



TEACHING IN A PANDEMIC

Lessons Learned in Alberta

Alberta has been identified as the highest performing education system in the English speaking world for the past several years.¹ But how has it held up against the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic?

The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) Pandemic Research Study shows how teachers are coping and what we are learning.

THE ALBERTA RESEARCH

It's a provincial survey of 8,000 Alberta teachers and school leaders who have given voice to their experiences during the pandemic and shared their concerns and questions on re-entering public schools.²

WHAT ARE THE TOP 3 CONCERNS FOR ALBERTA TEACHERS?



School safety, including:

- Personal protective equipment
- Physical distancing measures
- Reducing large class sizes
- School cleanliness and hygiene



Student learning needs for school re-entry, including:

- Support for vulnerable populations, child poverty and growing inequity
- Student engagement and motivation
- Curricular gaps when schools "go back"
- Less high-stakes testing and more authentic assessments



Well-being for all, including:

- Mental wellness and health supports
- Greater focus on relationships
- Social-emotional learning
- More physical activity and play

WELL-BEING: HOW ARE OUR TEACHERS HOLDING UP?

Teachers are feeling exhausted (70%) and isolated (63%).



"I feel overwhelmed by the expectations to be working full-time from home, while also working with my own children on their home schooling."

— Survey respondent

Compassion fatigue is a deep concern for the profession:

35% of teachers are taking on some of the trauma their students are feeling...



"Are they safe? Are they fed?"

— Survey respondent

And 75% don't feel the same emotional connection with their students as prior to the pandemic...



"I feel disconnected from my students. I wonder what's going on with students and parents that I'm getting no response or feedback from."

— Survey respondent

65% of teachers feel their energy level is lower than 30 days ago...

"Why am I not sleeping?"

— Survey respondent



EQUITY: WHAT DO STUDENTS NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL?

Teachers are worried about the impact emergency remote teaching has on students who need extra attention.



"My students are young children with special needs and online learning is not ideal or developmentally appropriate for many children."

— Survey respondent



62% said access to extra help above and beyond classroom support is a top concern...



...and 64% said technology (access and digital literacy) is an issue.

AT-RISK

The following groups of students were identified by teachers as struggling in their classes with online instruction:

77% of teachers express concern about students living in poverty

70% of teachers express concern about students with Exceptionalities

71% of teachers express concern about students in Single Parent Homes

68% of teachers express concern about students with English as a Second Language

38% ... and male students seem to be having more difficulty

30% than female students.



TECHNOLOGY: HOW ARE WE CONNECTING?

Teachers are using a wide variety of technology platforms, digital tools and print resources for emergency remote teaching. Technology has been essential in the rapid move to online instruction.

Top 3 Ways Teachers are Connecting:



Email



Video Calls or Virtual Meetups



Telephone Calls

Students are most often accessing online instruction at home with...



Laptops

35%

Mobile Devices

32%



But everyone is starting to feel Zoomed-out ...

"No exercise, too much tech time"

— Survey respondent

CONNECTING OR DISCONNECTING?



79% Of teachers have noticed students' overall readiness to learn (ready, willing, able) has declined

77% Of teachers have noticed students' ability to focus has declined

67% Of teachers have noticed a decline in students checking in each day

The rapid move to digital platforms brings its own set of issues:



Excessive screen time concerns



Technology costs for families



Remote access (equity) challenges and lack of support



Concern with growth in privatization of educational services

"There's a loss of social interaction and imaginative play"

— Survey respondent

EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING: GETTING THROUGH THIS TOGETHER!

Some relationships have thrived during the pandemic:

Teachers find they're more collaborative with their colleagues and school leadership...

57% agree/strongly agree

... and 91% have a positive working relationship with parents/guardians.



But there is a falloff in engagement:

Survey respondent

"In the beginning most parents were diligent and engaged. This engagement has fallen off track significantly in the last few weeks."

THE ROAD AHEAD...

The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified challenges with inequity and poverty and hit vulnerable Albertans the hardest. It has also accelerated new opportunities with digital technologies and collaboration within the school community.

Albertans will need a healthy and emotionally secure population, along with safe and caring public schools, for a flourishing economy.

As we travel the road ahead we must focus on:



School Safety



Student Learning Needs



Well-Being for All



Thank you to our teachers, school leaders, students, parents and the entire Alberta community for all you do to continue educating our young people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We look forward to being at school together soon.



Further information about Alberta Teachers' Association research is available from: Dr Philip McRae. Email: research@ata.ab.ca

1. Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)
2. Survey administered between April 27, 2020 and May 15, 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. 8128 Alberta teacher respondents (7200+ teachers and 900+ school leaders). This study's survey data is highly representative of the profession of teaching in Alberta and has a confidence interval of +/- 1.5 per cent (19 times out of 20) on all questions.