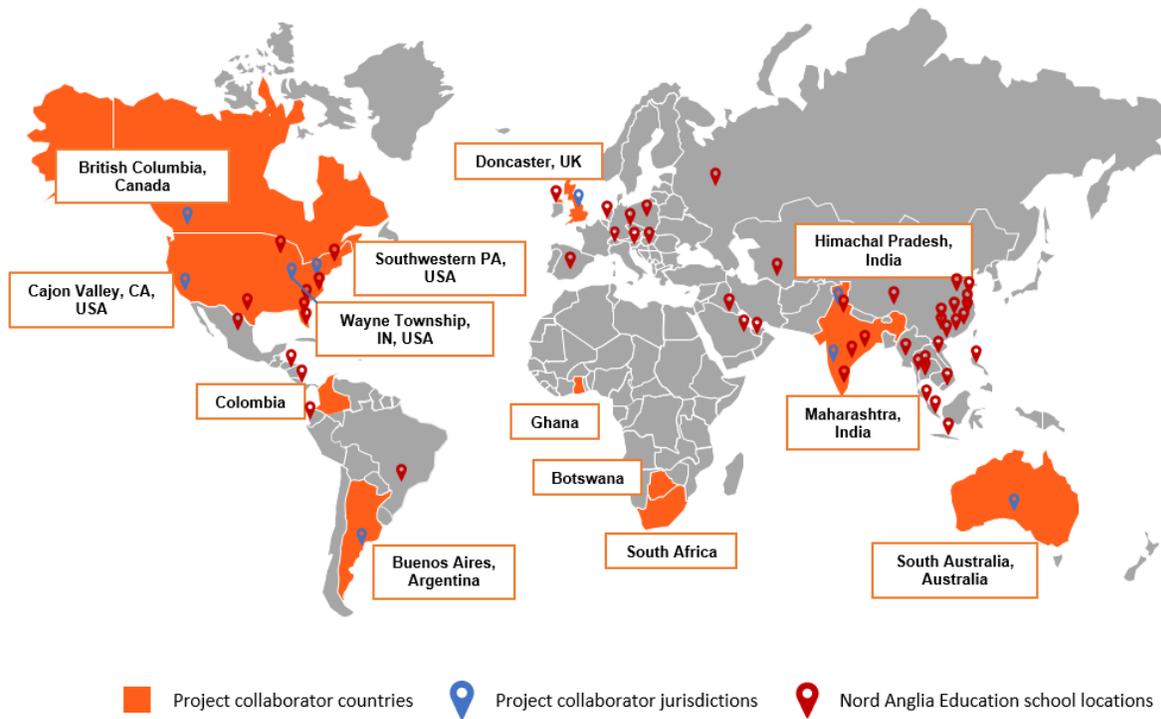


## PERSPECTIVES FROM PARENTS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, AUSTRALIA

Rebecca Winthrop

Mahsa Ershadi

Rachel Clayton



## **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.<sup>1</sup> The project emerged out of CUE’s work on harnessing [education innovations](#) to address inequality 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 countries 15 countries with over 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 AUSTRALIA**

The COVID-19 pandemic caused mandatory shutdowns and mass disruption of schooling worldwide. Across Australia’s 9542 schools, four million students enrolled in reception to year 12 were affected (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Educators responded to the crisis by rapidly shifting their in-class lessons online so that students could continue to learn remotely. As a result, parents<sup>2</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> The suggested citation for this report is: Winthrop, R., Ershadi, M., & Clayton, R. (2021, March). *Family engagement in education network technical report: Perspectives from Parents in South Australia, Australia*. Center for Universal Education at Brookings

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

## **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

### **Schools**

South Australia is a state located in south central Australia. It serves 273,730 students in reception to year 12. There are 715 schools in the state. Aboriginal students comprise 5% of the student population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Approximately 8% of the population lives in poverty, including 22,350 children (South Australian Council of Social Service, 2018). Overall daily attendance rates hover around 90%. However, among Aboriginal children, this rate is 20% (Government of South Australia Department for Education, 2018).

In South Australia, retention rates between year 8 students and the progression to year 12 is 74%. While transition rates year to year between year 8 and year 11 are above 90%, between year 11 and year 12, the transition rate is 73%. The South Australian Certification of Education (SACE) is given to students upon the successful completion of senior secondary school. SACE completion is based on attaining credits on a range of subjects typically over two years. The SACE completion rate in the same year among year 12 and year 13 students is 62% (Government of South Australia Department of Education, 2020).

### **Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA)**

AISSA represents the interests of 104 member schools with 20% of students in South Australia attending an AISSA school. The guiding principles of AISSA are a “commitment to the independence of member schools to develop in ways that embody their individual philosophies” and “a belief that the Independent sector offers genuine diversity that ensures parents have real choice in selecting their children’s schooling” (Association of Independent Schools of South Australia, (n.d.)). Nine key projects will drive AISSA for the 2020 and 2021 school years. Education-related priorities include strengthening outcomes for marginalized students, social innovation, STEM, Aboriginal cultural immersion, and social entrepreneurship (Association of Independent Schools of South Australia, (n.d.)).

## **SURVEY OF PARENTS**

From July 28, 2020 to August 21, 2020, CUE distributed a 34-item online survey to parents and caregivers of students enrolled in AISSA schools. A total of 299 primary caregivers responded to our survey. To collect data representative of the population in South Australia, 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 apriori calculations, we aimed to collect 384 responses from primary caregivers in South Australia. 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](mailto:leapfrogging@brookings.edu).

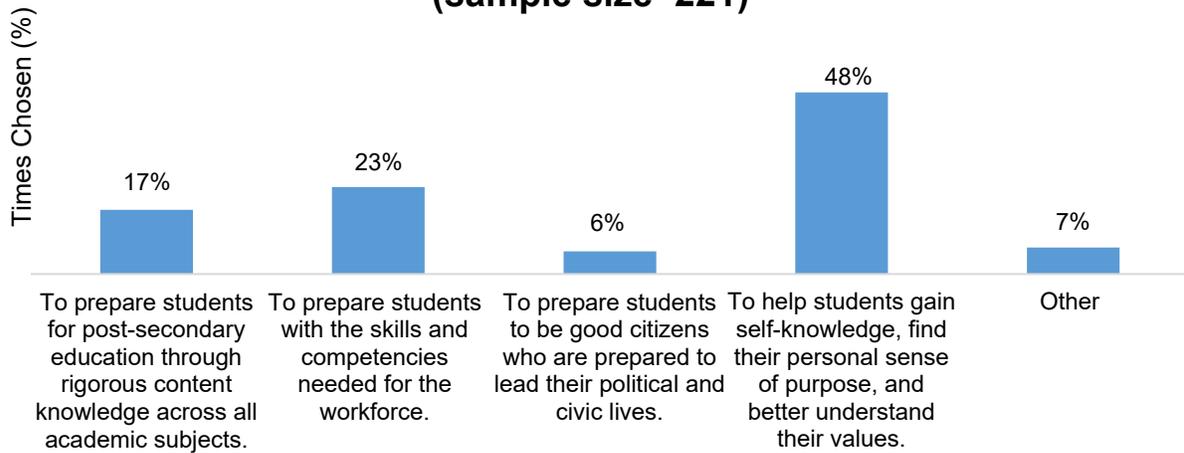
## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank our project collaborators at the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) and Learning Creates Australia, without whom we would not have been able to conduct this survey.

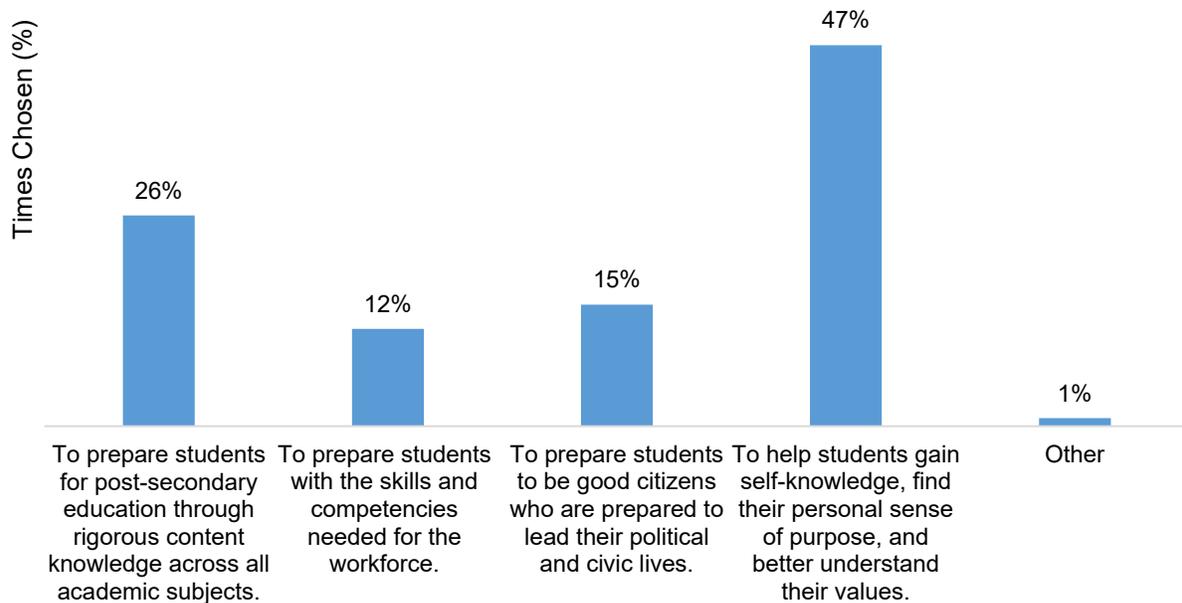
## SURVEY FINDINGS

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

#### I believe that the most important purpose of school is: (sample size=221)

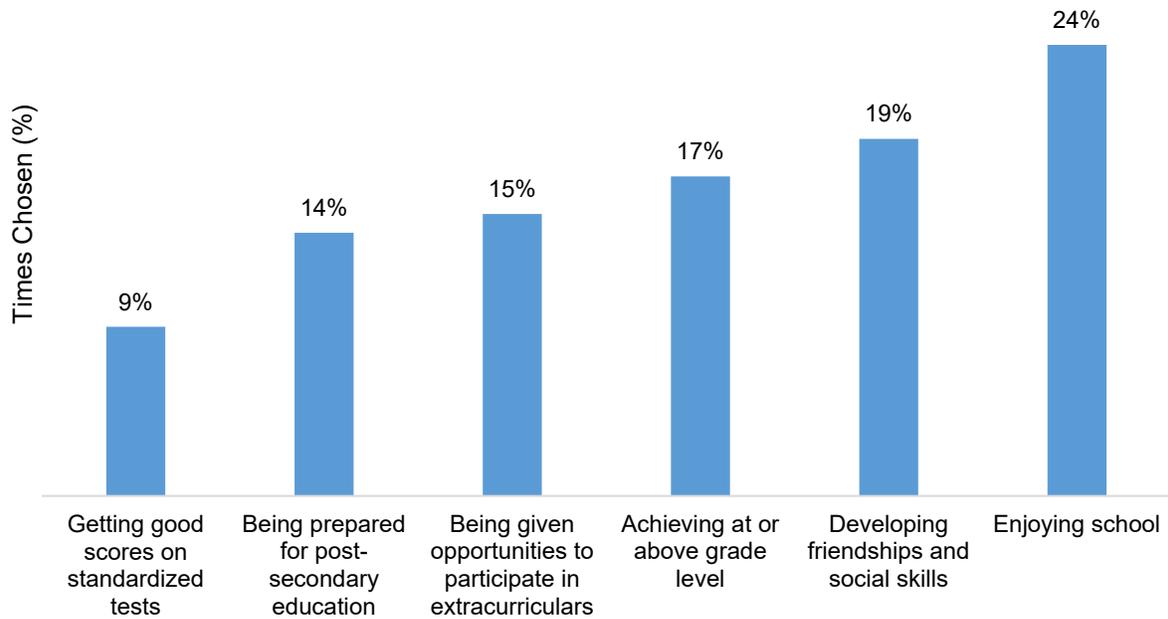


#### I believe that my child's educators believe that the most important purpose of school is: (sample size=215)



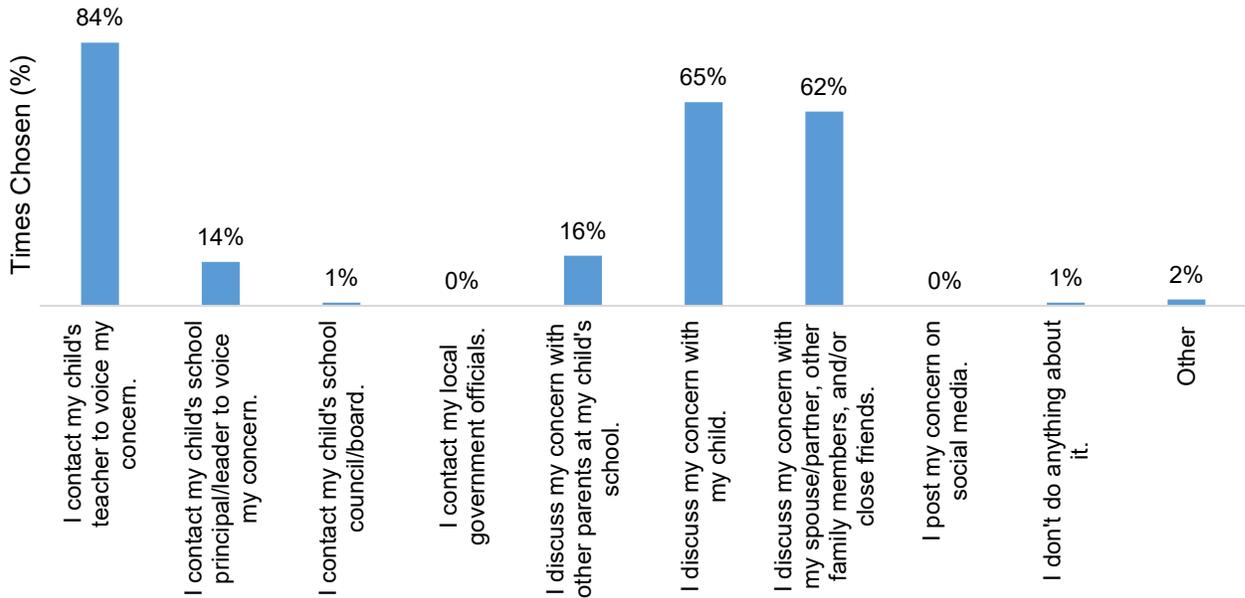
## Parents' indicators of quality and perceived alignment with educators

I am satisfied with my child's education when my child is:  
(sample size=217)

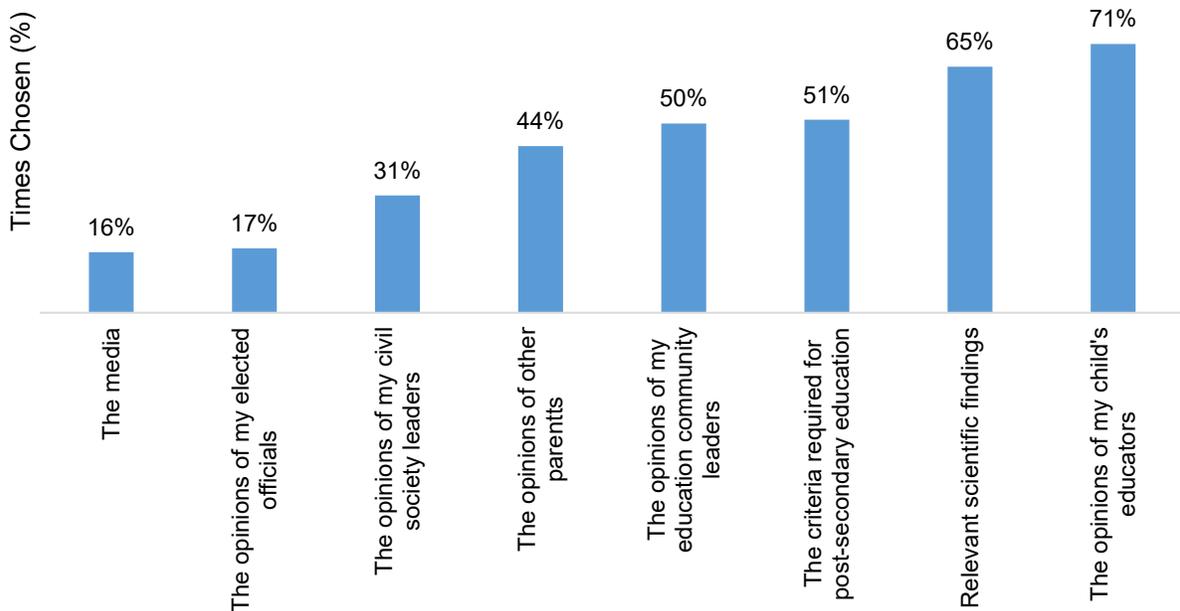


## Parents' sources of information

**How do you react when something about your child's education bothers or upsets you?  
(sample size=200)**

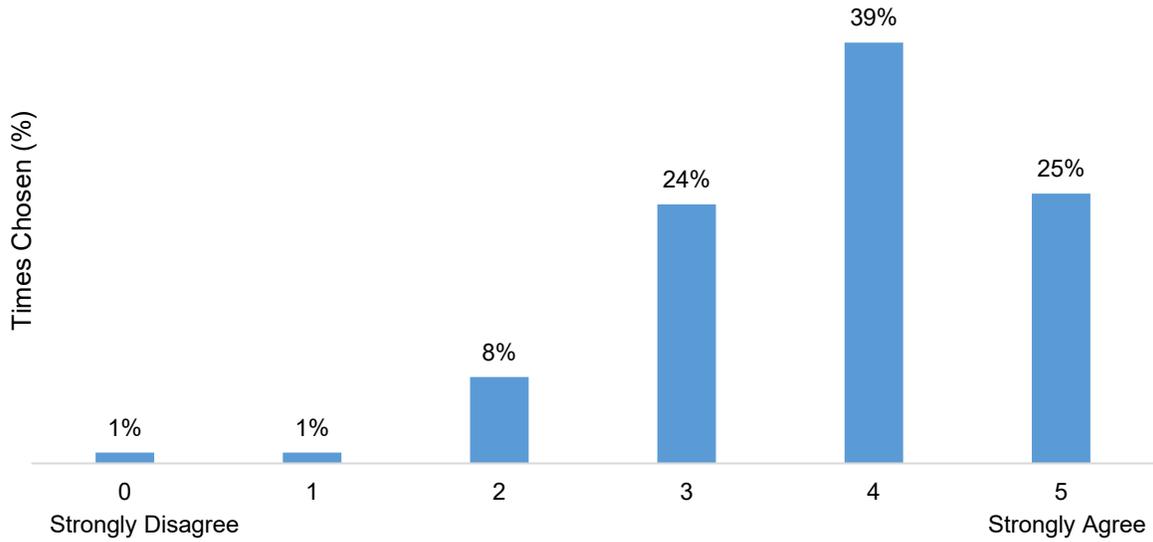


**What influences your perspective about what makes for a good quality education for your child?  
(sample size=184)**

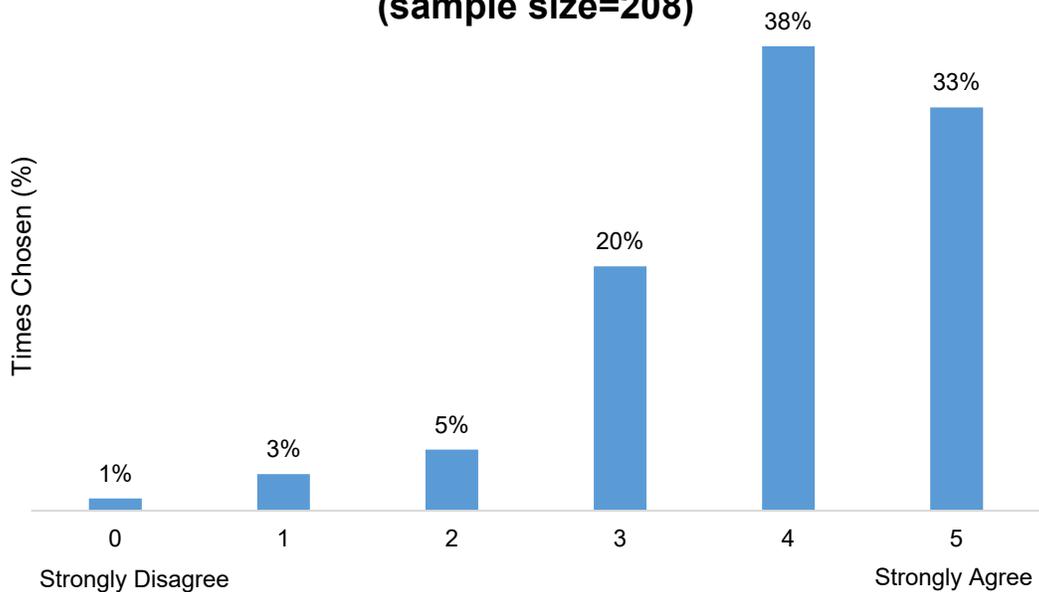


## Parents' trust of and perceived alignment with teachers

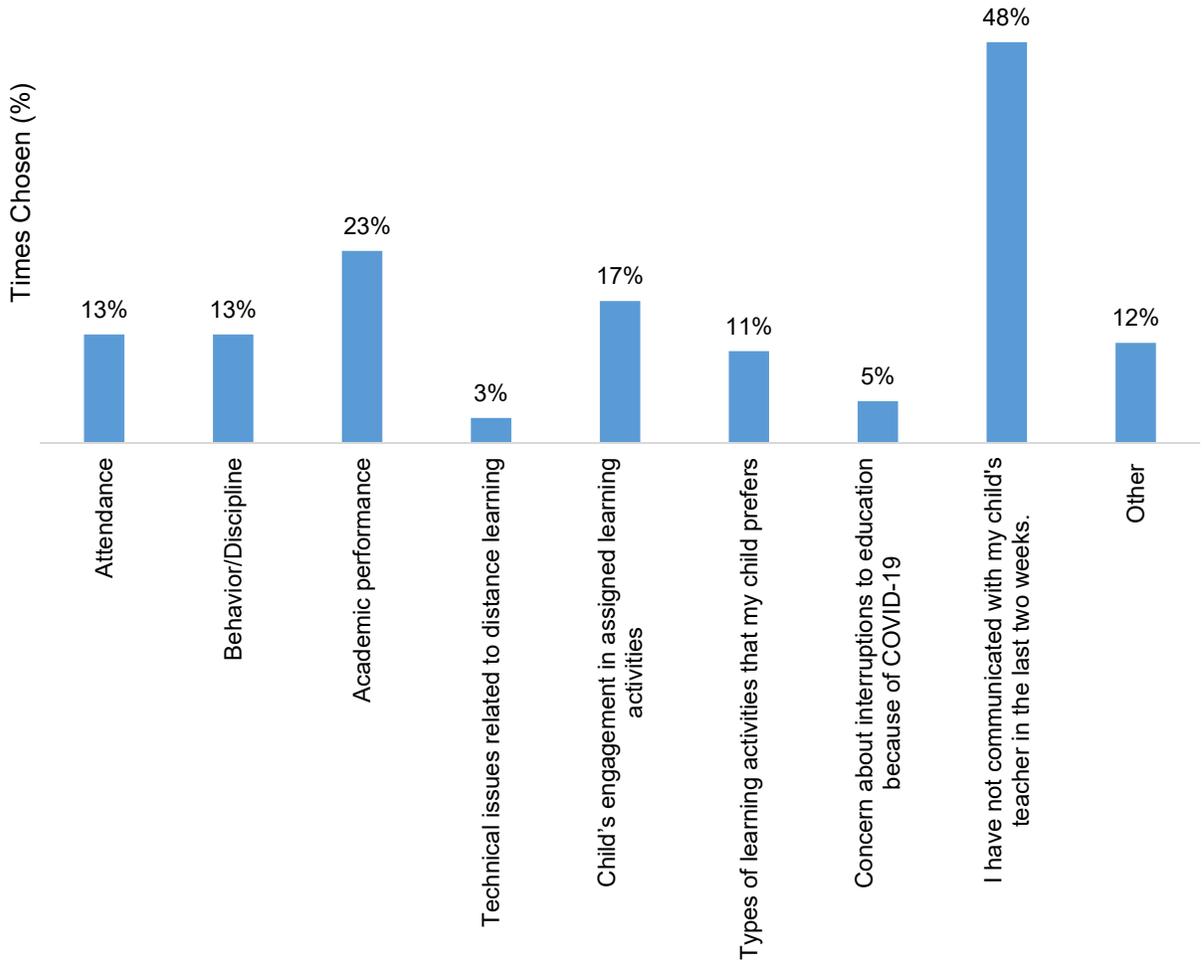
**My child's teachers share my beliefs about what makes a good education.  
(sample size=208)**



**My child's teachers are receptive to my input and suggestions.  
(sample size=208)**

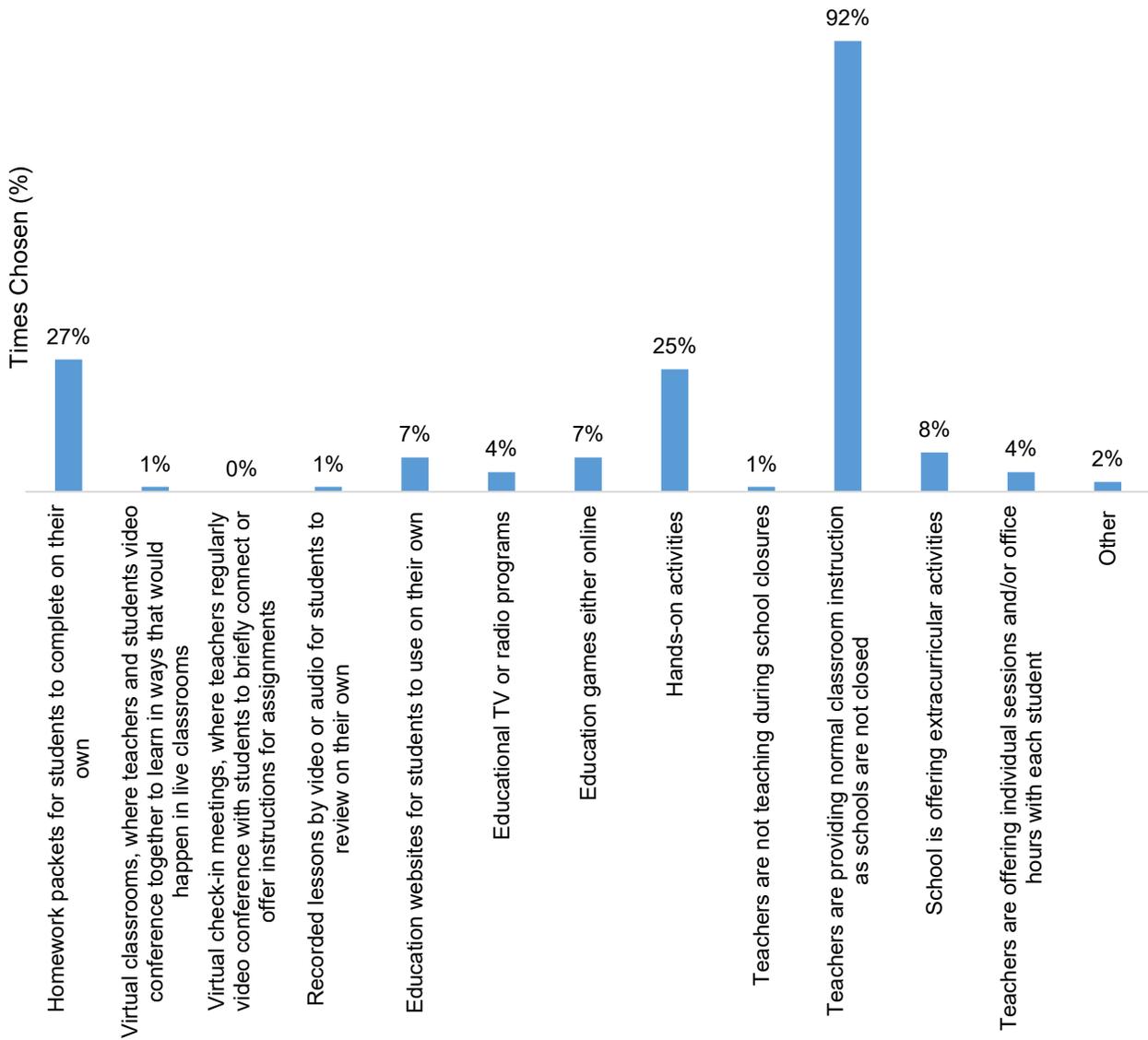


**In the last two weeks, what have you communicated to your child's teacher about:  
(sample size=206)**

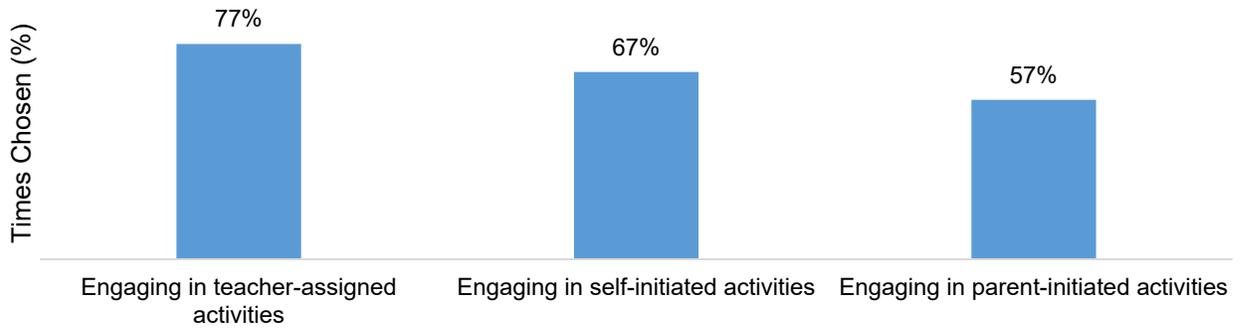


## Parents' opinions on pedagogy

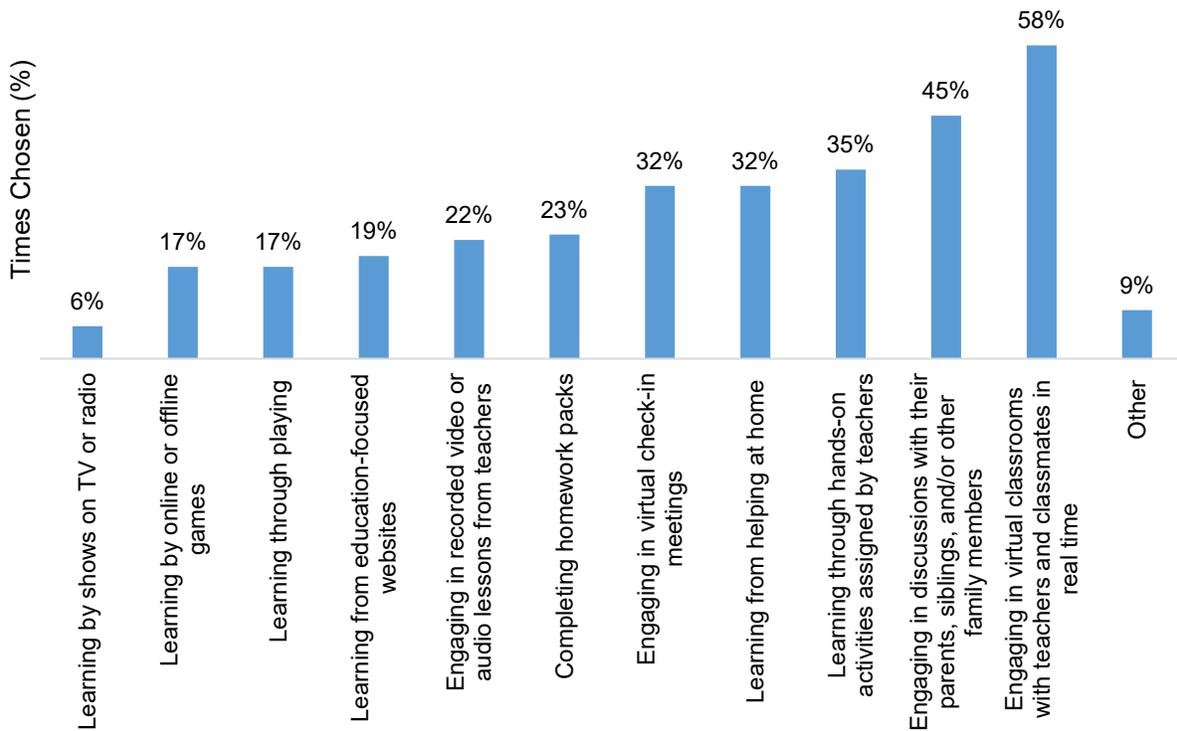
In the last two weeks, how are your child's teachers continuing to teach?  
(sample size=257)



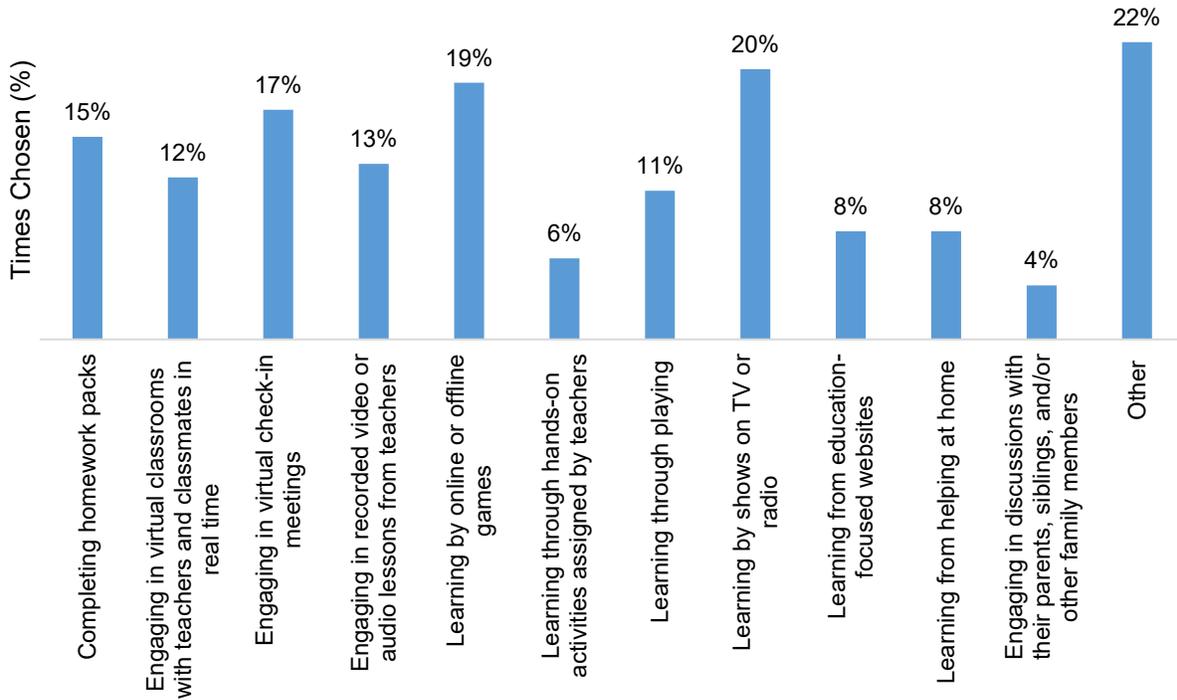
**How is your child spending the majority of their time right now?  
(sample size=239)**



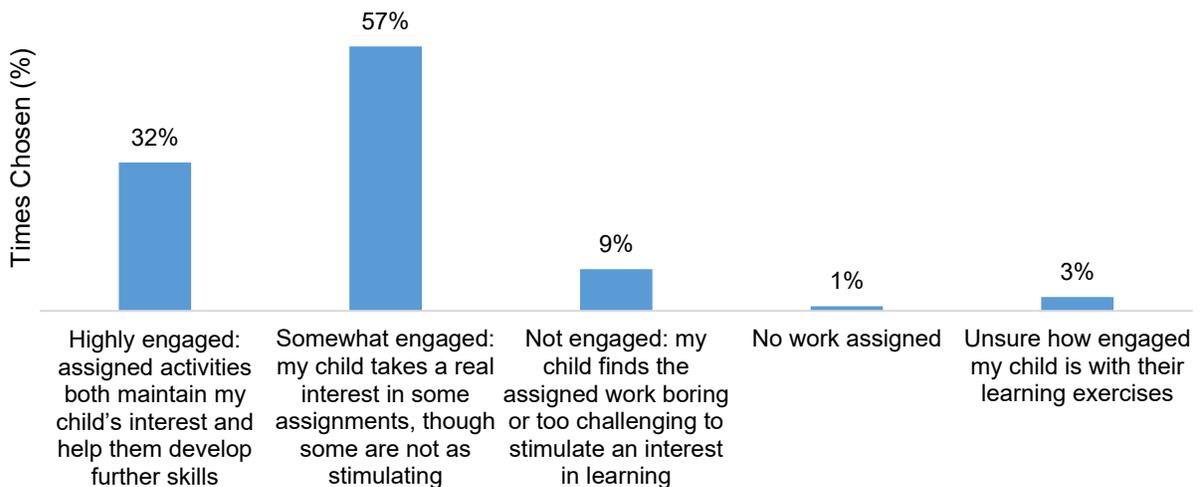
**When you think about the different ways in which your child is or was learning during their school closure, which are you the MOST satisfied with?  
(sample size=228)**



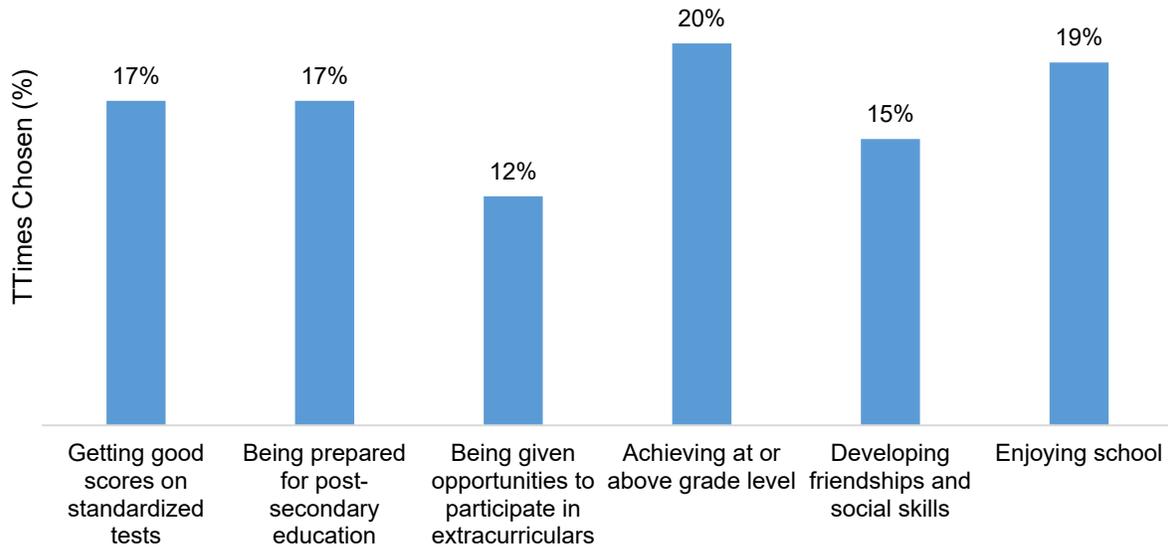
**When you think about the different ways in which your child is or was learning during their school closure, which are you the LEAST satisfied with? (sample size=181)**



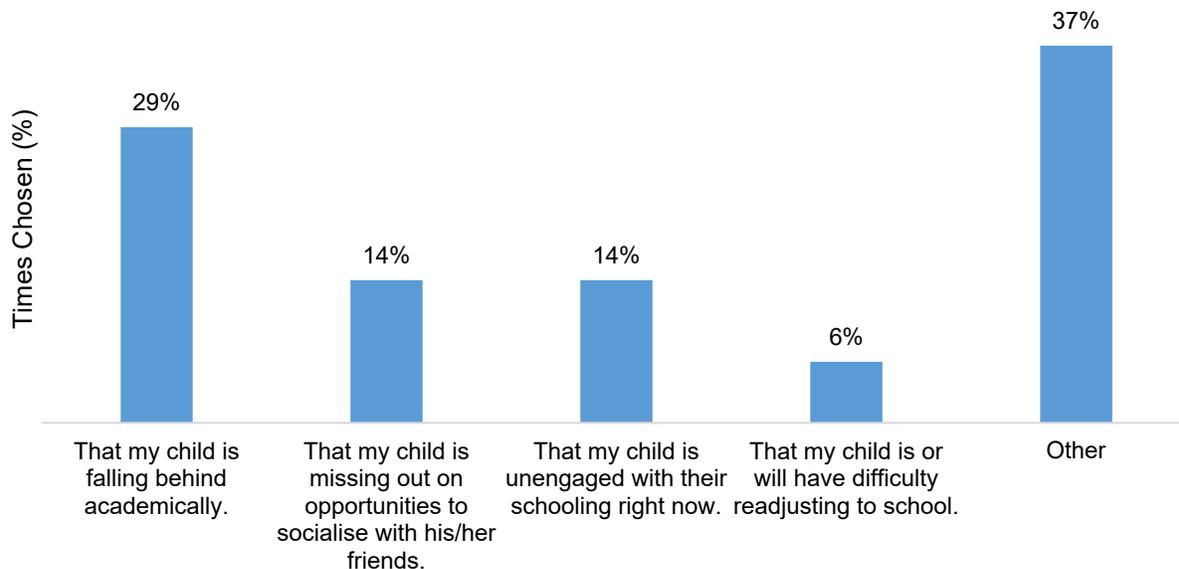
**How engaged is your child with the activities their teacher has assigned? (sample size=200)**



**I believe that my child's educators are satisfied with their students' education when their students are:  
(sample size=207)**

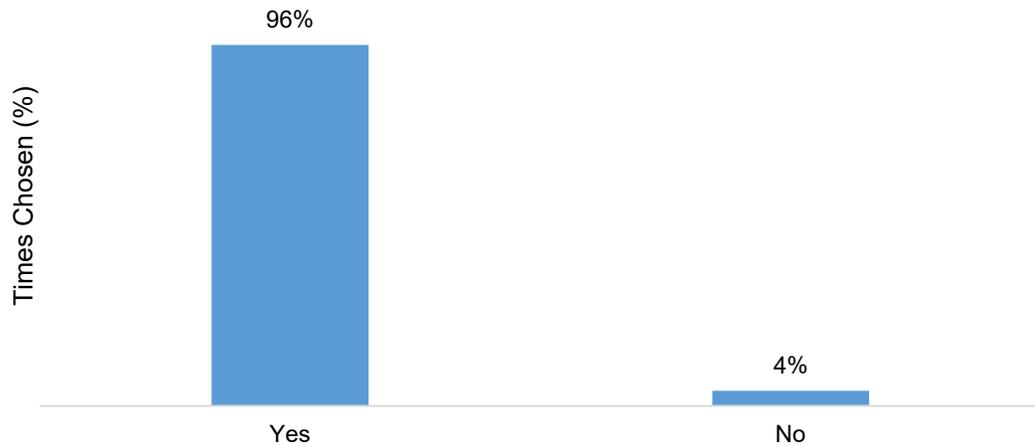


**With regards to your child's education right now, what worries you the MOST?  
(sample size = 196)**

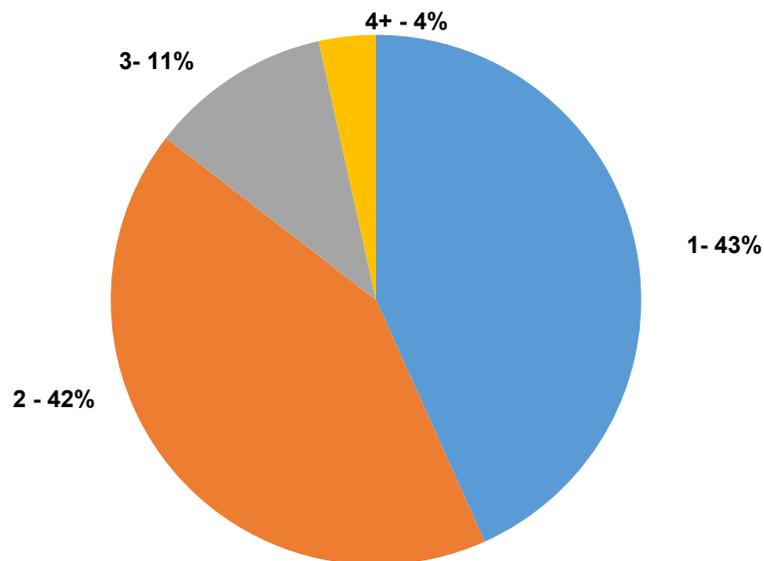


## Demographics of survey respondents from South Australia

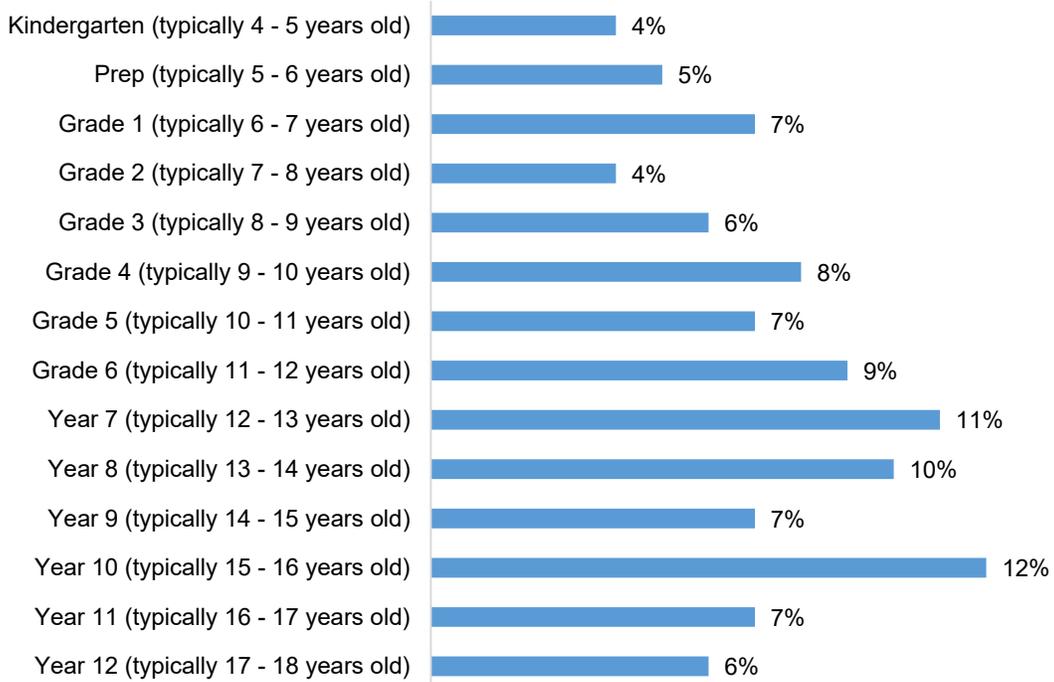
**Are you your child's primary caregiver?  
(sample size=186)**



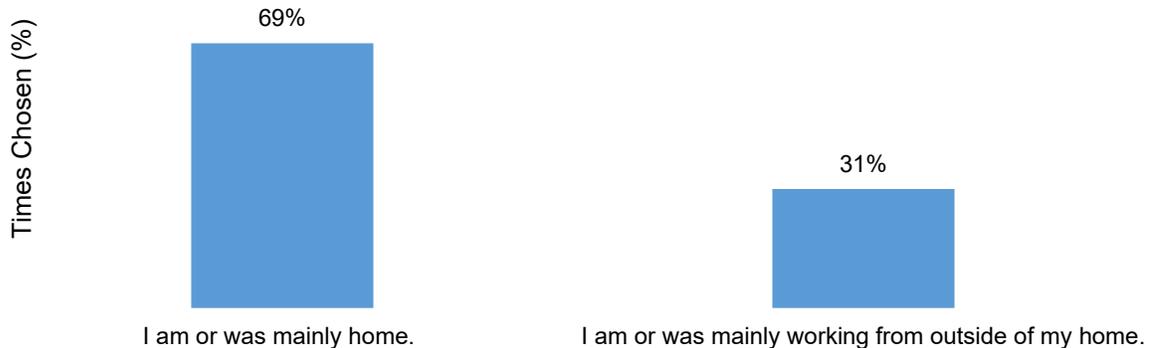
**How many children do you have who are currently  
in kindergarten through year 12 in school and live at  
home with you?  
(sample size=290)**



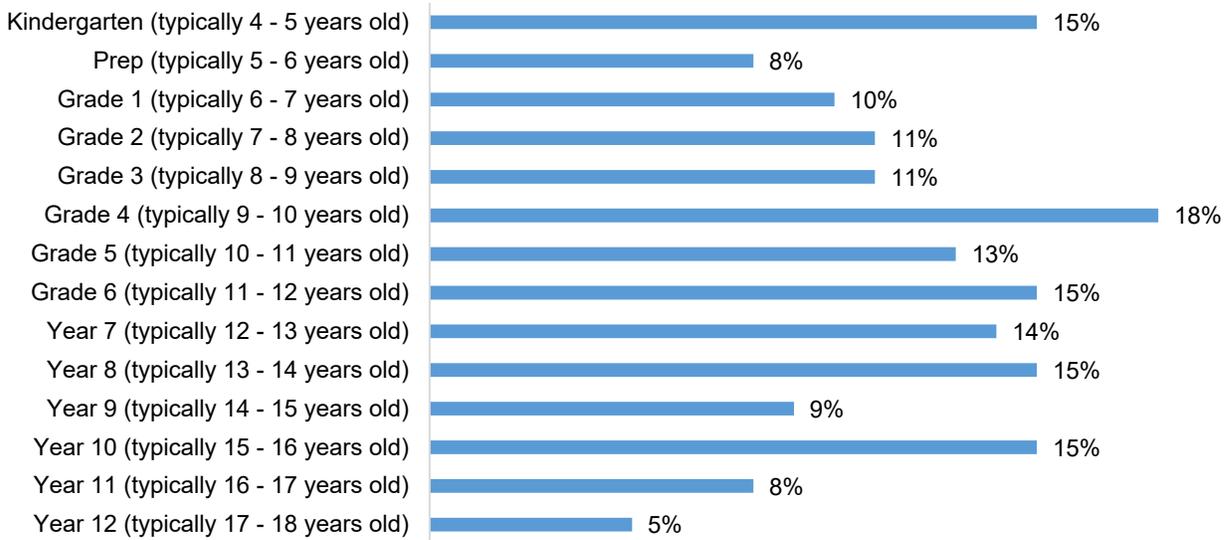
**In which grade is your oldest child who is enrolled in school (kindergarten to grade 12)?  
(sample size=285)**



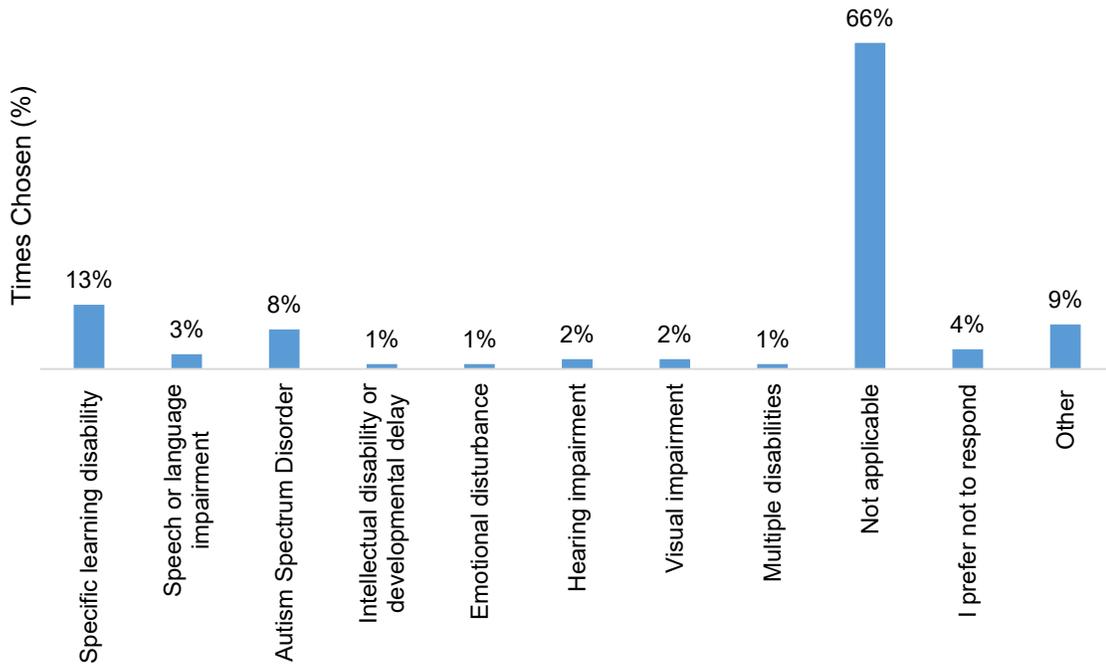
**During your child's school closure, are or were you mainly home (whether employed or unemployed) or are or were you mainly working from outside your home?  
(sample size=177)**



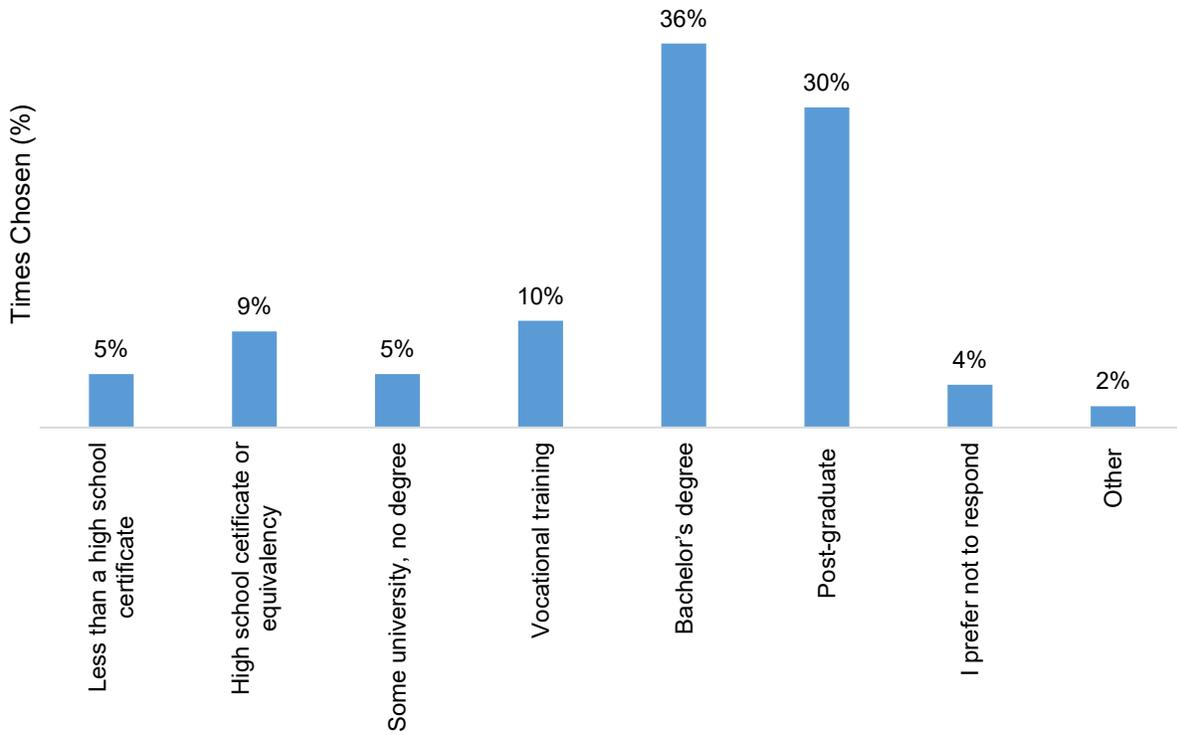
**In what grade(s) is/are all your school aged children? For this question, please consider all your children. (sample size=184)**



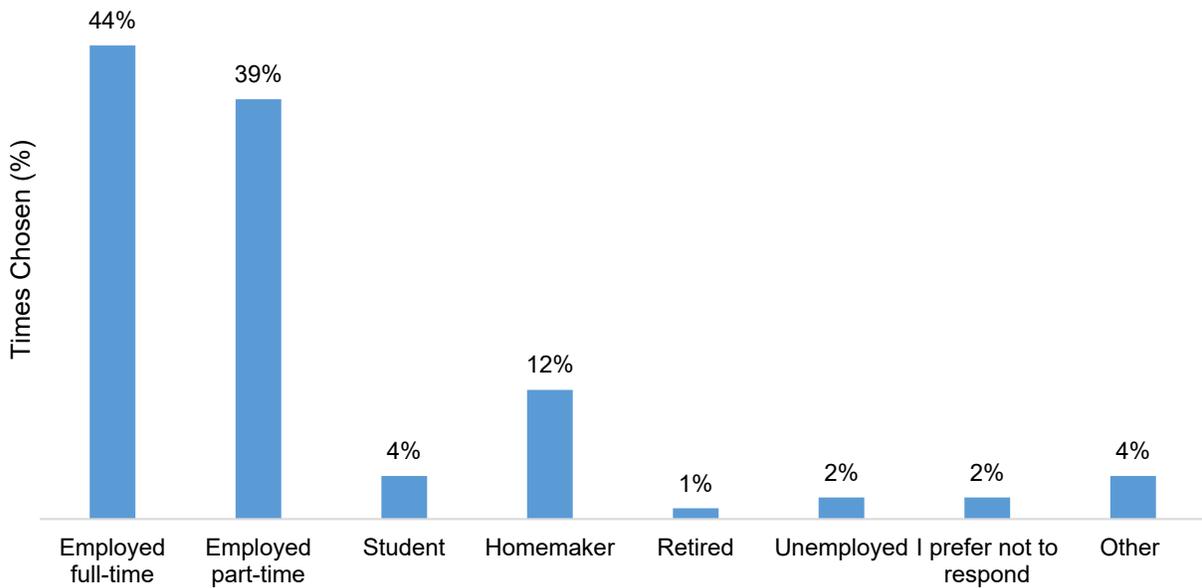
**Has your child been diagnosed with any of the following? (sample size=161)**



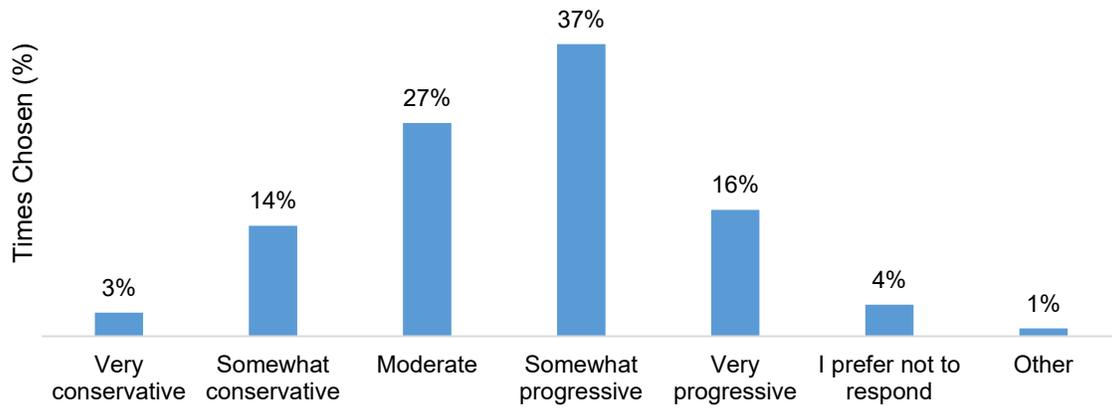
**What is your highest level of education attained?  
(sample size=187)**



**What is your current employment status?  
(sample size=188)**

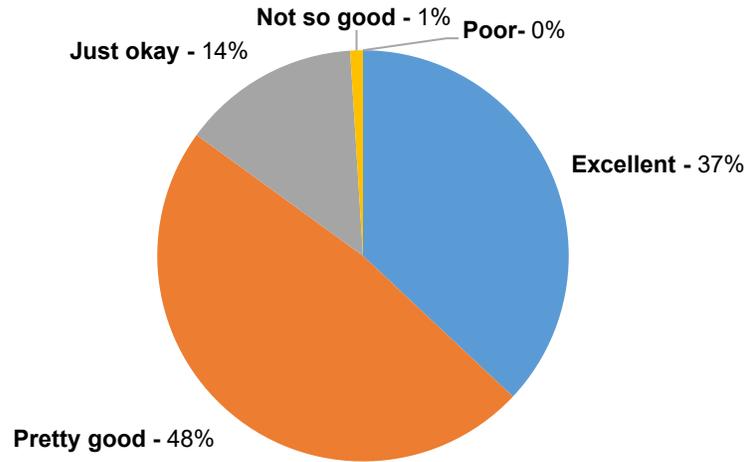


**When thinking about social issues, do you consider yourself to be:  
(sample size=185)**

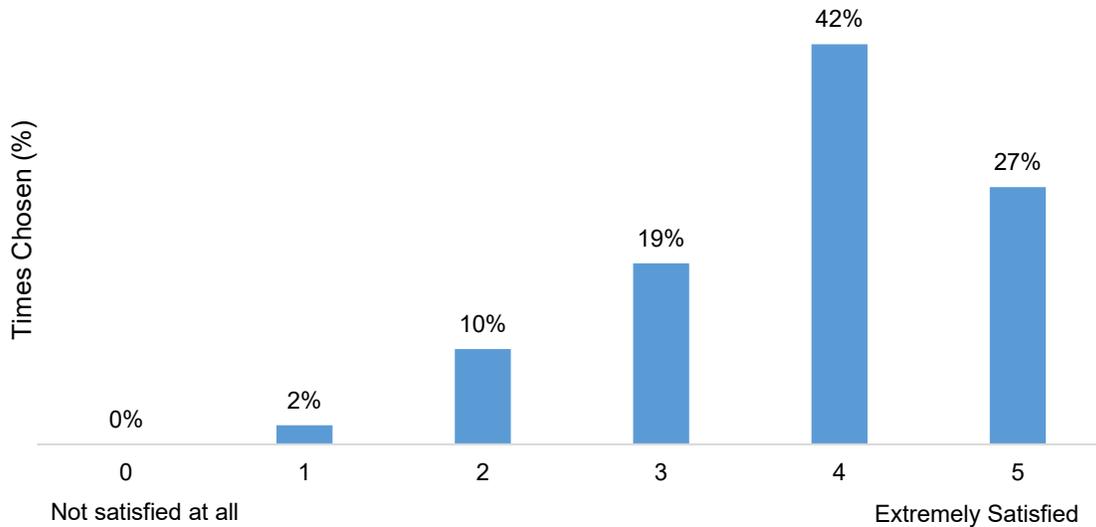


## Parents' satisfaction with their children's education

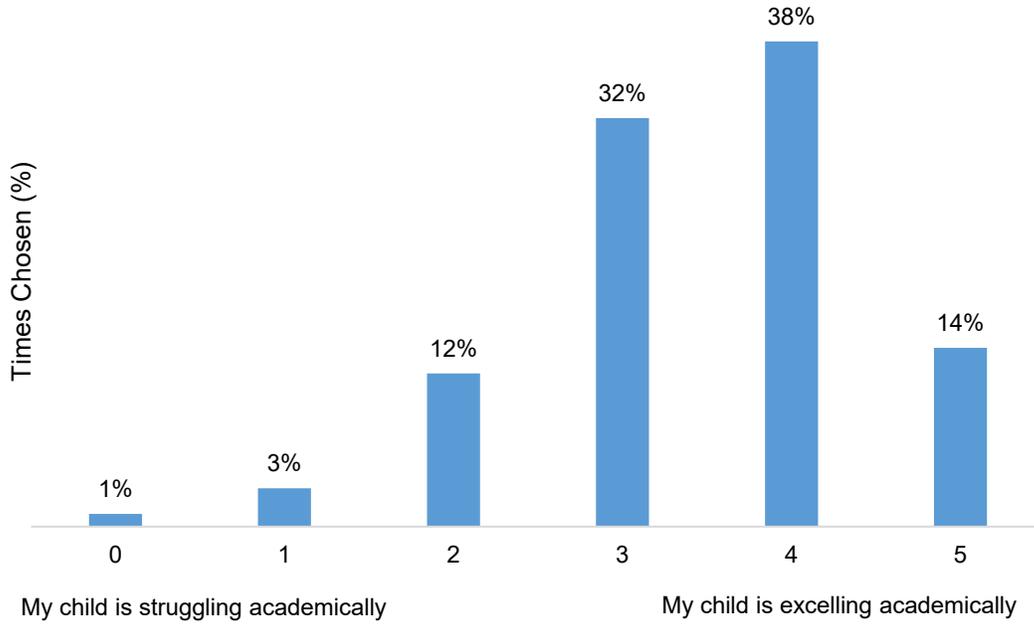
How would you rate the education that your child is getting from their school right now?  
(sample size=280)



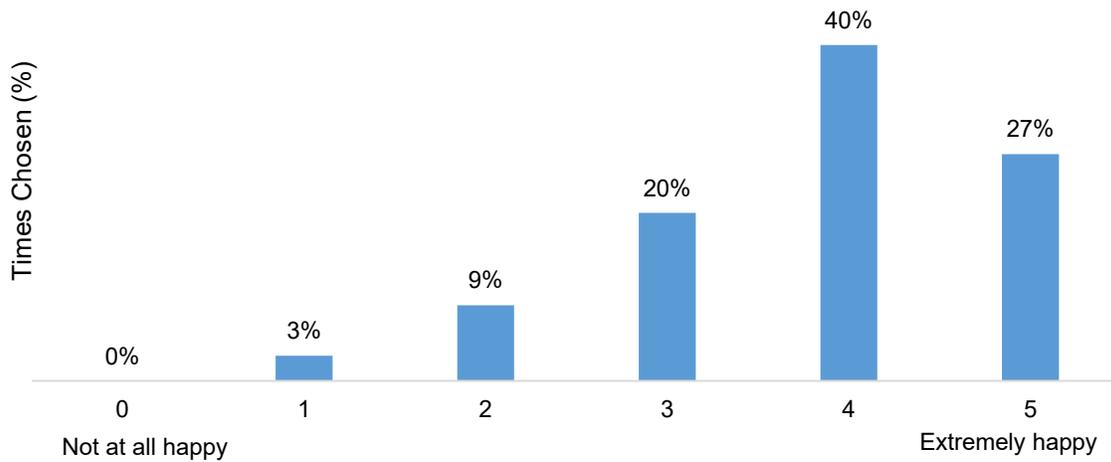
At the time of this survey, how satisfied are you with your child's education?  
(sample size=240)



**How well do you believe your child is doing academically right now?  
(sample size=278)**



**At the time of this survey, how happy is your child with their education?  
(sample size=243)**



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