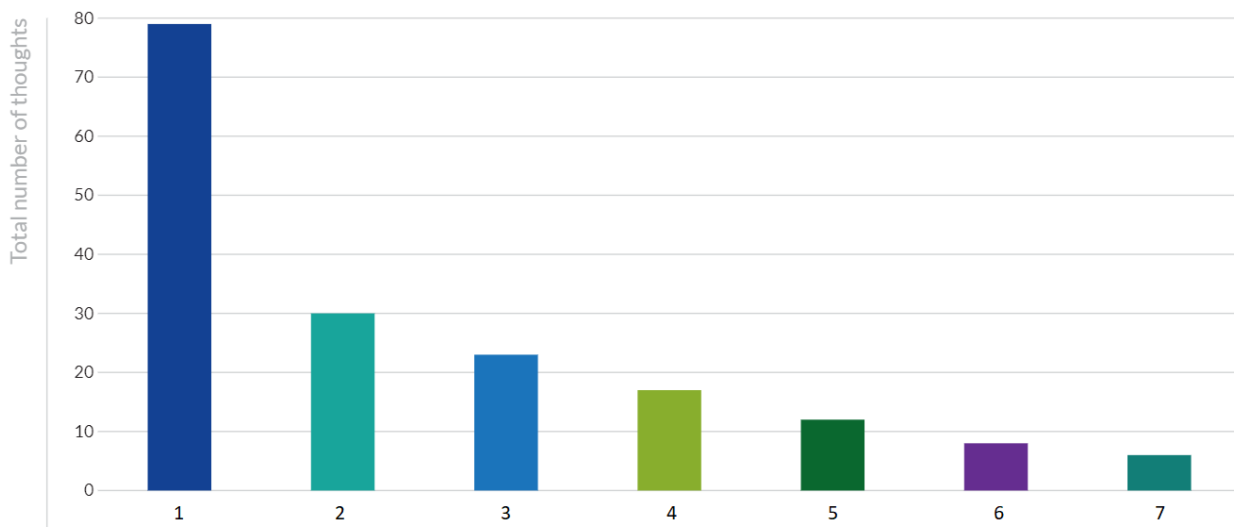# HWDSB

Student Exchange on Distance Learning - June 2020

Participation: 332 participants (18% Jk to Gr.3, 24% Gr. 4 to 6, 22% Gr. 7 & 8, 36% Gr. 9 to 12), 394 thoughts and 5,950 ratings

What we asked: *What do you like about learning from home and how can we make it better?*

What we heard: Common themes among the 203 thoughts that were rated 3.3 and above

1. Instruction Delivery and Interaction
2. Home Learning
3. Self-Paced Learning
4. Consistency/Structure

5. Communication/Feedback
6. Workload
7. Digital Platforms

We recognize that a 332 student sample size is not generalizable to the entire student population, however, the thoughts submitted do align with what we heard from parents and guardians, thus, we believe it is important for us to listen to and act upon what we heard from these students.

1. Instruction Delivery and Interaction – Most thoughts by far (95) were about the way in which students are being taught during distance learning. Students who voiced thoughts related to this theme were either grateful that their teacher teaches them directly in real time or via pre-recorded videos, or were expressing a need for direct instruction from their teachers. The latter reject assigned readings or YouTube videos as satisfactory instruction and express needing teachers to hold online classes or provide pre-recorded videos because they learn best from their teachers. Many stated that they learn better when they can interact with their teacher and their

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class during instruction. Predictably, younger students were more focused on wanting to see their teacher either live or on pre-recorded video while older students were more concerned over their difficulties learning the material without their teachers. Some French Immersion students voiced frustration that they have not had opportunities to speak French since the closure.

2. **Home Learning** – Of the 31 thoughts relating to what it's like learning at home, we found that younger students miss their friends but like spending more time with their family. Some junior and intermediate students expressed difficulties trying to learn amid distractions at home.

3. **Self-Paced Learning** – Most of the 28 thoughts in this theme were written by students who enjoy the flexibility that distance learning affords. They enjoy having the freedom to work at their own pace, make up their own hours and choose when to take breaks. Flexible due dates were appreciated by some but a few others felt that the lack of a schedule and direct instruction was demotivating and led to procrastination.

4. Consistency/Structure – Most who posted these 22 thoughts were intermediate and secondary students. Too many emails, instructions posted in different spots, unclear due dates, different expectations across teachers, and no schedule for when assignments arrive were the main issues voiced here. Students expressed a desire for consistent and clear scheduling and coordination of assignments between teachers.

5. **Communication/Feedback** – The 13 comments having to do with communication and feedback were submitted mainly by junior and intermediate students with a couple from secondary. Students were either pleased that their teachers answered their questions promptly, or wished they had regular communication with their teacher and prompt feedback for work they had submitted. The main concerns are not knowing how they are progressing and not being able to move forward in their work because they are stuck and need help.

6. **Workload** – Only 8 comments with ratings of 3.3 and higher were submitted. These were mainly intermediate students feeling stressed over their workload.

7. **Digital Platforms** – 6 thoughts on digital platforms expressed primary students' interest in learning keyboarding and digital math games, and junior and intermediate students' challenges with too many platforms.

What's Next? You have given us a lot to think about:
- We will dig deeper into the data to better understand the issues you raised;
- We will use this information to inform our decision-making about next steps for supporting students;

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- We will bring this information to our Principals, our Program, Equity & Well-Being, Special Education and IIT teams;
- We will use it to refine the messaging, supports and resources available to staff, students and parents/guardians.

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