REMOTE LEARNING DURING COVID-19:

INSIGHTS FROM VICTORIAN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Independent
Schools Victoria

Lockdowns and their legacy

This report contains encouraging news for those who teach and learn in Independent schools. But this good news is tempered with caveats, which suggest a need for caution as schools assess how well they have managed the disruption caused by COVID-19.

The good news is that, based on responses to LEAD School Effectiveness Surveys conducted by Independent Schools Victoria, key stakeholders are generally satisfied with the way schools responded to last year's imposition of remote learning.

In particular, teachers and parents who took part in the surveys were satisfied with the resources and support they received from their schools during government-mandated lockdowns. This adds to the evidence that many schools were able to adapt, embracing new ways of thinking and new technology that's likely to be commonplace in education long after the pandemic is behind us.

But the first half of 2021, with sudden COVID-19 outbreaks leading to new lockdowns, shows us the pandemic is still with us, presenting fresh challenges to the resilience and adaptability of school communities.

It's also reasonable to assume that, regardless of overall levels of satisfaction recorded by those who took part in the surveys, experiences in individual and diverse schools varied considerably.

More importantly, the surveys highlight concerns about the impact on student learning and wellbeing. Not surprisingly, students – the central focus of everything that schools do – often found remote learning particularly challenging.

It's clear that lockdowns leave a legacy. Helping schools understand and deal with this legacy, through programs such as Project Wayfinder and our LEAD Surveys, remains central to the work of ISV.

Michelle Green
Chief Executive
Independent Schools Victoria

To understand how Independent schools in Victoria tackled the challenges of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) analysed responses from almost 23,000 stakeholders who participated in the LEAD School Effectiveness Survey in 2020. This research aims to capture experiences of various stakeholders, including staff, students and parents.

The findings demonstrate that, through the eyes of their most important stakeholders, schools participating in the LEAD School Effectiveness Survey generally performed well and adapted quickly to the external shock of COVID-19 that upended the traditional school timetable. Most stakeholders in the survey expressed high satisfaction with the resources and support provided by schools during remote learning. The evidence from the study suggests that the crisis has brought communities together and improved school culture, mindsets and practices.

However, while schools adjusted well and teachers generally had the necessary tools to adapt the curriculum to online delivery, many students found remote learning challenging. In particular, Year 12 students experienced a reduced sense of belonging to their school and missed out on the significant 'rite of passage' associated with completing VCE.

Satisfaction with student learning, as well as wellbeing and belonging, were understandably lower across all stakeholder groups, many of whom undoubtedly faced individual challenges associated with the pandemic including anxiety, social isolation and economic uncertainty. This finding highlights the difficult challenge COVID-19 created for schools: how to ensure students remain connected to their teachers and peers while learning in isolation. The findings of this research suggest some areas in school systems, management and practices that can be improved.

This report outlines the findings of the analysis and poses some questions and considerations for school leaders. It aims to add to discussions on how schools can capitalise on the opportunities and lessons learned from remote learning, so that school communities continue to flourish despite disruptive environments.

COVID-19 and its effect on education systems

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented disruption in education. The United Nations (UN) says COVID-19 caused 'the largest disruption of education in history' through its far-reaching social and economic consequences that are impacting on most students, teachers and families globally. The pandemic has affected approximately 1.58 billion students, or 94 per cent of learners from early childhood learning to higher education, in 200 countries and reshaped how teachers educate and students are educated (UN 2020a).

There has been a wide range of implications on formal education due to the pandemic. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that school disruptions resulted in around 40 million children missing out on aspects of their early learning education (Gromada, Richardson, & Rees, 2020). The UN has stressed that the impact on a child's critical pre-school year will likely compromise their future learning. The American mental health organisation, Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health (C&A), says one of the greatest challenges the pandemic created for secondary students was the lack of structure and routine with at-home or online learning (C&A 2021). Whether early childhood, primary, secondary or tertiary, many institutions are now faced with new and unexpected challenges. The long-term effects are yet to be realised; however, the UN suggests that young people may be at a potential loss in their education and development of human capital (UN 2020b).

In an attempt to control the spread of the virus, many governments closed educational institutions temporarily, either suspending services or offering online education instead. Between 2020 and early 2021 more than two-thirds of all countries have introduced a national distance learning scheme at some stage over the last 12 months (UNESCO 2020). Australia is one of the few countries where school closures were localised, as opposed to a coordinated national response. School and university closures were not recommended by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (Australian Health Protection Principal Committee [AHPPC], 2020). State and territory governments implemented different approaches with different effects on education. For example, the governments of Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, as well as some Independent schools, enacted school closures at different times aiming to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The tools for education delivery and methods for teaching drastically changed as a result of the pandemic. While tertiary education had existing methods and resources for remote learning, primary and secondary schools had to adapt swiftly and embrace digital learning and online collaboration within weeks, if not days. Schools mobilised various forms of online education and resources by using existing online platforms and developing new technologies to enhance learning and host 'virtual classrooms' (OECD 2021a).

Research shows that online learning can be advantageous due to an abundance of resources. There is also evidence to suggest that it can aid staff readiness, confidence, student accessibility and motivation (Ali, 2020). There is, however, growing concern for the educational, emotional and social implications for students and teachers of such an environment (Drane, Vermon, & O-Shea, 2020). Such concerns only grow when assessing the impact of learning-at-home for vulnerable children (Drane et al., 2020).

Over the academic year of 2020, data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) show that of the 4,006,974 students enrolled in 9,542 schools, 599,226 students attended Independent schools across Australia (ABS, 2020). Independent Schools Victoria witnessed many positive changes in how schools adapted to the challenges of COVID-19. Through our conversations with more than 90 Independent school principals during the pandemic, we found that many schools embraced digital learning and technological advances. They also recognised the increased importance of student and staff wellbeing. Many principals also commented on the extraordinary efforts of teachers to switch the curriculum to online delivery and recognised that technology can increase student learning and engagement in certain cases.

However, the unprecedented nature of the shift to online learning meant that principals, teachers and school staff were somewhat flying blind. In the words of one principal, managing the shift to online learning was 'like driving a car while you're still building it'. In this situation there are bound to be successes; but there's also a high probability of some challenges along the way.

Research objectives

In response to the changes in education due to the pandemic, ISV aimed to capture the experiences of key stakeholders and their views on their school's response to COVID-19 through the LEAD School Effectiveness Surveys. The purpose was to provide data showing how COVID-19 affected Victorian Independent schools and their communities.

The key question driving this study was: what is the overall experience of remote learning in schools and how does this differ between schools, teachers and students of various demographics?

We were also interested to determine the following:

1. To what extent were stakeholder groups satisfied with the delivery of remote learning across the LEAD sample?

2. What, if any, were the obvious areas for improvement for schools in offering remote learning?

3. To what extent did schools that performed well in relation to remote learning see an overall spike in stakeholder satisfaction?

Research methodology

The LEAD School Effectiveness Surveys are a flagship research service offered to ISV Member Schools. They aim to measure school effectiveness through the eyes of various stakeholder groups. The externally validated surveys offer a 360-degree view of school performance by surveying students, staff, parents and governing board members. Since 2007, ISV has offered the surveys to more than 175 schools and collected responses from over 374,000 people, allowing schools to benchmark their results and conduct longitudinal comparisons.

Forty-three schools that educate more than 38,000 students participated in the LEAD School Effectiveness Surveys between August and November in 2020. We incorporated a remote learning module in the student, parent, teacher and staff satisfaction surveys to capture overall remote learning experience and its impact on student learning, resources and support, and wellbeing and belonging. Table 1 outlines the number of responses analysed for the remote learning module for each survey. Responses from 35 schools were analysed for the remote learning module.

Table 1: Responses by survey type

| Stakeholder survey	Sample size (n)	Total schools
Student survey (Year 5 to 11)	10,116	29
Year 12 survey	1,830	24
Parent survey	7,397	32
Staff survey	3,372	32

Discussion

Stakeholder views of the remote learning experience

Our analysis shows schools generally fared well in moving to the online delivery model imposed upon them by the pandemic. Overall satisfaction across all respondents averaged 6.5 out of 10, with staff (7.2 out of 10) being the most satisfied stakeholder group.

Both staff and parents were generally more satisfied with the remote learning experience than students. They provided an average satisfaction rating of above seven for their overall experience of remote learning.

Figure 1: Overall satisfaction with the remote learning experience
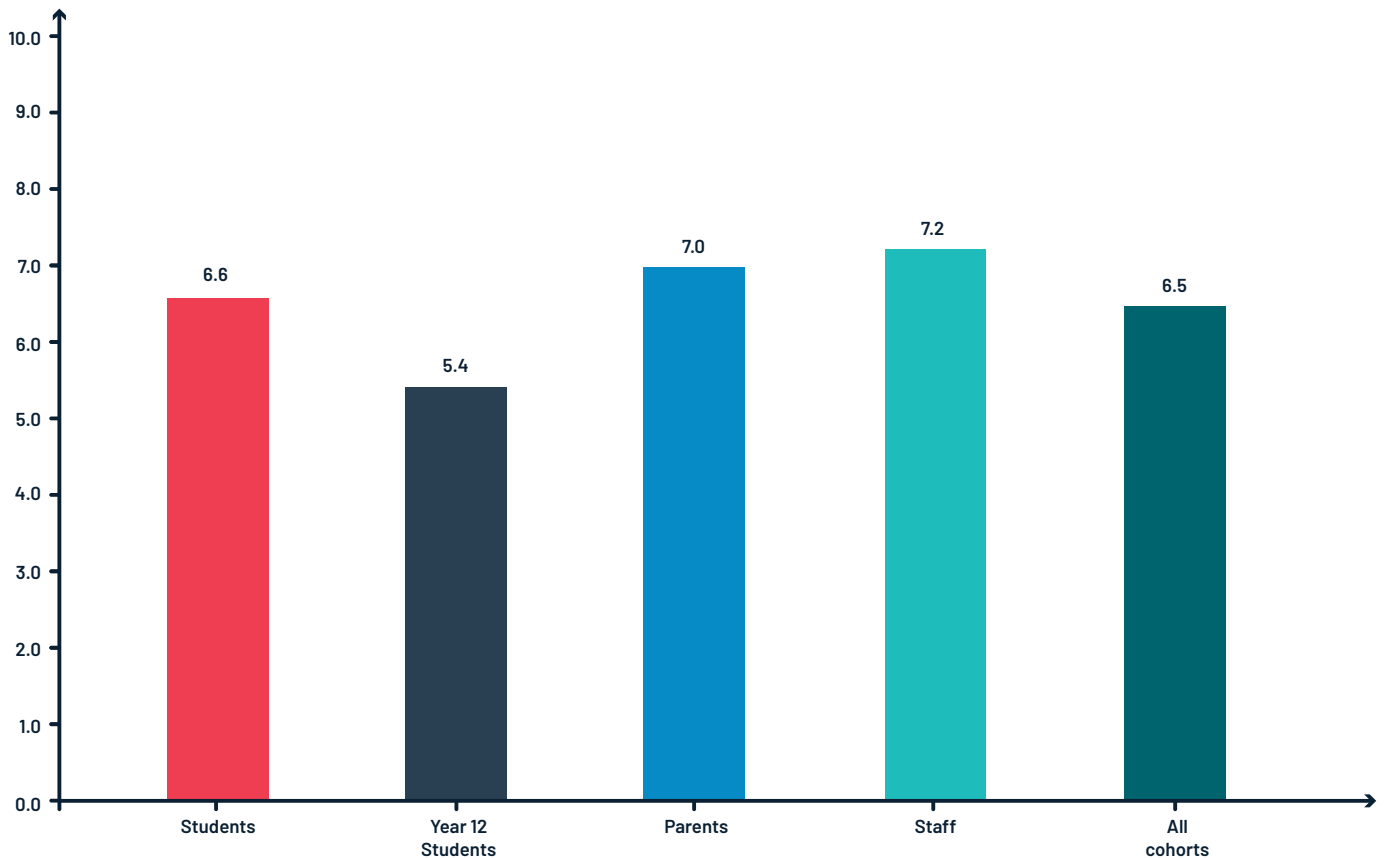
Total sample; Unweighted; base n = from 1830 to 10116
Participants rated from 0 to 10 for 'Remote learning has been a positive experience for me'.

We grouped individual questions into domains to allow analysis across stakeholder groups. All cohorts expressed high satisfaction with the resources and support provided by schools to support remote learning, with the average score out of 10 across all stakeholder groups reaching 8.0. This was followed by overall satisfaction with student learning (6.7) and wellbeing and belonging (6.4), as indicated in Figure 2 below.

Overall satisfaction scores were consistent with other studies aimed to measure remote learning experience. For example, a global teacher survey by McKinsey found that Australian teachers rated an average of 6.6 on effectiveness of remote learning compared with in-person learning. Their study also found that Australian teachers provided a higher rating on students' remote learning compared with their international counterparts (Chen, Dorn, Sarakatsannis, Wiesinger, 2021).

While there was high satisfaction with the resources and support provided by schools, stakeholder satisfaction was lower for both the wellbeing and belonging and student learning domains. For example, parents were satisfied with the resources and support they were provided (8.0 out of 10); however, they were less satisfied with the wellbeing and belonging domain (6.2 out of 10), and the domain relating to their child's experience (6.7 out of 10).

Year 12 students were the least satisfied stakeholder group (5.4 out of 10), mainly driven by their low satisfaction with the wellbeing and belonging domain. Connectedness to peers and teachers was more difficult for older students, who consistently ranked these items lower than counterparts in primary and middle school.

Figure 2: Overall satisfaction with the remote learning experience

"I find remote learning very hard because I am used to learning with my classmates around me. I am used to taking turns at answering the teachers' questions. I am used to writing with pen and paper. I would rather be at school than be at home at this time."

(Year 12 survey)

"I personally have struggled immensely with the lack of face to face connection, both with teachers where I feel I've had a much more difficult time absorbing content, and felt incredibly disconnected and isolated from my peers, which has taken a toll on my learning and my grades."

(Year 11 survey)

The lowest average response across all stakeholders came from year 12 students (4.3 out of 10 for 'my learning was enhanced by the experience'). This is not surprising as there was potentially more at stake for senior students, many of whom relied on specialist equipment to complete their studies.

"Remote learning was a large burden on my motivation as a student, not having two separate environments in which I could undertake studies meant I struggled with self-discipline and motivation towards my studies."

(Year 12 survey)

This suggests that while schools were successful in delivering remote learning, the real challenge was in keeping students and families connected to the school during the extended period outside the classroom.

This finding is supported by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which in a recent policy brief argued that while many education systems successfully allowed teaching and instruction to continue despite school closures, strengthening engagement, and providing student and parental support were foremost recommendations to improving online learning (OECD 2021b). The Mitchell Institute for Education and Health Policy at Victoria University similarly noted COVID's critical effects on children's wellbeing and vulnerability and the important role of schools and early learning centres in limiting the impacts on a child's learning and development (Noble, Hurley, & Macklin, 2020).

Many schools that completed the surveys put in place strategies to mitigate the lack of connection of students to the school and issues of belonging and wellbeing. These included reducing student workloads, maintaining regular virtual connection opportunities with teachers and students, and providing additional wellbeing and learning support to struggling students. The following quote from a parent illustrates the type of evolving strategies employed by schools to safeguard the wellbeing of students during remote learning:

"Very glad the school has given less homework to year 7's in lockdown 2.0. First time doing 3-4 hours of homework most nights was too much for my daughter and she was not coping well. This time less work after hours means less isolation, more interaction with family, less screen time".

All indications suggest that the prominence of wellbeing and connectedness to school will continue to play a pivotal role in schools throughout 2021 and beyond. Ensuring support for students and staff will be a priority as we move into a 'COVID-normal' world.

Were there any key differences in the remote learning experience across school demographics?

We observed some variances in overall satisfaction across school demographics, such as location, socio economic status (SES) and recurrent income per student. Figure 3 below shows the average satisfaction score across all stakeholder surveys by location.

Figure 3: Overall satisfaction by location
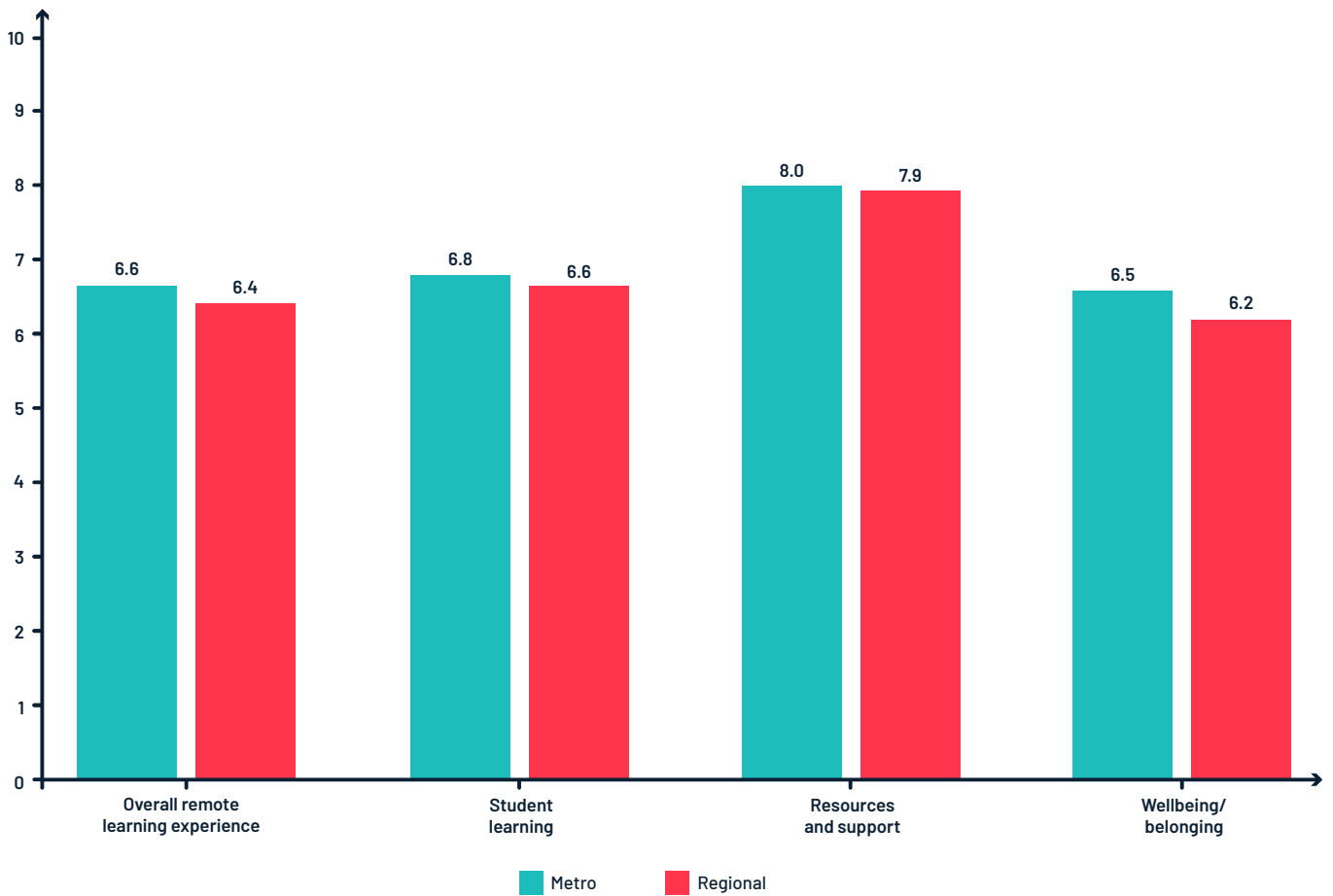
Source: Unweighted data; Year 12 survey, Student survey, Parent survey and Staff survey
Note: Survey sample by location is representative of the population sample (all Victorian Independent schools).

Overall, regional students were less satisfied with their remote learning experience compared with metro students (6.4 vs. 6.6). They appear to be more challenged in relation to adapting to remote learning compared with metro students (7.4 vs. 7.7 for 'my students adapted positively to remote learning'). This finding was consistent in the qualitative feedback particularly concerning mental health and resources and support among regional students.

"Online schooling has had the biggest setback and has impacted my motivation and studies for the first 6 weeks, and now another 6 weeks of online schooling, teachers locking the classroom out 5 minutes into the class so I can't join for the rest of the period because I live in a rural area and my WiFi is below standard.."

(Year 12 survey, regional student)

Similarly, parents whose children attend regional schools were less satisfied with their overall remote learning experience (6.8 vs. 7.1 metro schools). They felt less connected to the teachers and school community and were less satisfied with their child's remote learning experience.

While there was generally a high satisfaction with the resources and support provided by schools, our analysis found that the higher the school's SES score and the higher their recurrent income per student, the more satisfied were the responses relating to the resources and support available to support remote learning. This linear relationship was only evident for the resources and support domain in comparison to other domains, as shown in Figure 4 below that outlines overall satisfaction by SES.

Figure 4: Overall satisfaction by school's SES bands
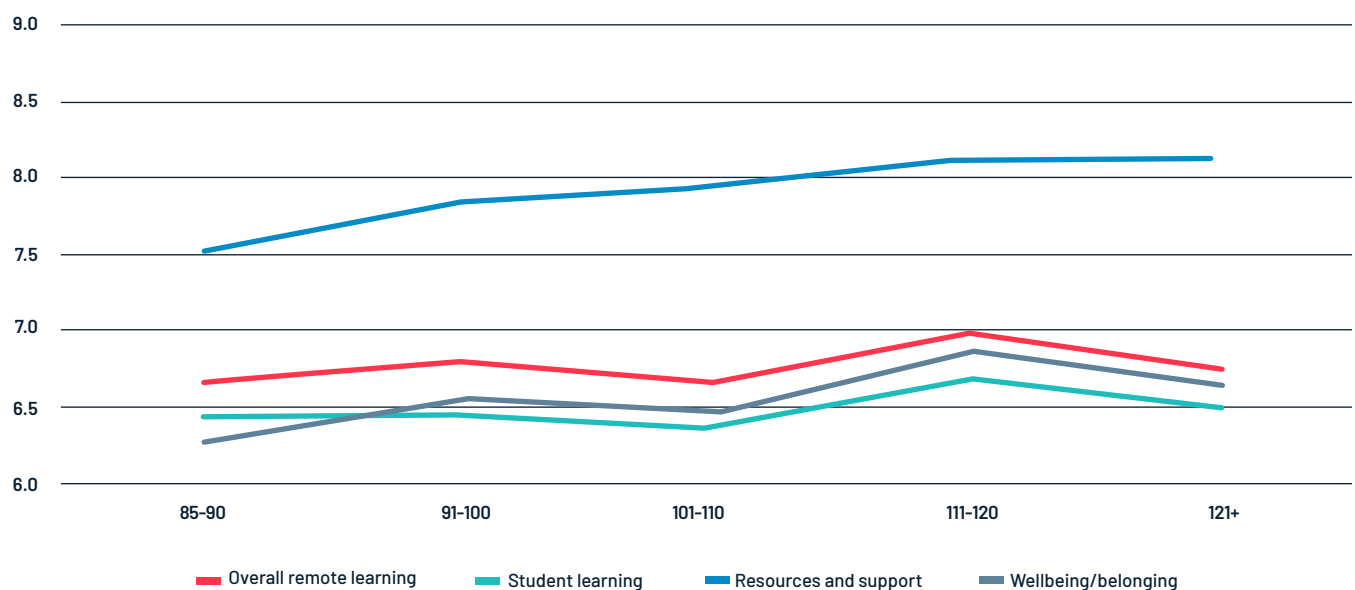
Source: Unweighted data; Year 12 survey, Student survey, Parent survey and Staff survey
Note: Population sample for SES band is unknown. Sample size may not be reflective of overall population sample.

Additionally, qualitative analysis focusing on low SES schools found that some Victorian Independent schools were hit especially hard during remote learning. This has taken a toll on student learning, as illustrated in the comment below.

"I had no problems with how my school dealt with remote learning, except that worksheets and booklets were only printed for primary students and secondary students were expected to print their own resources. I found that quite annoying as at first, I did not have a printer. I had to get one and then the amount of pages meant to be printed were very high in number and because of that the ink cartridges finished…"

(Student survey, low SES school)

Schools that participated in the surveys varied in their readiness to adopt a remote learning module, such as having adequate technology infrastructure, e-learning pedagogy skills, learning platforms and digital capabilities. Schools that already had these systems and infrastructure were undeniably better at coping with remote learning.

"During this tough time in education the College has been well lead and have supported the entire College community moving forward as the bar continually shifted and will continue to shift. Prior to the pandemic the College has had solid tools/systems in place to support the students learning and when the College was challenged to move to RLP it did this seamlessly and smoothly. A credit to all involved who continually adapted and put in place methods to deliver students with a solid learning platform whether onsite or remotely. Staff, students and parents/guardians interests were always kept at the forefront of any decisions made."

(Staff survey)

Despite the differences in satisfaction and readiness to adopt remote learning across stakeholders and school demographics, unprompted feedback showed high appreciation in each school's effort in adapting to the challenges of the pandemic. In fact, relative importance analysis found that 'quality and commitment of teachers' were important drivers of remote learning experience.

"Thank you for your commitment, courage and persistence and for constantly reviewing the online learning component and adapting as you have progressed. I think that on a whole the staff and students have done a wonderful job with remote learning. Thank you for your effort."

(Parent survey)

"I feel that teachers are always making an effort to provide the best learning experience possible for me and giving me all the opportunities I want to succeed. Remote learning has been positive and they work hard to make it as engaging as possible. I'm blessed to be where I am."

(Student survey)

What factors were more important than others?

While there was lower satisfaction with student learning in comparison to resources and support, a strong positive correlation was observed between student learning and the overall remote learning experience across cohorts. This indicates that student learning experience is an important factor in the successful deployment of remote learning. In other words, the higher the satisfaction in student learning, the higher the satisfaction in overall remote learning experience. Figure 5 below outlines the correlation coefficient (r) between the overall remote learning experience and the remote learning domains.

The vertical bar charts outline the overall satisfaction of each domain for students, while the line charts outline the correlation of each domain with overall remote learning experience. For example, Year 12 students' overall satisfaction with resources and support is 7.6 out of 10. Year 12 students' correlation coefficient (r) is 0.56 for overall remote learning experience and resources and support.

A correlation coefficient ranges from -1 to +1. A negative value indicates a negative relationship between variables, a positive value indicates a positive relationship between variables while 0 indicates no linear relationship. Generally, values between 0.1-0.3 indicate a weak (positive) relationship, 0.3-0.5 indicate a medium relationship while 0.5-1.0 indicate a strong relationship. In this case, r=0.56 signify a medium to high relationship between overall remote learning experience and resources and support domain.

Figure 5: Overall satisfaction and correlation with the remote learning experience

Overall satisfaction and Coefficient, r

Source: Unweighted data; Year 12 survey and Student survey
Note: Pearson correlation coefficient test was used to compute correlation. Typically, we use this as guidelines to identify strength - Small (0.1-0.3), Medium (0.3-0.5) and Large (0.5-1.0).

Encouraging independent learning and promoting wellbeing

Analysis of the student learning statements on remote learning contained in the survey showed a positive strong correlation between students who reported that they enjoyed managing their time and learning, and overall satisfaction with remote learning (r=0.71 for student survey and r=0.72 for Year 12 survey). For students, the ability to self-regulate their learning is an important factor in whether remote learning was successful. Those who enjoyed guiding their own learning were more satisfied and coped better with remote learning than others.

This is supported in many research studies, such as the OECD 2020 report 'School education during COVID-19 – were teachers and students ready?', which highlights the importance of student self-efficacy and resilience for independent learning. The report found that a student's psychological well-being and self-efficacy increases their ability to pursue their goals, even when faced with stressful situations in the future (OECD, 2020).

Although remote learning presents its own challenges, the shift in responsibility in learning has encouraged some students to step up and take ownership of their learning.

"Despite the pandemic I know that my child is being prepared for the next level of education - not just academically but also in critical and independent thinking processes. They are encouraged to engage and interact with their teachers so that they feel challenged to step up and become the person they want to be. I am truly grateful to this school for working together with us parents to create such lovely thoughtful and resilient human beings."
(Parent survey)

"Remote learning has helped me to become more independent as an individual."
(Student survey)

As a result of the benefits of remote learning observed at many schools during the lockdown, some schools were keen to explore a hybrid learning model to capitalise on the best of both worlds – on-site and remote learning. The hybrid learning model has been around for the last decade, but it was pushed into the spotlight during COVID-19. It enables enhanced learning and a more personalised, self-paced, flexible and multifaceted approach to the learning and teaching process (Birbal, Ramdass, & Harripaul, 2018). However, its adoption requires an effective strategy in line with the school's own context and readiness such as teacher knowledge, pedagogy, technology, management structure and stakeholder (teacher, parent and student) readiness (Kiddle, Farrell, Glew-O'Leary, & Mavridi, 2020). This is a conundrum that was recognised by some stakeholders surveyed:

"With remote learning, there is no one size fits all approach for all the subjects. Some of them, for example the dreary ones like History, require a lot more engagement and appeal to keep the child motivated. Some others like science require more visual and tangible approaches to achieve that full impact. This aspect needs to be in the forefront for teachers while designing teaching methods especially when the body language of the students is something that is not visible during remote learning."
(Parent survey)

Due to the challenges students faced in today's disruptive environment, and those they will face in the future, it is imperative that schools continue to embrace a whole child approach to education, with adaptive structures and systems that support student's academic, cognitive, physical, social emotional and mental wellbeing (Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, 2020).

Empowering staff development and fostering belonging

As shown in Figure 6, while overall satisfaction concerning the resources and support domain was high, this factor was the least correlated with the overall remote learning experience. This may suggest that staff were generally satisfied with the resources and support they received from schools, but they only see this as a hygiene factor (not a motivating factor) in influencing the overall remote learning experience.

Analysis of the remote learning statements showed a strong association for 'remote learning being a catalyst for professional growth' and the feeling of 'belongingness to the school/school community' with the overall remote learning experience (r=0.568 and r=0.585 respectively). Both factors increased staff satisfaction with remote learning, which suggests that the mindset of staff and the framing of the challenge of COVID-19 by school leaders may have played a part in how staff experienced remote learning.

"It appears that the leadership of the college is improving and they are starting to provide more opportunities for staff. Having general staff PD sessions on the staff days is a plus."

(Staff survey)

While remote learning has enabled opportunities for staff to re-skill, qualitative data showed that some staff were struggling to cope with the additional workload imposed upon them and a few felt uncertain of their job security. For some, the lack of communication with the leadership team created a breeding ground of confusion and distrust.
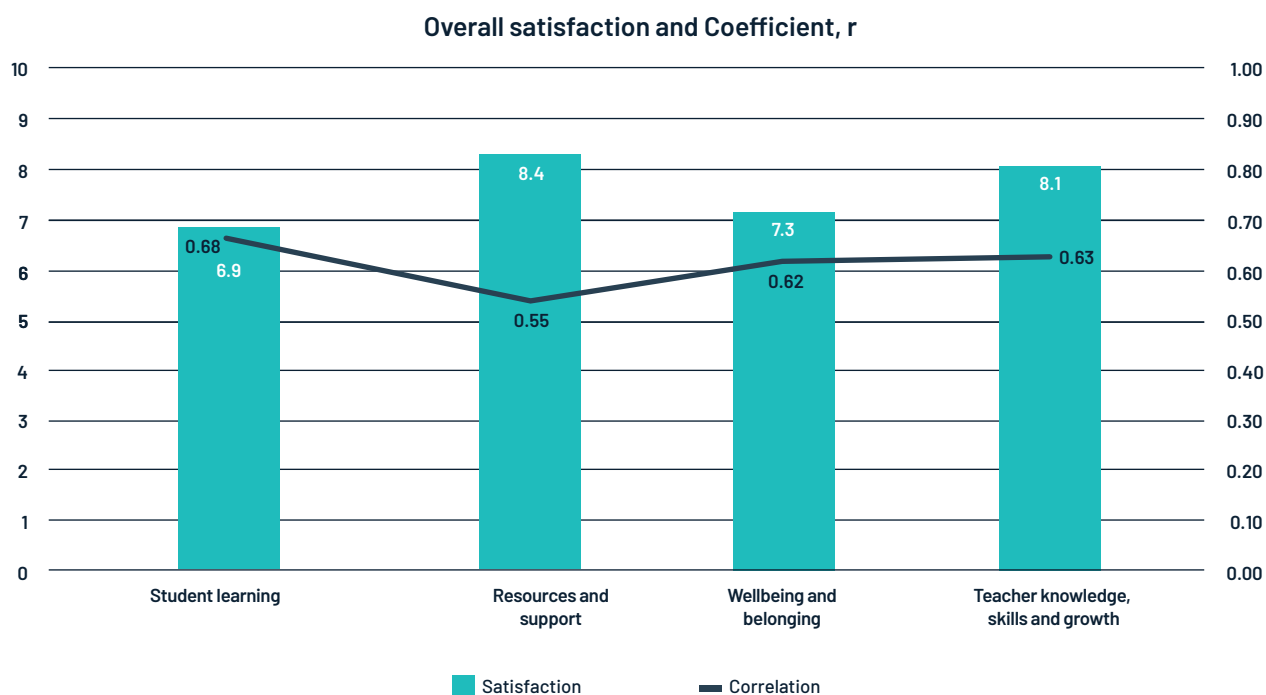
"The feeling of uncertainty about job security has increased the longer the pandemic goes on. Some clearer communication regarding this would have been helpful."

(Staff survey)

"I feel the school could have had more communication with staff through the pandemic."

(Staff survey)

Figure 6: Overall satisfaction and correlation with remote learning experience

Source: Unweighted data; Staff survey.

Overall, our analysis showed that empowerment and inclusion are important so that staff could feel that they are 'change agents' who have a direct impact in the school's educational practices. During a disruptive period, building trust and providing assurance is important to encourage a culture that embraces ambiguity. This includes engaging in authentic, transparent and frequent conversations with their staff to foster connections.

School leaders play a pivotal role in moving the school forward collectively despite the disruptive nature in education. As illustrated in the comment below, great leaders permeate all levels of the school, impacting the attitudes and behaviour of every stakeholder.

"My child wants to do her best for her teachers and by deduction the teachers want to do their best for the Principal, who clearly loves and supports all his staff and students."

(Parent survey)

Establishing strong community partnerships

As teachers faced additional workload and exhaustion during remote learning, much of the burden was also shouldered by parents. There was a heightened sharing of responsibility for education between the school and family during the lockdown. Parents have become more involved in their child's education than ever before. Unsurprisingly, there was a strong correlation between a parent's remote learning experience and their child's learning, as shown in Figure 7.

There was also a medium correlation between the resources and support provided to families in relation to remote learning and the likelihood of the parent to recommend the school to others (r=0.66).

Figure 7: Overall satisfaction and correlation with remote learning experience

Overall satisfaction and Coefficient, r

"I think remote learning has been handled well, with a good system and teacher have been supportive."

(Parent survey)

"I think the school has shown great adaptability in these extremely challenging and fast-moving times. I've been very impressed by the teacher's level of commitment to my daughter and the time they've spent getting her back on track once discovering her lack of motivation with online learning."

(Parent survey)

We also found a strong positive association where parents who reported feeling connected to the teachers also felt connected to the broader school community (r=0.79). Parents who had regular communication with the school were more likely to have a positive remote learning experience. Parents felt that this was a driving factor in their child's learning as they were more optimistic their child made progress learning at home.

"The school has been absolutely amazing with remote learning and the teachers exceptional. The communication consistent and as a family we feel supported by our school more than ever."

(Parent survey)

"Online learning has been the best thing out of this pandemic! My child has truly improved academically and I can actually see her academic level as I'm more involved with her learning."

(Parent survey)

Qualitative analysis found that schools that engaged and incorporated community voices benefited immensely during remote learning. The following comments from parents and staff convey the importance of having their voices heard and feeling a sense of belonging.

"I have been extremely impressed and grateful to the leadership team during recent times. Communication has always been quick and concise and decisions made with the whole school community in mind. I also truly appreciate the efforts of the teaching staff who have tackled and delivered online learning to the best of their abilities."

(Parent survey)

"As both a staff member and as a parent at the school, I felt confident that our school community was in good hands. There was opportunity to provide valuable feedback and adjustments were made accordingly. The team of staff spearheading the operation have been exceptional this year."

(Staff survey)

As parents become more involved and engaged in their child's academic and social development, schools will need to continue incorporating parents' voices by understanding their needs and drivers of satisfaction, to improve their engagement and experience. Having a strong community bond will ultimately support the school to continue to grow.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our research findings show that the COVID-19 pandemic has given schools a taste of the level of responsiveness and resilience needed in the community to support students to thrive in disruptive environments. Communities were brought together with a shared purpose to support students in their physical, academic, social and emotional wellbeing.

One of the silver linings of the crisis was the shift in mindset concerning learning. This was evident among many stakeholders, who concentrated their efforts on doing what matters for students and actively considered the 'whys' of their actions. Remote learning has also shed light on some of the 'hows', as schools were forced to deal with issues that some were perhaps reluctant to address before the pandemic.

"I believe that remote learning has been a catalyst for change in our curriculum and also has sped along some changes and additions for our performing arts program that were long overdue."

(Teacher survey)

We have listed possible ideas and strategies that school leaders and their communities may find helpful in their planning and discussions to encourage more resilient systems. As our analysis involved schools with different demographic backgrounds, it is important that these are applied based on the individual context of your school.

Improving school-based practices

School leaders may wish to consider:

1. **Creating adaptive learning practices**

- Evaluating the effectiveness of different education approaches adopted during remote learning.

- Developing a hybrid model of learning based on what works best for the school's educational needs and vision. For example, schools could consider prioritising on-site learning for younger students. Hybrid solutions could also be developed for older students, who have more capacity for independent learning.

- Continuing to take into account the views of stakeholders, assisting them to embrace a more personalised and flexible approach to learning.

- Encouraging a resilient mindset and culture by shifting from 'best practice' to 'evolving practice', enabling them to adapt and move beyond status quo when needed.

2. **Improving technology infrastructure to support effective learning**

- Evaluating the effectiveness of new technologies adopted during remote learning and streamline processes where needed.

- The experience of end users when investing in new technologies – not to replace existing teaching or learning practices or roles, but to enhance them.

- Exploring ways to build digital and data capabilities among teachers, enabling them to better assess their students' learning.

3. Enabling evidence-informed practices and decisions

- Assessing communication systems and methods used during remote learning – including communication platforms and communication frequency – to maintain effective collaboration, feedback and engagement.

- Investigating opportunities to perform data cleaning and data mining on the use of remote learning platforms and other systems to develop creative ways to measure, monitor and improve student performance.

- Using real-time feedback and data for evidence-based decision-making through their various platforms, systems and capabilities to capture and analyse stakeholder voices.

4. Developing a culture of togetherness to encourage collective ownership of change

- Exploring ways to enhance a 'people first' culture across their school community. The pandemic has demonstrated to many schools the importance of encouraging a culture and mindset that is based on people and community, to build strong connections and sense of belonging.

- Looking at strategies and approaches to enable greater opportunities, structures and platforms for feedback and collaboration with stakeholders.

- Ensuring communication with stakeholders is open, succinct, transparent and frequent. School leaders could consider implementing appropriate digital platforms to support two-way feedback with staff, students and their families.

- Continuing to focus on mental health and wellbeing, ensuring that an appropriate support system is in place for students and teachers to seek help and feedback.

Acting on lessons learned for each stakeholder group

School leaders may wish to consider:

Students

- Assisting students who have struggled with remote learning and work to devise strategies to assist these students to catch up on any learning loss that may have occurred.

- Continuing to focus on holistic education by teaching academic and social skills that support independent learning, and mental health and wellbeing. Some examples include introducing programs on metacognition and mental health education in the classroom.

- Establishing programs that focus on purpose, belonging and meaning behind a student's learning to encourage student agency.

- Encouraging more involvement of the student voice in classroom practices and everyday school life to support wellbeing and engagement.

- Reviewing systems and practices to identify and monitor at-risk students who show signs of struggle psychologically and academically in light of the impact of COVID-19.

Teachers and leaders

- Ensuring that teachers are empowered and supported to leverage the trust, innovation and ownership mindsets developed across many schools during the period of remote learning.

- Strengthening educators' skills and knowledge in technical areas including data, data literacy and digital capabilities as required. Encourage lifelong professional development focusing on building expertise that targets critical skills needed for the future.

- As the full impact of COVID-19 becomes apparent, schools may need to prioritise professional development courses for teachers to better identify at-risk or struggling students and to monitor wellbeing more effectively.

- Implementing strategies to understand motivational structures of staff and addressing challenges using methods with a social lens to encourage a collective outlook across the school.

Parents

- Leveraging increased parental engagement generated in many schools during the pandemic by supporting parents to ensure continuity of learning at home, particularly positive learning habits and time management.

- Implementing or enhancing communication platforms that enable parents to better track their child's academic and social progress.

- Ensuring communication with parents and families is open, succinct and frequent to manage expectations and foster connectedness.

- Continue to incorporate parents' feedback to enhance family engagement and experience.

Finally, the following future-focussed 'how might we' questions may help prompt and frame discussions about education at your school. These broad, general questions are important for all stakeholders to consider in response to the disruption to schooling caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

How might we...

- incorporate systems to sustain the positive momentum and initiatives created during the pandemic?

- re-imagine schooling and the purpose of schooling in light of remote learning?

- rethink a hybrid curriculum model that draws out the positives of both on-site and remote learning?

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