

Tulsa SEED Study

STUDY OF SCHOOL EXPERIENCES AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY & UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA-TULSA

The Tulsa SEED Study is led by Principal Investigators Dr. Anna Johnson and Dr. Deborah Phillips at Georgetown University; Dr. Diane Horm at University of Oklahoma - Tulsa; and Dr. Gigi Luk at McGill University.

Children with Special Needs: Distance Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

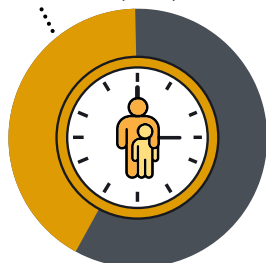
October 2021

This brief reports on the Tulsa SEED Study, which is following a diverse group of low-income children from age 3 through 4th grade to understand the effects of attending Tulsa pre-K on their learning and development. We surveyed parents twice about their experiences with distance learning during the 2020-2021 school year (when the children were in 2nd grade): first, in the winter of 2021 (N=770) and again in the summer of 2021 (N=579). We also surveyed teachers in winter of 2021 about their experience with distance learning during the 2020-2021 school year (N=121). In the Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) district, distance learning was in place from March 2020-March 2021. These findings focus on children with an **Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)**. An IEP is an individually tailored education and service plan for eligible children who have been identified as having a disability, as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA). Approximately 10% of the children in our sample have an IEP.

Distance learning was challenging for families and teachers of children with special needs.

- **More than 40%** of parents whose children have IEPs reported that their child **needed more support for distance learning than the parent had time to provide.**

Needed more support than had time (42%)

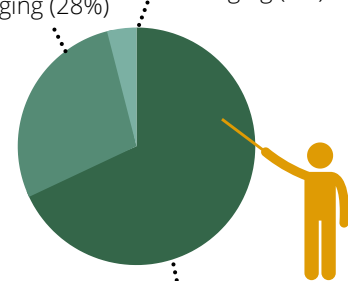


N = 72

- Nearly all teachers of students with IEPs reported that **adapting online instruction to children with special needs was challenging.**

Somewhat challenging (28%)

Not at all challenging (4%)



Very challenging (68%) N = 97

Despite this challenge, a lack of differences in other key learning outcomes underscored the resilience of families and teachers.

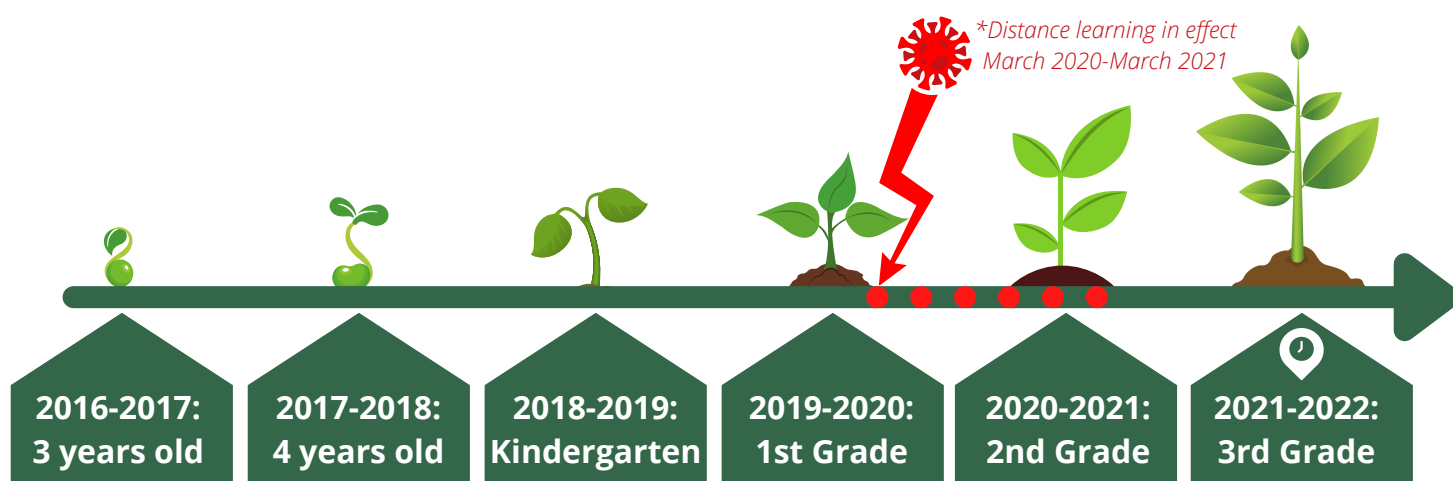
- Children with IEPs **had just as much contact with teachers** and **spent just as much time on distance learning** as their peers without IEPs.
- Similarly, parents of children with IEPs were **just as likely to say their child was prepared to start 3rd grade** as those whose children did not have IEPs.

The context of distance learning highlighted how many children, regardless of IEP status, experienced learning challenges.

- Among all parents who shared additional information about distance learning challenges, **the most commonly mentioned challenge was children's focus and attention, regardless of whether the child had an IEP.**

More About Tulsa SEED

The Tulsa SEED Study aims to understand the effects of pre-K on self-regulatory, education, and health outcomes and the role of classroom supports and context in explaining those effects. When the COVID-19 pandemic began in early 2020, Tulsa Public Schools switched to distance learning, which lasted for approximately one year. Since then, the SEED Study Team has also begun to investigate questions about how the pandemic has impacted families and educators, including the effect of distance learning on children, parents, and teachers. In August 2020, the study team released a research brief detailing our initial findings. In September 2021, the team released another brief on our more recent findings. As of October 2021, the children in our study sample are currently in the 3rd grade.



Suggested citation:

Tulsa SEED Study Team. (2021). Children with special needs and distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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