



**STRATEGIC ALLIANCE FOR ALBERTA
STUDENTS WITH LEARNING
CHALLENGES**

**JUNE 2020 FOLLOW UP
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SURVEY
REPORT**

Follow up Survey June 2020 Inclusive Education

Introduction

On March 15, 2020, the Alberta Government made the decision to close all schools in Alberta in response to the spread of COVID-19. Guidelines on continuing learning under a new education delivery model were released on March 20, 2020.

One month following the province-wide shut-down of schools, Strategic Alliance for Alberta Students with Learning Challenges conducted a survey to see how Alberta parents, caregivers, and students were managing with this change in learning environment and supports.

We wanted to follow up with parents after our April 2020 survey to see how they and their students were managing as we near the end of this school year.

The following information in this report provides a brief summary of the data collected and key statistical findings of the survey. Please contact Strategic Alliance for Alberta Students with Learning Challenges for further information at info@strategicalliance4abkids.ca.

WHO RESPONDED?

The survey was posted on our Facebook page and open to the public from May 28, 2020 to June 12, 2020. Of the 216 respondents to the survey, most students reflected in the survey are from pre-kindergarten to grade six, comprising 66% of the group. Also, 92% attended public school, 5% attended private school, 3% home schooled and there were no responses from charter schools. Of the public school attendees, responses reflected 42 public school divisions, but also included one response from a francophone school division, 3 responses from private schools and 3 from home schoolers throughout the province.

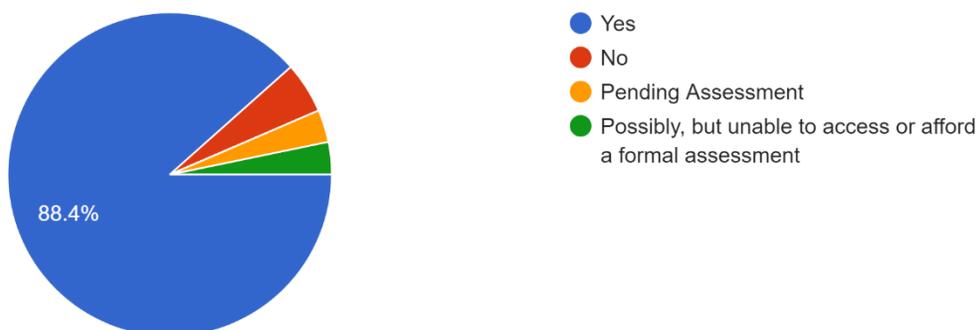
COMPLEXITY OF LEARNING CHALLENGES

Respondents to the survey were asked whether their child (or children) had a learning challenge and whether they had a special needs designation. Of those students with a designation, respondents were to specifically indicate their child's coding according to the Alberta Education's special education coding criteria.

The results of the survey show that most families have at least one child with a learning challenge. Of these students, an overwhelming 89% have a special needs designation. The top categories for coding are learning disabilities (30%), severe physical or medical disability (20%), and emotional/behavioral disability (15%). About 3.2% of respondents are unable to access or afford an assessment, and 3.2% are pending an assessment.

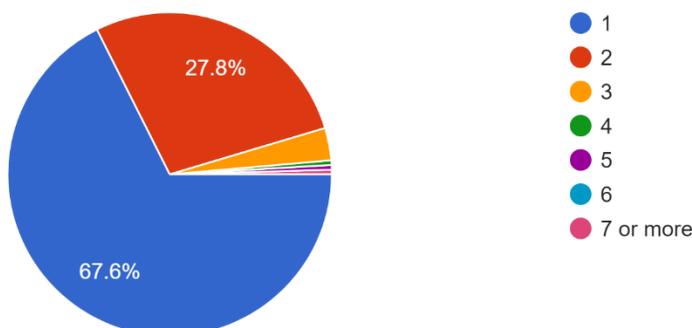
Does your child(ren) have a special needs designation?

216 responses



How many children do you have at home with learning challenges?

216 responses

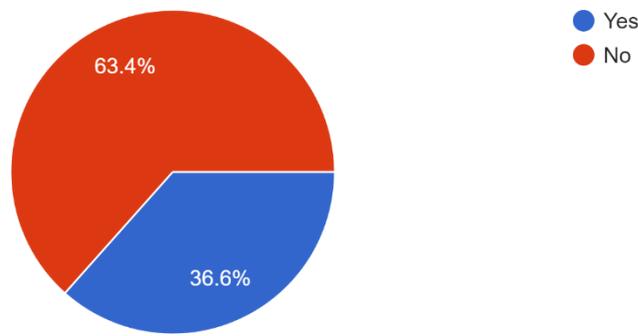


COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT FROM SCHOOLS

We wanted to determine whether provision of supports for students were impacted following the Province's March 28, 2020 announcement that \$128 million dollars of K-12 education funding was being reallocated to support Alberta's COVID-19 response. This funding adjustment was to be effective in May 2020 for most school authorities. We asked:

Have supports provided by your child(ren) 's school remained consistent since the launch of the new education delivery model?

216 responses



For “No” responses, we then asked to please describe the changes. Some comments included:

“Any support he received through EAs completely evaporated. Zero support, remediation, accommodation.”

“My son's one-on-one EAs were let go, and his AAC specialist had her position terminated.”

“Part-time educational assistant who continued to work directly with student through online education delivery was laid off April 30. Student had endured the sudden, abrupt cancellation of classes, the transition to online learning, and then had to cope with supports being stripped. We hired the EA privately for some continuity of support and to assist with balancing the demands of attempting to keep our small business afloat, though not every family could do that.”

“The school has left the full responsibility of learning and reaching out for help fully on my child. Beforehand the E.A would reach out to see how things were going and offering help.”

“He has no EA’s anymore, and the supports his school can offer are extremely minimal for at home learning. My son has been diagnosed with ASD and has shown regression since schools have closed.”

“Some improvement as some of the teachers became more comfortable with technology.”

“Obviously the in-person, hands on group learning with peers disappeared. EA laid off effective mid-May and she was meeting with the higher needs students every single day to read with them.”

“Her teacher has done a couple one on one chats (opened up homework help Wednesday’s in addition to Monday whole class meets).”

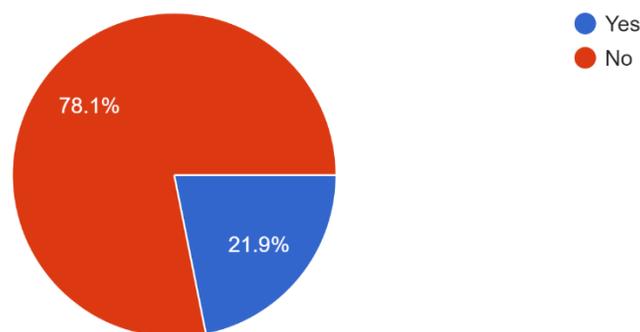
HELP AND RESOURCES REQUIRED

Parents were asked what supports they felt their children needed to be successful with at home learning. The top answers were:

- Educational Assistants – 73%
- Literacy Supports – 50%
- Numeracy Supports – 42%
- Occupational Therapist Support – 35%
- Speech Language Pathologist Support – 34%
- Behavioral Consultant Support – 29%
- Psychologist – 26%

Have you received the supports you feel your child(ren) need to be successful?

215 responses

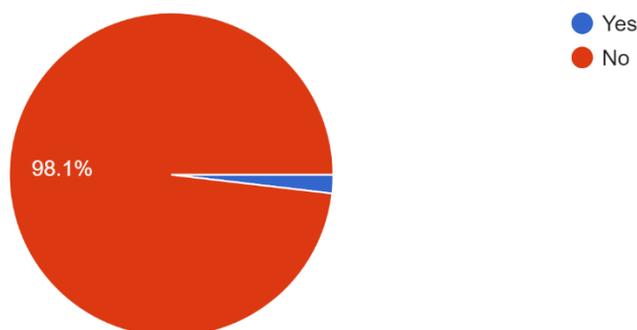


In the Minister's May 6, 2020 'Update on student learning and school re-entry engagement,' a provincial education helpline was made available to parents through which Alberta Education staff address their questions and direct them to their school authorities, where applicable. The intent is to provide advice to families, particularly to parents of children with disabilities, who have questions about their child's program now that the traditional delivery process has changed. Parents can reach the helpline by calling 780-422-6548 (toll-free by dialing 310-0000, followed by the 10-digit phone number) or by emailing studentsupport@gov.ab.ca.

<https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=712792C1E64D8-9A5B-9162-E664314164B1783C>

We wanted to know if families were aware of this resource, so we asked:

Have you utilized the provincial education helpline (780-422-6548, studentsupport@gov.ab.ca) announced on May 6, 2020 in the 'Update on st...ID=712792C1E64D8-9A5B-9162-E664314164B1783C']
216 responses



If they had used this service, we wanted to know what their experience was, and if they hadn't, why not? The responses given were:

"Didn't know about it."

"A helpline is not an appropriate substitute for direct educational assistant support."

"Have heard it was not very useful."

"Because we need support. Ideally in person. What would they do?"

"No because recent experiences that other people have encountered have pushed me into not calling. Her teacher is an amazing person and she is trying her best during this situation."

“I have seen online this is more geared to collecting negative information about your child’s teacher or telling you to go back to the school/teacher for help and is a waste of time.”

“This process is very overwhelming. Multiple kids learning from home as jobs and whole system makes you not want to sit down and call on the phone need a physical person.”

“Just finding out now.”

“I heard that they could not help and only redirected you to talk to the school or they would launch a formal complaint against your teacher.”

“Haven't tried it as the supports my son requires are not available due to funding cuts.”

SUMMARY

Overall, the respondents felt they did not have the supports their children needed to successfully continue learning at home. A vast majority of parents felt that they had fewer supports than when online learning commenced in late March 2020. Parents expressed resulting student regression. One family said:

“Our child’s relative success with student learning during COVID-19 has been the result of family advocacy, cooperation and coordination between school staff and FSCD, but it has not been easy.”

Strategic Alliance for Alberta Students with Learning Challenges plans to conduct a survey for early in the 2020-21 school year.

For more information or insightful comments submitted through the survey, please contact info@strategicalliance4abkids.ca.