



**REPORT ON FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH WITH
EDUCATORS REGARDING COVID-19**

February 2021

Prepared for:

Communications Services Manitoba

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Appendix A — Discussion guide

Key findings:



Key finding – Stress levels related to the impact of the pandemic have dropped.

Participants said that their stress levels and work-life balance in the spring were disrupted because of the pandemic. However, a return to (mostly) in-class learning has helped ease some of the stresses, as has becoming increasingly familiar with technology and how to integrate it into their teaching to achieve better outcomes and keep students engaged.

Key finding – The recommended solution to most issues is fewer students per classroom.

Regardless of the area being discussed, participants consistently mentioned that fewer students per class solves most problems, be it learning loss experienced from the pandemic, work-life balance, or improving students' education.



Key finding – Participants have difficulty identifying how Manitoba Education contributes to success in the classroom.

Participants primarily see Manitoba Education as the conduit through which money from the provincial government flows to divisions, as well as the body which maintains and updates curriculum. They have difficulty seeing how Manitoba Education contributes to students' success.



Key finding – Participants have concerns about Manitoba's Commission on K-12 Education.

Participants have concerns about the Commission's report, primarily around amalgamation. The biggest concern for amalgamation is that larger divisions could have policies and guidelines that would not address the needs of their local schools. Participants believe that smaller divisions are better able to cater to the needs of students in their community, especially in rural communities, where participants seem to feel the needs are quite different between communities.



1.0 Introduction

Communications Services Manitoba hired PRA Inc. to undertake focus group research with teachers and educators in Manitoba to learn about their experiences with remote and in-class learning during the pandemic. In addition, the groups were used to gather perceptions of Manitoba's Commission on K-12 Education.

1.1 Methodology

PRA conducted three focus groups with educators from across Manitoba. Participants for the groups were recruited from a list of 39 educators put forth from two sources: the Manitoba Teachers' Society and the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents. PRA contacted those on the list to ask them to register for one of the three groups. In total, 28 educators participated across the three groups.

Please see Appendix A for the moderator's guide.

1.2 Caution

As with all qualitative research, results cannot be extrapolated to the general population. Any numbers or estimates included in this report are simply used to illustrate participants' opinions and are not indicative of the behaviour or attitudes of the larger population. Thus, these results must be used with caution.

2.0 Experiences with remote learning

2.1 Challenges and barriers

The bullets below summarize the key themes regarding the challenges and barriers related to remote learning.

- **Technological challenges.** The biggest challenges with remote learning are related to many different aspects of technology.
 - *Lack of hardware.* In the 2019-20 school year (i.e., March to June), the primary challenge was ensuring that all students had access to technology that would allow them to learn remotely. Many children did not have access to computers, tablets, and so forth at home to be able to access class remotely, while other families may not have had enough devices for all their children.
 - *Lack of connectivity.* Educators from remote/northern communities said that students' ability to connect was and still remains a major issue with remote learning. Even if students have the necessary hardware, they may not have access to high-speed internet at home, or their internet may be inconsistent, which impacts learning. As one rural educator explained, *"The kids in the furthest north, connectivity for them is really difficult. I had one student for the two weeks that we were remote here in January, it's just not possible. I had to phone him every day, so we would be on the*

- phone together for 30 minutes, 45 minutes every day going through the stuff that I had done with the other kids remotely. When the kids are losing connectivity, then it all breaks down really quickly.”*
- **Inability to use hardware.** For students who did not have access to hardware, participants said that many schools and/or divisions gave students hardware so they could participate in remote learning; however, many were unfamiliar with the technology and could not use it. In many cases, the parents/guardians were not able to assist the children because they too were unfamiliar with the hardware. As a participant explained, *“I find if they didn't have the hardware to start with, the learning curve was just so big anyway. You can give them an iPad and you can give them a laptop and give them high speed internet, but they would ask ‘how do I get Microsoft Word?’ Well, it's already on your computer. ‘Well, where do I find it?’ You know, they just try to navigate simple things, even though we do use technology in the school with the kids.”*
 - **Teaching to different devices.** One participant mentioned that, even if all of their students had the technology to access remote learning, students did not experience learning the same way because the device they used to access classes impacted it. For example, many students were using cellphones to access classes, which do not have a full, easily accessible keyboard, and they could not take notes and watch simultaneously; or the screen would be too small to be able to clearly see what was being taught.
 - **Maintaining student involvement in education.** Another major challenge participants say they faced with remote learning is having students actively involved in learning, especially students in junior high and high school, who were not under the same supervision from their parents as children in elementary school. As one participant said, *“The participation has been really down. I found in my kids they're really discouraged because they can't see their friends, they don't have the same routine. They like the structure and they miss that when they're at home.”* In the spring, some felt older students were less engaged because students knew that their grades could not be adversely impacted, and therefore, did not try as hard or did not attend remote class regularly.
 - **Lack of training for remote learning.** For themselves, many participants say they struggled in the early stages of remote learning in the 2019-20 school year when they had to quickly adapt in-class to remote learning. They received minimal to no training on how to use various software applications, and were expected to master them in a matter of days, which proved to be a struggle; many have only started to feel comfortable with the technology more recently. As this comment explains, *“Back in April, they said we're going to remote learning and we've never seen this before, and just getting used to that technology and the lack of professional development was a challenge.”*
 - **Maintaining work-life balance.** In the 2019-20 school year, participants said their work-life balance was almost non-existent because they had to adapt their lessons to an online platform, and so they were learning how to use the platform and trying to adapt their lessons simultaneously, on top of their teaching schedule. Many said they were working many nights and weekends, just to be able to keep up with the changes. On top of this,

students' and parents' ability to reach them expanded beyond the normal work day, as students and parents would use the software to contact educators after normal school hours. The comments below speak to the expanded time participants' work took on during the 2019-20 school year.

"I think it's pretty much expanded your work day when it goes remote. You have the students messaging you at all times of the day, night, and early morning asking questions. I know it's stated that you don't have to answer, but we're all educators, and are all in it for the kids. We feel obligated to answer the questions and try and help out as much as we can. I've had messages coming at two in the morning and when it goes remote students aren't on the computers nine to three-thirty."

"My extra time was spent because I was just trying to figure out ways to help kids. I'd have kids email me questions and I'd record videos and send them back to them, so that was eating up my evenings sometimes and just trying to keep on top of the emails with parents because absenteeism was much higher, so just trying to, you know, contact those kids and see if they're okay."

"I think it speaks to what happens when you have that one kid that's not engaging, not doing anything, and all of a sudden they phone you at nine-thirty or 10 o'clock at night, and they want some help. If you don't talk to them now, you might not see them for another two weeks. So what do you do? You go on and you start chatting with them, then you find out you need a video chat and next thing you know, it's 10 o'clock at night, and here you are video chatting with a student helping them with a math problem."

- **Concurrent classrooms.** Participants who are teaching in concurrent-classrooms, that is, teaching in one class while also teaching students remotely (either at home or in another classroom) have found it challenging because it is difficult to address students' needs across different mediums at the same time, which adds to stress and/or impacts work-life balance.

2.2 Overcoming challenges and barriers

The bullets below summarize the key themes regarding how participants have dealt with and overcome barriers related with remote learning.

- **Becoming more familiar with online/remote software.** The biggest impact on overcoming barriers related to remote learning was better understanding of how to use the products and software available. As mentioned, many were thrown into remote teaching with little experience using the software required by their division, and it took several months (or even into the fall) to figure out how to use it to not only help students learn, but also keep students engaged. As one participant said, *"I found a couple apps where the kids are working on a little white board, so I'm teaching and I can see every single one of their screens and so there's a lot more back and forth. Where the beginning in March, it was a lot of me singing and dancing in front of the screen and not really sure what was happening on the other end. So just becoming more aware of interactive tools, I guess, has really been a lot better this time around."* Even something as simple as asking

students to keep their cameras on helped with remote teaching so that participants could get a better sense of which students were more or less engaged.

- **Getting support from other educators.** Participants said that initially during the pandemic, there were not a lot of formal professional development sessions, and in order to get up to speed, the best resource was often other educators. In some cases, these were formal connections through their school, while in other cases, it meant being involved in social media groups, where teachers would meet and share various lessons and/or ideas. Over the past few months, reliance on other educators is less than it was in the spring, but this is still a major source for assisting with some of the challenges they are experiencing.
- **Limiting their out-of-class time access.** A major focus (related to balancing work and life) was to set parameters on their teaching. In the new school year, participants said they returned to dealing with students and parents during a normal working day, and set guidelines for students in terms of when and how quickly they would respond to chats/emails during off hours. For example, *“In the spring I was getting contacted by parents and students all hours every day, all day long at random times because for some students, they just woke up and its three p.m. I was on 24 hours a day in the spring. This time around, it was very clear, I have this window and we have this schedule. They can pop me emails anytime but I might not answer them till nine a.m.”*
- **Hiring teachers specifically for remote learning.** In some schools/divisions, rather than having teachers teach concurrently, or splitting time between remote and in-class learning, they hired teachers specifically for teaching remotely. Being able to focus on one type of delivery (i.e., in class or remote) has reduced workloads by not having to adapt lessons so it fits both types of delivery (on-line and in-class).
- **Developing a routine.** By creating a remote learning schedule and/or routine that would be similar to in-class experiences, it improved the remote teaching and learning experience for both students and teachers. As noted earlier, in the spring, students were not always logging in at scheduled times, or were doing work during off school hours, which participants believed impacted the quality of education. By establishing a routine that is communicated to students, participants feel that remote learning has been more successful.

It should be noted that, when asked, very few participants had used or accessed the Manitoba Remote Learning Centre (although it is only applicable for those teaching K-8). For those that did look, they either did not find anything of value because the information and/or resources were too generic, or the resources did not pertain to their specific students. However, most said they looked when it was first launched and have not had the time to return to see if the information available has improved.

2.3 Learning loss

One area of concern was the learning loss students faced because of remote learning. Many participants said that students experienced significant learning loss for a number of reasons, primarily because of the issues related to remote learning in the spring (e.g., student inattention, connectivity, etc.). However, many participants said they had to reduce or cut sections of their curriculum because it was not feasible to teach all the components they had planned for in-class learning in the fall. Furthermore, some participants reported they were unable or unsure of how to adapt specific aspects of the curriculum to remote learning.

In most cases, participants said that their students are about two to three months behind where they should be in their learning and curriculum, which aligns with the time spent in remote learning during the spring of 2019-20. Not all students experienced the same level of learning loss. The degree of learning loss depended on their level of involvement in the spring and how well their previous teachers were able to teach remotely. Because many students were behind, they had to go back to aspects of the curriculum that students should have learned the previous year. They could not move forward with a significant portion of the class being behind, and trying to move forward would leave those who were behind even further behind.

When asked how they can overcome learning loss, a few suggestions were put forward.

- **Fewer students in classes.** By far, the most common suggestion was to reduce the number of students in each class. The suggestion was not at all related to COVID-19 protocols or safety, but that participants strongly believe that they are better able to teach and learning improves when the teacher to student ratio is smaller.
- **Remove remote learning.** There was also a sense that students learn better and are more engaged with in-class learning. Participants, primarily those teaching high school where students are not back in class full-time, said students would benefit from being in class all the time, rather than in remote learning. As one comment shows, *“I think the best thing we can do is actually put teachers in the classrooms. When you look at a kid and you know exactly if they are getting it or aren't getting it. A teacher provides immediate feedback, knowing exactly where the kid is and where the kid needs to go and there's just no substitute for that.”*
- **Focusing on essential components of the curriculum.** For many, to deal with learning loss and bring their students along quicker, they found they have been focusing on what many deem to be “essentials” of their curriculum, and perhaps eliminating components that they feel are less important.
- **Tutoring support.** One participant suggested that the province could offer tutoring and allow parents a tax deduction and/or rebate to pay for tutoring to help their children with learning loss.

3.0 Overall health and well-being

3.1 Student mental health

During the pandemic, participants said that they had concerns with their students' mental health and well-being, primarily because of the loss of social interaction between students; however, during the spring 2020, they did not feel there was much they could do to focus on students' well-being. Their time was focused on trying to adapt their teaching to remote learning and trying to contact students to keep them engaged.

Even when students returned in September, participants did not do much to focus on students' mental health and well-being because they were focused on adapting their classroom to fit public health measures. In part, many participants said that they found students' mental health and well-being to be much better, simply due to the fact that they were back in class and had a semblance of a normal routine.

However, many participants pointed out that the loss of a lot of physical activity and extra-curricular activities has left many students without an outlet to improve their health and reduce stress. As one participant said, *"I do feel with the loss of gym class that they're not getting a lot of movement at all, and although we do take movement breaks throughout the day it just it's not the same. Especially because before and after school they're not getting any movement."*

Some participants said they have tried to fill the loss of activities by adding or adapting activities that can be physically distant, typically involving online computing and/or games (e.g., Minecraft club, e-sports, etc.). However, many did not seem too focused on replacing lost activities for two reasons. First, because of the added workloads related to remote learning and adapting their teaching, some simply do not have the time to manage or coordinate activities that they might normally have taken time to do. Second, one participant noted that in the current school year some teachers have purposely withdrawn from these activities since they are not being pushed by administration at the moment, as noted by this comment: *"A lot of staff have really noted that this whole thing has been a weight on mental health and not having to stay for an extra three hours after school because there's a basketball game, and people have commented on how it's really nice. So I think that kind of plays into the mental health thing."*

When asked for supports needed to support student mental health, most participants could not put forth suggestions that were not related to learning. For example, many said that having smaller classrooms to aid in student learning would reduce stress and improve mental health because students would be feeling more confident and less behind in their studies.

However, most seemed to believe that a return to full in-class learning with fewer restrictions related to the pandemic would be the best solution to aid students' mental health and well-being.

3.2 Staff mental health

Participants said that because of their increased workload in the spring, their mental health suffered because of the added stress. Few found very good ways of coping with the additional stress, so the summer break was a well-received way to unwind.

Currently, participants said that their stress levels are higher than normal because of the need to balance in-class and remote learning, as well as mind restrictions related to the pandemic. However, stress levels are not nearly as high as they were during the spring.

With that being said, participants noted several ways they are better able to manage their mental health and well-being, noting that they have taken more sick days and/or mental health days and are simply getting away from work (e.g., going for walks, hikes, etc.).

One area that participants said has suffered is relationships between staff. As a result of the pandemic and public health measures, staff meet virtually and often do not have an opportunity to come together during lunch or after school. In the spring, many said that staff were reaching out and helping each other more so than usual. During the 2020-21 school year, there has not been the same level of interaction with other staff because of the need to remain physically distant due to public health measures, as noted by this participant's comment: *"Now I feel that's kind of starting to drift away now because we don't ever meet in person anymore. At the beginning, for sure in March to June, and then for sure in the fall, I felt people had to band together because we had to help each other figure this out and figure out the technology pieces, so there was a lot more dialogue."*

4.0 Changes to be maintained

After a discussion of the impacts the pandemic has had on education as a whole in Manitoba, participants were asked what changes have occurred that they would like to see implemented or carried forward beyond COVID. Of interest, participants tended to struggle with this question and did not quickly or easily identify learnings and opportunities that they would like to see implemented moving forward; however, after some discussion, the following (few) themes were identified.

- **Supplementing with online learning.** Participants would like to see some component of online learning be maintained. That is, most do not want any remote learning (although a few would keep blended learning for some high school programs), but would like to see continued use of online platforms as another resource for them to help further students' education. As one participant noted, prior to the pandemic, approximately one-third of teachers in their school were using online resources, primarily because there were concerns about using it and also some unwillingness to learn/try new ideas among some colleagues. Now that everyone has been forced to use/learn online platforms, they would like to see it continue to allow more options for students to learn and access information. One participant explained how she would see online learning continue after a return to in-class learning: *"I did a lot of class recordings, so I think that's something that I'll continue. Once I've been back in the classroom, it's just automatic now; I hit record. The benefit for students is if they need to re-watch whatever we did that day, or they can*

pause, rewind. Or an absence, they always got that resource, so I think that's something that I'll continue to do."

- **Virtual parent-teacher conferences.** In one group, participants were quite adamant about the need to continue virtual-parent conferences. Not only did they feel that virtual meetings worked better in terms of meeting parents' schedules, but also felt that they conferences worked better virtually. "I just felt like the conversations were so much deeper than they are in person as well. And we even had parents that were out of province that could come that wouldn't generally be able to come, so to be able to be part of that conversation was really great as well." Participants recognized that the need for in-person would remain, but perhaps giving parents the option could be considered moving forward. In the same group, they also noted that virtual staff meetings should continue; however, there was not consensus on this across groups, as mentioned in Section 3.2, the loss of in-person staff meetings has impacted staff morale for some.
- **Continue remote learning for some students.** Although the general consensus around K-12 education was that it functions better in-class, a few participants said there are groups of students that would learn better remotely, especially those that struggle coming to class on a regular basis, either because of behavioural/social issues or health issues. A few mentioned that there are educators teaching via remote learning for entire grade levels in some divisions, and that could continue after the pandemic for those that would benefit from it.

5.0 K-12 transformation

The bullets below summarize the discussion of Manitoba's Commission on K-12 Education.

- ▶ **Some participated in consultations in spring 2019.** Some participants had taken part in the Commission's consultations on K-12 education in the spring of 2019. Among those that had participated, few had any input about the process, other than they welcomed the opportunity to participate, but wondered how the Commission would be using their feedback. In many cases, participants thought the Commission already had decisions made about their recommendations, as the comments below show:

"To be honest, I don't even know if it really made a difference on what I said or not because it felt like decisions were already going to be made, and my input didn't matter. It's a combination of events leading up to the head review and whatnot; makes me question whether voices are really heard."

"I went to a very emotional town hall, where there were a lot of people crying in that room, because I think people felt desperate to have their voices heard and because we're facing school closures and budget cuts and lots of slashes there are lots of rumours going around about what what's anticipated. And it was felt that it really didn't matter what we were going to say, the report is going to be what the political people want it to be."

- ▶ **Hopes for the Commission's report.** Most participants did not have very specific hopes for the Commission's report, other than to feel that the opinions of educators were listened to as part of the process. Primarily, that meant transparency about what the

Commission had heard from educators, and having that supported by statistics or numbers that would be linked to the Commission's recommendations. Otherwise, most participants simply hoped the report would strengthen education as a whole, primarily related to lower numbers of students in each class to enhance student learning, and more funds put towards education (which presumably would go towards hiring more educators to have smaller class sizes). Generally, there was a sense that the report would be too focused on the administrative side of education, rather than the teaching side (*"I worry that the report will spend too much time focusing on administrative levels of education versus what is desperately needed in the front lines to ensure that we can provide the best possible educational opportunity to the kids in our classrooms."*).

- ▶ **Concerns about amalgamation.** Most participants had concerns about the potential for school divisions to be amalgamated as part of the Commission's recommendations, which for the most part were related to each division's governance over schools. Many felt that larger divisions would not be able to cater to the unique needs of their communities because communities/schools would be too different to create policies that fit all schools. As one participant explained, *"I'm in northern Manitoba, but I can't imagine someone who's not living here and understanding and knowing our families, our students, our community. I can't imagine somebody else making the decisions for us."* This sentiment was shared by educators in and outside of Winnipeg; however, seemed to be more strongly voiced by educators teaching outside of Winnipeg. A few others had concerns about learning new systems (e.g., learning a new report card system, using Microsoft Teams instead of Brightspace, etc.) and/or policies if their division was to be amalgamated. However, very few raised concerns about how amalgamation would impact their day-to-day, in-class teaching. It seemed concerns were much more on a macro than micro-level.
- ▶ **Inclusion.** The topic of inclusion as an area of focus was discussed with participants; however, across the three groups, inclusion did not necessarily seem to strike a chord. Rather than seeing inclusion as a key focal point of education, some raised concerns about an over-focus on inclusion to the point where it has negative impacts on students' learning and education. Some said that by including all students in the classroom, especially those with significant learning and/or behavioural issues, it can often impact the development of other students in the class because they have to spend more time with these students, meaning they have less time for the other students. In order to support a truly inclusion education system, many said it will require training for educators to ensure they are up-to-date on techniques to incorporate and/or help all students, but also more funds to support student service programs. The one area where there was some consensus around inclusion was a focus on marginalized groups, specifically Indigenous and low income groups that may have barriers that negatively impact students' education. As one participant said, *"We have a lot of families who are struggling and in order for those students to learn, they need to be fed, they need to feel safe, and they need to have consistency in their life, and they need those supports that our schools just aren't providing them with."*

6.0 Perceptions of Manitoba Education

When asked about their perceptions of Manitoba Education and how the department contributes to teacher and student success, most participants struggled with identifying specific ways in which they felt the department contributed. Most saw the department as holding the purse-strings and allocating money to divisions, and each division is ultimately responsible for using that money to ensure education goals are met. They also saw the department as being the decision-makers on curriculum, but there were mixed feelings about the quality of the curriculum, as noted by this comment: *“The curriculum documents that they give us help students. It gives you ideas on how to teach it. And I say that in one breath, because they have some excellent stuff out there; and then some of the curriculum documents are like 25 years old, and they haven't been updated since. So on that end you think nobody teaches this way anymore.”*

In general, they saw Manitoba Education as being separated from the day-to-day operations of schools and teaching, and didn't necessarily see the department as an ally for teachers. They did not see people within the department advocating for teachers or aspects that they felt were important (e.g., fewer students per class). As one participant said, *“I kind of feel like I'm a foot soldier that just got asked by the general if he's helping me and I don't know if the general's working for me or the President. Is it top down or is the Minister of Education talking to government and defending on behalf of myself and students?”*

During the pandemic, participants' views did not change much, as they saw the department as simply handing out instructions and they were required to follow them, and they did not see (or believe) there was much dialogue between the department and teachers. Although they did not always agree with the change being made during the pandemic, for the most part, they felt like the department was trying to make decisions that were in the best interest of education, while trying to balance the needs of other areas of the province (e.g., childcare, working parents, etc.).

Appendix A — Discussion guide

DISCUSSION GUIDE

0:00 INTRODUCTION (10 minutes)

Good evening, my name is Nicholas Borodenko and I work for PRA Inc., a market research company that has been contracted by the Government of Manitoba and the Department of Education to conduct focus groups on their behalf. I want to thank you all for taking time this evening to participate in today's focus group and offer your opinions about your experiences in remote and in-class learning during the pandemic and how it is impacting you, your school, and your students. Manitoba Education will use the information obtained in these sessions to inform current and future planning.

Before we begin, I have some meeting guidelines I would like to review.

- There are no right or wrong answers. We invited you here today to give your opinions, so please provide your honest opinions, even if they are different from others in the group.
- Please try to speak one at a time, so the entire group can hear your comments.
- Please leave your cameras on at all time and leave yourself unmuted, and feel free to speak when you have something to say. If you find you are unable to jump in, please raise your hand or hit the raise hand button in the chat feature.
- To ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak, I may call on you to get your opinion. Conversely, I may interrupt you, not because what you have to say is not important, but to allow others to have the opportunity to speak.
- We are recording this group to make sure our notes accurately reflect what everyone says. We will not use your name in our report, and after the report is complete, we will destroy the recordings.

[REFERENCE VIEWERS VISIBLE ON ZOOM WITH CAMERAS OFF]

Before we begin, does anybody have any questions?

First, I'll call on you one by one, please say your name, what school you teach in, what grade you teach, and how long you have been teaching.

0:10 REMOTE LEARNING [25 MINUTES]

I want to start the discussion focused on remote learning.

1. From your experience with remote learning this school year, what has worked well? What has not?
2. What have been some of the challenges you have experienced with remote learning?
 - How have you overcome them?
 - What did you do/try that was successful?

- What did you do/try that was unsuccessful? Why was it unsuccessful?
 - Has remote learning had additional impacts on your work-life balance? Please describe.
3. Describe your experience transitioning students to remote learning and back into in-class instruction.
- What, if any, challenges have you faced? Which were expected? Unexpected?
 - What strategies did you use to help address these challenges?
4. Have you utilized the Manitoba Remote Learning Support Centre to assist you with remote learning this year? Is there anything else the Remote Learning Support Centre could offer to assist you in the classroom?

0:35 TEACHING [25 MINUTES]

5. Which opportunities have emerged this school year that would you like to see continue beyond COVID and why? *[FOR MODERATOR: you may want to probe for the following types of opportunities: Classroom teaching; Student engagement; Parent/Caregiver engagement; Staff collaboration]*
6. Have you seen evidence of learning loss greater than what you would typically see each fall?
- What measurables/outcomes/evidence do you have of learning loss?
 - What subject areas/grades have you seen the biggest learning loss?
7. What supports do you need to help mitigate potential learning loss in students?
8. What innovative steps have you and/or your school taken to help support the following during the pandemic?
- Students
 - Parents
 - Each other
9. What are the top additional classroom supports that would assist with in-class learning and teaching? *[FOR MODERATOR: If focus is on individual/mental health supports for teachers, indicate that will be covered in the next topic. Probe for additional measures beyond additional teachers and EAs]*
10. Thinking about the Department of Education, how would you say they have contribute to the success of the education system during the pandemic? What do they do well? What could they be doing better?
11. In general, during non-pandemic times, how does the Department contribute to success of education? What do they do well? What could they be doing better?

1:00 OVERALL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING [25 MINUTES]

12. What are some creative ways that you have been able to maintain positive relationships:

- Students
- Parents
- Colleagues/ Administration

13. What mental health and well-being information, supports or strategies have you found helpful in supporting your students to address any issues they are facing associated with the pandemic?

14. Have you noticed social impacts on students in your classrooms as result of the pandemic? What have you done to help mitigate those? What support could be provided to assist to you in helping those students?

15. What mental health and well-being information or supports have you found helpful to address any issues you have faced associated with the pandemic?

16. What additional mental health and well-being supports/resources for teachers, other educational staff and students would you find most helpful in the future?

K-12 Transformation

Before we end, I am going to transition to Manitoba's Commission on K-12 Education. In the spring of 2019, this Commission conducted, for the first time in decades, a full review of Manitoba's K to 12 education system.

17. Did you participate in the Commission's consultations, either through an online survey, sending a submission or attending one of the town halls? If so, what was that experience like?

The Commission's mandate was to undertake a comprehensive and independent review of the K-12 education system. The government wanted advice on modernizing the education system to ensure it prepares our students for post-secondary education, the workforce, and a rapidly changing world that is hugely competitive.

18. As an educator, what would you be hoping to see the Commission recommend in their report to assist you in your role as a teacher?

19. Are you excited, neutral or apprehensive at the opportunity for change in the education system resulting from the Commission's report and recommendations? (If, apprehensive, please probe for more specifics)

20. It has been reported that the government is looking at fewer school divisions, and during the Commission consultations many stakeholders expressed worry about an amalgamation of divisions. What are your top concerns about how amalgamation would affect your day-to-day work in the classroom? What opportunities or benefits do you see from amalgamation?
21. The Commission heard from many educators on the importance of inclusion in modern classrooms. What changes or improvements do you see that are needed to the education system as a whole to make it more inclusive for students of different backgrounds and abilities?

[CHECK WITH VIEWERS FOR ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS]

Thank you. Those are all of the questions I have.

I appreciate you taking the time to discuss your opinions.