



**INSIDE  
THIS  
ISSUE**

**THE CHAMBERS**

---

**PG. 2**

PAYING THE PRICE

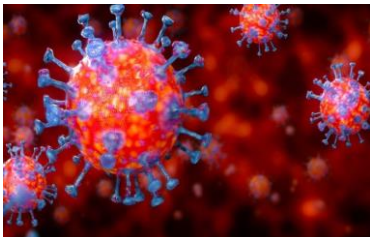
FACING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

---

**PG. 3**

LET'S NOT FORGET OUR  
TEACHERS

---



**PRETTY GOOD ISN'T  
GOOD ENOUGH**

**TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19**

For decades, as our school systems have developed, we have seen the fight for equity, for funding, for more and better teachers, and even for school supplies. In 2020, while the world is in a fight for the survival of every human being due to an unknown killer, we have seen the cracks in the foundation of a system that, in many cases, has continued to fail the students they serve and placed the blame on the backs of those educators whose pleas for funding, technology for their students, and smaller class sizes the powers that be have chosen to ignore.

The pandemic COVID-19, while it has taken thousands of lives and continues to drive fear in the hearts of many, has shown the failure of an American education system that has touted itself to be one of the best in the world. For years, the system of education in America has existed on just being pretty good. Now the question is whether pretty good is good enough?



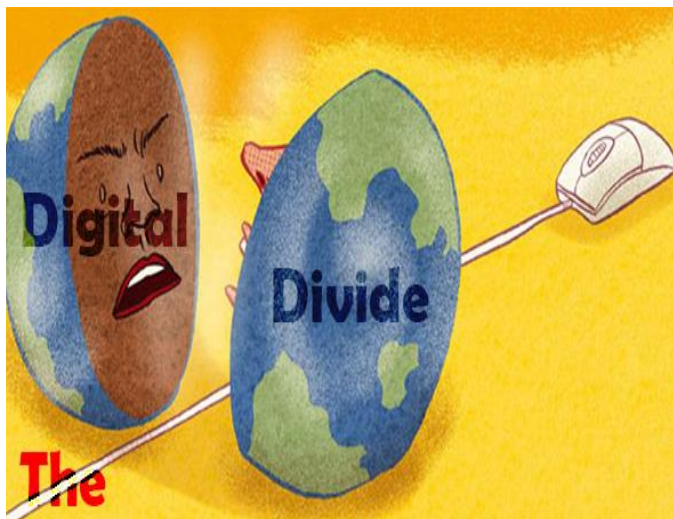
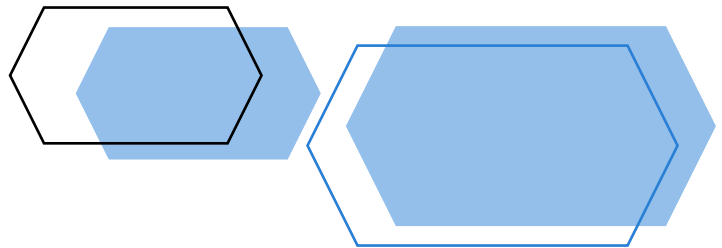
# PAYING THE PRICE

## FUNDING SCHOOLS DURING A PANDEMIC

Public school funding has been a topic of discussion since the first school was developed in America. While it was required for every child to be educated, there was no requirement for them to be educated in a school building, which later and over the years posed the even greater question of who should foot the bill to educate children in the communities where they lived and even now, in the states where they live. The question of whether to only have private schools that are often run by the churches or organizations where only those who can afford to pay can have their children educated; or have common and public schools that are funded by the towns, state, or federal governments has certainly been at the very core of how well school systems are run and serve the children and families in those communities.

Then came the pandemic, and while it has taken many lives, and caused lockdowns of countries, it has also shown the world the inequities and inadequacies of the public-school systems in America. Businesses believed they should have been first in line for relief, forgetting that school systems were important and continue to suffer from lack of funding. Even now, nine months since the first school closings, our education systems are still suffering with no true means of support in the horizon from the federal government, but who ultimately pays the price?

(continued on page 4)



In an age of technological growth, our schools are still behind. Several years ago, I entered a school system where there were no computers. Since I had been raised with a typewriter in my home, I remember how excited I was to learn how to use a word processor, and then purchase one on my own. By the time I got to college, I soon learned how far behind in the technological age I was. While I was well versed on using my typewriter and word processor, my peers were already proficient in the use of computers, many of them having their own personal computers at home. It took several months of hard work and dedication for me to catch up to my peers, but I would take advantage of the computer labs and the tutoring they offered at NYU. Later, when I entered teaching eight years later, I was disappointed that the

# FACING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

school I was assigned to did not have computers on which the students would learn. Imagine being in college in 1991 and realizing you were behind the technological age, and then in 1999 to find that there were still other children who did not have access to the very devices that would usher them into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It took the writing of a grant that provided the students with computers both in school and at home to have the opportunity that so many had been exposed to for several decades. Fast forward twenty years later, and we still have not bridged the technological disparities our children have faced over the years. It seemed that the digital divide was not as important to or part and parcel in the educating of our children as testing and even sports have been over the years, because with the onset of COVID-19 we have seen an outcry from school systems for computers, tablets and even wi-fi to ensure continuity of learning while they are at home keeping safe from this unknown virus.

(continued on page 3)



# LET'S NOT FORGET OUR TEACHERS

At the beginning of the pandemic, while many school systems claimed that they were ready and providing professional development to their staff, it was the teachers who were left to plan and prepare on how best to serve the needs of their students.

Over the years, teachers have had to be the child-care providers, mentors, and educators of the children they serve, and while they do not often get recognized for the work that they do, they have always been ready and willing to ensure they go above and beyond the call of duty. Whether they were having schools in their homes, schoolhouse, outside in the fields or in multi-floor buildings, teachers have always been on the front lines ready to ensure they love their students into understanding.

While the role of an educator might not get the recognition or salary it deserves, for those who have heeded and accepted the call, they do so with the enthusiasm, and dedication that most can not understand. It is because of this that during the pandemic, teachers have strategized and implemented a variety of ways in which they can educate and continuously inform their students of everything that is going on in their school communities, and even in the world. In their own ways, they have found ways to bridge the communication divide that school systems have long struggled with in serving the needs of their students, and still they refuse to give up.

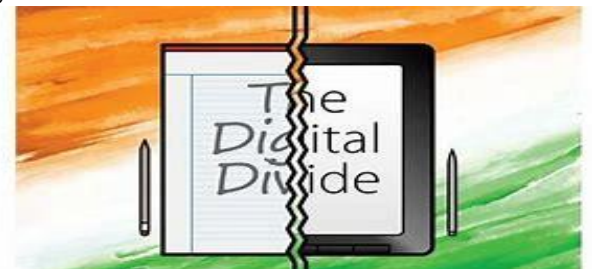
So as the world tries to find a resolution to this pandemic, never forget the teachers that are steadfast in ensuring that our children receive the support they need and deserve.

## FACING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

In March 2020, as the nation was facing a lockdown, our children were preparing for learning at home. Many school systems requested assistance from their Mayors and Governors, who in turn asked for assistance from the federal government because there was an apparent shortage of devices for online learning, and even worse, for many students, a lack of wi-fi to get connected to their classes. How would they continue with school? Many companies like Charter communications, Comcast, AT&T, Sprint, and Spectrum offered free wi-fi for 60 days to anyone working or studying from home, but even after seeing that the lockdowns went beyond 60 days, they never bothered to extend their offers. Instead, many of them were behind the push for their workers to return to work.

In August, The Washington Post stated that "America is about to embark on Round 2 of the unplanned experiment in online education-and, for millions of students, virtual learning won't be any better than it was in the spring." They certainly hit the nail on the head because while many could excuse the fact that America was not quite ready to have all children learning remotely, it would have made sense that they learned from that mistake and started planning for semesters to come, but wishful thinking does not always make those wishes come true.

By September, several school districts claimed to order devices for their students but were met with several problems. Some districts did not receive the devices they ordered, while there were school districts in Chicago and Georgia who said they were having a hard time getting the devices to the students who really needed them. The fact that it took a pandemic to realize the academic needs of our children, shows just who and what are our priorities.





# PAYING THE PRICE

---

## FUNDING SCHOOLS DURING A PANDEMIC

Over the years, while many school systems have struggled to provide adequate funding for their schools, many have chosen not to fully rely on state and federal funding and would instead look to the community and the property taxes they pay, to help sustain their schools. With the onset of the pandemic, many school systems complained that they were stretched to the limit, as they had to now ensure that their students were provided with the utensils needed for learning remotely, and that came with a hefty price tag. School systems became hopeful that the CARES Act would bring them the much needed relief they needed, but when it did come, it certainly short changed every school district that were already stretched to limit. Bipartisanship took center stage while our children and their families suffered the consequences.

When schools closed in March, many students went home to be taught by their parents. It seemed that the mechanisms had not been in place to allow for seamless transition from in person to online learning, and with the way in which the pandemic was quickly spreading across the country, school was the last thing on the minds of many. However, during the months where children were supposed to be on remote learning and others simply not knowing what was going to happen in their schools, we heard of many school systems trying to plan for the new school year by ordering the devices they needed to ensure that they were going to meet the needs of their students in the new school year, but even more sadly, for schools to reopen during the pandemic. While teachers tried to do the best they could, we would hear through the media about the demands that businesses had for their employees to return to work, as if the pandemic had suddenly disappeared. When we did hear about the children, it was only in the context of schools reopening for parents to return to work, completely ignoring the risks. Amid the “planning” for big businesses to get their employees back to work, while the number of positive COVID cases rose, some school systems had their staff go on strike rather than put themselves and their students at risk by entering those school buildings. Some, like New York City, were very intent on opening, no matter the cost.

New York City Public Schools, the largest public school system in the country had their Chancellor make decisions that were not conducive to the safety of our students. While he stands before the media and says one thing, behind the scenes, the schools are being told something else. While the Chancellor continues to play a game of not today maybe tomorrow with our children as he cannot decide whether or not they should physically be in school or in the safety of their home, many of our children without devices and access to wi-fi are simply sitting at home or in shelters with no way of participating in remote learning. Our children are paying an extremely high price for the lack of planning, lack of preparation and lack of funding, but in the end, who will be held accountable for this massive failure?



## References

- Biswas, J. (2020). Comcast, AT & T, Sprint offering free or lowcost internet for students amid COVID-19 crisis. Retrieved from [www.abc30.com](http://www.abc30.com)
- Browning, K (2020, October 12). The Digital Divide Starts with a Laptop Shortage. *The New York Times*. [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)
- Choi, E. (2020, August 26). Remote Learning Without a Laptop? Thousands could be stuck without devices due to shortage. *The Wall Street Journal*. [www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com)
- Fraser, J.W. (2019). *The School in the United States: A Documentary History (4th ed.)*. Routledge.
- Goldberg, E. (2020, October 28). What it's like to be a teacher in 2020 America. *The New York Times*. [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)
- Greig, J. (2020). Dozens of companies offering free wi-fi and other services to those working or studying from home. Retrieved from [www.techrepublic.com](http://www.techrepublic.com)
- Heim, J. (2020, October 6). Pandemic Teaching, in their words. *The Washington Post*. [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)
- Hollingsworth, H. (2020). Empty desks: Coronavirus robs US classrooms of teachers. Retrieved from [www.apnews.com](http://www.apnews.com)
- Natanson, H. and Strauss, V. (2020, August 5) America is about to start online learning, Round 2. For millions of students, it won't be any better. *The Washington Post*. [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com).
- Perry, A. (2020). Time to fight for the funding our kids need to mend the coronavirus wreckage. Retrieved [www.hechingerreport.org](http://www.hechingerreport.org)
- Sass, E. (2020). American Educational History: A Hypertext Timeline. Retrieved from [www.eds-resources.com](http://www.eds-resources.com)
- United States. (1983). *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*.

