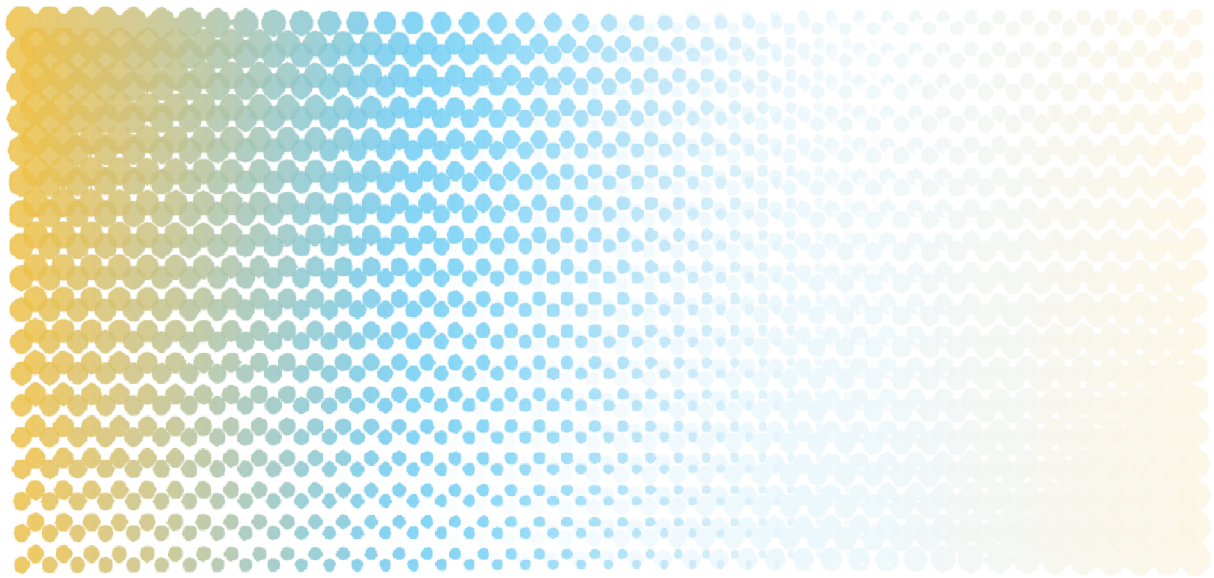


Research Brief:

Unmet Demand for Community Engagement on School Data and Technology Use



Community engagement is [frequently referenced](#) as an important principle of responsible data and technology use in K-12 education, but how frequently do schools and districts implement these practices? Do students and their families feel like they are being adequately engaged by their schools? Do they even want to be engaged? To answer these questions, CDT conducted [survey research](#) on teacher, parent, and student views toward technology decision-making and community engagement in the context of edtech and student privacy.

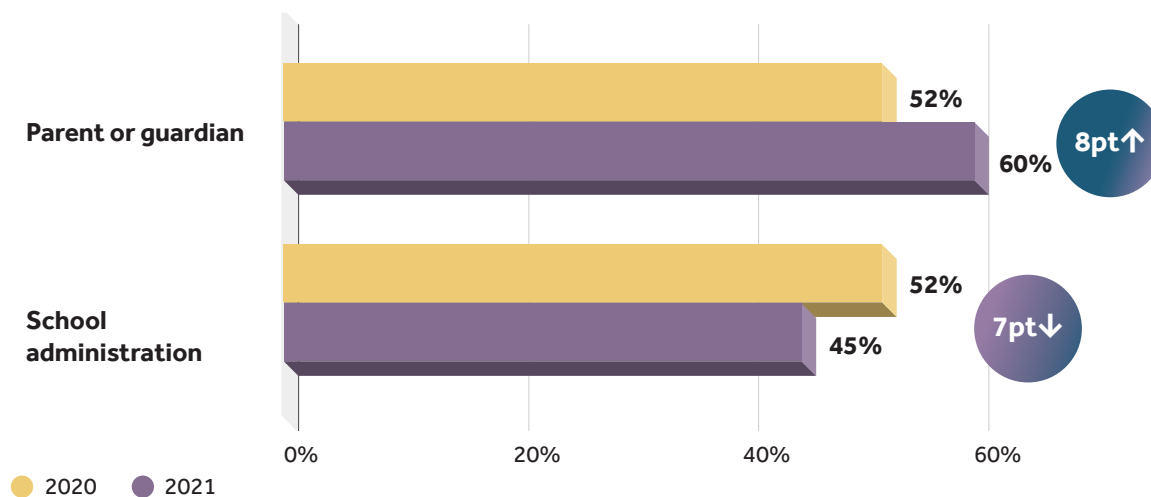
CDT's research found that far from being ambivalent, parents and students express eagerness to play a role in decisions about technology and data, but indicate these desires are going unmet. There are clear gaps in schools' and districts' community engagement efforts, so this guidance charts a path forward for practical steps schools can take to better satisfy these demands.

School communities are paying attention to technology and data issues.

As the role of technology and data in education has grown more salient in the past year, parents are becoming more attentive to these issues. Parents' awareness of school technology is increasing, with **52 percent** reporting awareness of a tech plan in place at their children's school, compared to **43 percent** in 2020. At the same time, parents report that their concern about student privacy and security protection is growing, rising from **60 percent** in February 2021 to **69 percent** in July 2021.

Parents indicate that they place more responsibility for protecting student privacy and security on themselves than they do any other party, and this perceived responsibility is growing.

Who do parents perceive as responsible for protecting student privacy / security?¹



Finally, teachers note that inquiries about student privacy issues from parents and students are becoming more frequent: **48 percent** of teachers reported receiving inquiries from parents or students in the past school year, compared to just **20 percent** in 2020.

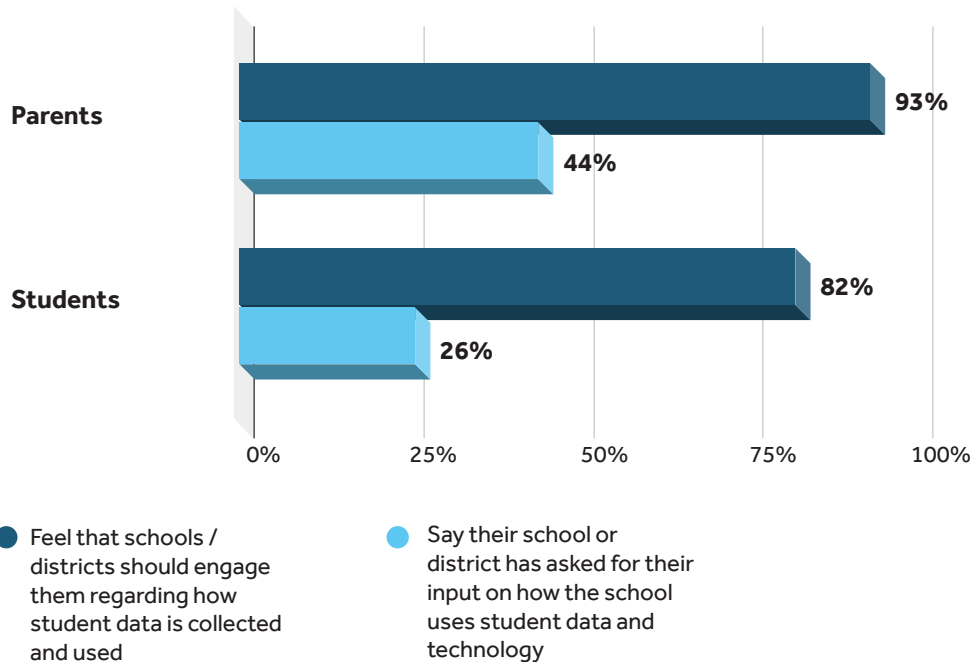
¹ Other options included "teachers," "school district/charter management organization," "my child/the student," "state government," "online platform/resource provider," and "federal government," all of which received less than 30 percent agreement from parents and did not change significantly from 2020 to 2021. See [full research slides](#) for complete response rates.



The demand for increased community engagement is going unmet.

Large majorities of parents and students alike indicate a desire to participate in decisions about student data use, but far fewer report that they have ever actually been consulted on these questions.

Most parents and students want to be consulted but few have been asked for input:

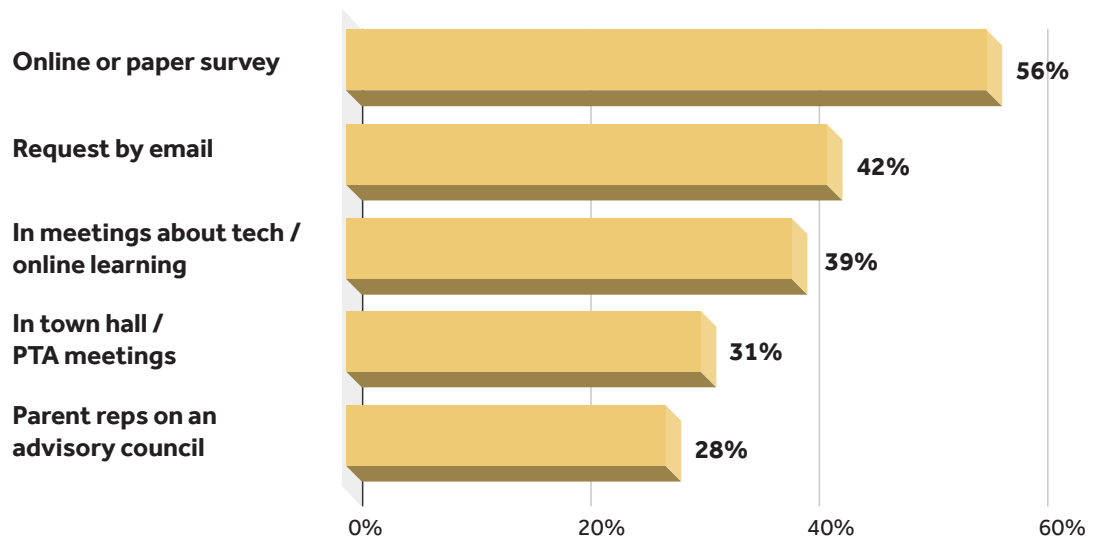


Parents' strong desire to be included in decision-making is unsurprising given their expressed interest and concern described above. Taken together, however, these statistics illustrate a stark shortfall in schools' track record of meeting these expectations. A related example of limited edtech-related school communications is the provision of support for technology that the school uses: **78 percent** of students but only **34 percent** of parents indicated they received support or training from the school around its use of education technologies and learning platforms.

How and when do parents want to be engaged?

Parents express support for a range of methods for collecting feedback about school technology and data practices, with online or paper surveys being the most popular.

Ways parents think schools should collect their feedback about technology use and online learning:



On questions about when to be consulted during the process of procuring new technologies, parents are most interested in providing input during the early stages of decision-making, but report some level of interest in staying involved throughout the technology's full lifecycle. **61 percent** of parents surveyed want to give input when a school is deciding whether or not to adopt a new technology; **41 percent** want to give input after a school adopts a new technology and when it is first being used; and **40 percent** want to give input when the school is re-evaluating the technology after it has been in full use for a while.

Conclusion

Taken together, these findings clearly suggest that most schools have room for improvement in terms of engaging parents and students about technology and data decisions. Parents' expressed desires and preferences illustrate realistic, practical ways in which schools and districts can make steps to better meet this demand. To meet this need, CDT provided [in-depth guidance](#) on how administrators can conduct effective community engagement around technology use, focusing on the particular issue of data sharing.