

# WHAT WE HEARD

A summary of results from  
parent and student learning  
at home surveys



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parent and student learning at home surveys  
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development  
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## INTRODUCTION

In June, Nova Scotia parents and students were asked to complete an online survey to share their experience with at-home learning during the pandemic. The survey asked a series of questions and respondents were also given the opportunity to provide written answers.

More than 20,000 parents of students in Pre-primary through to Grade 12 and over 8,300 students from Grades 7 to 12 completed the survey. Of the student respondents, 530 identified as Mi'kmaq/Indigenous and 433 identified as being of African descent, with 317 of those students identifying as African Nova Scotian.

Below is a summary of the initial findings from the survey that were used to help inform the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's re-opening plan for September. The department will continue to analyze the survey results and along with the regional centres for education and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial will use the findings as we work together to further plan for the coming school year.

## TIME SPENT ON LEARNING

Over half of all parents and students who responded to the surveys (57 per cent for both) agreed that students were spending between one to three hours a day learning from home. Twenty per cent of students felt they spent more than three hours a day learning, compared to 12 per cent of parents.

Although 11 per cent of parents felt that their child(ren) spent too much time learning from home, 47 per cent of parents felt that the amount of learning time was just right and almost the same amount of parents felt it was not enough (43 per cent). Just over half of the students (52 per cent) agreed that time spent learning at home was just right. Students were much more likely to feel that they were spending too much time on learning while at home (32 per cent) compared to 11 per cent of parents.

### TAKE AWAY:

There isn't a clear consensus on the right amount of learning time. Just under half of the parents responding felt that their child received the right amount of learning time while at home, while almost as many parents felt it wasn't enough.

### NEXT STEPS:

During online learning at home, there will be enhanced expectations for teachers and students related to online teaching and learning. Teachers will be expected to deliver classes online with a mix of real-time instruction and self-directed assignments. There will be specific expectations provided to all teachers, students, and families on what is expected during at home learning, including guidelines about how much time students would be spending on schoolwork and interacting with school staff.

## COMMUNICATION WITH SCHOOLS

Over half of parents (55 per cent) told us that the amount of communication from their child's school supported their child's learning and 67 per cent agreed that their child received the necessary feedback from their teacher to successfully complete the at-home learning activities. Student responses closely matched parent responses for support of learning and feedback, with 51 per cent of students feeling the amount of communication was just right and 65 per cent said that they received the feedback they needed.

Of the three different ways students engaged in learning at home given in the parent survey (teacher directed online, at-home learning package and teacher directed by telephone or email), 83 per cent of parents reported that online learning was the most common. Most students (81 per cent) indicated that email was most common, followed by video conferencing at 40 per cent.

Half of the students reported email as their preferred method of communication. Most parents agreed email was the most common form of communication (88 per cent) and this was preferred by 78 per cent of parents.

### TAKE AWAY:

While 55 per cent of parents felt the communication to support learning was appropriate, 43 per cent felt that it wasn't enough. Many students also felt this way, with 45 per cent reporting there was not enough teacher/school communication.

### NEXT STEPS:

The principles of the Nova Scotia school re-entry plan highlight the importance of communication between the education system and students and families, through building and maintaining close communication to continue to support student well-being and learning. Staff will stay closely connected with students and families, as they always do, and in particular during at-home learning through regular and consistent contact with the students they are working with.

## ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

Almost all of the parent and student responses (99 per cent for both groups) told us that students had access to electronic devices at least occasionally to support learning. However, 26 per cent of those parents and 19 per cent of those students reported that access to the devices was limited because they were shared.

Students self-identifying as African Nova Scotian and Indigenous were slightly more likely to have limited access to devices (both groups 25 per cent).

Almost all parents (99 per cent) and 92 per cent of students indicated that the student had access to the internet, which is expected given respondents to the survey required access to the internet to complete it. About 35 per cent of parents and students indicated that students experienced technology or internet related challenges while learning at home.

### TAKE AWAY:

There are challenges for many students with accessing the internet and devices in order to support learning at home, and even with internet and a device many students had issues in some aspect with either technology or internet during this time.

### NEXT STEPS:

Nova Scotia's Back to School Plan recognizes that there are challenges for some students across our province in learning in an online environment. In the event students are learning at home, those who do not have internet access will be provided with options to connect with teachers, including receiving lessons and completing assignments. To help students who may have limited or no access to devices, the province has secured 14,000 new and refurbished computers that will be given to students who need them. Non-internet options to support learning will also be available including teleconferences and USB flash drives with assignments loaded on the drives. African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq students will receive computers if required.

## EFFECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Eighty per cent of parents indicated that their children found the learning activities engaging at least some of the time and 75 per cent of students agreed with this. Most parents also found that their child could work independently on learning activities at least some of the time (84 per cent).

Just over half of students (55 per cent) found the expectations for completing the work and the difficulty of the work were just right, however 33 per cent of students said they were too high. Most students (73 per cent) reported that they were able to complete learning activities by themselves all, or most of the time, with only five per cent saying that they could not complete the activities at all on their own.

Students were asked to rate the impact of various teaching practices on their ability to learn. The teaching practices students felt had a medium or high impact were:

- using Google Classroom to share assignments—86 per cent
- teacher created videos or demonstrations—64 per cent
- flexible office hours and the ability to contact the teacher—63 per cent
- teacher feedback—62 per cent
- regular contact and check-ins—58 per cent
- work packages given for an entire week or 2-week period—58 per cent

### TAKE AWAY:

One-third of students felt that the expectations for completing the work and the difficulty of the work was too high (33 per cent). Students felt that Google Classroom, demonstrations, a variety of contacts with their teacher, and having work packages for a set amount of time were the most effective practices to support their learning.

### NEXT STEPS:

Teachers will deliver classes online and through the use of other approved tools and methods so that all students are able to participate in a combination of real-time instruction and self-directed learning, keeping in mind what students shared as the most impactful teaching methods during the previous at-home learning (e.g. Google classroom, teacher videos/demos, teacher feedback). Students will have opportunities to engage virtually with their peers and opportunities to engage with their teacher.

## WELL-BEING

Most students (86 per cent) took time to take care of themselves (physical activity, healthy eating and mental health) during the at-home learning period at least some of the time. Almost all parents (94 per cent) agreed with this.

From a well-being perspective, 73 per cent of parents responded that the at-home learning experience was a positive one for themselves, at least some of the time. Their perspective for their child was slightly higher with 82 per cent reporting that at least some of the time, at-home learning was a positive experience.

When students were asked the same question, considering their well-being, 39 per cent reported that it was most, or all, of the time. A higher percentage of Mi'kmaq/Indigenous and students of African descent reported that it was not a positive experience (35 per cent and 32 per cent, respectively), compared to 27 per cent of all students.

One-in-five, or 20 per cent, of parents responded that their child(ren) could not keep a routine for learning that worked for their family circumstances. A slightly higher percentage of students (28 per cent) agreed with this.

Overall, 85 per cent of parents and 81 per cent of students feel that students will be able to transition easily back into the classroom after learning from home.

### TAKE AWAY:

Over one-quarter of students reported that learning from home was not a positive experience for their well-being (27 per cent). Students self-identifying as Mi'kmaq/Indigenous or of African descent reported that learning from home was not a positive experience for their well-being at a slightly higher rate, 35 per cent and 32 per cent respectively.

### NEXT STEPS:

We know that the best place for children is in the classroom and with the support of Public Health, IWK, and educators, students will be returning to schools on September 8. We know some students were impacted more than others by the pandemic. Through our Inclusive Education Policy, schools will focus on high-leverage and culturally responsive practices to support student well-being and achievement. In the event students need to shift to at-home learning, access to student services support will be provided to students that require it. This would include services such as school psychologists, counsellors, mental health clinicians, and speech-language pathologists.



## SUMMARY

The information parents and students reported in these surveys is extremely valuable as the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, in partnership with the regional centres for education and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, continue to plan for the upcoming school year.

In addition to the parent and student insights, school staff have also taken time to discuss their experiences since the pandemic began in March to reflect on what worked well and things that can be done differently in the future.

All of this information will be used as we continue to develop plans in areas such as improving online learning, supporting students without reliable internet service, and professional learning in areas students told us were the best methods to help them learn.

In order to learn, students must also take care of their well-being, these insights will inform how schools focus on supporting their students when the school year begins.

## NOTES ABOUT SURVEY

The parent and student surveys were administered by the regional centres for education and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial. They were conducted online and required an internet connection to complete. Participation in the surveys was voluntary.

The total student population between Grade 7 to 12 is 56,663. Of that population, 8,361 completed the survey, giving it a 15 per cent response rate.

The total provincial enrollment is 123,239 students. Approximately 20,000 parents completed the survey, representing approximately 34,000 students considering parents with multiple children in school.

Parent survey responses represent 28 per cent of enrolled students.

The surveys contained some questions that allowed parents and students to provide comments. More than 20,000 comments were provided and will be used by the department, the regional centres for education and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial to help with future planning.

Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education (AVRCE) conducted an independent survey for students. Those results are not included in this report.

Region	Number of Respondents STUDENT SURVEY	% of Total (Rounded)	Number of Respondents PARENT SURVEY	% of Total (Rounded)
AVRCE	21	0%	2256	11%
CBVRCE	791	9%	2114	11%
CCRCE	1736	21%	3165	16%
CSAP	186	2%	690	3%
HRCE	5158	62%	9496	47%
SRCE	234	3%	783	4%
SSRCE	87	1%	1220	6%
TCRCE	148	2%	339	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,361</b>		<b>20,063</b>	





  
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