

Westman Consortia Rural and Remote Learning

Phase One Report

Dr. Cathryn Smith¹ and Mr. Gustavo Moura²



May 2021

Notes about the authors

¹ Associate Professor, Department of Leadership and Educational Administration. Chair, Graduate Studies Program. Faculty of Education, Brandon University.

² PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba

Correspondence concerning this report should be addressed to Dr. Cathryn Smith at SmithC@brandonu.ca.

Table of Contents

List of Figures 4

List of Tables..... 7

Description of the Program 8

Description of the Research 9

Literature Review 10

Our Data 14

Questionnaire to Participants 14

Multiple Choice Questions 14

Principals 15

Curriculum Consultants 15

Parents 17

Teachers 27

Students Grades K-4 34

Students Grades 5-8..... 41

French Immersion 47

Open-Response Questions..... 51

Principals 51

Curriculum Consultants 54

Parents 57

Teachers 63

Students Grades K-4 65

Students Grades 5-8..... 67

Summary of Findings Across the Participant Groups 68

Context for Innovation: Program Demand and Design 70

Need for the Program..... 70

Design of the Program 70

Beliefs, Perspectives and Tensions in Communication 71

Technology, Learning and Pedagogical Practices 72

Technology72

Learning73

Pedagogy.....73

Enabling Strategies: Supports for Teachers, Parents, Students, and Mental Health 73

Support for Teachers74

Support for Parents74

Support for Students’ Socialization75

Support for Mental Health.....75

Interim Recommendations..... 76

References..... 79

Appendix A: Remote Learning Questionnaire 82

List of Figures

Figure 1: Students enrolled in the Westman Remote Learning Program according to principals' responses.....	11
Figure 2: How often is support provided for teachers and students?.....	12
Figure 3: Involvement of curriculum consultants with teachers and/or students.....	12
Figure 4: Parents' identification of their children's program.....	13
Figure 5: Parents' employment experiences.....	14
Figure 6: Technology use by remote learning students.....	15
Figure 7: Access issues.....	16
Figure 8: Parents' notion of time spent on remote learning/supporting children on remote learning.....	17
Figure 9: Remote learning structure.....	18
Figure 10: Parents' support for children.....	19
Figure 11: Parents' challenges on remote learning.....	20
Figure 12: Parents' resources on remote learning.....	20
Figure 13: Children's attitudes towards remote learning, according to parents.....	22
Figure 14: Students' connections, according to teachers.....	24
Figure 15: Teachers' perspective on their connection with students online.....	24
Figure 16: Teachers' remote teaching skills.....	25
Figure 17: Teaching domains - part 1.....	26
Figure 18: Teaching domains - part 2.....	27
Figure 19: Teachers' feedback.....	27

Figure 20: Teachers' perspective on parents' support.....28

Figure 21: Teachers' perspective on online support and student/student support.....29

Figure 22: Tech support for students.....29

Figure23: Teachers' views on sustainability.....30

Figure 24: Students' connections with classmates online.31

Figure 25: Students' connections out of class time and in person.....32

Figure 26: French Immersion students - confidence and skills.....33

Figure 27: English Program students - confidence and skills.....33

Figure 28: Online learning.....34

Figure 29: Students' opinions on interesting schoolwork.....34

Figure 30: English Program students - themes and the Arts.....35

Figure 31: English Program students: feedback.....36

Figure 32: English Program students: online help.....37

Figure 33: Students' connections.....38

Figure 34: Online learning skills and confidence, according to respondent students.....39

Figure 35: Respondent students' opinion about interesting schoolwork.....40

Figure 36: Respondent students' opinion about whether their schoolwork is difficult.....40

Figure 37: Respondent students' opinions about their learning programs.....41

Figure 38: Students' responses to the support they have.....42

Figure 39: Students' responses to online searching.....42

Figure 40: Students' and parents' level of comfortability with French language.....44

Figure 41: Parents' and students' level of French language.....45

Figure 42: K-4 Students' responses towards their French language skills.....46

Figure 43: Respondents to the question of what students have noticed about their French language during the remote learning program.....46

List of Tables

Table 1: Strengths and Challenges of Rural Remote Learning Identified in Multiple Choice Responses and Presented by Theme.....66

Table 2: Overall Recommendations for Rural Remote Learning Presented by Theme.....73

Description of the Program

The Westman Consortia Partnership (WCP) is a coalition of seven school divisions in western Manitoba, who joined together during the COVID-19 pandemic to deliver remote learning to students who are medically advised not to return to in-class learning. The Assistant Superintendent of Brandon School Division serves as the contact person for the Westman Consortia Partnership. The seven school divisions belonging to the consortia are Brandon School Division, Park West School Division, Southwest Horizon School Division, Rolling River School Division, Mountain View School Division, Swan Valley School Division and Fort La Bosse School Division.

Unlike in March 2020, when all Manitoba students transitioned to online learning in response to the pandemic, in September 2020, parents of children had to provide medical documentation to access the remote learning option. Fall registration in the initial six divisions identified 154 Kindergarten to Grade 8 students from 39 different schools who would require remote learning services. The school divisions decided to pool their resources and expertise to deliver remote learning for the registered students (130 in the English stream and 24 in the French Immersion stream). Eight class groupings were formed (K-1, 2, 3, 4, 5-6, 5-6, 7-8 English, K-8 French Immersion) and a teacher placed with each class. The assigned teachers were drawn from the teaching staff in four of the initial six divisions. Since initial registration and the addition of a seventh school division, the students' numbers have surpassed 170 and two new teachers have been hired.

The WCP Remote Learning Guidelines document (2020) outlines the organization of the partnership and identifies remote learning considerations for teachers, parents and students; administrative details; expectations for participating teachers; implementation steps; and plans to develop a parent document. Teachers contacted families the week of September 14, scheduled classes began the week of September 21 with planned individual and group learning time daily, except on Friday afternoons when the teachers would meet to do collaborative planning with curriculum consultants, mostly from Brandon School Division.

Remote learning requires support and cooperation from all partners. With learning taking place in students' homes, parents are called upon to support their child's learning in multiple ways ranging from facilitating digital access, monitoring energy and attention, assisting with academic learning and communicating with their child's teacher. There is a need to assist parents with these

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

tasks as required and to help caregivers develop confidence and capacity as co-educators. Teachers play different roles as facilitators of remote learning and are forced to improvise in this new context. There is a need for teachers to innovate, collaborate and reflect on what is working well to maximize learning in all the classes. Students are also adapting to a new teacher and new software, plus learning with students they have only met online from the other divisions. There is a need to determine effective ways to support student's social emotional and academic growth and to ensure formative assessment and feedback that fosters student learning. Curriculum consultants support the remote learning teachers and meet with the teachers weekly. The curriculum consultants provide practical and pedagogical support and facilitate collaboration amongst the teaching team. Their involvement provides an opportunity to examine the kinds of instructional and assessment strategies that are working well in the online environment and the types of supports for teachers that enhance program delivery. Home school principals are responsible for maintaining provincial and school records on each remote learning student, troubleshooting emerging issues and arranging for transition back to classrooms as required. As the one who connects families, schools and communities, home school principals need to be kept informed through efficient and effective communication.

Description of the Research

The objective of this research is to identify effective approaches for delivering remote learning to students in the Westman region of Manitoba. The research question is: What beliefs, practices and strategies are critical to remote rural learning? The WCP is a work in progress and the group acknowledges that they are "building the ship while sailing it" (WCP, 2020, p. 4). Action research (AR) (Stringer, 2014) is a perfect methodology for studying emerging practices and offering ongoing feedback through multiple inquiry cycles.

In the research preparation stage, the researcher submitted an application for ethical approval to the Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC) and permission to conduct phase one of the research (#22739) was granted December 1, 2020. Generous financial support received from Tech MB (\$6000) for Phase One has been used to hire a Research Assistant IV, Mr. Gustavo Moura, a PhD candidate. The same amount has been received, in addition, for phase two of the research and will once again cover salary for the research assistant and associated research costs.

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

The first AR cycle gathered initial feedback from each of the participant groups involved in the initiative: students, parents, teachers, curriculum consultants and students' home school principals. Online questionnaires were developed for all five participant groups (students, parents, teachers, curriculum consultants and home school principals). Letters of invitation and recruitment scripts with links to digital questionnaires were sent by the research assistant, to Mathew Gustafson (Brandon School Division Assistant Superintendent), who is the contact person for WCP. Ms. Carmen Mclean, on behalf of Mr. Gustafson, forwarded the letters of invitation and recruitment emails to parents, teachers, curriculum consultants and home school principals. Students accessed questionnaires through their parents, if the parents agreed to their participation.

Once the questionnaire data was analyzed, the results were shared with the WCP Advisory Council, which has representation from each school division. The Phase One Interim Report was shared and the researchers presented the findings from phase one of the research. The researchers facilitated a conversation with the Advisory Council members and asked for clarification and guidance on a few issues related to the study.

The researchers have identified specific questions to include in the second action research cycle which will include focus groups and interviews with students, parents, teachers and curriculum consultants. All members of the targeted groups will be invited to volunteer to be interviewed. All letters of invitation, recruitment scripts and protocols for the second cycle of data collection were submitted as an amendment to the original submission and were granted BUREC approval April 12, 2021.

Literature Review

Bates (2019) foregrounds the educational context in times of change. One of the most recurrent arguments observed in such contexts is the economic value and presence of the market in the reshaping of students' identities. Bates (2019) arguably states higher education programs will expand their knowledge-based work to guarantee rapid knowledge flow and construction (Bates, 2019; Fawns, 2019; Garcia, 2014), keep up with timely and contextual information (Bates, 2019; Baxter et al., 2018), and offer flexible and adaptable learning skills that will enable students to develop their troubleshooting abilities (Montrieux et al., 2017; Baxter et al., 2018). To achieve these goals, the concept of knowledge is discussed as something that balances content and skills.

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Within the times of change the Internet has played a significant role in almost every aspect of society.

For example, we can see a world that is connected digitally, our personal information being transferred and translated into data that anticipates, predicts, and influences our behaviour, and the development of mass communication reaching and transforming places around the globe. Information and communication technologies (ICTs), as the key tool in this context, help bridge information and reshape teaching pedagogies. In primary and secondary education, ICTs offer opportunities for teachers to develop agency and democracy (Saviani & Galvão, 2021) among their students. Teaching and teaching methods began to include more exploratory ideas and the presentation of multiple perspectives, more critical openness to original and individual thinking, and increase the likelihood of questioning (Bates, 2019).

In times when ICTs are key to describe a world that is digitally connected, research has explored the role of ICTs in different aspects of society. In education, Bates (2019), for instance, argues educators are responsible for developing skills and preparing students for a digital society. Moreover, being digitally literate means to be aware of the different potentialities of ICTs and how they affect individuals' daily interactions. In the classrooms, the technological infrastructure changes pedagogical practices and reshapes epistemological knowledges (Santos, 2019). That means, ICTs are redefining notions of time and space, fostering agency and communication, and bringing people together even when they are geographically apart.

The role of ICTs had never been as much emphasized and discussed before the current COVID-19 pandemic situation (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020; North et al., 2020; Reicher, 2020; Saviani & Galvão, 2021). With several primary/secondary schools and post-secondary institutions having to shut their doors and implement an emergency remote teaching and learning program, administrators and teachers found themselves amidst challenges adapting to the 'new normal'.

In addition to delivering content, different emotions arose with the COVID-19 pandemic and teachers were not only dealing with school curricula delivery, but also learning how to manage and develop coping skills with their students in remote learning (Carpenter & Dunn, 2020; North et al., 2020; Reicher, 2020; McGinn & Alphonso, 2021). During remote learning in the pandemic, safety has been central to stop the spread of the virus, although some countries like Canada adopted in-person classes or a mix of blended classes later in the fall of 2020 (Government of Canada).

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Despite students, teachers, principals, and school staff returning to school physically, provincial governments adhered to the strategy of developing remote learning capacity as well.

For instance, the province of Manitoba developed a plan called Safe Schools COVID-19 (#Restart Manitoba). The province of Manitoba, Canada, has been responsive to the immediate changes that the COVID-19 brought to the population. In the spring of 2020, schools had first shut down and transitioned students and teachers to remote learning, hoping that that would be an immediate but temporary response. As remote learning has become something more permanent for several teachers and students, the province created a Remote Learning Support Centre (<https://www.mbremotelearning.ca>), “in partnership with Manitoba Education, representatives from metro, rural, and northern divisions have come together to oversee the design and implementation of a provincial strategy for school leaders, teachers, students, and families” (“About Us” website page).

The Centre includes a framework that contains:

a) ‘foundational beliefs and guiding principles’ that are evidence-based and support the implementation of remote learning.

b) a provincial repository that is made of resources in both English and French, and that can be used to support in-home learning.

c) a professional learning plan that seeks to inform teachers’ pedagogies and remote learning choices (e.g., how to support students in low/no tech learning environments?).

d) a remote learning support team (educators and consultants) to provide instructional and coaching support to teachers across the province. And,

e) different learning supports for K-8 students who are learning from home, with the purpose to enhance independent and autonomous students’ work (Sinek, 2009).

Besides the services above, the Centre also has a page designed for Well-being, and it gives teachers, students, and parents resources and tips for them to maintain their health and well-being. The goal of the Centre is to keep students motivated and help them feel they belong to a community. The Centre recognizes the value of every individual’s voice, and hopes to work in collaborative ways to build awareness within the community, promote interactions among different people, and even acknowledge and respond to the effects of trauma during the pandemic.

However, the Centre was officially launched in January of 2021, while teachers and students had their first remote learning experiences starting in the spring of 2020. Taking into account what those teachers, parents, and students have gone through, we rely on their shared experiences to

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

(re)think their roles in education. When looking into what strategies have been developed for remote teaching and learning during COVID-19, Adair-Gagnon (2021), Thompson and Coleman (2021), and Thompson and Thompson (2021) give us input on how their experiences shifted in the past year.

Thompson and Thompson (2021) and Adair-Gagnon (2021) stated how they, as teachers, needed to “start from scratch” and relearn how to engage their students in an online setting. Through YouTube videos, they have found a way to collaboratively work with other teachers while developing new strengths to support one another and support their students. Using an online platform to create a community of individuals with similar experiences aligns with the studies in online education in the sense of fostering a digitally connected community and developing new skills within the context in which everyone is now inserted.

In the transitioning period from in-classroom to remote learning, Thompson and Thompson (2021) said they did not have a lot of support, and were basically “operating the new system blindly”. In addition, to seek out support in their teaching pedagogies, they relied on using familiar online software to engage with students and parents (e.g., email and WhatsApp), and even on friends who work in Information Technology to teach them how to navigate and use other programs (e.g., Google Docs). Thompson (2021) highlight the importance of the “University of YouTube” in order to learn and implement new skills into their teaching.

Adair-Gagnon (2021), as a middle years’ teacher, used the videos to document her decision-making processes during the remote learning in Manitoba. First and foremost, Adair-Gagnon (2021) was “making her thinking visible” and adding to the province’s guidelines in terms of working with her students online. Adair-Gagnon (2021) highlighted how important it was for her and her students to develop together an activity that shows and reflects upon the current context of teaching and learning. Such activities guarantee they all improve their coping skills, provide unique perspectives on how their lives have been impacted by the pandemic, health orders and restrictions, and give students a chance to authentically and critically analyze local, national, and global responses towards the COVID-19.

Besides pedagogical strategies, teachers also re-evaluated their classroom management skills. In addition to the fact that teachers need to count on the participation of parents, who are multitasking, in students’ learning (Adair-Gagnon, 2021; Thompson & Coleman, 2021), they needed to become more flexible, understand the new synchronous and asynchronous activities roles, and come up with tips for a successful online interaction (e.g., participating and engaging in

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

online meetings – whether that is a nod and just a ‘thumbs up’, muting themselves when not speaking, using the chat, looking into the camera in case they are using videos). Adair-Gagnon (2021) indicated that although real-time communication is something she and her students really miss in an online setting, her feedback has become more frequent, therefore all the teaching and “everything takes a longer” to be accomplished remotely.

Taking all of these into consideration, we present our data and in the Final Report will provide some discussion about how the literature diverges and converges with our findings.

Our Data

Information from the Brandon School Division Superintendent’s Office reports that the questionnaires were sent to 105 students K-4 (Eng./Fre.); 76 students 5-8 (Eng./Fre.); 11 teachers (including a K-teacher who is 0.5 and two teachers at 0.5 who share a class); 5 curriculum consultants; and 39 principals. The number of parents who received the questionnaire was not provided.

As of March 01, 2021, we have received a total of 88 responses: 15 students K-4 (Eng./Fre.); 6 students 5-8 (Eng.); 38 parents (3 for French Immersion); 6 teachers; 3 curriculum consultants; and 20 principals.

Questionnaire to Participants

The questionnaires aimed at finding out about the demographics of the participants in the study, and their strategies and experiences during the remote learning program. Each group of participants received a different questionnaire, but many questions looked at some similar issues/matters. Strategically, the questionnaires approached a mixed-method methodology, and the research team developed both multiple choice and open-response questions. Each of the questionnaires is included in Appendix A.

Multiple Choice Questions

The questions for principals and curriculum consultants offer us insights into the demographics of the Westman Consortia Remote Learning Program, and the type of support being given to teachers and/or students who are currently teaching and learning remotely. The majority

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

of questions posed to these two groups were open response questions so less information was generated from the multiple choice questions than for the other participant groups.

Principals

Principals who responded to the questionnaire have students from grades K-8 enrolled in the program. The number of students vary according to each principal, and not all principals have students in all grades. The graph below shows which programs students are enrolled in, and 85% of principals who answered indicated that they have students in English K-G4, 70% said they have students in English G5-G8, while 10% of their students are either in French K-G4 or French G5-G8.

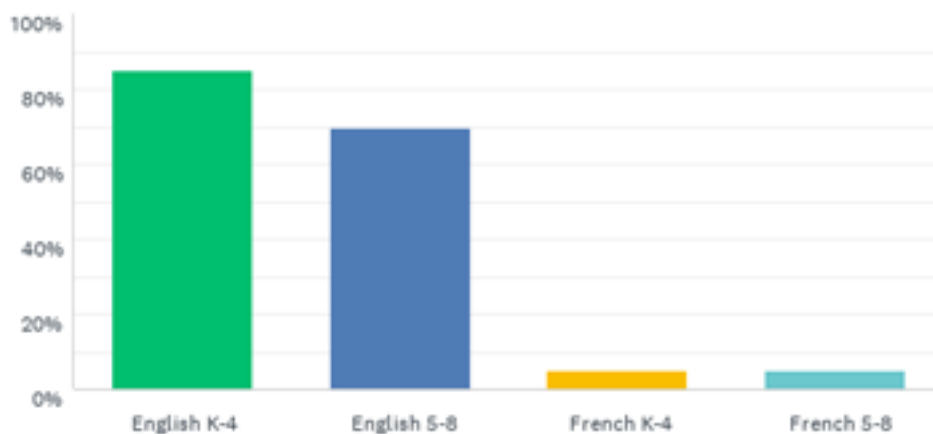


Figure 1: Students enrolled in the Westman Remote Learning Program according to principals' responses.

Curriculum Consultants

When thinking of the support for teachers and students within the program, the curriculum consultants play a role in providing daily or weekly support, and in providing support whenever requested. Over 65% of the curriculum consultants who answered the questionnaire reported that they provide support for teachers and/or student a few times a week, and when requested. Over 30% of curriculum consultants provide group support, while over 30% of curriculum consultants also deal with teachers and students individually (Figure 2). The curriculum

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

consultants' involvement with the Westman Remote Learning Program varies between attending Friday meetings weekly and monthly, as shown in Figure 3.

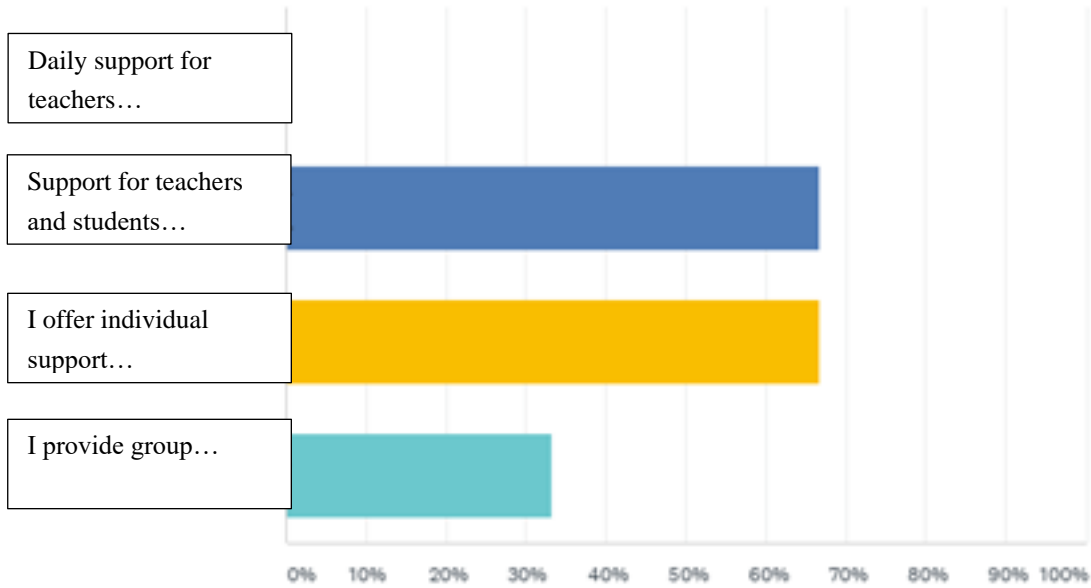


Figure 2: How often is support provided for teachers and students?

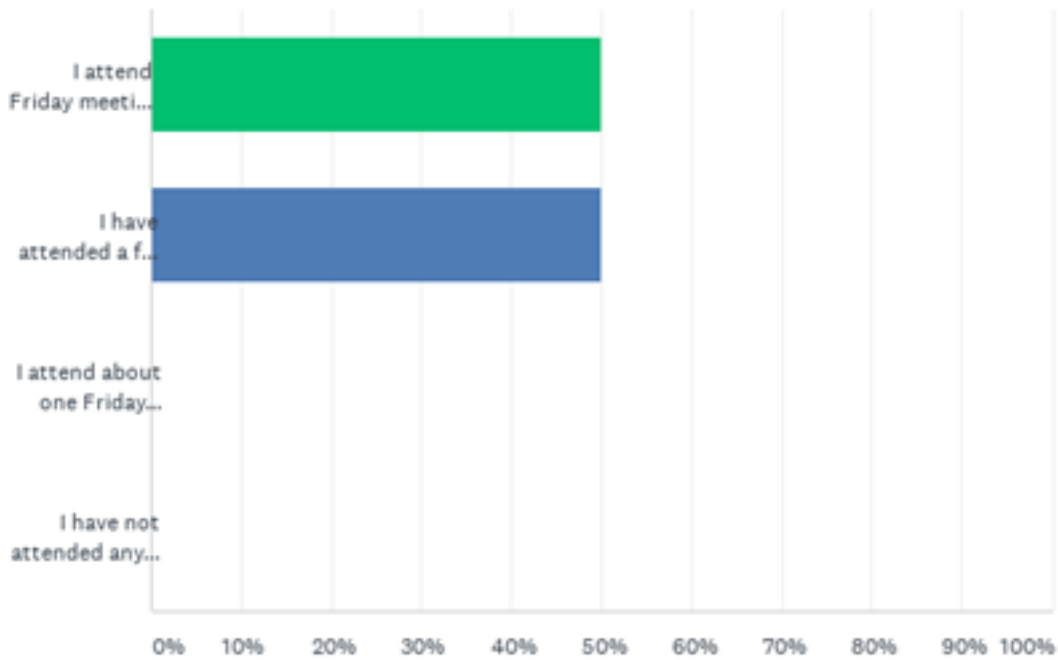


Figure 3: Involvement of curriculum consultants with teachers and/or students.

Parents

Program

According to the parents who responded to the questionnaire, their children attend a variety of programs in the Westman Remote Learning Program. Almost 70% of the respondent parents said their children are in the English K-4 programs. Nearly 8% have their children in French Immersion K-4, and the remaining are from English Grades 5-8 (Figure 4).

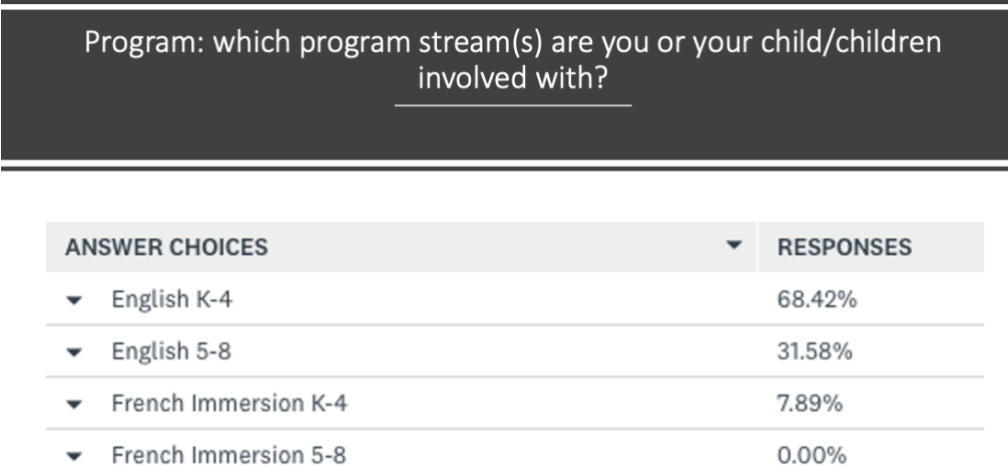


Figure 4: Parents' identification of their children's program.

Employment

As to have a clear idea of what other responsibilities parents have, and how they might affect parents' support for their children, we also asked parents about their employment situation (Figure 5). One parent noted that they are also receiving incentives from Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) while they have their children in remote learning.



Figure 5: Parents' employment experiences.

When asked about their work schedule, 52% of parents stated they have flexible hours at work, while the remaining 48% said they had a more fixed work schedule. In addition, 50% of working parents who answered the questionnaire said they work from home, and another 50% said they actually go to their workplace. In some cases, only one parent goes to work and the other stays home, or both parents work and a babysitter cares for the children at home. One parent in the study reported living in the basement of the family's own shop.

Technology Access

The graph below shows what types of technology devices parents have utilized with their children during remote learning. Aside from desktop computers, laptop computers, iPads/Tablets, cell phones and school division devices, one parent noted the use of a Chromebook as well. The laptop computer is the most used device during remote learning (over 60%), followed by a division-owned device (nearly 38%), and iPad/Tablet (29.7%). Parents stated cell phones and desktop computers were the least used devices in remote learning.

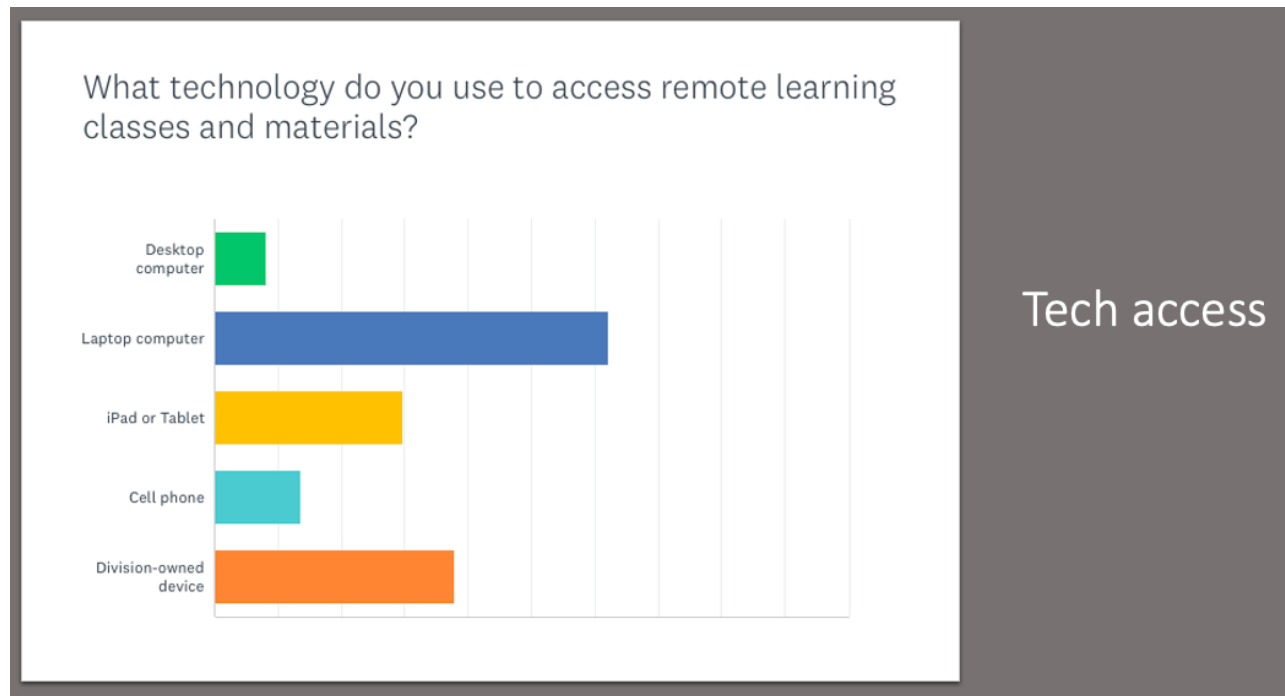


Figure 6: Technology use by remote learning students.

Access Issues

Along with the technological tools that are used in the remote learning program, parents were asked about which issues they have encountered while supporting their children. The majority of parents answered that they have not encountered any challenges in accessing remote learning. Of those who indicated access issues, nearly 50% of parents stated internet connection as the biggest issue, whether it is about losing connectivity, weak connectivity, or video calls not functioning properly. Other problems included logging on to programs and accessing specific programs (see Figure 7).

Access Issues

“Problems with Microsoft Teams”

What kinds of issues have you encountered accessing remote learning?	
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
No challenges	40.5%
Video freezing	29.7%
Lost connections	27%
Sound lags	24.3%
Weak internet connection	21.6%
Difficulty logging on to the internet (Connection issues)	16.2%
Trouble accessing specific programs	16.2%
Difficulty logging onto programs (Password issues)	10.8%
What do you do when the internet goes down and you and your child are unable to connect with online support?	
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Work independently on tasks assigned by the teacher	62.1%
Send an email to inform the teacher and wait	62.1%
Switch to using data on a phone	37.8%
Do something not school related until the internet comes back on	16.2%

Figure 7: Access issues.

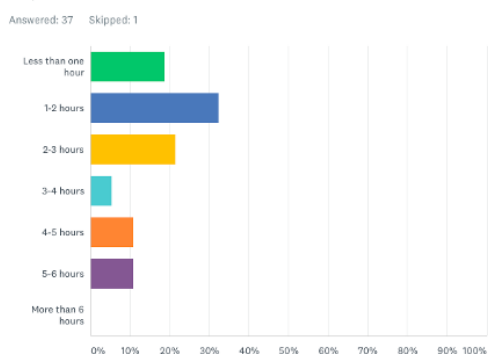
Although parents face such issues, when asked about what to do when the internet goes down and their children are unable to connect with online support, the majority of parents either work independently on the assigned tasks or send an email to inform the teacher and wait. Nearly 40% of parents also stated they switch to cellular data, while over 15% of parents do something else, not school related.

Time

Parents were asked both about their time spent helping their children and the time their children spend daily on remote learning. On average, most children are spending four to six hours a day on remote learning, whereas parents are supporting their children between less than one hour to 2 hours a day. Yet, the range of hours varies among all parents who responded to the questionnaire, a few parents have indeed stated that they need to support their children for up to six hours a day.

Time online/Time of support

On average, how much time are you spending supporting your child or children's remote learning per day?



On average, how much time is your child/are your children spending per day on remote learning?

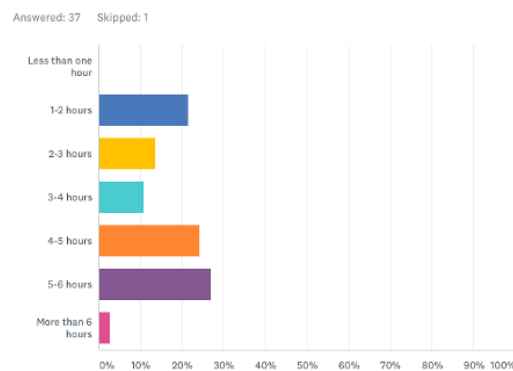


Figure 8: Parents' notion of time spent on remote learning/supporting children on remote learning.

Remote Learning Structure

In observing their children, parents commented on the structural elements of their children’s remote learning program (Figure 9). Virtual class meetings lead the way in how their children are engaging in remote learning. More specifically, over 70% of parents reported that their children work in small groups with the teacher. One on one meetings with the teacher and individual work with the teacher are significant (60.7% and 67.8% respectively), while computer mediated independent learning represents almost 58%. Group work without the teacher, and partner work without the teacher are among the least used structures during remote learning.

In addition to what structures are used, parents were also asked about how successful the structures have been. Parents reacted positively and 92.8% of them answered that virtual class meetings have been successful. On the other hand, only 32.1% of parents related to successful experiences of children working in small group meetings without the teacher. Parents also commented that their participation with a one-on-one approach with their children at home has been successful, and another parent stated that one-on-one meetings with the teacher have decreased as the number of students in remote learning classes grew over the period

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Which of the following structures have been elements of your child's/children's remote learning this fall?		From your perspective, which of the following structures have been successful in your child's/children's remote learning this fall?	
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Virtual class meetings	89.2%	Virtual class meetings	92.8%
Small group with the teacher	71.4%	Small group with the teacher	67.8%
Individual work without the teacher	67.8%	One-on-one meeting with the teacher	57.1%
One-on-one meeting with the teacher	60.7%	Computer mediated independent learning	46.4%
Computer mediated independent learning	57.1%	Small group without the teacher	32.1%
Small group without the teacher	46.4%	Partner work without the teacher	28.5%
Partner work without the teacher	32.1%		

Figure 9: Remote learning structure.

Support to Children

Parents were given a list of options and asked to indicate what type of supports they give their children. By far, around 75% of parents have engaged in providing encouragement for their children, followed by supervising independent activities, helping with time management, and helping their children to engage. Few parents have reported needing to support their children logging on to programs, though nearly 50% of parents reported supporting their children to access programs and apps, and through direct supervision, motivation and emotion regulation, and outdoor activities regulations.

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Support to children: what are parents providing their children	
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Providing encouragement	75.8%
Supervising independent activities	68.9%
Help with time management	65.5%
Helping my child to engage	62%
Helping to motivate my child	58.6%
Providing direct instruction	55.1%
Helping regulate the need for movement and/or outdoors	55.1%
Help access programs and applications	44.8%
Helping regulate emotions	44.8%
Help logging on	37.9%
Help with logging on to programs (password issues)	31%

Figure 10: Parents' support for children.

Challenges

Following the list of supports in the picture above, parents also responded to what has been more challenging in supporting their children on remote learning. Aside from the results shown below, parents commented that their children have also “started counseling since COVID to deal with social distancing and no seeing friends”, and that parents themselves do not “always understand the French instructions” (see more in the French Immersion report in further sections below). The figure below indicates that most parents encounter challenges in helping motivate their children (45.4%) and helping with time management (40.9%).

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Support to children: what are parents providing their children	
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Helping to motivate my child	45.4%
Help with time management	40.9%
Providing direct instruction	31.8%
Helping my child to engage	31.8%
Helping regulate emotions	31.8%
Supervising independent activities	27.2%
Helping regulate the need for movement and/or outdoors	27.2%
Providing encouragement	22.7%
Help to access programs and application	13.6%
Help with logging on to programs (password issues)	9%
Help with logging on to the internet (connecting)	4.5%

Figure 11: Parents' challenges on remote learning.

Resources

As parents face challenges with their children during remote learning, some of the resources they draw on to help their children are displayed in figure 12 below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Contact the teacher	72.4%
Review the assignment requirements	72.1%
Search for help online	48.2%
Contact another student in class	3.4%
Contact another parent with a child in the class or program	3.45%
Contact a teacher at my child's home school	0.0%

Figure 12: Parents' resources on remote learning.

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

The top two strategies, according to parents, are to contact their remote learning teacher for help or try reviewing the assignment requirements with their children. Almost half of the parents who answered this question stated they also search for help online, and almost 3.5% of the parents stated they contact either another student in class or another parent with a child in the class program. None of the respondent parents contact their child's previous teacher at their home school. Also, a few parents have not encountered any issues, so they emphasized the absence of challenges in comments they provided at the end of the questionnaire.

Feedback from Teachers

While parents are playing a big role in helping their children do assignments and schoolwork, we asked parents what type of feedback teachers are providing to the children to let them know how they are progressing with their learning. Three-quarters of parents listed that their children are getting verbal and live feedback from teachers. Another 60% also said feedback is written and posted, while 57.1% of parents confirmed their children's assignments are being graded. Emails have been used by teachers to provide written feedback (46.4%); while marked tests (28.5%) and journals (7.1%) have also been useful for written feedback. One parent expressed that their children have not received any type of feedback.

Children's Attitudes

In order to find out what parents think about their children's attitudes towards remote learning, we asked parents to rank the following statements from most accurate (1) to least accurate (8):

- They are eager to join class each day.
- They talk about what they are learning.
- They are excited to complete assigned learning tasks.
- They look forward to class meetings.
- They look forward to individual meetings with the teacher.
- They look forward to group gatherings online.
- They have increased their interest in topics explored in class.
- They are eager to demonstrate what they have been doing online.

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Combining all responses, we reached an average for each one of the statements above (see Figure 13). The most accurate attitude, according to the parents (as indicated by the lowest average rating), is that their children are eager to demonstrate what they have been doing online, followed by children’s increased interest in topics explored in class and their looking forward to group gatherings online. The least accurate attitude of children towards remote learning, according to parents, is that they are eager to join class each day.

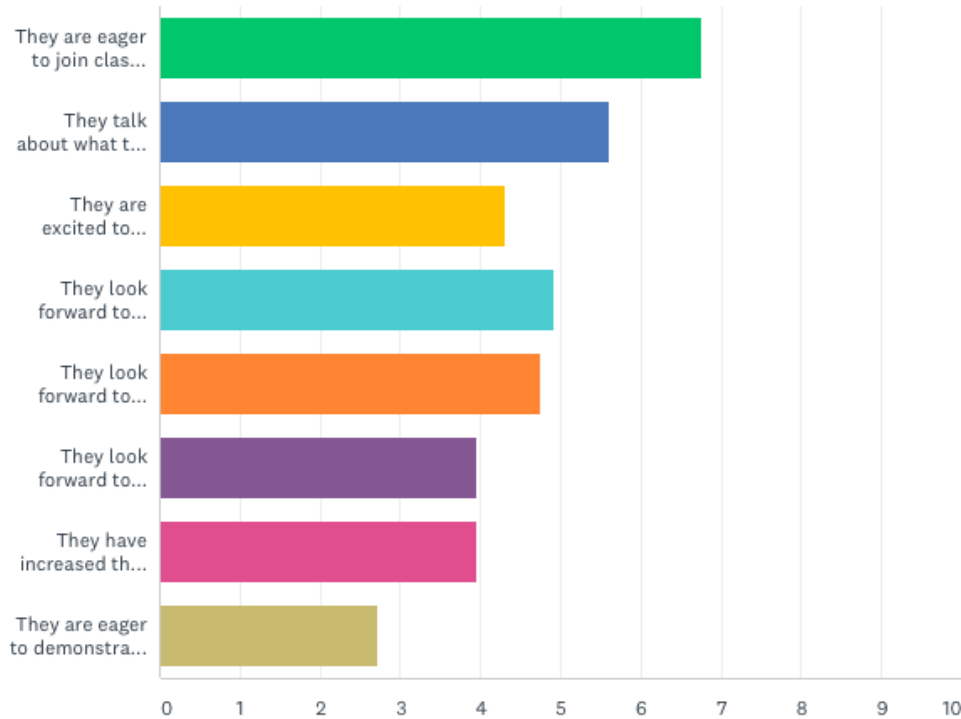


Figure 13: Children's attitudes towards remote learning, according to parents.

Changes

As many parents had children doing remote learning in the spring, before the Consortia program began, we asked them to tell us what changes they have noticed in their children between the initial spring experience and the fall/winter implementation of the remote learning program. Considering their experiences with remote learning in the spring of 2020 and experiences throughout the 2020-2021 school year, one parent stated “their child is less engaged” and another parent said “there has been no difference”. The data shows that 33.3% think remote learning is more varied now, 25% say their children are more engaged, 16.7% think their children is more

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

motivated to learn, and 12.5% of parents think their children are more independent or more efficient in completing work.

Concerns

In addition to the challenges, successes, supporting strategies, and attitudes towards remote learning, parents were also asked to share their concerns about their children as remote learners. Parents' biggest concerns are that their children are less physically active and that they spend less time talking to their friends. Nearly 30% of parents are actually concerned that their children are not excited about school, leading to concerns about children feeling more withdrawn (17.3%) and children coming up with reasons not to log on to remote learning (13.7%). Also, 13.7% of parents shared they have no concerns about their children as remote learners.

Teachers

The multiple-choice questions for teachers consisted of providing them with statements and asking them to strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statements given. The statements encompass the following observation points for discussion: students' connection with other students online; students' connection with the teacher; online teaching skills; online teaching; online assignments; teaching domains; feedback for students; support for students; tech support for students; and sustainability of the program.

Student/Student Connection

One of the important pieces we could observe from this study is how students are connecting with other students and classmates. Therefore, teachers were asked to provide their perspective on whether students are meeting new people, enjoying meeting each other, making new friends, and connecting with other students outside of class time online.

While all teachers strongly agreed or agreed that their students are meeting new people, making new friends online, and enjoying the online meetings, not every teacher agreed that their students connect with other students outside of class time. Nearly 20% of teachers do not think their students are actually connecting with their classmates outside of class time.

My students connect with other students in my class outside of class time.

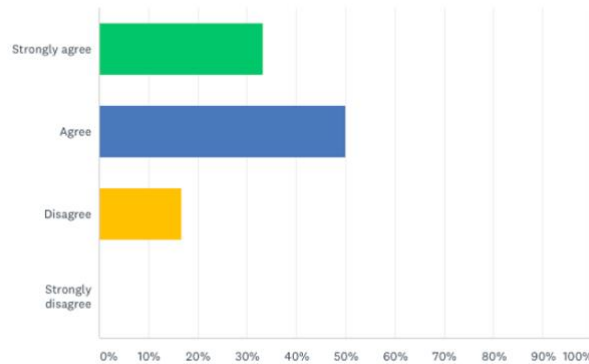


Figure 14: Students' connections, according to teachers.

Student/Teacher Connection

Similarly, we wanted to hear from teachers whether students are able to contact the teachers when questions arise, and if teachers are also enjoying meeting with their students online.

While all the teachers either strongly agree or agree that they enjoy meeting students online, 15% of them say that students do not contact them when they have questions about an assignment or schoolwork. However, over 50% of teachers stated that they are contacted by students whenever a question arises.

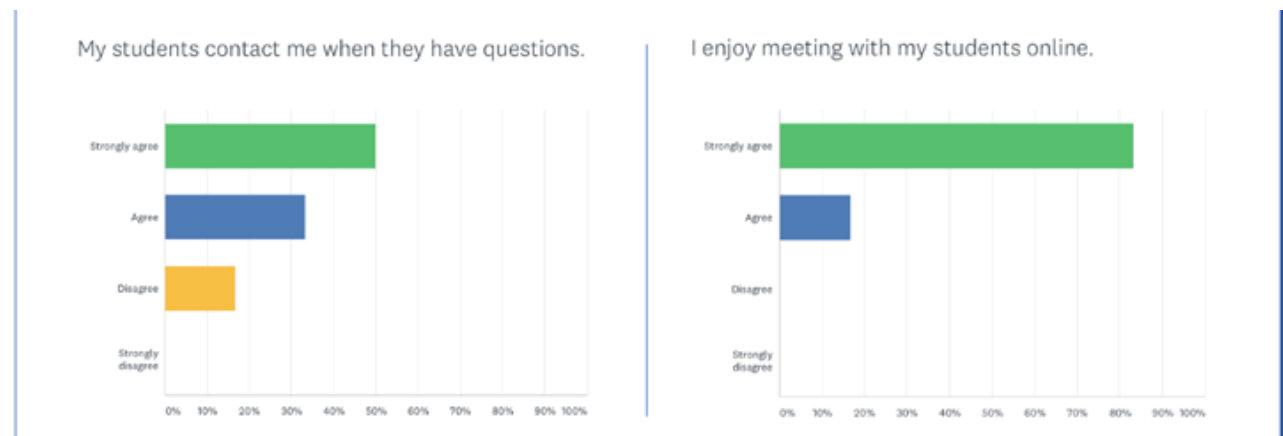


Figure 15: Teachers' perspective on their connection with students online.

Online Teaching Skills

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

With the intent to check up on teachers' skills for online teaching, teachers assessed statements about their learning of new skills in working with technology through remote teaching, and their confidence teaching online now compared to when they first started. All the teachers stated that they feel more confident teaching online now compared to when they first started (66.7% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed with the statement). However, as seen below, over 15% of these teachers feel that they are not learning new skills in working with technology through remote teaching.

I am learning new skills in working with technology through remote teaching.

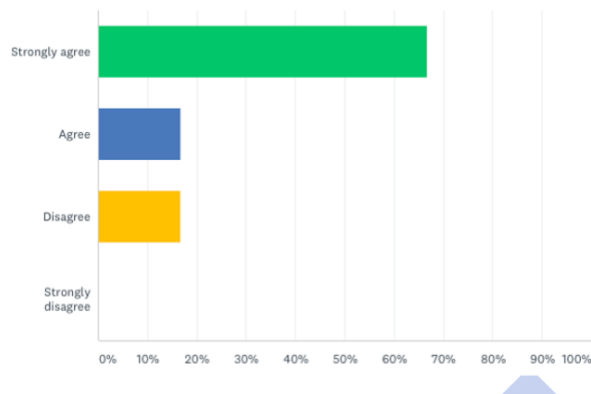


Figure 16: Teachers' remote teaching skills.

Online Teaching

With the shift to online delivery, teachers are required to learn new strategies for online teaching. When asked if they were able to model being a learner for their students, 100% of the teachers responded strongly agree.

Online Assignments

Teachers were also asked to weigh in and tell us if they are being able to provide interesting and stimulating remote learning assignments. According to the teachers' responses, one hundred percent of the teachers strongly agree or agree with the fact that they are able to provide interesting and stimulating assignments to students doing remote learning.

Teaching Domains

As remote learning has been adopted and developed to replace in-classroom learning, we asked teachers to evaluate if they include Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Health, the Arts, and different themes in their online teaching.

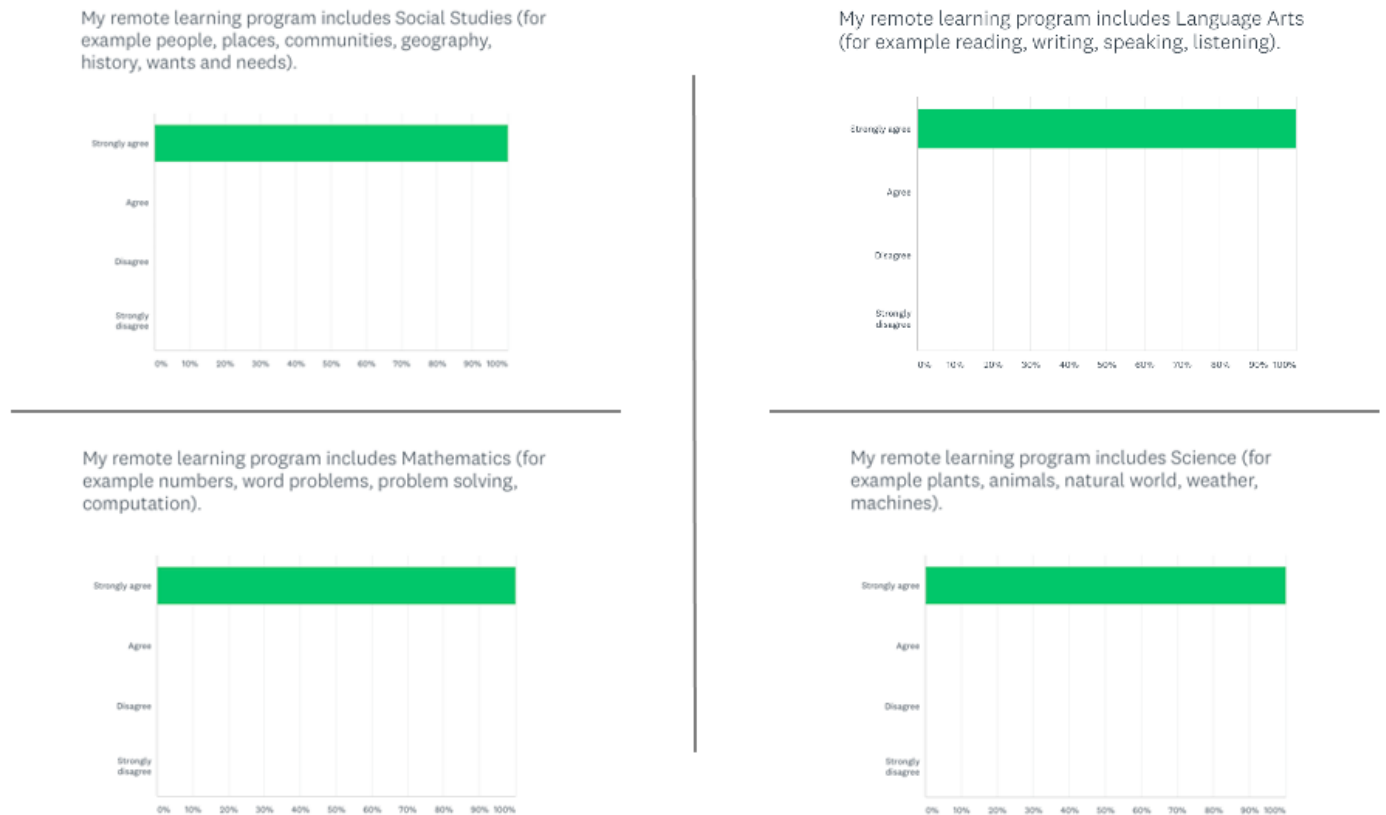


Figure 17: Teaching domains - part 1.

Concerning Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science, all teachers strongly agreed they are able to include these domains into their remote learning program (see above).

In regard to Health, the Arts, and the inclusion of themes into their remote learning, the majority of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that they are able to use those domains in their remote teaching. Only 16.7% of teachers stated they do not incorporate themes into their remote teaching.

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

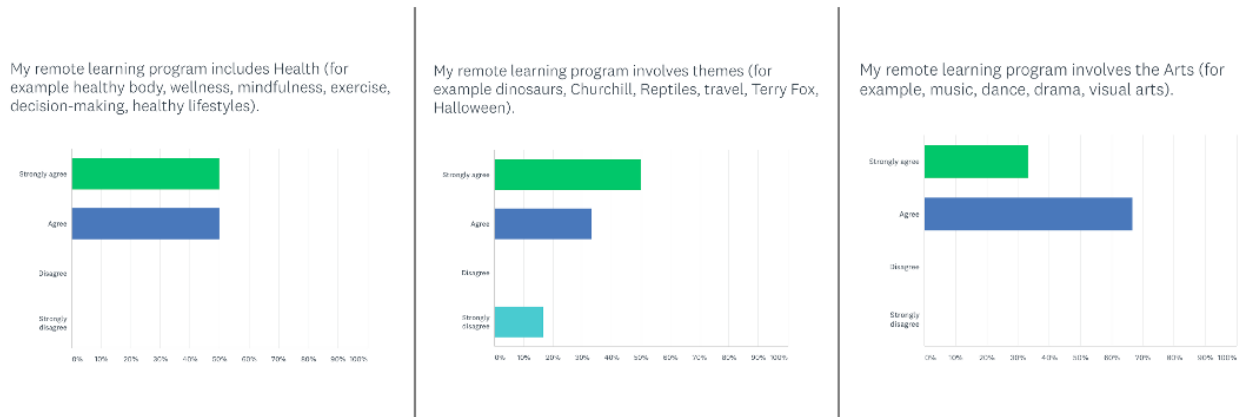


Figure 18: Teaching domains - part 2.

Feedback for Students

Feedback for students has been an important tool to discuss how students are doing in their remote learning assignments. From a teacher’s perspective, we can note that all of the teachers either strongly agree or agree that their students are aware of their assessment during remote learning.

My students know how they are doing on their remote learning assignments.

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0

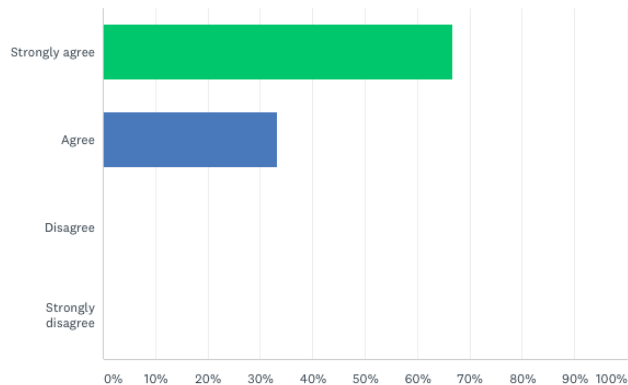


Figure 19: Teachers' feedback.

Support for Students

Aside from the feedback that students receive, we explored what other kinds of support students have during remote learning, considering support from teachers themselves, support from

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

parents, support from other students, and online support for students to complete their assignments.

According to teachers, they all help students with their work when it is needed. The teachers were not fully in agreement that students get help from their parents (Figure 20). 17% of teachers strongly agreed and 50% agreed that parents are helpful when children experience challenges with their schoolwork, while 33% of teachers do not agree that the parents are able to help the students.

Regarding online support and support from other students/classmates (Figures 10 & 11), 50% of the teachers responded that they agree that students search online for answers when they face issues with their work, and 70% of the teachers stated that students, in fact, check in with other students. Fifteen per cent of the teachers disagreed with both statements and believe students neither go online nor talk to other classmates. Also, 35% of teachers strongly disagreed that students search online for answers, and 15% of teachers strongly disagreed that students talk to other students when they need help.

My students get help from their parent(s) with their work when they need it.

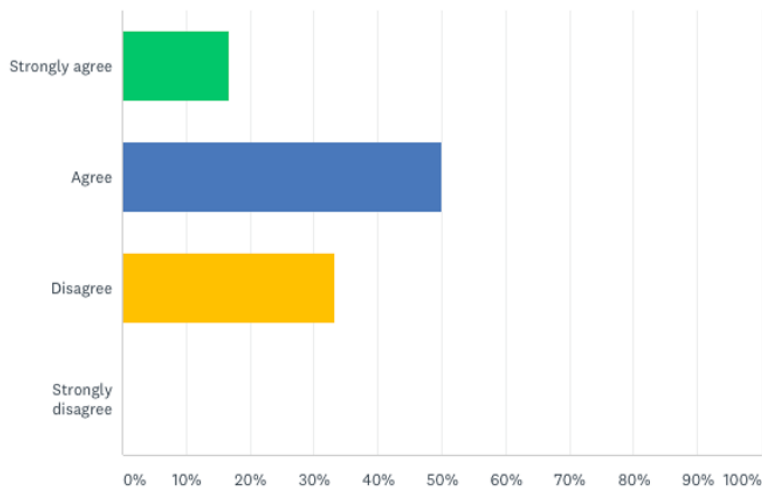
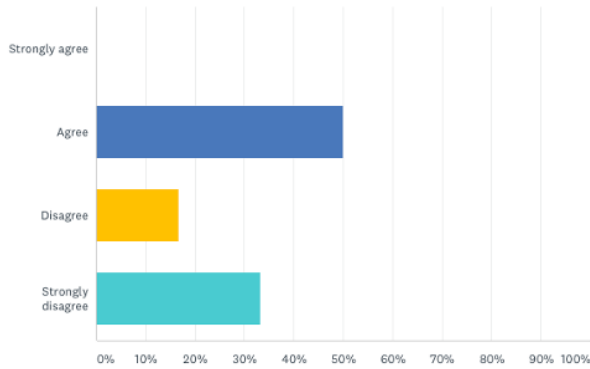


Figure 20: Teachers' perspective on parents' support.

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

When students need help with an assignment, they search online for answers.



Students help each other with their work when they need it.

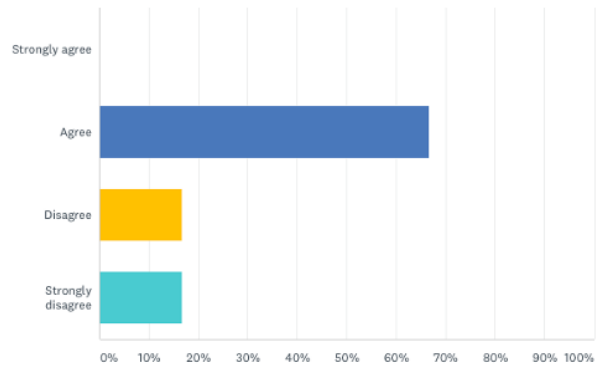


Figure 21: Teachers' perspective on online support and student/student support.

Technology Support for Students

As there was a concern that technical difficulties might be posing problems during remote learning, we asked teachers if they are able to help students resolve technological issues. As shown in the graph below, 83.3% of the teachers who answered this question agree that they are able to help their students, whereas 16.7% disagree and say they cannot help their students resolve technological issues.

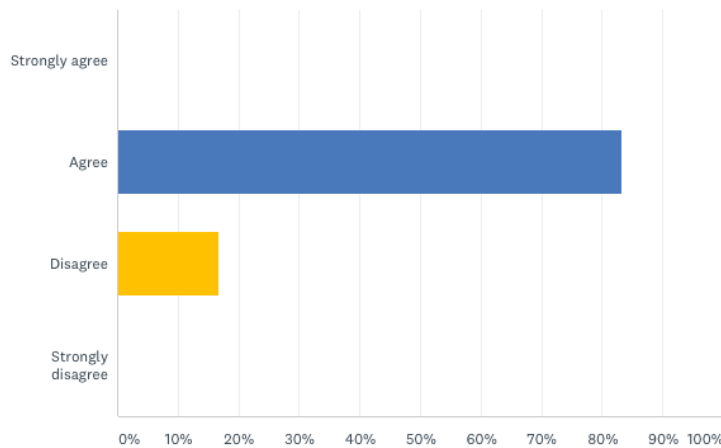


Figure 22: Tech support for students.

Sustainability of the Program

Teachers were offered three statements that directly relate to the sustainability of the remote learning program. One of the statements ensures teachers can sustain their commitment to the program, another statement warrants teachers can sustain their level of teaching, and the last statement suggest teachers would like to continue teaching remotely in the future.

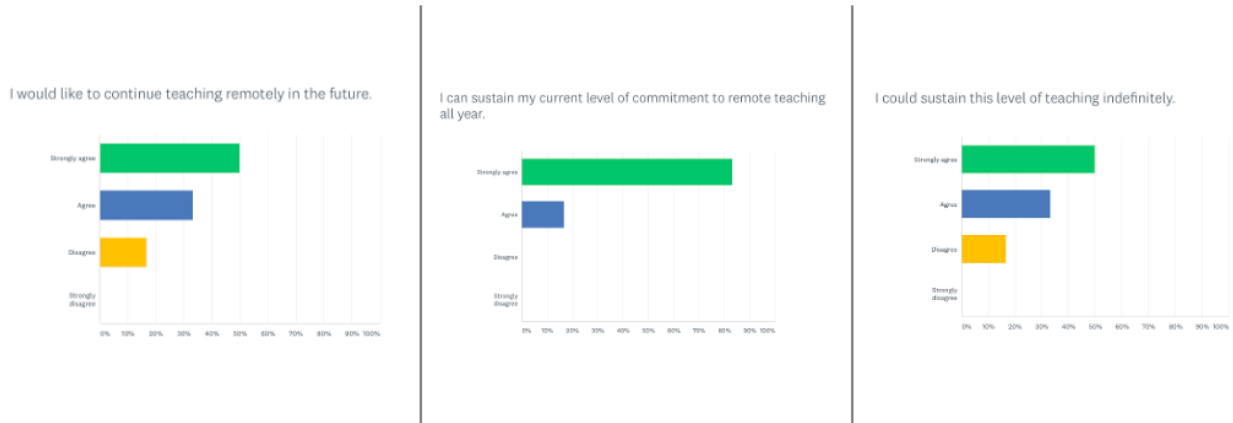


Figure23: Teachers' views on sustainability.

Although all teachers strongly agreed/agreed that they can sustain their remote teaching for the whole year, a more long-term program is not a viable option for everyone. Approximately one-fifth of teachers stated they could not sustain remote teaching indefinitely nor would like to continue teaching remotely in the future.

Students Grades K-4

For students from Grade K-4, we developed questions for which they could select Yes, Sometimes or No. These questions encompass: students' connection with other students online; students' connection with the teacher; online learning skills; online learning; online assignments; teaching domains; feedback for students; and support for students.

The Grades K-4 students are divided into two groups: English Program and French Immersion Program. Although all multiple choice questions are the same for both groups, this report keeps both groups' answers separate as their experiences with remote learning can vary considerably.

Students' Connection with other Students Online

Although all responding students, from either French Immersion or English programs, stated they like or sometimes like meeting their classmates online, only 100% of the English respondent students said they meet/sometimes meet new classmates online. In French Immersion, 25% of respondent students said they actually do not meet new classmates online.

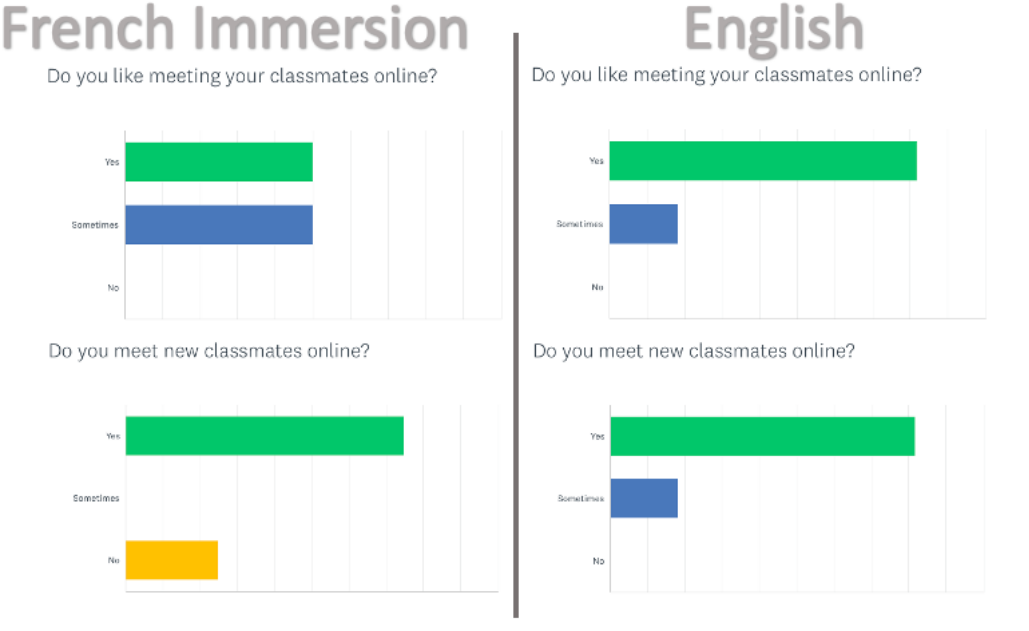


Figure 24: Students' connections with classmates online.

When asked if they meet with other students online outside of class, or connect with students in person outside of class, none of the French Immersion respondents indicated that they do any of those. However, although a range of 70% to 80% of English students do not meet other students online outside of class, nor meet them in person, 20% to 30% of these students said they do connect or sometimes connect with other students under those circumstances.

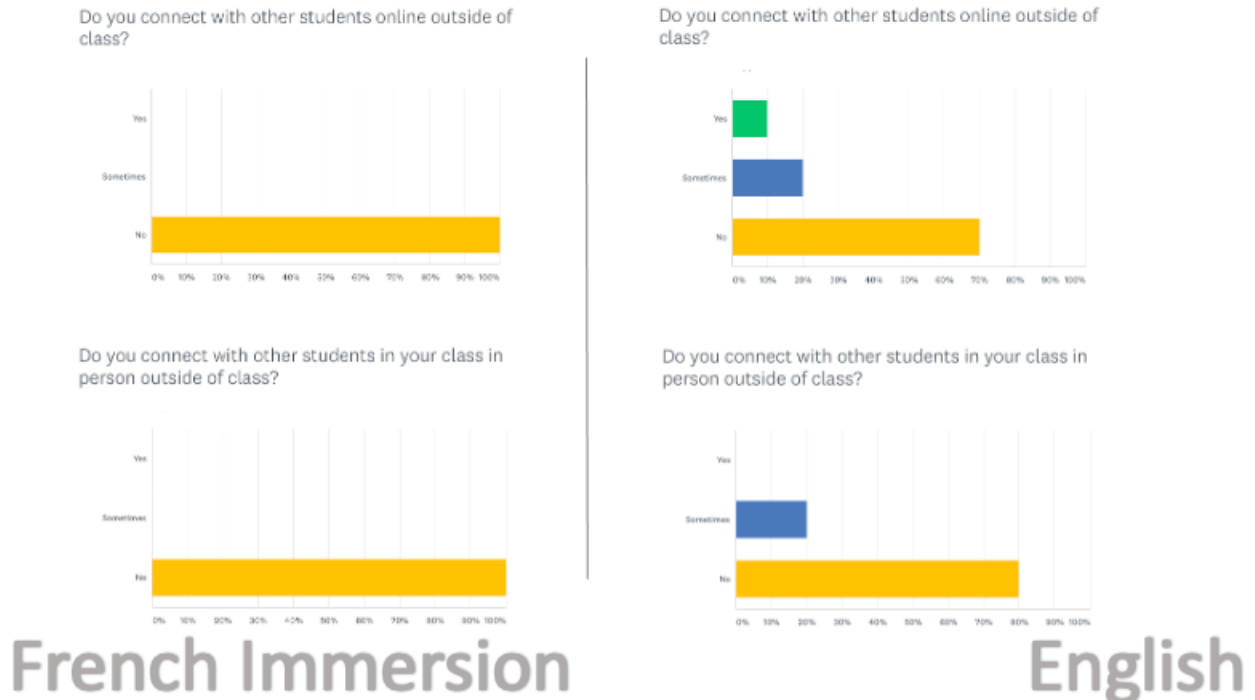


Figure 25: Students' connections out of class time and in person.

Connection with the Teacher

The connection students from Grades K-4 have with their teachers presents less controversy. All students, from English and French Immersion, always or sometimes connect with their teachers, and they also enjoy meeting their teacher online.

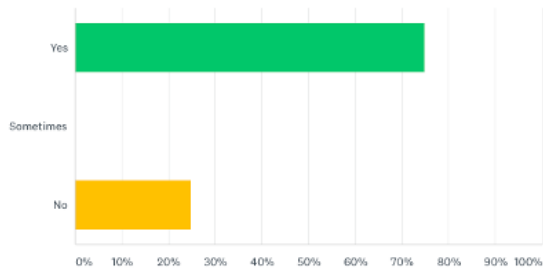
Online Learning Skills

The students from French Immersion, who responded to these questions, are somewhat divided about whether or not they feel more confident learning online now than when they started, and whether or not they are learning new computer skills. As the graphs below show, while 75% of these students are more confident in their current online learning experiences, nearly 50% feel they are definitely learning new computer skills. One-fourth of these students sometimes feel like they are learning new skills and another one-fourth do not think they are learning any skills.

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Do you feel more confident learning online now than when you first started?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0



Do you feel you are learning new computer skills?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0

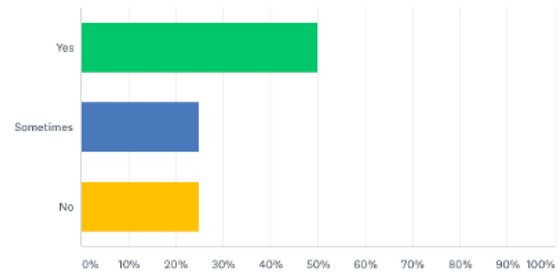
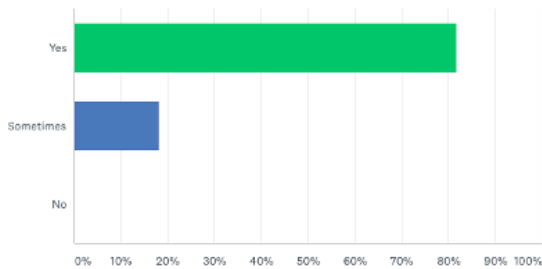


Figure 26: French Immersion students - confidence and skills.

With the English Program students, 80% of respondents both feel more confident in an online learning environment now, and feel they are learning new computer skills. Nearly 10% of the English Program respondents feel they are not improving their computer skills.

Do you feel more confident learning online now than when you first started?



Do you feel you are learning new computer skills?

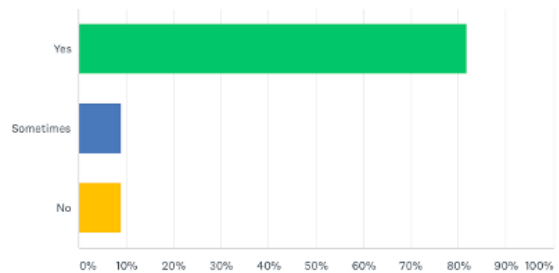


Figure 27: English Program students - confidence and skills.

Online Learning

The French Immersion respondent students seem to either always believe or sometimes believe that they are learners in their remote learning classroom. However, 54.5% of respondent students from the English program feel like learners in their remote learning classroom, whereas 36.3% sometimes feel it, and 9.1% do not feel like they are learners in this learning setting.

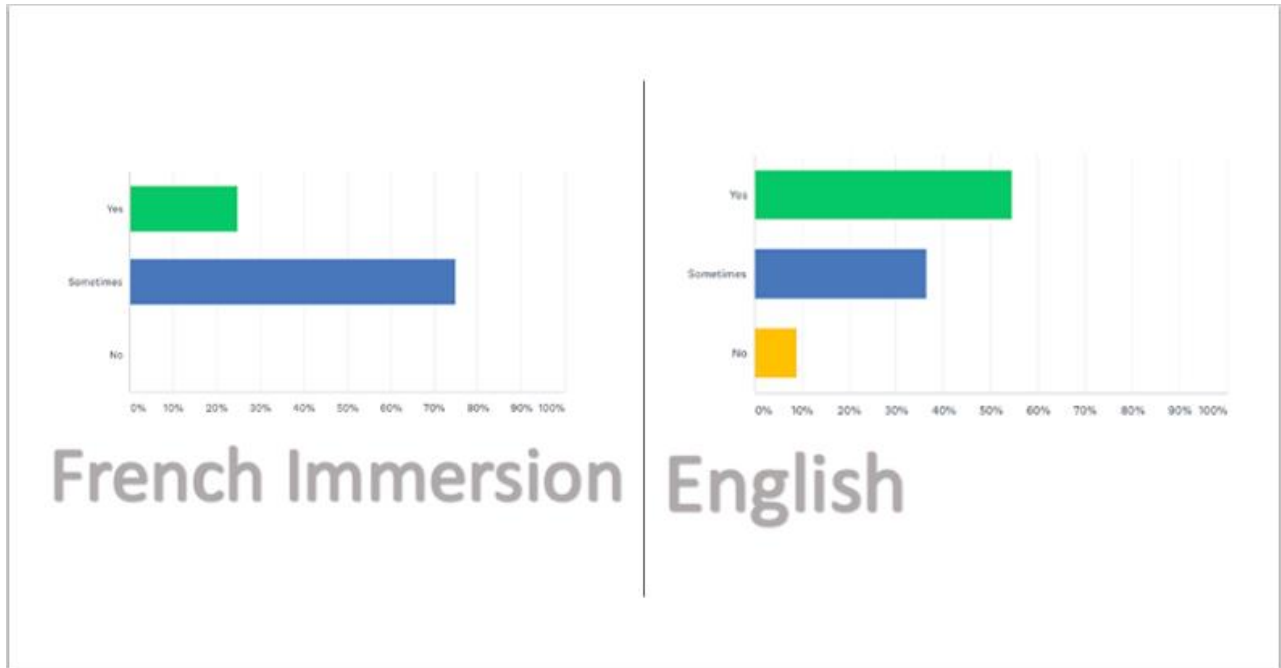


Figure 28: Online learning.

Online Assignments

When asked if they find their assigned work interesting, respondents from the English K-4 Program varied in their answers as to whether their schoolwork is interesting. Nearly 10% of these students find their work is not interesting, while over 90% think or sometimes think their work is interesting. For French Immersion students who responded to this question, half believe they do have interesting schoolwork, and the other half think they sometimes are assigned interesting schoolwork.

Do you find your school work interesting?

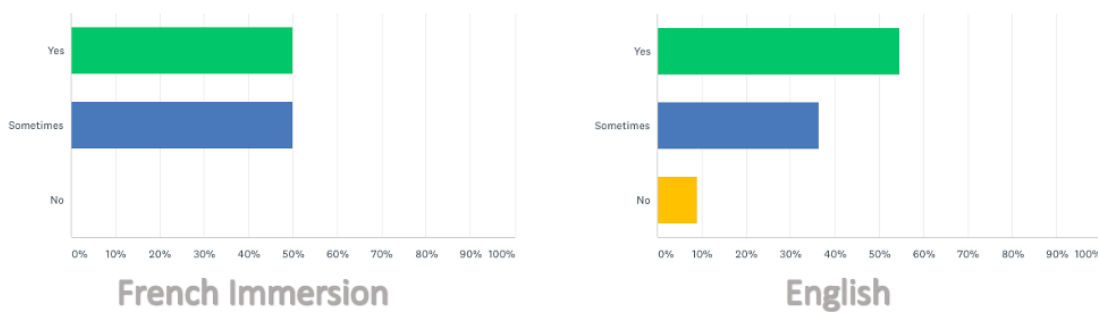


Figure 29: Students' opinions on interesting schoolwork.

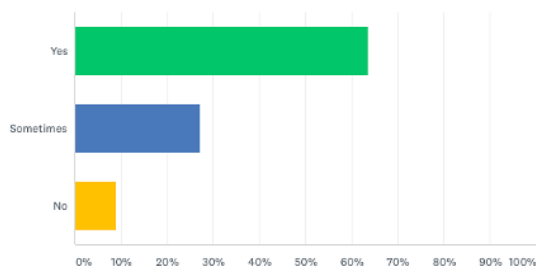
WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Now, when asked if such work is difficult, 100% of the French Immersion respondent children said that they sometimes find their work difficult. For the students in the English Program, only 9% of respondents think their schoolwork is difficult, 45% think their schoolwork is sometimes difficult, and nearly 46% think their schoolwork is not difficult.

Teaching Domains

All students from the English Program, who responded to the questionnaire, learn or sometimes learn about Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science, and Health in remote learning. As for the French Immersion students, they also all learn or sometimes learn about these same domains. When asked about themes (for example, dinosaurs, Churchill, reptiles, travel, Terry Fox, and Halloween), and the Arts (such as drama, visual arts, music, dance), all French Immersion respondents indicated that they learn or sometimes learn through themes in remote learning. Although minimal, ten per cent of the English Program students stated that neither themes, nor the Arts is included in their remote learning program.

Do you learn about the Arts? (for example music, dance, drama, visual arts)



Do you learn through themes? (for example dinosaurs, Churchill, Reptiles, travel, Terry Fox, Halloween)

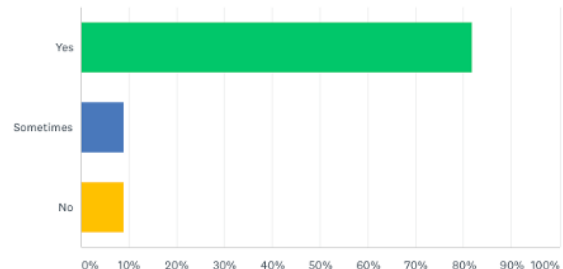


Figure 30: English Program students - themes and the Arts.

Feedback for Students

All French Immersion students who responded to the questionnaire said that they know how they are doing in their assignments. Aside from French Immersion, 18% of the students in the English Program, who responded to the questionnaire, stated they do not know how they are doing in their assignments.

Do you know how you are doing on your assignments?

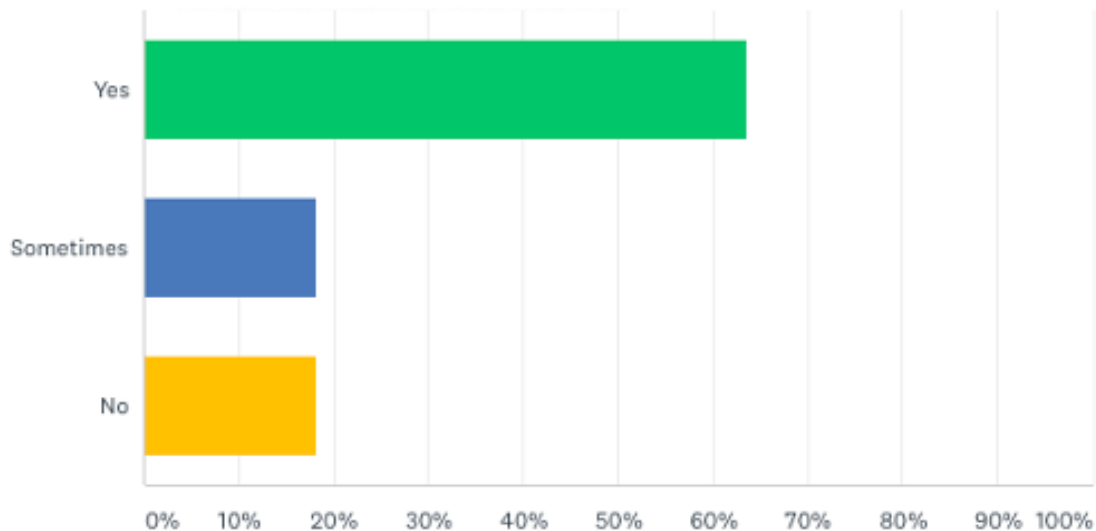


Figure 31: English Program students: feedback.

Support for Students

Regarding whether students have support from their teacher or parents when they need help with schoolwork, 100% of Grades K-4 respondents said they either have or sometimes get the help they need. None of the French Immersion students who answered this questionnaire stated they can get help from classmates, whereas nearly 20% of the students from the English Program sometimes have it, and over 80% do not. French Immersion students seem to have more autonomy searching online for answers when they need help with their work. Twenty-five per cent of them said they look online, while 75% responded that they sometimes look online for answers for their doubts and questions. In the English Program, 60% of the students do not look online at all, 30% sometimes do, and only 10% search for their answers online.

Do you look online for answers when you need help?

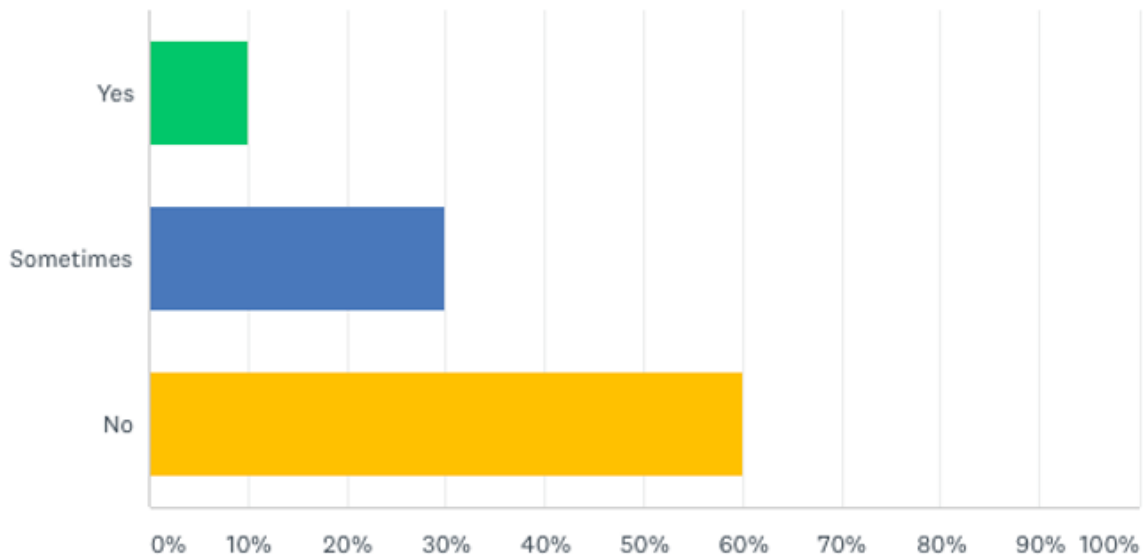


Figure 32: English Program students: online help.

Students Grades 5-8

The multiple-choice questions for students consisted of providing them with statements and asking them to strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statements. The statements encompassed the following topics: students' connection with other students online; students' connection with the teacher; online learning skills; online learning; online assignments; teaching domains; feedback for students; and support for students.

Students' Connection with other Students Online

All student respondents were asked to agree or disagree to a certain extent with a few statements given about meeting people online on remote learning. All students from Grades 5 to 8 who responded to the questionnaire either strongly agree or agree that they have met new people through remote learning, and that they enjoy meeting with their classmates online.

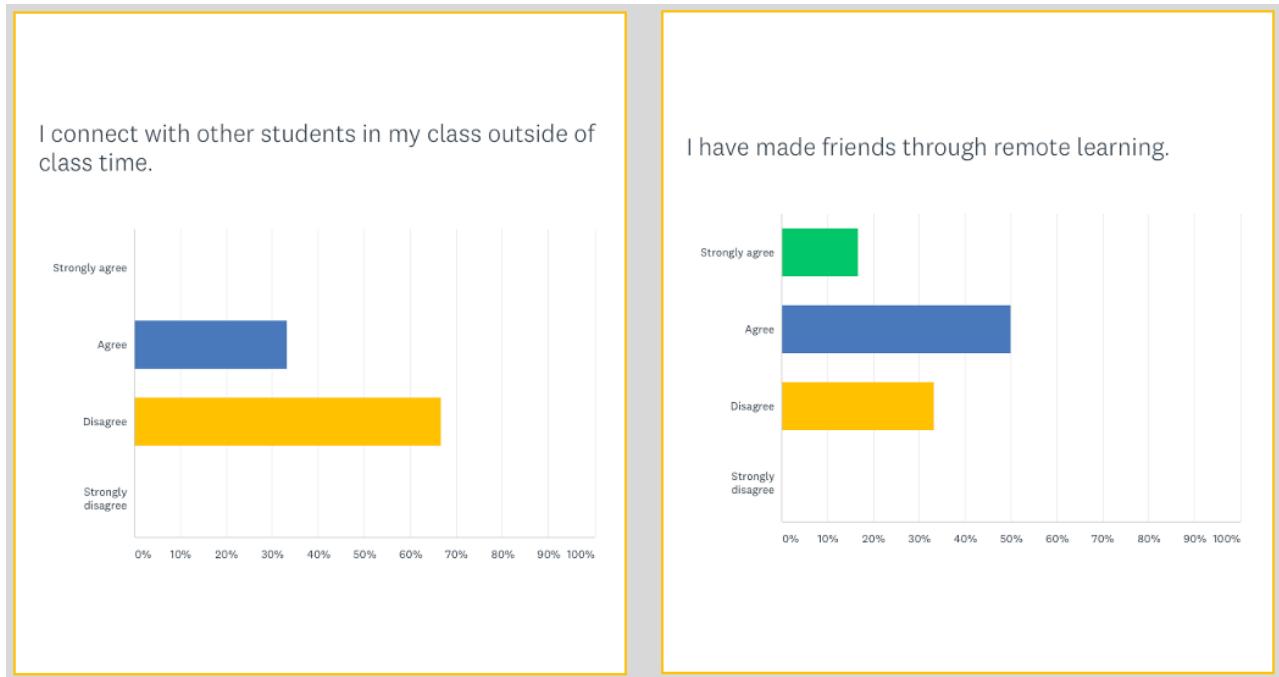


Figure 33: Students' connections.

However, when asked about connecting with other students from their class outside of class time, and making new friends through remote learning, the respondents did not fully agree. While 33% of the respondent students agree that they have connected with their classmates outside of class time, 67% of them do not think they have had that chance. In addition, making friends through remote learning seems to be occurring for nearly 67% of the students, while over 33% of them attested they have not made friends through remote learning.

Students' Connection with the Teacher

When asked about meeting their teachers, and whether or not they enjoy meeting with their teachers, the majority of responding students strongly agree (66.6%) that they have contacted their teacher whenever they have questions and that they enjoyed the experience. A smaller percentage of students (33.4%) agreed they have had such contact and liked it, and no one disagreed with these experiences.

Online Learning Skills

Students were asked to agree or disagree with their level of confidence learning online now, compared to when they started. According to the responses obtained, all of the students are feeling

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

more confident learning online, half of them strongly agree, and the other half agree that they are feeling more confident.

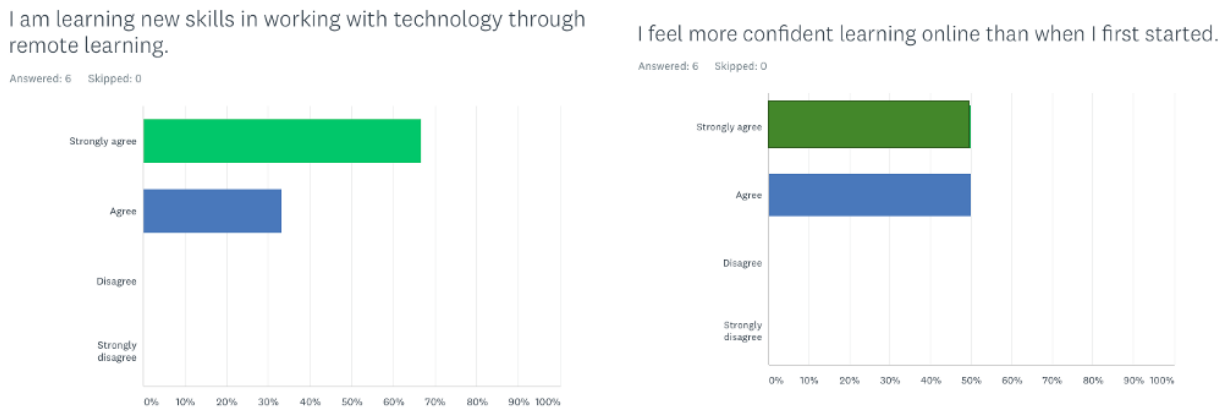


Figure 34: Online learning skills and confidence, according to respondent students.

In terms of learning new skills in working with technology through remote learning, 66.6% of the respondents strongly agreed and 33.4% agreed that they are learning new technology skills while in the program.

Online Learning

Fifty per cent of the students from grades 5-8 who responded to the questionnaire stated they strongly agree that they feel like learner in their remote learning classroom, and the other fifty per cent agreed.

Online Assignments

Considering the work given to these students (Figure 35), nearly 70% of the responding students agree they are assigned interesting activities. A small portion (16.6%) of students strongly agree that they are given interesting work, and also another 16% of these students disagree with the idea that they are given interesting assignments to work with. Aside from knowing from students if their online work is exciting, students were also asked to say whether or not their online work is difficult. As Figure 36 shows, almost 70% of the respondent students do not think the work is difficult, and over 30% of them either agree or strongly agree that the work is too difficult.

The work I am given to do is interesting.

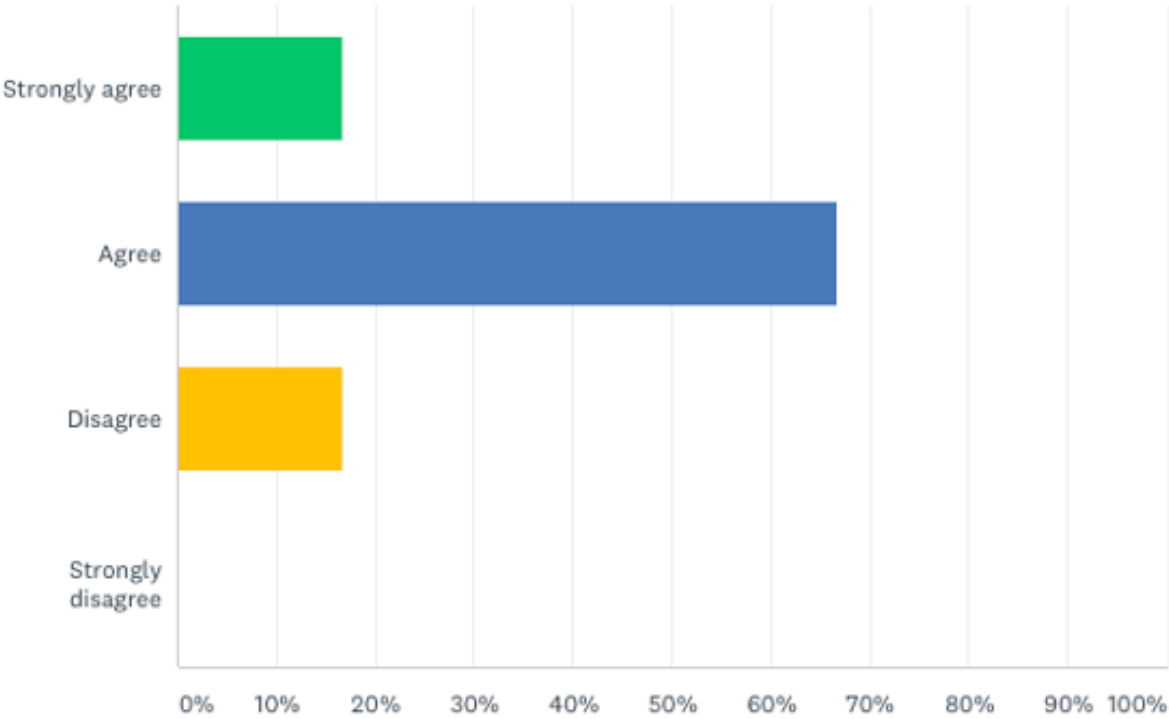


Figure 35: Respondent students' opinion about interesting schoolwork.

The work I am given to do is difficult.

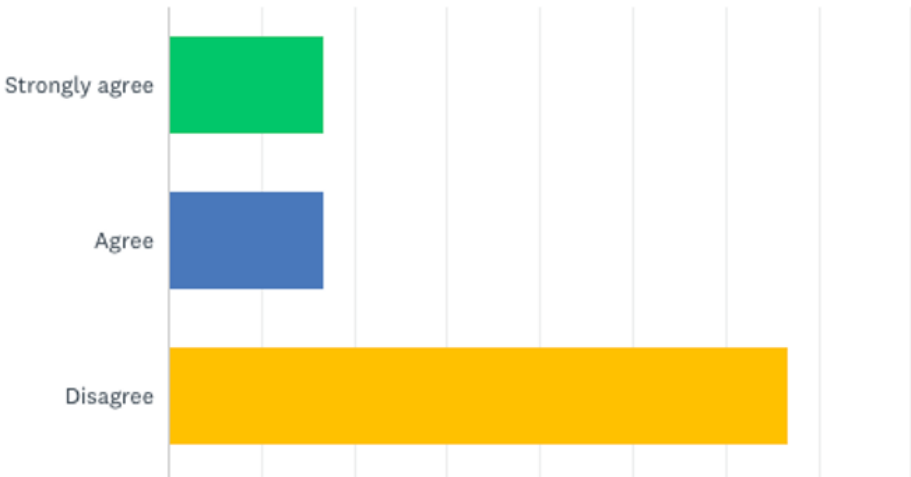


Figure 36: Respondent students' opinion about whether their schoolwork is difficult.

Teaching Domains

We cannot observe disparities in how students see the inclusion of Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Science, and Health in their online learning. All students who responded to the questionnaire either strongly agreed or agreed that these teaching domains are present in their remote learning classrooms. On the other hand, 50% of these students do not agree that the Arts (music, dance, drama, visual arts) are included in their program, 15% think there is also a lack of inclusion of themes (dinosaurs, Churchill, Reptiles, travel, Halloween), and 15% more of the students strongly disagree that themes are present in their learning classrooms.

My remote learning program involves the Arts (for example music, dance, drama, visual arts).

My remote learning program involves themes (for example dinosaurs, Churchill, Reptiles, travel, Terry Fox, Halloween).

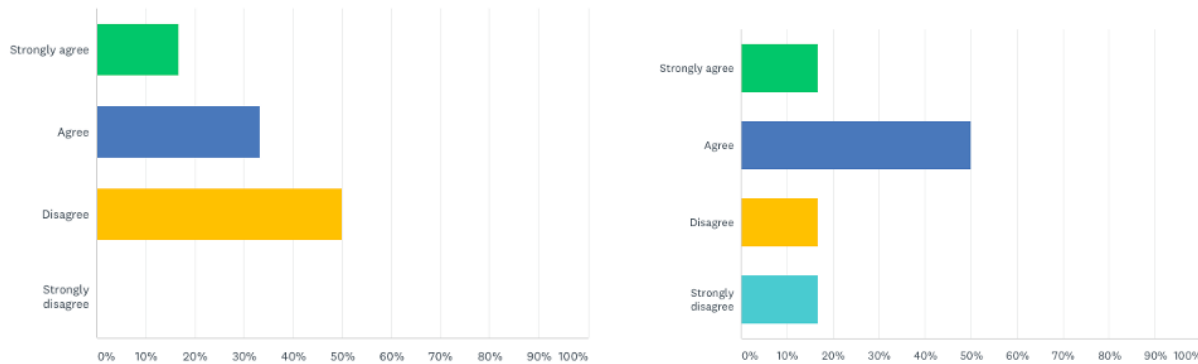


Figure 37: Respondent students' opinions about their learning programs.

Feedback for Students

All of the Grades 5 to 8 students feel knowledgeable about how they are doing in their assignments, half of the students strongly agreed, and the other half agreed with the statement.

Support for Students

As for supports, we asked students to tell us if their teachers help them with their work, if their parents help them with their work, if other classmates provide them with help, or whether they search online for answers when they need help. Sixty-seven percent of the children strongly agree that their teachers and parents are helpful, while 33% of the students agree that this is true. In general, we can say 100% of the students who responded to the questionnaire are able to look for help from either their parents or their teachers.

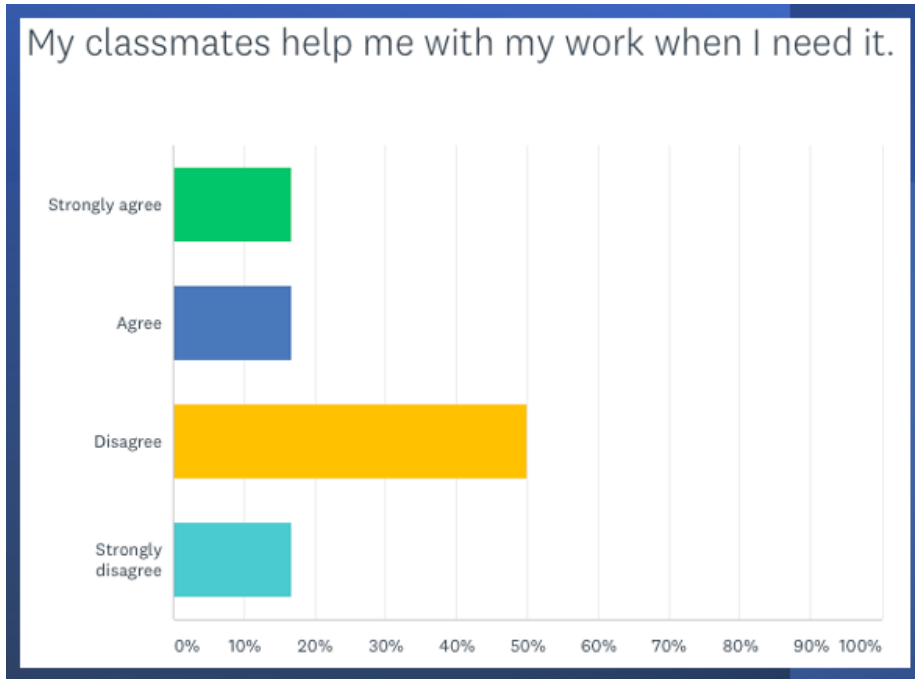


Figure 38: Students' responses to the support they have.

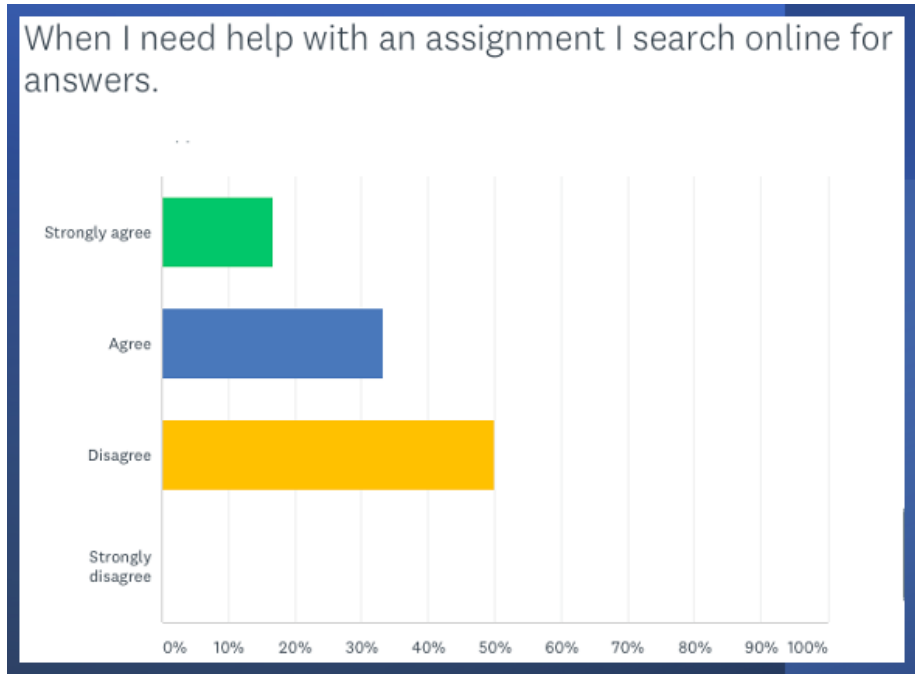


Figure 39: Students' responses to online searching.

The majority of students in this questionnaire disagree or strongly disagree that classmates and online search (Figures 38 and 39) are strategies they use when they need help with an assignment.

French Immersion

For the French Immersion program, the questions addressed to this group alone can be found in Table 2. The themes we can observe from the questions below include: the level of comfort with French language, the types of support to French language learning online, the level of French required in remote learning, French language skills (Speaking, Reading, Listening, and Writing), and French language improvement during the remote learning program. For the purpose of protecting the identity of our participants in French Immersion, we will present the data in themes rather than according to each participant group. It is important to note that no responses were received from participants in the Student grades 5-8 group.

As for level of comfort, parents were asked how comfortable they are in supporting their children learning French, students were asked how comfortable they feel learning French, and teachers were asked if they feel comfortable teaching French via remote learning. In order to investigate support for French language learning online, parents were asked what they access to help their children with an assignment, students were asked what they access/seek out when they do not understand an assignment, and teachers were asked about their suggestions for parents and students to better complete assignments. All participants were asked about their level of French required to help and go through the assignments. Questions about French language skills (Speaking, Reading, Listening, and Writing) give us a bit of background on how much French language students are using during remote learning, along with how students are perceiving their French language improvement.

Comfort with French Language

All French Immersion teachers, who responded to the questionnaire, expressed they are very comfortable supporting students' French remote learning. Parents, however, are either feeling very comfortable or not so comfortable, while the majority of the students are somewhat comfortable learning in French through their remote learning program (Figure 40).

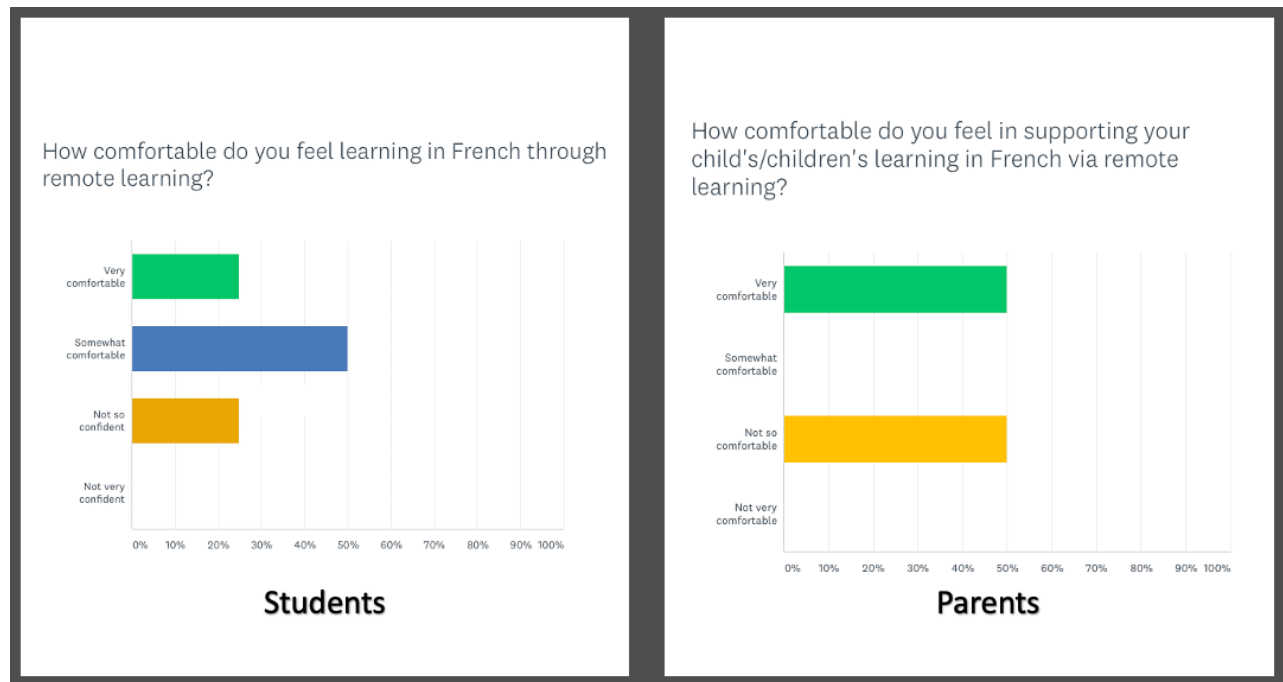


Figure 40: Students' and parents' level of comfortability with French language.

Types of Support for French Language Learning Online

Teachers, parents and students who accessed the questionnaire were given a few options to choose from and indicate which types of support they use to seek help with a French assignment. Including the types of supports teachers advise parents and students to use, and the types of support that parents and students actually use, we can observe that the use of Google Translate is the main tool of choice (88%). This is followed by consulting the teacher (66%), and/or consulting a relative/family member (55%).

Level of French Required in Remote Learning

The questions asked to teachers, parents, and students about their level of French required in remote learning focused on the accessibility of French materials. In response to the questions, teachers in French Immersion stated that in the K-4 program, material is accessible with most parents' level of French, whereas in Grades 5-8, the material and instructions are beyond most parents' level of French.

Corroborating to what teachers had said (Figure 41), fifty per cent of parents, who responded that they have their children in the French Immersion program, said that material and instructions are beyond their level of French. Three quarters of the students who responded

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

from K-4 answered they are able to understand the French materials and assignments, but not very well. No students have said they cannot understand the French materials and assignments, but 25% of parents stated they lack French knowledge, and do not have the ability to support their child/children.

For parents, which option best describes the level of French required for your child's/children's remote learning program?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Material and instructions are accessible with my level of French	25.00%
Material and instructions are beyond my level of French	50.00%
I have no French language knowledge or ability to support my child/children	25.00%

For students, which option best describes the level of French required for your remote learning program?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
I can understand the French materials and assignments very well.	25.00%
I can understand the French materials and assignments, but not very well.	75.00%
I cannot understand the French materials and assignments to do my classwork.	0.00%

Figure 41: Parents' and students' level of French language.

French Language Skills (Speaking, Reading, Listening, and Writing)

For students from Kindergarten to Grade 4, the questions about their French language skills focused on exploring how much they are using the language during the remote learning program compared to in-classroom learning. Students were able to indicate that they are using the language more, the same or less than when in the physical classroom. All students who responded to the questionnaire for French Immersion students answered these questions as the graphs below show.

Noticeably, students are reading either the same amount of French or less than they did in class, with 75% of students stating they are reading less French during the remote learning program. When asked about writing and speaking, 50% of students expressed they are also doing less of each while learning remotely. Half of the respondents also indicated that they are listening to the same amount of French as they did in the classroom.

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

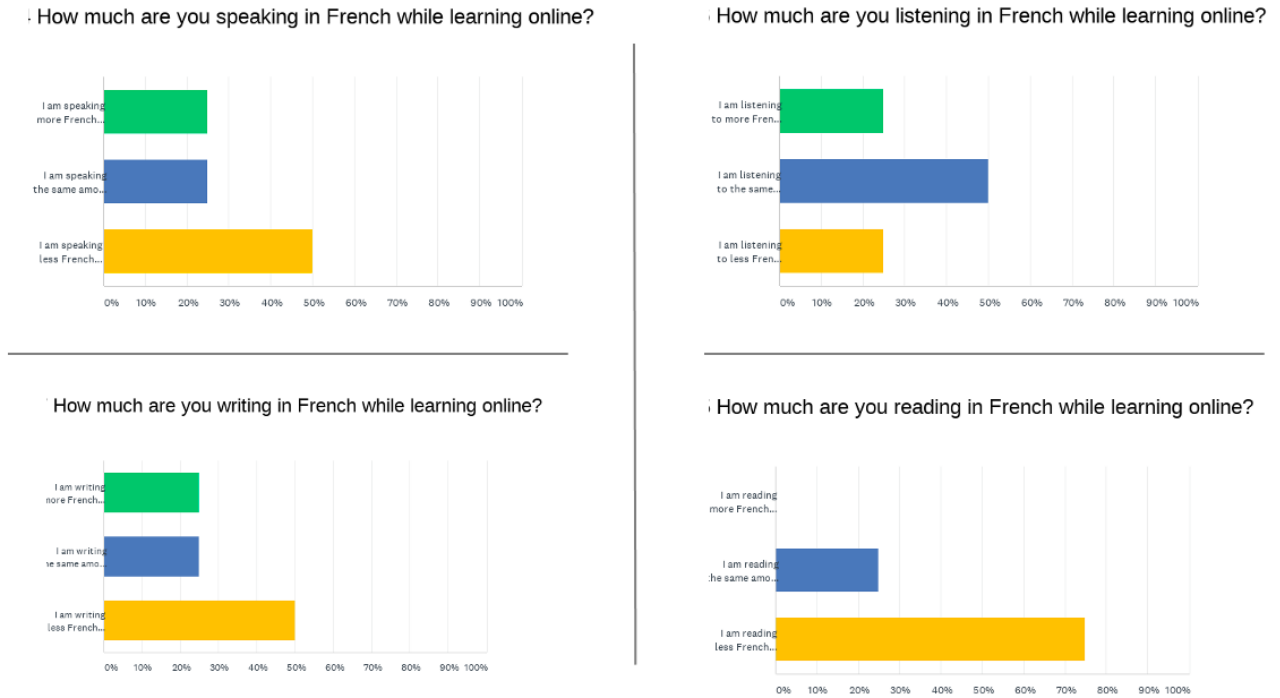


Figure 42: K-4 Students' responses towards their French language skills.

French Language Improvement During the Remote Learning Program

The graph below seems to suggest that all students from Kindergarten to Grade 4 think that despite the different opinions of use of French language skills, their knowledge of the language has been improving during the remote learning program.

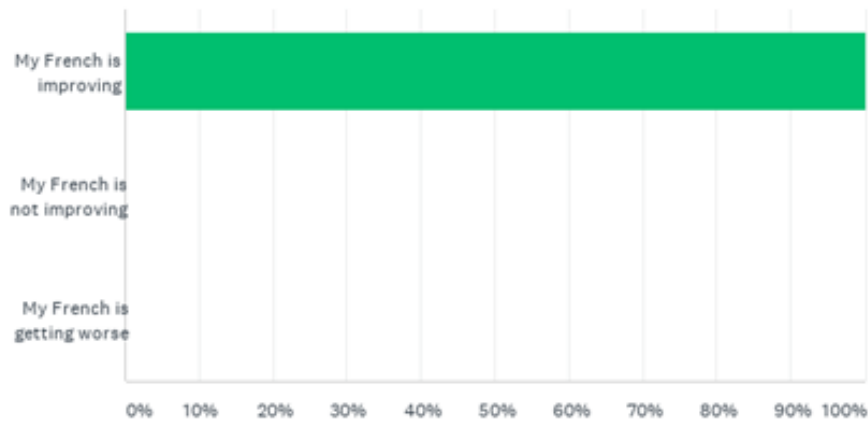


Figure 43: Respondents to the question of what students have noticed about their French language during the remote learning program.

Open-Response Questions

In the open-response questions, we wanted to further explore participants' opinions about different aspects of the Westman Consortia Remote Learning Program. Questions for each participant group varied, however some topics were included for multiple participant groups. Topics for the students focused on their experiences as learners including what they liked and disliked about the program, how remote learning compared to classroom learning, what challenges they encountered, and what changes they would suggest. In contrast, the adults were asked about their experience supporting, planning, teaching and managing remote learning, and for their thoughts about the program's sustainability. The same questions were posed to all respondents in each participant group, plus there were a few additional questions regarding second language acquisition included for individuals associated with the French Immersion Program.

Analysis of Open-Ended Responses

The principal investigator (PI) and the research assistant (RA) worked together through the data analysis of the open response questions. The PI and RA analysed each group of participants separately and coded all responses to each question. The findings from the data analysis will be discussed by participant group and question, with the subthemes generated by the coding process presented in descending order of frequency. Quotations included in each participant group section represent individual voices but exemplify commonly shared perspectives. The number of respondents who provided a particular response is indicated by the n=# entry after the introduction of each theme.

Principals

Firstly, according to the 20 principal respondents, the number of students that they have enrolled in the remote learning program varies from one to twenty-three students. The principals who responded to the questionnaire have students enrolled in the program at all grade levels.

Principals were asked to identify the best features of the remote learning program. The most important feature identified by principals (n=10) is that the remote learning program provides an essential service that protects the safety of participating students and their families: "When families have vulnerabilities that may medically compromise someone, they need to have the opportunity to

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

learn from home”. The second most important feature is that the remote learning program simulates the school routine, in that each student is assigned a teacher, a group of classmates, and follows a schedule that is similar to a school day (n=6): “Teachers are able to focus on the remote learning aspect and do not need to worry about in class. The very specific teacher/student time online vs independent is also very important”. Similarly, the integration of technology and the highly interactive classrooms are seen as a strength (n=5). “The fact that there is a reporting system, tracking, accountability” replicates the school routine. The use of rural remote learning has reduced the teacher workload for those working in schools (n=3), “it took the burden of planning for remote learning off my teachers who are also teaching in class and sending packages to students not in the consortium”. It is seen as a strength that there are distinct roles for teachers doing remote learning and those teaching in classrooms (n=4). “It simply allows some peace of mind that all students are being attended to in some way”. According to principals, positive communication between teachers, families, and principals is another favorable attribute of this remote learning program (n=3).

When principals were asked to identify the most challenging features of the remote learning program, the most common response (n=10) referred to different program design issues, including differences of opinion regarding what is expected from the remote learning program by the teachers, the school, the students, and the parents:

Many teachers in the program do not realize that remote learning does not mean 100% online learning ... Students are not receiving small group/individual communication once a week as outlined. Limited, effort from teachers to create personal connections with challenging students ... Lack of empathy for students in this situation, they did not choose this option. It is a necessity for the health and safety of themselves or a family member.

Second in prevalence were issues with what was described as difficult communication (n=8) between the program, the teachers and the home school, and one recommended communication strategy: “I like that the students are still connected to our school. I've called families to see how it's been going. They like the communication”. Principals reported that they felt their role included a lot of responsibilities but afforded them little control of the program (n=7). For example, one principal reported “the remote learning teachers routinely notify us of lack of attendance in remote learning classes. However, as a school principal, I am limited in how I can support this teacher/family”. A common concern was the issue of engagement, with principals worrying about the possibility of students becoming disconnected from their local school as a result of the program

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

(n=8). The “lack of connection with the teacher and students to the home school” has some principals worrying about “(re)connection and relationships with the home school when the time comes”. Principals were concerned that teachers in the remote learning program were finding it difficult (n=4) to “get to know their students and fully understand their learning needs”, and that teachers also had concerns about engagement and attendance (n=4). In addition, some principals (n=4) were concerned with issues about digital access and quality of the internet: “for my student, it [the challenge] has been connectivity”.

Home school principals identified a number of structural elements that could be strengthened including admission criteria, access to resource teachers, social workers and counsellors, and clearer expectations for all stakeholders (n=8): “Clear expectations of teacher's responsibility and the school's responsibility. Who was running the program? What was the responsibility of the division specialist?”. Communication is the second most prevalent aspect that principals identified that needed strengthening (n=7). Suggestions for strengthening communication varied, including more personal connection between principals and the coordinator of the remote learning program via zoom: “Program co-ordinators could connect with home principals through zoom or other methods rather than just email. More personal connection. Put [a] face to the name”; and requested more frequent updates about students’ progress from remote learning teachers. Principals expressed their personal philosophical perspectives about online learning and pedagogy (n=5), discussing planning time, training for parents and students in the programs, and the need for quality programming: “Differentiate instruction, focus more on hands-on tasks rather than online apps, programs, websites. Use the online portion of the program for conversations, discussions, demonstrations, etc.”. As services have evolved during the pandemic, some principals have been involved with multiple programs (provincial remote learning, parental choice for homeschooling, and rural remote learning), and were finding the complexity to be a challenge.

The biggest factor impacting the sustainability of the remote learning program, according to school principals, is adequate financial resources (n=5). Any change in students’ and families’ need for the program would naturally impact sustainability (n=4). Finding solutions for digital access challenges would be essential to extend the program (n=6), or as one principal stated, the need for “equitable access to Wi-Fi in rural Manitoba”. Continuation of the program would require a sufficient number of adequately trained teachers (n=3) and the ability to deliver a quality program (n=3): “Teachers need to be well trained. This program will only work if there is solid pedagogy and strong partnerships between all stake holders. Especially parents. Access to

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

necessary technology and familiarity with it is also critical”. Ultimately, principals believe that the sustainability of the program rests on the degree of alignment between what the parents are looking for and what the program has to offer, and what school-based and remote learning options can deliver (n=4). One concern was that the “transition of students grade to grade with respect to pacing and disparity of achievement of outcomes” could impact sustainability.

When given an opportunity to ask questions about the remote learning program, principals asked if this model could perhaps “keep some of our small rural schools alive?”, if perhaps a newsletter could keep principals informed, whether there are pros and cons to the use of technology, and whether remote learning teachers could be allowed “to input data into the provincial report card?”

When provided with space to offer any additional comments, principals commented on the following: the benefits of the program for students, teachers and families and the acknowledgement that teachers have been required to innovate and problem-solve (n=4), the recognition of growing pains of a new initiative (n=4), and the collaboration of rural divisions with the leadership of Brandon School Division (n=2). In contrast to the mostly positive comments, two principals were critical and one wrote,

I believe this program is well intentioned but needs to be re-examined. As an administrator it was frustrating as there was little transparency into what was going on with these students and what they were being taught. Also, when remote learning was made optional for all students, we were stuck to find a school-based solution, it would have been helpful if we could have assigned the few students wanting to do remote learning to the consortia rather than having to make drastic school changes.

Overall, a general feeling was that “remote learning was needed under the conditions of the pandemic and everyone was doing their best under the circumstances. It was challenging for many”. In addition, “this gave families who needed to keep their students home due to medical concerns a viable option. As any new program it had growing pains. As it continued, we developed routines.”

Curriculum Consultants

Curriculum consultants were asked what they like best about supporting teachers in the remote learning program. As there were only three responses in this category, we will not provide

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

counts for the different ideas. According to the responses, talking about online pedagogy is the most frequent topic that curriculum consultants enjoy in the remote learning program. As one consultant said, “I have appreciated seeing the development of the teacher’s skills, comfort level with online teaching”. Additionally, curriculum consultants' responses indicate that the way they “pursue the goals” has been positive, it helps teachers to identify a path forward and to recognize “that the goals for students haven’t changed”.

According to curriculum consultants, the most difficult aspects of supporting remote learning teachers include the nature of the relationship, their support responsibilities, and contextualization of teachers’ different needs. One curriculum consultant defined their position as: “my role is to assist and support. Nothing else”. Whereas another curriculum consultant found it difficult to “balance my other responsibilities and [make]sure I am providing them with the supports they need”. Both examples complement the contextualization piece, where “every teacher comes from varying backgrounds (different divisions, different number of years in the profession, etc.),[and] that different teachers are looking for different types of support based on their own experiences”.

When asked about what they are helping teachers accomplish in remote learning, curriculum consultants reported that they are helping teachers to reflect on their practices and with assessment, “it’s a matter of helping them with clarity ... Also helping them to see that progress with their students is being made”. They are able to provide systemic support: “in the beginning, it was doing things on the back end: helping with the transition to bring children into the system, helping to figure out report card expectations”. Whereas later on they are called upon to respond to what teachers ask for and need: “I am providing them a place to voice their concerns and problem solve challenges they may encounter”.

When asked about what teachers are finding difficult while teaching online, consultants' responses show that lack of student engagement is the most recurrent challenge: “Now, I am hearing that the lack of student engagement for some of the teachers is a great concern”. In addition, Curriculum Consultants observed that teachers are finding planning and assessment, socialization, and structural difficulties challenging.

Curriculum consultants responded to what makes their support work exciting. The observation that this has been an exploratory experience is prevalent among consultants’ opinions. One curriculum consultant expressed that “the opportunity to see this entire new avenue of learning open up for our teachers and students” is exciting. Interaction with the teachers is another feature that makes consultants’ work exciting: “I like the connection with the teachers from other parts

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

of Manitoba, and hearing their positive anecdotes about students”. Another point mentioned in the curriculum consultants’ responses refers to this experience being a positive shift for some individuals, “while many students and teachers may do their best in a face-to-face environment, it is very interesting to see others thriving in the remote learning context”.

When asked about what makes their work stimulating, curriculum consultants reflected on: a) their own role and professional learning: “when I am doing this work, I feel like I am truly fulfilling the purpose of this role”; b) developing new relationships: “the business of education was, is and always will be about establishing relationships”; and c) learning with each other: “if we are discussing something as consultants, there is always lots to be learned from the conversation”.

We asked curriculum consultants what some of the exciting developments are that they have noticed in the remote learning program. According to the responses, discussing ideas for online program activities was a highlight, such as “beginning to establish a regular library visit routine with a few classes. Getting together to share and discuss good literature”. Consultants were excited that their support was reflected in teachers’ shifts in attitudes and perspectives, “it is great to see their enthusiasm develop as they experience a sense of accomplishment”. Developing a sense of community; and setting up a streamlined process, has been rewarding, since “there are continual shifts being made towards more standardized practices for all”.

Curriculum consultants have Friday afternoon planning sessions with teachers, and we asked consultants how teachers are supported in those meetings. Collaboration and professional learning were identified as the main focus of the meetings, though the topics “have shifted over time”, since there was more logistical support required at the beginning of the program.

In addition, consultants weighed in with what they think remote learning teachers are looking for when they gather for Friday sessions. Validation and reassurance is the prevalent aspect: “I believe some are looking for the connection piece, to check if they are on the right track with what they are doing”.

Curriculum Consultants indicated what they are learning about effective facilitation of meetings with remote learning teachers. Their responses indicate that they are learning how to provide effective leadership, the importance of understanding individual contexts, the value of dialogue, and the importance of celebrating successes. One Curriculum Consultant summarizes what they are learning:

the importance of giving the teachers time to voice both their questions/concerns and to celebrate successes. The need for being responsive to their unique challenges and needs. I

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

have appreciated the positive and patient stance the current facilitators have taken while working through challenges with the teaching team.

When asked what would enable consultants to more effectively support the remote learning teachers, their answers indicated clear communication and consistency in guidance provided for remote learning as fundamental to consultants being able to offer efficient support:

I think if there were a more clear direction that everyone was supposed to focus on, then there would in turn be more direction for consultants. For example, if the teachers were all focusing on and familiar with the best practices in remote learning as put on by the province, then more support could be given for each of those areas.

Curriculum consultants offered input into what factors might impact the sustainability of the remote learning program. Their answers identified collaboration as critical for sustainability:

The teacher needs to know that they don't have to go it alone. There are three teachers that I'm presently team teaching with. It is plain to see that there is a burden lifted from their shoulders. They have a colleague "in the room". The environment immediately becomes more engaging and fun for everyone involved because they have someone to lean on.

Continuing demand for the program from students is a critical factor, "Will we have learners who need or want to continue to learn remotely?"; and support from parents: "there is a greater expectation on parents in this format of learning"; are key factors that could influence the sustainability of the program.

When given the opportunity to share any further comments about their experiences with remote learning, Curriculum Consultants emphasized the teachers' role in the remote learning program:

Somehow, some way, the remote learning teachers need to be recognized when this is all said and done. The amount of energy and enthusiasm they have to maintain on a minute-by-minute basis is something to behold. There's no down time for them when that little computer camera is on them. I am in awe of what they are being asked to accomplish.

Parents

Parents were asked to offer input on their children's favourite part of remote learning. The most recurrent aspects addressed by the 38 respondent parents relates to the social interaction (n=10) and the structure of the learning activities (n=10). One parent noticed that their child was

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

“having group meetings for reading and numeracy block and meeting one-one with teacher for more feedback and personal directed learning”. Additionally, parents noted that their children were more focused and enjoyed “working independently on online lessons” (n=9). “Being in the comfort of home, in a more familiar environment compared to a classroom” makes their child “get a lot more work done”. These aspects are followed by the flexibility (n=7) that the remote learning program has given their children, as there is “more time to complete assignment” and the teacher is able to respond more quickly to student questions. Parents also indicated that their children like their teachers (n=6), and routines such as the “morning ‘huddle’ with her classmates and teacher.” The fact that technology is included in the remote learning program (n=6) is another positive feature of remote learning for children, according to parents. We found out from a parent that their child “likes that she can just log in and do the technology online”. Small class sizes (n=2) were also a positive for children, and that there is freedom from social pressure (n=2). One parent stated, “there is no bullying in remote learning while the bullying at their normal school is really bad”.

In addition to what children like best, we also asked parents to provide their opinion on what have been their children’s favourite learning activities. Among the parents who named disciplines, reading (n=9) is the predominant favourite, followed by math (n=8), science (n=7), and social studies (n=2). Parents provided some pedagogical insights in their answers, observing that digital-mediated learning (n=11) is prevalent in their children’s favourite activities. One parent explained how their child’s online activity becomes an “interactive virtual field trip”, while others noted that children are experiencing active (n=6) and creative (n=5) learning. “I think [their favorites] would be the ones [activities] that offer the chance to be creative with projects such as creating a scene from materials or an object from clay”. Parents also commented that the learning apps and programs (n=5) are key in children’s activities such as “Mathletics”, “online Jeopardy novel reading” and others. Another highpoint raised by parents is the social interaction (n=5) that children can maintain in remote learning through both “group meetings and one on ones with teacher”.

When asked about what they think their children experience online that they might not experience in the classroom, parents’ responses point to the on-going increase in technological skills (n=9). “Learning all about technology and how to connect with individuals virtually and making friends virtually”, and their access to digital tools (n=7) through “hands on use of technology”. Parents also said that in the remote learning program, their children have more personal attention from both teachers and parents (n=7). As one parent suggested, their child has

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

“more dedicated time from the teacher compared to classroom. This is such a stark contrast from previous years”. Parents have also mentioned the personal development that their children have presented (n=8), including one child who “experienced a confidence boost through communicating with text rather than verbally”. Opportunities for social interaction (n=4) and more time with family (n=4) were additional noted benefits of remote learning.

We asked parents what would make their children’s remote learning experience better. According to their responses, synchronous interactions (n=7) are key to their children’s experiences, whether these are student/student interactions (n=4) or teacher/student interactions (n=4). To exemplify this, a parent wrote that their child needs “more interaction with peers through group work, more one on one with a teacher for help”. A few parents feel that additional feedback (n=2) and reducing technological challenges (n=2) would contribute to better children’s experiences during remote learning. Parents affirmed that their children need more “virtual learning times throughout the day as these decreased since the fall” and that “it is frustrating when slow internet or lag causes delays and ‘wasted time’ while they wait”. In addition to these aspects, parents suggested more flexibility (n=2), and individual parents suggested increasing motivation to enhance interest, and increasing the challenge and engagement during online activities.

As parents were asked to indicate what would make it easier for them to support their children in their remote learning program, we observe that parents are seeking practical suggestions (n=8) to help their children, for example: “our teacher does a good job of giving us links and information to support what she teaches in class”. Parents are also feeling effective in supporting their children in remote learning (n=7). Some challenges they have are balancing time and support, or simply multitasking (n=5). As suggested by one parent, it would be better “having activities posted ahead of time so I can prepare if I am going to be busy in a work meeting”. Lastly, parents shared ideas about information they can get to help their children with motivation and content, such as “getting support with French instructions” or “more support for parents (provide material) and have regular parent child meetings or emails to ensure that parents are aware of and can help their child with learning concepts”.

After commenting on their children’s preferred features of remote learning, parents were asked to give insights into their children’s least favourite part of remote learning. Not being physically with others at school and not having enough social interaction with people online describe the social challenges (n=8) children face in remote learning. One parent, for instance, gave the example that their child “was disappointed as she is missing her first big field trip this

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

year due to Covid”. Another aspect where parents have observed negativity refers to difficult synchronous interactions that are only sometimes caused by technology issues (n=9): observing their child’s “frustration with kids that say they can’t participate because their mic isn’t working”. A few parents raised issues related to the amount of work (n=7) their children have: “the amount of research. As they are young and not strong readers, it takes a very long time for them to find, read, and then write the expected amount on different topics. It can be very frustrating for them”. The types of tasks given (n=3) and level of independence (n=3) appear to be some issues faced by children in remote learning. Time (n=4) was also one concern from parents as it can be “hard to sit through long class meetings”. In contrast to the parents who identified challenges in their children’s experiences, some parents felt unable to identify any challenges and say their children are enjoying online remote learning (n=3).

According to parents, their children’s least favourite learning activities included English Language Arts (n=7), math (n=5), science (n=3), social studies (n=2), and the lack of gym, music, and art (n=1). On a more pedagogical and conceptual lens, the types of assignments (n=2) and mode of delivery (n=2) impact how children see their independent activities in remote learning: “He also would prefer the teacher to teach science. He does not enjoy doing science independently, and I feel he isn’t learning as well this way”. A few of the respondent parents, were unable to identify their children’s least favorite activities (n=6), and one parent shared positive comments about the structure of the remote learning program, “Friday afternoons off has been a huge break for them, and they feel rewarded for all their hard work throughout the week”.

We asked parents what was making their children’s learning activities stimulating. The most recurrent finding indicates that children have engaging platforms/activities in remote learning (n=12). The children are “sharing time in the morning, incorporating fun activities/assignments” and “when the teacher uses real life experiences and examples, he [child] says this is very, very interesting and he remembers more”. The individual presence of the teacher (n=10) makes it stimulating for children through “teacher engagement, online resources, different style of communicating, recording your work in a video as opposed to traditional learning”. Having to learn online (n=8) also makes children’s experiences stimulating, according to parents, commenting that “they like the virtual experiences with other classes from other places and the earth rangers”. As parents mentioned, socializing is also stimulating (n=5), as children are “able to converse with peers on activities” and enjoy “receiving constructive feedback”. One parent

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

commented that the ability of their child to make her own choices, like not “having to show herself to everyone all the time” was proving to be stimulating during remote learning.

In the opinion of parents who responded to the questionnaire, the most difficult aspect they face while supporting their children’s remote learning is the time and presence required for supervision (n=10), particularly if they have more than one child: “It has been difficult to keep up with assignments as there are so many for each kid assigned. Completely understandable overall, just incredibly hard with the number of kids and their ages”. Parents have also raised that their children have individual needs and characteristics (n=6), as “he is a teenager, and it is hard to get details on how things are going” and “sometimes it is hard to get him to focus on assignments”. These difficulties overlap with parental demands (n=3), parents having to deal with siblings during remote learning (n=4), and difficult accessing the teacher (n=2). Besides these multiple demands, the nature of the assignment (n=4) seems to be another difficulty that parents face while supporting their children in remote learning: “If I happen to miss a part of her video call, sometimes I have no idea what’s going on. Maybe having a digital agenda” is one of the suggestions a parent wrote in their responses. It is important to note that in contrast to the above responses, almost half of the parents said they have no difficulties supporting their children in remote learning (n=9).

When we asked parents to comment on how their children’s experiences with remote learning compared to their experiences with face-to-face learning in the classroom, we had parents who were on the fence about a preference and/or expressed both opinions (n=4):

He misses the classroom because there are fewer home distractions, and he can focus more.

However, he feels that remote learning allows way more time with the teacher to learn and not deal with things that take time away from learning.

Among the parents who stated their children's preference for face-to-face learning (n=7), we identified that it is because it offers easier communication/interaction (n=8). As one parent said, it is “easier to communicate with people in the classroom. He said that online, some kids are not wanting to speak in group discussions”, which relates to the engagement advantage (n=2) of face-to-face learning contexts. Individual parents felt that in an in-person setting, their children are able to focus better and also be more autonomous. For parents who said their children prefer remote learning (n=7), it is mostly because of their positive experiences (n=7): “Her writing, reading, spelling and willingness to learn and engage has greatly improved”, and the feeling of safety and comfort when learning from home (n=5). Increased focus (n=3) and increased autonomy (n=2) are seen as remote learning benefits: “The in-person classroom is sometimes a source of sensory

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

overload. Being able to shut off the camera but leave on the sound and move around as needed has improved our child's mood, productivity, and sense of acceptance within the class". Other aspects mentioned by individual parents whose children prefer remote learning credited the one-on-one time between children and parents, children's improved engagement and the ease of communication, "when you need the teacher, it's just a click away".

Not surprisingly, when asked about what their children miss the most about going to school, parents' responses predominantly indicate that seeing friends is the most common response (n=22), connected closely to being with and seeing other people like teachers or even just "being around kids his own age" (n=7). One parent shared that their daughter misses "her friends and one on one time with her teacher. Her teacher has been arranging one on one meetings with my daughter to fulfill this need". An additional point that parents raised is that their children miss being in class and/or certain routine activities like "structured break activities" or "gym class/recess" (n=7).

Given the chance to improve one thing about remote learning to make it more successful for themselves and their children, parents suggested changes in how the time is organized (n=7), including "more flexibility regarding class times"; and more modeling of assignments (n=5). Some parents asked for "more parent tutorials how to use programs like seesaw, notebook, flip grid. Troubleshooting support on demand" and a better variety and balance of activities (n=4);, advocating for "more support, access to EAs, gym teacher, and music teacher, more group work with peers". Parents also indicated more frequent student/teacher check-in would be helpful, "to help child with things that they are struggling with, not leaving that up to parent to try and teach it" (n=3). And last, parent support needs to be understood as important for a more successful experience in the remote learning program, (n=2).

When asked about the sustainability of the remote learning program, parents said you would have to consider the teachers (n=6), "I think it can only go up from where we are, the teachers make it fun and engaging, and there is so much teacher parent communication, everyone is engaged with how your child is performing, what needs work, etc." Mental health conditions (n=6) such as considering "teacher's burn out" and "mental health issues surrounding being isolated from other peers"; plus work conditions for parents and their "level of engagement/work-life balance" (n=4) would all impact the sustainability of the current program. Parents were vocal about the need for adequate equipment and technology access (n=3), a high quality of learning (n=3) and stability factors such as sufficient financial support (n=2), and the size and viability of the program (n=1) under a changing pandemic situation (n=2).

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Given the opportunity to share whatever else they wanted us to know about their experiences with remote learning, all parents presented positive aspects of being in the program, were appreciative of the opportunity and appreciated the teachers' efforts in making the option a reality (n=18):

I very much enjoy our teacher's personality. I think it's hard to be upbeat and positive on a TEAMS meeting daily, and she is so great at it. She also has taken time to learn about the kids, and their families, and shows great interest in their work.

Parents have also suggested more direct teaching, smaller class sizes, flexible scheduling and the value of the community they have found through remote learning. On the negative side, they worry that remote learning may increase anxiety about going back to in-person classes in the future.

For parents who have their children in French Immersion remote learning, their challenges include not speaking the language (n=2) and not understanding instructions (n=2): "We do not speak French. Having to use Google translate and then figuring out the age-appropriate wording is difficult". When asked about how the French remote learning can be improved, parents indicated the need for more instructions for them (n=3) and more modeling, as one parent asked: "provide examples to demonstrate the French instructions, for example, in math".

Teachers

When the six teachers who responded to the questionnaire were asked about what they like best in the remote learning program, developing relationships (n=5) was the most common response: "I love the strong working relationship I have made with parents and students". Almost as many teachers valued the opportunity to develop their pedagogy (n=4) and the flexibility (n=3) afforded through remote learning. One teacher described this opportunity as "the independence and flexibility to teach my students the way that best suits them and I". For teachers, being able to provide students with individual support (n=3) is more achievable in the remote learning environment and there are fewer distractions (n=2): "I can connect with smaller groups of students or individuals without having the distractions like I would in the classroom". And finally, one respondent commented on students' growth and learning as being the best aspect of the remote learning program.

Thinking about what teachers like least about the remote learning program, having to carry out administrative responsibilities (n=3) is the most prevalent issue among teachers. As one teacher

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

stated, the issue is “having to do duties outside of teaching, such as having to call parents about attendance, having to contact over a dozen principals instead of just one, trying to coordinate resources (including people) for students with special needs”. Communication challenges made it difficult to get students set up with technology at the outset, and to stay in touch “when parents are disengaged” (n=2). Unreliable technology and the lack of physical movement are concerns individual teachers raised about the remote learning program.

Teachers were asked to tell us what they do online with students that they would not be able to do in the classroom. According to teacher respondents, the continuous digital access (n=3) is the most prevalent advantage of online teaching compared to in-classroom teaching. For example, one teacher shared that “my usual classroom does not have access to computers on an all-day/everyday basis”. Due to consistent digital access teachers found they were able to post assignments, “the students are able to see what they need to work on” and also offer a range of assignment options (n=2). Individual respondents indicated that in the online environment they are able to increase independence and autonomy for students and build a classroom community.

When asked about what they miss about teaching in the classroom, teacher respondents specified that collegial contact and collaboration (n=4) are what they miss the most, “being able to bounce ideas off my colleagues”. In addition to their colleagues, remote learning teachers are also missing direct contact with students (n=3), “being able to read the faces and body language of my students to gauge their understanding”, and the synergy they feel in the classroom (n=3): “I miss the buzz of a classroom”.

The teachers were asked to provide us with some ideas about where the Westman Consortia Partnership (WCP) could improve the remote learning program to make it more successful for themselves and their students. According to teachers’ answers, the most prevalent suggestion is to set up a designated administrative team (n=3). One teacher suggested that WCP could “make it its own school, so there wouldn’t be so many fingers in the bowl, so to speak”. Another teacher phrased this as “having one administrative team (i.e., principal, secretary, etc.)”. Individual teachers also suggested the WCP could assist by ensuring that divisions lend students digital devices and provide further role clarification.

We asked teachers for their thoughts about what might impact the sustainability of the remote learning program, and the most frequent response was “where we stand with the pandemic” (n=2). Moreover, teachers who responded to the questionnaire discussed the importance of the program: “I think the remote learning program should be a program that we prioritize”, but increasing

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

awareness is also critical: “the buy in from all stakeholders – where everyone sees the value and the fact that we are making a difference – a growth mindset” (n=2). Among the suggestions from individual teachers, enrollment criteria, program size, and a streamlined administrative team are identified as factors that could impact sustainability.

When given the opportunity to share any other comments about their experiences with remote learning during the 2020-2021 school year, most of the respondent teachers showed their appreciation to the organizers of the program (n=5). One teacher shared that “I have had a fantastic year. It was organized very well and I appreciate all of the collaboration and planning that has made this program what it is today”. That positivity also permeates the second recurrent finding which is collaboration, as the teachers have appreciated “the effort that everyone has put into this” and “the collaboration and support I receive” (n=3). One respondent wanted to mention the accomplishment and performance from students during the remote learning program: “I am pushing my students to new levels, and I am seeing so much growth in most of them”.

Respondent teachers in French Immersion are very comfortable with supporting children’s remote learning in French. They have stated that the biggest challenge in French Immersion remote learning is the fact that “students are afraid to take risks when learning French and will often rely on Google Translate instead of trying on their own”. When asked about what could be done to improve remote learning in French, a respondent suggests “gathering a bank of French resources to display or be available in one place” for access by parents, students, and teachers.

Students Grades K-4

For the general questions, the 15 students who responded from Grades K-4 English and French Immersion programs will be presented together. When asked about what they like best about their remote learning program, students revealed that they most like learning from home (n=6) as it gives them the opportunity to be in a quieter environment, and it is “easier get attention because of the number of students” in online class, and “it teaches you to improve your time management”. Grades K-4 students gave some examples of what they like in terms of pedagogical strategies/activities: they “get to draw”, “[do] dancing” and “math” (n=3). The third item they like best about their remote learning program is their online interactions with friends (n=2).

On the other hand, when asked about what they least like about their remote learning program, three (n=3) students mentioned each of the following topics: working autonomously, tech

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

access and the social challenges of remote learning. Working alone is challenging because “it is difficult when I do not know how to do an assignment and do not have a teacher there in person to help”. Using technology for learning can be difficult when there are “too many platforms”. Missing one’s peers is a hurdle with remote learning, because students are “not in a classroom with friends” and feel they have a “non-existing social life”. Time is mentioned by two students, though for one the issue is too many online meetings and for the other “the limited online class time” is what they enjoy the least about remote learning.

As K-4 students were asked to indicate what they do online that they cannot do in the classroom, having ready access to technology is predominant (n=3), whether it indicates students are able to “text with friends”, “[access] the internet all the time”, or even use tech features such as “mut[ing] ourselves”. Secondly, using their technological skills (n=2) and finding different ways of communicating (n=2) are also recurrent in students’ responses. Controlling their own environment (n=2) is another response we could observe from respondents as one student said they are “getting work done faster and not getting distracted”. Finally, one student mentioned the fact that they are staying healthy by learning online.

According to K-4 students, the biggest thing they miss about the classroom is seeing/being with classmates (n=11). One student described the absence of “being around all my friends/recess/gym class. Some students also miss the physical school spaces and the structure of the school (n=3). A few students mentioned missing being physically close to their teacher with “the ability to ask questions in person, in a much easier and understanding way” (n=3).

Given the opportunity to share more information about their remote learning experiences, K-4 students mostly affirmed that they are having positive personal experiences (n=3): “I think it is a great experience and overall does what’s needed of it”; and shared some of their challenges (n=3): “sometimes the assignments are hard to understand and it’s difficult not having a teacher in person to show me how to do it. Sometimes my computer glitches as well and it’s hard to submit my work”.

For the students in French Immersion, their biggest challenge seems to focus on language learning (n=2) as one student clearly stated “it’s a new language, so it is hard”. Content, tech quality and insufficient class time are amongst the challenges revealed by individual K-4 students. One student regretted having “not enough time at class to thoroughly discuss the topic at hand”.

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

The only extra information we got from K-4 students about their French Immersion remote learning was the suggestion that: “perhaps having/encouraging more lecture/class time for discussion as a way to further enhance our usage of the language” would benefit the program.

Students Grades 5-8

The six Grade 5-8 students who responded to the questionnaire were asked to indicate what they like best about their remote learning program. According to Grade 5-8 students, all of whom were in the English remote learning program, they like best the fact that they are studying from home and how the home environment helps them focus on their schoolwork (n=3). As one student stated, “I like that I can concentrate without anyone distracting me”. The second feature that students like best relates to their teacher’s pedagogy and organized tracking of assignments (n=2). As one student stated, “my teacher plays games with us sometimes”; while another student said that the remote learning structure “makes it more clear on what assignments we’re supposed to work on and how to do them”. One student mentioned that in their remote learning program they liked having easy access to friends through online chats.

Now when asked about what they like least about remote learning, Grades 5-8 students specified the lack of socialization (n=3), not only in terms of social interactions, but also about being physically in the same space as other people: “I miss seeing other people in person”. The second aspect that students indicated relates to technology (n=2), as one of the students shared “I don’t like when the technology acts up sometimes and doesn’t load or when the Wi-Fi is off”. Following the abovementioned, individual students expressed that autonomous work and too much on-screen time were among their least favourite aspects of remote learning.

We asked students to tell us what they do online that they are not able to do in a classroom, and according to students, at the top of the list was access to digital/interactive communication (n=2), and health self-regulation (n=2). As one student shared, “I am able to stim a lot without distracting other students”. Tech skills and school flexibility are other features identified by individual students: “we use more technology, and I am a lot more tech savvy” and schools can function every day regardless of snow days.

Similar to the Grades K-4 students, when Grades 5-8 students were asked what they miss most about being in classrooms, seeing/being with friends (n=6) is the most recurring aspect of school that is being missed. This is followed by how students miss the physical space and

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

classroom learning structure (n=3): “I miss that I can’t go out to recess with my friends or have lunch with them and doing gym”.

When asked for any additional comments, students highlighted their positive experiences in remote learning as they enjoy some of the activities and the new way of learning (n=3). Experiences related to how they are exposed to an online pedagogy (n=2) is the second most commented feature, as one student shared “I like activities like seesaw and Mathletics because it is a cool way of learning”. Finally, one student offered a recommendation followed by a warning, stating “I would strongly recommend this program to others if they have a stable internet connection and are self-motivated to keep up with their work.”

Summary of Findings Across the Participant Groups

Four distinct themes summarize the findings that run across the different participant groups. The first theme, Context for Innovation: Program Demand and Design, consolidates findings related to the initial reason for the program’s creation and elements of program design that resonated with participants. The second theme, Beliefs, Perspectives and Tensions in Communication, addresses the complex challenges of maintaining effective communication in such a complex and ever-changing system. The third theme, Technology, Learning and Pedagogical Practices, explores the ways in which technological access and skills are influencing the ways in which remote learning is being facilitated and experienced, and the impact of those decisions on student learning. The fourth theme, Enabling Strategies: Supports for Teachers, Parents, Students, and Mental Health, synthesizes what participants say supports them to be effective in their role within the Westman Consortia Program.

First, we introduce Table 1 which contains overall strengths and challenges in the remote learning program as identified from the Multiple-Choice responses. These items are organized into the four identified themes. The written description and exploration of each theme that follows elaborates upon and provides further analysis of the participants’ responses.

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Table 1

Strengths and Challenges of Rural Remote Learning Identified in Multiple Choice Responses and Presented by Theme

Themes	Strengths	Challenges
Context for Innovation: Program Demand and Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term sustainability
Beliefs, Perspectives and Tensions in Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understandable student feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student comprehension of feedback
Technology, Learning and Pedagogical Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to digital devices • Parents can support children with technology • Students can work independently • Teachers more confident teaching online • Teachers can support students with technology • Students acquiring confidence and tech skills (MY) • Core curriculum subjects are being taught • Providing interesting remote learning assignments • Health, Arts and Thematic instruction utilized • English stream students find work interesting • K-4 FI students find their work difficult • Students recognize Health content • K-4 FI students report learning through themes • Teachers provide verbal and written feedback • Feedback is posted, emailed and graded • Children are motivated by online learning • Children's coursework stimulates new interests • Parents observe motivation and independence • Online programming is more diverse • Teachers model a learning stance • Students feel like learners in online classrooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unstable internet connections disrupt learning • Poor Wi-Fi is replaced by cellular data • Accessing and logging on can be difficult • Some teachers are not learning tech skills • Some teachers cannot solve tech issues • FI EY students are not all learning tech skills • Half of FI EY students find their work interesting • Half of EY English students find their work easy • Most MY English students find their work easy • Half of MY students lack Arts instruction • Some parents don't see their children's feedback • Some parents see children resisting logging on
Enabling Strategies: Supports for Teachers, Parents, Students, and Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible work schedules support parents • Parent support of 1-2 hours daily is usually enough • Curriculum Consultants are responsive to teachers • Teachers observe friendships developing online • Students contact teachers with questions • Students enjoy meeting and connecting online • MY students extend friendships beyond the class • Parents are helpful when students have difficulties • Students use a variety of strategies to get help • Students are supported by parents and teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are multi-tasking while supervising • Parents have fixed schedules and work locations • Some parents' support takes up to 6 hours daily • Parents are concerned about their children • Children are less physically active • Children are socializing less • Some parents observe children withdrawing • Students are not connecting outside of class • FI students do not connect with their peers • Students lack effective strategies for getting help

Context for Innovation: Program Demand and Design

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a time sensitive challenge for the Manitoba Southwestern school divisions. Students, teachers and parents needed a program that could be developed quickly, accommodate individuals who were medically fragile, and be responsive to ever-changing needs. The initial vision to develop a rural remote learning program that was strength-based, innovative, and responsive, served as guiding principles throughout the development and enactment of the program.

Need for the Program

The need for the program is paramount on peoples' minds, and all participant groups commented on this topic. It was conceived as an essential service that had filled the need for an educational option for students unable to attend school for medical reasons. Any change in the demand for the service, due to changes in the rate of vaccination or prevalence of the virus, would necessarily impact sustainability. Dimensions of size would impact the viability of the program, for which the foremost motivation was to keep students and teachers engaged in education and healthy. Adequate financial resources could become a larger issue if the economies of scale disappear, through a decrease in demand, fewer participating students or not as many school divisions participating. There is a feeling amongst those involved, however, that this is an important program that should be prioritized, and an understanding that it cannot be a priority if people are not aware of the innovation and learning that has taken place.

Design of the Program

Not surprisingly, all participant groups had something to say about the design of the program. There was strong consensus that the program is an essential service that has done a good job of replicating many of the features of school within a remote learning environment. The standard markings of school are viewed as positive elements: children have a teacher, a classroom of peers, a daily and weekly schedule, direct instruction through a range of pedagogical approaches and learning which includes all the core subjects. Implementing this structure has required substantial innovation by remote learning teachers and collaboration between the different partners has resulted in benefits for students, teachers and families. Specific structures the adults singled

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

out as advantageous include small class sizes, Friday afternoons with no classes, and the central role of the teacher. For students, being able to learn at home where there are fewer distractions and receiving individual attention from their teacher, has increased their ability to focus and work independently.

Design elements of the program that could be strengthened revolve around a few topics. Roles, responsibilities and expectations for all stakeholders could be more clearly articulated. Examples where more clarity would be helpful include principals who have questions about pedagogy, general confusion about who is responsible for attendance and report cards, and worries about sustaining the connections, and transitioning students, to their home schools when the program ends. For teachers, having a streamlined administrative structure in which there was a principal and office assistant designated for the remote learning program, would help reduce their administrative responsibilities (which include attendance, accessing resources and contacting principals) and improve communication about roles and expectations. A second area where challenges have surfaced relates to student engagement and attendance, though this was primarily voiced by principals and consultants, not by teachers, parents or students, although some K-4 students did comment that they found it difficult to work alone, which could impact both engagement and attendance. Principals noted the need for teachers and students within the program to have access to additional supports including counselling, social work and resource. Teachers added that French resources should be available in one central location for shared access and that students should be provided with digital devices by either the program or their school division. Finally, there was a request for increased communication about what content was being taught in remote learning, and both clarity and flexibility around who could participate in the program.

Beliefs, Perspectives and Tensions in Communication

Although some of the participants shared having positive experiences in communicating during the remote learning program, a few issues were still raised. From a broader perspective, the (lack of) communication make it unclear for parents, teachers, principals, and students to understand the expectations and individual roles. In a more specific matter, teachers' concern around communication reflects the difficulty to assist students in some aspects of their daily remote learning routines. From what was presented by the participants, a face-to-face environment makes it easier for them to interact with one another, engage in activities, and help someone out when

needed. Indeed, mostly among the students, new ways of communicating are being appropriated as students seems to be better adapted to digital/interactive forms of communication and learning.

Technology, Learning and Pedagogical Practices

The rural remote learning program required teachers, parents, and students to maximize their technological skills and digital access. Remote learning contributed to and impacted students' learning differently. Teachers found themselves innovating, creating, and adapting pedagogical practices.

Technology

In remote learning, technology plays a fundamental role in all of the participants' new routines. According to the participants of the study, we can analyze the role of technology under three main streams: access, skills, and benefits. As for access, most of the participants talked about the unreliable access to Wi-Fi, and sometimes not-functional software. From the principals' perspectives, making sure that people in rural Manitoba had equitable access to the internet was the biggest concern. Participants also showed the good side of working with technology in remote learning, as it provides interactive and hands-on activities, flexibility, and quick access to resources/files. However, the number of platforms is shown to be one of the drawbacks of the easy access to different sources participants have.

Predominantly, parents, students, and teachers are developing new skills during remote learning. Along with technical knowledge, these participants are also improving, or finding new ways to improve, social skills. This adds up to the benefits of having access to technology in remote learning as there is a system in place that is accountable to store students' information, and to give more autonomy on students' own participation in the learning process. On the negative side, parents and students lack more synchronous virtual learning times; and teachers find it challenging to motivate students and have them be physically active in remote learning.

Learning

The learning aspect of being in remote learning, according to parents, teachers and students, identifies what helps and what jeopardizes one's learning. For instance, in remote learning, the teacher is 'a click away' and can support students right away. The autonomy that the remote learning offers students actually helps them grow and become more independent doing their tasks. Nonetheless, students' learning is still affected by the fact of being home and having too many distractions around; and learning is also impacted when the students do not see their teachers often, have little access to them or need to wait long times to receive their response/feedback.

For participants included in French Immersion, learning another language remotely is a challenge itself as there is too much dependence on Google Translate, given the level of difficulty of assignments and lack of language skills from both parents and students.

Pedagogy

All participants in the study have somehow made reference to pedagogy in their responses. When thinking of the current program and its sustainability, there is a focus on the quality of the delivery of the program. This refers to how well-trained teachers, students, and even parents are to deal with remote learning and how well-planned the program is. From the curriculum consultants' perspective, for instance, the weekly checking-in with teachers is a strategy to establish a more streamlined online pedagogy, giving the chance for teachers to voice their successes and tensions, revise planning and assessment, and incorporate new ideas exchanged among themselves. The strength of an online pedagogy, according to teachers, parents and principals is the flexibility it offers, and the context-based troubleshooting skills it develops in all participants. Teachers are being able to develop new, active, and creative (digital/online) activities, as much as they create new routines with students. But one aspect to consider is whether the autonomy that an online pedagogy provides is ideal and properly assigned to students who may be a little more dependent on others to do a search and complete the schoolwork.

Enabling Strategies: Supports for Teachers, Parents, Students, and Mental Health

Remote learning teachers, students and parents are the critical participants in the remote learning initiative. The essential supports required by each stakeholder group have shifted with

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

increasing awareness of the needs in each group over time. The lack of opportunities to socialize during the remote learning period has led to pervasive concerns about the mental health of both students and teachers.

Support for Teachers

To support teachers in the delivery of this essential service, a number of supports were put in place, in particular the support of curriculum consultants. From their perspective it has been very important that the teachers had the designated time on Friday afternoons to gather together and collaborate. At the outset there were a lot of logistical issues to resolve and questions to answer about how to access various programs and resources. As time went by, the support shifted more towards providing reassurance and validation for teachers, through reflective processes that helped them reach clarity. The third shift is when groups of teachers started meeting to co-plan together and the consultants were called upon as needed for support or resources. For the consultants working in these roles, it was a privilege to be able to work so directly with the teachers and develop relationships with them. There was growth in their understanding of their roles within the consortia and how to most effectively support the teachers. Dialogue emerged as a significant tool, teachers were isolated and appreciated the chances to have professional conversations with each other and the consultants. Having a second set of eyes on student assessments and clarifying student progress in the online environment was another topic for discussion. Both teachers and curriculum consultants stressed the excitement of the innovation and the need for a growth mindset that embraces change and has a can-do attitude. Some consultants thought it might be helpful to have an agreed upon set of guidelines for remote learning that could enhance consistency between teachers and help streamline supports.

Support for Parents

Although half of the parents reported only positive experiences supervising their children during home-based remote learning, parents indicated, not surprisingly, that they are always multi-tasking. Many may have paid employment in or outside the home, more than one child in remote learning, and unmotivated teen-agers and/or pre-schoolers who do not yet attend school. When coupled with the regular demands of running a household, parents are pressured to integrate the demands of remote learning supervision into their daily schedule. Parents feel they would be able

to fulfill their multiple roles better if they could access information about their child's daily schedule and assignments when *they* have the time, which may be before, during or after the instructional day. Suggestions to facilitate this time-shifting include posting a digital schedule and list of assignments, providing clear written instructions for independent work, and posting examples to model what completed work should look like. For parents of students in French Immersion, instructions in English would be appreciated (even if they had to be posted separately from the student instructions). When parents are trying to help their children with assignments, they sometimes need access to content information, so they appreciate teachers who provide links to appropriate resources. Some parents find it difficult to access the teachers and would prefer to meet with the teacher on a regular basis to get insights into how their child is doing and how they can best support their learning.

Support for Students' Socialization

Parents are the most enthusiastic about the socializing they observe in their children. From the parental perspective, children are receiving more personal attention from their family, and some, though not all, parents feel their children are getting more personal attention from their teachers than in the physical school. Socializing through online environments has been helpful for some children as parents report increased confidence, an absence of bullying and the ability to make choices about how to interact (ie. video on or off). Teachers value the strong relationships they have formed with students and parents, while students value their online interactions, though these are more popular amongst the older students. Parents, teachers and students identified the same social challenges that students face during remote learning. Students are missing their friends, the physical locations where they could socialize such as the gym, recess or lunch time, seeing both friends and teachers physically, and having a social life.

Support for Mental Health

The topic of mental health surfaced in comments by teachers, parents and students. Parents are concerned about the mental health of the remote learning teachers and see the potential for teacher burn-out. Concerns also apply to students, as they worry about the mental health of children who are isolated from their peers. For some students, the opportunity to study alone at home increased their mental health as they were free to work at their own speed, move freely

around the house, interact less with their same age peers and engage in comforting behaviours without fear of criticism.

Interim Recommendations

The beliefs, strategies, and practices that have evolved during the remote learning program have supported student learning, teacher and parent innovation, and the growth of strength-based collaborative approaches to problem-solving. Reflecting on both multiple-choice and open-ended responses from our questionnaire data, we have drafted recommendations to address the identified gaps in program delivery. These recommendations are presented in the four themes to emphasize their alignment with the findings presented.

Table 2

Overall Recommendations for Rural Remote Learning Presented by Theme

Themes	Overall Recommendations
<p>Context for Innovation: Program Demand and Design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial investment in teacher recruitment, preparation and ongoing professional learning would be required to sustain the remote learning program over a longer period of time. • For French Immersion, recruit additional teachers to increase teacher/student contact time. • Appoint administrative personnel (principal and administrative assistants) specific to the remote learning program.
<p>Beliefs, Perspectives and Tensions in Communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share strategies for providing feedback amongst teachers. • Provide processes for students to ask questions to ensure they understand the feedback they receive. • Clarify expectations for all stakeholders in the remote learning program. • Streamline communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) have a shared portal (to display resources, post communications, provide updates), b) clarify communication paths (e.g., who to contact, for what and how), c) arrange multiple communication options (e.g., online, email, phone)

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

<p>Technology, Learning and Pedagogical Practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide on call assistance to help families with tech issues. ● Post tutorials for commonly used program and applications. ● Continue to provide loans of devices and affordable Wi-Fi access for families. ● Ensure all loaned equipment has standard applications and programs installed and ready for use by students. ● Encourage use of a limited number of applications and programs to reduce frustration with logging on to multiple sites. ● When possible, provide access through applications or programs in TEAMS to reduce the steps involved in logging on. ● Provide more support for FI students to access and develop tech skills. ● Developing the capacity to support parents and students in French Immersion on TEAMS (e.g., translation, read aloud, dictionary). ● Increase the difficulty in English language assignments by incorporating multiple levels of challenge for students. ● Encourage teachers to adopt some opening strategies or games to make joining class each day novel and exciting. ● Educate parents about various forms of assessment including formative feedback.
<p>Enabling Strategies: Supports for Teachers, Parents, Students, and Mental Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify and share effective ways for parents to support students that do not require their constant presence. ● Share strategies for making information accessible (on TEAMS) so parents can help their children when the teacher is not available. ● <i>Post a digital schedule of assignments so parents know what is due and when.</i> ● <i>Post a daily schedule so parents can catch up with what they may have missed while multi-tasking.</i> ● <i>Provide parents with access to an on-call EA who can provide academic and technical support.</i> ● Encourage parents and teachers to incorporate physical movement breaks into their school days. ● Post some movement break ideas or links to videos to help students (and others) to get up and moving during the day. ● Teach students how to search for help online and post how-to videos on TEAMS. ● Identify options for interpersonal connection between students in each class so students can ask each other questions and seek assistance. ● <i>Consider a later start time for MY students.</i> ● Provide orientation on One Note (or other such program) where students can write on assignments without having to print them.

**Italicized text signifies recommendations suggested by parents in their questionnaire responses.*

As mentioned earlier, this is an interim report summarizing the findings from the first phase of the research study. We have already started the second phase of the study in which we are inviting individuals to participate in Focus Groups or Personal interviews with the researchers. The questions that are being used for these interviews have been drafted to probe further into areas of interest suggested by the Phase One findings. As researchers, we greatly appreciate the financial support of Tech MB and the cooperation and involvement of so many individuals within the

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Westman Consortia Rural Remote Learning Program. We look forward to sharing our Final Report with the Consortia once phase two data collection and analysis are completed.

References

- Adair-Gagnon, K. [Kimberley Adair-Gagnon]. (2020, Apr 19). Episode 9: Routines for the win [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zdzWkhLM80>
- Adair-Gagnon, K. [Kimberley Adair-Gagnon]. (2020, Apr 12). Episode 8: Responsive remote teaching and learning [Video].
YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGyVOdhoNkU>
- Adair-Gagnon, K. [Kimberley Adair-Gagnon]. (2020, Apr 10). Episode 7: Chat norms [Video].
YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEvalwvHRik>
- Adair-Gagnon, K. [Kimberley Adair-Gagnon]. (2020, Apr 09). Episode 6: Collaborative team meeting [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lBRxhM6m69w>
- Adair-Gagnon, K. [Kimberley Adair-Gagnon]. (2020, Apr 07). Episode 5: Managing the virtual classroom [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ad8xmeDz76c>
- Adair-Gagnon, K. [Kimberley Adair-Gagnon]. (2020, Apr 01). Educating through a pandemic: Episode 1 [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOURSCcAAOY>
- Adair-Gagnon, K. [Kimberley Adair-Gagnon]. (2020, Mar 31). Educating through a pandemic: Let's collaborate and share our strengths [Video].
YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRgEdMIympE>
- Bates, A. W. (2019) Teaching in a digital age. 2nd Edition. Vancouver: Tony Bates Associates. <https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/teachinginadigitalagev2/>
- Baxter, J., Callaghan, G., & McAvoy, J. (2018). *Creativity and Critique in Online Learning: Exploring and Examining Innovations in Online Pedagogy*. Springer International Publishing AG. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78298-0>
- Carpenter, D., & Dunn, J. (2020). We're All Teachers Now: Remote Learning During COVID-19. *Journal of School Choice*, 14(4), 567–594. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2020.1822727>
- Fawns, T. (2019). Postdigital Education in Design and Practice. *Postdigital Science and Education*, 1(1), 132–145. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-018-0021-8>
- Fernandez, A., & Shaw, G. (2020). Academic Leadership in a Time of Crisis: The Coronavirus and COVID-19. *Journal of Leadership Studies (Hoboken, N.J.)*, 14(1), 39–45. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21684>

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

- Garcia, I. (2014). Emergent leadership: is e-leadership importance in the quality of virtual education? *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia*, 18(1), 25–44. <https://doi.org/10.5944/ried.18.1.13798>
- Gurr, D., & Drysdale, L. (2020). Leadership for challenging times. *ISEA*, 48(1), 24–30. <https://www.thecommonwealth-educationhub.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ISEA-2020-481.pdf#page=30> (Accessed on February 09, 2021)
- Manitoba. (n.d.). Welcoming our students back. #RestartMB Restoring Safe Schools COVID19 Education Plan. <https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/index.html>
- Manitoba Remote Learning Support Centre. (2021, Jan 4). The Manitoba remote learning support centre. <https://www.mbremotelearning.ca>
- Montrieux, H., Raes, A., & Schellens, T. (2017). “The best app is the teacher” Introducing classroom scripts in technology-enhanced education. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 33(3), 267–281. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcal.12177>
- North, R., Vitto, C., Hickam, G., Santen, S., & Messman, A. (2020). Remote Learning in the Time of COVID-19. *AEM Education and Training*, 4(3), 280–283. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aet2.10483>
- Reicher, D. (2020). Debate: Remote learning during COVID-19 for children with high functioning autism spectrum disorder. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 25(4), 263–264. <https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12425>
- Saviani, D. & Galvão, A. C. (2021). Educação na pandemia: A falácia do “ensino remoto”. *Universdade e Sociedade*, 67, 36-49.
- Sinek, S. (2009). Start with why: How great leader inspire everyone to take action. Penguin.
- Slark, C. (2020, Sep 16). Westman school divisions launch remote learning program together. *The Brandon Sun*. <https://www.brandonsun.com/local/westman-school-divisions-launch-remote-learning-program-together-572423902.html>
- The Westman Consortia. (2020). *Leaders and Learners Newsletter*. 15(6), 3-4. https://www.cassa-acgcs.ca/cms/lib/ON01929128/Centricity/Domain/34/LL_Newsletter-2020-Issue-6.pdf
- Thompson, N. & Coleman, A. [Voices in Education]. (2021, Feb 03). Parenting in COVID-19: An Irish experience [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvCPv1jqOOo>
- Thompson, N. & Thompson, A. [Voices in Education]. (2021, Jan 12). Coping with COVID-19: A teacher’s experience [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVnADLMLDS4>

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Yates, S., Dickinson, H., Smith, C., & Tani, M. (2020). Flexibility in individual funding schemes: How well did Australia's National Disability Insurance Scheme support remote learning for students with disability during COVID-19? *Social Policy & Administration*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12670>

Appendix A: Remote Learning Questionnaire

Remote Learning Parent Questionnaire

You are invited to complete this questionnaire as you are associated with the **Western Consortia Remote Rural Learning Program**. Your feedback will provide important information to the facilitators of the remote learning program and help guide ongoing improvements. By submitting this questionnaire you are a participant in this study as described in the letter of invitation. Your participation is voluntary and you will not be identified. The best person to complete this questionnaire will be the parent who provides the most direct supervision of the remote learners in your home. If this role is shared, please submit a joint response. Thank you for participating.

Demographics

1. As a parent of a remote learning student, which program stream(s) are you or your child or children involved with?
 - a. English K-4
 - b. English 5-8
 - c. French Immersion K-4
 - d. French Immersion 5-8

Technology Issues

2. What technology do you use to access remote learning classes and materials?
 - a. Desktop computer
 - b. Laptop computer
 - c. I-Pad or Tablet
 - d. Cell Phone
 - e. Division-owned device
 - f. Other
3. What kinds of issues have you encountered accessing remote learning?
 - a. No challenges
 - b. Weak internet connection
 - c. Difficulty logging on to the internet (connection issues)
 - d. Difficulty logging onto programs (password issues)
 - e. Sound lags
 - f. Video freezing
 - g. Lost connections
 - h. Trouble accessing specific programs
 - i. Other

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

4. What do you do when the internet goes down and you and your child are unable to connect with online supports?
 - a. Work independently on tasks assigned by the teacher
 - b. Do something not school related until the internet comes back on
 - c. Switch to using data on a phone
 - d. Send an email to inform the teacher and wait
 - e. Other (please specify)

Time Commitment

5. On average, how much time is your child spending per day on remote learning?
 - a. Less than one hour
 - b. 1-2 hours
 - c. 2-3 hours
 - d. 3-4 hours
 - e. 4-5 hours
 - f. 5-6 hours
 - g. More than 6 hours
6. On average, how much time are you spending supporting your child's remote learning per day?
 - a. Less than one hour
 - b. 1-2 hours
 - c. 2-3 hours
 - d. 3-4 hours
 - e. 4-5 hours
 - f. 5-6 hours
 - g. More than 6 hours
7. Please select the options that best describe your employment situation while your child is (or children are) engaged in remote learning.
 - a. No paid employed
 - b. Caring for other siblings
 - c. Working part-time
 - d. Working full-time
 - e. Other (please specify)
8. If answers (c) or (d): What is your work schedule like?
 - A) flexible hours/schedule
 - B) Fixed hours/schedule
9. Whichever answer from 7.1: Do your work from home or at your workplace?
 - A) I work from home.
 - B) I work at my workplace.
 - C) Other (please specify)

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Parental Support

10. Please select the kinds of support you find you are providing for your child while they are doing remote learning.

- a. Help with logging on
- b. Help with logging on to programs (password issues)
- c. Help to access programs and applications
- d. Help with time management
- e. Providing direct instruction
- f. Supervising independent activities
- g. Providing encouragement
- h. Helping to motivate my child
- i. Helping my child to engage
- j. Helping regulate emotions
- k. Helping regulate the need for movement and/or outdoors
- l. Other

11. What are your biggest challenges in helping your child with remote learning?

- a. Help with logging on to the internet (connecting)
- b. Help with logging on to programs (password issues)
- c. Help to access programs and applications
- d. Help with time management
- e. Providing direct instruction
- f. Supervising independent activities
- g. Providing encouragement
- h. Helping to motivate my child
- i. Helping my child to engage
- j. Helping regulate emotions
- k. Helping regulate the need for movement and/or outdoors
- l. other

12. Which of the following structures have been elements of your child's remote learning this fall?

- a. Virtual class meetings
- b. Small group work with the teacher
- c. Small group without the teacher
- d. Partner work without the teacher
- e. One on one meetings with the teacher
- f. Individual work without the teacher
- g. Computer mediated independent learning
- h. Other (please specify)

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

13. Which of the following structures have been successful in your child's remote learning this fall?
- Virtual class meetings
 - Small group meetings - with the teacher
 - Small group meetings - without the teacher
 - Partner work – without the teacher
 - One on one meetings - with the teacher
 - Computer mediated independent learning
 - Other (please specify)
14. What kinds of feedback is your child receiving from their teacher to let them know how they are progressing with their learning?
- Verbal feedback – live
 - Verbal feedback - recorded
 - Written feedback – posted
 - Written feedback - emailed
 - Graded assignments
 - Marked tests – totals, percentages or letter grades
 - Written correspondence (journals)
 - Other (please specify)
15. What resources do you access when your child is struggling with a concept or an assignment?
- Contact the teacher
 - Review assignment requirements
 - Contact another student in the class
 - Contact another parent with a child in the class or program
 - Search for help online
 - Contact a teacher at my child's home school
 - Other (please specify)
16. What changes do you notice when you compare your child's initial experiences with remote learning in the spring of 2020 with their experiences in the fall of 2020?
- My child's is more independent
 - My child is more engaged
 - The remote learning is more varied
 - My child is more motivated to learn
 - My child is more efficient in completing work
 - Other
17. How you would describe your child's attitudes towards remote learning? Please, rank the following statements from most accurate (1) to least accurate (8).
- They are eager to join class each day

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

- b. They talk about what they are learning
 - c. They are excited to complete assigned learning tasks
 - d. They look forward to class meetings
 - e. They look forward to individual meetings with the teacher
 - f. They look forward to group gatherings online
 - g. They have increased their interest in topics explored in class
 - h. They are eager to demonstrate what they have been doing online
18. Which of the following concerns you about your child as a remote learner?
- a. They seem more withdrawn
 - b. They spend less time talking to their friends
 - c. They come up with reasons not to log on to remote learning
 - d. They are not excited about school
 - e. They are less physically active
 - f. I am not aware of any concerns
 - g. None

Open Response Questions: please type your response in the space provided.

- 19. What is your child's favorite part of remote learning?
- 20. What have been your child/children's favorite learning activities this fall?
- 21. What have your child/children been able to experience through remote learning that might not occur in the classroom?
- 22. What would make your child's remote learning experience better?
- 23. What would make it easier for you to support your child in their remote learning?
- 24. What is your child's least favorite part of remote learning?
- 25. What have been your child's least favorite learning activities this fall?
- 26. What is making your child's learning experiences stimulating?
- 27. What is making it difficult for you to support your child's remote learning?
- 28. How does your child's experience with remote learning compare to their experience with face to face learning in the classroom?
- 29. What is your child missing the most about going to school in person?
- 30. If we could improve one thing about remote learning to make it more successful for you and your child, what would that be?
- 31. From your perspective, what are some factors that might impact the sustainability of the remote learning program?
- 32. What else would you like to share with the organizers about your family's experience with remote learning this fall?
- 33. Is your child / Are your children in French Immersion?

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

A) yes

B) no

For parents of students in French Immersion

If your child is in French Immersion, please respond to these additional questions.

34. How comfortable do you feel in supporting your child's learning in French via remote learning?

Very comfortable – Somewhat comfortable – Not so Comfortable – Not very comfortable support for students

35. What supports do you access when you and your child don't understand the language in an assignment or material? Support for students

- a. Use Google Translate
- b. Use You Tube
- c. Consult a dual language dictionary
- d. Consult the teacher
- e. Guess
- f. Email the teacher for support
- g. Email another student for support
- h. Consult a sibling
- i. Consult a family friend
- j. Consult a past teacher
- k. Other (please specify)

36. Which option best describes the level of French required for your child's remote learning program:

- a. Material and instructions are accessible with my level of French
- b. Material and instructions are beyond my level of French
- c. I have no French language knowledge or ability to support my child

37. What are your biggest challenges in supporting your child's remote learning in French?

38. If we could improve one thing about French remote learning to make it more successful for you and your child, what would that be?

Thank you very much for your responses.

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Remote Learning Student Questionnaire Grades 5-8

a. You are invited to complete this questionnaire as you are a remote learning student with the Western Consortia Remote Rural Learning Program. Your feedback will provide important information to the facilitators of the remote learning program and help guide ongoing improvements. By submitting this questionnaire you are a participant in this study as described in the letters of invitation you and your parents received. Your participation is voluntary and you will not be identified. If you need help with completing the questionnaire, you can ask your parents for assistance. Thank you for participating.

Fixed Response

Please select the response that best describes your feelings for each the following statements.

1. I have met new people through remote learning.
2. I enjoy meeting with my classmates online.
3. I have made friends through remote learning.
4. I connect with other students in my class outside of class time.
5. I contact my teacher when I have questions.
6. I enjoy meeting with my teacher online.
7. I know how I am doing on my remote learning assignments.
8. My teacher helps me with my work when I need it.
9. My parent(s) help me with my work when I need it.
10. My classmates help me with my work when I need it.
11. When I need help with an assignment I search online for answers.
12. The work I am given to do is interesting.
13. The work I am given to do is difficult.
14. I feel like a learner in my remote learning classroom.
15. I am learning new skills in working with technology through remote learning.
16. I feel more confident learning online than when I first started.
17. My remote learning program includes Language Arts (for example reading, writing, speaking, listening)
18. My remote learning program includes Mathematics (for example numbers, word problems, problem solving, computation)
19. My remote learning program includes Social Studies (for example people, places, communities, geography, history, wants and needs)
20. My remote learning program includes Science (for example plants, animals, natural world, weather, machines)
21. My remote learning program includes Health (for example healthy body, wellness, mindfulness, exercise, decision-making, healthy lifestyles)
22. My remote learning program involves the Arts (for example music, dance, drama, visual arts)

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

23. My remote learning program involves themes (for example dinosaurs, Churchill, Reptiles, travel, Terry Fox, Halloween)

Open Response Questions: please type your response in the space provided.

24. What do you like best about your remote learning program?
25. What do you like least about your remote learning program?
26. What do you do online that you would not be able to do in the classroom?
27. What do you miss about being in the classroom?
28. What else would you like to share about your experience as a remote learning student?

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Remote Learning Student Questionnaire French Immersion Grades 5-8

If you are in French Immersion, please respond to these additional questions.

29. How comfortable do you feel learning in French through remote learning? (Very – Not comfortable at all)
30. Which of the following supports do you access when you don't understand an assignment or material?
 - a. Use Google Translate
 - b. Use You Tube
 - c. Consult a dual language dictionary
 - d. Consult the teacher
 - e. Guess
 - f. Email the teacher for support
 - g. Email another student for support
 - h. Consult a family member
 - i. Consult a friend
 - j. Consult a past teacher
 - k. Other (please specify)
31. Which option best describes the level of French required for your remote learning program:
 - l. I can understand the French materials and assignments very well.
 - m. I can understand the French materials and assignments, but not very well.
 - n. I cannot understand the French materials and assignments to do my school work.
32. What are your biggest challenges with remote learning in French?
33. How difficult is it for you to learn in French online?
 - a. Very difficult
 - b. Somewhat difficult
 - c. a little difficult
 - d. Not difficult at all
34. How much are you speaking in French while learning online?
 - a. I am speaking more French than I did in the classroom
 - b. I am speaking the same amount of French as I did in the classroom
 - c. I am speaking less French than I did in the classroom
35. How much are you reading in French while learning online?
 - d. I am reading more French than I did in the classroom
 - e. I am reading the same amount of French as I did in the classroom
 - f. I am reading less French than I did in the classroom
36. How much are you listening in French while learning online?
 - g. I am listening to more French than I did in the classroom

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

- h. I am listening to the same amount of French as I did in the classroom
 - i. I am listening to less French than I did in the classroom
37. How much are you writing in French while learning online?
- j. I am writing more French than I did in the classroom
 - k. I am writing the same amount of French as I did in the classroom
 - l. I am writing less French than I did in the classroom
38. What are you noticing about your French while learning online?
- a. My French is improving
 - b. My French is not improving
 - c. My French is getting worse
39. Is there anything else you wish to tell us about remote learning in French?

Thank you very much for your responses.

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Remote Learning Student Survey Grades K-4

[You are invited to complete this survey as you are part of the Western Consortia Remote Rural Learning Program. Please, tell us what you think of your remote learning program. Your answers will help make the program better. Once you answer these questions, you will be part of the study. Thank you for participating. If you need help with the questions, you can ask your parents.]

a.

Fixed Response

Please select the response that best describes your answer for each of the following questions. (keep yes, sometimes, no)

1. Do you meet new classmates online?
2. Do you like meeting your classmates online?
3. Do you connect with other students online outside of class?
4. Do you connect with other students in your class in person outside of class?
5. Do you contact your teacher when you have a question?
6. Do you enjoy meeting with your teacher online?
7. Do you know how you are doing on your assignments?
8. Does your teacher help you with work when you need it?
9. Do your parent(s) help you with work when you need it?
10. Do your classmates help you with work when you need it?
11. Do you look online for answers when you need help?
12. Do you find your schoolwork interesting?
13. Do you find your schoolwork difficult?
14. Do you feel like a learner in your remote learning classroom?
15. Do you feel you are learning new computer skills?
16. Do you feel more confident learning online now than when you first started?
17. Do you learn about Language Arts? (for example reading, writing, talking, listening)
18. Do you learn about Math? (for example numbers, word problems, problem solving, computation)
19. Do you learn about Social Studies? (for example people, places, communities, geography, history, wants and needs)
20. Do you do learn about Science (for example plants, animals, natural world, weather, machines)
21. Do you learn about Health (for example healthy body, wellness, mindfulness, exercise, decision-making, healthy lifestyles)
22. Do you learn about the arts? (for example music, dance, drama, visual arts)
23. Do you learn through themes? (for example dinosaurs, Churchill, Reptiles, travel, Terry Fox, Halloween)

Open Response Questions: please type your answer in the space provided.

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

24. What do you like best about your remote learning program?
25. What do you like least about your remote learning program?
26. What do you do online that you could not do in the classroom?
27. What do you miss about being in the classroom?
28. What else would you like to share about being a remote learning student?

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Remote Learning Student Questionnaire French Immersion K-4

If you are in French Immersion, please respond to these additional questions.

29. How comfortable do you feel learning in French through remote learning? (Very comfortable – not comfortable)
30. What do you do when you don't understand something?
- a. Use Google Translate
 - b. Use You Tube
 - c. Use a dictionary
 - d. Ask the teacher
 - e. Guess
 - f. Email the teacher
 - g. Email a classmate
 - h. Ask a family member
 - i. Ask a friend
 - j. Ask last year's teacher
 - k. Other (tell us what you do)
31. Which option best describes the level of French required for your remote learning program:
- a. I can understand the French materials and assignments very well.
 - b. I can understand the French materials and assignments, but not very well.
 - c. I cannot understand the French materials and assignments to do my school work.
32. How difficult is it for you to learn in French online?
- d. Very difficult
 - e. Somewhat difficult
 - f. a little difficult
 - g. Not difficult at all
33. What are your biggest challenges with remote learning in French?
34. How much are you speaking in French while learning online?
- h. I am speaking more French than I did in the classroom
 - i. I am speaking the same amount of French as I did in the classroom
 - j. I am speaking less French than I did in the classroom
35. How much are you reading in French while learning online?
- k. I am reading more French than I did in the classroom
 - l. I am reading the same amount of French as I did in the classroom
 - m. I am reading less French than I did in the classroom
36. How much are you listening in French while learning online?
- n. I am listening to more French than I did in the classroom
 - o. I am listening to the same amount of French as I did in the classroom
 - p. I am listening to less French than I did in the classroom

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

37. How much are you writing in French while learning online?
- q. I am writing more French than I did in the classroom
 - r. I am writing the same amount of French as I did in the classroom
 - s. I am writing less French than I did in the classroom
38. What are you noticing about your French while learning online?
- t. My French is improving
 - u. My French is not improving
 - v. My French is getting worse
39. Is there anything else you wish to say about remote learning in French?

Thank you very much for your help!

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Remote Learning Teacher Questionnaire

You are invited to complete this questionnaire as you are a remote learning teacher with the Western Consortia Remote Rural Learning Program. Your feedback will provide important information to the facilitators of the remote learning program and help guide ongoing improvements. By submitting this questionnaire you are a participant in this study as described in the letter of invitation you received. YOUR PARTICIPATION IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY . Thank you for participating.

Fixed Response

Please select the appropriate response for the following statements. (SD, D, A, SA)

1. I help my students to meet new people through remote learning.
2. My students enjoy meeting with each other online.
3. My students have made friends through remote learning.
4. My students connect with other students in my class outside of class time.
5. My students contact me when they have questions.
6. I enjoy meeting with my students online.
7. My students know how they are doing on their remote learning assignments.
8. I am able to help students with their work when they need it.
9. My students get help from their parent(s) with their work when they need it.
10. Students help each other with their work when they need it.
11. When students need help with an assignment they search online for answers.
12. I am able to give my students interesting assignments online.
13. I am able to give my students stimulating assignments online.
14. I model being a learner in my remote learning classrooms.
15. I am learning new skills in working with technology through remote teaching.
16. I feel more confident teaching online than when I first started.
17. I AM ABLE TO HELP MY STUDENTS resolve TECHNOLOGICAL issues.
18. I can sustain my current level of commitment to remote teaching all year.
19. I could sustain this level of teaching indefinitely.
20. I would like to continue teaching remotely in the future.
21. My remote learning program includes Language Arts (reading, writing, speaking, listening)
22. My remote learning program includes Mathematics (numbers, word problems, problem solving, computation)
23. My remote learning program includes Social Studies (people, places, communities, geography, history, wants and needs)
24. My remote learning program includes Science (plants, animals, natural world, weather, machines)
25. My remote learning program includes Health (healthy body, wellness, mindfulness, exercise, decision-making, healthy lifestyles)
26. My remote learning program involves the arts (music, dance, drama, visual arts)

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

27. My remote learning program involves themes (dinosaurs, Churchill, Reptiles, travel, Terry Fox, Halloween)

Open Response

- 28. What do you like best about teaching in the remote learning program?
- 29. What do you like least about teaching in the remote learning program?
- 30. What are you able to do online with your students that you would not be able to do in the classroom?
- 31. What do you miss about teaching in the classroom?
- 32. If the Westman Consortia Partnership could improve one thing about remote learning to make it more successful for you and your STUDENTS, what would that be?
- 33. From your perspective, what are some factors that might impact the sustainability of the remote learning program?
- 34. What else would you like to share with the organizers about your experiences with remote learning during the 2020-2021 school year?
- 35. Are you a French Immersion teacher?
 - A) yes
 - B) no

If you teach in the French Immersion. Program, please answer the additional questions.

Additional questions for teachers of students in French Immersion

- 36. How comfortable are you with supporting children's remote learning in French?
- 37. What are the biggest challenges you have with supporting your students' French language learning through remote learning?
- 38. What supports do you suggest students or their parents access when they don't understand the language in an assignment or material?
 - a. Use Google Translate
 - b. Consult a dual language dictionary
 - c. Consult the teacher
 - d. Guess
 - e. Email the teacher for support
 - f. Email another student for support
 - g. Consult a family friend
 - h. Consult a past teacher
 - i. Other (please specify)
- 39. Select the option that best describes the level of French required for the remote learning program(s) you teach.
 - j. Grades K-4 Material is accessible with most parents' level of French

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

- k. Grades K-4 Material and instructions are beyond most parents' level of French
 - l. Grades K-4 I have parents with no French language knowledge or ability to support their child
 - m. Grades 5-8 Material is accessible with most parents' level of French
 - n. Grades 5-8 Material and instructions are beyond most parents' level of French
 - o. Grades 5-8 I have parents with no French language knowledge or ability to support their child
40. If we could improve one thing about French remote learning , what would that be?

Thank you very much for your responses.

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Consultant Questionnaire

You are invited to complete this questionnaire as you are a Curriculum Consultant supporting remote learning teachers with the Western Consortia Remote Rural Learning Program. Your feedback will provide important information to the facilitators of the remote learning program and help guide ongoing improvements. By submitting this questionnaire you are a participant in this study as described in the letter of invitation you received. Thank you for participating.

1. Which of the following are ways in which you have supported the remote learning program?
 - a. Daily support for teachers and or students
 - b. Support for teachers and or students a few times per week
 - c. I provide individual support when requested
 - d. I provide group support when requested
 - e. Other (please specify)
2. How involved have you been with the Friday team meetings of remote learning teachers?
 - a. I attend Friday meetings weekly
 - b. I have attended a few Friday meetings per month
 - c. I attend about one Friday meeting per month
 - d. I have not attended any Friday meetings
 - e. Other (Please specify)
3. What do you like best about supporting teachers in the remote learning program?
4. What is the most difficult aspect of supporting remote learning teachers?
5. What are you helping teachers accomplish in remote learning?
6. What are teachers finding the most difficult about teaching online?
7. What makes your support work exciting?
8. What makes your consultant work stimulating?
9. What are some exciting developments you have noticed in the remote learning program?
10. How are teachers supported through the Friday afternoon planning sessions?
11. What are remote learning teachers looking for when they gather together?
12. What are you learning about effective facilitation of meetings with remote learning teachers?
13. What would enable you to more effectively support the remote learning teachers?
14. What are some of the factors that might impact the sustainability of the remote learning program?
15. What else would you like to say about supporting the rural remote learning program?

WESTMAN CONSORTIA RURAL AND REMOTE LEARNING

Home School Principal Questionnaire

You are invited to complete this questionnaire as you are a home school principal with students enrolled in the Western Consortia Remote Rural Learning Program. Your feedback will provide important information to the facilitators of the remote learning program and help guide ongoing improvements. By submitting this questionnaire you are a participant in this study as described in the letter of invitation you received. Your participation is voluntary and you will not be identified. Thank you for participating.

1. How many students from your school are involved in remote learning?
2. What grades are your students enrolled in?
3. Which programs are your students enrolled in?
 - a. English K-4
 - b. English 5-8
 - c. French K-4
 - d. French 5-8
4. How satisfied have you been with the remote learning option for your students? (Likert scale)
5. How satisfied do you feel the parents of remote learning students are with the remote learning program? (Likert)
6. How satisfied are you with the communication and structure of the Western Consortia Partnership? (Likert)
7. From your perspective, what are the best features of the remote learning program?
8. From your perspective, what are the most challenging features of the remote learning program?
9. From your perspective as a home school principal, what could be done to strengthen the remote learning program?
10. From your perspective, what are the factors that might impact the sustainability of the remote learning program?
11. What questions do you have about the remote learning program?
12. What else would you like to say about the remote learning program?

Thank you very much for your responses.