

## Oak Park and River Forest High School

Oct. 1, 2020

### Results of Thoughtexchange:

*“What is working well with remote learning and what could be improved?”*

Thoughtexchange is a unique opinion research tool that allows users “to hear from the unheard majority,” as Thoughtexchange puts it. Exchange participants are asked to anonymously respond to an open-ended question, as well as review and rank at least 30 responses from other participants. Participants can revisit the survey as many times as they like before it closes. The Thoughtexchange algorithm shuffles the thoughts that each participant sees, so that the number of rankings per thought is as equal as possible, regardless of when the thought was submitted.

For this Thoughtexchange, which was open Sept. 22-28, 2020, students were asked to respond to the following question: *“What is working well with remote learning and what could be improved?”*

### TWO KEY UPDATES

Before looking at results, we want to share two important updates:

- The Reimagine Education OPRF 2020-2021 steering committee is working to create a hybrid plan that will allow students to opt in to some level of in-person learning during semester 2. A draft of the plan will be presented to the Board on Nov. 19, with a final plan to be presented for Board approval on Dec. 3.
- As we shared with you in our Sept. 11 Thoughtexchange report ([click here](#)), many students are not finding the Wednesday advisory period to be useful, a theme that is repeated in this latest exchange. Supporting students’ social-emotional health is too important to just cancel this effort right now. But we heard you loud and clear: We need to do better, and we are working on making sure that time is truly meaningful and helpful.

### RESULTS

#### Demographics

Participation in the Thoughtexchange was as follows:

- Total number of participants: 1,326
- Number of thoughts shared: 2,168
- Number of ratings given to thoughts: 60,414

We requested that participants answer three demographic questions, with the results as follows.

**1. What best describes your role?**



%		Role
39%	(483)	Student
7%	(85)	Faculty member
1%	(18)	Other employee
52%	(651)	Parent/guardian
1%	(11)	Both an employee & parent
0%	(3)	Community member or other

**2. How do you self-identify?**



%		Identity
5%	(60)	Asian
8%	(103)	Black or African American
5%	(58)	Latinx or Hispanic
0%	(6)	Middle Eastern/North African
5%	(57)	Multiracial
0%	(0)	Native American
0%	(0)	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
67%	(836)	White
2%	(23)	Other
8%	(103)	Prefer not to say

### 3. How do you self-identify?



%		Person Icon	
73%	(902)	Dark Blue	Female
25%	(305)	Blue	Male
1%	(11)	Light Blue	Non-binary
1%	(20)	Light Blue	Other

#### **Themes that emerged**

Here are the top three themes that emerged, along with the three top-ranked thoughts within each theme:

##### **Advisory**

- **OK... the IDEA of advisory is nice but 10 mins does absolutely nothing.** On B days, I don't have a class until 10:30 so it sucks having to get up at 8 just for 10 mins of advisory.
- **Advisory is so unnecessary. The student bulletin works just fine.** We literally don't need it. It makes us lose sleep, and we never even do anything productive in it, so why even bother?
- **Advisory should be removed; gets in the way and has no use.** If we would have no advisory, can have a more consistent schedule, sleep more, and save time during the day.

##### **Block schedule**

- **Block scheduling is great!** It's nice to have the workload broken up onto alternating days
- **Block Scheduling.** The block scheduling allows students to not feel overwhelmed.
- **The A/B schedule is working for my student.** Only having three classes per day is manageable. A full schedule each day would be overwhelming.

##### **Assignments**

- **All teachers need to agree to post ALL assignments, tests, readings, reviews, expectations on the assignment portion of google classroom.** My son needs to look in three different places and sometimes skim all the pages of a handout to find the assignments. It's too much.
- **Every assignment should at least be posted on Google Classroom.** It is crazy to expect the kids to hunt down expectations.
- **Teachers should never communicate things solely through Zoom. Info should always be in an accessible spot for students to find.** When teachers don't write things down in classroom (AND put due dates!!!!!!), there can be a lot more confusion.

##### **Hot topics**

Of the total 2,164 thoughts that were shared, 2,085 were given enough ratings to rank. You can see all thoughts by [clicking here](#). Following are 15 highly rated thoughts on different topics:

- **OK... the IDEA of advisory is nice but 10 mins does absolutely nothing.** On B days, I don't have a class until 10:30 so it sucks having to get up at 8 just for 10 mins of advisory.

- **Working well...The 9am start time** - I hope we keep this start time when we go back in person, it is sooooo much better for the students.
- **All teachers need to agree to post ALL assignments, tests, readings, reviews, expectations on the assignment portion of google classroom.** My son needs to look in three different places and sometimes skim all the pages of a handout to find the assignments. It's too much.
- **I think remote learning's later start is good and healthier for the kids. The technology continues to present issues however.** The chrome books do not seem to be able to handle zoom classes and google meets without losing audio &/or video.
- **The A day B day schedule for remote learning works decently for me as a student.** It makes the work load not super insane.
- **Block scheduling is great!** It's nice to have the workload broken up onto alternating days
- **It's better than it was in the spring.** Teachers and students are more engaged. Classes are more engaging and content is truly being taught.
- **Put everything for the class in one place, please and thank you**
- **Advisory is an ineffective use of time** we don't do anything and I feel like it is pointless since it doesn't benefit any of us
- **Teachers who make themselves available for office hours help students who are struggling understand the material** Learning via Zoom can be challenging
- **The structured schedule is working well.** Consistency helps the students focus and plan their work.
- **It's going fine, but I still wish we didn't have advisory.** It's pointless and most kids I know just skip it. I could be sleeping in or doing homework during that time.
- **It helps my student to have some printed materials for homework, rather than have to do everything on the computer. Not having to read on the screen** after looking at it all day helps.
- **I enjoy having a 30 minute break in between every class.** It gives me time off to do something for myself before having to rejoin another hour long zoom class.
- **The pace we have to learn/keep up is too fast. There's too much information being thrown at us and not enough time to really grasp and comprehend it.** Because a lot of the work is based on a standard that most students don't fit into, we fall behind and they struggle to get back up.

### Disaggregated results

We filtered results by the various demographics we collected: role, race/ethnicity, and gender identity. While there did not appear to be wide variations among constituencies, it's important to note that there were two categories of disaggregation that did not have enough results to rank: role + any race/ethnicity other than white, and all results + non-binary.

### Critical difference

One of the Thoughtexchange features is that it assesses whether there are any significant areas of disagreement among respondents who have tended to rank other thoughts similarly. Here are the most notable commonalities and differences found.

**Side A (266 participants) + Side B (254 participants) both gave high rankings to these thoughts:**

- **Interactive polls or requests for answers to be typed online are great for getting all students engaged.** This can reach everyone, not just the brave soul who is willing to speak into his or her camera.
- **Advisory is a waste of time.** Time could be better spent sleeping or eating breakfast.

- **Allow retakes, extra credit and test corrections. These are extraordinary times.** Remote learning is not working for some - allow creative ways for students to stay motivated and keep up with material. The goal is to learn.
- **It's better than it was in the spring/** Teachers and students are more engaged. Classes are more engaging and content is truly being taught.
- **The new synchronous schedule is a huge upgrade.** It is much more interactive than last semester and is obviously much safer than being in person.
- **NO teacher should be rigid and inflexible. Teachers need to understand the power they have to shape, encourage OR discourage students.** Students need teachers that will genuinely inspire and support them to achieve their dreams.
- **Remote learning will never replace classroom teaching but the staff seem to be working very hard to make sure it's as good as it possibly can be.** Students need to continue to learn and to stay connected to the school.
- **Get rid of Advisory!** It's too short to do anything substantial. If you don't have a 1st or 5th period, then you have to wake up early to do nothing for 10 minutes.
- **Advisory seems to be a waste of time. During on-line learning it should be cancelled.**
- **There is no reason for advisory, especially before school.** My senior refuses to participate and I frankly don't blame him because there isn't enough time to do anything worthwhile

**Side A gave these responses high ratings while Side B gave them low ratings:**

- **We have no problems to report.** Our son has no complaints
- **What's working best for the remote learning is that it is keeping our children In the faculty Staff safe from the pandemic.**
- **Teachers are doing great, generally happy with how things are going.**We recognize the challenge of teaching online, it's hard!
- **Virtual classrooms are preferable to not knowing what to expect on a day by day basis.**We know our focus is on learning and not on waiting to hear whether we will have school or not.
- **I am appreciating the opportunity to keep myself and my family safe and healthy.**
- **Being home and remaining safe.** To drop the spread of COVID 19.
- **The schedule is amazing.**The flexibility is amazing.
- **The schedule, the breaks, the alternating class days, and communication from teachers all seem to be working well**
- **I think OPRFHS is doing an outstanding job! No complaints.**
- **Teachers are engaging in live lessons for each class, using a rigorous curriculum.** Our daughter is learning and making progress during classes.

**Side B gave these responses high ratings while Side A gave them low ratings:**

- **We are 100% able to do in person learning but oprf is soft. How come people are going to work everyday and we aren't going to school.**
- **This question, like all thought exchange questions, is skewed. You need to ask direct questions, not soft nonsense. Nothing is working.** Virtual learning is an oxymoron and should be scrapped. All of the students are falling behind. The administration and Board need to stop acting like *[thought ends here]*
- **This is embarrassing and ridiculous... bring the students back into school face to face...**

- **I am simply not a fan of remote learning at all. It's bad for our kids' bodies, eyes and mental state. It's not natural.** Remote learning is like a black hole sucking the life out of everybody.
- **Everything** Kids need to be in school ... hybrid model... enough of this... all other schools are beginning to do it, Catholic schools can do it. Bring them back
- **there is very little that I can say that is positive about remote learning** it feels like the kids are falling behind all the other schools that are open and wearing masks but able to do it
- **Make it in person**
- **Is there a way to create some type of Hybrid , In school and on line learning. Even if it means having the kids meet in one of the practice fields fo**
- **Some in person instruction and interaction is NEEDED** Relationships can not be formed completely via zoom - for teachers or students. There has to be a way for a hybrid experience.
- **Please review what other high schools are doing to promote safe in-person learning. We are a supportive community and can figure this out!** We need to keep in mind the mental health of our students from lack of in person socialization.

Thank you to all who participated in this Thoughtexchange. The results will help inform administrators and teachers about how we can improve remote learning this semester, while working toward creating a hybrid plan that will allow some level of in-person instruction next semester.