

## First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Peoples

Participants expressed a desire for the education system to close the academic achievement and outcome gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Delivering the promise of “Jordan’s Principle” was a common theme throughout discussions, as well as ensuring equitable access to all government-funded services and supports. Encouragingly, participants noted many helpful initiatives that could be expanded upon. Some examples included:

1. Expanding land-based education to highlight and incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing.
2. Funding Indigenous language programming to promote language revitalization.
3. Ensuring that First Nations children have equitable access to resources and supports.
4. Utilizing existing data collection and measurement such as the “Our School” survey to gain an enhanced understanding of the inequities in the system.
5. Welcoming and consulting with Elders and Knowledge Keepers, increasing their participation and engagement in schools.



## Theme 6: Communication

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Participants’ commented positively about the increased communication during the pandemic, across the education system and other sectors, and also commented on opportunities for this to be improved and streamlined. Some expressed concerns with regard to online platforms and modes of communication. Whether online or in person, it is clear that improving the quality of communication would be beneficial.

### Communicating with Parents/Caregivers

Discussions pertaining to communication centred on collaboration among teachers, administrators, parents/caregivers, and students. With this in mind, communication must be phrased carefully, focusing on student capabilities and strengths rather than learning deficits. As several respondents noted, “schools need to go to parents.” In order to improve the communication with parents/caregivers in the education system, participants shared that we must do more of the following:

1. Implement more home visits and in-person interactions to build connections.
2. Use social media and other online platforms to increase reach of communication.
3. Listen to what “the parents are using” to communicate, use common platforms.

## Intersectoral Communication

Participants suggested greater collaboration with mental health services and social work. As part of the need for intersectoral responses, a few participants called for enhanced coordination with Child and Family Services (CFS). One participant noted that CFS has retreated from monitoring chronic absenteeism, thus increasing pressure on education system workers to take on this monitoring. Strengthening of communication challenges solutions and successes across sectors should continue. The common theme was that schools should be hubs for access to services and that the education system need not be the sole provider of those services. To ensure this, we must:

1. Build awareness of the socioeconomic disparities that can impede the flow of communication.
2. Recognize and address the trend towards ideological polarization and nurture trust between communities and government to improve communication.
3. Encourage a better understanding of various sectors' strengths and capacity for collaboration and partnership.



## Theme 7: Evidence-based Decision-making—Data Collection

Participants revealed greater understanding and learnings about the system as a whole. The pandemic also revealed a large discrepancy across school divisions in the tools and approaches employed to identify their students' learning needs. During the forum, superintendents confirmed that school closures during the pandemic impacted students' academic outcomes, behaviours, and skills. Several school divisions reported adopting a proactive approach and using assessment and classroom screening tools to support early identification of learning needs in order to gather data and inform student programming (such as Early Years Evaluation). Divisions further reported increasing their use of data (including Social Emotional Learning data). Some school divisions are focusing on young learners' literacy and numeracy outcomes, while others are centered on middle years learners. Many school divisions reported being flexible by permitting teachers to prioritize content based on the assessment of students' learning needs. Most school divisions asserted that they are facing challenges in collecting qualitative and quantitative data regarding the mental health and well-being of the students due to limited access to resources. There is also a clear need for provincial data to inform planning and evidence-based decision-making.

Some participants identified a lack of a clear standard for data collection, which results in some school divisions developing their own strategies. Better collaboration with the department regarding data collection may improve efficiency in the manner data is collected, leading to better evidence-based decision making overall. It was noted that the challenge lies in creating a balance between the autonomy of school divisions and standardization in order to improve the efficiency of data collection.