

# Parent Satisfaction Survey

**April / May 2002**

**Presented to:**

Ministry of Education  
Government of British Columbia  
Victoria, British Columbia

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# Executive Summary

## Purpose

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In order to more fully understand British Columbia parents' satisfaction with the education system in this province, the Ministry of Education (the ministry) requested a random sample telephone survey. While a paper survey had been distributed to stakeholders (parents, students, teachers and non-teaching staff), a projectable study was also required to provide a valid province-wide overview. Of particular importance was including the impressions of parents of all public school grades, whereas the paper survey focused on grades four, seven, 10 and 12.<sup>1</sup>

This research is part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to help guide provincial and local improvements to learning opportunities and student achievements.

This research was designed to enable schools, school boards and the ministry to monitor parents' satisfaction with aspects of the public education system. It will also support public school improvements that will ultimately lead to better learning opportunities for higher student achievement.

The questionnaire, including total (topline) findings, is appended.

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<sup>1</sup> See computer tabulations for question B1 to view the final distribution of the sample by children's grade level.

## Methodology

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In total, 1445 surveys were completed among a random sample of parents of BC's school-age children. All parents of school-age children were eligible for this research. The research was designed to examine the experience of a representative sample of school-age children. Therefore, in addition to the usual randomization techniques already in place, the child to be discussed in each household was also randomized on the "birthday" basis.

This study employed a "disproportionate" sampling plan, which ensured that each region of the province was represented with enough interviews to allow separate analysis on a regional basis. The table following outlines the actual and final weighted sample distribution.

Region	Actual sample	Final Weighted Sample
North	205	52
Central Interior	211	71
Coast	205	275
Kootenay	205	55
Lower Mainland	414	823
Okanagan	205	171
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1445</b>	<b>1445</b>

A pure random sample of 1445 carries tolerance limits of +/-2.6 percentage points 19 in 20 times that the study is repeated, in the most conservative case. In other words, a finding of 50% would fall within 47.4% and 52.6% most of the time. Accuracy increases as results near 0% and 100%. For example, a finding of 5% carries tolerance of +/-1.1 percentage points. The regional subsamples of approximately 205 and 414 carry tolerances of +/-6.8 and +/-4.8 percentage points respectively.

The questionnaire was developed in consultation with the Ministry and the Public Affairs Bureau, addressing the original and final research objectives. The final questionnaire was approximately 12 minutes in length.

## Summary of findings

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### ***Overall satisfaction with child's education***

A majority of BC parents (77%) is satisfied with their child's education. Notably, fully one-third are "very" satisfied. Just over one-in-five (22%) are dissatisfied, with 10% "very" and 12% "somewhat" dissatisfied.

A similar satisfaction question was asked later in the survey. Once parents have considered various aspects of their child's education (as presented in the lines of questioning in our survey), satisfaction does increase (to 82%). Note that most of this growth is in the "very" satisfied category.

Satisfaction is driven largely by parents' appreciation of their children's teacher. Following at some distance, secondary reasons for parent satisfaction centre on the child's enjoyment of school and accomplishments so far.

Dissatisfaction emanates from several areas: concerns that children are not learning the basics, large class sizes and poor quality teachers (each mentioned by 8-9% of all parents). The teacher job action as well as concerns over government funding also appear to have some impact in driving satisfaction downward (each mentioned by 5% of parents).

(See computer tabulations for C1, C2 and G1.)

### ***Satisfaction with specific aspects of a child's education***

A strong majority of BC parents is satisfied with their children's education, with respect to the "basics": learning reading, writing and mathematics skills. Parents are similarly, if slightly less, satisfied with program choices for their child. Even the anti-bullying learning program, at the bottom of the list, receives relatively high satisfaction marks. Note that this program also has the highest degree of uncertainty—that is, parents who cannot respond to this question. Each of the aspects of learning evaluated in this study receives relatively strong satisfaction, with the proportion "very" satisfied ranging from one-third to one-half of all parents.

***Development of reading skills at school***

Total satisfied	85%
Very satisfied	49%
Total dissatisfied	12%

***Development of writing skills at school***

Total satisfied	82%
Very satisfied	43%
Total dissatisfied	17%

***Development of mathematics skills at school***

Total satisfied	80%
Very satisfied	42%
Total dissatisfied	18%

***Program choices for this child***

Total satisfied	77%
Very satisfied	35%
Total dissatisfied	14%

***Learning about anti bullying***

Total satisfied	73%
Very satisfied	40%
Total dissatisfied	12%

(See computer tabulations for F1 to F5.)

***Parents' impressions of teachers' caring***

The vast majority of parents (87%) feel that teachers care about their children. Note that this level varies across the subgroups of interest: By grade level, this sense that teachers care is highest among parents of children in the youngest grades, ranging from 96% in K-2 to 75% among parents of grades 11 and 12 students. Regionally, this level is lowest in the North. Note also that this sense of teachers' caring is meaningfully linked with parents' overall satisfaction with the public education system, echoing the drivers of overall satisfaction expressed in parents' verbatim comments. (See computer tabulations for F7.)

### ***Goal setting and preparing for the future***

A vast majority of parents (82%) is involved in setting learning goals for their child, this level highest among parents of students in grades eight to 10. (See computer tabulations for F6.)

Among parents of secondary-school students, 62% feel that school is preparing these children for a career. Somewhat more parents (72%) feel that school is preparing these children for a post-secondary education, this level increasing...

- in the Okanagan
- among parents of female students
- among parents of younger secondary students (grades 8-10)

Notably, both of these issues are linked meaningfully to parents' satisfaction with their child's education.

(See computer tabulations for F9 and F10.)

### ***Meeting parents' expectations***

Parents were asked a series of questions about specific aspects of their own and their child's experience at school. Parents were asked to rate how frequently each activity occurs.

The results below are presented in highest-to-lowest frequency order, in three "tiers". Activities in tier one can reasonably be considered to be meeting parents' expectations. Similarly, tier two activities are occurring with relative frequency, based on parents' expectations. Tier three activities are meeting fewer parents' expectations, revealing some opportunity to grow performance in these specific areas and, possibly, overall satisfaction with the education system.

#### **Tier One:**

##### ***Do you feel welcome at this child's school?***

- "all" or "most" of the time: 90%

##### ***Does this child feel safe at school?***

- "all" or "most" of the time: 89%

**Tier Two:**

***Are the rules about behaviour enforced at this child's school?***

- "all" or "most" of the time: 79%

***Does this child work hard at his/her studies?***

- "all" or "most" of the time: 77%

***Do you think personal differences are respected at school? Clarify if necessary: These differences might be cultural, ethnic, social or physical, among others.***

- "all" or "most" of the time: 76%

**Tier Three:**

***Does the school include you in decisions that affect this child's education?***

- "all" or "most" of the time: 68%

***Does this child's teacher help with schoolwork when needed?***

- "all" or "most" of the time: 66%

(See computer tabulations for D1 to D7.)

***Student opportunities and needs***

Parents were asked a series of questions examining the frequency of certain activities and needs in their and their child's experience with public education in BC. The results below are presented in order of most frequent to least frequent within two categories: Opportunities and Issues/Needs. Note that bullying and teasing are at the bottom of the list, in terms of frequency.

**Opportunities:**

***How often does this child use computers at school?***

Total at least twice a week	51%
Total once a week to a couple times a month	20%
Less often	10%
Don't know	19%

***How often does this child learn about other cultures at school?***

Total at least twice a week	26%
Total once a week to a couple times a month	29%
Less often	19%
Don't know	26%

***How often are you given an opportunity to be involved in school planning?***

Total at least twice a week	10%
Total once a week to a couple times a month	25%
Less often	59%
Don't know	6%

***How often does the school report on this child's performance?***

Total at least twice a week	10%
Total once a week to a couple times a month	18%
Less often	69%
Don't know	3%

***How often do you volunteer at this child's school?***

Total at least twice a week	5%
Total once a week to a couple times a month	23%
Less often	72%
Don't know	<1%

**Issues/Needs:**

***How often does this child need extra help from his/her teacher with schoolwork?***

Total at least twice a week	27%
Total once a week to a couple times a month	30%
Less often	38%
Don't know	5%

***Is this child bullied, teased or picked on at school?***

Total at least twice a week	5%
Total once a week to a couple times a month	12%
Less often	79%
Don't know	3%

***Do you think this child bullies, teases or picks on other children at school?***

Total at least twice a week	2%
Total once a week to a couple times a month	4%
Less often	91%
Don't know	3%

(See computer tabulations for E1 and E8.)

# Appendix

Questionnaire

**Parent Satisfaction Survey  
Final Topline Results (14 May, 2002)**

**INTRODUCTION**

I am [INTERVIEWER NAME] of McIntyre & Mustel Research, a professional opinion research firm. As part of the BC government's ongoing dialogue about education, we have been asked to talk to parents and guardians of school-age children about their satisfaction with the public education system.

S1. How many children in this household are in the **public** school system, kindergarten to grade 12? Please exclude children who are home-schooled, or attend independent schools or private schools.

**Average**

1.8 children in the public school system → **CONTINUE**

None

→ **THANK AND RECORD REGION**

May I please speak to the parent or guardian in your household who is most involved in decisions about these children's education **IF NOT AVAILABLE, ARRANGE CALLBACK.**

**PERSUADERS:**

- We are not selling or soliciting anything.
- Your responses are anonymous and will be held in strict confidence.
- Your participation in this survey is purely voluntary, but your assistance will make a difference.
- Your identity will not be shared with our client and we will report only on the findings in total.

**B. Characteristics of Household Children**

B1. In what grades are/is the [RECALL NUMBER FROM QS1] school-age children / the child in this household?

7%	Grade 1	8%	Grade 4	7%	Grade 7	9%	Grade 10
8%	Grade 2	7%	Grade 5	9%	Grade 8	8%	Grade 11
8%	Grade 3	8%	Grade 6	7%	Grade 9	8%	Grade 12

B2. **IF MORE THAN ONE SCHOOL-AGE CHILD IN HOUSEHOLD:** Which of these children most recently had a birthday? **SELECT ONE.**

B3. For randomization purposes, we would like you to think about this child when you answer my questions. Is this child female or male?

- 50% Female
- 50% Male

- B4. **IF SELECTED CHILD IS IN GRADE 6 or 7:** Is this child in an elementary school or middle school?  
**IF SELECTED CHILD IS IN GRADE 8:** Is this child in a middle school or secondary school?

56% Elementary school  
5% Middle school  
39% Secondary school

### C. Top-of-Mind Satisfaction with Child's Education

- C1. Are you basically satisfied or dissatisfied with this child's education? Is that very or somewhat?  
[CLARIFY IF NECESSARY: We are referring to the current academic year, which began in September 2001 and will end this June.]

34% Very satisfied  
43% Somewhat satisfied  
12% Somewhat dissatisfied  
10% Very dissatisfied  
1% Don't know

- C2. What is the main reason you say that? ENTER VERBATIM, CLARIFY BUT DON'T PROBE  
OPEN END

n/a

### D. General Frequency of Activities

Next, we'd like you answer the following questions about your and this child's experience with the public education system **this academic year**.

[CLARIFY IF NECESSARY: "That would be since September 2001".]

**READ FIRST QUESTION...**All of the time; Most of the time; About half the time; Only rarely or None of the time. **REPEAT SCALE AS NECESSARY**

#### RANDOMIZE LIST

- D1. Does this child work hard at his/her studies?

33%	All of the time	4%	Only rarely
44%	Most of the time	1%	None of the time
18%	About half the time	1%	Don't know

D2. Does this child's teacher help with schoolwork when needed?

32%	All of the time	6%	Only rarely
34%	Most of the time	2%	None of the time
17%	About half the time	8%	Don't know

D3. Do you think personal differences are respected at school? **[CLARIFY IF NECESSARY: "These differences might be cultural, ethnic, social or physical, among others."]**

33%	All of the time	4%	Only rarely
43%	Most of the time	2%	None of the time
13%	About half the time	6%	Don't know

D4. Are the rules about behaviour enforced at this child's school?

42%	All of the time	3%	Only rarely
37%	Most of the time	1%	None of the time
11%	About half the time	7%	Don't know

D5. Does the school include you in decisions that affect this child's education?

24%	All of the time	14%	Only rarely
34%	Most of the time	8%	None of the time
17%	About half the time	4%	Don't know

D6. Do you feel welcome at this child's school?

71%	All of the time	3%	Only rarely
19%	Most of the time	1%	None of the time
5%	About half the time	1%	Don't know

**END RANDOM**

D7. Does this child feel safe at school?

54%	All of the time	1%	Only rarely
35%	Most of the time	1%	None of the time
7%	About half the time	2%	Don't know

**E. Time-based Frequency of Specific Activities**

**READ FIRST QUESTION...**Every day, Twice a week, Once a week, A couple times a month, Less often.  
**REPEAT SCALE AS NECESSARY.**

**RANDOMIZE LIST**

E1. How often does this child need extra help from his/her teacher with schoolwork? **[CROSS-BREAK WITH D2]**

12%	Every day	30%	Less often
15%	Twice a week	8%	Never
11%	Once a week	5%	Don't know
19%	A couple of times a month		

E2. How often does this child use computers at school?

21%	Every day	6%	Less often
30%	Twice a week	4%	Never
15%	Once a week	19%	Don't know
5%	A couple of times a month		

E3. How often does this child learn about other cultures at school?

14%	Every day	18%	Less often
12%	Twice a week	1%	Never
11%	Once a week	26%	Don't know
18%	A couple of times a month		

E4. How often do you volunteer at this child's school?

1%	Every day	46%	Less often
4%	Twice a week	26%	Never
7%	Once a week	<1	Don't know
		%	
16%	A couple of times a month		

**KEEP QE5 AND QE6 TOGETHER**

E5. Do you think this child bullies, teases or picks on other children at school?

<1	Every day	32%	Less often
%			
1%	Twice a week	59%	Never
1%	Once a week	3%	Don't know
3%	A couple of times a month		

E6. Is this child bullied, teased or picked on at school?

2%	Every day	36%	Less often
3%	Twice a week	43%	Never
3%	Once a week	3%	Don't know
10%	A couple of times a month		

E7. How often does the school report on this child's performance?

7%	Every day	67%	Less often
3%	Twice a week	2%	Never
5%	Once a week	3%	Don't know
13%	A couple of times a month		

E8. How often are you given an opportunity to be involved in school planning?

7%	Every day	50%	Less often
3%	Twice a week	9%	Never
4%	Once a week	6%	Don't know
21%	A couple of times a month		

#### END RANDOM

Every day  
Twice a week  
Once a week  
A couple times a month  
Less often

NEVER (DO NOT READ)

#### F. Satisfaction with Specific Education Activities

Please tell me whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with the following aspects of this child's education this academic year starting with... **READ FIRST ASPECT**. Is that very or somewhat?

#### RANDOMIZE LIST

F1. Development of reading skills at school

49%	Very satisfied
36%	Somewhat satisfied
8%	Somewhat dissatisfied
5%	Very dissatisfied
3%	Don't know

F2. Development of writing skills at school

43% Very satisfied  
39% Somewhat satisfied  
10% Somewhat dissatisfied  
7% Very dissatisfied  
2% Don't know

F3. Development of mathematics skills at school

42% Very satisfied  
38% Somewhat satisfied  
11% Somewhat dissatisfied  
7% Very dissatisfied  
2% Don't know

F4. Learning about anti bullying

40% Very satisfied  
33% Somewhat satisfied  
8% Somewhat dissatisfied  
4% Very dissatisfied  
15% Don't know

F5. Program choices for this child

35% Very satisfied  
42% Somewhat satisfied  
9% Somewhat dissatisfied  
4% Very dissatisfied  
9% Don't know

**END RANDOM**

SCALE: Very satisfied  
Somewhat satisfied  
Somewhat dissatisfied  
Very dissatisfied

F6. Are you involved in setting learning goals for this child?

82% Yes  
17% No  
1% Don't know

F7. In your opinion, do the teachers at school care about this child?

- 87% Yes
- 9% No
- 4% Don't know

F9. **IF CHILD IS IN GRADES 8-12:** In your opinion, is school preparing this child for a job or career in the future?

- 62% Yes
- 32% No
- 6% Don't know

F10. **IF CHILD IS IN GRADES 8-12:** In your opinion, is school preparing this child for post-secondary education?

- 72% Yes
- 25% No
- 3% Don't know

## G. Considered Satisfaction with Child's Education

G1. Finally, Based on your opinions about this child's education, are you basically satisfied or dissatisfied with your child's education? Is that strongly or somewhat? **[CLARIFY IF NECESSARY: We are referring to the current academic year, which began in September 2001 and will end this June.]**

- 41% Very satisfied
- 42% Somewhat satisfied
- 11% Somewhat dissatisfied
- 6% Very dissatisfied
- 1% Don't know

## H. Demographics and Round up

As we near the end of the interview, I have just a few final questions to help us understand the results. Please ask me to skip any questions you are not comfortable with.

H1. **IF CHILD IS IN GRADES 4, 7, 10 OR 12:** Did you receive the paper survey from the Ministry of Education, which was distributed through the schools to parents around BC?

- 43% Yes
- 45% No
- 11% Don't know

H2. **IF YES:** Did you complete and return the paper survey to this child's school?

- 72% Yes
- 26% No
- 2% Don't know

H3. GENDER OF PARENT (BY OBSERVATION)

- 28% Male
- 72% Female

H4. Into which of the following age groupings may I place you?

- 16% Under 35 years
- 82% 35 to 54 years
- 2% 55 years or better
- <1% Refused
- %

H5. Is your annual household income before income taxes less than \$50,000 per year or \$50,000 per year or more?

- 29% Less than \$50,000
- 53% \$50,000 per year or more
- 19% Refused

H6. REGION

- |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 4% North              | 4% Kootenay        |
| 5% Central Interior   | 57% Lower Mainland |
| 19% Coast and Islands | 12% Okanagan       |

H8. Would you mind telling me the name of the school that this child attends?

YES → **RECORD NAME** \_\_\_\_\_  
NO →

H7. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your or this child's experience with the public education system? IF YES: What would that be? **DO NOT PROBE.**

Yes → **OPEN END**  
No

**Thank you very much for sharing your views. Your opinions will make a difference.**