

Thank you for participating in the Return to School Survey! We appreciate you sharing your thoughts and feedback with us.

What We Asked You: What are the most important things you want to share about your school experience so far this year?

Who We Heard From



5,309 Students attending school in-person
797 Elementary students (Grade 7-8)
4,512 Secondary students (Grade 9-12)



3,976 Thoughts were shared



105,767 Star ratings were assigned to thoughts

Survey Results:

- Most students (89%) reported that they are feeling somewhat or very engaged in their learning;
- Nearly $\frac{2}{3}$ of students feel their well-being has improved or stayed the same since returning to school; secondary students were more likely to report a decline in well-being;
- Over half of students reported that they have the skills to cope with school and life stressors;
- Almost $\frac{2}{3}$ of students are comfortable with the health and safety precautions being taken in their school;
- Many students are comfortable using the online learning platform.

Top Thoughts - Grades 7 to 8:

- **Adherence to Safety Protocols:** Students generally feel that schools are doing a good job keeping them safe, but some are concerned that their peers are not taking distancing/masks seriously enough.
- **Social Connections:** Students are happy to be able to interact with friends and teachers again. Students want more opportunities to (safely) socialize and interact with others.
- **Recess, Physical Activity and Extracurriculars:** Students are finding physical education classes and recess challenging due to safety protocols and the lack of equipment. Students would like clubs, sports, and other extracurriculars and social activities to resume.

- **Workload:** Students find that the workload is heavy and there is a lot of homework and they would benefit from resources to help manage stress and support well-being.
- **Safety Measures:** Generally, students are comfortable with the safety measures in place. Some students requested additional precautions (e.g., mandatory masks for all, better efforts at social distancing).
- **Teachers:** Many students shared positive feedback about their teachers being well-organized, supportive, and helping to keep them safe.
- **Engagement:** Many students are finding classes fun and engaging, while others are struggling to stay focused and motivated during long classes and on days at home.
- **Learning In-Person:** Students described the benefits of learning in-person (e.g., support, socialization/interaction, focus, routine) and preference for in-person learning over virtual learning.
- **Mental Health:** Many students expressed that their mental health has improved since returning to school, while others requested more support for mental health and well-being.
- **Access to Phones:** Students would like to be able to access their phones at recess and lunch time, since opportunities for social interaction and other activities are restricted.
- **Class Size:** Many students reported that they feel their class size is too large.

Top Thoughts - Grades 9 to 12:

- **Workload:** Students find that the workload is heavy and there is a lot of homework. Students would benefit from resources to help manage stress and support well-being.
- **Schedule/Pace:** The Quadmester model has been a big adjustment for many secondary students and has presented challenges including fast pace, condensed course time, and long period of time in the classroom. Some students have asked for more breaks during class.
- **Safety Measures:** Generally, students are comfortable with the safety measures in place. Some students requested additional precautions (e.g., mandatory masks for all, better efforts at social distancing).
- **Well-Being:** The current school experience is creating feelings of stress and anxiety for some students.
- **Virtual Learning:** Students reported some challenges with virtual learning, such as staying focused, screen time, and difficulties interacting with others. Students prefer in-person instructional time.
- **Grades / Assessments / Preparedness:** Some students are finding the frequency and weight of assignments/tests stressful, and they are concerned about their grades. Many students expressed concerns about being prepared for subsequent grades or college/university.

- Support: Senior/graduating students need additional support from guidance counsellors, support with university applications, and information related to graduating.
- Communication: Students want to receive important communications directly, rather than through their parents.
- Teachers: Staff and students would both benefit from tips and resources on how to make virtual learning more engaging. Students and staff are both still adjusting to the changes in the new model of learning in terms of expectations and workload.
- Social Interactions and Cohorts: Students want more opportunities for safe social connections (e.g., between cohorts; clubs, teams, and extracurriculars) with classmates and peers.
- Engagement: Students reported feeling tired and having a hard time staying engaged in learning, particularly in the virtual environment and on at-home days. Students would benefit from additional supports or resources related to learning in a virtual environment.
- Positive Thoughts: Students described the benefits of learning in-person and showed appreciation of teacher efforts to keep students engaged and safe.

If you want to learn more, you can view details of the [full survey results](#).

How will this information make a difference?

We heard what you had to say! We have shared your thoughts with the staff at your school. The principals and teachers will be working together on strategies to:

- Ensure safety protocols are in place and enhanced wherever possible;
- Find ways to help build school spirit and a stronger sense of community, while keeping safe;
- Develop tip sheets to address technical issues;
- Work with our guidance counsellors, social workers and psychologists to help support well-being;
- Address workload balance concerns, especially for secondary students;
- Work with grade 12 students to develop plans to reimagine safe graduation related activities.

Secondary students will see some immediate changes, including no exams for secondary students, cancelled EQAO testing for grade nine students, and reduced requirements for volunteer hours. Watch for more information about this and more in the weeks ahead.

We are also sharing the feedback we received with our colleagues at the Ministry of Education and Ottawa Public Health. Together, we are working to ensure a safe school year so that students can be successful.

Remember, if you have ideas about how things can be improved at your school, share those ideas with your teacher and/or principal. They would love to hear from you.