

ATA Research  
2020

# Reporting on COVID-19 Prevention, Infection and Control in Alberta K–12 Schools

ATA Pandemic Research Study  
Fall 2020



The Alberta Teachers' Association

[www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca)

# Overview

As Alberta students attended their first full week back in face-to-face classrooms and online learning environments, the Alberta Teachers' Association (the Association) is reporting on teacher and school leader considerations regarding the current COVID-19 prevention, infection and control measures in Alberta K–12 schools.

This research reflects an exploration and perception of Alberta teachers and school leaders as to the implementation of, and confidence in, the current preventative health measures in place. The results of this survey do not provide insight into the effectiveness of the various preventative health measures such as masking, cohorting, hand washing and physical distancing; these are to be found in emerging medical and public health literature.

To conduct this research study the Association used a random stratified sample of Alberta teachers and school leaders across the province, in combination with a longitudinal sample and chain referral mechanism. The random and longitudinal sample results track closely together. The resulting demographic balance of the 1,600 individuals in this study is highly representative of the population of teachers and school leaders in the province of Alberta.

The survey instrument was designed using guidance from a World Health Organization COVID-19 survey tool<sup>[i]</sup> and adapted for the Alberta context by Dr Philip McRae and Dr Lisa Everitt of the Association in partnership with Dr Lynora Saxinger, a physician and associate professor, University of Alberta, Department of Medicine, Division of Infectious Diseases.

In the first full week back with students, 76 Alberta schools (approximately 3 per cent of all K–12 schools in the province) had confirmed at least one positive case of the disease on their campus. Alberta Health Services (AHS) had declared 13 of these schools as having COVID-19 outbreak status (2 to 4 cases), and 1 school was on watch (5+ or more cases).



# Seven Key Findings

## COVID-19 Prevention, Infection and Control in K–12 Schools Reporting from 1,600+ Alberta Teachers and School Leaders

1

**84%** of respondents do not receive daily confirmation of **COVID-19 screening checklists** completion before a student(s) enters the classroom.



“I am spending most of my day isolating sick students, and following the sick student protocol. Contacting parents, re-explaining the COVID screening checklist and reassuring teachers.” – Alberta school principal

2

Only **18%**

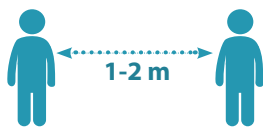


of respondents believe that the **cohorting of students** in place at their school will prevent or contain COVID-19 infection(s). Teachers and school leaders are observing students intermixing at lunchtime, during breaks, on buses, and before and after school.

“The kids all have active lives outside of the building. They do not adhere to cohorting when off campus. As hard as we try we cannot keep them 2 m apart.” – Alberta classroom teacher

3

**50%**



of the respondents “never, rarely and occasionally” observe **physical distancing** occurring in their classrooms, hallways and on school grounds.



**Large and growing class sizes** are deemed a significant factor in limiting physical distancing as a preventative health measure.

**1 in 4** teachers have over **30 students** in their **largest classes**. Over 9% have more than 35 students in their classroom.

4

**86%+** of respondents report compliance of **mask wearing** when students are interacting with others in classrooms and hallways, but with some challenges at different grade levels.



5

Student **hand washing** is rare, while disinfectant use is more common.

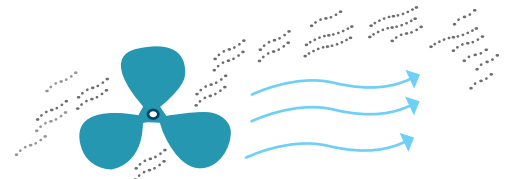


Concerns about adequate staffing for **sanitization** and teachers' role and responsibility to disinfect surfaces in their classroom.



6

**45%**



of the respondents are attempting to create better **ventilation in the school** “frequently, usually, every time,” but they are limited by the nature of the physical school building.

7

Teacher and school leader well-being is of critical concern given the reporting of extreme and unsustainable levels of **fatigue, stress and anxiety** within the profession.



**94%**

of respondents reporting fatigue



**95%**

of respondents reporting stress



**81%**

of respondents reporting anxiety

“As a school leader I am beyond exhausted. I see my [teacher] colleagues are stressed, anxious and already close to burning out.” – Alberta school leader

**1,600+ Alberta teachers and school leaders.** Alberta Pandemic Pulse Survey (September 10 to 14, 2020)  
Random stratified sample and longitudinal chain-referral sample.

**Margin of Error +/- 2.5%** on all questions (19 times out of 20).

Further information about the Association's research is available from  
**Dr Philip McRae** at the Alberta Teachers' Association; e-mail: [research@ata.ab.ca](mailto:research@ata.ab.ca).



The Alberta  
Teachers' Association

# Key Findings

## Daily COVID-19 Screening Checklists—Process Challenges and Adherence to Screening

Eighty-four per cent (84%) of the teacher and school leader respondents do not receive confirmation that the COVID-19 daily screening checklist has been completed before students enter their classroom environment.

The COVID-19 screening tool, as currently implemented in Alberta K–12 schools, is seen as ineffective by forty-five per cent (45%) of the respondents, with another thirty per cent (30%) “unsure” it will reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

This is an important finding, as across Alberta in the first full week back to schools hundreds of students and dozens of teachers were potentially exposed to COVID-19 and are now isolating at their home for 14 days to monitor symptoms and get tested for COVID-19.

- “*[As a school principal] I am spending most of my day isolating sick students, and following the sick student protocol. Contacting parents, re-explaining the COVID screening checklist and reassuring teachers. I am a teacher, not a nurse.*” – Alberta school leader
- “*More signs around our school. Parents need to take this seriously and not send their child to school if they feel unwell.*” – Alberta classroom teacher
- “*Over and over I hear colleagues telling me about symptomatic kids coming to school.*” – Alberta online/alternative school teacher

## Cohorting of Students—Varied Approaches, Process Challenges and Broken Cohorts

While seventy-three per cent (73%) of respondents noted they are implementing a cohorting model—not switching daily contacts or having students randomly interacting with others outside this cohort group—only eighteen per cent (18%) believe it will prevent or contain COVID-19.

- “*Students stay in one classroom but during options go to classrooms where many different cohorts attend.*” – Alberta classroom teacher
- “*For the most part students are cohorts but free outdoor time and hallway travel is not done well. JH students are really struggling with the concept of physical distancing. Students have been cohorted, but teachers are not. They travel to several different classes. Teachers are at higher risk. It is only the first week. This is going to be difficult.*” – Alberta school leader

This low confidence in the cohorts at the various schools appears to be due to the observation of students regularly breaking cohorts throughout the school day. In particular, students are seen interacting with many others outside their cohort(s) at lunchtime, on buses and at bus stops, at recess or breaks, and before and after the school day.

- “*Because the students are allowed to leave school at lunchtime to go home or downtown and students freely group together and will takeoff their masks even if they're in different cohorts at that time.*” – Alberta classroom teacher
- “*The kids all have active lives outside of the building. They do not adhere to cohorting when off campus. As hard as we try we cannot keep them 2 m apart.*” – Alberta school leader

## Physically Distancing Rarely Occurring in Classrooms, Hallways and on School Grounds—Large Class Sizes Are Limiting Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is not occurring in a majority of Alberta classrooms.

Over half of Alberta teachers and school leaders state that physical distancing by students as a preventative health measure is “never, rarely and occasionally (only about thirty per cent of the time)” being done in classrooms (55%), hallways (51%) and while outside the school building or on playground(s) (57%).

- “*Physical distancing is impossible for young children and is too stressful for a teacher to enforce.*” – Alberta classroom teacher

Respondents noted that physical distancing is being clearly hindered by large class sizes across Alberta where twenty-five per cent (25%) of respondents note that their largest classes have between 30 and 40+ students; fifteen per cent

(15%) of which have 30 to 35 students, seven per cent (7%) have 35 to 40 students and two per cent (2%) over 40+ students in the room.

“Smaller class sizes would help because it is impossible with my numbers in current classrooms for students to social distance.” – Alberta classroom teacher

“Classroom and hallways are crowded even when classes aren’t large.” – Alberta school leader

The programs of study with the largest classes are in English Language Arts (10–12), Primary Grades 4–6, Mathematics and Science (10–12) and Junior High English Language Arts (7–9).

“We can’t effectively distance due to class sizes. Classrooms are too small for the group size. Furniture doesn’t allow for students to face the same direction and all have access to table surface.” – Alberta school leader

## Mask Wearing Is Showing High Compliance, But Challenges in Some Grades

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A positive finding is that there is high compliance with mask wearing across Alberta K–12 schools.

Students are being observed wearing a mask in the classroom(s) while alone at a desk and within the classroom (or cohort), when interacting with other students (89%) and in the hallways (86%).

“The most positive outcome to all of this is that students at my school have been compliant with wearing masks. This is something that can be controlled in schools. It has been tough to control the physical distancing and staggered entrance/exits with our students. I think staggered days may work best for high school students.” – Alberta classroom teacher

“There needs to be smaller class sizes, I have 30+ students in grade 3/4 with 40cm between their rows. Kids are doing okay with masks and mask break.” – Alberta classroom teacher

“Every classroom seems to be a bit different in terms of when kids can take off their masks.” – Alberta classroom teacher

## Student Hand Washing Is Rare, While Disinfectant Use Is More Common Teachers Concerned with Disinfecting Surfaces in Their Classroom(s)

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Thirty-six per cent (36%) of respondents note that students “frequently, usually and every time” are washing their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Disinfectants are used more frequently (88%) to have students clean hands when soap and water were not available.

Less than half (45%) of the respondents noted that students are “frequently, usually and every time” disinfecting their desk or other classroom surface(s), yet 75% of teachers are spending time disinfecting classroom(s) surfaces. Teachers are concerned with disinfecting surfaces in their classroom(s).

“I have been asked to spray desks (upside down mist or fog method) between each class because sanitizing wipes have already run out. I have 38 desks and I don’t have time because I have no prep.” – Alberta classroom teacher

“The extra cleaning protocols (between each of the 4 high school periods plus before and after lunch) are adding so much to my day, particularly since I do not have a prep at all this semester. It is non-stop “go go go” from 15 minutes before the first class starts (supervising kids sanitizing hands and wiping desks as they come in) until the end of the day. I’m lucky if I get 20 minutes to scarf down my lunch and sit down. It’s exhausting and not sustainable.” – Alberta classroom teacher

“More staffing to help with more frequent sanitizing of surfaces. It is too much to expect a teacher to add that to their already extremely full plate of teaching.” – Alberta classroom teacher

“Substitutes have not been included in school safety plans. We don’t have the protocols. We don’t have access to screening lists. We don’t know if our students have been exposed. We haven’t been trained or explicitly told what/when/how to clean.” – Alberta substitute teacher

## Classroom and School Ventilation—Attempts to Create Better Ventilation Around the School

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Forty-five per cent (45%) of respondents are “frequently, usually and every time” creating more ventilation for their classroom environment(s), such as opening windows, teaching outdoors, and other means. However, there are limitations in their ability to improve the ventilation due to the nature of the physical buildings they inhabit.

- “ I would like to see more ventilation in rooms where/when students eat ... also better ventilation installed in classrooms.” – Alberta classroom teacher
- “ Is air quality in buildings going to be tested during the winter months?” – Alberta classroom teacher
- “ Will the increase in fresh air intake continue when weather is cold or will efficiency override?” – Alberta classroom teacher

## Outbreak Plan for Schools—Two Significant Challenges Identified

Two challenges were noted by respondents regarding the current action(s) in the outbreak plans for Alberta schools:

1. Teachers and school leaders believe (71%) that it will be a challenge having parents and/or guardians pick up a student in a timely manner from school when their child/youth shows symptoms or has a presumptive case of COVID-19.
2. A second challenge being identified is the cleaning and disinfecting of all items the presumptive COVID-19 student touched/used while isolated as soon as the child/student is picked up (66%). Along with this is the challenge of items being removed from the classroom and storage in a sealed container for a minimum of 72 hours (50%).

A third concern of note from this research is public health officials contacting the school and/or parent community regarding a presumptive case of COVID-19 (32%). This finding may highlight some underlying concerns related to public trust in relation to the efficacy of COVID-19 contact tracing and timely disclosure(s) in Alberta.

- “ Outbreak plan needs to be more complete.” – Alberta classroom teacher
- “ I am not a doctor but respond to about 10 sick students at school each day this week. I would have had a nurse in every school to triage our daily sick kids, and to work with their family on testing and reporting back. Our community is so poor, parents will not test their kids when they are sick, no time, no transportation (can't use public transit while sick, and they don't want to be stigmatized or have any impacts on their own ability to work and survive the day), so we likely have many cases hidden and school personnel are ill equipped to educate and manage the number of sick kids we are seeing daily.” – Alberta classroom teacher
- “ We opened without all sanitation in place, less cleaners than last year, supply chain management problems and we have run out of masks and sanitation supplies in the first week. What you see on the news is not even close to the reality in high schools. Also, where are the N-95 masks for staff while we wait with sick kids everyday?” – Alberta school leader

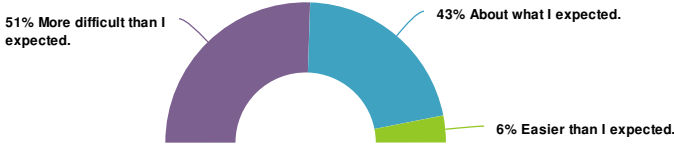
## Teacher and School Leader Well-Being— Unsustainable Levels of Fatigue, Stress and Anxiety

The first full week with students back in classrooms (face to face or online) was seen to be challenging by fifty-one per cent (51%) of the respondents across rural and urban Alberta. Yet, a majority (64%) of teachers and school leaders are invigorated having students come back into their classrooms and school communities.

Of critical concern, however, is the unsustainable level of fatigue, anxiety and stress in the teaching population. An overwhelming majority (94%) of teachers and school leaders are fatigued by the end of the day, with high levels of stress (95%) and anxiety (81%).

- “ Teacher mental health needs to be addressed.” – Alberta classroom teacher
- “ Aside from the physical toll of wearing a mask all day, we end up utterly exhausted from all this additional supervision we are expected to do, and the lack of needed support people.” – Alberta classroom teacher
- “ The stress that teaching in a pandemic is causing is astronomical. Teachers will be burning out and taking leave. I don't know if a single colleague who isn't feeling worried and stressed and burnt out already. What we are being asked to do is ridiculous, both online and in-person, and there are no supports for us.” – Alberta online/alternative school teacher
- “ The work load from parent questions and concerns are completely time-consuming right now. We are unable to get any other work done during the day. As a result, all the other work gets done in the evenings and weekends. I'm exhausted, emotionally drained, and overwhelmed from being held responsible for every student's health and well being. I'm not being asked educational questions. I'm only being asked health guideline questions. Currently I'm a public health advisor not an educator.” – Alberta school leader
- “ As a school leader I am beyond exhausted. I see my colleagues are stressed, anxious and already close to burning out.” – Alberta school leader

1. How challenging was the first full week with students back in classrooms (face to face or online)?



Value	Percent	Responses
More difficult than I expected.	51.0%	819
About what I expected.	42.7%	686
Easier than I expected.	6.2%	100

Totals: 1,605

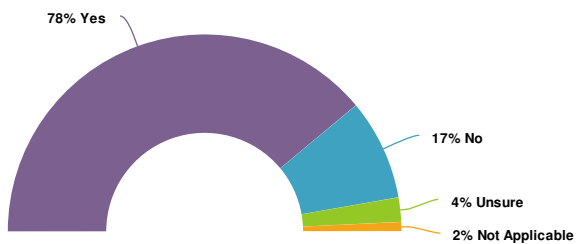
2. In order to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among students/staff in Alberta schools, a daily COVID-19 screening checklist is to be used to identify individuals who may be symptomatic, or who may have been exposed to someone who is ill or has a confirmed case of the virus.

Identify your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable	Responses
The daily COVID-19 screening checklist is being completed by students and/or their parents/guardians each day before entering our school. Count Row %	261 17.3%	339 22.5%	637 42.2%	173 11.5%	67 4.4%	32 2.1%	1,509
I receive confirmation that the daily COVID-19 screening checklist has been completed before a student(s) enters my classroom. Count Row %	1,009 66.8%	259 17.1%	73 4.8%	30 2.0%	27 1.8%	113 7.5%	1,511
The daily COVID-19 screening checklist is being completed each day by staff before entering our school. Count Row %	105 6.9%	128 8.5%	517 34.2%	449 29.7%	281 18.6%	32 2.1%	1,512
The daily COVID-19 screening checklist is an effective tool to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission among students/staff in Alberta schools. Count Row %	270 17.9%	409 27.1%	452 29.9%	296 19.6%	70 4.6%	13 0.9%	1,510
<b>Totals</b> Total Responses							1512

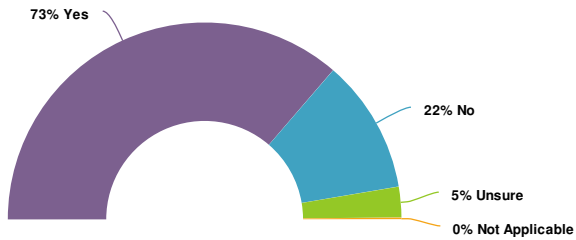


3. A COVID-19 cohort is a small group of the same people who can interact regularly without staying 2 metres apart. A person in a cohort should have little to no close contact with people outside of their cohort.  
 Does your school use a cohorting model with students?



Value	Percent	Responses
Yes	77.9%	1,097
No	16.6%	234
Unsure	4.0%	56
Not Applicable	1.5%	21
		<b>Totals: 1,408</b>

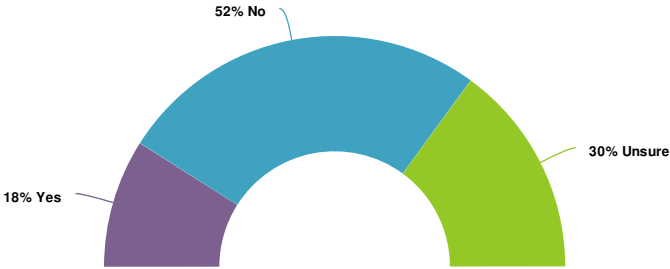
4. Is your school implementing a cohorting model where students are interacting only with the same people within their group (and not switching daily contacts or randomly interacting with others outside this cohort group) throughout the school day?



Value	Percent	Responses
Yes	72.6%	836
No	22.0%	253
Unsure	5.0%	58
Not Applicable	0.3%	4

Totals: 1,151

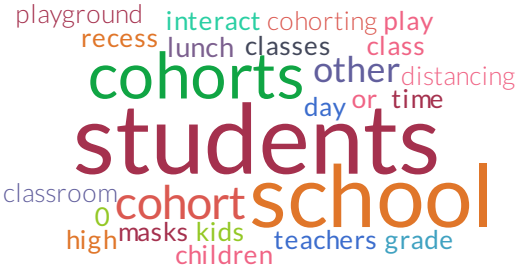
5. Do you have confidence that the cohorting model in place at your school will prevent or contain COVID-19 infection(s)?



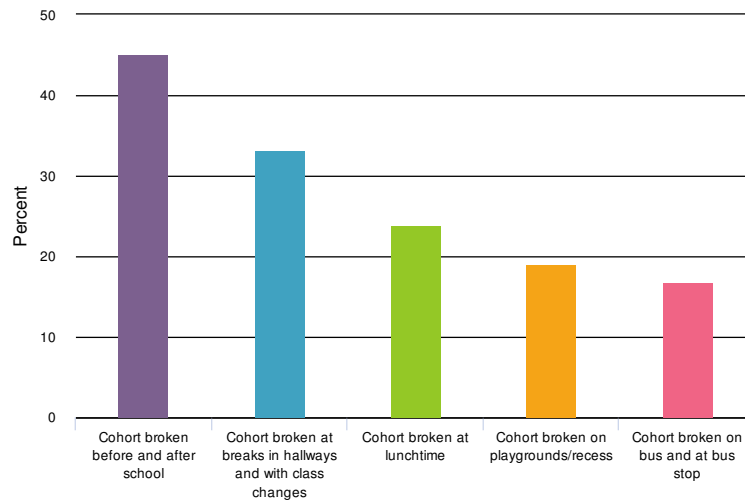
Value	Percent	Responses
Yes	18.0%	207
No	52.1%	599
Unsure	29.9%	343

Totals: 1,149

6. Qualitative Comments (n=550+) on the Cohorting Model in Place at School.



7. Initial text analysis of primary challenges with the cohorting model in place at Alberta K-12 schools.



Value	Percent	Responses
Cohort broken before and after school	45.2%	19
Cohort broken at breaks in hallways and with class changes	33.3%	14
Cohort broken at lunchtime	23.8%	10
Cohort broken on playgrounds/recess	19.0%	8
Cohort broken on bus and at bus stop	16.7%	7

### Representative Comments on Cohorting Challenges

"Because the students are allowed to leave school at lunchtime to go home or downtown and students freely group together and will takeoff their masks even if they're in different cohorts at that time."  
09/10/2020 Response id: 1239

"The kids all have active lives outside of the building. They do not adhere to cohorting when off campus. As hard as we try we cannot keep them 2 m apart."  
09/10/2020 Response id: 1274

"As soon as students exit out building they are not distancing with each other as they walk home and socialize with each other."  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1282

"Students stay in one classroom but during options go to classrooms where many different cohorts attend."  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1285

"If more staff were hired, there could be more flexibility in a timetable. For the most part students are cohorts but free outdoor time and hallway travel is not done well. JH students are really struggling with the concept of physical distancing. Students have been cohorted, but teachers are not. They travel to several different classes. Teachers are at higher risk. It is only the first week. This is going to be difficult."  
09/10/2020 Response id: 1289

8. During the last 7 days, which of the following measures have you taken to prevent infection from COVID-19?

	Never	Rarely (about 10% of the time)	Occasionally (about 30% of the time)	Sometimes (50% of the time)	Frequently (70% of the time)	Usually (90% of the time)	Every time	Not applicable	Responses
Ensured physical distancing in public. Count Row %	6 0.4%	36 2.3%	42 2.7%	100 6.5%	301 19.4%	605 39.0%	448 28.9%	12 0.8%	1,550
Frequently washed my hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Count Row %	2 0.1%	29 1.9%	52 3.4%	111 7.2%	284 18.3%	438 28.3%	628 40.5%	5 0.3%	1,549
Used disinfectants to clean my hands when soap and water were not available. Count Row %	5 0.3%	9 0.6%	12 0.8%	28 1.8%	151 9.7%	391 25.2%	948 61.2%	6 0.4%	1,550
Avoided touching my eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands. Count Row %	5 0.3%	22 1.4%	60 3.9%	192 12.4%	340 21.9%	588 38.0%	338 21.8%	4 0.3%	1,549
Disinfected surfaces in my classroom. Count Row %	34 2.2%	58 3.8%	70 4.5%	139 9.0%	302 19.5%	349 22.6%	500 32.4%	93 6.0%	1,545
Wore a mask in school. Count Row %	0 0.0%	4 0.3%	9 0.6%	27 1.7%	100 6.5%	353 22.8%	1,025 66.2%	30 1.9%	1,548
Wore a mask in public. Count Row %	12 0.8%	29 1.9%	34 2.2%	65 4.2%	142 9.2%	324 20.9%	938 60.5%	6 0.4%	1,550
Avoided a social event I wanted to attend. Count Row %	97 6.3%	74 4.8%	78 5.0%	223 14.4%	226 14.6%	280 18.1%	329 21.3%	240 15.5%	1,547
Created more ventilation for my classroom environment(s), such as opening windows, teaching outdoors, other. Count Row %	193 12.5%	106 6.9%	107 6.9%	247 16.0%	229 14.8%	195 12.6%	263 17.0%	206 13.3%	1,546
Stayed home from school. Count Row %	1,257 81.3%	31 2.0%	16 1.0%	15 1.0%	9 0.6%	6 0.4%	40 2.6%	173 11.2%	1,547
<b>Totals</b> Total Responses									1550

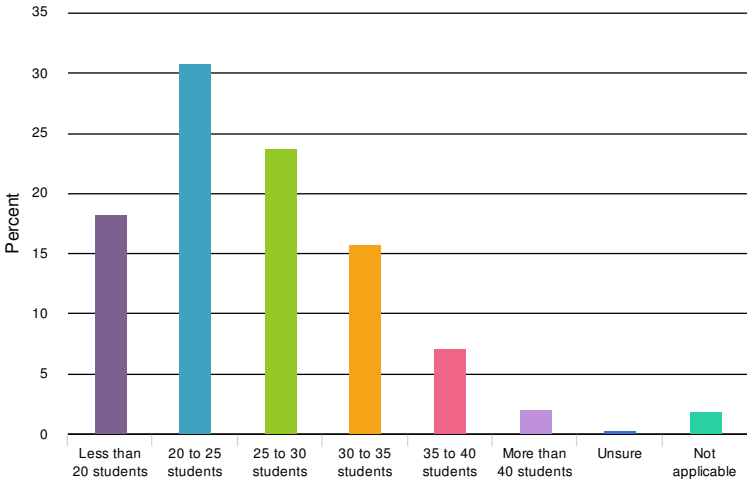
9. During the last 7 days, which of the following measures have students in your classrooms/schools taken to prevent infection from COVID-19?

	Never	Rarely (about 10% of the time)	Occasionally (about 30% of the time)	Sometimes (about 50% of the time)	Frequently (about 70% of the time)	Usually (about 90% of the time)	Every time	Not applicable	Responses
Physically distancing (1 to 2 metres) while in the classroom. Count Row %	303 21.0%	325 22.5%	163 11.3%	223 15.5%	182 12.6%	156 10.8%	45 3.1%	46 3.2%	1,443
Physically distancing (1 to 2 metres) while in the school hallway. Count Row %	181 12.6%	341 23.6%	216 15.0%	272 18.9%	199 13.8%	159 11.0%	41 2.8%	33 2.3%	1,442
Physically distancing (1 to 2 metres) while outside the school building or on playground(s). Count Row %	194 13.5%	375 26.1%	241 16.7%	232 16.1%	143 9.9%	121 8.4%	60 4.2%	73 5.1%	1,439
Wore a mask in the classroom(s) while alone at desk. Count Row %	123 8.5%	230 16.0%	153 10.6%	203 14.1%	167 11.6%	300 20.8%	217 15.1%	47 3.3%	1,440
Wore a mask within the classroom (or cohort) when interacting with other students. Count Row %	34 2.4%	62 4.3%	54 3.7%	71 4.9%	153 10.6%	390 27.1%	635 44.1%	42 2.9%	1,441
Wore a mask while in the hallways at school. Count Row %	37 2.6%	47 3.3%	40 2.8%	48 3.3%	86 6.0%	388 26.9%	763 52.9%	33 2.3%	1,442
Avoided group gatherings outside their classroom (or cohort) common spaces. Count Row %	109 7.6%	188 13.1%	142 9.9%	170 11.8%	185 12.9%	248 17.3%	280 19.5%	114 7.9%	1,436



	Never	Rarely (about 10% of the time)	Occasionally (about 30% of the time)	Sometimes (about 50% of the time)	Frequently (about 70% of the time)	Usually (about 90% of the time)	Every time	Not applicable	Responses
Avoided touching their eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands. Count Row %	77 5.4%	258 18.0%	248 17.3%	353 24.6%	203 14.1%	133 9.3%	54 3.8%	111 7.7%	1,437
Students washing their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Count Row %	29 2.0%	154 10.7%	205 14.3%	325 22.6%	291 20.3%	171 11.9%	78 5.4%	183 12.7%	1,436
Used disinfectants to clean hands when soap and water were not available. Count Row %	8 0.6%	9 0.6%	26 1.8%	86 6.0%	322 22.4%	575 40.0%	375 26.1%	36 2.5%	1,437
Disinfected their desk or other classroom surface(s). Count Row %	317 22.1%	118 8.2%	80 5.6%	156 10.9%	174 12.1%	232 16.1%	261 18.2%	99 6.9%	1,437
<b>Totals</b> Total Responses									1443

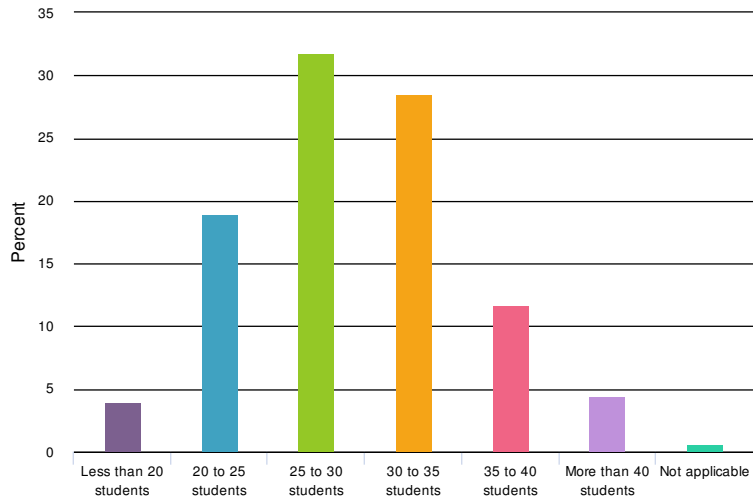
10. The size of the largest class that you are now teaching with students:



Value	Percent	Responses
Less than 20 students	18.3%	250
20 to 25 students	30.8%	421
25 to 30 students	23.8%	325
30 to 35 students	15.8%	215
35 to 40 students	7.1%	97
More than 40 students	2.1%	28
Unsure	0.3%	4
Not applicable	1.8%	25

Totals: 1,365

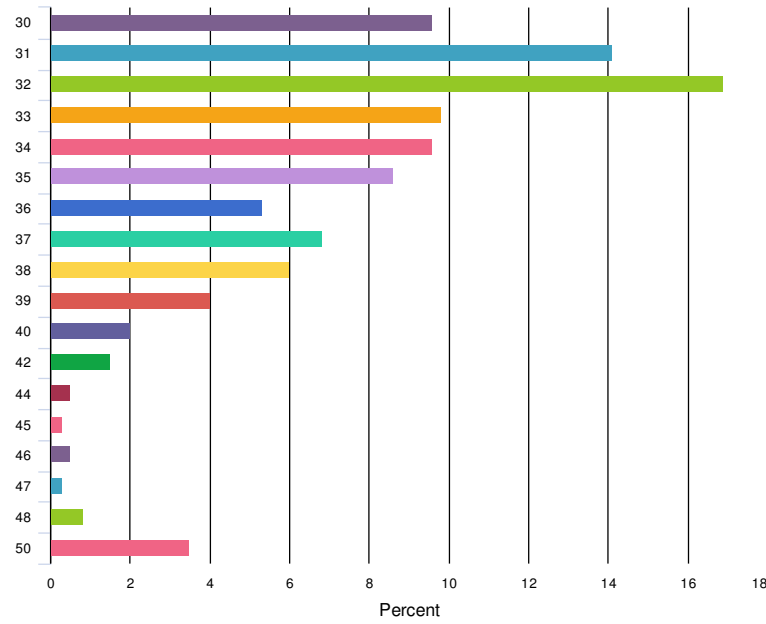
11. The size of the largest class within the entire school.



Value	Percent	Responses
Less than 20 students	3.9%	7
20 to 25 students	19.0%	34
25 to 30 students	31.8%	57
30 to 35 students	28.5%	51
35 to 40 students	11.7%	21
More than 40 students	4.5%	8
Not applicable	0.6%	1

Totals: 179

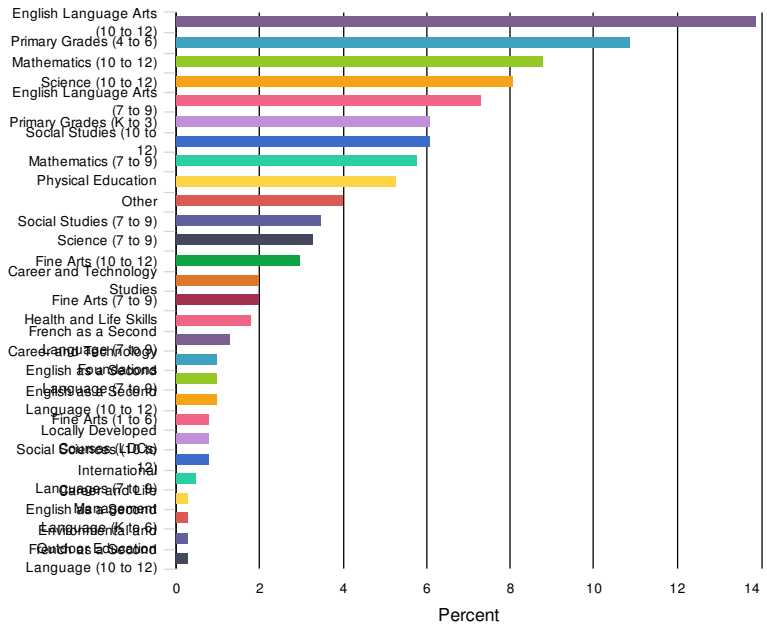
12. How many people are in your largest class with 30 or more students?



Value	Percent	Responses
30	9.6%	38
31	14.1%	56
32	16.9%	67
33	9.8%	39
34	9.6%	38
35	8.6%	34
36	5.3%	21
37	6.8%	27
38	6.0%	24
39	4.0%	16
50	3.5%	14
40	2.0%	8
42	1.5%	6
44	0.5%	2
45	0.3%	1
46	0.5%	2
47	0.3%	1
48	0.8%	3

Totals: 397

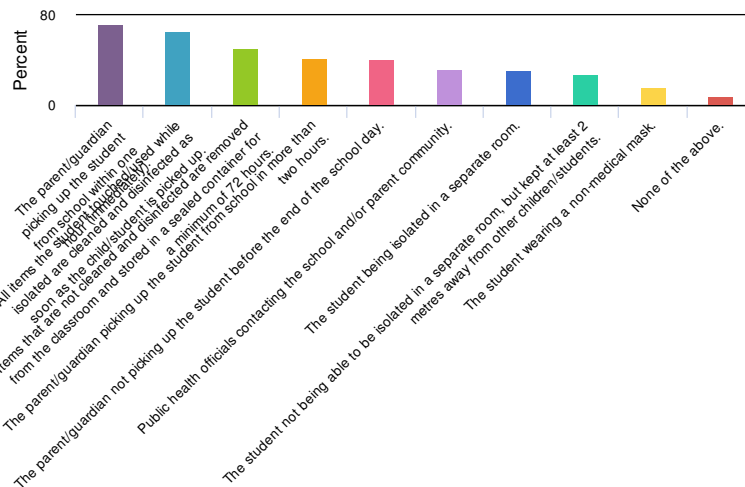
13. In which program of study is the largest class with over 30 students?



Value		Percent	Responses
English Language Arts (10 to 12)		13.9%	55
Primary Grades (4 to 6)		10.9%	43
Mathematics (10 to 12)		8.8%	35
Science (10 to 12)		8.1%	32
English Language Arts (7 to 9)		7.3%	29
Primary Grades (K to 3)		6.1%	24
Social Studies (10 to 12)		6.1%	24
Mathematics (7 to 9)		5.8%	23
Physical Education		5.3%	21
Other		4.0%	16
Social Studies (7 to 9)		3.5%	14
Science (7 to 9)		3.3%	13
Fine Arts (10 to 12)		3.0%	12
Career and Technology Studies		2.0%	8
Fine Arts (7 to 9)		2.0%	8
Health and Life Skills		1.8%	7
French as a Second Language (7 to 9)		1.3%	5
Career and Technology Foundations		1.0%	4
English as a Second Language (7 to 9)		1.0%	4
English as a Second Language (10 to 12)		1.0%	4
Fine Arts (1 to 6)		0.8%	3
Locally Developed Courses (LDCs)		0.8%	3
Social Sciences (10 to 12)		0.8%	3
International Languages (7 to 9)		0.5%	2
Career and Life Management		0.3%	1
English as a Second Language (K to 6)		0.3%	1
Environmental and Outdoor Education		0.3%	1
French as a Second Language (10 to 12)		0.3%	1

Totals: 396

14. In the event of a presumptive student case of COVID-19, which of the following action(s) in the outbreak plan do you believe will be challenging for your classroom/school environment? (Check all that apply)



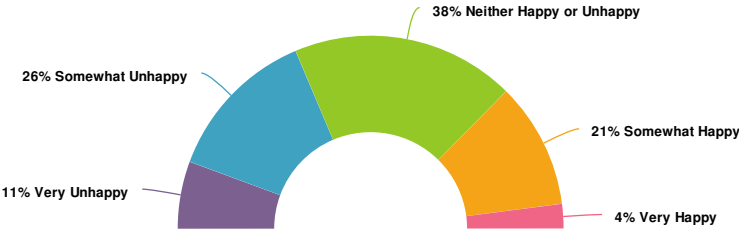
Value	Percent	Responses
The parent/guardian picking up the student from school within one hour (immediately).	71.5%	1,088
All items the student touched/used while isolated are cleaned and disinfected as soon as the child/student is picked up.	65.6%	999
Items that are not cleaned and disinfected are removed from the classroom and stored in a sealed container for a minimum of 72 hours.	50.5%	769
The parent/guardian picking up the student from school in more than two hours.	42.1%	641
The parent/guardian not picking up the student before the end of the school day.	40.8%	621
Public health officials contacting the school and/or parent community.	32.1%	488
The student being isolated in a separate room.	31.4%	478
The student not being able to be isolated in a separate room, but kept at least 2 metres away from other children/students.	27.4%	417
The student wearing a non-medical mask.	15.7%	239
None of the above.	8.5%	129




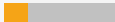

15. To what extent do you agree with the following general statement?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable	Responses
The current COVID-19 public health interventions in Alberta schools (i.e., physical distancing, mask wearing, cohorting, daily screening checklist and the outbreak plan) are appropriate and effective for the age groups of students in my classroom. Count Row %	434 28.9%	465 30.9%	176 11.7%	337 22.4%	61 4.1%	31 2.1%	1,504
<b>Totals</b> Total Responses							1504



16. How are you feeling?



Value		Percent	Responses
Very Unhappy		11.3%	182
Somewhat Unhappy		26.0%	417
Neither Happy or Unhappy		37.5%	601
Somewhat Happy		21.1%	339
Very Happy		4.1%	65

Totals: 1,604

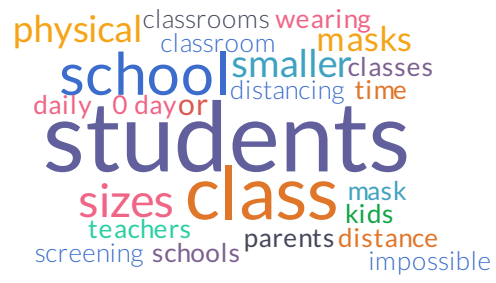
17. Thinking about this past week with students in classrooms (face to face or online), identify your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree	Responses
I am invigorated with my students coming back in my classroom/school. Count Row %	114 7.1%	185 11.5%	275 17.1%	707 44.0%	324 20.2%	1,605
I feel isolated. Count Row %	176 11.0%	512 31.9%	147 9.2%	506 31.5%	264 16.4%	1,605
I feel hopeful. Count Row %	184 11.5%	436 27.2%	422 26.3%	467 29.1%	95 5.9%	1,604
I feel anxious. Count Row %	51 3.2%	170 10.6%	88 5.5%	701 43.7%	594 37.0%	1,604
I feel exhausted by the end of the day. Count Row %	26 1.6%	47 2.9%	28 1.7%	339 21.2%	1,162 72.5%	1,602
<b>Totals</b> Total Responses						1605

18. Please identify your level of agreement to the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable	Responses
COVID-19 feels close to me. Count Row %	61 4.1%	241 16.1%	279 18.6%	567 37.8%	345 23.0%	8 0.5%	1,501
COVID-19 feels like it is spreading slowly. Count Row %	121 8.1%	489 32.6%	231 15.4%	509 33.9%	144 9.6%	7 0.5%	1,501
COVID-19 is something I think about all the time. Count Row %	46 3.1%	276 18.3%	44 2.9%	647 43.0%	493 32.7%	0 0.0%	1,506
COVID-19 is <u>not</u> fear-inducing. Count Row %	485 32.2%	701 46.6%	111 7.4%	165 11.0%	40 2.7%	2 0.1%	1,504
COVID-19 is media hyped. Count Row %	454 30.1%	485 32.2%	177 11.8%	272 18.1%	116 7.7%	2 0.1%	1,506
COVID-19 is something that makes me feel helpless. Count Row %	73 4.8%	414 27.5%	180 12.0%	545 36.2%	292 19.4%	2 0.1%	1,506
COVID-19 is stressful. Count Row %	20 1.3%	29 1.9%	26 1.7%	450 29.9%	980 65.0%	2 0.1%	1,507
<b>Totals</b> Total Responses							1507

19. Qualitative comments (n=600+) regarding changes teachers and school leaders would like to see regarding physical distancing, mask wearing, cohorting, daily screening checklist and/or the outbreak plan for Alberta schools.



Representative comments on changes that teachers (face to face and online) and school leaders would like to see regarding physical distancing, mask wearing, cohorting, daily screening checklist and/or the outbreak plan for Alberta schools?

“ Lower class sizes to make physical distancing possible. ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1241

“ We have already had to send multiple children home that are exhibiting symptoms present on the checklist. ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1282

“ Mask wearing should be mandatory for K to 6 in my school and all over Alberta. Many students wear masks in this age group but not all. Students in ECDP and K do not. Smaller class sizes would help because it is impossible with my numbers in current classrooms for students to social distance. Overall I do not feel the current govt school re-entry plan has done enough to make my staff or students feel safe. There is a lot of anxiousness in my school. Especially when we read about Covid outbreaks in other schools around the province. We do our best but worry this is not enough from what resources we have been provided. ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1303

“ Smaller class sizes, better ventilation in schools, larger physical teaching space. ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1307

“ Over and over I hear colleagues telling me about symptomatic kids coming to school. ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1321

“ The most positive outcome to all of this is that students at my school have been compliant with wearing masks. This is something that can be controlled in schools. It has been tough to control the physical distancing and staggered entrance/exits with our students. I think staggered days may work best for high school students. ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1330

“ There needs to be smaller class sizes have 30+ students in grade 3/4 with 40cm between their rows, kids are doing okay with masks and mask breaks ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1363

“ Hire more teachers to reduce workload for online teachers with 40-100+ students or multiple grades ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1389

“ First and foremost is to reduce the number of students in a building at any one time. ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1546

“ We need more support. Aside from everything we are doing, we have so much more supervision that teachers have no breaks to do things, catch a breath, prepare for other activities; aside from the physical toll of wearing a mask all day, we end up utterly exhausted from all this additional supervision we are expected to do, and the lack of needed support people. ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1558

“ Physical distancing is impossible for young children and is too stressful for a teacher to enforce ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1574

“ A. I worry about the long term affect on staff health. We are rushed to develop scenario 2/3 on one pd day/told one week in advance. ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1590

“ Mask wearing should be publicly stated as necessary at all times in the indoor school environment. Physical distancing needs to be increased in schools. ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1616

“ More cleaning supplies. My school ran out. They don't have budget. I had to buy my own cleaning supplies. ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1624

“ We can't effectively distance due to class sizes. Classrooms are too small for the group size. Furniture doesn't allow for students to face the same direction and all have access to table surface ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1625

“ Certain impimentation methods are labour intensive and seem to be rather countintuitive to prevention of spread. FO example, Students wipe down the ir chrome books with disinfectant after using and before returning to chrome cart, but then touch it with their hand to return it to the cart..... In classrooms, students have to stay in their seat if their mask is off, but in phys-ed masks are off, and students are running around breathing heavily around each other..... ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1627

“ Students are great at wearing masks and cleaning tools and surfaces. However at lunch time they gather in groups, no physical distancing and masks off-defeating the purpose of all the extra time and work we do to keep everyone safe. ”  
09/11/2020 Response id: 1697

“ Active case in my school SMALL Classrooms More help for staff and students More of everything to support us ”  
09/12/2020 Response id: 1728

“ Our custodial team needs more time (more funding) to meet the cleaning guidelines ”  
09/12/2020 Response id: 1943

“ Outbreak plan needs to be more complete ”  
09/13/2020 Response id: 1963

“ More staffing to help with more frequent sanitizing of surfaces - It is too much to expect a teacher to add that to their already extremely full plate of teaching. ”  
09/13/2020 Response id: 1964

“ Physical distancing is absolutely impossible due to large class sizes. I fee frustrated that I cannot put desks in pairs as I always have, even though desk are less than 1m apart in any given direction. ”

09/13/2020 Response id: 1972

“ Smaller class sizes. Parent accountability for screening children. Clarity on protocol when a student is sent home (when they can return). Stricter cohorting rules in schools (for example, PE teacher teaches all 700 kids, Resource teacher works with all kids, etc). ”

09/13/2020 Response id: 1976

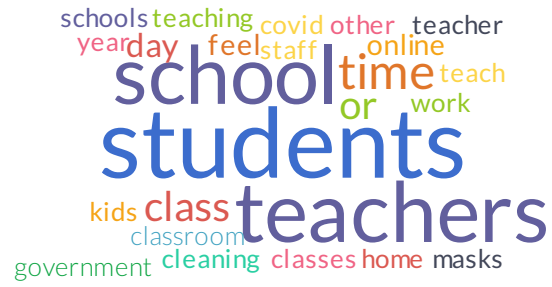
“ Less students in class/school at a time. Mandatory mask wearing with portable sinks in rooms. Online screening tool that must be completed prior to entering building. ”

09/13/2020 Response id: 2049

“ Public health professionals visiting schools to help enforce and teach students about health procedures. ”

09/15/2020 Response id: 2161

20. Qualitative comments (n=700+) with other questions, concerns or issues.



## Representative questions, concerns and/or issues shared with the Alberta Teachers' Association.

“ Quicker screening for staff and students ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1240

“ Currently, the students have all of their belongings in my classroom, with such a large class in a little space, I am tripping over everything and not given any reasonable alternative. ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1249

“ This whole situation is a recipe for a disaster. The stress and anxiety that my staff are working in, is significant and I am concerned for their mental health. Every day, 95% of my time is spend dealing with COVID and not with education. ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1267

“ Class sizes are too large making physical distancing absolutely impossible in my classroom. ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1272

“ As a school leader I am beyond exhausted. I see my colleagues are stressed, anxious, and already close to burning out. ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1307

“ I am doing my best. I am not a health care worker, but I am doing everything I can to keep my students safe. The amount of responsibility that I feel on my shoulders is crushing most days, ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1313

“ Supports needed for Mental Health for staff, children and their families. ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1317

“ Thank you for advocating for teachers and students. I knew it would be hard but this feels unsustainable. ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1318

“ Concerns regarding cleaning duties assigned to teachers. ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1324

“ I am concerned about the number of teachers that are being removed from my school for online learning. This is creating class sizes larger than I would like and the teachers who are teaching online have classes ranging from 30 to 40 students even in the elementary grades ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1351

“ I have been asked to spray desks (upside down mist or fog method) between each class because sanitizing wipes have already run out. I have 38 desks and I don't have time because I have no prep. I'm concerned for the safety of the students that they don't have appropriate means to sanitize their desk or chair. ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1368

“ I am concerned that the list of symptoms on the screening checklist are too vague. When we say sore throat, is it a little tickle or full on strep type sore. A light cough or whooping cough type coughing. I don't feel qualified to monitor student health and I am sure parents aren't consistently doing the checklist. They don't even read the emails and agenda I send home daily. Never mind a checklist. ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1381

“ The extra cleaning protocols (between each of the 4 high school periods plus before and after lunch) are adding so much to my day, particularly since I do not have a prep at all this semester. It is non-stop "go go go" from 15 minutes before the first class starts (supervising kids sanitizing hands and wiping desks as they come in) until the end of the day. I'm lucky if I get 20 minutes to scarf down my lunch and sit down. It's exhausting and not sustainable. ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1384

“ Is air quality in buildings going to be tested during the winter months? ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1396

“ Saying we are truly physically distancing & cohorting is just not true. ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1512

“ Students are happy to see their friends, but the cleaning, masks, and distancing (if that actually happens once and a while) are going to take a toll on them. I will lose almost 20 min of instruction each 85 min class due to students disinfecting desktops, their hands, Chromebooks, etc. ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1543

“ I am currently burned out and we are only at 1 week into quarter 1. High school teachers are needing to reorganize all we have done to fit a new model of way longer classes and it has been almost entirely on us to just figure out. ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1567

“ How are we going to avoid teacher burnout? ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1584

“ Why are our elected officials in Education empowered to think its ok, not to engage with teachers in creating this plan. Unacceptable. Not one person has asked my opinion on our readiness or how my staff are doing. If one polled admin over the course of the last three weeks, I would assume the majority would have requested more time to prepare. No one asked us. Again, go slow to go fast.. we need to have time to create solid plans where we can present in confidence and build staff wellness, not more angst. ”

09/11/2020 Response id: 1590



“ The hand sanitizer in our classrooms is dangerous for children (has been recalled). Teachers in our school have not received face-masks or shields. Will the increase in fresh air intake continue when weather is cold or will efficiency override? ”

09/12/2020 Response id: 1735

“ Substitutes have not been included in school safety plans. We don't have the protocols. We don't have access to screening lists. We don't know if our students have been exposed. We haven't been trained or explicitly told what/when/how to clean. ”

09/12/2020 Response id: 1798

“ The stress that teaching in a pandemic is causing is astronomical. Teachers will be burning out and taking leave. I don't know if a single colleague who isn't feeling worried and stressed and burnt out already. What we are being asked to do is ridiculous, both online and in-person, and there are no supports for us. No one checks in. ”

09/12/2020 Response id: 1833

“ [As a school principal] I am spending most of my day isolating sick students, and following the sick student protocol. Contacting parents, re-explaining the COVID screening checklist and reassuring teachers. I am a teacher, not a nurse. ”

09/12/2020 Response id: 1841

“ The work load from parent questions and concerns are completely time consuming right now. We are unable to get any other work done during the day. As a result, all the other work gets done in the evenings and weekends. I'm exhausted, emotionally drained, and overwhelmed from being held responsible for every student's health and well being. I'm not being asked educational questions. I'm only being asked health guideline questions. Currently I'm a public health advisor not an educator. ”

09/12/2020 Response id: 1891

“ I feel that because our community does not have any cases of Covid it is not taken seriously. ”

09/13/2020 Response id: 2068

“ I am frustrated at the government's lack of care ”

09/14/2020 Response id: 2127

“ Classroom and hallways are crowded even when classes aren't large. ”

09/15/2020 Response id: 2137

“ Teacher mental health needs to be addressed ”

09/14/2020 Response id: 2147

“ Public health professionals visiting schools to help enforce and teach students about health procedures. ”

09/15/2020 Response id: 2161

Demographics

Completion Rate:

100%



Complete

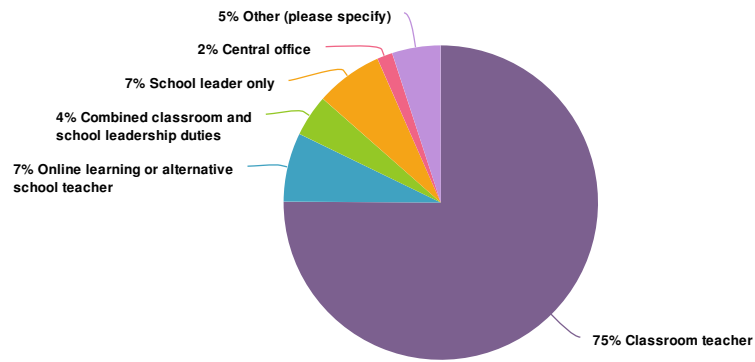


1,612

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Totals: 1,612

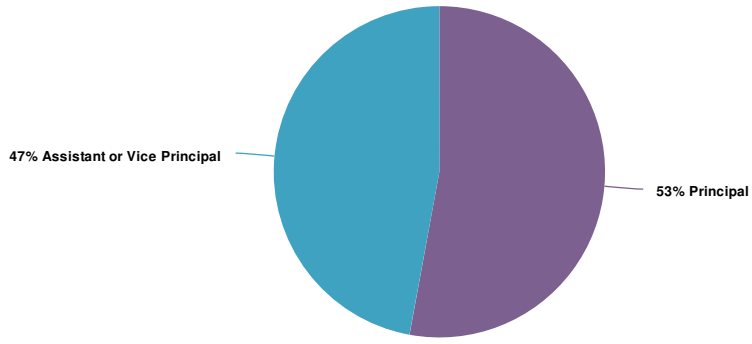
21. Your current assignment



Value	Percent	Responses
Classroom teacher	75.1%	1,210
Online learning or alternative school teacher	7.1%	115
Combined classroom and school leadership duties	4.3%	69
School leader only	6.9%	112
Central office	1.6%	26
Other (please specify)	5.0%	80

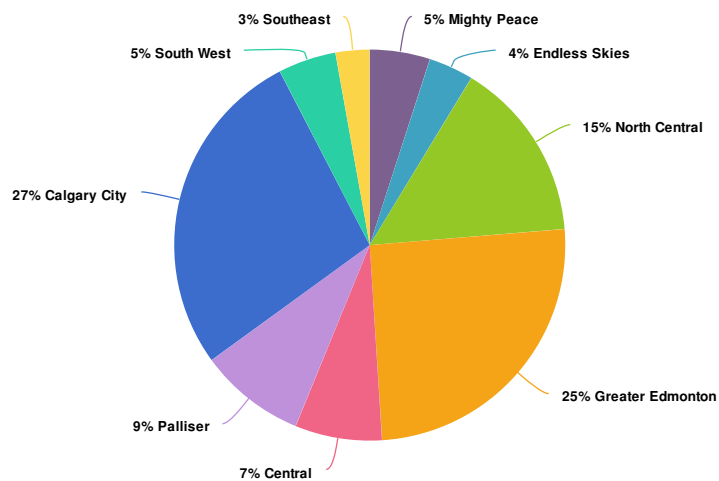
Totals: 1,612

22. Please select:



Value	Percent	Responses
Principal	52.9%	90
Assistant or Vice Principal	47.1%	80
		<b>Totals: 170</b>

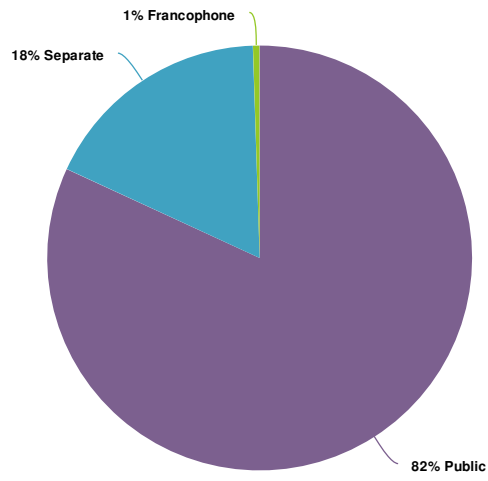
23. Teachers' convention that you attend



Value	Percent	Responses
Mighty Peace	5.0%	75
Endless Skies	3.7%	56
North Central	15.0%	227
Greater Edmonton	25.3%	383
Central	7.2%	109
Palliser	8.8%	134
Calgary City	27.4%	415
South West	4.8%	73
Southeast	2.8%	43

Totals: 1,515

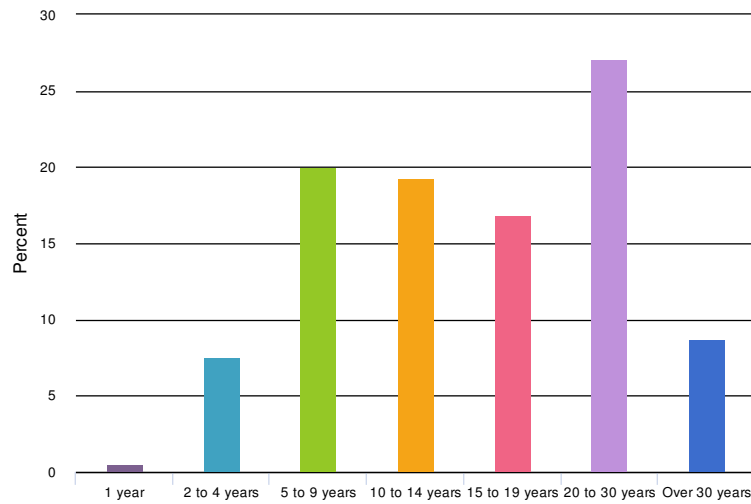
24. Type of school authority in which you are employed



Value	Percent	Responses
Public	81.8%	1,240
Separate	17.6%	267
Francophone	0.5%	8

Totals: 1,515

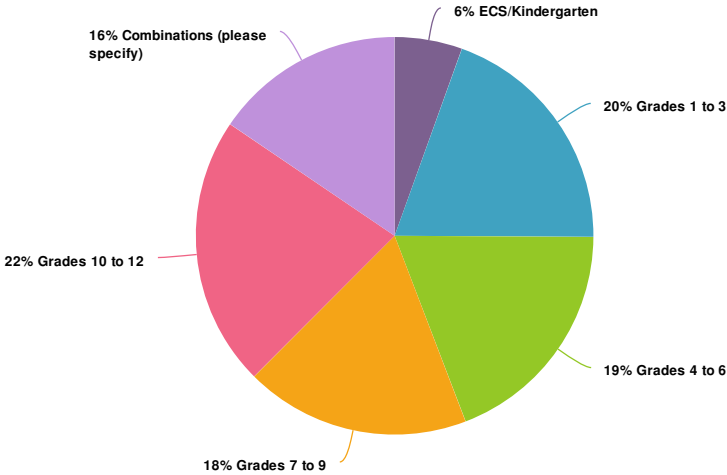
25. Your teaching experience, including current year



Value	Percent	Responses
1 year	0.5%	7
2 to 4 years	7.5%	114
5 to 9 years	20.0%	303
10 to 14 years	19.3%	292
15 to 19 years	16.9%	256
20 to 30 years	27.1%	409
Over 30 years	8.7%	131

Totals: 1,512

26. Your current assignment is related exclusively or mainly to students in

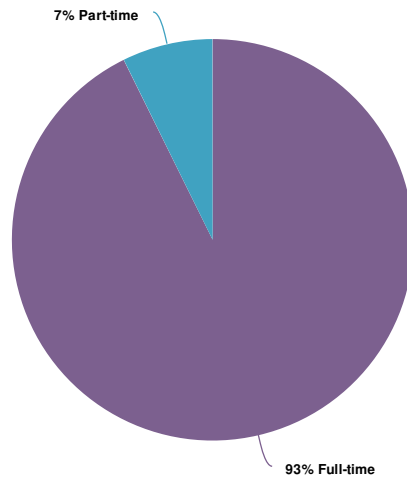


Value	Percent	Responses
ECS/Kindergarten	5.5%	83
Grades 1 to 3	19.6%	296
Grades 4 to 6	19.1%	289
Grades 7 to 9	18.3%	277
Grades 10 to 12	22.0%	333
Combinations (please specify)	15.5%	235

Totals: 1,513

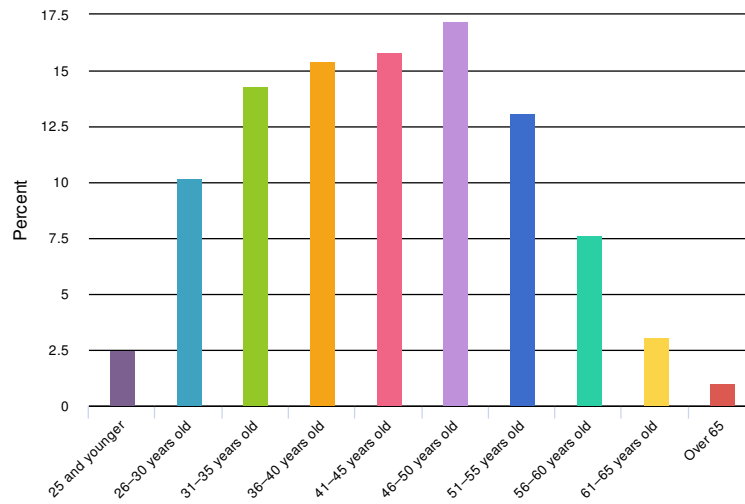


27. You are employed



Value	Percent	Responses
Full-time	92.7%	1,405
Part-time	7.3%	110
		<b>Totals: 1,515</b>

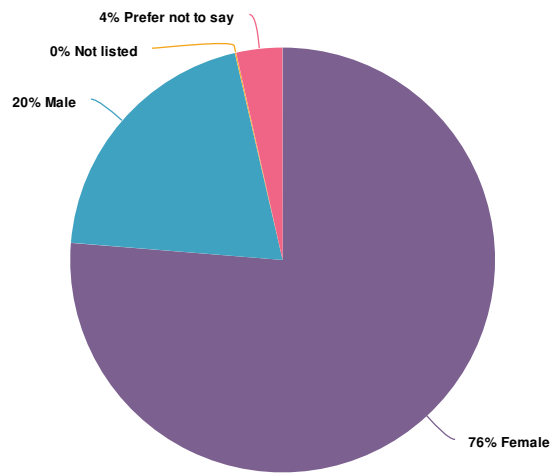
28. Your age



Value	Percent	Responses
25 and younger	2.5%	37
26-30 years old	10.2%	153
31-35 years old	14.3%	215
36-40 years old	15.4%	232
41-45 years old	15.8%	238
46-50 years old	17.2%	259
51-55 years old	13.1%	197
56-60 years old	7.6%	114
61-65 years old	3.1%	46
Over 65	1.0%	15

Totals: 1,506

29. How do you identify?



Value	Percent	Responses
Female	76.3%	1,158
Male	20.1%	305
Not listed	0.1%	1
Prefer not to say	3.5%	53

Totals: 1,517

### **ATA Pandemic Research Study Background**

COVID-19 is a serious health threat to Albertans, and the situation evolves daily. The risk varies between and within Alberta communities, but given the growing number of infections across the province, the risk is considered high by the Government of Canada[i]. The health risk of this disease is further compounded by the nature of asymptomatic spread, and with the impact of growing inequities and socio-economic challenges accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic across society.

In order to provide a timely report on the success and challenges of the COVID-19 prevention, infection and control measures in Alberta's K-12 schools, the Alberta Teachers' Association (the Association) conducted a random stratified and selected longitudinal population survey of 1600+ teachers and school leaders across Alberta. The survey results below investigate the preventive behaviours, risk perceptions, knowledge, and levels of trust to inform the pandemic outbreak in Alberta K-12 schools.

During the period of this survey administration (September 10 to 14, 2020), Alberta was in its first full week back with over 600 000 students in face to face classrooms and close to 140 000 students learning online.

This survey was done in an environment with active COVID-19 case loads and growing community spread. At time of survey, 76 Alberta schools had confirmed at least one positive case of the disease on their campus, with 13 of these schools declared by Alberta Health Services (AHS) as having COVID-19 outbreak status (2 to 4 cases), and 1 school on watch (5+ or more cases).

The overall percentage of school with infections in Alberta after the first week would be approximately 3% of all schools. However, the result of these outbreaks and cases are several hundred students quarantined and dozens of teachers awaiting testing results within the first week of school re-entry.

#### **Research Methods and Timeline - September 10, 2020 and September 14, 2020**

The survey instrument for this ATA pandemic research study was designed using guidance from a World Health Organization COVID-19 survey tool[ii] and adapted for the Alberta context in partnership with Dr Lynora Saxinger, a physician and Associate Professor, University of Alberta, Department of Medicine, Division of Infectious Diseases.

The rapid response research study was run with two parallel and identical surveys. One survey instrument drew on a random stratified sample of teachers and school leaders in Alberta (n=730+), and another (identical instrument) captured the voices of a group of teachers and school leaders (n=870+) being followed as a longitudinal population and chain referral sampling throughout the Fall of 2020.

The survey was administered between September 10, 2020 and September 14, 2020 after the first week all students had returned to Alberta school buildings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Survey Population – 1600+ Alberta teachers and school leaders**

This survey contains a highly representative sample of the profession of teaching from across Alberta. Detailed demographics of the respondents is contained at the end of this summary report.

The overall data being coded for themes and analyzed is that of one thousand two hundred (1600+) Alberta teachers and school leaders; 1200+ classroom teachers, 100 online/alternative school teachers, and 180 school leaders, 25 central office teachers and 80+ others (blended face to face and online teachers, substitute teachers, and school counsellors).

#### **Margin of Error +/- 2.5%**

The confidence interval on this survey is +/- 2.5% on all questions (19 times out of 20).

[i] <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks.htm#r>

[ii] [https://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/436705/COVID-19-survey-tool-and-guidance.pdf](https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/436705/COVID-19-survey-tool-and-guidance.pdf)



# The Alberta Teachers' Association

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