

# WHAT WE HEARD

## Calgary Girls' School

Calgary, Alberta

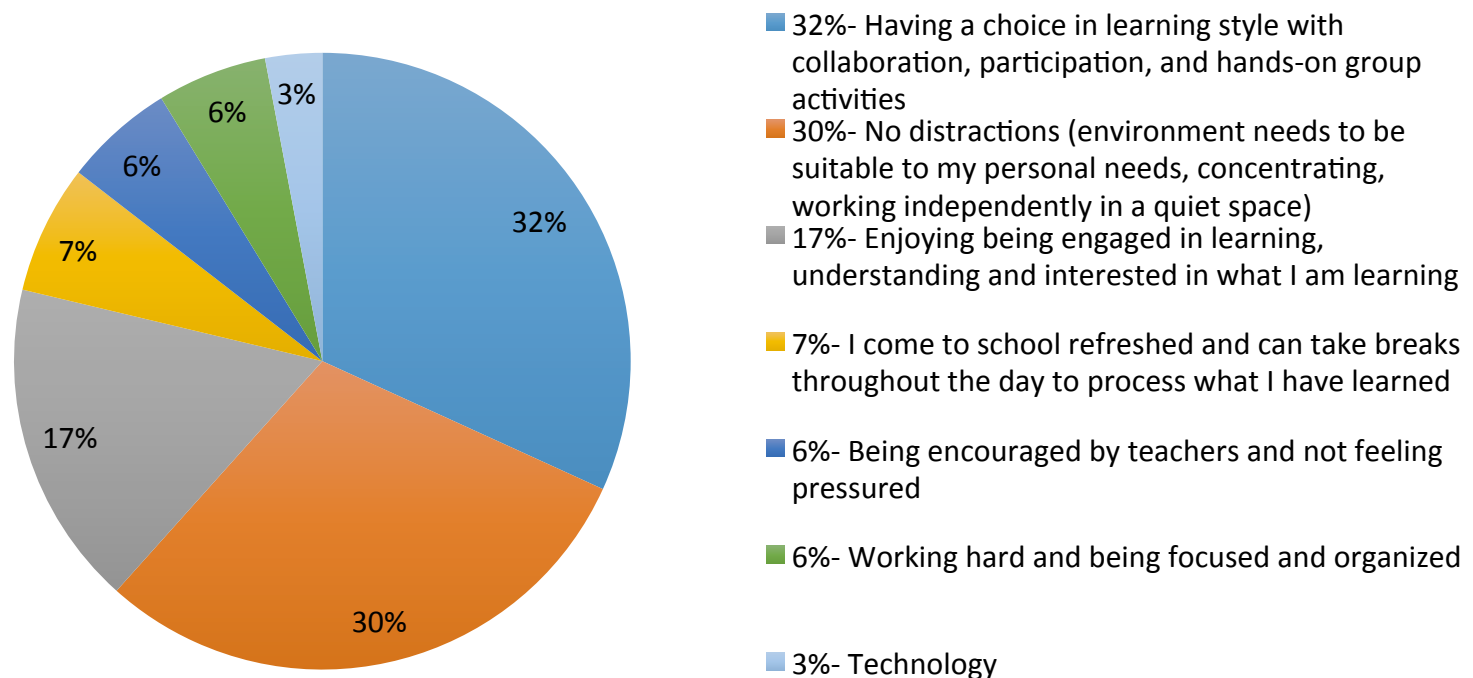
December 11, 2014

457 Student participants

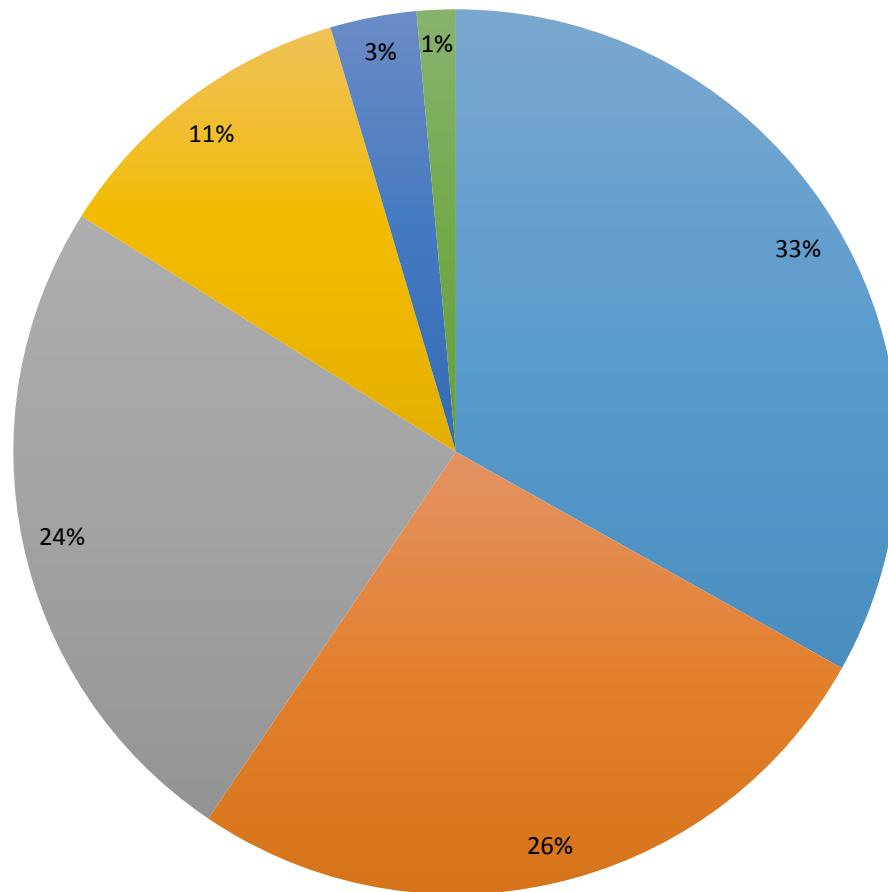
At this Speak Out Forum breakout sessions of small working groups of students and a table leader were formed. The facilitation process for the small group discussions centered around four themes: what does it look like when you are learning at your best; what is holding you back from learning at your best; what actions can adults take to improve how education looks and feels; what actions can students take to improve how education looks and feels? These small group informal discussions were intended to start the conversation with students about their education and were not structured to withstand the rigor of research-based inquiry or scientific data analysis.

### What does it look like when you are learning at your best?

When you are working at your best, what is happening around you? What do you see, hear, feel or do?

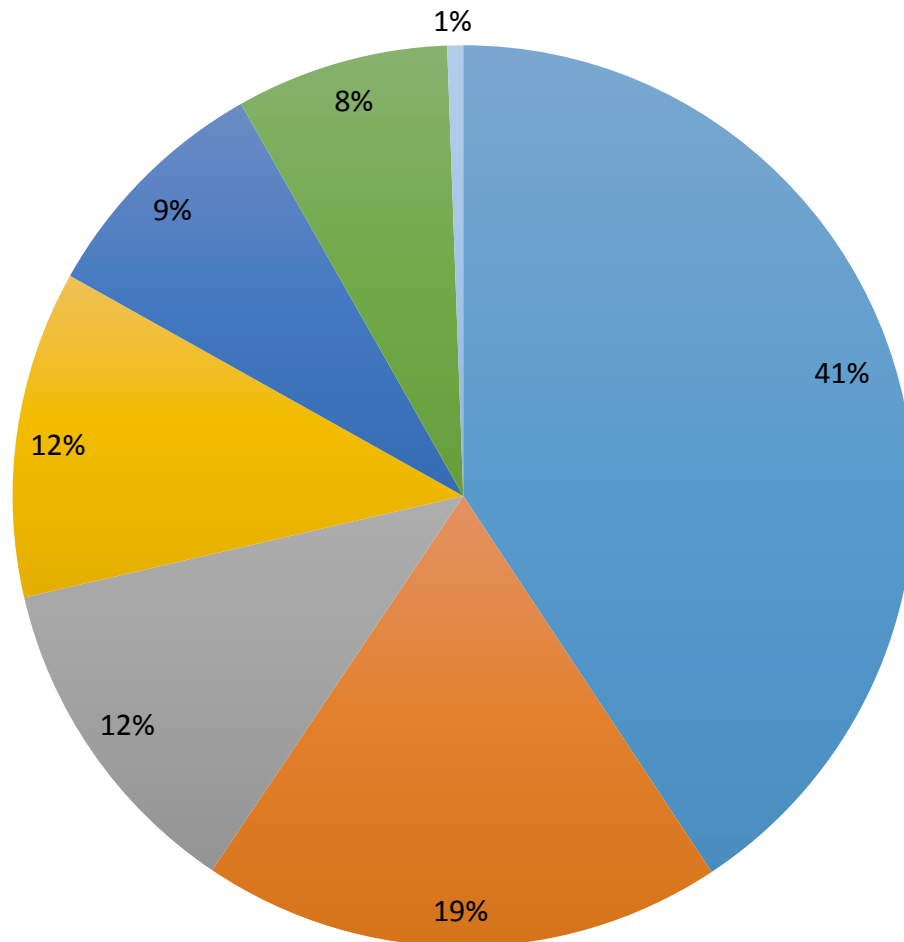


## What is holding you back from learning at your best?



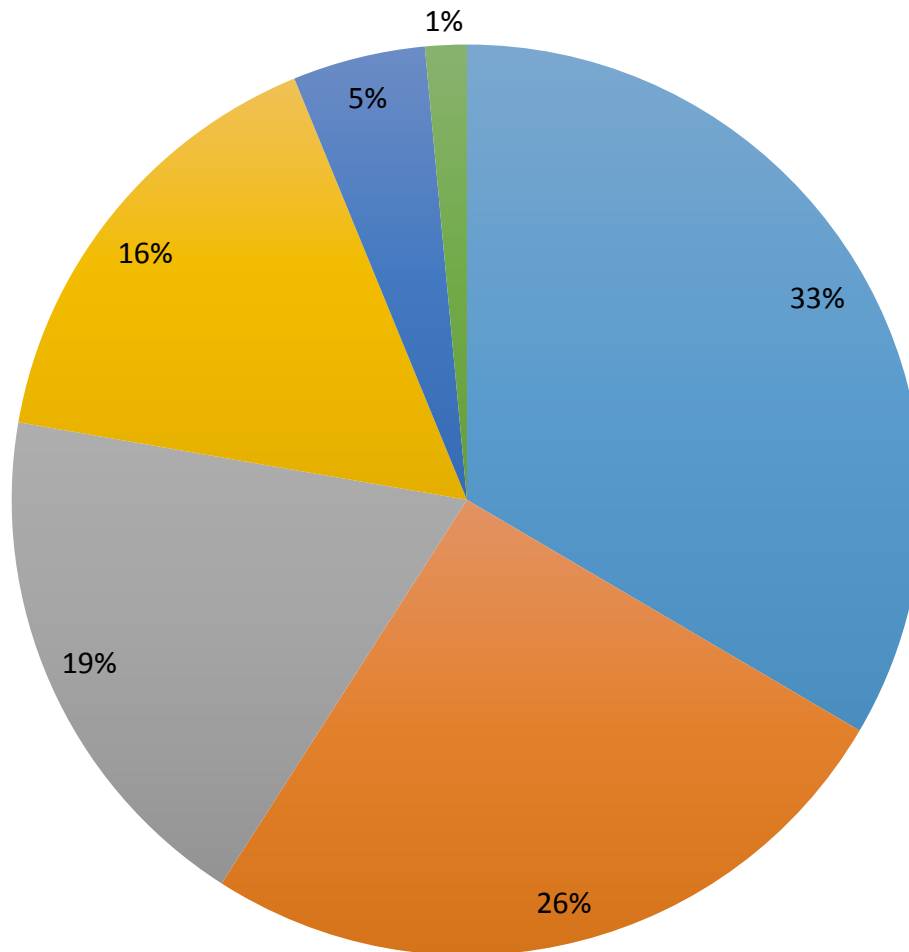
- 33%- Class material, grades, and requirements are not explained sufficiently or creatively enough for us to understand due to time constraints and different learning styles
- 26%- Distractions such as social lives, bullying, working in groups, teachers and parents, disrespect in the classroom, and the internet
- 24%- Stress, pressure from peers, teachers, due dates, too much homework and negative attitudes
- 11%- Lack of support and individual attention from teachers, not having a voice in school and being in classes of mixed abilities
- 3%- Lack of time management
- 1%- We do not ask when we need to slow down or have practice problems explained

## What actions can adults take to improve how education looks and feels?



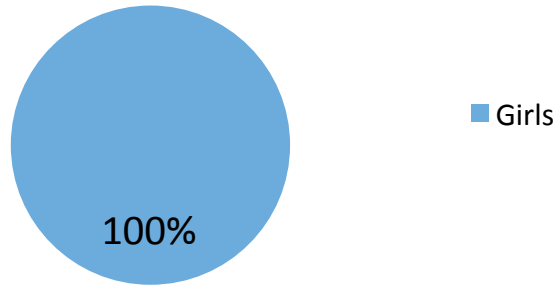
- 35%- Personalize learning by offering more flexible options and due dates for students and providing individual help when needed
- 19%- Put less pressure on students by assigning less homework, having realistic expectations, and not comparing us to other students
- 12%- Provide advice, support, encouragement, and stop distractions and bullying in school
- 12%- Create a fun, engaging, and comfortable environment with breaks and free time
- 9%- Make sure students understand what is asked of them and how they are being graded
- 8%- Adapt teaching styles to be more friendly and helpful and assigning projects that are fun and interesting
- 1%- Make work more challenging leading up to tests

## What actions can students take to improve how education looks and feels?

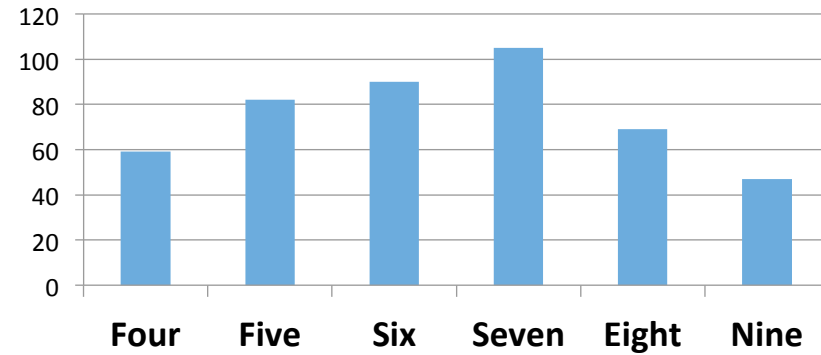


- 33%- Be positive, open-minded and responsible for your own learning, manage your time and avoid distractions
- 26%- Contribute to a comfortable learning environment by respecting and encouraging yourself and others, use school resources appropriately
- 19%- Collaborate, get involved, make your best effort, have fun and participate
- 16%- Ask questions and seek help when you need it, advocate for yourself, take breaks
- 5%- Express your ideas and opinions, challenge yourself, and be a leader
- 1%- Be creative, be yourself and do not bully others for being themselves

## Gender



## Students by Grade



### NETWORKING

14% of you use Facebook, 34% use Instagram, 7% use Twitter, and 8% use Tumblr.

### LANGUAGES

51% of you speak a second language.

### LEARNING AT OUR BEST

The top two ways you learn best are:

1. By doing
2. By working with others

### WHY WE GO TO SCHOOL

The top two reasons you go to school every day are:

1. I want to go to college or university.
2. I enjoy it.

Demographic information was collected using the "Who's in the Room?" questionnaire.

**SESSION NOTES**

**Parent Speak-Out: February 17, 2016**

All notes were captured directly by participants on flipchart paper during the session, and transcribed into this record by the third-party facilitator. The process consisted of 3 rounds of small group discussions, with a small amount of collective sharing and debriefing in between.

*Vision:* Our vision is to be a centre of excellence enabling girls and young women to become confident and innovative leaders in a complex and global world.

*Mission:* The girls and young women of CGS are agents of change who develop confidence and a strong sense of self in a safe, collaborative, inquiry-based learning environment.

**What makes you especially glad that your daughter attends CGS? What do you value most about CGS?**

**What are we doing well with respect to our vision and mission? What successes can we celebrate?**

Undistracted Girl environment	Uniform – see the real person, bring whole self to School	Confidence and self-esteem building
Supportive	Structured Academic Environment combined with self-led interests	Learning to work in groups with different personalities
Staff really care about the students and make themselves available after hours, plus all the clubs; support the girls to bring out their best in academics and beyond	My daughter is happy!!	CGS is a gift to the city of Calgary and society, producing respectful, independent and compassionate girls who are inclusive, thoughtful and use their voice
Visible confidence when addressing adults/public	Freedom to express themselves	Academic transition to high school = successful
Provincial results – solid PATs, higher than provincial average	Seeing how my daughter has grown into a mature, well-adjusted young adult	Availability of staff when we need to talk to them
Availably and use of technology – but not using “tech for tech’s sake”, as a tool not a toy	Choir at Know or MRV, trying to give girls the best experience	Don’t do things have-way
Strong band and Arts programs; band trips provided new experiences	Teachers willing to dialogue	Go girls program
Confidence, risk-taking, determined, curiosity	Inquiry based teaching style	Open discussions about health
Off-campus trips, camps, outdoor education	Small school in small classes	Zero tolerance for bullying
Interdisciplinary nature of the subjects; good for creativity and innovation	Direct donation fundraising, direct money to school; and corporate matching	Owning laptops, tech used appropriately while also experimenting with cutting edge

		(Ex. 3D printer) Computer skills
Competitions with other schools	Love the variety of electives	Great science and math programs
Sports teams	Friendships and diversity among the girls	Caring, nurturing environment
Safe, collaborative inquiry-based learning being fulfilled	Integrated education (academic and emotional)	She is getting ready to face life
Thinking outside the box	Global mentality and community involvement	Forces us as parents to rethink education and how WE learn
Teaching ownership, accountability and respect	They actually like coming to school 😊	It feels small – we're not just a number
Multicultural demographics	Given and encouraged to use their voice	

**What should be on our radar, if we are striving to be the best school for girls? What do we need to pay attention to?**

Stay a diverse school, socially and economically	Awareness of strengths/self	Time management and life skills development
Managing emotions and anxiety	More parent engagement and involvement	Holding parents accountable
Keep the curriculum challenging to enable the girls to be competitive	The other parts of the culture of CGS are just as important (as the idea to the left)	Changing work environment and use of technology
Women in more STEM-like roles and politics	Awareness of the different Education styles; techniques, new ideas, partnerships with university	Educating the girls on social issues
The transition to socializing and boys!	Marketing and promoting the school; celebrate more!	Focus on how to adapt (real world)
What are other schools doing?	Global view	Keep conversation about girls in media +/- and feminist perspective
Keep camping programs in place to build confidence	Parents not confident in current grading system; marking system not communicated well to parents	Track why students leave before grade 9
Parents need to see more graded assignments with rubrics in a timely manner	Lack of communication from Grade levels (wikis not current or informative)	Report cards – want more feedback, personal comments – social? Effort? What can they work on?
Family zone login and system needs improvement; too many logins, can't find anything; calendar could use work too	Inconsistent loading of work to the website – students upload? Website generally needs improvement	More emails and more descriptive emails
Not just focus on technology but real skills too; technology is constantly changing	Communication between teachers and parents – girls don't talk to parents to share if they are struggling	Look at enrollment – don't want it to decrease or will risk funding No cut off dates

Hard skills not just female specific options (ex. woodworking)		
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**Based on the previous conversation and your own perspectives:**

**How might CGS improve to better meet our vision and mission? Where do you see room for growth?**

*After each group had brainstormed a list, all participants went around the room and read the various recommendations and responses. They were asked to allocate three votes to prioritize the suggestions that MOST resonated with them. The number of votes is captured in brackets, and the responses are ranked from highest to lowest resonance.*

- More face-to-face and staff with staff – interactions feel fragmented. Would like more formal parent-teacher interaction (17)
  - Formal and regular feedback from teachers
    - No formal feedback for students on soft skills
  - More communication and conversations, Parent involvement
- Assessment – not getting overall “big picture” view of how things are going; could be more dynamic, updates aren’t dynamic enough (13)
  - Evaluation approach is not as clear or perhaps ‘traditional’ as parents might hope for
- Collaboration – in order to help our girls succeed we need better communications and ease of access to information (ex. report cards and wiki) (9)
  - Consistent systems for sharing info LMS, Novell, portfolios, wiki, calendars, main page, emails
- Invested marketing communications – want a full school (8)
  - Advertise in preschools, Calgary herald, Calgary’s Child Magazine; tell the story of CGS better – articulate vision and mission through story
  - Improve with Marketing – keep enrollment up (#s) and diversity; Increase # of students at CGS
- Benchmarking with world-wide schools – that share similar vision and mission (7)
- Communication (web-based) is onerous – profile, wiki, family zone; hard to navigate and multiple logins (5)
- Facilitating more learning situations that utilize the strengths of introverts (4)
- More opportunities for parents to interact with each another (4)
- Basic academic skills (writing, math) and balance between academic/project work (4)



- Revisit intent of Advisory – some like/dislike. Does it help achieve intended goals? Allow girls to choose projects/who they work with. (4)
- Are they going to have the skills – academic, personal and life skills, in order to be competitive? (2)
- Technology – maintain up-to-date laptops and programs (if old, laptop can't run up-to-date software and apps) – every 3 years (2)
- Intentional, structured leadership for Grade 9s (re: Advisory or Go Girls) (1)
- Role of Learning Strategists – are they accessible enough to students? (1)
- Calendar – PD Days aligned with long weekends to have whole week off (1)
- Celebrate more! Externally – website, forum, etc.
- Consider having girls do personality assessments early in the year to know themselves and for the teachers to know them – self-awareness
- A few more controls around the use of technologies (curriculum time without technology)
- Easier access to classroom information
  - More timely information on field trips
- Go Girls is not growing with girls personal development
- Courage – keep experiences available; new experiences off campus like camps and outdoor education

**What stands out from tonight's discussions? Any final comments?**

We'd like to do this more often	Great getting to know other parents, and have interactive opportunities
Parents are an untapped resource – ex. have expertise in different areas they should share and leverage	Interesting for me to hear different perspectives – daughter came here after initially attending an arts school, in comparison this is very structured!!
Sharing our narrative more broadly for marketing, attraction	Desire to learn more about grade 10 transition and what it consists of