the personal support they bring. This is unclear, but likely a cause behind the numbers.

One other point that might be interesting is that there is naturally occurring attrition of staff at international schools every year. Many teachers go overseas to work for only one to two years. Some may have been convinced to stay longer this year simply to help their school due to the challenge their school is facing in getting new staff to the school for the coming school year.

Fundraising Campaigns and Initiatives

This question also demonstrates a difference between international and US schools. Fifty percent of international schools indicated this question was not applicable to them, while only 18% of US schools indicated they had no ongoing fundraising campaigns or initiatives. Of the other 33% of international

schools that **do** have fundraising activities in progress, 29% indicated they were continuing those efforts, either as planned or with modifications, while only 14% indicated they would halt their fundraising plans.

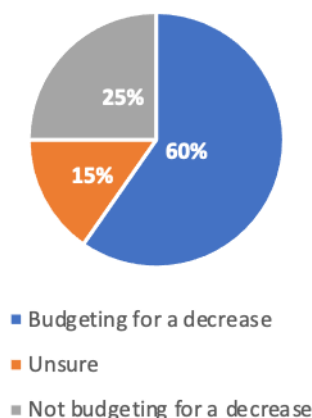
It should not be surprising to see that far fewer international schools have fundraising campaigns or initiatives than their US schools. There are unique challenges for international schools to fundraise as compared to US schools. International schools are often located within countries or cultures that either do not have a tradition of giving to school fundraising efforts or their population is lower resourced. In addition, international schools tend not to serve a local population as they cater to expat families. This results in fewer connections to local businesses or local individuals of wealth that might otherwise take interest in the success of a local private school – all things into which US schools can tap. As a result, international schools tend to look to resources in the US, Canada, or other interested individuals, like their international alumni base, for their fundraising. This requires a different type of fundraising (at a distance) that often proves challenging.

Re-enrollment and New Student Outlook

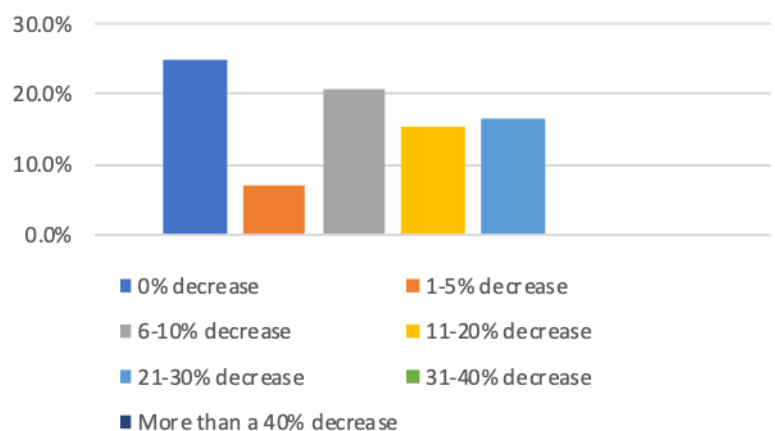
On the issue of re-enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year, international schools are bracing for lower re-enrollment to a greater degree than the US schools. This figure also matches the new student inquiries at similar lower rate against the US numbers. These higher numbers might be explained again in part to the nature of the families served in international schools. For example, we know that many expat business and Christian worker families were relocated/evacuated to home countries as a precaution against the spread of the COVID 19. In addition, we assume that most international school boarding students were sent home to far-flung regions. The big questions are: will these families and students return to their schools? Will those international business employees be sent back *and* with their families? Will the NGOs and Christian service families return? These may have an impact for some years. The relocation of families and students is FAR less a factor for US Christian schools. In the US, students may be able to rejoin their local classmates sooner than relocated expat students, but this is yet to be seen.

Budgeting and Forecasting

Budgeting Based on Enrollment Projections



Percentage Enrollment Decreases Used in 2020-2021 Contingency Planning



On the point of scenario planning, international schools were asked to indicate what percentage of decrease in enrollment was used for contingency planning. Choices ranged from 0% to 50% decreases in enrollment. No international school planned for 31-50% decreases in enrollment. It is notable that 10% of US schools did scenario planning for a 31-40% decrease in student enrollment. These scenario differences may be due to the lateness of the international survey. Perhaps international participants had a better indication of coming enrollment at the time the survey was taken than the US participants.

It was notable that 60% of international schools were building a budget for a decrease in student enrollment, while 25% were not planning for a decreased income and 15% were unsure at the time of the survey.

International survey participants had the option of indicating other financial considerations currently on the table. These included items such as cutting programs, benefit cuts, salary cuts, reduction of grades offered, layoffs, and other losses. Sixty-four percent of international schools also indicated they are considering the real possibility that learning remotely will continue for Fall 2020. For this question, we were not given the specific data from the US schools to compare their options.

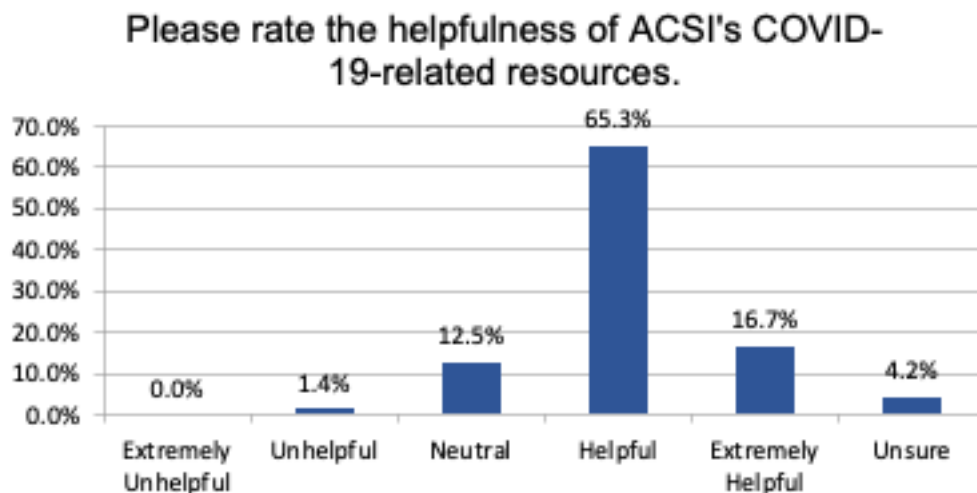
New Opportunities

On the issue of what new opportunities international schools were considering for the coming year, the input follows the US thinking. The top response for both international (at 51.4%) and US schools (at 48.6%) was the consideration to “Incorporate distance learning into brick and mortar delivery.” Likewise, international schools indicated a higher percentage for “offering a new hybrid delivery program” at 37.5% vs US schools at 23%.

Perception of ACSI Membership and Services

Our office was not given access to the US data on the remaining points of the survey, but a few things are worth noting. It is encouraging that through this COVID 19 season, nearly 45% of international school members’ perception of the value of their ACSI membership/services increased significantly or increased somewhat. Fifty-one percent of respondents said their perception of the value of ACSI stayed the same. A very low percentage (4.2%) indicated their perception of the value of ACSI had decreased somewhat or significantly.

On the question rating the helpfulness of ACSI’s COVID 19 related resources, 82% of international schools found the resources helpful or extremely helpful.



It is interesting for our office to note that international school members are aware and are using key ACSI resources like the Town Hall webinars (60%), the Coronavirus Resource page (52%), ACSI Community pages (45%), international accreditation staff (40%), and the ACSI Blog (38.5%). Twenty-eight percent indicated they contacted their Regional Director or other international office staff and only 7.5% contacted ACSI member care.

It should not surprise us that 0% of international schools participated in the ACSI Legal Legislative weekly call or that only 1.5% contacted the Legal Legislative office. This is due to the general lack of applicability of ACSI legal services to international schools, since it is related to US laws and concentrated recently on

accessing US governmental assistance during the COVID 19 season. These assistance benefits are naturally not available to international schools.

Takeaways and Other Factors

We have learned some interesting things about our international schools through this survey:

- 1) ACSI's international school members responded well and rapidly to the move from face-to-face learning to learning remotely at home. This ability to pivot nimbly may reflect upon the type of staff that international schools hire and the international families who join those school communities. Many of the people come ready to flex to the demands before them due to their experience with international change itself. This means many are pre-disposed to make the best of the required changes. Not that this was easy, but it is clear that members have stepped up to the challenge.
- 2) This next point does not come out in the survey but should be noted as a significant difference between US and international schools. Because of the COVID 19 pandemic, international schools have had to endure the repatriation, relocation, and evacuation of countless individuals within their school communities. This relocation includes faculty, staff, top leaders, students, and parents. Yet, in almost all cases, international schools continued operating for those same individuals no matter where they were or in what time-zone they were located. I know of one teacher (one of many) whose school instructional day began at 8:30pm and ended at 3:30am every day. This did not deter her commitment to her students no matter where they or she was located.
- 3) Uncertainty regarding future enrollment and staff may well continue to be a factor. The worldwide impact of the virus itself means international schools have taken a hit. Not only is it to be seen if families will return, there is the other issue of international/expat staff recruitment efforts. Will international schools be able to get the staff they need and will those new hires be able to enter the country easily? The opposite issue is also a consideration – will scheduled leaving staff be able to depart their current assignments? These things are happening as this report is being written.
- 4) And yet! ... international schools are hiring. This points back to the earlier issue regarding the nature and annual turnover in staff. Yes, there are going to be some reductions in student enrollment, but the schools still need to hire new teachers to take the place of scheduled leaving staff members. An interesting problem and an opportunity for some to find new jobs overseas.
- 5) Finally, the COVID 19 response survey has shown us that it is time for ACSI Global to do a full demographic survey of international schools. For example, we see in the COVID 19 survey there may be more EE and residential programs than we were aware of in our membership. There are other hints at regional differences in this COVID 19 survey that should be explored across our member schools in Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America. A new survey would give us more information about our schools reflecting today's reality and help us plan services for the future. Respectfully submitted,

Tim Shuman
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June 2020