

Dear Ms. Ogden and Mr. Davis,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on post-pandemic secondary restart.

DPAC circulated a survey to secondary parents with the following 5 questions:

1. Thinking of the changes to education in the last year, what changes did you like and would keep in the future?
2. Thinking of the changes to education in the last year, what changes did you dislike?
3. Thinking of education pre-pandemic, what do you miss and want to do again?
4. What features do you want to see in a schedule when all restrictions have been lifted?
5. What other suggestions do you have for the Vancouver School Board for post-pandemic education?

This survey received 901 responses with parents/guardians from the following schools:

- King George
- U Hill
- David Thompson
- Windermere
- Gladstone
- Britannia
- Prince of Wales
- Vancouver Technical
- Churchill
- Lord Byng
- John Oliver
- Magee
- Tupper
- Point Grey
- Templeton
- Eric Hamber
- Killarney
- Kitsilano

(EDIT: We have removed the number of respondents/school from this version of the report but it was made available to all committee members and the VSB.)

Some limitations of this survey include the fact that:

- Our survey did *not* allow for the option of selecting multiple schools (e.g., for a parent with students at multiple schools) so this breakdown by school is likely not accurate.
- We understand that not all parents were able to complete this survey and this is also a limitation of our results.
  - Our DPAC newsletter (which contained the survey link) does not reach all parents (DPAC does not have all parent emails) and not all PACs distributed this survey to their members.
  - Also, DPAC understands that requests for feedback like this are less likely to be completed by those historically excluded from participation (i.e. Black, Indigenous and People of Color as well as those who are low income, are English language learners, have disabilities and/or other structural barriers to engagement).
  - As you can see from the distribution of represented schools, many secondary school parents are not well sampled in this survey.

As a result of the strengths and limitations of this survey, efforts have been made to interpret survey results in two ways:

- Through attending to the dominant and emergent themes in the data (e.g. topics/opinions that come up the most) and
- Through attending to less dominant but important themes in the data, particularly ones that are important to attend to through an equity lens. Because time is of the essence, this level of interpretation is not given the attention it deserves. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions about dynamics in the data and I can look closer for a deeper analysis.

DPAC assembled a group of 20-30 secondary parent volunteers to analyze and interpret survey data. I want to acknowledge and thank our working group for their time in reviewing, discussing and analyzing the survey data. Given the number of responses, this report would not be possible without the help of these engaged parents.

Finally, I include PAC level feedback in this report that we received from PAC chairs in the final section. This PAC level feedback is limited in that PACs were given a short time frame to engage with their members and we have only received 5 feedback emails from PAC chairs. Despite these limitations, these emails are rich with the community level knowledge of PAC chairs that may not be reflected in individual level data.

## Outline

I include here 3 major sections:

1. Summary
2. Summary of Responses to Each Survey Question
3. PAC Level Feedback

## Summary

### Working group

DPAC assembled a working group of parent volunteers to analyze and interpret survey data. Many spoke of being frustrated that they were being consulted on post-pandemic education when we are still mid-pandemic. Many asked when/how will they be consulted on their experiences of pandemic education and their hopes for the future (assuming we will continue to be experiencing a pandemic in some form for a while longer). Many voiced that it was important for DPAC to capture the level of dissatisfaction with the previous year, even if this was not the focus of the consultation. The working group noted how answers to questions blurred the lines between post-pandemic suggestions and pandemic suggestions and as such, we cover the range of responses here.

### Return to full-time in-person learning

One of the major themes that came up in the survey and in working group discussions was the request to return to full-time in person learning and the accompanying dissatisfaction some parents have experienced with education over the last year. This dissatisfaction was at times related to inconsistent teaching approaches across and within schools, poor communication from teachers and/or the district.

### Technology

One of the major themes that came up in the survey, working group discussions and PAC level responses was the use of technology and parents asking for the continued use of Teams post-pandemic. Despite frustrations, many parents voiced appreciation for

Teams in improving communication, accessibility and education over the last year. One working group member noted that improved uses of technology and remote learning options could dramatically improve the experiences of marginalized students with disabilities or other mental or physical health barriers. Although not a dominant theme of survey responses, some members of the working group believed the VSB should have made structural changes at the beginning of the pandemic to enable an easily accessible, robust remote learning option. Care should be taken in implementing remote options in a way that does not exacerbate inequities.

## Semester

One of the major themes that came up in the survey, in working group discussions and in PAC level responses was the hope to move towards a semester system, rather than a linear system or a quarter system. Many parents spoke negatively about the quarter system, with some exceptions.

## What was lost

Many survey responses and PAC level responses concerned what has been lost over the last year, by way of social, community and academic opportunities. Some respondents described experiencing a deficit that would need to be overcome in the coming years. One working group member described this as a need to “rebuild muscles”. As such, DPAC would like to advocate for additional Provincial funds to be spent on educational and social supports to make up for what has been lost.

## Summary of Individual Survey Questions

### Question 1

Parents/guardians were asked “Thinking of the changes to education in the last year, what changes did you like and would keep in the future?”

Despite the open-endedness of this question, parents’ responses were surprisingly consistent. The three most frequent responses were:

1. Parents felt that **juggling fewer classes simultaneously had a positive impact** on their children, both academically and emotionally (less anxiety) and would like

to carry this structure forward next year. However, approximately half of these parents felt that moving to a 2 semester system with 4 courses at a time would be better than the quarter system. The preference for a 2 semester system over a quarter system is consistent throughout survey questions with some variation.

*Sample quotations:*

“The switch away from a full year system to 2 or 4 courses at a time is so much easier to manage, and makes it possible to take say, Physics 11 and 12 in the same year.”

“Deeper focus on subjects for shorter periods was better because not juggling so many subjects at once made it easier to stay on top of work.”

“The smaller course load with quarters - ultimately I would like to see semester school 4 courses per semester. My son is in grade 8 and I do not think the change from the current quarter system and 2 courses to 8 courses for a full year course load will work at all - I think majority of students will suffer and be overwhelmed with a full course load. Semester will be a great option.”

2. Parents showed **appreciation for the use of MS Teams** for assignments, teacher communication, working with partners online, but many parents qualified that this should not be at the expense of in-person learning.

*Sample quotations:*

“MS Teams made it more clear what was due and when, and helped with communication, transparency and performance. It also meant if you had to miss a class it was easier to catch up. Teachers providing notes and video/content online gave opportunity to review anything that was unclear.”

“Using Teams shows great potential but only when used properly by teachers.”

“I think using Teams and on-line delivery of course material is efficient and useful for the students to help stay on track. Otherwise I believe my son would benefit from as much in class and face to face as possible.”

“Use of Teams for a central location for teachers to post recorded lectures, presentation material, supplementary information, homework assignments, etc. This could be particularly beneficial to students who are absent from class (e.g., due to illness) but could allow them to participate and keep up with their schoolwork.”

These positive mentions of Teams can be interpreted within a context of the VSB's efforts at attaining greater accessibility and communication through the use of technology. In my estimation, VSB parents have benefitted from these advancements and are eager to not lose sight of the lessons learned about improving accessibility and communication, particularly in times of a crisis (pandemic) but also in future normal times. Some responded in the survey that communication for students improved with Teams and parents echoed that Teams should remain regardless of delivery mode to enhance and improve this keystone.

**3. Many parents did not want anything about the current model to transition to the future**, with several specifically calling out the lack of education, inconsistency and frustration with the structure this year.

*Sample quotations:*

"I didn't like any of it. It was/is traumatizing, exhausting and frustrating for both parents and kids. I wouldn't like to keep any of it for the future for the sake of our children's mental health. General inconsistency across schools with use of flex time; clubs, and communication from teachers and administrators."

"I wouldn't keep anything from this past year. It was not enough education, particularly for the grade 8's. It neglected the social, emotional and intellectual needs of the children."

"We did not like any of the changes and are looking forward to in-person learning resuming in September 2021."

Additional themes worth noting (although less frequent):

Many parents **appreciated the flexibility a mixture of in-person and on-line learning** provides, particularly to meet specific student needs or when temporarily physically absent from school. Based on the range of comments regarding on-line learning, inconsistency across student experience was very likely.

*Sample quotations:*

"The option for online learning is great. Would like to see more but more structured and tutorials available."

“The opportunity for partial home learning. Now [that] we know it can be done.”

Similar to those parents who do not want to bring anything from the current structure forward next year, many parents used the question to highlight **that they are expecting full-time in-person instruction** in September 2021, at times commenting on how will the VSB make up what has been lost:

*Sample quotations:*

“High school students should have the options to attend school full-time like elementary school students even during the pandemic...I feel the damages done to some high school students academically and mentally were quite serious when they were not able to attend school full time for so long.”

“I feel the students need to be back to school full time for their academic, mental and emotional well-being. It's paramount that Teachers and students interact for the entire day.”

“I want my child in school full time without condensed material. Online learning doesn't work.”

“How will [VSB] make up what has been lost to students this year? Summer school for core classes? Etc.”

## Question 2

Parents/guardians were asked: “Thinking of the changes to education in the last year, what changes did you dislike?”

Many parents responded to this question by commenting that they felt there was a **lack of instruction time** with a particular emphasis on **inadequate in-person instruction time**.

*Sample quotations:*

“It was not enough face to face instructional time. They suffered academically and socially because of lack of time at school.”

“Only 2 hours face to face class in the morning or afternoon is inadequate. Suggest to have minimum 3 hours or 3.5 hours face to face session in the morning or afternoon. Online class could be reduced to balance the face to face lessons.”

Many responded that they **didn't like anything about the changes** to education in the last year and specifically, that they disliked the inconsistency and quality of education delivery. Many spoke of a great deal of inconsistency between teachers and schools in their ability to manage remote classes:

*Sample quotations:*

“Remote learning (basically worksheets); severely decreased number of daily learning hours for students; Teams platform. Basically the entire experience has been awful. Only exception has been smaller class sizes.”

“I disliked the online classes as there was no mechanism in place to ensure all the teachers and students were attending the online classes daily. There wasn't enough instruction and the online classes were not engaging (if the Teachers did show up). Many Teachers dumped piles of work at the beginning of the week and did not do their daily "online" classes for the students at home. The students are anxious, stressed and nervous and have spent far too much time on social media and electronic devices and isolated in their rooms.”

“The remote learning was a non-starter. Most teachers did not offer the required offerings, and if they did, it was not instruction. This left my child to complete his courses during the 5 weeks of in person learning. The teachers were not skilled in (nor did the VSB seem to require them to be) delivering remote learning. Leave that to the people who are skilled at it. Remote learning is not simply throwing stuff up on teams.”

Many spoke of **disliking the quarter system**, specifically noting the intensity and associated stress and poor knowledge retention over the last year. Some referenced gaps in core subjects such as math, science and physical education due to the quarter system. Some referenced the challenges posed by a quarter system for students with learning challenges.

*Sample quotations:*

One listed their dislikes as: “1. Less in class time; 2. Less instructional time (whether in person or online) with the teacher; 3. Am concerned about the 4 quarters - for example my child took math in quarter 1 and will not do math again until minimum 1 year later which may impact their ability to recall the learning they have done.”

“Too little time in school. Not enough social engagement. Certain courses like math are very challenging in a quarter system and then to just pick up again the next year.”

“The school rotation, 10 weeks per course is very rushed and it can be very stressful.”

“The quarter system was VERY difficult for any kid with learning challenges. Trying to memorize huge amounts of information for science or socials in such a crammed period of time made my son constantly feel like a failure as he could not succeed. His test marks were really low although the homework task assignments generally went



okay...Also, not being in school all day was terrible for my son. He missed the social aspects, and the lack of structure was a huge challenge.”

Respondents spoke of **disliking the lack of socialization** in the last year, and the lack of extracurricular activities and sports.

*Sample Quotations:*

“School sports and activities/clubs also need to resume. These kids need social connection and an outlet for athletics, arts, social justice etc.”

Others remarked on the **inconsistency of education at the VSB with other districts** and or with private schools and voiced frustration at this.

*Sample Quotations:*

“I dislike all of the changes. I especially dislike how few instructional hours our students are getting. Other school boards have more instructional hours and VSB should do the same. Our students are hugely disadvantaged compared to other high school students in the province.”

### Question 3

Parents were asked: “Thinking of education pre-pandemic, what do you miss and want to do again?”

Many spoke of missing and wanting their children to return to **full time in-school** education.

*Sample quotations:*

“Everything. Full day school. Classes in person. Eating at school. Seeing friends at school. Clubs and extracurricular.”

“In-person instruction, social interaction with other students and the teachers.”

Respondents also spoke of missing and wanting a return to schools-as-communities with a variety of community features beyond strictly academics. Respondents spoke of missing, and wanting a return to: in-person friendship connections, clubs and extracurricular activities, field trips, outings, and athletics. They also spoke of missing the consistency of a daily routine (including every-day activities like buying lunch from a cafeteria and eating with friends or asking a teacher for help in person), access to hands-on classes and spaces (e.g., labs, shop), and special events (e.g. graduation ceremonies, concerts and performances).

*Sample Quotations*

“I think my child really misses the student interaction...all the energy that’s created in high school. Student connections. She’s always just connecting on the phone. And that’s not really connecting.”

“Extra curricular activities. The natural opportunities present for socializing that come with being in class more.”

“Clubs. Sports. The opportunity to make new friends and engage socially with others on the school property. The opportunity to be challenged through debate and in person discussions with teachers and other students. The opportunity to create a sense of belonging within the school community, rather than always feeling like an unwelcome guest. The opportunity to truly dig deep into a subject rather than always simply skimming the surface.”

#### Question 4

Survey respondents were asked: “what features do you want to see in a schedule when all restrictions have been lifted?”

As with other questions, many respondents spoke of **preferring a semester system** and wanting to see that when restrictions have been lifted.

As with other questions, many respondents spoke of **wanting full-day in person class** with some referencing wanting a “return to normal”.

As with other questions, many respondents spoke of **wishing for a return to sports activities, in-person in-class interaction and extra-curricular activities.**

Some additional themes came up that may deserve a separate investigation by the VSB.

Though not a dominant mention, some respondents took the opportunity to write that **they liked flex time**, sometimes with the proviso that it be used more effectively and with a specific purpose. Views on flex time likely needs more investigation by the VSB since it was not well covered in survey responses and there is some variation in opinions across questions.

#### *Sample Quotations:*

“The “flex hour” is beneficial for inquisitive students to gain more learning hours.”

“The idea of built-in flex time would be great.”

“Flex time with classroom teachers and fewer classes at a time---no more than 4.”

“Retain small class size, allow for flex time and perhaps some courses that can be continued to be offered online (mixed mode) to make more time to additional electives.”

“Chance to work on homework at school during flextime.”

“I like the flex time that was created the year before the pandemic”

Though not numerous, some parents mentioned that it was important to them that some version of online learning remain.

### *Sample Quotations*

“Flexibility to do a course online if not offered at your school or does not fit into your timetable. And this course has to be in timetable so you can do it as one of your eight courses.”

“Continued opportunity for remote learning for kids who need to stay home due to illness. I think going forward even mild illness will keep people home, so having the option to continue learning when out of school is important.”

### Question 5

What other suggestions do you have for the Vancouver School Board for post-pandemic education?

In response to this question, as with other questions, many parents responded that they wanted **a return to full time in-person instruction**.

Many parents also responded that they were **concerned about secondary students falling behind** and hoping for supports to “make it up” such as summer school.

Many parents suggested **innovations for the 21st century** in education such as incorporating technology in a more creative and intelligent way.

Many parents spoke of feeling there was **inadequate instruction time** this year.

Though not sizable, some parents took this opportunity to suggest modern structural accessibility improvements to education that would serve diverse learners.

“Adapt the curriculum to be more fluid and modern, offer different ways to learn for neurodivergent learners even if they don’t have an IEP.”

Lastly, though not sizable, some parents commented here with the suggestion that the **VSB should be prepared for the next (or continuing pandemic)**.

## PAC Level Responses

This feedback I received by email from PAC chairs is presented here verbatim as an appendix. I may continue to hear from PACs with their feedback and I will be sure to send it to you. I chose not to name the PACs in presenting their feedback since we did not confirm with individual PACs whether they wanted to be connected to their feedback. If you have any questions about this feedback, I'm happy to ask the PAC chair if they can answer any questions for you. As you see, much of this feedback is consistent with survey responses but provides more context and some more variation.

## Conclusion

In this report, I've provided parent feedback on a post-pandemic secondary model of education by summarizing the main themes from a parent survey guided by questions that the VSB has posed other stakeholders. The main themes were a desire to return to more in-person learning, appreciation for the use of technology, support for a semester system and a hope that some of the social, community and academic gaps from this year could be addressed.

I hope this feedback will be useful to you in your planning.

Should the VSB be asked to make adaptations for the 2021-2022 school year, DPAC asks that parents be included in the process at the earliest possible opportunity.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this parent feedback.

Krista Sigurdson (Vancouver DPAC)

## Appendix: PAC level responses

### PAC #1

Changes liked / things to keep:

- The increased awareness of / resources around / discussion about mental health. Sessions like the Jack talk and open discussion about topics such as anxiety and depression should continue.
- Acceptance and encouragement that kids (and teachers) should stay home when they are sick! Perfect attendance should not be some sort of prize to strive for.
- Better hygiene practices (hand washing, improved ventilation, outdoor time etc)

Changes disliked:

- The quadmester system does not serve many students well due to the pace/intensity. The longer classes were also not a benefit in most courses.

Things missed:

- This year has demonstrated the importance of arts, sports, & clubs as an integral part of our children's education. Kids get validation and positive feedback from school in areas other than academics, and when those are removed their academic engagement and performance suffers. We need to continue to value those (and the Ministry needs to spend \$ on them.)

### PAC #2

We had a couple "sessions" on the survey questions and came up with the following statements.

- The need to train up teachers with Teams in a consistent manner so as to give all students the best opportunity to learn remotely...not self directed, teaching. Synchronized as suggested which never materialized seems to be a good solution.
- Like to see a hybrid model utilised for a selection of core and electives. More flexible deadlines.
- Under resourced and unprepared teachers. Many didn't have their lesson delivery prepared for the online model.
- Like to see course selection flexibility as spoken to in the video...especially electives.

- Gather information and consensus from other districts and mirror if possible to level consistency

### PAC #3

Thinking of the changes to education in the last year, what changes did you like and would keep in the future?

- Fewer courses at once allowed for better focus and access to teachers, however, the 10-week quarter system was too intense. A 4 course at a time semester system would be a better option.
- The use of Teams or another form of technology for posting homework and communication (between teachers/administrators and students as well as between students).
- If restricted learning did need to be used again, the one week on one week off schedule has been significantly better than the two week rotations for keeping students motivated and connected to their courses

Thinking of the changes to education in the last year, what changes did you dislike?

- The intensity of the 10-week schedule. Having fewer subjects to focus on was a plus, but the level of focus and intensity was difficult for students, especially during the remote learning periods.
- Prioritizing course selection over full-time instruction. We understand that some kids are motivated by their elective options at school, but generally, this was a huge trade-off for ALL students.
- The lack of a plan/path for the return to full-time learning. This may not have been easy in September, but even in March, it was only by parent pressure than any changes have been made. The VSB should have been planning for options to provide additional in-person learning for students.

Thinking of education pre-pandemic, what do you miss and want to do again?

- Social time
- Face to face time with teachers
- Opportunities for larger gatherings
- Extracurricular activities and sports

What features do you want to see in a schedule when all restrictions have been lifted?

- Continued investment and use of technology platforms such as Teams
- Flex time build into the schedule (as was planned to be implemented at LB for 20/21 school year)
- Training for teachers to develop the skills to continue to use technology in the curriculum.

What other suggestions do you have for the Vancouver School Board for post-pandemic education?

- Be prepared for the next pandemic!
- Commit to investing in technology to capitalize on the knowledge gained during the pandemic.
- Prepare for full-time in-person instruction under a variety of different circumstances given the pandemic may not be over, but the appetite for anything less than full-time in-person learning certainly is.

#### PAC #4

We have had the opportunity to discuss the questions at the PAC executive meeting. Our feedback is as follows:

Thinking of the changes to education in the last year, what changes did you like and would keep in the future?

- Using Microsoft Teams as an instructional and communication tool worked well once the students overcame the initial learning curve and as long as it is used consistently by both staff and students. Ongoing support and education for students and teachers would help ensure continued success for the program.

Thinking of the changes to education in the last year, what changes did you dislike?

- The total shutdown in Spring of 2019 did not work well. Self-taught classes and remote learning that did not come with instructions and structure did not work well. The IB Program is structured so that the students need it to be full time, following a traditional school calendar year. It was a challenge to do this in a quarter system.

Thinking of education pre-pandemic, what do you miss and want to do again?

- Students are missing the extra-curricular activities. They would like to see a return to the sports and arts programs. There are some advantages to having an academic program that runs all year long, meaning all eight subjects are taken all year long.

What features do you want to see in a schedule when all restrictions have been lifted?

- The Start Time should be later, not 8:35 AM. There should be more flexibility in the schedule throughout the day.

What other suggestions do you have for the Vancouver School Board for post-pandemic education?

- Option 4, which is available only at the Elementary level, should be offered at the Secondary Level.

- Offering a hybrid of online or remote instruction combined with in-school learning would benefit some students.
- A semestered system with four classes, double time for the first half of the year and the remaining four classes for the second half of the year.
- Some students liked the quarter system because it was easier to focus on just 2 subjects at a time.

## PAC # 5

- My biggest note was that I think the quarter system is terrible and would prefer a semester system with more courses. I think this negatively affected the Grade 8s the most.
- For the mini kids it has been communicated by both math teachers that the 10 weeks allowed for their curriculum is virtually impossible to teach in that time. I saw a similar experience with science as it just felt totally jammed in. And the fact there is such a delay between when they will be taking the subject again makes for terrible learning retention. For instance Q1 Gr8 math could see that student not doing math again until Q4 Gr 9 - that is 16 months between curriculum. Also - how can you do PE for only one quarter and not the rest of the year? And online PE was ridiculous.
- The online learning was all over the map as there seemed to be very little training for the teachers and some were literally terrible and did not post anything on line. Some were organized but the reliance on the students to do so much on line in their own time is really challenging and if some online learning is still required next year there should be synchronous teaching and a system adhered to by all teachers across the VSB.
- I originally thought the quarter system was incredible because it enables kids to only focus on 2 subjects at a time but I realize that isn't good with regards to retention if there is too big a gap between classes...
- Changes that I like - kids stay home when they are feeling unwell; changes I don't like - the quarter system; things I miss - community involvement such as concerts and school events; features I would like in a new schedule - accommodation for synchronous learning, perhaps using the resources of Vancouver distance education while still keeping students enrolled in their neighbourhood school;
- suggestions for future - school bands and choir are not only educationally beneficial but also help build community, so band programs need to be properly funded by the district as relying on funds from PAC means that schools in lower-income neighbourhoods have less money to spend on instruments than higher-income schools.