



EXCHANGING IDEAS - REPORT FOR MAY 6-13 EXCHANGE WITH FAMILIES AND STUDENTS

BACKGROUND

On May 6th, WRDSB launched “Exchanging Ideas” - a campaign that allows for connection and to hear ideas and questions from families, students and staff during the system closure. The following report details the feedback received from families and students.

Thoughtexchange was the tool used to gather feedback from stakeholders from May 6 to May 13, 2020. Families and students were asked to answer the question:

What are the most important things WRDSB can do to better support students' learning and well-being during this time?

Participants could enter as many thoughts (i.e., responses to the above question) as they liked, review the thoughts shared by others, and assign stars to each thought (from 1 star to 5 stars) depending on how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the thought.































To make sure that the conversation in each Exchange was about the topics that were most meaningful to participants, separate Exchanges were created for the following groups:

- Parents/guardians of a student in Kindergarten to Grade 8
- Parents/guardians of a student in Grade 9 to Grade 12
- Students in Kindergarten to Grade 8
- Students in Grade 9 to Grade 12

Using Thoughtexchange helped us determine the thoughts that are most important to the WRDSB community.

PARTICIPANTS

How did they engage?

All Participants	 4,716 Participants	 2,811 Shared Thoughts (60%)	 3,630 Rated Thoughts (77%)	 3,147 Explored Thoughts (67%)
	 5,783 Thoughts shared			
	 104,839 Ratings assigned			
Students in K-Grade 8*	 680 Participants	 379 Shared Thoughts (56%)	 501 Rated Thoughts (74%)	 442 Explored Thoughts (65%)
	 739 Thoughts shared			
	 12,633 Ratings assigned			
Students in Grade 9 to 12*	 335 Participants	 149 Shared Thoughts (45%)	 237 Rated Thoughts (71%)	 188 Explored Thoughts (56%)
	 258 Thoughts shared			
	 5,436 Ratings assigned			
Parent/Guardian of K-Grade 8 Student	 2,557 Participants	 1,584 Shared Thoughts (62%)	 2,011 Rated Thoughts (79%)	 1,762 Explored Thoughts (69%)
	 3,318 Thoughts shared			
	 62,008 Ratings assigned			
Parent/Guardian of Grade 9-12 Student	 1,144 Participants	 699 Shared Thoughts (61%)	 881 Rated Thoughts (77%)	 755 Explored Thoughts (66%)
	 1,468 Thoughts shared			
	 24,762 Ratings assigned			

*Note: Thoughts shared in these Exchanges were written by both parents/guardians and students

Participation Language

Language	Number of participants		
English	4,654	Portuguese	2
Arabic	20	Ukrainian	2
Chinese (Simplified)	12	Marathi	1
Korean	8	Russian	1
Spanish	4	Serbian	1
Japanese	4	Turkish	1
Persian	3	Vietnamese	1
French	2		

Please select on the City or Township where you live:

City/Township	Number	Percentage
Kitchener	1,732	38%
Waterloo	1,117	24%
Cambridge	921	20%
Woolwich	313	7%
Wilmont	257	6%
Wellesley	97	2%
North Dumfries	83	2%
Other	48	1%

Have you/your child engaged in Distance Learning (e.g., through online tools, printed materials received through the mail, phone calls)?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	4,421	97%
No	114	3%
No Response	3	<1%

FROM THOUGHTS TO ACTIONS

The thoughts shared by participants were reviewed. The following themes emerged from those thoughts that received an average rating higher than 3.6. The table below highlights the themes and the actions that have or will be taken as a result of the feedback received. The second table provides a detailed description for each theme.

Themes	Actions
<p>Importance of synchronous learning as part of distance learning experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In situations where educators are aware that the use of synchronous audio or video would benefit students, we are encouraging and supporting its use. When used effectively, it [live video] can also be a valuable tool in aiding instruction as it can enhance students' learning and keep them engaged while supporting their mental health, particularly when they are isolated from classmates, friends and extended family. Educators are being provided with numerous supports to build their capacity in the use of synchronous learning tools (e.g., online resources such as videos, guideline documents, webinars).
<p>Be mindful of the challenges students and families are facing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We recognize that students and families are living in very different contexts and we continue to make student well-being and mental health a priority. We are continuously updating the WRDSB@Home site with mental health and distance learning resources. Administrators and Educators are being provided with resources to support student well-being in a distance learning environment.
<p>Clearly communicate expectations for students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an expectation that educators connect regularly with students and families to provide clear expectations and to clarify expectations where students or families have questions. We are encouraging staff to share expectations but also be flexible in their approach given the differing circumstances of students and families (i.e., they can shift based on circumstances).
<p>Provide feedback on students' progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We continue to reinforce with educators the importance of timely feedback on student learning and have continued to build educator capacity to provide feedback in the distance learning environment. We are also encouraging educators to be open to feedback from students and their families about what students need during this time and to address these needs collaboratively with students and their parents/guardians.
<p>Different approaches to distance learning being used</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have seen a dramatic increase in the number of educators using Brightspace and Google Classroom in the last 8 weeks. We continue to provide support to educators to use a combination of digital tools and personal techniques to deliver distance learning, with new resources being created to support educators in using video conferencing
<p>Continue to communicate with families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are continuing with weekly updates to the community, with more frequent updates when announcements are made by the Ministry of Education We introduced a new weekly video series highlighting work of educators delivering distance learning. Educators are continuing to reach out and connect with families to monitor students' experiences of distance learning.
<p>Ensure all students and families have the tools needed to engage in distance learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are changing the process for students to receive printed materials to ensure they arrive more frequently. Additional WiFi enabled devices have been purchased and will be provided to families who are unable to access the internet. We have reinforced that distance learning cannot be a "one-size" fits all approach and that educators must differentiate based on the needs of the students and their families.

Considerations for Re-opening

- Our plans will be informed by directions and recommendations from the Ministry of Education, Public Health and experiences from other jurisdictions nationally and internationally.
- We will seek feedback from parents/guardians as we develop our plans for re-entry.

Exchanging Ideas (May 6-13) Question for Families & Students: “What are the most important things WRDSB can do to better support students' learning and well-being during this time?”
Themes and Detailed Descriptions of Themes by Respondent Group

	Importance of Synchronous Learning as Part of Distance Learning Experience	Be Mindful of the Challenges Students and Families are Facing	Clearly communicate expectations for students	Provide feedback on students' progress	Different Approaches to Distance Learning Being Used	Continue to communicate with families
Parent/Guardian of K- Grade 8 Student Click here to see the top thoughts shared**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Call for an increase in synchronous learning opportunities (via online tools, phone calls) - Importance of students and teachers interacting regularly to increase engagement, to support learning, to maintain relationships, to foster sense of belonging to a class - Importance of students connecting with each other to support their development and mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognize it is challenging for families to support distance learning when adults are working full time, especially with the youngest learners - Provide learning activities that students can do independently - Ensure that students with special needs are being supported and abilities are taken into consideration as part of distance learning - Support for and be mindful of the mental health and well-being of students and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share work with students at regular intervals to allow families to plan the day or week - Share expectations, instructions and/or schedule of assignments with students regularly as it helps to create a routine - Recognize and share with students that the timelines are flexible - Share learning goals of units being taught with families so they are able to provide support to students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide meaningful and timely feedback to students and families on students' submitted work and overall progress, as it helps student engagement and motivation - Provide progress updates to parents/guardians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expression of appreciation for educators and all they are doing - Desire for distance learning to be a similar experience for each student as currently experiencing differences in: messaging, frequency of contact with educators, level of support from educators, online learning platforms being used - Request for coordination between educators in same grade within a school so that students in same school have similar experiences - Provide training and support to educators for delivering distance learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expression of importance of communication between educators, students and families to support sense of community and learning - Provide regular updates to WRDSB families when they are available - Continue to collect feedback from families
Parent/Guardian of Grade 9-12 Student Click here to see the top thoughts shared**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Call for an increase in synchronous learning opportunities (via online tools, phone calls) - Importance of students and teachers interacting regularly to increase engagement - Ensure educators are available to support students' learning through regular interactions via email or phone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide support to students who are struggling (for various reasons) - Take into consideration the challenges that students may face - Support for and be mindful of the mental health and well-being of students and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share expectations, instructions and/or schedule of assignments with students regularly as it helps to create a routine - Share learning goals with students regularly - Encourage and set expectations for students to complete work, while also being mindful that this may be challenging for some students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide meaningful and timely feedback to students and families on students' submitted work and overall progress, as it helps student engagement, motivation and reduces anxiety - Provide progress updates to parents/guardians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expression of appreciation for educators and all they are doing - Desire for distance learning to be a similar experience for each student as currently experiencing differences in: frequency of contact with educators, level of support from educators, online learning platforms being used, amount of work being assigned - Provide training and support to educators for delivering distance learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expression of importance of communication between educators and families to share progress updates and to help support distance learning
Students in K- Grade 8* Click here to see the top thoughts shared**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Call for an increase in synchronous learning opportunities (via online tools, phone calls), especially videos lead by educator - Format of online learning should consider skills and abilities of youngest learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognize it is challenging for families to support distance learning when adults are working full time, especially with the youngest learners - Provide learning activities that students can do independently - Support for and be mindful of the mental health and well-being of students and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share work with students at regular intervals to allow families to plan the day or week - Encourage and set expectations for students to complete work, while also being mindful that this may be challenging for some students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide meaningful and timely feedback to students and families on students' submitted work or activities students are engaging in, as it helps student engagement and motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expression of appreciation for educators and all they are doing - Desire for distance learning to be a similar experience for each student as currently experiencing differences in: frequency of contact with educators, level of support from educators, amount of work being assigned - Provide training and support to educators for delivering distance learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expression of importance of communication between educators, students and families to support sense of community and learning - Provide regular updates to WRDSB families when they are available - Continue to collect feedback from families
Students in Grade 9 to 12* Click here to see the top thoughts shared**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Call for educators to be available to support students' learning through regular interactions via email or phone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide flexible timelines, allow students to work at appropriate pace - Support for and be mindful of the mental health and well-being of students and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share work with students at regular intervals to allow families to plan the day or week - Share expectations, instructions and/or schedule of assignments with students regularly - Be mindful of students' workload 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide meaningful and timely feedback to students and families on students' submitted work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desire for distance learning to be a similar experience for each student as currently experiencing differences in: frequency of contact with educators, amount of work being assigned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide regular updates to WRDSB families when they are available

*Note: Thoughts shared in these Exchanges were written by both parents/guardians and students; **Note: You will need to change “Participant Group” from “All” to the group of interest (e.g., Student in Grade 9-12) to see the top thoughts from just that group.

Ensure all students and families have the tools needed to engage in distance learning	Considerations for Re-opening
<p>Parent/Guardian of K- Grade 8 Student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that students have access to devices, printed materials (e.g., workbooks), the internet to support their learning - Provide activities for youngest learners that do not require technology <p>Click here to see the top thoughts shared**</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide clear information about the plan to return to schools and appropriate measures that will be put in place (e.g., social distancing, personal protective equipment, class sizes) - Plan for students to require additional supports in September (academic, mental health) - Continue with distance learning until the end of this school year
<p>Parent/Guardian of Grade 9-12 Student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that students have access to devices, printed materials (e.g., workbooks), and the internet to support their learning <p>Click here to see the top thoughts shared**</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide clear information about the plan to return to schools and appropriate measures that will be put in place (e.g., social distancing, personal protective equipment, class sizes) - Plan for students to require additional supports in September (e.g., academic, mental health) - Continue with distance learning until the end of this school year and into next year
<p>Students in K-Grade 8*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that students have access to devices, printed materials (e.g., workbooks, paper), and the internet to support their learning - Provide activities for youngest learners that do not require technology <p>Click here to see the top thoughts shared**</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide clear information about the plan to return to schools and appropriate measures that will be put in place (e.g., social distancing, personal protective equipment, class sizes)
<p>Students in Grade 9 to 12*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that students have access the internet and any additional resources to support their learning <p>Click here to see the top thoughts shared</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue with distance learning until the end of this school year and into next year

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