



## Parents critical of methods used to communicate their children's academic results

The progress report is a communication tool that presents the status of the ongoing research conducted as part of the ERES project. A first wave of data collection was carried out in spring 2008 among two distinct groups, for a total of nearly 2,642 families. Additional information about this study is available on our Website at <http://www.eres.fse.ulaval.ca>. This second progress report features a description of the parents who completed questionnaires along with their viewpoints on the methods used by schools to communicate their children's academic results.

### Who are the parents participating in the ERES project?

The parents who agreed to take part in the ERES project have been divided into two groups, based on whether or not their children have been exposed to the new Education Program. The first group includes parents with children in Secondary IV not exposed to education reform (ER). The majority of the 1,247 respondents from this group are mothers (67.1%); their average age is 45.7 years and 80.5% of them are married. Most were born in Quebec (89.5%), speak French at home (81.8%) and have a postsecondary education (77.4%). In addition, 85.2% work full or part time and 47.7% have an annual income of \$40,000 or more.

The second group, which is composed of 1,395 parents with children in Secondary II who have been exposed to the new Education Program, are, for the most part, mothers (67.5%); the average age of respondents is 43.7 years and 79.9% of them are married. The majority were born in Quebec (86.5%), speak French at home (79.2%) and have a postsecondary education (69.8%). Finally, 86.8% work full or part time and 49.2% have an annual income of \$40,000 or more.

### Viewpoints on methods of communicating results

The following table summarizes the main differences between the old and new report cards, which are the official method of communicating the academic progress of students, regardless of whether or not they have been exposed to the new Education Program.

#### Report cards of students exposed to the new Education Program since 2007-2008

- A percentage grade for each subject
- The group average for each subject
- A percentage grade for each competency
- A summary of learning development
- Comments on a minimum of one cross-curricular competency
- Comments

#### Report cards of students not exposed to the new Education Program

- A percentage grade for each subject
- The group average for each subject
- Comments

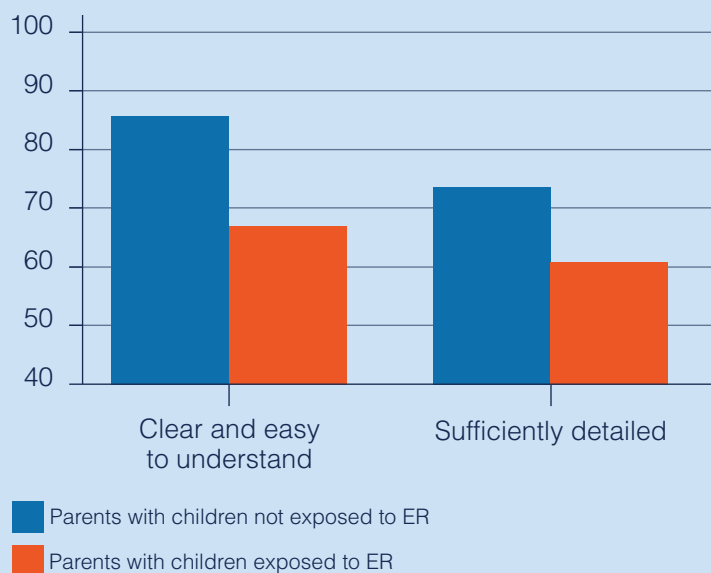


Parents were surveyed on the importance they attributed to the various ways used by schools to inform them of their children's academic progress. Numeric report cards, with or without comments, were considered important by over 96% of parents, regardless of whether or not their children were exposed to ER.

When asked to assess the communication methods used, 85.5% of parents whose children were not exposed to ER agreed that the methods used by schools to communicate their children's results were clear and easy to understand. In addition, 73.4% of them mentioned that these methods were sufficiently detailed to follow their children's academic development, both in terms of their strengths and difficulties.

Parents with children exposed to ER were; 67.9% of them reported that the methods used by the school were clear and easy to understand and 60.3% of them believed that these methods were sufficiently detailed to follow their children's academic development.

### ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNICATION TOOLS USED



It would therefore appear that the two groups of participants hold different views on this topic. **While the majority of parents with children exposed to ER mentioned finding the communication methods clear and easy to understand, they were not as likely to believe this to be so when compared to parents of youth not exposed to the new Education Program.** A more detailed analysis also found that this gap was wider among parents with a postsecondary education; these parents appeared to be more critical of the communication methods than parents with fewer years of schooling. The same finding was noted in terms of the communication methods being deemed sufficiently detailed to follow the progress of students, including their strengths and difficulties. **Fewer parents of youths exposed to the new Education Program found the methods used to communicate their children's academic results sufficiently detailed when compared to parents whose children have not been exposed to ER; again, this gap was wider among parents with a greater number of years of schooling.** Further analyses confirmed that these differences could be observed regardless of annual income and regions of Quebec.

It would therefore seem, that even though the current report cards contain more information, a smaller proportion of parents find them clear and easy to understand and sufficiently detailed to follow their children's progress. It is important to keep in mind, however, that parents of children not exposed to education reform receive reports cards that are quite similar to those they received as students. This may influence their assessment of the situation. Also, the difference in terms of age and level – Secondary II for students exposed to ER and Secondary IV for those not exposed – may also partially explain this difference of opinion. Parents of Secondary IV students have more experience of the high school education system than the other group of parents.

### IN OUR NEXT PROGRESS REPORT

Don't miss our next progress report in fall 2009, when we will present how parents perceive the training program followed by their children.



UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL

Pavillon des Sciences de l'éducation  
Bureau 956  
Québec (Québec) G1K 7P4  
CANADA

Faculté des sciences de l'éducation  
Département d'études sur l'enseignement et l'apprentissage

Éducation,  
Loisir et Sport

Québec

