

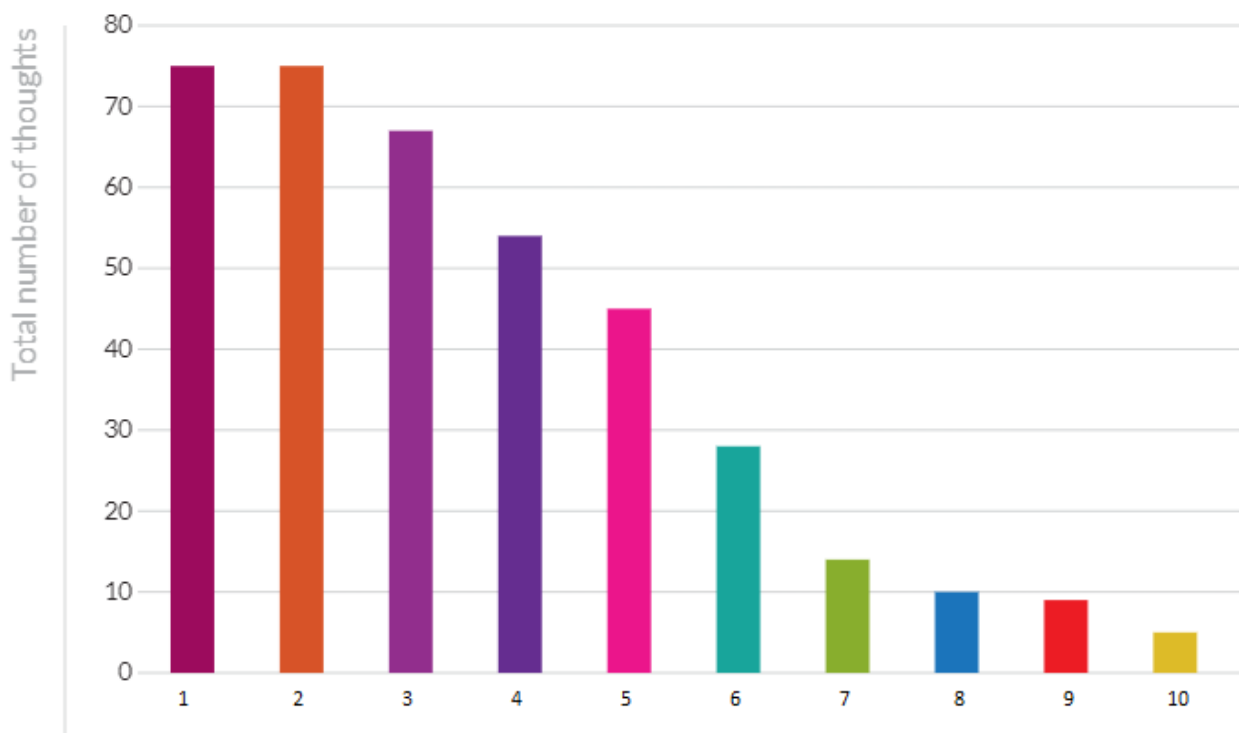
HWDSB

Exchange on Elementary In-Class Learning – October 2020

Participation: 558 participants (91% parents/guardians/caregivers, 9% students), 522 thoughts and 10,096 ratings

What we asked: *How are you doing in Elementary School so far this year?*

What we heard: Common themes among the 522 thoughts that were rated 3.3 and above



1. Safety Protocols
2. Transitioning
3. Mental health & well-being
4. Learning experiences
5. Staff

6. Communication
7. Class size
8. Exercise
9. Supports
10. Winter planning

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We recognize that a sample size of 558 is not generalizable to the entire student and parent/guardian/caregiver population, however, we believe it is important for us to listen to and act upon what we heard from these participants.

1. Safety Protocols – Most parents/guardians said their children are doing well wearing masks and following safety protocols in school but they regret that safety restrictions mean their child is not able to run around freely during recess. Students agreed and said they felt bored and sad that they cannot play as they did before and are restricted to one area during the day.

Parents/guardians also voiced frustration with children having to stay home due to common cold symptoms.

2. Transitioning – The thoughts that comprise this theme are mostly very positive.

Parents/guardians and students commented about how happy they are being back in school with their teachers and friends. Students are adapting well to the safety rules with only minor frustrations. In general, parents/guardians state that the situation is not ideal but that everyone is adjusting well to new school life.

3. Mental health & well-being – Parents/guardians said children are happier now that they are back in school. Seeing friends and interacting has been a huge boost to their mental well-being. Students also commented that they are happy to see their teachers and their friends every day.

4. Learning experiences – Parents/guardians and students said students are learning much better in school than at home. Some students like the desks being spaced apart because it reduces distractions. Learning in person is preferred over learning remotely by most.

5. Staff – There is much gratitude from parents/guardians and students about how helpful, creative, and positive teachers have been. They said they are pleased with how teachers have adjusted to the changes and how teachers are finding creative ways to make learning engaging and fun for children. They also expressed thanks to principals and other staff, including EAs, secretaries, ECEs and bus drivers, for their positivity, patience and responses to concerns.

6. Communication – Parents/guardians said that communication has improved a lot since the Spring and they appreciate being kept up to date on Covid-19 protocols and health and safety changes. Some parents/guardians said they felt overwhelmed with the many platforms through which they are receiving information, emails, and text messages. Parents/guardians would like to be kept up to date on happenings, especially how their child is progressing, using one platform.

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7. Class size – Some parents/guardians expressed being pleased with current small class sizes while others were frustrated with their child’s current class size being more than 20. A few said they are anxious about possible changes in class sizes in the future.

8. Exercise – Parents/guardians pointed to the importance of children getting plenty of exercise; they would like schools to plan for this in the coming winter months by planning class activities that get children moving. Parents/guardians claim that students miss extracurricular activities and being able to move freely about.

9. Supports – Parents/guardians expressed a desire to put more supports in place for children learning under COVID with the severe changes they have experienced in their school environment. There is also concern for students with IEPs who need extra help. From a student perspective, teachers are being very supportive.

10. Winter Planning – Parents/guardians are concerned that as winter approaches, opportunities to conduct classes outdoors are gone, students may be spending more time indoors, classroom ventilation will suffer with windows closed, wet and bulky outdoor gear will be difficult to manage at student desks, and waiting in line to enter the school is uncomfortable in the cold.

What’s Next? You have given us a lot to think about:

- We will look closer at the data to better understand the issues you raised;
- We will bring this information to our Principals, our Program, Equity & Well-Being, Special Education and IIT teams;
- We will use this information to inform our decision-making about next steps for supporting students.