Speak UP iFamily Report

This report analyzes data from iFamily's Zoom training and iTutors surveys to highlight key successes and recommend paths of improvement in the fall. The report seeks to understand the impact of iFamily's support programs, especially how our services have intervened in existing performance gaps.

The iTutors program regularly provides over 140 students with one-on-one tutoring sessions in any areas where they want assistance since the inception of the iFamily program as a response to distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. With almost 1,800 tutoring sessions already completed, the iTutors program has recently expanded to include student book clubs and ESL training for parents. In this report, data was collected from parents and tutors via two separate surveys. Responses were collected for both surveys throughout June and July 2020.

iFamily's Zoom training program has trained over 350 parents and older siblings and enabled them to support the children in their homes to access classes and tutoring via Zoom. In this report, data was collected via a survey sent to parents after they received Zoom training via a Speak UP workshop or individual training from a staff member.

Executive Summary

The iTutors program has been extremely helpful for families and entirely satisfying for students and parents. However, we need to provide more back-end support for tutors, including academic resources and beginner support networks, to maximize retention of tutors even after they no longer need course credit or experience. Overall, we are working to improve the iTutors program by incorporating the following suggestions:

1) **Compile resources for tutors.** Tutors are requesting more support in learning materials and teaching skills to ease some of the burden of preparing for sessions. We are looking to gather and create more resources and tips for our tutors and have already expanded the orientation provided to new tutors.

2) **Setting clear expectations for families and tutors.** The program is new and optimally flexible for families, but this may be placing some strain on our tutors. We are communicating clear expectations for the minimum number of sessions per week, subjects available, and how/when to communicate about a student's academic progress; anything that exceeds those minimums is not guaranteed, but can be requested from the program or individual tutor.

3) **Recruit more tutors.** We are constantly growing, and almost 100% of our families will be continuing with us in the Fall. The most effective recruitment tool thus far has been word-of-mouth between families, including social media posts. Math and English are the most requested subjects, and our student load is relatively balanced across age groups, spanning preschool through 12th grade. There is also a small but significant need for tutors who can communicate with parents in Spanish.

The iFamily program has also provided Zoom training to approximately 350 family members with the goal of increasing their connection to teachers, community resources, and virtual classrooms. Of the trainees surveyed, 100% would recommend the Speak UP iFamily program, citing their increased confidence with the software and augmented capacity to advocate for their families.

iTutors

Key Takeaways:
- Parents are very satisfied with the iTutors program, including our tutors' performance and the program's management. Almost 100% of our current students plan to continue with us in the fall.
- Our tutors are building strong relationships with families and enabling significant academic growth. We are working to grow our capabilities and supply our tutors with even more resources and support.
- Tutors typically work with only a single student or family. Math is our area of greatest need, closely followed by English. Our population of students is relatively balanced, spanning every level from preschool through high school.

Program Evaluations & Persistence

Over 97% of families reported that their children's tutor accommodated their schedule and helped their children increase their subject knowledge. Parents were pleased with both their tutor's content knowledge and teaching capabilities as well as Speak UP's management of the program—on average, 80% of parents chose "Very Satisfied" for each of these items. Parents are overwhelmingly willing to recommend the iTutors program, with 90% of parents saying they were "Extremely Likely" to mention the program to a friend.

Nearly 100% of families who responded to our survey indicated a desire to continue tutoring through the summer and into the fall. However, of the tutors who responded to our survey, many are less committed: A large portion are unsure about continuing[1], and a few have indicated they will not be returning in the fall.

	Students	Tutors
Yes	95%	38%
Maybe	2%	52%
No	2%	11%

Figure 1. Percentages of students and tutors anticipated to continue in the fall.
(Percentages shown here are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not total 100% exactly.)

This may be in part due to the ephemeral nature of incentives offered to tutors, as volunteer credit and unpaid experience may become less appealing to some individuals with time. With this information in mind, we should prioritize changes that improve the tutor side of the program to maximize retention.

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[1] UPDATE: The projected tutor continuation percentages, as displayed in the Tutors column of Figure 1, were based on survey responses collected during the summer. However, we are happy to report that as of August 17, 2020, only nine tutors—approximately 6% of our volunteers—decided not to return for the Fall, so in reality we retained almost 94% of our tutors.

Where We Excel

Our tutors are building strong relationships with the families they serve:

- One parent commented, "We just started a month ago, but since then I've observed that [our tutor] is spot on with his needs and 'gets it'. [My child] said, 'She understands me!' I've never seen anyone have the insight like this tutor!"
- Another parent mentioned, "My son didn't want a tutor because he thought he didn't need one. Once he got a tutor he was really able to find out his strengths and weaknesses. He realized the benefits of having a tutor one on one."
- Many of our tutors felt rewarded by the connections they built with families, including one tutor who shared this anecdote:
  "About a month into working with [my student], she got on the Zoom call and told me how excited she was that she was on TV yesterday. I looked into it, and she and her mom were featured on a Spanish news channel talking about how Speak UP has helped them since [my student] had to leave school. This was a really rewarding moment for me, not because of the recognition from the media, but because of the smile I saw on [my student's] face that day."

This relationship-building is most likely enabled by our low student-to-tutor ratio. Continuing to pair tutors with only one student or family when possible will go a long way in keeping our program personable and adaptable.

Of course, the iTutors program is also enabling academic and personal growth for students and tutors. Tutors report being able to expand their teaching skills and get experience working with students:

- "One of my students was struggling in science and was not not happy with her weekly quiz score. Last week she got 100% on her quiz."
- "I have learned how to tutor better, especially in an online environment, and seen directly how my student improved not just with individual concepts, but how he answers problems as a whole."
- "Overall, I think this program is rewarding because you are helping someone who doesn't necessarily have this help at home or even at school. I know [my student] told me that she doesn't have any teacher interaction at all and is teaching herself at home, which is incredibly hard and stressful for an 8th grader."

Parents report that students are also growing academically, gaining a better understanding of their schoolwork through one-on-one tutoring and engaging instruction:

- "She could focus better and she's more confident and comfortable with her tutor."
- "[My son's] comprehension grew exponentially and [my daughter's] science grade went from a C- to an A!! Thank you!!"
- "My son is starting to feel more confident with math. He went from hating it and being convinced that he was not able to do math to having a better understanding of it."

Areas of Growth

Tutors are asking for lesson plans and teaching skills to make their work easier. Suggestions include a database of homework and materials spanning all grade levels and subjects, tips for engaging the younger children, and effective methods specifically targeted at remote online tutoring. We are looking to other organizations and brainstorming with educational professionals in our community to compile resources and teaching strategies we can share to tutors. New tutors also receive an orientation during onboarding that introduces teaching skills, directs them to resources, and establishes a support network with other tutors and program leaders.

There has also been some demand from both tutors and parents for improved communication. Although this is primarily left up to tutors and parents, iTutors has been establishing more concrete guidelines regarding the methods and frequency for tutors to communicate with parents. We are also preparing to implement procedures to facilitate this communication, e.g. weekly logs via Google Forms. There is also a small but significant need for Spanish-speaking tutors who can communicate with some of our parents in their native language, for which we are attempting to recruit more Spanish-speaking tutors.

Lastly, the iTutors program is working to expand our offerings. Some families have requested tutoring for subjects outside of our current capabilities, including drama, art, music, and Spanish literacy for native speakers. Tutors have also requested an online system for setting meetings and advertising more subjects based on their areas of expertise.

Tutor Profiles

Almost half of our tutors were referred by family members or friends. Approximately one-fourth of our tutors were recruited by Speak UP team members, primarily iTutors founder Tracy Grand. Professors are also sending college students our way from the University of Southern California, University of California Santa Barbara, Occidental College, and Loyola Marymount University.
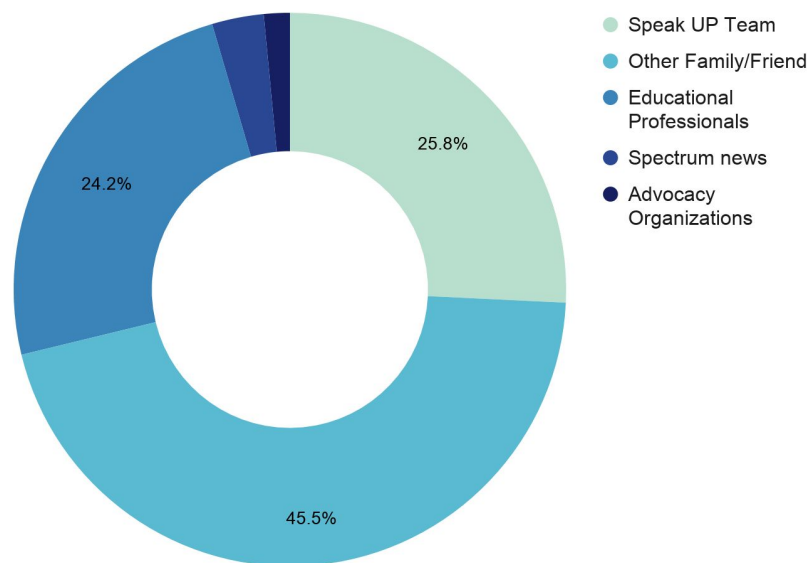

Figure 2. Categories of referral information reported by our tutors.

Most tutors are paired with a single student. This enables our volunteers to focus on a student's needs more holistically; both tutors and parents commented frequently on the strong rapport between our tutors and the children they serve.
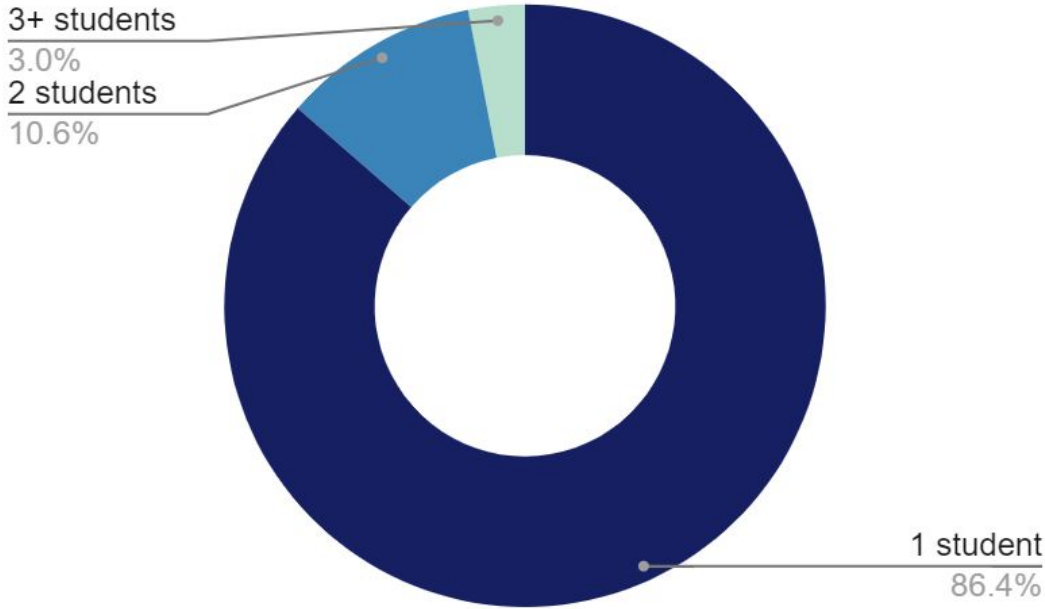
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Figure 3. Number of students served, as reported by our tutors.

Student Profiles

The iTutors program serves over 140 students at all grade levels. The early childhood demographic, i.e. preschool through third grade, has grown to become our most-served population since the spring.
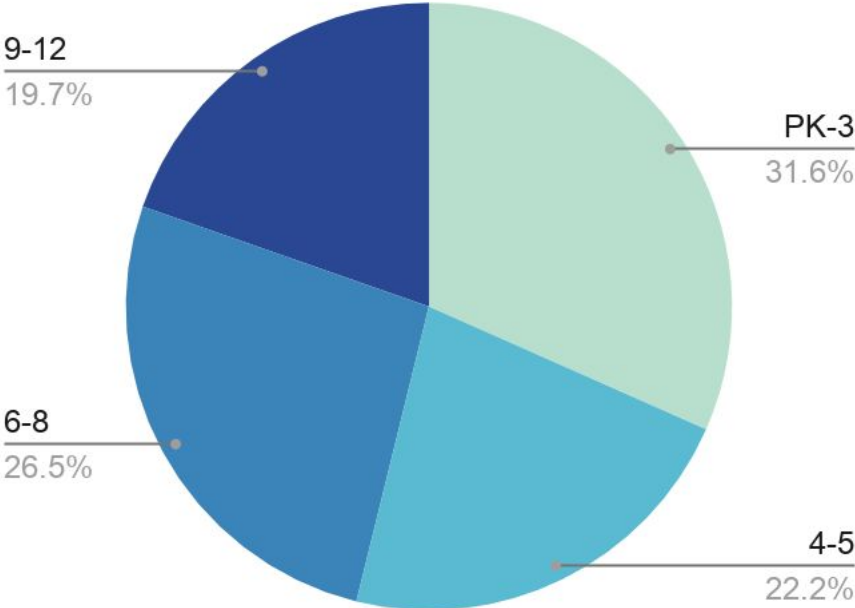

Figure 4. Grade bands of students served in Spring/Summer 2020, as reported by parents.

Over half of our students get help in multiple subjects. While there are differences in the survey response rates between our tutors and our parents, both groups agree that math is the area of greatest need, closely followed by English reading and writing skills.

According to the parents, 54% of our students need help in math and 44% need help in English.
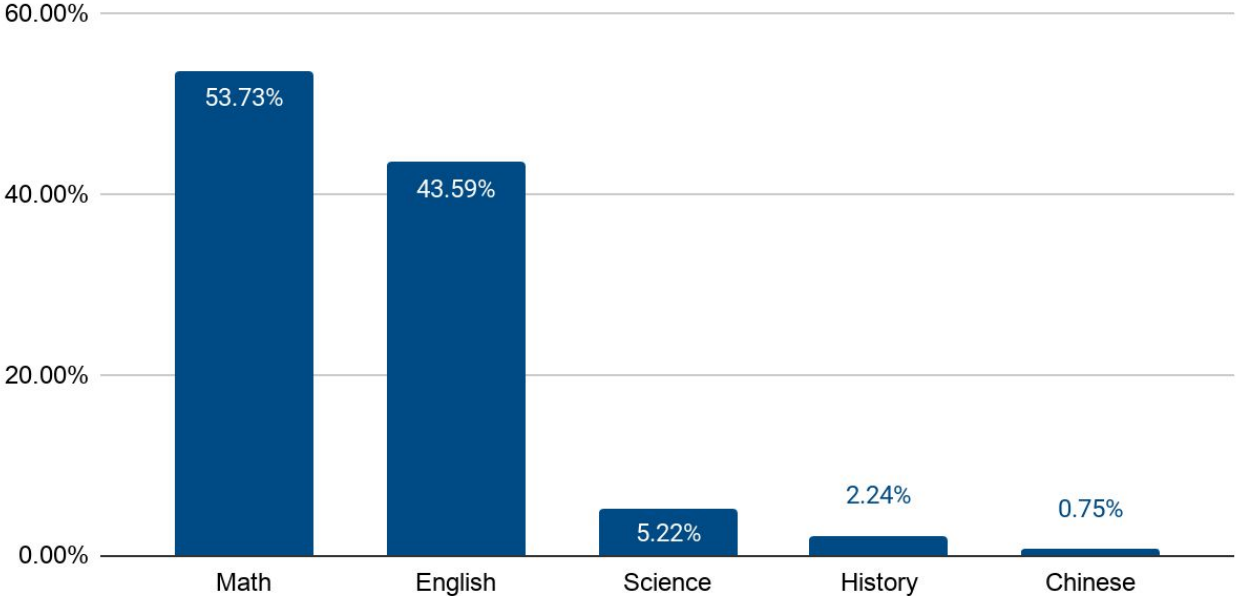

Figure 5. Subject support needed by our students, as reported by parents.

Fall 2020 Student Projections

If all students are assumed to advance one grade level, then our current population will skew older by the next academic year. This will balance the load across age groups, but we will have slight shrinkage in the need for early childhood education tutors and a significantly greater need for high school-level tutors among continuing students.
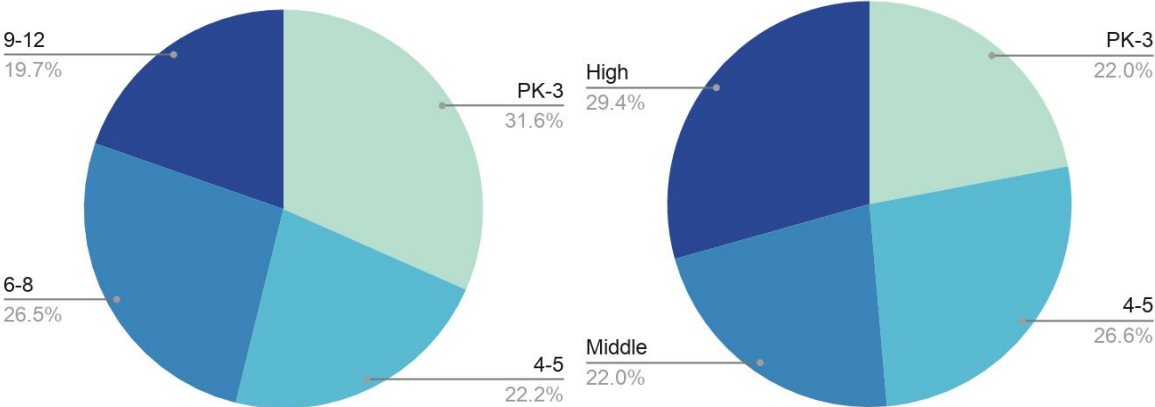

Figure 6. Grade bands of students served in Spring/Summer 2020 (left) compared to projected grade bands for students expected to continue in Fall 2020 (right), as reported by parents.

Parents primarily want to continue with the same subjects, although some would like to add on extra support in other subjects. To fulfill demand, we will need to recruit more capable tutors for every subject, especially English: Based on requests from current parents, we will need more than double our current number of English tutors for secondary students.
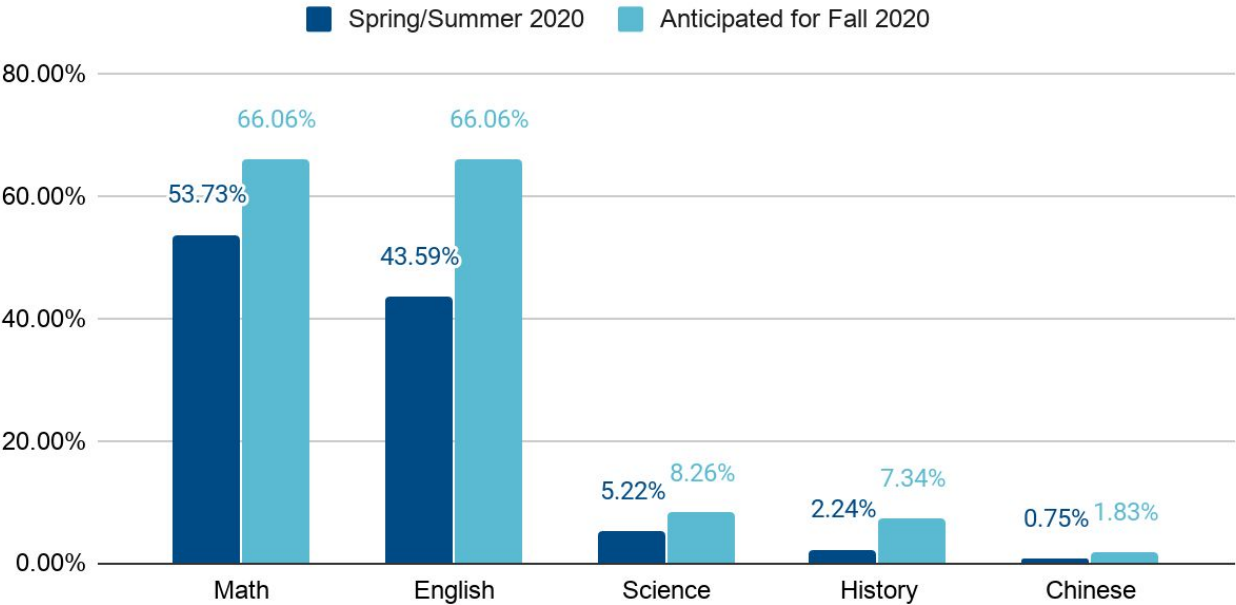

Figure 7. Predicted subject needs of our students compared to current subject needs, as reported by parents.

Zoom Training

Key Takeaways:
- The iFamily Zoom training program has trained 350 family members. These trainees feel more confident using Zoom, and their familiarity with the platform has enabled them to support their children's learning needs and communicate with schools and their communities.
- About 96% of the trainees who responded to our survey signed up to participate in at least one other Speak UP virtual workshop or advocacy campaign. This means the Zoom training has also connected these families to more opportunities to expand their knowledge and advocacy.

Impact of the Zoom Training

Approximately 350 family members have been trained on Zoom through Speak UP's iFamily program. Most of the trainees who answered our survey felt much more confident using Zoom after the training.
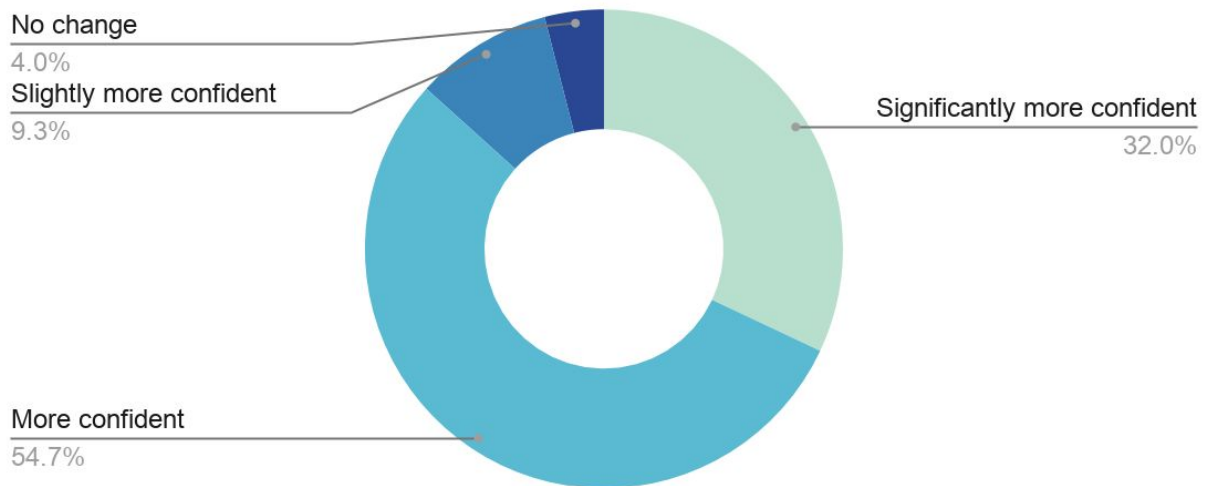

No change
4.0%
Slightly more confident
9.3%
Significantly more confident
32.0%
More confident
54.7%

Figure 8. Self-reported confidence of Zoom trainees after the training.

By conducting Zoom training, we have been empowering families to support their children's academic endeavors and giving them the tools necessary to connect with schools and resources in the community. Over 70% of trainees reported that our training immediately helped them support their children's learning and communicate with their teachers.
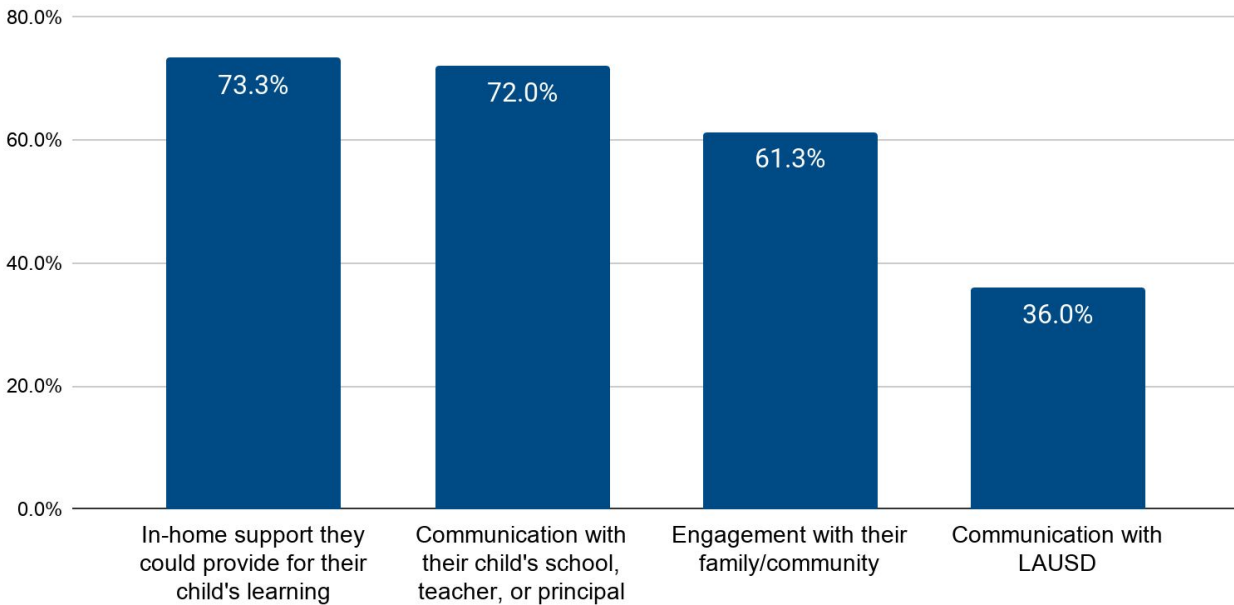
Figure 9. Reports of how the Zoom training helped family members increase their capabilities to support their children and engage with schools and communities during the Safer at Home orders.

Our Zoom training also acted as a gateway to further involvement and advocacy with Speak UP. By the time they responded to our survey, two-thirds of parents had already attended another workshop or program we hosted. Additionally, 96% of trainees who completed our survey signed up for information about participating in one of our other virtual workshops or advocacy campaigns.

Trainee Testimonies

Of the trainees surveyed, 100% would recommend Speak UP iFamily programs to other families. While this was asked on the Zoom trainee survey, many of the parents also had children in the iTutors program and thus included more holistic recommendations. Some of their insight into the value of our iFamily programs is provided below:

Testimonies about Zoom Training
- "It made it clear how to navigate the program with ease."
- "I would recommend the program because it was easy to follow, I liked the step-by-step process, and I was able to feel confident when I used it on my own."
- "It gives us the opportunity to learn about technology and help others understand it as well."
- "It helps you better understand this system, and you learn from other parents with the experiences they share. The presenters are really well prepared and professional."
- "For me, it was a great support. It was a reason to not feel depressed and ask more questions at my children's school."
- "It has helped me communicate with teachers and with my family who are not close by, especially in these trying times."

Testimonies about iFamily Programs
- "They have a lot of good information, and I went to a workshop for helping kids with different disabilities."
- "The staff are trustworthy, capable, and respond to any questions. My son's tutor is also very good and gives him the confidence to develop his skills. The program helps make his homework engaging and understandable, and they are responsive and communicative with me."
- "It has helped us so much to have a greater knowledge of my rights as a parent and the rights of my child as well as the tutoring support for my daughter."
- "This program has been such a tremendous help to my family! I am very thankful for such a program. It's my hope that it's able to continue on with offering support to families with their students' learning needs."

Speak UP is a grassroots organization of parents who want a more powerful voice in education policy. Kids don't have lobbyists, and kids don't have a union. Kids have parents, and parents are the only people whose sole interest is the success of kids. Learn more or become a member at speakupparents.org

Do you need free technology training for software such as Zoom? Does your child need a volunteer tutor to assist them during distance learning? Check out our iFamily program here!