



Summary of Highlights for Parents

"It Takes a Virus: What Can Be Learned About Parent-Teacher Relations from Pandemic Realities?" aimed to capture parents' and teachers' perspectives about learning at home during March – June 2020. Findings are based on data collected from 1067 parent survey respondents, 566 teacher survey respondents, and 10 parents and 10 teachers who were individually interviewed.

Parent-teacher relations were enhanced because:

- Communication was more frequent, more meaningful, and more personalized communication (e.g. via Google Meet, phone, email).
- Parents had new or renewed appreciation for the role teachers play in children's learning.
- Parents gained deeper understanding of their children as learners, which meant discussions with teachers were more effective and parents could be stronger advocates for their children.
- Parents felt supported by teachers. Teachers' empathy about families' circumstances was key.
- Parents found value when teachers provided synchronous learning opportunities (e.g. Google Meets) to clarify material and provide social interaction.
- Teachers gained new insights into students and families, especially with respect to how parents juggled supporting their children's learning with their own work demands and domestic responsibilities.
- Teachers and parents worked together to discover creative ways to meet students' needs, sometimes realizing that learning at home was better for the child.
- Teachers assured parents that it was okay to de-emphasize school to focus on children's or parents' emotional health and other family priorities.

Parent-teacher relations became strained when:

- There was no standardized approach to technology—too many platforms and programs requiring parents to figure out how each teacher wanted things done, often without any technology support.
- Teachers' assignments were not straightforward and parents had to spend a lot of time explaining material or helping children complete work.
- Parents felt teachers were assigning too much or too little work for their children.

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- Parents could not communicate with teachers effectively (e.g. slow responses, slow or unclear feedback on children's work, no availability during evenings when parents had time to help children).
- Teacher "presence" was lacking—few or no Google Meets offered to explain material or connect with students.
- Students were unmotivated to do schoolwork, and parent-child or family conflict emerged as parents tried to help their children focus.

Other noteworthy findings:

- Provincial budget decisions had significant impact on families who had children with exceptional learning needs (e.g. Educational Assistants)
- Ministry decision on how to handle grades and the progression to the next grade was perceived to de-motivate students, which made it difficult for parents to support their children.
- Parents and teachers expressed concern about students' grades in the 2019-2020 school year falsely representing their abilities and knowledge. They predict some students will face future challenges with learning.
- Parents and teachers acknowledged schools play more than an academic role. The social function of schooling was missed: students missed teachers; teachers missed students; and students missed their friends and extracurricular activities.

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