

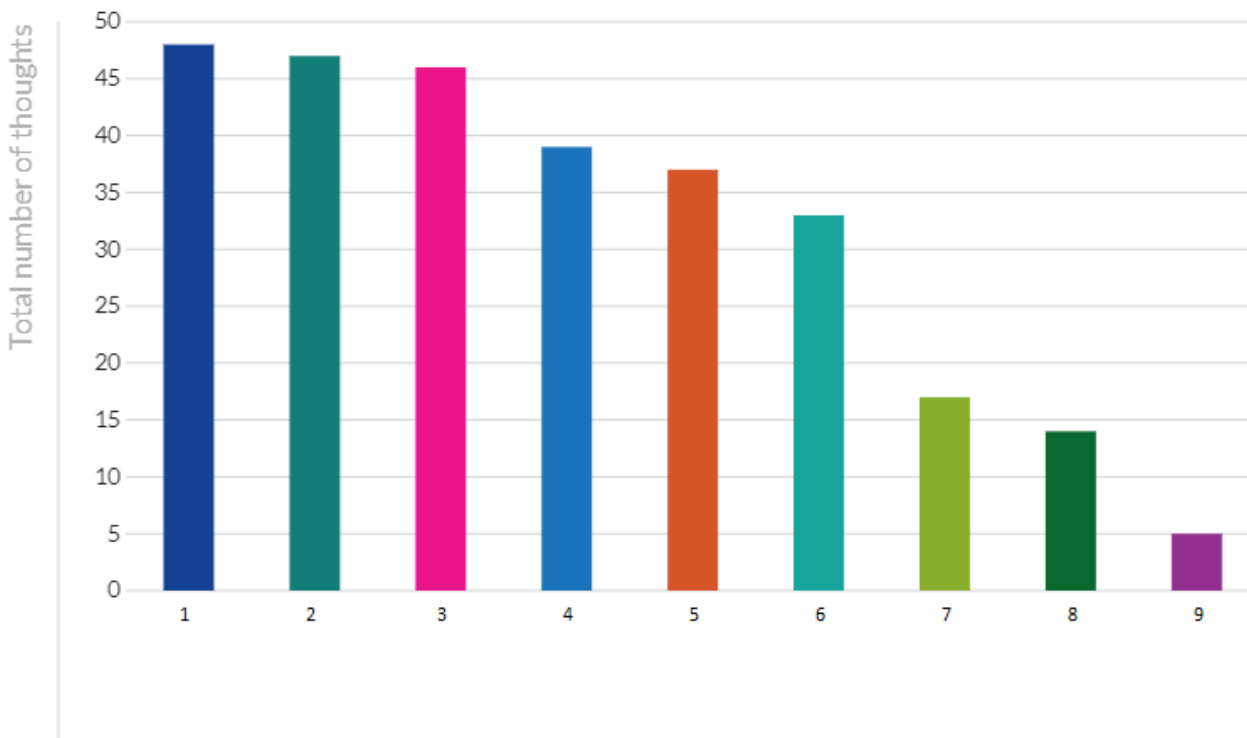
# HWDSB

## Exchange on Secondary Blended Learning – October 2020

**Participation:** 354 participants (75% parents/guardians/caregivers, 25% students), 445 thoughts and 7,335 ratings

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

**What we heard:** Common themes among the 445 thoughts that were rated 3.3 and above



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|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Learning experiences           | 6. In-class learning |
| 2. Digital platforms & technology | 7. Differentiation   |
| 3. Student support                | 8. Absence records   |
| 4. Workload & assessments         | 9. Safety            |
| 5. Mental health and well-being   |                      |

We recognize that a sample size of 354 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.

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**1. Learning experiences** – A lot of frustration with the secondary learning model was expressed by both parents/guardians and students. Parents/guardians are concerned that students find it difficult to engage, to focus, and just want to sleep after coming home from first period. Some suggest moving to two subjects as the shorter periods are difficult to juggle and prevent deep learning. A few students said they felt they were progressing adequately given the situation and the resources they have available but that they would like to do better. Parents/guardians are most concerned about students not engaging and falling behind.

**2. Digital platforms & technology** – Parents/guardians state that they and their students are struggling with being asked to access different applications to communicate with teachers, get information, find assignments and submit work. Both students and parents/guardians voiced frustration over school and teacher technology and WIFI being slow or dropping off, making it difficult to hear what teachers are saying. Some students appreciate the structure that standard platforms brings (e.g., MS Teams and the Hub) compared to learning in the spring.

**3. Student support** – Students voice frustration over not being able to access the help they need and request prompt responses to their requests for help from staff. They also asked that teachers remain online for the full lesson time when the teaching part of the class is over and make themselves available outside of class to answer questions live. Parents/guardians express concern over their students feeling overwhelmed and being left behind. Some participants felt that their teachers were thoroughly engaging students in their lessons and holding online discussions.

**4. Workload & assessments** – Students said they are struggling with the volume of work they are being asked to complete. Parents/guardians said having online, timed assessments is stressful for students and commented that students are cheating on assessments.

**5. Mental health & well-being** – Students and parents/guardians said students feel isolated, disconnected, overwhelmed, anxious and depressed. Some asked teachers to give students time to connect with each other live as this is vitally important to their well-being.

**6. In-class learning** – Students and parents/guardians said they prefer that students be in school full time. They say students learn and achieve better when they are face to face with their teachers and peers and have a regular school routine.

**7. Differentiation** – Students who are hands-on learners and their parents/guardians are asking teachers to meet different learning needs and styles. Likewise, parents of students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) are asking staff to pay close attention to accommodation needs and to ensure these are in place.

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**8. Absence records** – Parents/guardians and students asked for attendance to be taken later in the class or amended during the class to ensure all students are accounted for. They state that difficulties connecting and with their technology has resulted in many false absences because students were late to the class.

**9. Safety** – Many parents/guardians agree with the statement that students are happy with the steps schools are taking to ensure safety during COVID. Others express concern over crowded hallways and ask that staff supervise class dismissal to ensure students are masked and distancing.

**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.