

Pandemic and General Education in Georgia



Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia



საგარეო ურთიერთობების
მინისტროს განყოფილება
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Introduction

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, on March 8, 2020, after the end of the spring holidays, the educational process in Georgian schools was not resumed in the classrooms. 579 995 students of 2081 public and 221 private schools (519 364 public and 60 631 private) continued their education remotely until the end of the 2019-2020 academic year. In order to ensure the continuity of the ongoing educational process at all levels

of education, the Ministry has identified all vulnerable groups and their needs and taken appropriate measures in a timely manner, based on which 2019-2020 has not been declared as an academic year. The steps taken by the Government of Georgia to ensure a continuous education process in the context of the global pandemic were named by the International Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) as one of the best examples in the world.

The First Stage of the Pandemic (Spring-Summer) Preschool education

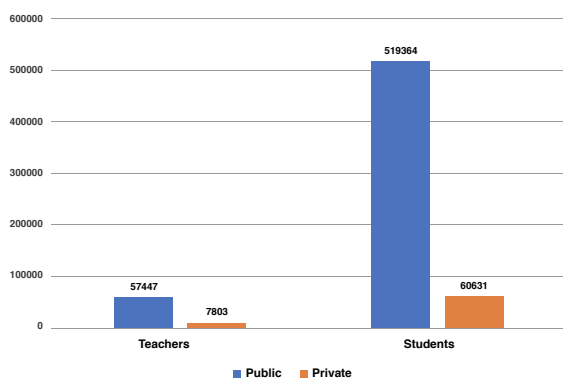
Preschool Education

- To ensure access to education for each preschool child and support their parents a number of recommendations were issued and various information-educational resources were developed.
- In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Coalition "Education for All", 12 TV programs entitled "Tips for Parents" were created. The aim of the project is to offer recommendations and a variety of activities to parents of preschool child in TV format.
- Work has started on preschool education resources tailored to the interests of children aged 2 to 5 years.
- Visual cognitive games and other resources have been developed that promote the child's physical and emotional development and are used both remotely and in face-to-face communication.
- As a pilot, taking into account the needs of preschool institutions, a training module "Promoting Social-Emotional Development" was created. 27 representatives of preschool institutions were trained.
- At the municipal level, a training module "Fundamentals of Early Education" was created for the pre-school education specialists of the educational resource centers, and in the summer of 2020 those specialists were trained.
- In order to inform the public about the importance of early education, 3 webinars and 6 video games and activities were prepared, which were posted on the official Facebook page of the Preschool Education Center. In addition, 3 articles were prepared for the electronic newspaper-www.mastsavlebeli.ge.

General Education

During the new coronavirus, COVID-19 pandemic, schools moved to distance learning mode from March. In order to ensure access to education, various vulnerable groups were identified at the general education level:

Number of students and teachers in Georgian schools



- Socially vulnerable students;
- Students with special educational needs and disabilities;
- Students left out of school (including homeless children);
- National minorities.
- Various distance platforms have been prepared and implemented in a forced mode to ensure the distance learning process.

- Recommendations for the use of these platforms were developed for teachers and school administration representatives.
- Relevant trainings were held in online format.

Distance Learning Platforms

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia offered various distance learning platforms to schools:

“Teleskola”

- Since March 30, 2020 within the framework of the joint project of the Ministry and the First Channel of Georgia the educational project "Teleskola" has started. The new educational TV channel “First Channel-Education” has been created.
- The project envisages conducting TV lessons for schoolchildren provided by the National curriculum.
- A broadcast grid (table of lessons) includes all school subjects.

- Creative and developmental activities for students with special educational needs have been developed.
- All lessons are provided with sign language translation to support students with hearing problems.
- There is a separate broadcast grid (lesson table) for students of national minorities (in Armenian and Azerbaijani).
- The project is enriched by various cognitive and entertaining programs on weekends.
- Videos were recorded in support of the parents of the students where psychologists, using the resources available at home, offer the viewers exercises to develop academic and cognitive skills.
- During the spring-summer period of 2020, specialists in the relevant field, through TV programs, gave useful recommendations to the entrants.

Microsoft office 365 Teams

- Virtual classrooms have been created for all public school classes and subjects.



- A Microsoft Office 365 user profile was created for schools (528,327 students and 52,124 teachers). The platform el.ge was integrated in Teams

Microsoft in Georgian language

- Microsoft Educational Portal and its contents were translated into Georgian language.

Online School

- Implementation of an electronic journal “Online School (emis.ge)” has started.

- Electronic journal Mobile application - Online School was created.
- Relevant modules were added to an electronic journal to record student attendance and assessment information in both face-to-face and distance learning formats.

Minecraft

- Up to 100 teachers and more than 1,500 students in V-X grades throughout Georgia participated in the Minecraft pilot project. The platform was used in the teaching process of various subjects, both for developing the creative and critical thinking, as well as for accomplishing the interactive tasks.



WebSchool

- Within the scope of the project "WebSchool", webinars were conducted for the entrants.
- Within 2 months, up to 400 webinars were conducted for the entrants (including the ethnic minorities) in all subjects taken at the unified national exams.

Ischool

- Within the framework of the project ischool, the set of complex homeworks in various subjects for students of I-XII grades were developed and posted on the e-library portal <https://el.ge/projects/iskola>. Learning resources are available for both students to work independently and for teachers.

Chat-Bot in Georgian Language

- Integration of interactive Georgian-language Chat-Bot and e-journal has started in Teams.

According to a “distance learning study” conducted by National Examination and Assessment Center , 30% of students watch all TV lessons in various subjects, those 70% of students who watch TV School say, that the lessons were interesting and fun; 57.3% of parents consider the lessons interesting.



National Curriculum

- Based on the recommendations of the medical university and health care workers, and taken into account the physical and psychological capabilities of the adolescent in the distance learning process, the maximum number of recommended workloads (astronomical hours spent on lessons) was defined as follows:

grade	I-III	IV-V	VI-VIII	IX	X-XII
Maximum permissible hours (astronomical) per day	1 hour	1 hour	1.5 hour	1.5 hour	2 hour

The recommended duration of online lessons was defined as follows:

- A) in I-IV grades - 20 minutes;
- B) in V-IX classes - 30 minutes;
- C) In X-XI classes-up to 40 minutes.

Assessment System

Due to the current situation, regarding the transition of the learning process to a remote format:

- Adolescent recommendation workload, requirements for school hours, preparation of points, calculation of absenteeism have been prepared.
- Teachers were sent detailed instructions and guidelines on how to conduct student developmental assessment based on a complex assignment.
- Alternative ways of assessment have been developed, which include defining the points earned in the current academic year as annual points.

New Electronic Educational Resources

At the initiative of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia, with the involvement of school teachers, a new type of educational resources has been developed.

We learn by Playing

The resource "We learn by playing" was created in partnership with UNICEF. After the first phase of the implementation, teachers' opinions were processed and changes in the resource were taken into account. Today, teachers are actively using the developed material.

We learn Music by Playing

The resource "Learning music by playing" was first introduced in schools in 2020, and depending on the content, it can be used not only in music lessons, but also in various subjects.

Electronic Educational Resource of Computer Technologies

The resource includes activities under the new computer technology (IST) standard. Fully covers classes II-III-IV-V. The resource is structured in such a way that the student goes through certain steps, completes small-scale tasks and acquires knowledge, on the basis of which he / she completes the relevant complex task. Definitions of terms and interactive games can be found in the resource itself.

Electronic Educational resources

Electronic resources are designed for fourth grade students. However, the teacher can use them in other classes as well. Like the electronic resource of computer technologies, this resource is created according to the new approaches that provide a complex task.

Educational Chatbots

Chatbots help children develop the online communication skills they need for secure communication across different social networks. Educational chatbots can answer students' questions and offer relevant educational resources. It is planned to create an electronic resource of Georgian grammar in the future. If other countries are working on the creation of electronic resources in natural sciences and they can be used everywhere, the development of electronic resources of Georgian grammar and modern approaches in this direction should be designed in Georgia.

Psychological Support

- The Psychosocial Service Center of the Resource Officer Service of the educational institution provided various types of assistance to public school students, their parents and teachers through remote work.
- During the quarantine, the resource officer service had a 24-hour hotline: 08 00 00 00 88.

If necessary, parents of children aged 6 to 13 and beneficiaries over the age of 13 were Skype-consulted by qualified psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists.

- The services of a special teacher and psychologist, as well as other specialists were provided for students with special educational needs and their parents.
- During the pandemic, Samtredia Public School N15 operated continuously in the remote mode, providing full-time services to students with behavioral and emotional disorders for a specified period of time.

Access to Internet and Digital Devices

- According to the March 2020 study of the "Education Management Information System", 528,426 students were enrolled in the general education system, of which 12% (63,272 students) did not have access to the Internet from home, and 14% (71,796 students) did not have a computer device.

This last figure can be explained to some extent by considering the annual (percentage) failure rate of net-books. One part of the other students had access to both fixed and mobile internet. Overall, of these two overlapping groups, 88% of students had fixed internet access and 53% had mobile internet access.

- These figures are in line with data from the Distance Learning Survey conducted by the National Assessment and Examinations Center in the first half of June 2020. Data from this study show that before the COVID-19 pandemic, 79.2% of the students surveyed used a computer connected to the Internet (at home or at school).

Webinars and Support Trainings for Focus Groups

- 118 webinars, conducted for teachers of all general education subjects and school leaders, were published daily on the official Facebook page of the National Center for Teacher Professional Development. In total, the videos have more than a million views.

- Webinars were conducted for teachers, students and parents using Microsoft Office 365.
- Training module "Distance learning using Microsoft resources" was created.
- For the safe professional development of teachers, the training program, developed by National Center for Teacher Professional Development (tpdc) offers teachers distance and self-regulatory trainings in various subjects and content (inclusive education, general professional skills) in the frame of the National Curriculum.
- Trainings are conducted continuously on 3 main online educational platforms: teams, Edex and E-courses. tsu.ge. By the end of 2020, up to 5,500 teachers will be trained.



Current Programs

Defendants and Convicts Access to Education

- For up to 50 convicted and accused students in penitentiary institutions educational services were available remotely. Alternative curriculum format was developed by teachers and students were provided with electronic resources according to a pre-agreed rule and schedule established with the penitentiary institutions.

School Competitions

- Three school competitions were held remotely: an essay competition on equality and diversity issues, a blog competition "Our Language Georgian" and a distance competition "Photo Stories in a Pandemic". The winning students are rewarded with prizes and diplomas.

Film School

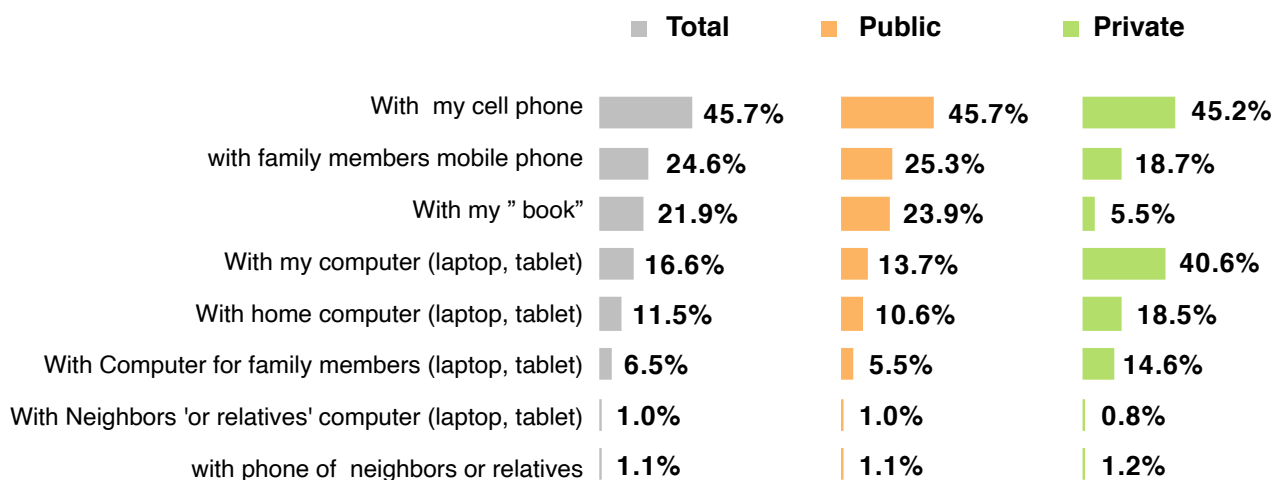
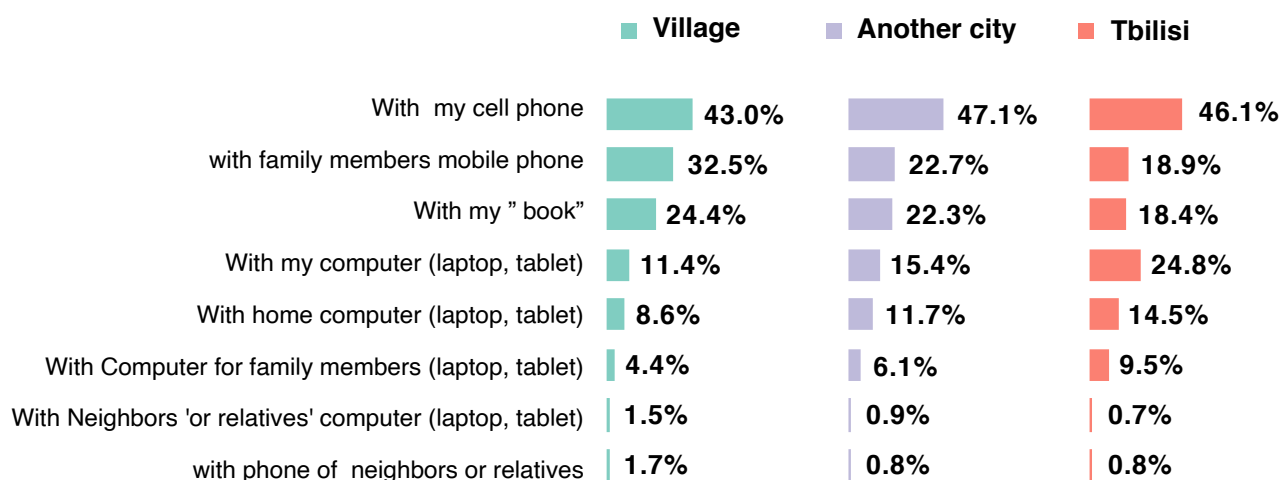
- The National Film Center organized a project "Film School" on the web platform "THE FILM CORNER", which involved a group of trained film specialists. The learning resource is designed for 13-19 year olds and combines the following topics: frame creation, image cropping, behind-the-scenes action, editing, parallel action, voice, character creation, etc. Up to 240 students participated in the activity.

Informatics Olympiad

- In September 2020, Georgia hosted the 4th Youth Informatics Olympiad (EJOI 2020), which was held online.



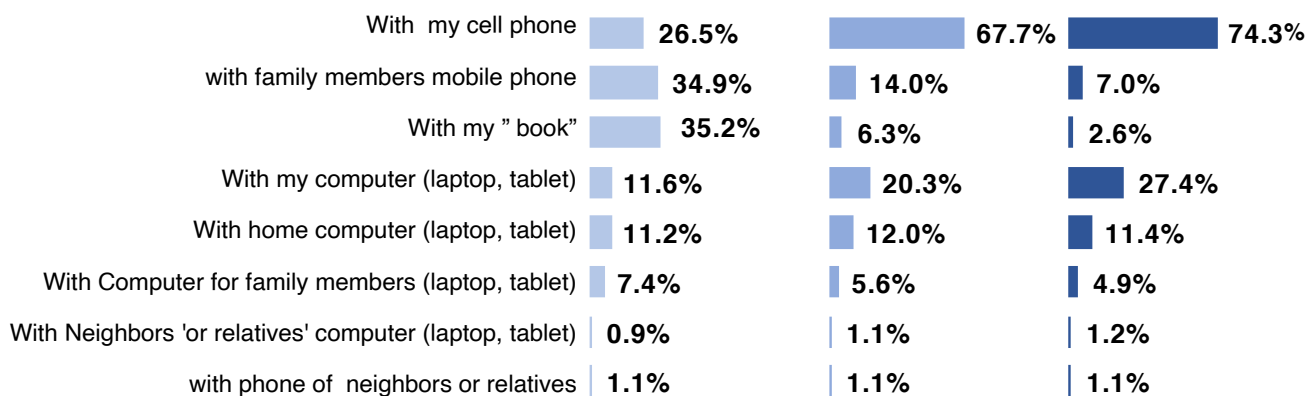
Electronic Devices Used in Distance learning



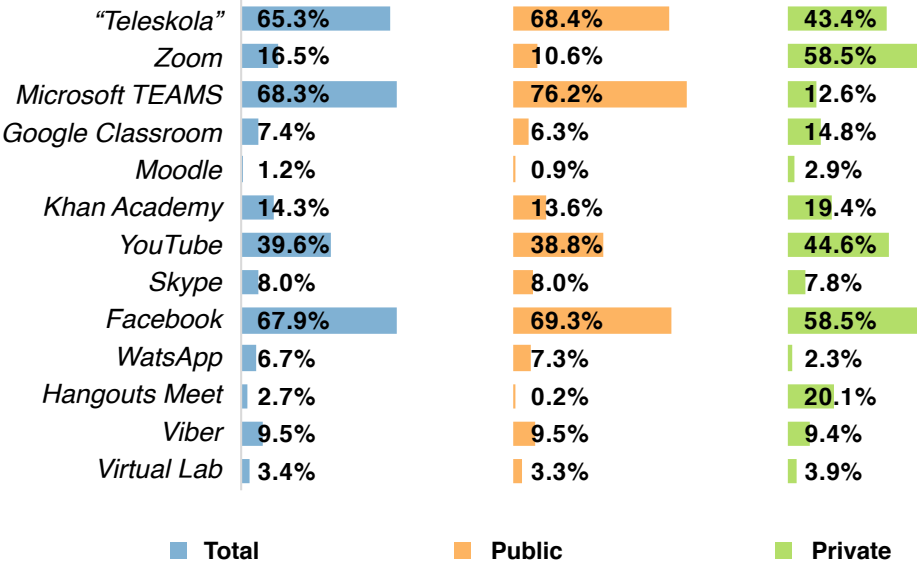
Elementary level (I-VI grades)

Basic level (VII-IX grades)

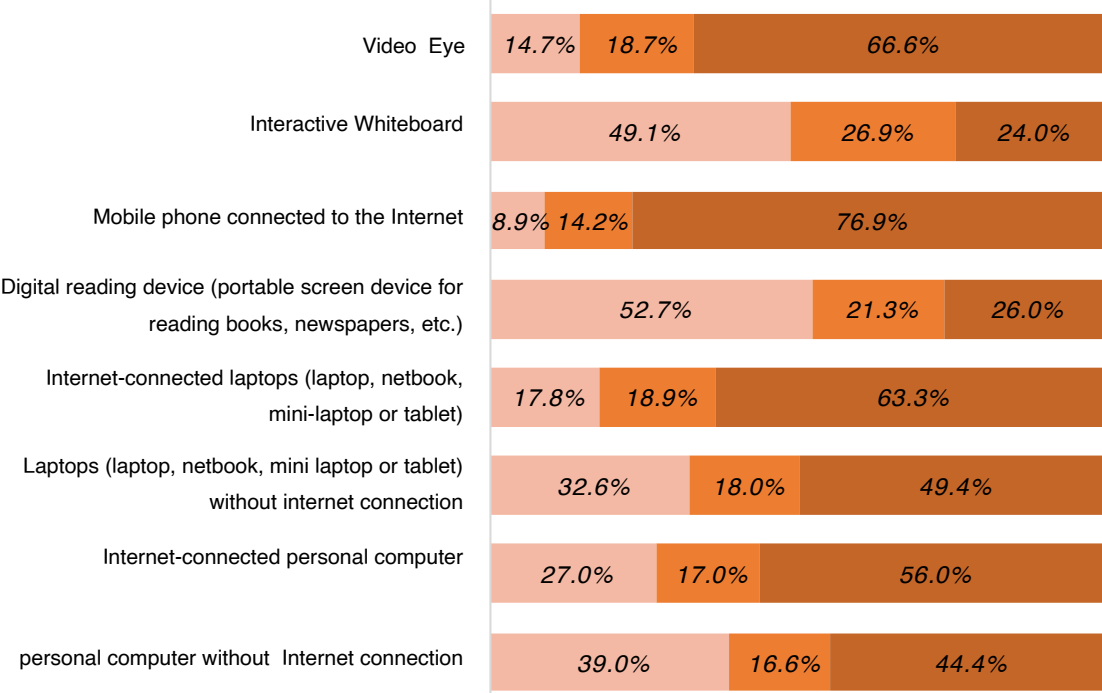
Secondary level (X-XI grades)



Programs Used by Teachers in Distance Learning

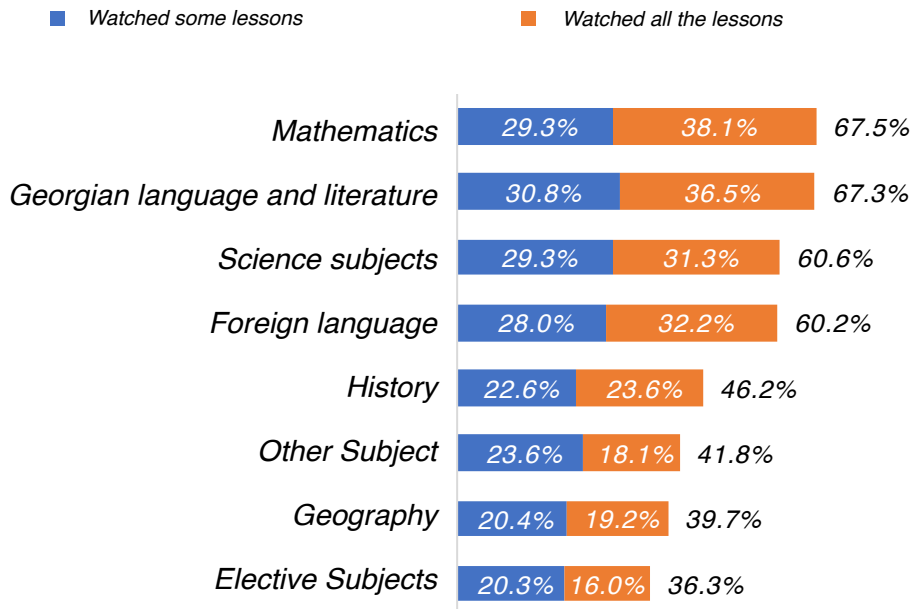


Teachers' Access to Technical Equipment

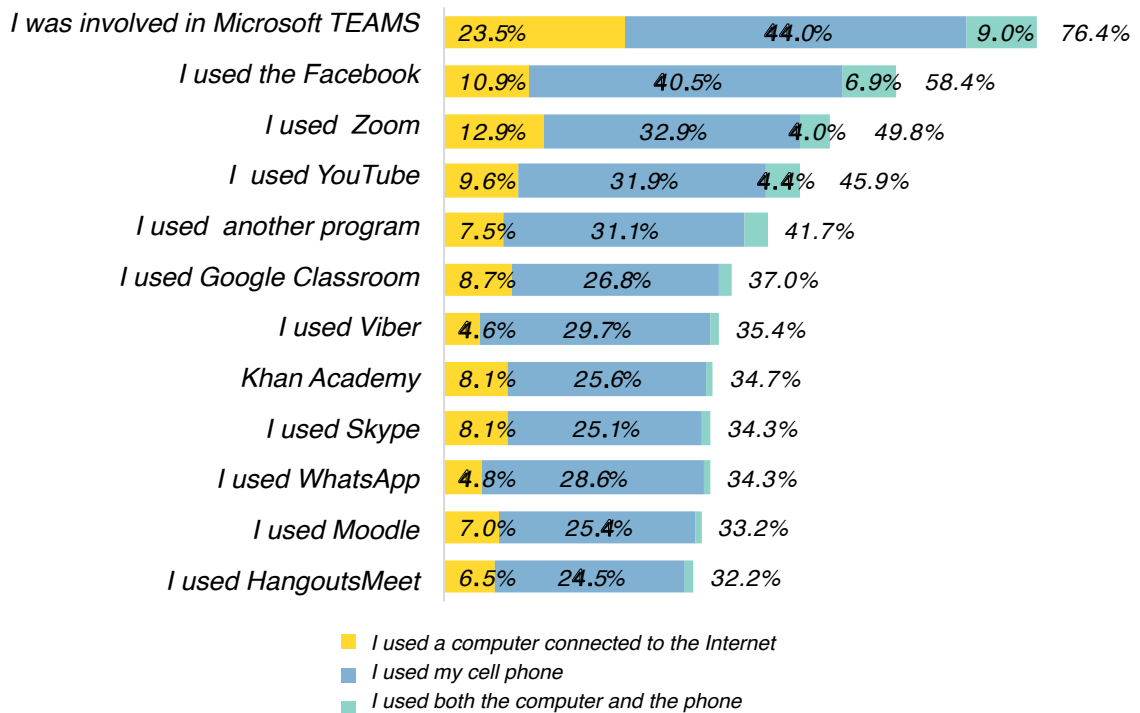


■ Was not available
 ■ Was sometimes available
 ■ Was always available

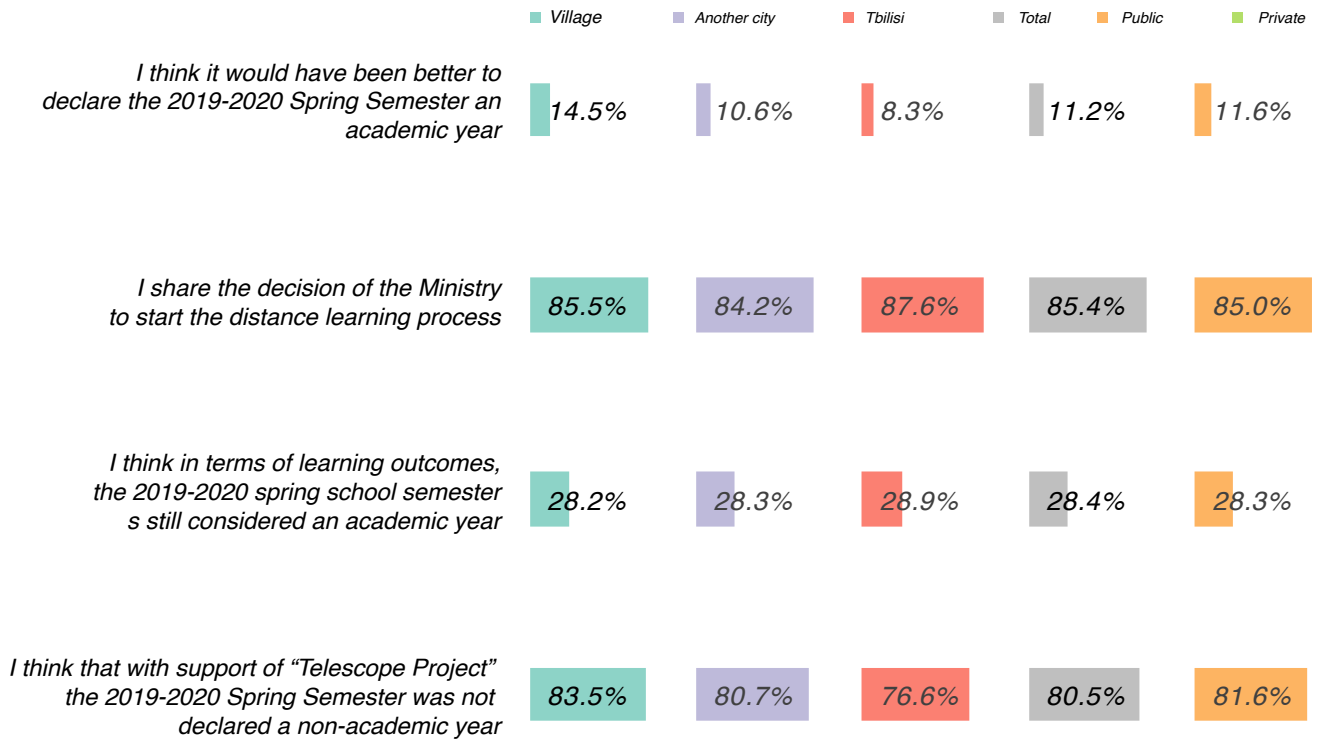
Frequency of watching TV lessons according to school subjects



Software used for distance learning



Evaluation the Decision of the Ministry



2020-2021 Academic Year: Preparing for the New School Year

Sanitation and Hygiene

- By September 15, 2020, all schools were centrally supplied with towels, thermometers, deodorants, deodorant barrier fluids, as well as hand sanitizers and dispensers.
- Schools were provided with bio-toilets as needed.

- School maintenance standard approved.
- In order to purchase the required amount of laundry, dry cleaning and sanitary ware by some public schools, the appropriate amount was allocated from the 56 17 - StopCoV Fund. Public schools were funded by the Educational and Scientific Infrastructure Development Agency, which requested additional funding to purchase a variety of hygiene items as well as water tanks and water dispensers.
- The so-called Fever rooms in case of fever in students were allocated separately.



Recommendations to Schools

- Annex 37 of the Order N01-227 / O of the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia on May 29, 2020 approved the general recommendations for general education institutions related to the new coronavirus infection.
- Recommendations include all the necessary directions: school cleaning and hygiene, moving around the school space, organizing the learning process, keeping distance, feeding process, transportation of students, operation of the library, operation of boarding schools, sanitation, medical staff functions, student and parent responsibilities Availability of drinking water, list of sorting inventory and facilities, first aid and necessary pharmaceuticals, student thermo-screen registration card.
- In partnership with World Vision Georgia, a practical guide “Schools During a Pandemic” was prepared for school staff, which will help t

- he school administration and teachers to guide the student-centered educational process according to health regulations.
- Information posters were placed in schools on the organization of the educational process in the conditions of the pandemic and the observance of the rules of hygiene.
- Relevant videos were made and broadcast on TV. They help students, teachers, and parents follow the rules.

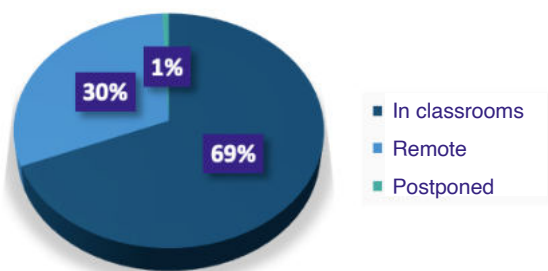
School Monitoring / Inspection

- At the initiative of the Ministry, Department of Labor Inspection in cooperation with other authorized agencies carried out the school monitoring process. The process took place in the conditions of active and constructive cooperation of all the agencies involved in. All the given recommendations were taken into account and the errors were corrected by the general education institutions.

Additional Finding

- Remuneration of school cleaners has increased.
- The Ministry finances the costs of rehabilitation and equipping of medical offices in public schools. At this stage, 534 public schools have medical offices and medical staff is selected in accordance with the qualification requirements developed jointly with the Ministry of Health.
- Under the COVID-19 Pandemic Public School Support Sub-Program additional funding was allocated to teachers who, in addition to their parents' choice, had to conduct additional online lessons.

Number of schools



Learning Process Management: The 2020-2021 school year in Georgia started on September 15

- ◀ 15 1581 schools started studying in classrooms;
- ◀ Remote mode - 700 schools (528 public, 172 private);
- ◀ Study was postponed in 17 schools (with the recommendation of 2 epidemiological services, due to 12 rehabilitations, due to the number of 2 co-infected).

- Taking into account the specifics and infrastructure of each school, the Ministry has developed recommendations that enabled all schools to plan the learning process, taking into account the ratio of individual capacity, number of students and school space.
- A strict guideline has been developed for principals - how and under what circumstances the school should switch to distance learning mode in the event of Covid confirmation at the school.

- According to the decision of the Coordinating Council of the Government of Georgia (the Council is composed of ministers, doctors, epidemiologists and other professionals) from the end of September 2020, except for Adjara, I-VI grade students of all public schools in Georgia returned to school.), And the students of VII-XII grades of Tbilisi schools continued their studies in a distance format. გაშო Due to the complicated epidemic situation, the first semester will end remotely in the cities of Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Rustavi, Telavi, Zugdidi, Zestaponi, Gori, Poti, Marneuli and Gardabani.

Adjusting the Teaching/Learning and Assessment System to the Distance learning Mode

Distance Learning Rule

- The distance learning rule was approved, according to which schools were allowed to choose different models of distance learning. The daily workload of students and the school hourly schedule were determined. Also, in order to facilitate the involvement of students with special educational needs in the learning process, schools were given the right to offer the services of special education teachers and other specialists involved in inclusive education in the school space to students with special educational needs during distance learning, according to a pre-agreed schedule.



Distance learning Models

The schools themselves choose the model that suits them:

A) Involve all students and teachers in the fully electronic, synchronous-teaching process using any of the electronic platforms recommended by the Ministry;

B) Learning fully electronic asynchronous - using TV / video tutorials or other available electronic platforms and / or digital resources;

C) Hybrid - combined use of fully electronic synchronous and / or asynchronous and attendance training, which can be differentiated according to subjects, classes and divisions.

Temporary Hourly Grid

- Based on the change in the National Curriculum, from March 30, 2020, during the distance learning process, the school will determine the temporary hourly schedule so that the temporary hourly schedule will include all the subjects approved for the beginning of the school year.

Complex Assignments

- The school, according to its class, readiness and need, was given the opportunity to assess students only with complex / summative assignments.
- The role of complex assignments in the teaching-learning process has increased. Methodological recommendations and guidelines have been prepared for all subjects, where an algorithm for creating an assignment is given along with specific examples of complex assignments.

Development of Remote Services

- “The Digital Transformation Program” has been approved, which aims at work on the development and introduction of digital resources.

Introduction of e-journal, which involves the integration of both face-to-face and remote modules for student registration and assessment has started.

The functionals of the Electronic Journal have been created:

- "Journal" –student attendance, formative and developmental assessment are reflected in functional.
- "Calendar" - school events, lesson plans, exams are reflected in functional.
- "Independent work" - the history of homework for the studentis are reflected in functional.
- "Statistical information" - statistical information about student assessments and Attendance are reflected in functional.
- "Message" – sending to and receiving notifications from users with different roles.
- "Activities" - the history of activities performed by the teacher is reflected in functional.
- “Resource Officers / Psychologists” - put in the system activities carried out by the\ Resource.
- Officer Service of educational institutions / Providing information to school administration, students and parents.

Access to Internet and Equipment

- Memorandum was signed with Internet service providers and teachers and students were offered a special package. The program for providing schools with computers and first graders with “books” was revised.
- Emphasis was made on the technological empowerment of schools. When planning the 2021 programs and the relevant budget the issues were taken into account.
- With the financial support of UNICEF, the necessary equipment for online learning (laptops, printers, projectors, projector screens and other small computer equipment) was provided to all homeless children's centers.

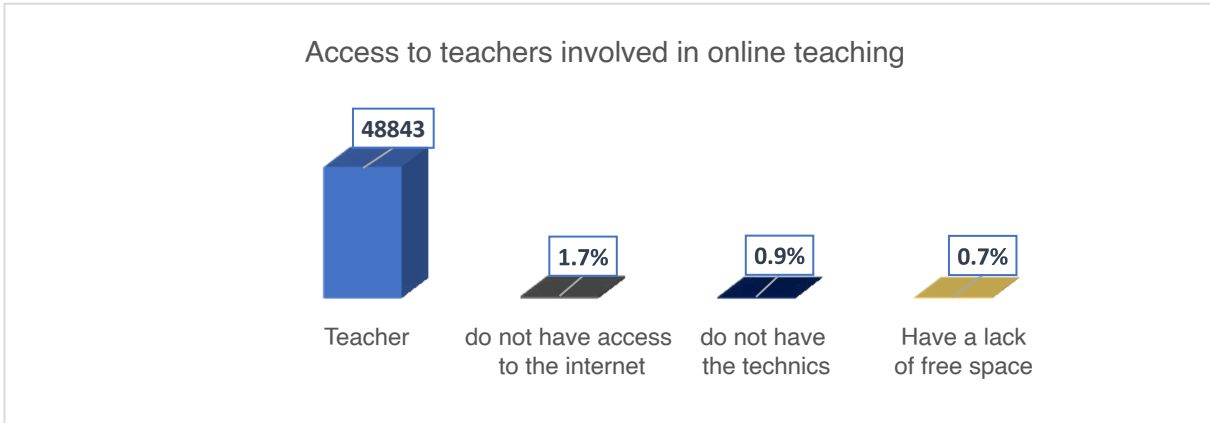


Cyber and Information Security

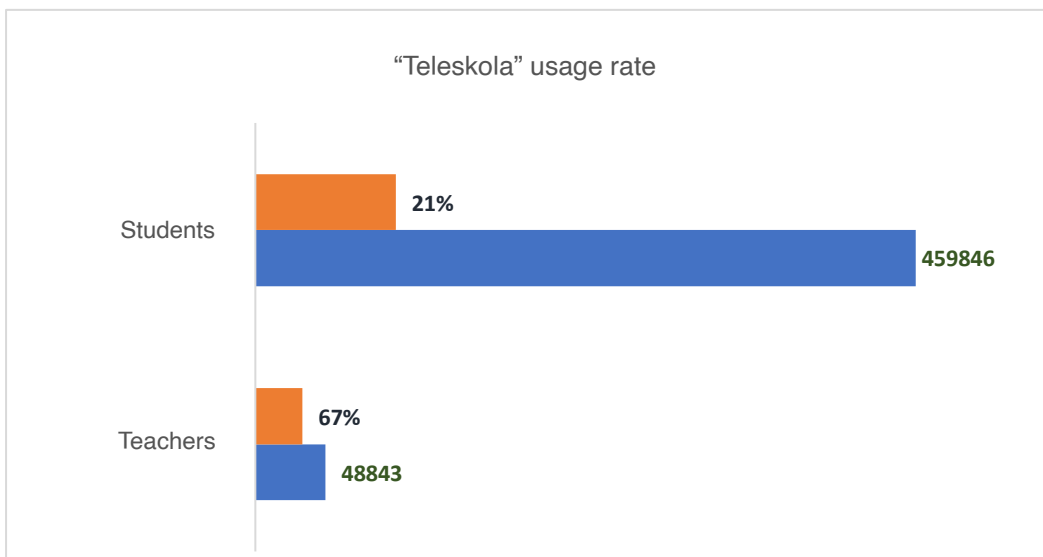
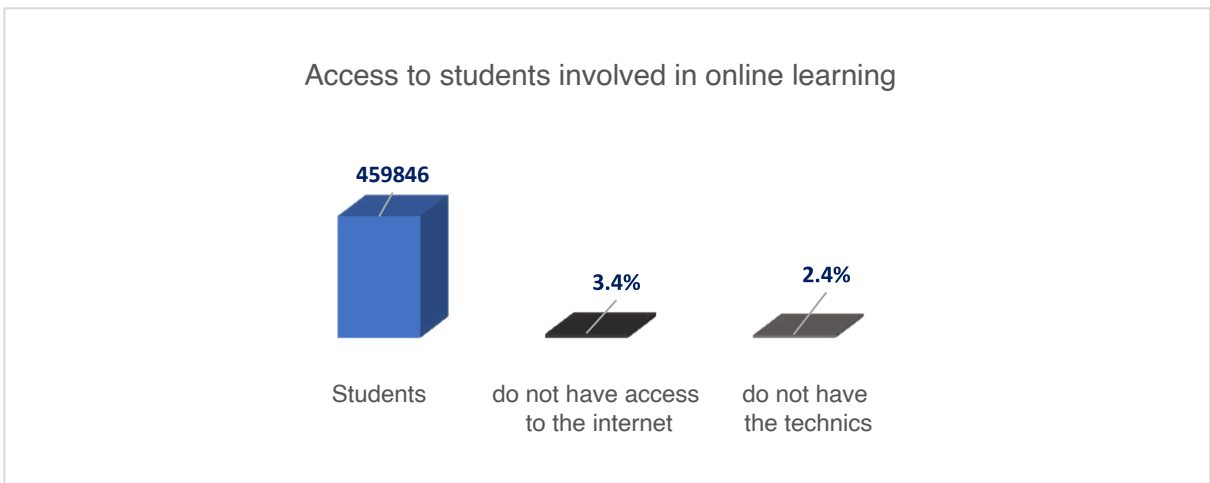
- Cyber Hygiene Webinar was held for teachers, students and parents.
- The campaign "Information Security in Online Education" was launched on Facebook, within the frame the various posts and a summary of Facebook Live were prepared.
- The TV campaign "Information Security in Online Education" was actively run.
- With support of the Ministry teachers participated in the anti-bullying day campaign as one of the main issues of of cyber-bullying.
- The security compliance of the online platform Feedc was checked and a recommendation document was prepared.
- The security compliance of various online resources provided by the Education Management Information System to its users was checked.
- Security systems are being actively monitored and appropriate configurations are being made: blocking malicious pages or applications.
- The security compliance of the electronic journal was checked.

Results of a survey conducted by the Ministry in November: .

97% of teachers involved in the online teaching process do not have a problem with access to the Internet and technology.

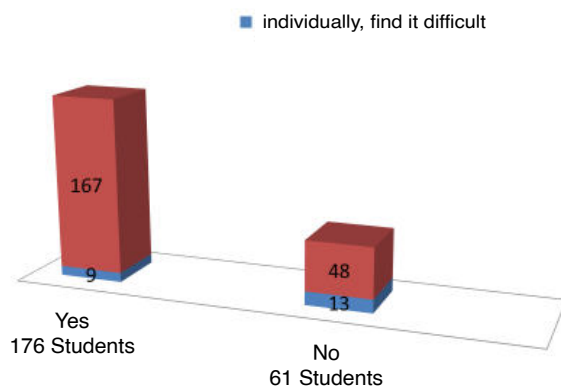


94% of students involved in the online learning process do not have a problem with access to the Internet and technology.



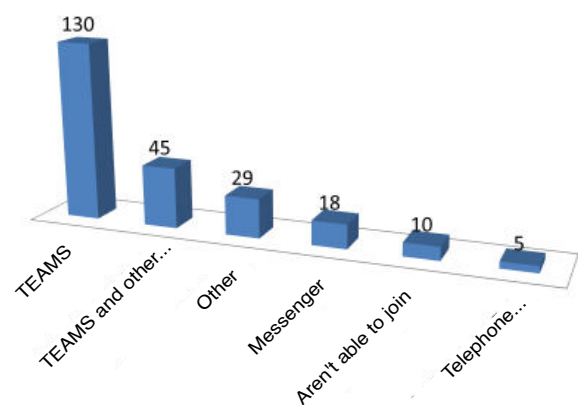
In order to evaluate the teaching-learning process of the 2020-2021 academic year, a multidisciplinary team conducted a survey of parents of students with special educational needs (376 parents participated in the study). Lessons in the research process were attended by 139 students and remotely- by 234 students. Those 135 students, who attended the lessons were involved in classroom activities together with their classmates, while 176 students involved in online learning process attended online lessons with their classmates.

The student together with his/her classmates is involved in the online learning process



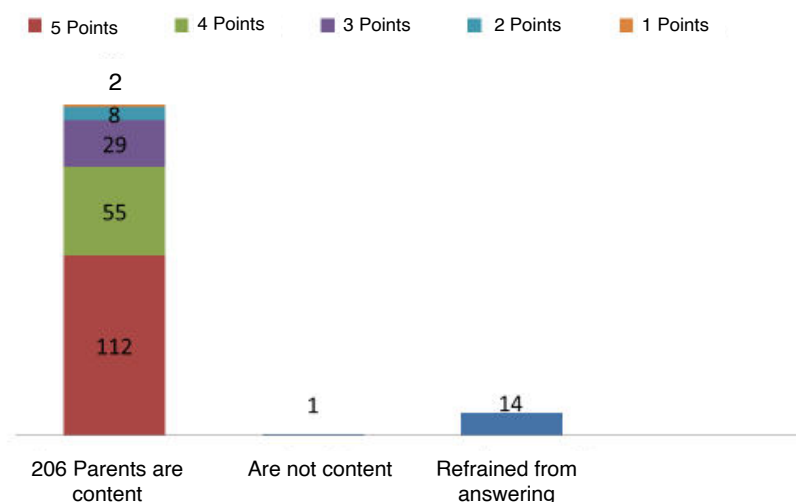
Facilities providing distance learning services

(TEAMS, ZOOM, FB, Messenger, Telephone communication, TV School)



How satisfied the parent is with the service provided

(1- dissatisfied, 5-satisfied)



- <https://el.ge/>
- <https://el.ge/projects/iskola>
- https://1tv.ge/tv-radio/arkhebi/pirveli-arkhi-ganatileba/?fbclid=IwAR2ntjp_8PLz8MCGi24ebH0QmwToC8YAXbTTBbPORfQ9dwe5JNlfXJ1Cjic

