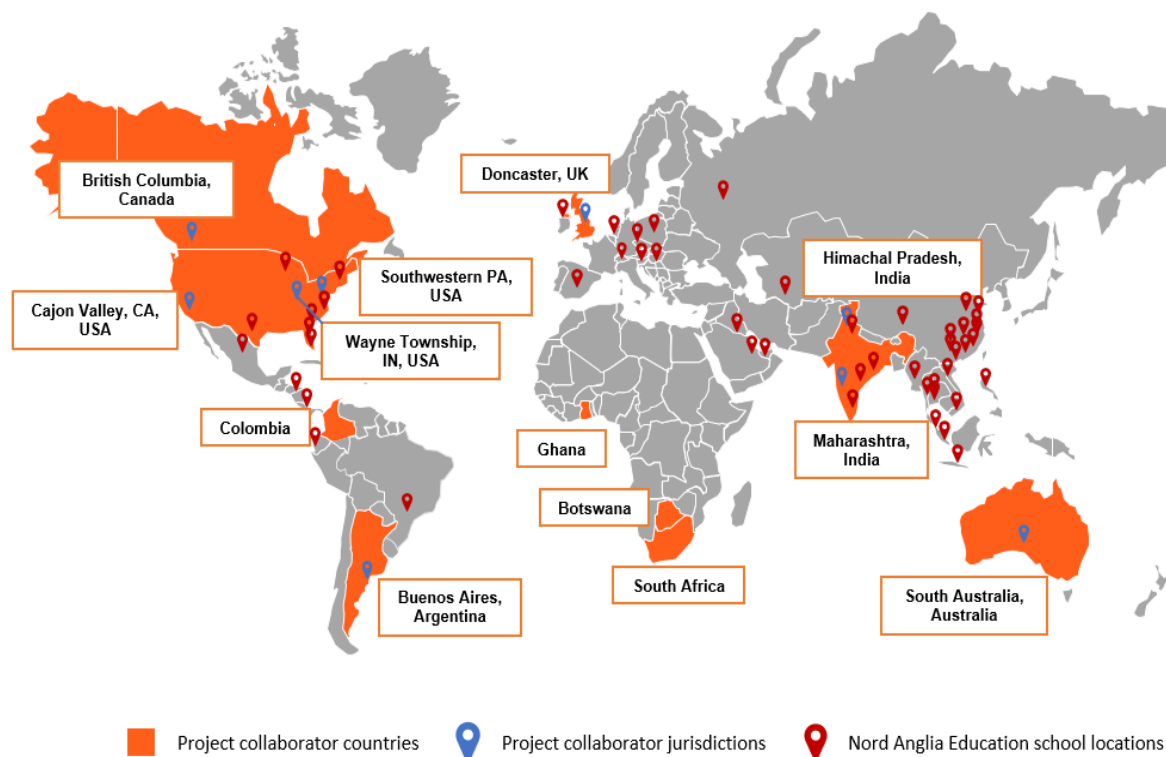


PERSPECTIVES FROM PARENTS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

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FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION NETWORK

In January 2020, the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at Brookings launched a new project focused on family and parent engagement in education.¹ The project emerged out of CUE’s work on harnessing [education innovations](#) to address inequality

¹ The suggested citation for this report is: Winthrop, R., Ershadi, M., & Partington, S. (2021, March). *Family engagement in education network technical report: Perspectives from parents in British Columbia, Canada*. Center for Universal Education at Brookings.

and help all young people, regardless of the community in which they are born, develop the full breadth of competencies and skills they will need to thrive in work, life, and citizenship in the 21st century. In 2019, CUE conducted consultations across 15 countries with 50 education decisionmakers—from ministers of education to school leaders—that were focused on advancing teaching and learning strategies that supported whole child development, or as some call it, the development of academic plus 21st century skills. A recurring theme from the consultations was a desire of decisionmakers to have more and better strategies for engaging parents and families. Together with 41 project collaborators across 10 countries, members of CUE’s [Family Engagement in Education Network](#), CUE has been exploring what it takes to build strong family-school partnerships, especially in contexts striving to address inequality and deliver a broad suite of skills and competencies for their children.

EDUCATION IN CANADA

The COVID-19 pandemic caused mandatory shutdowns and mass disruption of schooling worldwide. In Canada, over 5 million students enrolled in pre-kindergarten to grade 12 were affected (Council of Ministers of Education, n.d.). Educators responded to the crisis by rapidly shifting their in-class lessons online so that students could continue to learn remotely. As a result, parents² and families have been given a front row seat to how and what their children learn ‘in school,’ and academic outcomes and student success hinge on parent involvement now more than ever before.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Across the province of British Columbia, approximately 553,000 students are enrolled in primary and secondary public schools, 81,000 students are enrolled in independent schools, and 2200 students are home-schooled each year (British Columbia, n.d.). Included in CUE’s Family Engagement in Education Network are three public districts in British Columbia: SD48 Sea to Sky, SD8 Kootenay Lake, and SD8 Richmond.

² We use the term parent throughout to denote a child’s parent, guardian, or caregiver.

SD48 Sea to Sky

The Sea to Sky district serves 5052 students from kindergarten to grade 12 across the main centres of Squamish, Whistler, and Pemberton. The district serves six First Nation communities (Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw, Lil'wat, N'Quatqua, Samhquam Ucwalmicw, Skatin, Xa'xtsa, and the Metis, Inuit, and Off-Reserve Nations) and has a growing immigrant population. Median family income across the three main centres served by SD48 is approximately \$87,670 ("District Overview," 2021). Table 1 shows the proportion of Indigenous learners, as well as the proportion of students receiving special services ("District Overview," 2021).

Table 1. Demographics of SD-48 student population.

Cohort	% of students
Indigenous	12
English Language and ESD	7
International Education	1
French Immersion	21

Schools

There are 15 schools in the Sea to Sky district: nine elementary schools, one middle school, three secondary schools, one K-12 school, and one Distributed Learning school, which offers online learning and outreach programs ("District Overview," 2021).

District mission

The Sea to Sky district follows an education plan centered on three key elements: "Diversity is a strength; Inclusion is a right; Personalization is the way forward." Since implementing this education plan in its original form in 2012, the district has seen improvements in graduation rates – particularly Indigenous and special education graduation, – improvements in grade-to-grade transition rates, and a decline in suspension rates. Moving forward, the district strives to support students in making

further gains through cultivating community partnerships and integrating 21st century skill development into curricula (“SD48 Enhancing Student Learning,” n.d.).

SD8 Kootenay Lake

The Kootenay Lake district serves over 5400 students from kindergarten to grade 12 across a number of communities in the southern interior of British Columbia, including Crawford Bay, Creston, Kaslo, Nelson, Salmo, and Slocan Valley (“Our District,” 2018).

Schools

There are 21 schools in the Kootenay Lake district: 13 elementary schools, three elementary-secondary schools, one middle school, one middle-secondary school, and three secondary schools (“Schools,” 2018). The district also offers a Distributed Learning program called ELEV8 in which students from kindergarten to grade 12 can create an individualized Student Learning Plan with the support of their parents and a certified BC teacher and do the majority of their coursework at home with the option of having in-school time as well (“About ELEV8,” 2018).

The district offers students a variety of educational and extracurricular programs, such as Aboriginal education, French immersion, international education, performance and media, outdoor environmental leadership, and various sports academies (“Programs,” 2018).

District mission

The Kootenay Lake district is committed to working towards four key goals to ensure success for all students: learning, organizational excellence, relationships, and engagement. Four key student expectations drive the district’s efforts as well: academic success, creativity and imagination, citizenship, and resiliency (“Our Strategic Plan,” 2018).

The Department of Innovative Learning Services (ILS) within SD8 supports the development of place-conscious programs and opportunities for students (“Innovative Learning Services,” 2018). Another major initiative of the ILS team is a redesigned K-12

curriculum model centered on fostering 21st century skills and competencies through personalized learning, quality teaching and learning, flexibility and choice, and high standards. This curricula transformation is well underway across all grade levels, with the final stages of implementation occurring in the 2019-2020 school year (“Curriculum & Assessment,” 2018).

SD38 Richmond

The Richmond district serves approximately 20,000 students from pre-kindergarten to grade 12 within the City of Richmond, located on an island at the mouth of the Fraser River (“Our Story,” 2021).

Schools

There are 48 schools in the Richmond district: 38 elementary schools and ten secondary schools (“Schools,” 2021). Students in grades 10 to 12 have the option to combine online courses and face-to-face learning through the Richmond Virtual School, the district’s blended approach to secondary learning that contributes to their high graduation rates (“Richmond Virtual School,” 2021).

Richmond students have the option to partake in various career programs to explore future opportunities while still in high school, such as the Youth Train in Trades and Youth Work in Trades programs (“Career Programs,” 2021). The district also sponsors continuing education programs for adult learners, early learning programs for pre-school-age children, international education programs and language support for K-12 students, an Aboriginal education program, and a multi-grade outdoor academy where students develop leadership skills through outdoor physical education (“Programs,” 2021).

District mission

The Richmond mission statement reads: “The Richmond School District’s mission is to cultivate a safe, accepting and engaging community that inspires a passion for lifelong

learning.” Several key values guide the district’s vision and mission, including collaboration, creativity, curiosity, resilience, respect, and equity (“Our District,” 2021).

SURVEY OF PARENTS

From August 22, 2020 to October 2, 2020, CUE distributed a 34-item online survey to parents and caregivers of students enrolled in SD48 Sea to Sky, SD8 Kootenay Lake, and SD38 Richmond. A total of 1410 primary caregivers across the three districts responded to our survey. To collect data representative of the population in these three districts, we determined our sample sizes before commencing data collection by assuming that the student population in this jurisdiction was equal to the parent population, thus using a conservative approach, which dismissed the possibility of siblings. We set our confidence level at 95% and margin of error at 5% according to guidelines for research activities (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Based on our prior calculations, we aimed to collect 380 responses from primary caregivers in our three partner districts. All survey items were optional such that respondents could choose to provide a response to a subsequent question without having responded to a previous question. As a result, the response proportions per survey item options do not always sum to 100%.

SURVEY AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

A selection of survey responses is presented below. The order in which the results are presented here does not reflect the order in which the respondents completed the questions on the survey. CUE will however share the survey instrument upon request. Please send inquiries to: leapfrogging@brookings.edu.

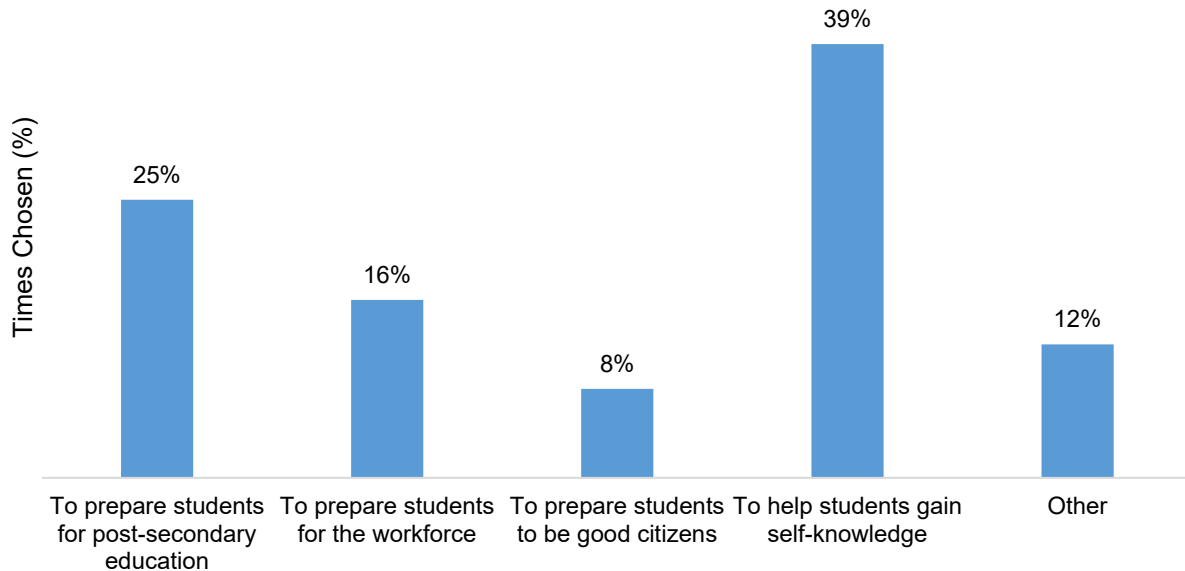
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank our project collaborators at SD48 Sea to Sky, SD8 Kootenay Lake, SD38 Richmond, and the Transformative Educational Leadership Program at the University of British Columbia and the Networks of Innovation and Indigenous Education, without whom we would not have been able to conduct this survey.

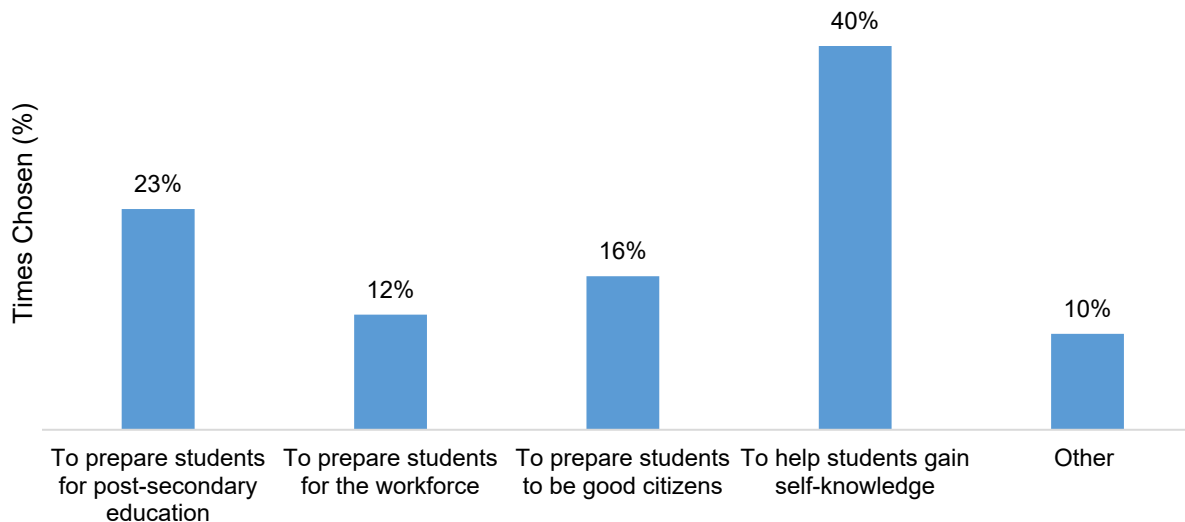
SURVEY FINDINGS

Parents' beliefs on the purpose of school and perceived alignment with teachers

I believe that the most important purpose of school is:
(sample size=1101)

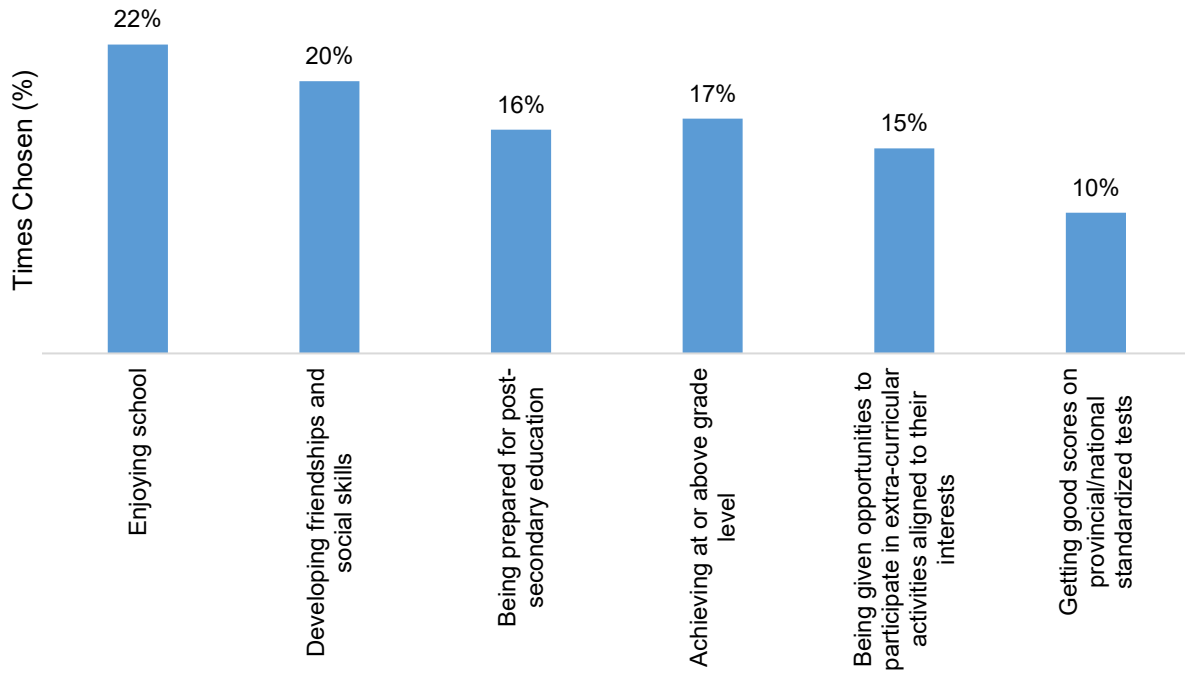


I believe that my child's educators believe that the most important purpose of school is:
(sample size=1043)



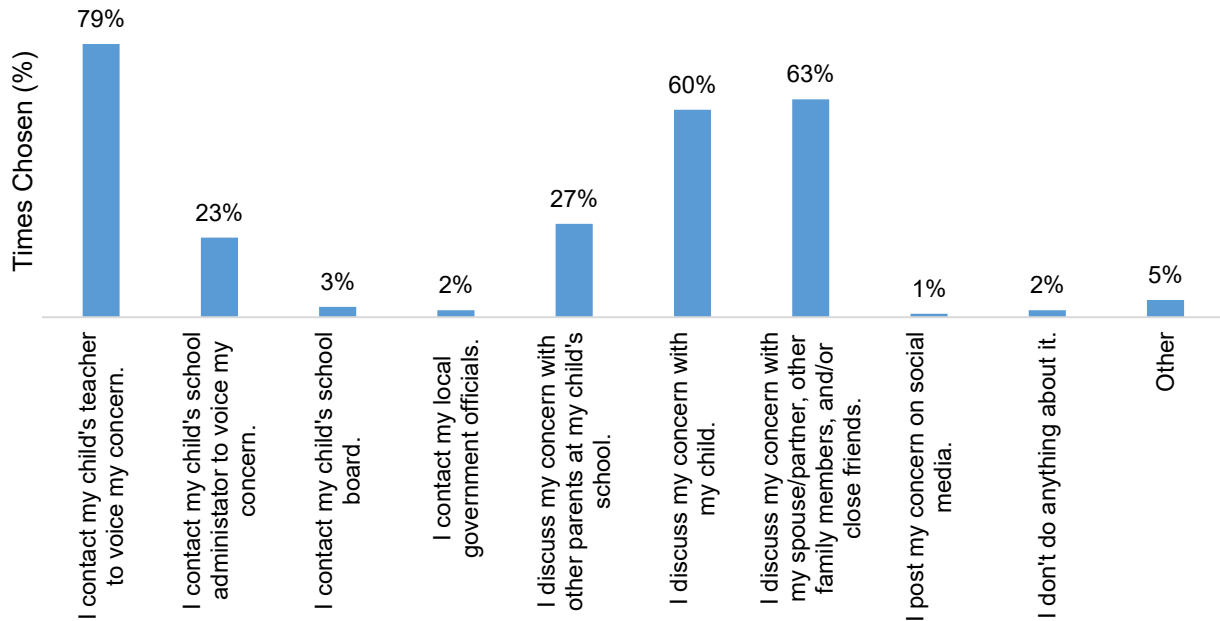
Parents' indicators of quality and perceived alignment with educators

I am satisfied with my child's education when my child is:
(sample size=1053)

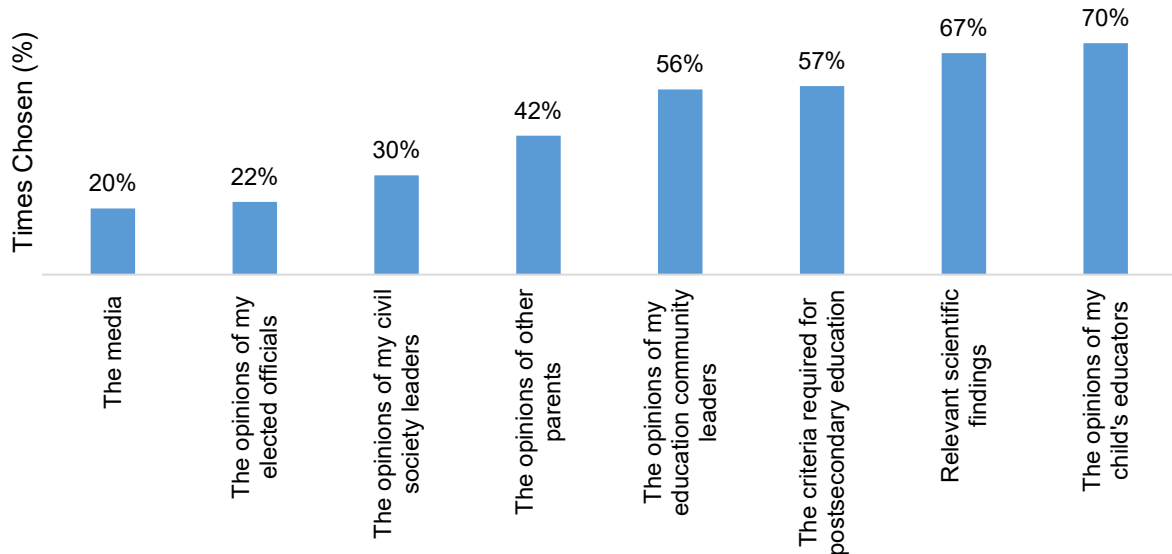


Parents' sources of information

**How do you react when something about your child's education bothers or upsets you?
(sample size=972)**

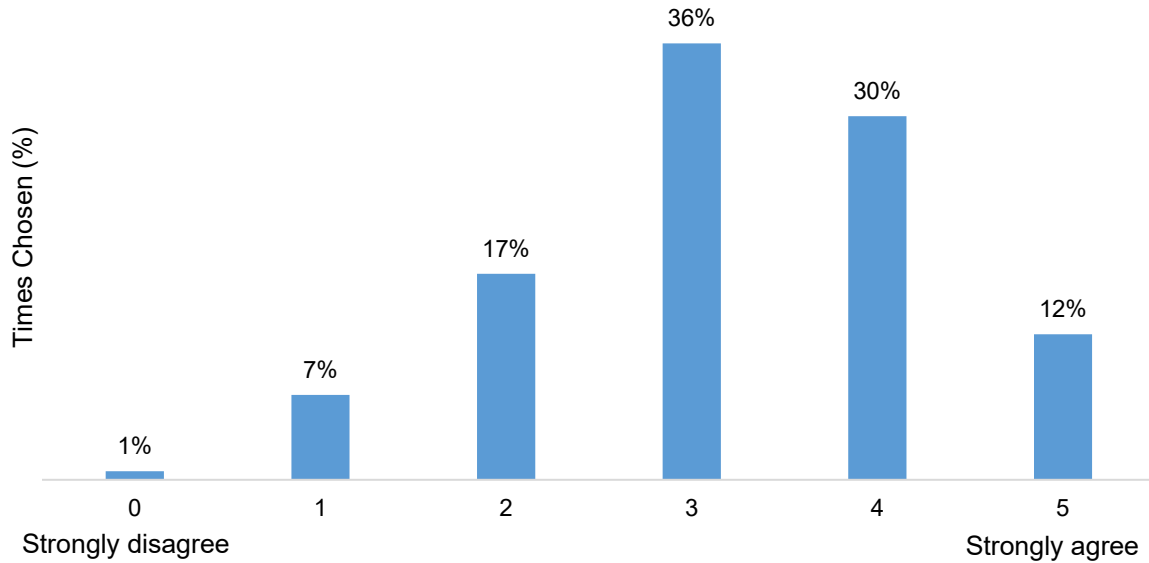


**What influences your perspective about what makes for a good quality education for your child?
(sample size=972)**

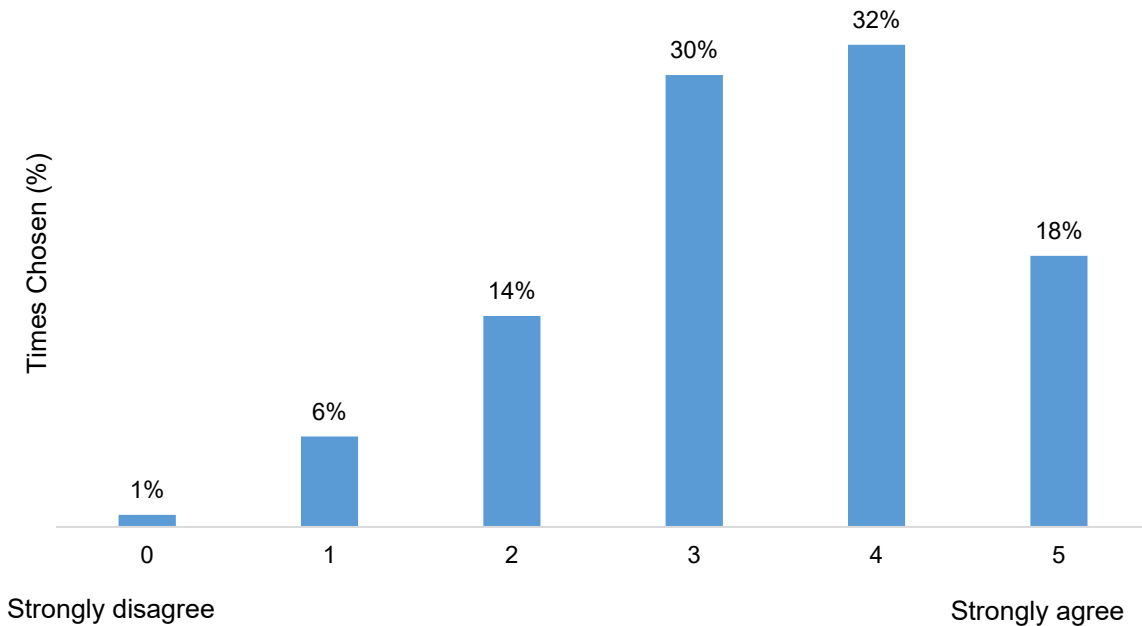


Parents' trust of and perceived alignment with teachers

**My child's teachers share my beliefs about what makes a good education
(sample size=950)**

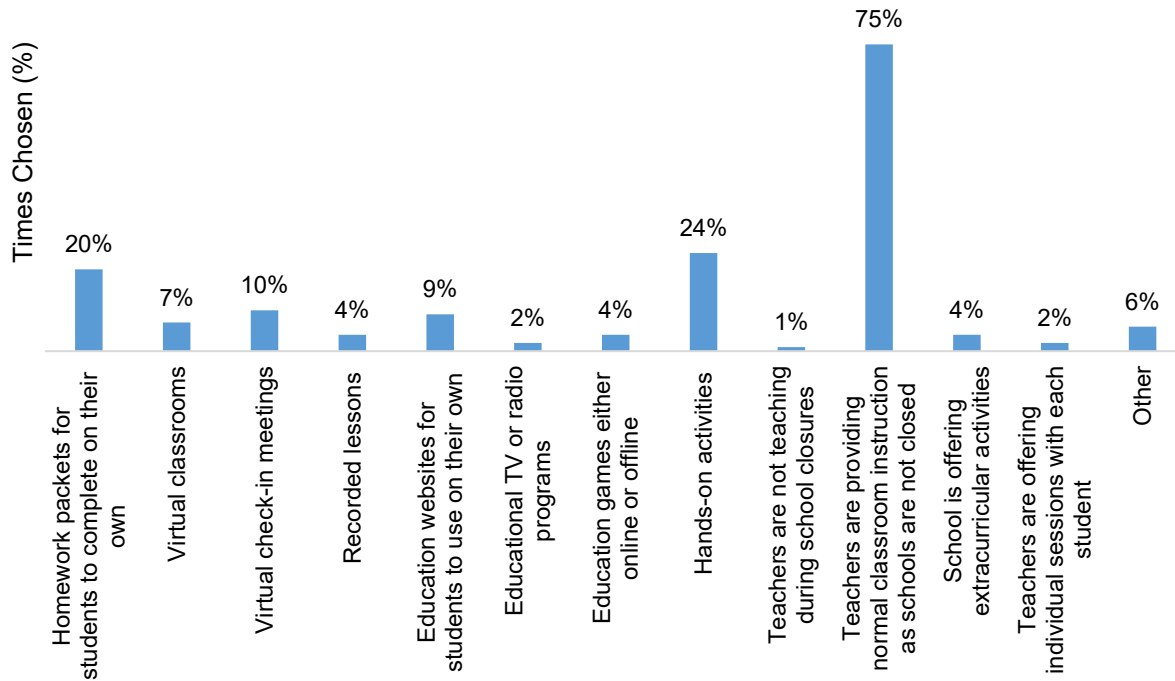


**My child's teachers are receptive to my input and suggestions.
(sample size=964)**

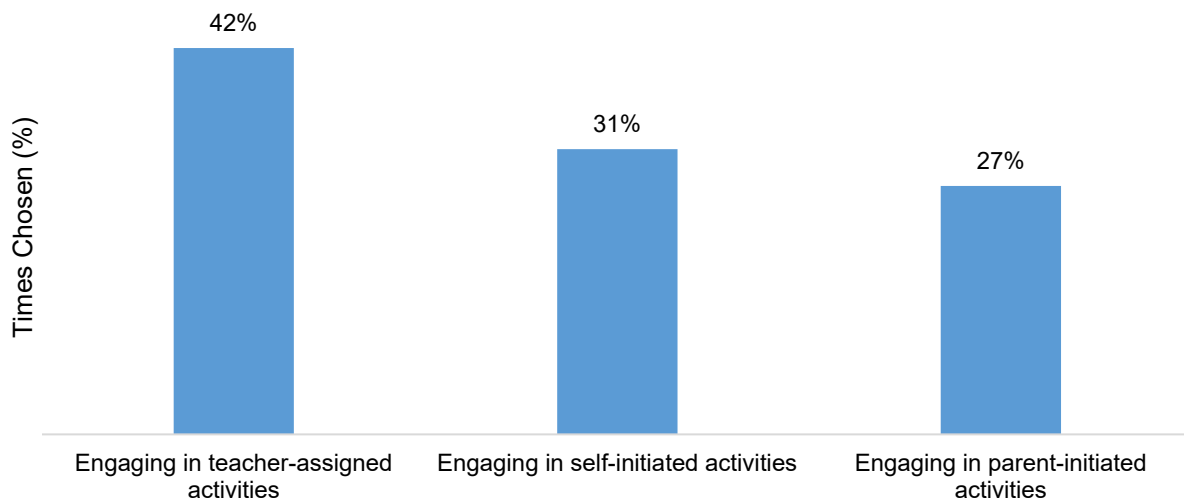


Parents' opinions on pedagogy

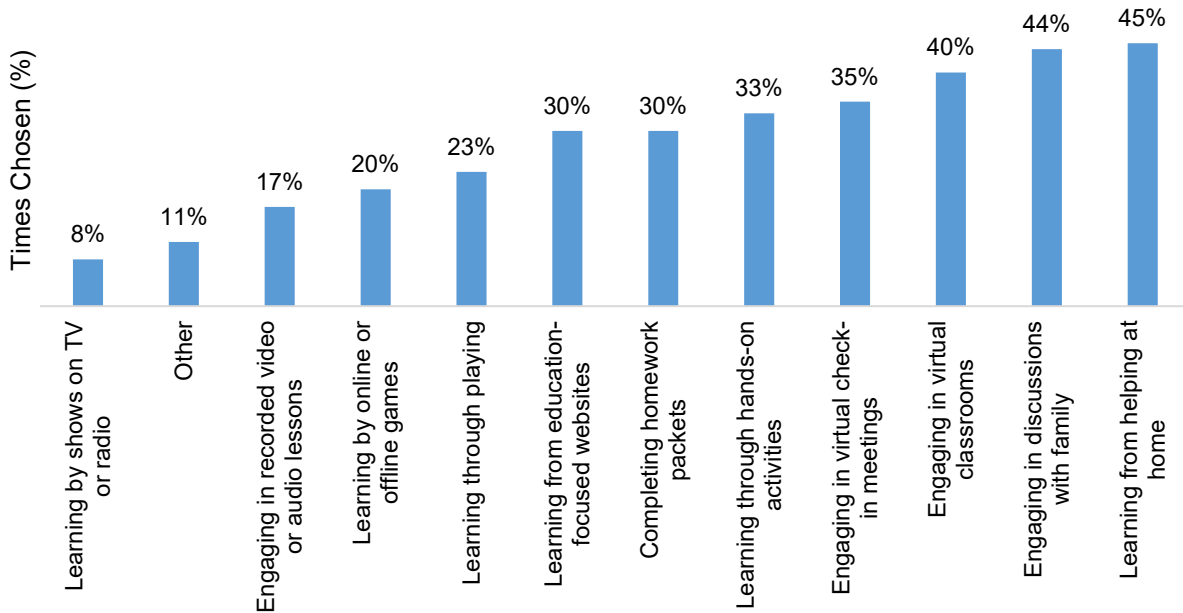
**In the last two weeks, how are your child's teachers continuing to teach right now?
(sample size=1229)**



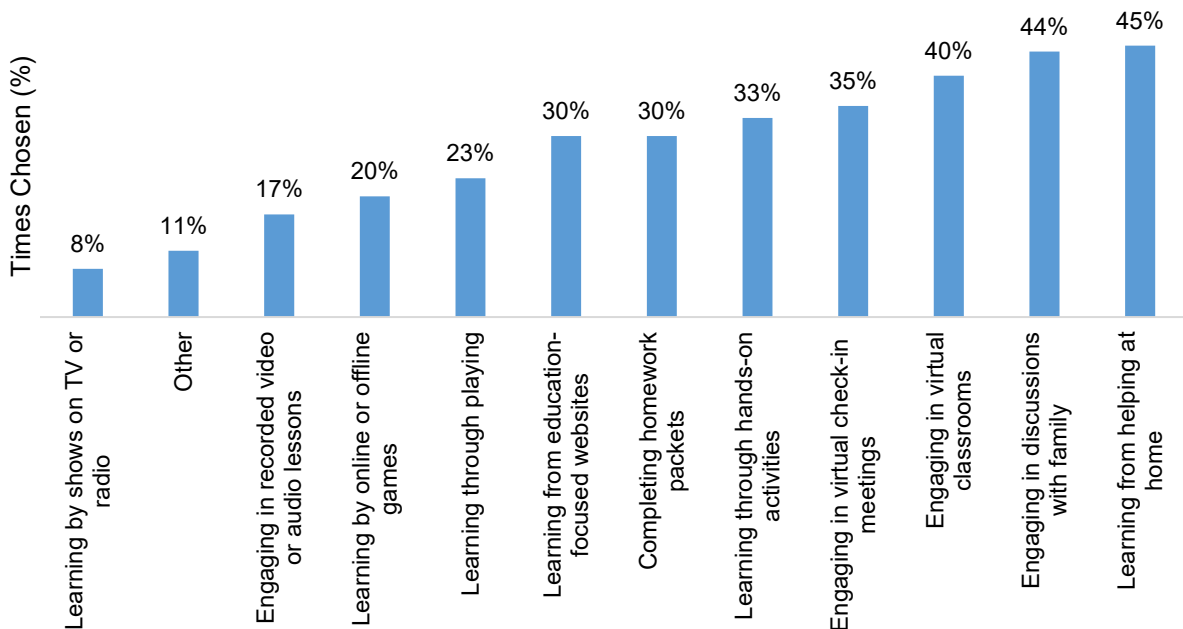
**How was your child spending the majority of their time during your child's school closure due to COVID?
(sample size=264)**



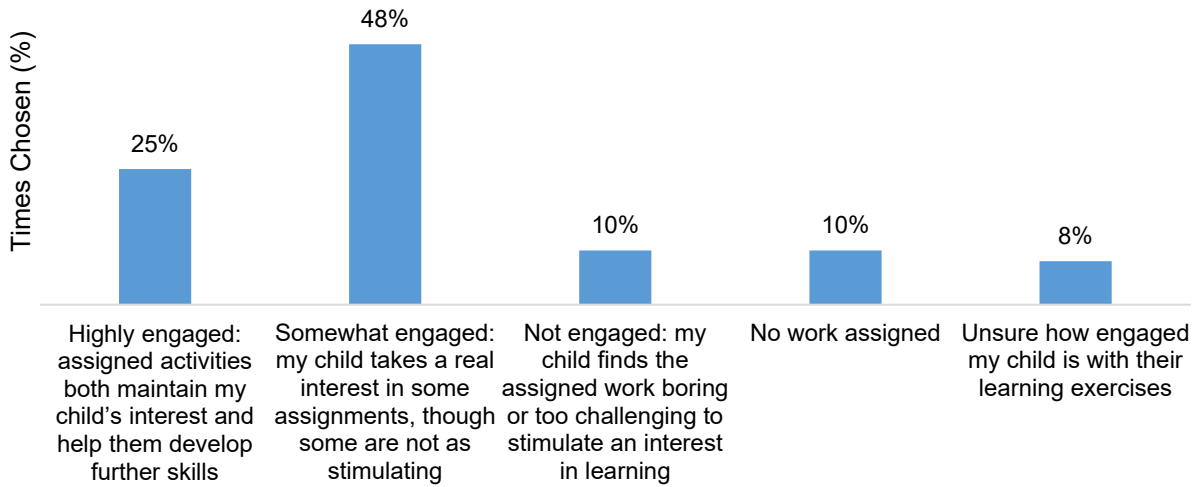
When you think about the different ways in which your child is or was learning during their school closure, which are you the MOST satisfied with? (sample size=1116)



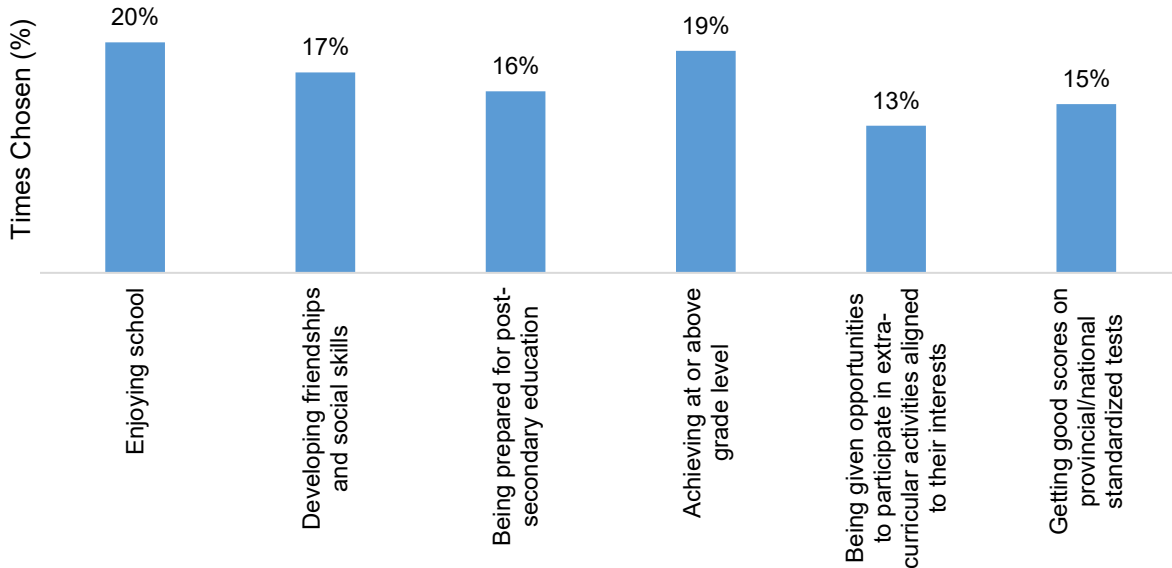
When you think about the different ways in which your child is or was learning during their school closure, which are you the MOST satisfied with? (sample size=1116)



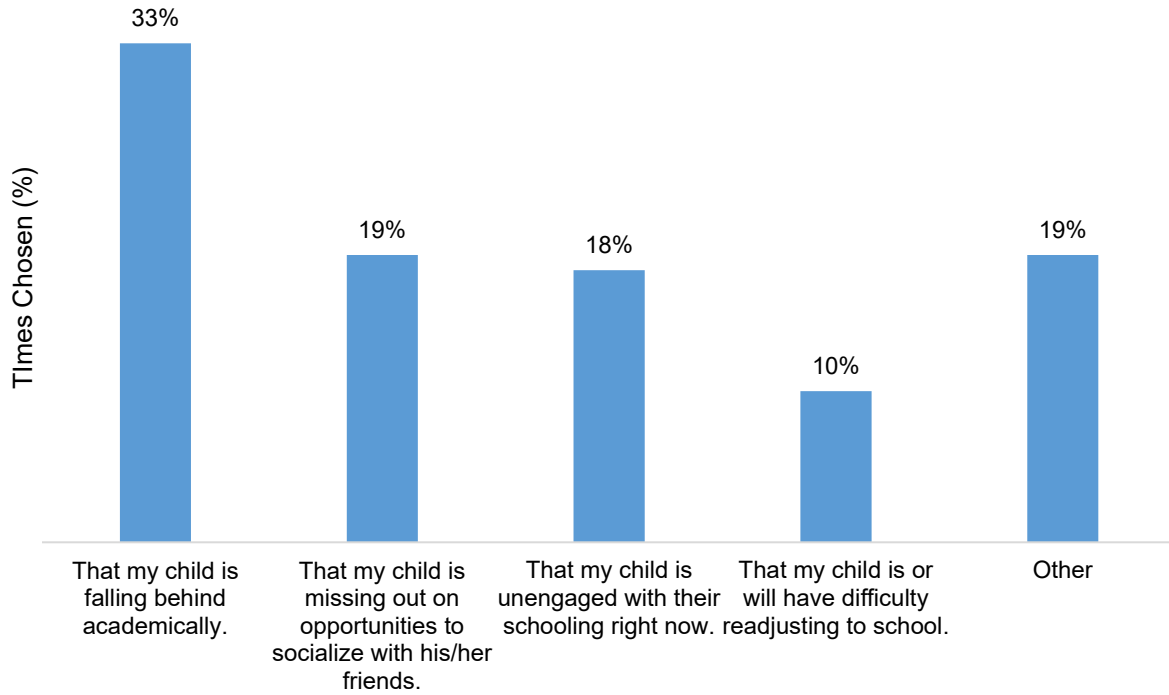
**How engaged was your child with the activities their teacher assigned during your child's school closure due to COVID?
(sample size=971)**



**I believe that my child's educators are satisfied with their students' education when their students are:
(sample size=938)**

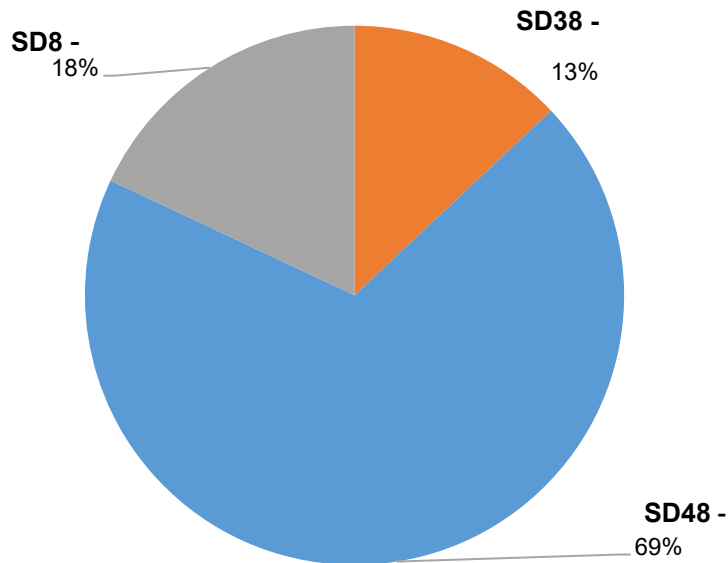


**With regards to your child's education right now, what worries you the MOST?
(sample size=954)**

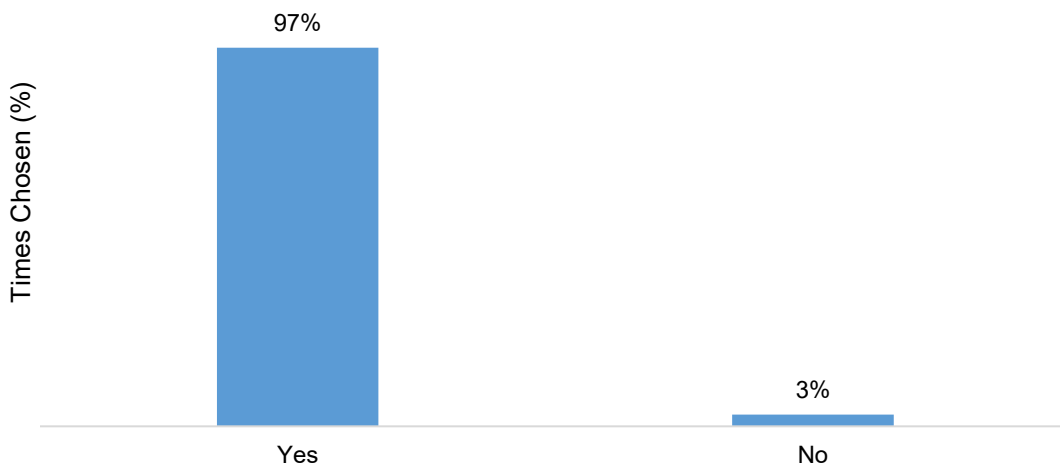


Demographics of survey respondents from British Columbia

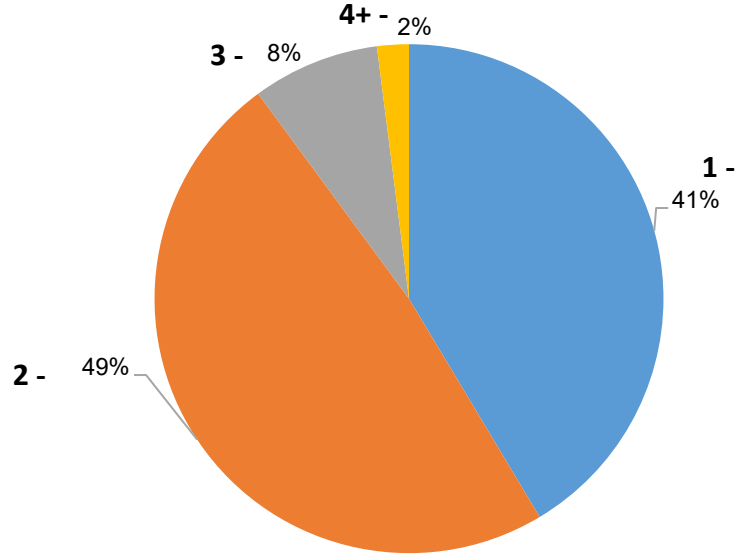
**Proportion of respondents from each district
(sample size=1410)**



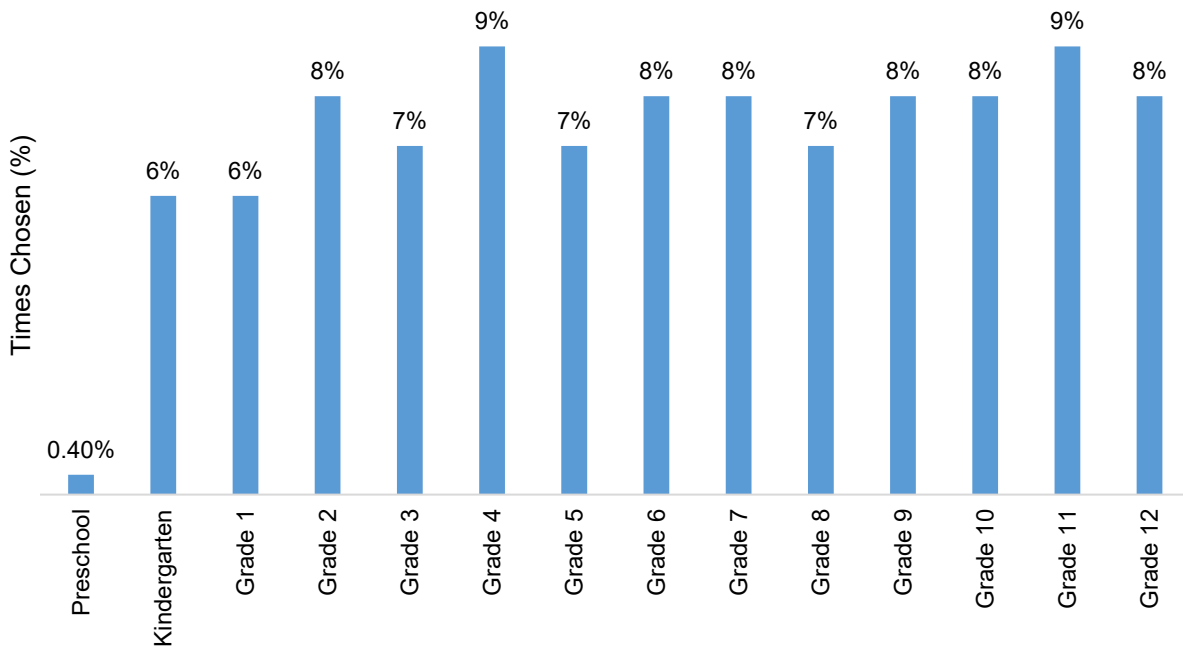
**Are you your child's primary caregiver (i.e., the
adult who assumes the most responsibility in
caring for the health and well-being of the child)?
(sample size=903)**



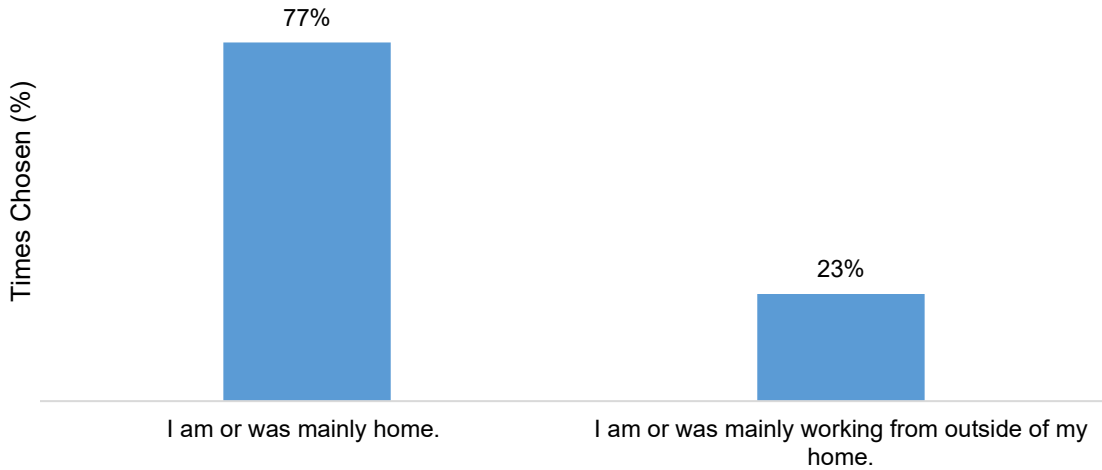
**How many children do you have who are currently in preschool through grade 12 in school and live at home with you?
(sample size=1383)**



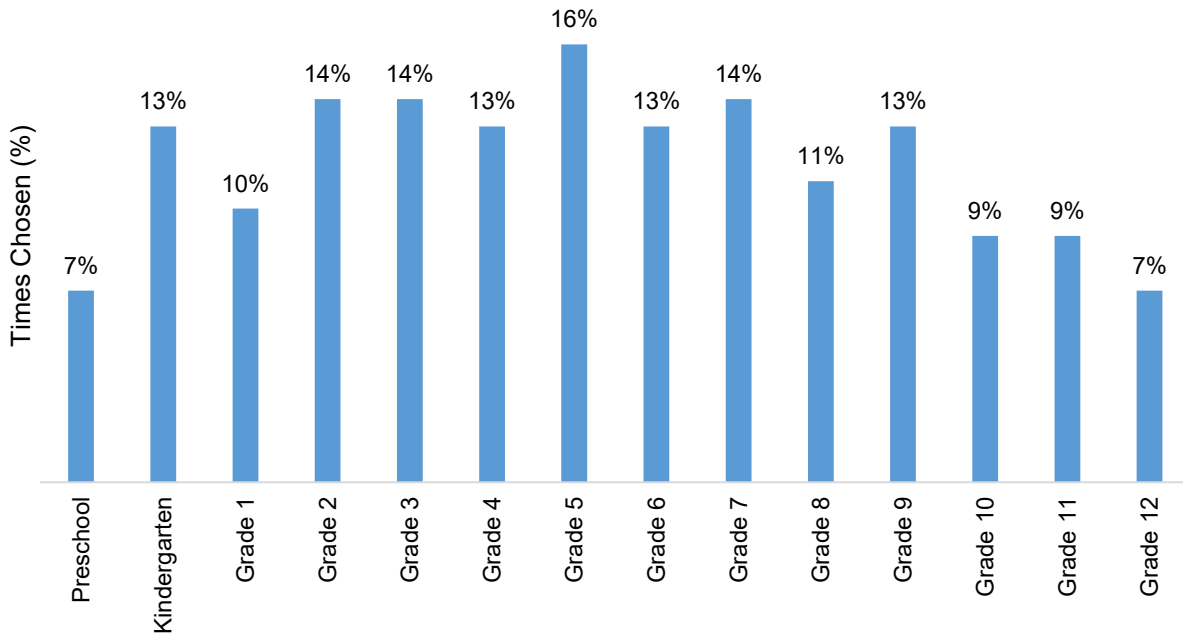
**In which grade is your oldest child who is enrolled in school (preschool to grade 12)?
(sample size=1369)**



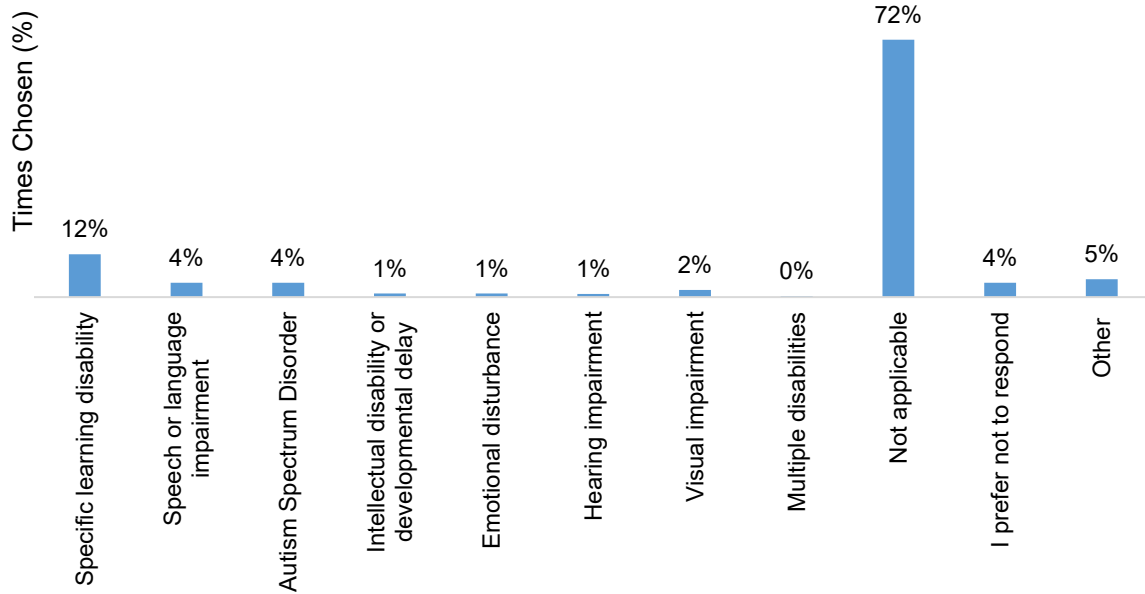
**During your child's school closure, are or were you mainly home (whether employed or unemployed) or are or were you mainly working from outside your home?
(sample size=889)**



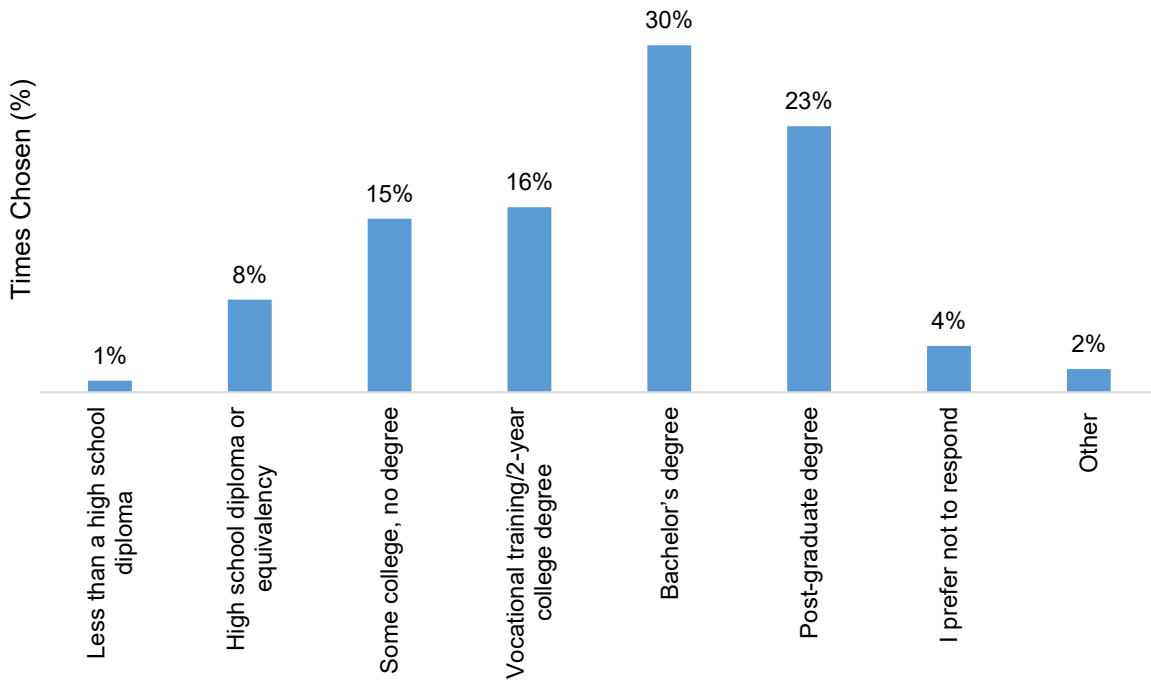
**In what grade(s) is/are all your school aged children? For this question, please consider all your children.
(sample size=895)**



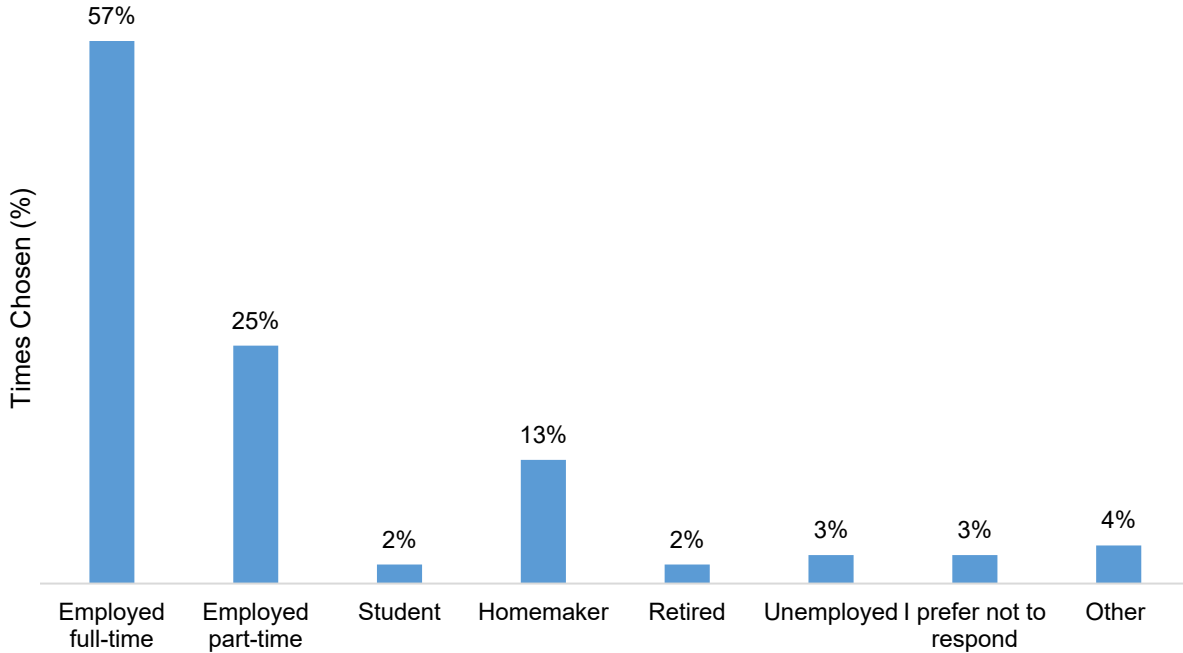
**Has your child been diagnosed with any of the following?
(sample size=657)**



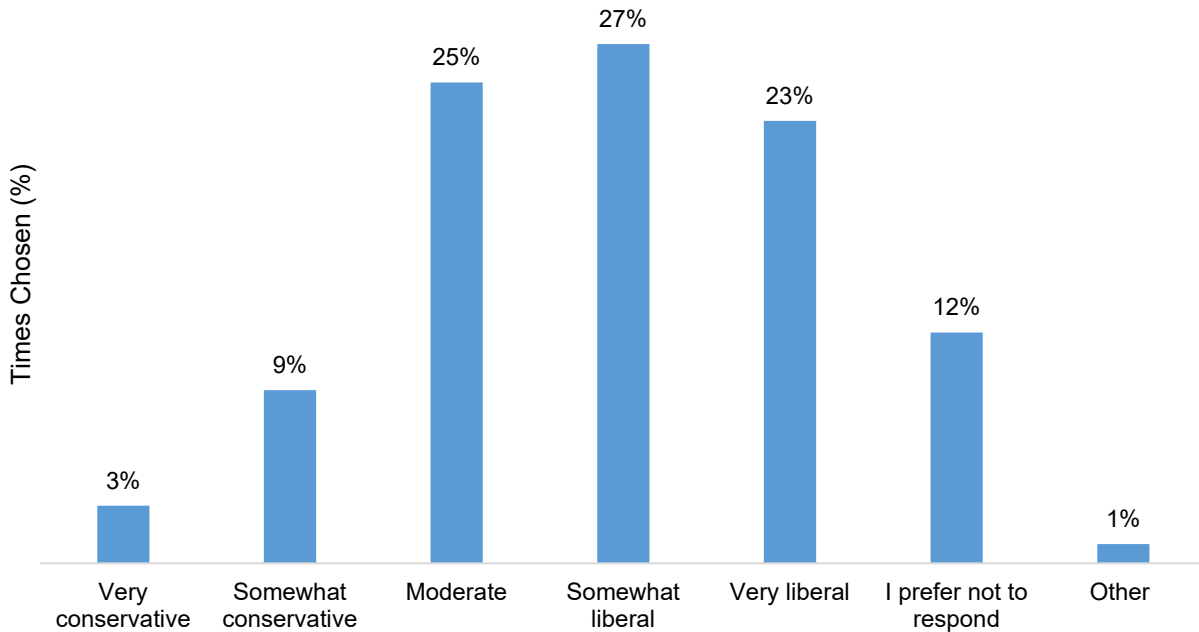
**What is your highest level of education attained?
(sample size=904)**



**What is your current employment status?
(sample size=921)**

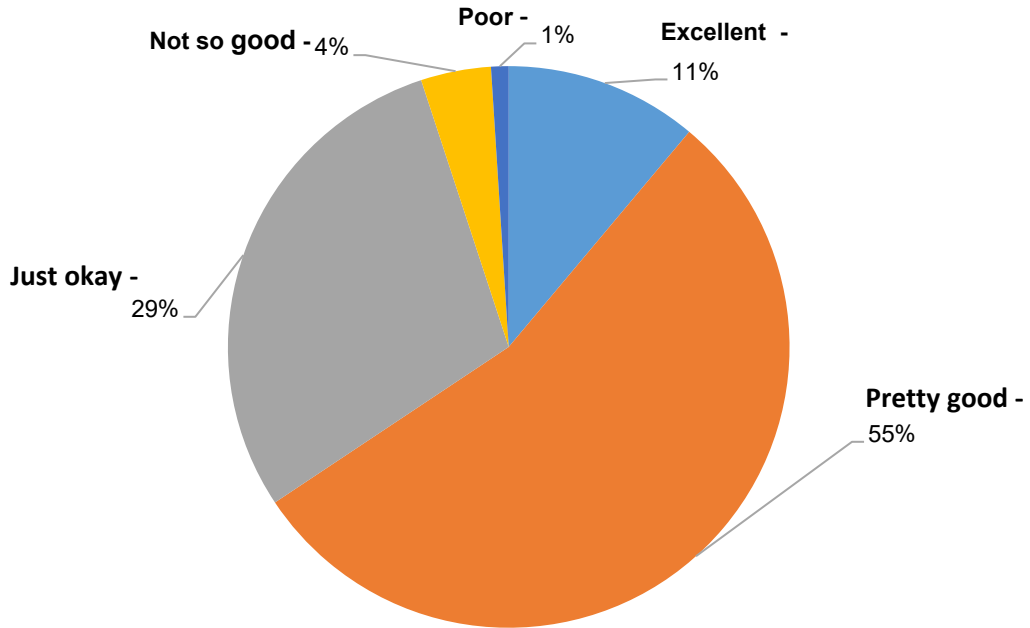


**When thinking about social issues, do you consider yourself to be:
(sample size=906)**

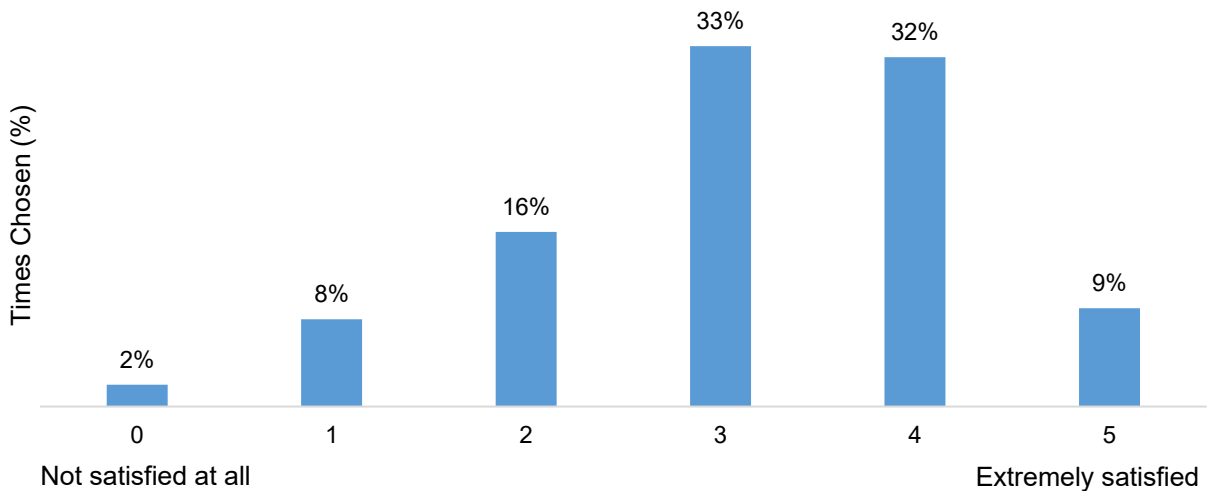


Parent's satisfaction with their children's education

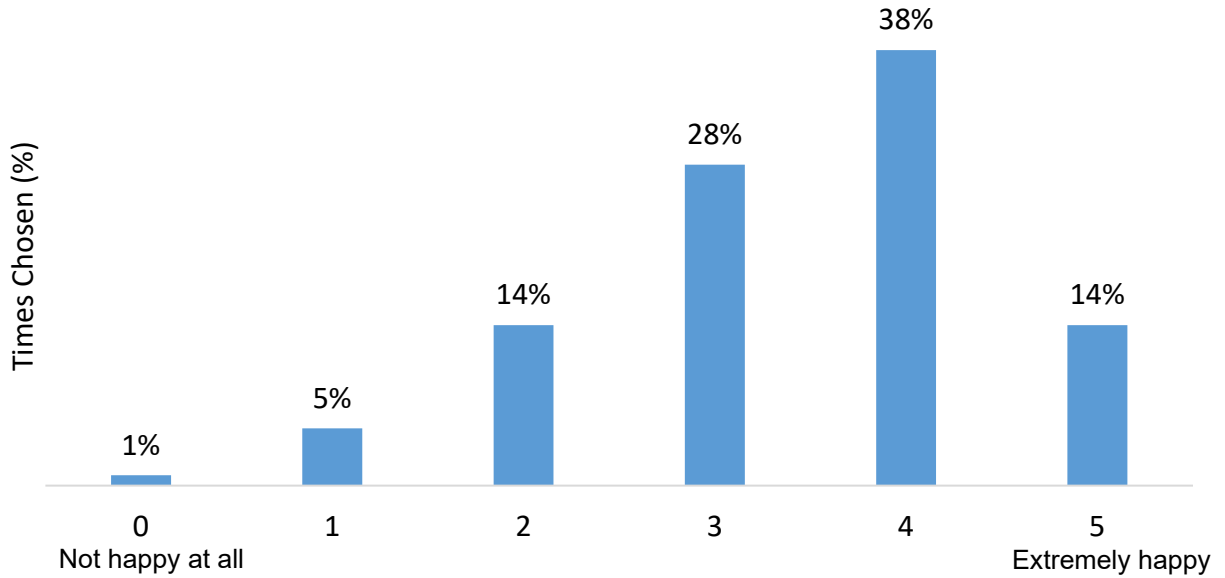
How would you rate the education that your child is getting from their school?
(sample size=1341)



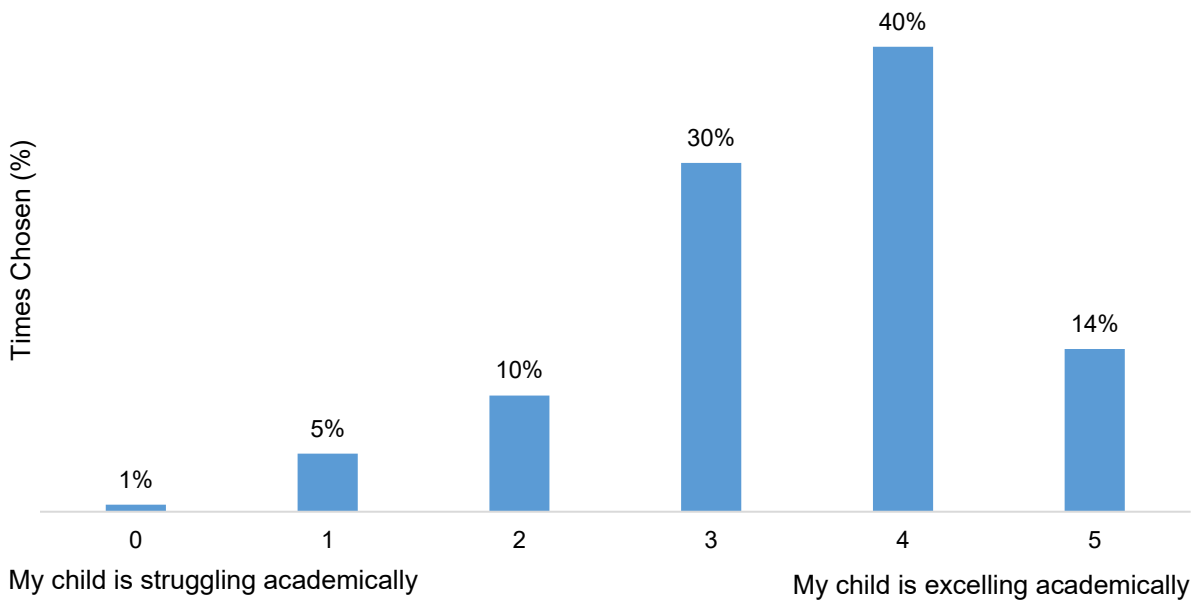
At the time of this survey, how satisfied are you with your child's education?
(sample size=1170)



**At the time of this survey, how happy is your child with their education?
(sample size=1189)**



**How well do you believe your child is doing academically?
(sample size=1341)**



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