



Chapter 6: The School Development Process

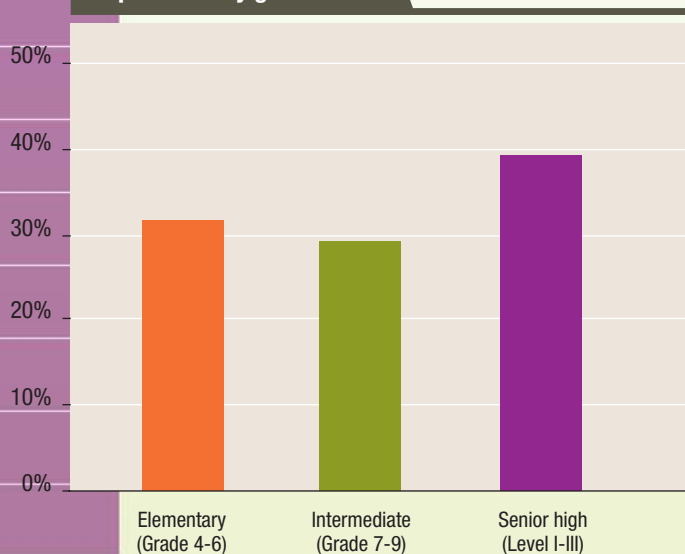
Schools in the province engage in a regular school-level planning process designed to guide and focus a school towards the achievement of its ultimate goal - to enhance student learning. The school development process is cyclical with schools repeating the process every three or four years. This process sets out to ensure students receive the best educational services possible.

An important component of this planning process is gathering the thoughts and opinions of parents, teachers and students. Each group completes a survey which covers a wide variety of topics including school safety, physical activity and dietary habits, and participation in school activities. For each statement, participants are asked to select one response on a five-point Likert scale: strongly disagree; disagree; don't know; agree; and strongly agree. As an example, the survey students in Grades 4 to 6 completed is provided in appendix A at the end of the report.



This chapter will explore student responses on selected questions from the school development surveys. Unless otherwise noted, the percentages reported are based on the number of participants who agreed or strongly agreed with a particular statement. A slightly different, although more age-appropriate response scale, was used in the primary grades, therefore their responses are not included in the analysis.

Figure 6.1: Percentage of respondents by grade level



Student participation

Between September 2006 and April 2008, 11,081 students in 86 schools across the province completed the school development survey. As shown in *figure 6.1*, the sample included similar percentages of students from the three grade groups. The percentage of male and female respondents was virtually identical. This was also true within each grade grouping.

Survey results

The statements within the surveys can be grouped along six themes: the school environment; healthy living; attitudes about school; opportunities for learning; available opportunities to reinforce learning; and teacher support. Each of these themes will be expanded in the following sections.

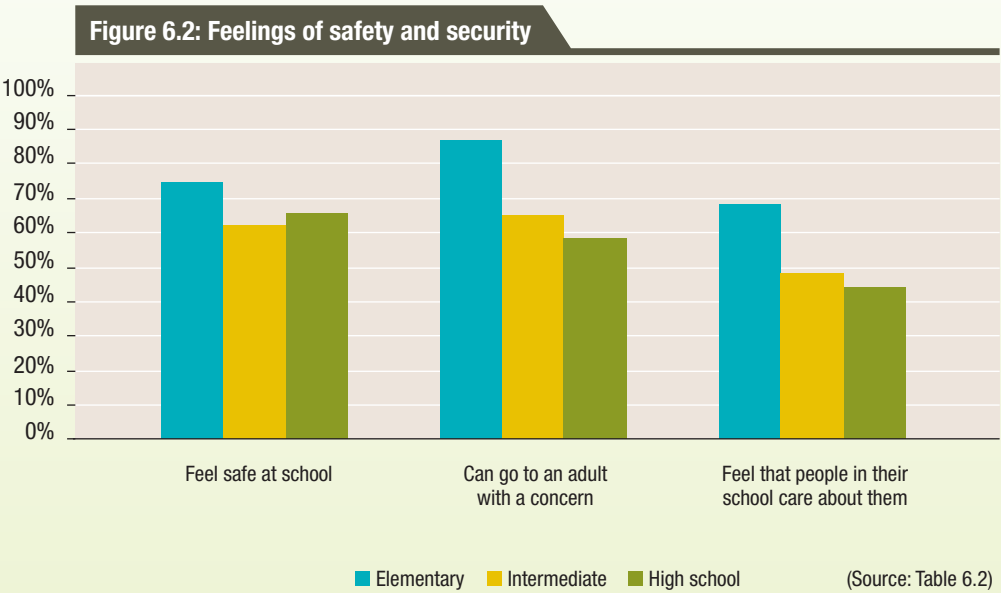
The school environment

This theme deals with how students feel while they are at school. These factors all have a role to play in promoting a healthy, positive school environment that encourages student learning. Overall, more than two-thirds of respondents felt safe while at school and could go to an adult with a concern (67.7% and 69.4% respectively). Just over half (52.9%) of respondents felt people at school cared about them.

Grade level differences

Figure 6.2 summarizes the responses for each of the three grade levels. The percentage of respondents who feel safe at school drops from approximately three-quarters of the elementary students, to 62.3% of intermediate students. At the high school level, the percentage increases slightly to approximately two-thirds of the respondents.

Students were asked if they could approach an adult with a problem or concern. Over two-thirds of the students agreed with this statement. When focusing on the different grade levels, a dramatic drop is seen between elementary students and the other levels. For example, while 86.9% of elementary students reported they could go to an adult with a concern, only 58.6% of senior high students stated they could do this. A little more than half of the students felt that people at their school cared about them. Again, higher percentages of younger students (i.e., elementary level), felt this was the case.





Healthy living

This section deals with the two components of ensuring a healthy lifestyle: diet and physical activity. Overall, a little more than half (55.2%) of the students reported making healthy food choices every day. While over three-quarters (76.4%) of students reported having the opportunity to take part in activities promoting healthy living at school, only 61.4% actually engaged in some form of physical activity every day.

Grade level differences

The percentage of students making healthy food choices peaks during the elementary years, at 78.6%, and then steadily declines to 43.3% for senior high students. Also, as students progress through the grade levels, they become less physically active. For example, 79.0% of the elementary students reported engaging in some form of physical activity on a daily basis. This drops to 54.1% for senior high students. A similar trend is seen

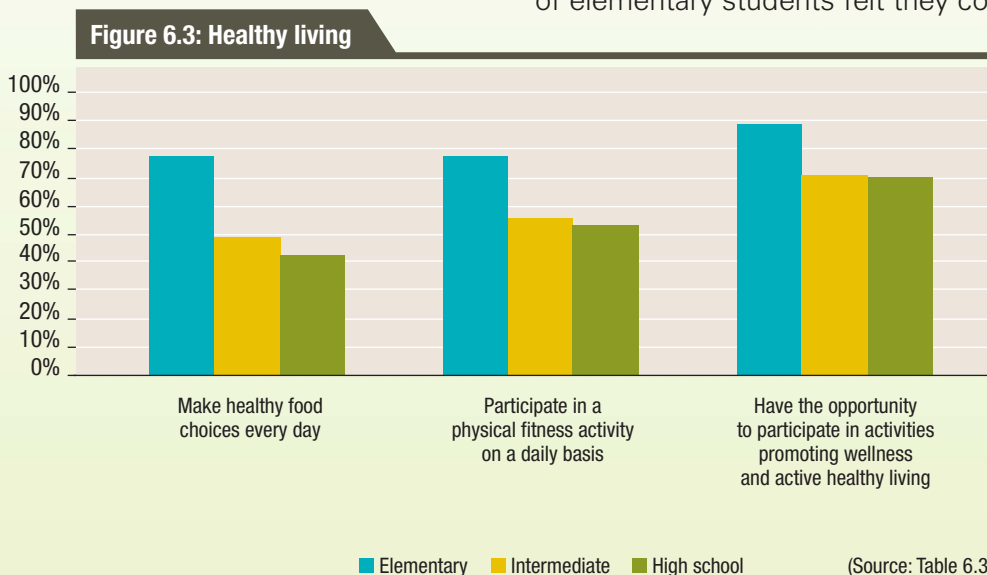
in the percentage of students at each grade level who have the opportunity to take part in activities promoting active living while at school (see *figure 6.3*).

Attitudes about school

To succeed at school, students must feel motivated to learn and see the importance and value in learning. Overall, students have a positive attitude about school. The majority of students believed they were able to learn while at school (84.2%), saw the importance of completing assigned work on time (90.7%), and being prepared for class (89.4%). A little over three-quarters (77.5%) of students reported treating everyone at their school with respect. Less than half the students (47.2%) felt that their school provided them with opportunities to be a leader.

Grade level differences

The percentage of students in agreement with these statements declined as they grew older, however this change is not as evident as in previous sections. Higher percentages of elementary students felt they could



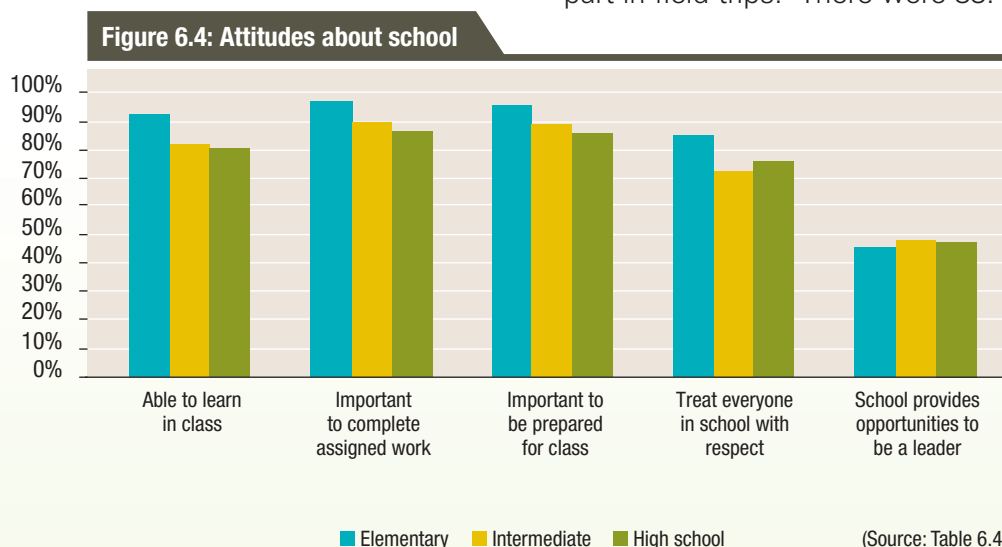
(Source: Table 6.3)

learn in class, saw the importance of being prepared for class and completing assigned work, and treating others with respect. With the exception of treating others with respect, the percentage declines as the grade level increases. The lowest percentage of students who treated their peers and teachers with respect was seen at the intermediate level. Approximately the same percentage of students in each grade level believed their school provided them with opportunities to be a leader (see *figure 6.4*).

counters and base ten blocks. Older students may complete experiments in the classroom or the science lab. A little more than half of the students reported going on field trips or having a guest speaker visit their classroom.

Grade level differences

As students progress through the grades, they are less likely to take part in these types of learning activities. As shown in *figure 6.5*, while 83.5% of elementary students take part in group activities, this drops to 67.0% for high school students. Similar trends are seen in the other activities. The most dramatic change is seen in the percentage of students who take part in field trips. There were 83.4% of



Opportunities for learning

Teachers may use a variety of methods to promote learning in the classroom. The school development survey highlighted two different ways to promote learning: engaging in group work; and using additional learning resources (e.g., inviting guest speakers to the class, taking part in field trips).

Over three-quarters of students reported taking part in group work and close to two-thirds reported engaging in hands-on activities to promote learning. In the younger grades this may involve using

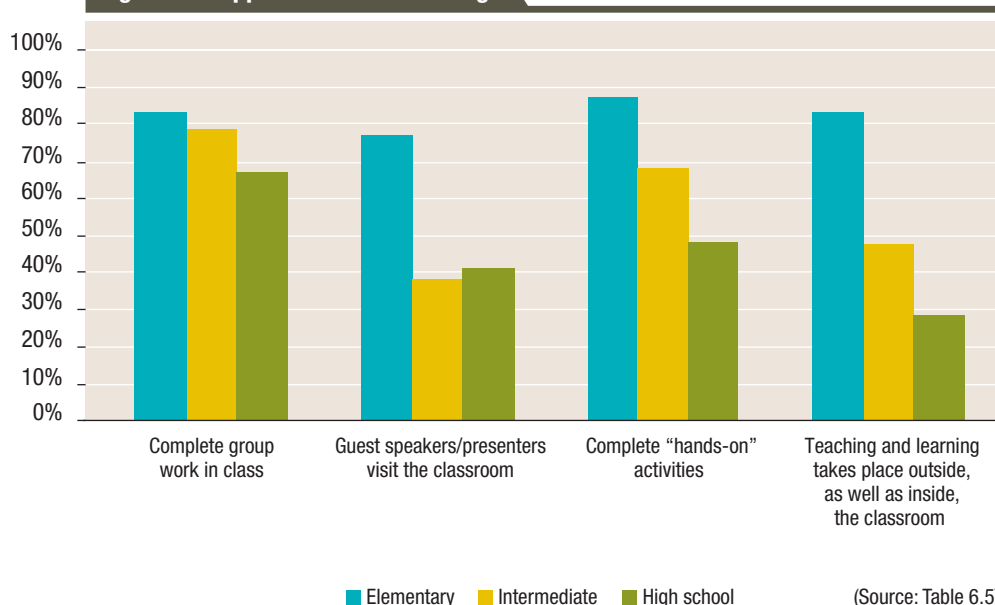
elementary students who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Teaching and learning takes place outside, as well as inside the classroom". At high school, this percentage drops to 28.4%.

Opportunities to reinforce learning

An important way to encourage learning is to provide activities that reinforce classroom learning. These hands on activities provide students with the opportunity to apply the abstract skills and theories learned in the classroom in a real world setting. For example, some schools in the province have cultural



Figure 6.5: Opportunities for learning



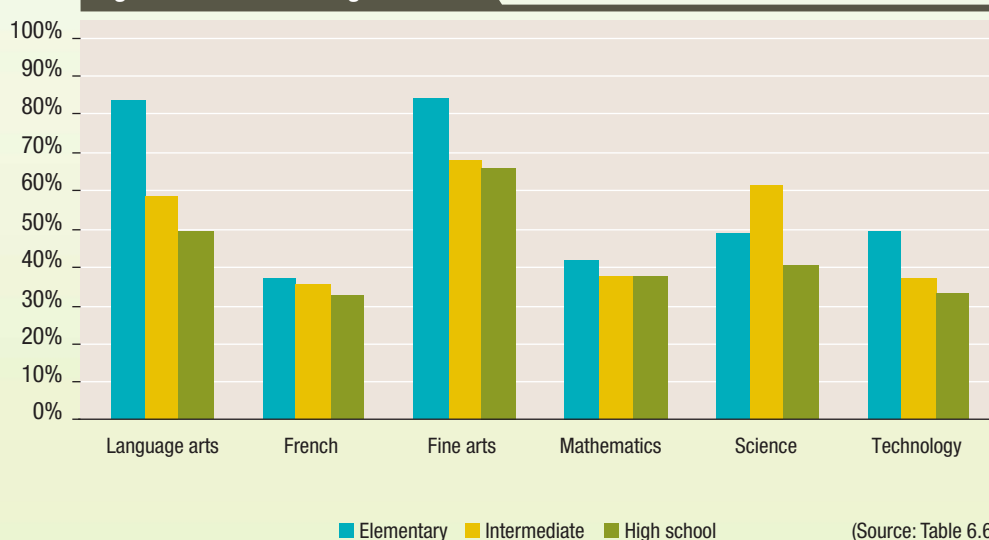
exchange trips with Saint-Pierre and Miquelon, or Quebec. This provides a great opportunity for students to practice their French language skills by becoming immersed within the French culture.

The survey results show that overall, higher percentages of students have the opportunity to take part in English language arts (62.8%) and fine arts programs and activities (72.5%) while at school, rather than science (49.2%), technology (39.4%) or mathematics (38.8%) activities.

Grade level differences

Senior high students are less likely to report having the opportunity to take part in these additional activities when compared to elementary students. The percentage of students with the opportunity to take part in French related activities remained low across all three grade levels. Intermediate students reported having the most opportunities to take part in science activities as compared to the other grade levels (see figure 6.6).

Figure 6.6: Extra learning activities



Teacher support

Students believe their teachers provided support in the classroom and helped them maximize their learning experience. For example, 80.6% of students reported their teachers provided them with course outlines for each subject. Also, approximately 80% of students reported their teacher used a variety of methods to assess their learning in the classroom. Finally, 75.4% of students felt their teacher was there to provide feedback on how they could improve their work either through written or verbal comments.

Grade level differences

As the grade level increased, the percentage of students who felt their teachers used a variety of assessment methods declined from 86.3% of elementary students to 74.0% of senior high students. The largest difference was seen in the percentage of students who felt their teacher showed them how to improve their work. There was a difference of approximately 25 percentage points between elementary (88.8%) and high school students (64.7%) who agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. There was little variability in the percentage of students who felt their teachers provided course outlines between the elementary and high school students. The percentage of intermediate students who agreed or strongly agreed with this was slightly lower than the other two levels (see figure 6.7).

