

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF 2022 THOUGHTEXCHANGE:

“How might we continue to positively impact student learning and improve our educational results?”

Background

A ThoughtExchange survey was launched from March 28 until April 11, 2022. Based on the Holy Spirit Catholic School Division's current [Board Strategic Priorities](#) and [Annual Education Results Report](#), parents/guardians, staff, and community members were asked for their feedback in determining: “How might we continue to positively impact student learning and improve our educational results?”

Additional context regarding the current political climate bears some consideration in reviewing the results received through the ThoughtExchange Survey.

The Continued Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

In March 2020, the COVID-19 Pandemic forced staff and students alike to pivot to an online forum. When classes resumed in September 2020, Alberta Health Services worked diligently with the school division to mitigate the spread of the disease by moving classes to at-home learning when there was evidence of exposure to the disease. Contact tracing efforts and the continual movement of classes between in-person and online forums diminished in January 2022. Nonetheless, the continual interruptions and changes in learning mechanisms during this time unquestionably challenged and strained both staff and students alike, who all endeavored to maintain high quality regardless of the situation. Currently, fatigue and resultant gaps in learning remain challenges that will require attention well into the future. As a result, several respondents identified “Mental Health” for both staff and students as a definite area of need.

Alberta's DRAFT Curriculum

The survey's most highly rated thoughts relate to the current controversial efforts of Alberta Education to draft and release a new curriculum. The responses provided are overwhelmingly opposed to the current draft and its implementation, which aligns with the “K-6 DRAFT Curriculum Survey” feedback the Board received from parents/guardians, staff, and community members in October 2021. To review the responses from the original “K-6 DRAFT Curriculum Survey,” see: <https://my.thoughtexchange.com/report/35c737a9909b8bbea0194f4046c472c2>.

Managing Limited Resources

Concern about diminishing budgets and resources was a topic reiterated in several categories of this survey. Many comments imbued the importance of ensuring that educational resources be focused towards the classroom and front lines staff members, who are essential to ensuring high quality education for students.

Survey Demographics

A total of 411 individuals from across the division participated in the ThoughtExchange. Of those, 171 provided 272 thoughts and 217 rated and ranked those thoughts using a total of 9,526 stars.

 **411**
Participants

 **272**
Thoughts

 **9,526**
Ratings

 **35**
Ratings Ratio

Survey participant's role in the school division:

	Number	Percentage
An employee	93	23%
A parent/guardian	292	74%
A community member	11	3%
TOTAL	406	100%

The school the survey participant most closely associates with:

	Number	Percentage
Catholic Central High School, Lethbridge	59	15%
Children of St. Martha School, Lethbridge	10	3%
Ecole St. Mary, Lethbridge	31	8%
Father Leonard Van Tighem, Lethbridge	51	13%
Our Lady of the Assumption School, Lethbridge	4	1%
St. Basil Catholic Education Centre, Lethbridge	10	3%
St. Catherine School, Picture Butte	15	4%
St. Francis Junior High School, Lethbridge	32	8%
St. Joseph School, Coaldale	28	7%
St. Mary School, Taber	23	6%
St. Michael's School, Bow Island	12	3%
St. Michael's School, Pincher Creek	22	6%
St. Patrick Fine Art School, Lethbridge	24	6%
St. Patrick School, Taber	17	4%
St. Paul School, Lethbridge	14	4%
St. Teresa of Calcutta School, Lethbridge	33	8%
Trinity ELearning School	5	1%
TOTAL	390	100%

Top Thoughts

The top ten thoughts rated in the ThoughtExchange are listed below.

Ranking	Average Star Rating	Thought ¹
1st	4.4	Enough support staff to support students adequately We have a number of students who are functionally illiterate in our school. We do not have enough support staff hours to adequately provide support.
2nd	4.3	Students' emotional well being, needs to be met before they can learn new information. Many children are struggling with mental health challenges. Support for mental health needs to be prioritized as much as numeracy and literacy.
3rd	4.3	Increase teaching staff by 1 fte at least. The student population has increased, including high needs students and yet the number of teachers in the school has decreased. Pre-K-12 = challenges
4th	4.3	Literacy and numeracy interventions Targeted small group instruction
5th	4.3	Recognizing staff who spend so much time doing extracurriculars with our students like the school musicals and sports teams Staff devotes a lot of their personal out of school time and this should be appreciated and recognized by the board and senior admin
6th	4.3	Adequate funding to support student learning It is imperative to allocate all funds available to offer the most learning opportunities
7th	4.3	Ensure teacher to student ratios are kept reasonable/low. Encourage EA's in the classroom to support teachers and assist with the diverse needs. 1 teacher in a classroom of 30+ kids cannot be expected to meet all the learning needs of the children, and that's when kids "fall through the cracks"
8th	4.3	Prioritize hiring earlier, a lot of excellent Catholic teachers have been scooped up by the public school district We are losing excellent teachers who are given permanent contracts in the public district
9th	4.3	Hire more teachers or lower class sizes The majority of our classes are 30+ students resulting in an excess of marking during a teacher's personal time. Fewer students = better learning.
10th	4.3	Putting more care into teacher mental health and work load Our teachers are exhausted with large class sizes, classroom management, and students who seem as though they're a year behind due to the pandemic.

¹ Please note that all quoted "Thoughts" are taken directly from the survey and are not edited in any way.

Major Themes

In reviewing the 272 thoughts provided, 14 themes emerged. The following table identifies each theme, shows how many thoughts were included in each, the overarching ranking of those thoughts and the top three thoughts for each category.

Identified Theme	Number of Thoughts within Theme	Average Star Rating for Theme	Top Thoughts ² within Theme
Alberta Education Curriculum Concerns	7	4.2	Please don't follow the new proposed Alberta curriculum.
			Continue to challenge AB Ed regarding their botched curriculum, refuse to be silenced When the curriculum is age-appropriate and realistic, teachers can be successful which means our kids can be successful
			Fight the implementation of all aspects of the current draft curriculum. It is out of date, age inappropriate, focuses too much on memorization, not diverse, and will harm our children's education for years to come.
Class Sizes	13	4.1	Ensure teacher to student ratios are kept reasonable/low. Encourage EA's in the classroom to support teachers and assist with the diverse needs. 1 teacher in a classroom of 30+ kids cannot be expected to meet all the learning needs of the children, and that's when kids "fall through the cracks"
			Hire more teachers or lower class sizes The majority of our classes are 30+ students resulting in an excess of marking during a teacher's personal time. Fewer students = better learning.
			Smaller class size Allows the teacher to have more interaction with individual students
Mental Health & Wellness	23	3.9	Students' emotional well being, needs to be met before they can learn new information. Many children are struggling with mental health challenges. Support for mental health needs to be prioritized as much as numeracy and literacy.
			Putting more care into teacher mental health and work load Our teachers are exhausted with large class sizes, classroom management, and students who seem as though they're a year behind due to the pandemic.
			Teacher and staff mental health needs to be a bigger priority These past years of pandemic teaching and learning have taken their toll on all of us and we need more supports in order to do our best work.

² Please note that all quoted "Thoughts" are taken directly from the survey and are not edited in any way.

Identified Theme	Number of Thoughts within Theme	Average Star Rating for Theme	Top Thoughts ² within Theme
Programming	9	3.9	Invest in success of fine arts education (music, band, art, drama, etc) and extra-curricular opportunities Lots of kids find belonging in the arts. Seems the scaffolding and sequencing of quality class and extra-curricular opportunities is being eroded.
			More support for CTS/Trades programs (Teacher PD, Funding, Evergreening, access to quality equipment) Not all students go to university. Is there a way we could take a both/and approach to promoting university and trades training after high school?
			Offering a variety of option classes Allow students to explore interests and or find out what they are might be interested in. Especially important to boost trade enrollment.
Resource Management	23	3.9	Adequate funding to support student learning It is imperative to allocate all funds available to offer the most learning opportunities
			We need proper resources to keep our students safe We have a student who requires one-to-one continually, and we have requested multiple times for a safe space for this student, to no avail.
			Bring back specialists, like intervention teachers or ESL teachers to assist. Our classes are beyond diverse at this point. Students are being left behind because the teacher cannot deal, and doesn't have proper training.
Community & Connection	16	3.8	Build relationships and create trust. Provide a safe and fun learning environment... remembering that people are different and may learn differently
			By building positive relationships between student and staff members Provide a safe and caring environment
			Reconnecting with families & allowing them to get involved in the school environment with Mothers day tea, spring/Christmas concerts,volunteering etc. When parents are involved children are able to take ownership & be proud of their accomplishments. Parents more invested in supporting home learning
Faith	6	3.7	Keep our faith central, sharing it with love and enthusiasm.
			Stay true to Catholicism
			Emphasize the authentic Catholic faith

Identified Theme	Number of Thoughts within Theme	Average Star Rating for Theme	Top Thoughts ² within Theme
Learning & Skills Development	33	3.7	Literacy and numeracy interventions Targeted small group instruction
			Continuing to champion ethical behaviour, gratitude and compassion. These qualities build character in our children.
			Teaching/showing kindness in all aspects of their learning If a student feels included and welcomed, they should improve in their learning
Staffing & Workload	27	3.7	Enough support staff to support students adequately We have a number of students who are functionally illiterate in our school. We do not have enough support staff hours to adequately provide support.
			Increase teaching staff by 1 fte at least. The student population has increased, including high needs students and yet the number of teachers in the school has decreased. Pre-K-12 = challenges
			Recognizing staff who spend so much time doing extracurriculars with our students like the school musicals and sports teams Staff devotes a lot of their personal out of school time and this should be appreciated and recognized by the board and senior admin
Support	34	3.7	Assure that students who need additional support get that support. Learning was disrupted and students are struggling.
			Diverse strategies for students to be able to have their individual learning needs/ styles met. And addressing bullying more effectively Needing to create a safe learning and play environment, and increasing opportunities for students to feel successful
			Ensure all students who require additional support are able to access EAs. There are many students with gaps in their learning due to the pandemic. These students are in addition to those who already have learning challenges.
Communication	26	3.5	I think communication with parents and teachers is crucial. I feel parents need to be aware when their child may be struggling.
			In person parent teacher interview. Connection to the school. Finding out where my child is at in all aspects of learning. What we need to work on.

Identified Theme	Number of Thoughts within Theme	Average Star Rating for Theme	Top Thoughts ² within Theme
Communication cont'd			More consistent communication from teachers in a more consumable way. Schools should be adopting standards for communication channels, some use remind, some dont, some use google, some dont, some use email, some dont.
Diversity & Inclusion	11	3.5	I love how you have a big focus on anti-bullying and children being kind to eachother It is so integral that kids feel safe and respected at school
			Refuse to discriminate, even if enticed.
			More Indigenous cultural appreciation please! We do some but let's do more with Elders! Our cultures need more communication between them, there is a great divide between our First Nations people and the white populations in Lethbridge.
Procedures Review	38	3.4	Recognize that the needs and concerns of rural schools are not always the same as city schools and allowing flexibility in policies to reflect that. Rural students miss opportunities and our schools miss out on community building opportunities when we are bound by restrictive policies.
			Prioritize instructional time. Many interruptions pull students and teachers out of the classroom. Many of these are not curriculum or in line with the mission of the school.
			Less focus on standardized tests and district assessments Teachers are exhausted and will be able to assist students more successfully if less time is being wasted on district assessments that we don't use
Miscellaneous	6	3.3	We must remember that rural communities are important as well
			Bring back the fun! School should be engaging to students, especially younger learners.
			Keep doing what you are doing. I've been very pleased with our children's quality of education.

For More Information

To gain a fuller understanding of the feedback provided, thoughts and rankings may be further explored in the Summary Report, which can be accessed at:

<https://my.thoughtexchange.com/report/e869b364f3d63ff1ed383580a5a8cf32>.