NAB EDUCATION INSIGHT REPORT
NAB INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS SURVEY 2020 - THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON STUDENT LEARNING & ANXIETY

NAB Behavioural & Industry Economics   March 2021

The 2020 NAB Independent Schools Survey provides a unique insight into the impacts of COVID-19 upon our children through the eyes of their teachers. Last year was one of the most challenging for schools in Australia's history with closures across the country disrupting the 2020 academic year, particularly in Victoria. COVID-19 required teachers and students to rapidly adjust to new ways of learning, with concerns around the impacts on educational outcomes from reduced engagement, as well as the effects on mental health, emotional wellbeing and social development. In this report, around 70 teachers from independent schools across the country share their views on important topics such as student anxiety, engagement during remote learning, adaptations to new ways of learning, student behavioural changes, modifications to teaching and the challenges now and in the future. While all students have faced major re-adjustments to their learning processes and social interactions, some have thrived, while many others appear to have struggled. The survey was conducted between 1 September to 15 November 2020.

Highlights:

- Concerning numbers of school students are still exhibiting high levels of anxiety (1 in 4 in years 7-10 & 1 in 3 years 11-12). Primary school-age girls have struggled more during COVID-19 than boys, but girls appear to have coped better than boys at the secondary level.
- 1 in 2 girls (48% v 28% of boys) showed signs of increased anxiety in prep-grade 3 during COVID-19, and 1 in 3 girls (36% v 17% of boys) in grades 4-6. Around 2 in 3 (65%) boys & 1 in 2 girls (50%) in years 7-10 were more anxious, and over half of all boys (54%) & girls (56%) in years 11-12.
- COVID-19 also impacted student engagement, particularly among boys (almost 1 in 5 boys in years 7-10 had low levels of engagement). Students who struggled most during/post COVID include: those already grappling with motivation; those with poor access to (or reluctant to use) new technology; extroverts/more social students; those lacking family support; and those spending too much time on social media/games.
- 1 in 2 teachers also experienced heightened anxiety during COVID, particularly in years prep-grade 3, with most teachers working longer hours during remote learning compared to being back in the classroom. But, despite the challenges of the past year, most teachers do not want school life to return to before COVID-19.
- While teachers have spent more time on their students' wellbeing during COVID (over 9 in 10 teachers worked at schools with a formal wellbeing program), 7 in 10 viewed these as of "moderate-low" benefit. Less time on devices, less focus on assessment, more fun & more classroom discussion on key student concerns could help.
- Post COVID, the gap between the academic standards of the highest and lowest performing students could widen, with other key concerns including: the effects of social isolation; the impact on social skills; and time spend on social media.
- While students have mastered a greater range of digital skills, concerns remain around lasting impacts on interpersonal, cognitive, critical thinking & communication skills. Teachers in VIC are particularly concerned about the impacts of COVID on socialisation and friendships, but also believe their students have had more opportunities for self-directed learning and mastering a greater range of digital skills.
- Student concentration, tiredness and absenteeism all worsened during remote learning, particularly in VIC. Over 7 in 10 teachers noted a sharp increase in incomplete assignments during remote learning, despite students spending more time completing assignments than when in the classroom.
- 4 in 10 teachers agreed post COVD there has been a sharper focus on what really mattered, a greater appreciation of what they did and more parental insight into their children's classroom activities. Almost twice as many teachers in VIC believed there was a greater appreciation of the vital role schools play in society since COVID, compared to other states.
- The one thing teachers would do to better support student outcomes post COVID-19 include: more focussed learning & a pared back curriculum; smaller class sizes; a hybrid model of face-to-face & remote teaching; shorter class times & more breaks; more one-on-one coaching & extra aides; more small group tasks; more parental support for struggling students; less focus on assessment/tests & less fear of failure; more individualised content; more connection, kindness & empathy; more self-directed learning; more tech support; more support for teachers' mental health; less screen time; and more peer connection.

Report Summary

What proportion of students currently have "high" levels of anxiety? At the primary level, anxiety is much higher among students in years Prep-Grade 3 than Grades 4-6. Anxiety was a little higher among girls than boys in both groups. Anxiety among boys in Prep-Grade 3 (15%) was almost 3 times higher than for boys in Grades 4-6 (6%), and almost twice as high for girls in Prep-Grade 3 (17%) than in Grades 4-6 (9%). Anxiety was much more prevalent in high school, however the gender pattern reversed, with boys a little more anxious than girls. Anxiety was also more prevalent in the final years of high school. Anxiety among boys climbed from 25% in Years 7-10 to 33% in Years 11-12, and from 24% to 31% for girls.

How has anxiety changed post COVID-19? Primary school-age girls have struggled more than boys, with anxiety in Prep-Grade 3 worse now than before COVID for 48% of girls (28% of boys), and for 36% of girls in Grades 4-6 (17% of boys, where anxiety also improved for 1 in 3 boys). COVID has had a bigger negative impact on high school students - particularly boys. In Years 7-10, anxiety was worse for nearly 2 in 3 (65%) boys and half of all girls (50%). In Years 11-12, the pattern is broadly similar - boys (54%) and girls (56%). Interestingly, anxiety improved for over 1 in 4 (27%) Year 11-12 boys, compared to just 18% of girls.

What proportion of students currently have "low" levels of engagement? At primary school levels, the share of students with low engagement was similar for boys (15%) and girls (14%) in Prep-Grade 3. While engagement improved in Grades 4-6, it was more noticeable for girls (6%), compared to boys (10%). Keeping students engaged was a bigger issue in high school, but much more so for boys than girls. Almost 1 in 5 boys (19%) had low levels of engagement through Years 7-10, compared to 14% of girls.

How has engagement changed post COVID-19? COVID has clearly had an impact, particularly for boys. In primary school, engagement in Prep-Grade 3 was worse than before COVID for 59% of boys (46% of girls), and for 33% of boys in Grades 4-6 (21% of girls). But engagement was also better for around 1 in 4 girls and boys in these grade levels, highlighting the risk of a growing gap in performance. A similar pattern emerges at high school, particularly in Years 7-10, where engagement worsened for over 1 in 2 (53%) boys (42% of girls). In Years 11-12, engagement was worse for 38% of male students (33% of female students). Engagement was "better" for almost twice as many girls (20%) than boys (12%) in Years 11-12.

Which characteristics/behaviours were demonstrated by students who struggled most during/post COVID? Many centred-on motivation and lack of discipline, with students unmotivated before COVID "using it as an excuse to stay un-motivated", "not doing homework", and with "inability to stay focussed on the set task". Technology was another key factor due to "poor internet connection or IT resources" and students being unbale to log on to classes "often due technical difficulties". Others struggled due not wanting to "draw attention to themselves", "anxiety being on-camera" and "not wanting to turn on cameras during online lessons". Personality types were also important with extroverts "missing the company of classmates" and social students "taking learning cues from others struggling most". Others were thrown by the "return to normal school commitments, routine and assessment following a period of learning from home". Some teachers cited "lack of social support from family at home, or interaction with friends", "family issues related to everyone being in the same space", an "inability to focus, particularly when sporting clubs were shut down", students having "limited physical outlets", "spending more time on screens and less time in face to face relationships", "difficulties connecting with peers and managing peer relationships via online platforms", and "too much time on social media and games during lock down."

Did COVID also impact teachers? When, asked to self-rate their own anxiety, on average teachers scored 6.3 points out of 10 (where 10 is excellent). Interestingly, teachers in VIC (7.4) were less anxious than those in other states (5.6). Primary school teachers rated their stress levels somewhat lower than high school teachers. Beyond averages, almost 1 in 2 (46%) teachers said their anxiety was worse than it was before COVID (only 14% said it was better). Teachers in VIC however bucked the national trend, with only 39% indicating their anxiety was worse (51% in other states), and 1 in 4 (25%) better (5% in other states). By year level, anxiety worsened for more teachers of students in Prep-Grade 3 (61%), and improved most for teachers of students in Years 7-10 (25%).

How has the time devoted to various aspects of teaching changed since COVID-19? Over 9 in 10 (91%) teachers devoted more time to "understanding different and new ways of teaching during remote learning", compared to just 44% when back in the classroom. Over 8 in 10 (84%) spent "more time preparing new material" (42% back in the classroom), and 83% to "troubleshooting problems with technology" (28% in the classroom). Many teachers worked longer hours (80% during remote learning, 44% in the classroom), spent more time on "student wellbeing" (70% during remote learning, 48% in the classroom), and more time on "student instruction and teaching" (61% during remote learning, 47% in the classroom). With greater demands on their time, it was encouraging that almost 1 in 2 (47%) teachers "devoted more time to their own personal wellbeing" during remote learning (30% in the classroom) - although nearly 1 in 5 (17%) also indicated they spent less time on their own wellbeing during remote learning.

How does this compare across states? Outside of Victoria, noticeably more teachers reported spending extra time during remote learning on understanding new ways of teaching (95%) and preparing new material (89%), compared to VIC at 85% and 78% respectively. Conversely, fewer teachers outside VIC devoted extra time to student wellbeing (62% vs. 81% in VIC).

What other aspects of a teacher's time changed during remote learning? Around 2 in 3 (67%) teachers said they spent more time during remote learning on "other" aspects of teaching including "calming, connecting and interacting with parents", "communicating with students via email if they were not present online during remote learning", "more emails and communication with administration and colleagues", "connecting with individual students", "seeking feedback" and "Zoom meetings". But 3 in 10 (31%) also said they were spending less time doing "other" aspects of teaching during remote learning including "behaviour management, disciplinary or playground issues", "classroom management", "communicating with colleagues", "out of work school-related activities", "incidental conversations", "social aspects of relationships with students", "demonstrating practical tasks to the class", "fun non-assessed activities", "assemblies" and "travelling to work".

What other aspects of a teacher's time changed when they returned to the classroom? Over half (56%) of the teachers surveyed reported change when they returned to the classroom. Areas where they are spending more time include "adapting learning to cater for a more flexible approach", "assessment to make up for all that couldn't be done during home learning", "behavioural, playground and social issues", "catching students up with their work", "cleaning", "discipline and motivation", "more one-to-one with students", "reconnecting with the students and seeing how they are", "doing practical sessions" and "settling students into a routine". Areas where less time is spent include "digitising lessons", "meetings", "planning and preparation (using one platform and verbal instructions from teachers being easier than those written and recorded), and "screen time, technology and technology issues".

What are the challenges and opportunities post COVID? The key challenge is a widening gap "between the academic standards of the highest and lowest performing students" (with agreement highest for this statement scoring on average 6.4 points out of 10). But there are also positives from remote learning, with the next most agreed statement being students have "mastered a greater range of digital skills" (6.2). But technology also has drawbacks with "a greater reliance on devices due to COVID-19 likely to impact students' development in areas such as interpersonal, cognitive, critical thinking and communication" scoring 6.1. Above average agreement was also present for the statement "family financial pressures are having a negative impact on students and their wellbeing" (6.0). Teachers agreed least with the statements "a growing number of children are likely to have special educational needs due to COVID-19" (4.1) and "a drop in the overall workload and postponement of some testing has removed pressure and fear of failure" (4.2).

How does VIC compare to other states? There are important differences, particularly around students wanting more opportunity for self-directed learning (6.8 in VIC; 5.1 other states), mastering a greater range of digital skills (7.0 in VIC; 5.6 other states), and relief from bullying (6.4 in VIC; 5.1 in other states). One area where teachers in VIC agreed less was adapting curriculums to better prepare students for life post-COVID19 (5.5 VIC; 6.1 other states).

Outside of physical and mental health, what are the main concerns for students post COVID-19? The single biggest concern according to almost 1 in 2 (48%) teachers was the effects of social isolation on their students. The next biggest concerns related to the impact on their social skills (45%), and about the time students spend on social media (41%). Other key worries included their level of engagement in learning (36%), greater disparity in learning outcomes between the top and bottom performing students (36%), cost of living pressures impacting the ability of families to afford independent education (30%), the impact on friendships (25%), and the ability of children to transition back to school (23%). Teachers were least concerned about the rising costs of university fees in some areas (4%) and bullying (4%). Only 1 in 10 (9%) teachers cited disruptions to meeting learning targets such as VCE or ATAR, poor hygiene and inability to practice social distancing at school, the ability for students to gain employment after school, and pressure of getting into a chosen course at university or TAFE, as major concerns.

How does VIC compare to other states? Key differences include heightened concerns about the effects of COVID of socialisation of children (a major concern for 69% of teachers in VIC, 30% in other states), the impact on social skills (58% VIC; 33% other states), and the impact on friendships (38% VIC; 13% other states). However, VIC teachers were also noticeably less worried about a lack of student support from parents or guardians (4% VIC; 33% other states), the time spent on social media (27% VIC; 53% other states), and children being sent to school when they were unwell (8% VIC; 27% other states).

How did student behaviours change during COVID-19? Over 7 in 10 (72%) teachers noted a sharp increase in incomplete assignments during remote learning (versus only 19% who saw more of this behaviour when back in the classroom). But more teachers also noted students spending more time completing assignments during remote learning (28%) than when in the classroom (17%). Teachers also highlighted more anxiety among students during remote learning (66% vs. 40% in the classroom), trouble concentrating (64% remote learning; 28% in the classroom) and tiredness (62% remote learning; 43% in the classroom). Absenteeism was also more problematic during remote learning (47% vs. 28% in the classroom). Fewer students spoke up in class (17% remote learning; 23% in classroom), and slightly more had self-doubt or self-criticised (30% remote learning, 25% in classroom). There were however some areas where student behaviour patterns did not differ, namely seeking more reassurance from parents and teachers (42% remote learning; 43% in classroom), headaches or stomach aches (15% during remote learning and in the classroom), and checking and reviewing school work (23% remote learning; 21% in the classroom).

How did VIC compare to other states? Students in Victoria exhibited more of all these behaviours during remote learning than when in the classroom (except seeking reassurance from teachers or parents). The biggest changes were incomplete assignments (76% doing more during remote learning compared to only 8% in the classroom), tiredness (88% vs. 24%), trouble concentrating (64% vs. 12%), and anxiety (72% vs. 32%). The experience was somewhat different in other states, with swings in behavioural changes far less pronounced for their students, except when it came to incomplete assignments (68% during remote learning; 29% back in the classroom) and trouble concentrating (64% vs. 43%). In addition, teachers noted a fall in the number of students who were tired during remote learning (39%) compared to when in the classroom (61%) - in stark contrast to the experience in VIC where it increased substantially.

What can be done to improve the wellbeing of struggling students during periods of remote learning? Teachers spoke of "spending more time off devices", "focussing less on assessment", "mindfulness activities", "making more time to socialise", "working with other students online", "any initiatives to promote connection with peers and the school community to keep a sense of belonging", "connecting with peers other than by social media", "focusing on what they can control and finding pleasure in daily activities", "social groups on Zoom" and "hooking up young people with mentors".

What can be done to improve the wellbeing of struggling students when back in the classroom? Teachers pointed to "dedicated social and emotional wellbeing sessions split into friendship groups", "a revised curriculum, including assessment requirements to allow for more time for personal wellbeing", "being open to changes in friendships", "encouraging all students to engage in class discussion, activities and small group tasks", "opportunities to hear students opinions about social, political and health concerns today", "making time for fun activities and chat among students and teachers", "focussing on physical interaction and activity", "more emphasis on group activity and practical work" and "returning to normality".

What can be done to improve the learning outcomes of struggling students during remote learning? Ideas include "breaking things up and focusing learning for shorter periods", "more time for catching up on missed work", "better access to one-on-one teacher conferencing", "taking regular breaks and exercise", "conversations and informal review of skills to ensure children don't feel disadvantaged or doomed to fail", "engage with others for accountability", "focus on learning attributes rather than knowledge", "forgive yourself if you didn't make good progress while learning at home", "get them to contribute with no fear of answers being wrong", "more one-on-one time with a trusted adult who can help talk through problems and concerns", "provide small group opportunities for connection with peers", "provide support to parents on how to support their children", "shorter lessons with breaks between" and "stop testing".

What can be done to improve the learning outcomes of struggling students when back in the classroom? Teachers pointed to "individual delivery of content that was developed as online instruction being available for students to refer to and check", "more time to participate in group tasks", "ask questions to clarify learning", "designing classroom routines that reinforce connection, kindness, empathy and tolerance of peers", "having adequate time and support from extra aides in the classroom", "more freedom with tasks, less crowded syllabus", "time to consolidate online content", and "allow students who have developed high levels of self-regulation and self-directed learning to continue to learn in this style".

What share of schools surveyed had a formal "wellbeing" program and how effective are they? With anxiety on the rise due to COVID, it was particularly encouraging that over 9 in 10 (91%) teachers said their school had a formal wellbeing program. But when asked based on their observations of their students, the extent they believe their school's wellbeing initiatives are helping improve student wellbeing during COVID-19, on average they scored just 6.2 points out of 10. More specifically, around 13% of teachers said they were not helping much (scoring 0-3 points), around 58% moderately (scoring 5-7 points) and around 3 in 10 (29%) very much (scoring 8-10 points).

If they had the power and resources what is the one thing teachers would do to better support students?
Suggestions include a hybrid model of "face-to-face and remote learning especially at senior secondary levels", more mentoring to "fill the professional knowledge that parents are not able to do", a greater focus on teaching and learning, less "assessment stress" and pressure of "external examinations, ATAR scores, Uni entrance etc." with one teacher noting the "greatest benefit of COVID was no NAPLAN!", a pared back curriculum so that teachers can "focus on mastery rather than trying to cram in too much content in a short time", fewer staff meetings and "more communication via email allowing teachers to concentrate on what was relevant rather than sit and listen to things that don't relate", more tech support allowing offsite/online learning to take place "quickly, reliably and easily" with "ready access to real time interactive activities no matter their age, where they live, or number of people using the internet at the same time", upskill teachers to do things "efficiently online" and "improve pedagogical research for online teaching", smaller class sizes at all year levels with "no more than 18 students per class", more fun including more sessions to "laugh and enjoy the positives" and "free from judgement to talk about how they feel about COVID", more whole school events "where the focus is on group work and interacting without the need for assessment", more support for teacher/principal mental health, moving the "conversation and action away from solely supporting students", thereby empowering teachers "to support kids better", revised timetables "to allow for less screen time and more time for wellbeing initiatives", "shorten the school day", and more teachers to assist the transition back to onsite learning "enabling small group sessions to prioritise learning needs and peer connection."

Have any aspects of teaching improved since COVID-19? Around 4 in 10 teachers agreed they are "able to think more about what really matters and what is worth doing" under these conditions (43%), there is a "greater appreciation of what teachers do" (43%), and "more parental insight into their children's every day classroom activities" (43%). Around 1 in 3 teachers highlighted "greater appreciation of the vital role schools play in society" (36%), and "more virtual and less face to face meetings" (32%) as positives. Around 1 in 4 (26%) highlighted "more use of online digital online tools" (26%). Interestingly, not one teacher identified "greater acceptance of fee relief or deferment for those families facing financial hardship" as a positive. Around 1 in 10 (8%) emphasised "other" things that had improved, such as less time doing other "stuff" that takes away from face-to-face teaching or student support, less travel time for students and teachers, and seizing opportunities to learn differently and foster learning engagement using different tools and an open-ended approach.

How does VIC compare to other states? Almost twice as many teachers in VIC (48%), said that appreciation for the vital role that schools played in society had improved since COVID (25% in other states). Noticeably more teachers in VIC also saw improvement around appreciation for what teachers do (52% in VIC, 36% in other states), and more parental insight into their children's every day class room activities (46% vs. 36%). But noticeably more teachers in other states saw postponement of some testing or a drop in the overall workload reducing pressure and fear of failure for students as a positive (18%) than teachers in VIC (8%). They were also more positive when it came to more ability to pivot rapidly and extensively (18% vs. 0% in VIC) and more time to focus on school work rather than extra-curricular activities (18% vs. 12% in VIC).

Finally, do teachers want life to return to exactly how it was before COVID-19? When asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the statement "I want everything about teaching and schools to return to exactly how they were before COVID-19", it appears very few wish to pre-COVID ways. On average, they scored just 4.1 points out of a possible 10 (where 10 is agree completely). Agreement was however slightly higher among teachers in VIC (4.4 points) than in other states (3.8 points). When breaking down the distribution of total teacher scores, it was telling that just 15% rated this statement 'high' (8-10 points) and wanted to return exactly to how things were before COVID. In contrast around 2 in 3 (63%) rated their agreement 'low' (0-4 points), signalling widespread appetite for change in how they teach and their schools. Appetite for change did however appear to be much stronger among teachers in other states (70%) than in VIC (56%), where noticeably more teachers were in 'medium' agreement (28% vs. 15% in other states).

PART 1: ANXIETY & ENGAGEMENT

This year has been particularly challenging for students and teachers, with closures of schools across the country disrupting a large chunk of the 2020 academic year - although the extent and period of closures varied across Australia, with Victorian schools forced to endure much longer periods of remote learning than elsewhere in the country.

COVID-19 required many schools, teachers and students to adjust rapidly to new ways of learning remotely as distancing measures were put in place. With students having to face major re-adjustments to their learning processes, some reportedly thrived, while others struggled.

Concerns have also been raised around the impact of remote learning on educational outcomes from reduced engagement (with teachers and classmates), as well as the impact on students' mental health, emotional wellbeing and their social development.

Part 1 of this report looks at how Independent school teachers view student anxiety and engagement during periods of remote learning and when they were back in the class room.

PROPORTION OF STUDENTS WITH "HIGH" LEVELS OF ANXIETY
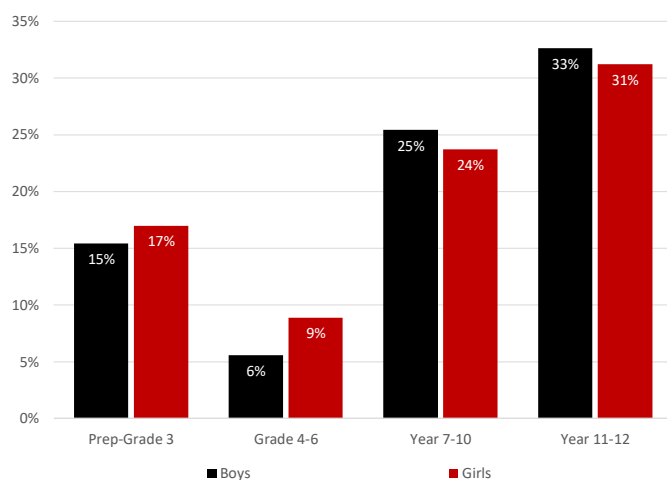
Based on their interactions with their students, teachers were asked to estimate the proportion of students that had "high" levels of anxiety.

At the primary level, anxiety was perceived as being much higher among students in Prep-Grade 3 than in Grades 4-6. Anxiety was also a little higher among primary school girls than boys in both groups.

Teachers also said the incidence of anxiety among boys in Prep-Grade 3 (15%) was almost 3 times higher than for boys in Grades 4-6 (6%), and almost twice as high for girls in Prep-Grade 3 (17%) than in Grades 4-6 (9%).

Anxiety was much more prevalent among students in high school. However, the gender pattern reversed, with boys a little more anxious than girls.

Anxiety was also more prevalent in the final years of high school. Anxiety among boys climbed from 25% in Years 7-10 to 33% in Years 11-12, and from 24% to 31% for girls.

STUDENT ANXIETY TODAY COMPARED TO BEFORE COVID-19
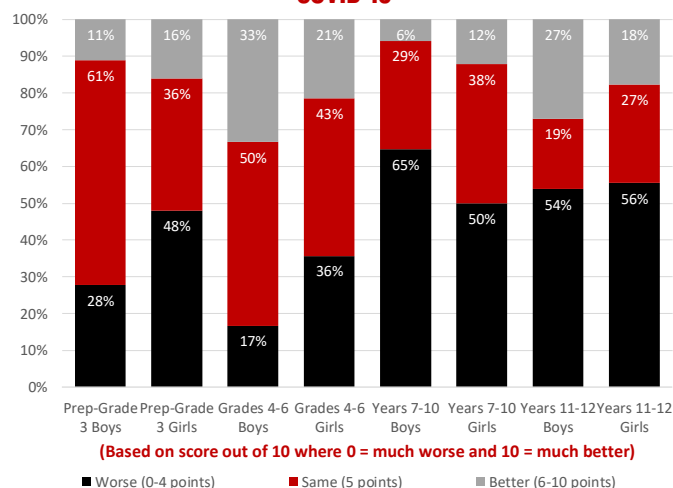
COVID has clearly had a negative impact on anxiety levels among students.

Primary school girls seem to have struggled more than boys, with teachers of primary school children indicating anxiety in Prep-Grade 3 was worse now than before COVID for 48% of girls, compared to 28% of boys, and for 36% of girls in Grades 4-6 compared to 17% of boys (where anxiety also improved for 1 in 3 boys).

COVID had an even bigger negative impact on anxiety levels for high school students - particularly boys. In Years 7-10, teachers estimate anxiety was worse for nearly 2 in 3 (65%) boys, compared to 50% of girls. In Years 11-12 however a broadly similar number of teachers indicated anxiety worsened for boys (54%) and girls (56%).

It was also interesting that anxiety levels were seen to have improved for over 1 in 4 (27%) Year 11-12 boys, compared to just 18% of girls.

PROPORTION OF STUDENTS WITH "LOW" LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT
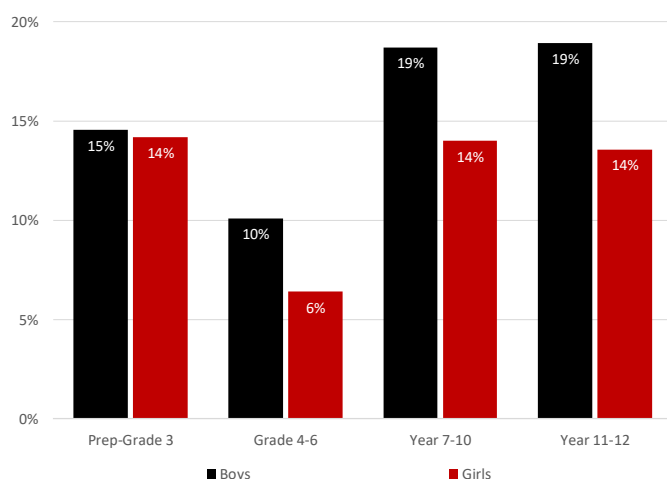
Based on their interactions with their students, teachers were also asked to estimate the proportion of students that had "low" levels of engagement.

At primary school levels, teachers reported similarly low levels of engagement for boys (15%) and girls (14%) in Prep-Grade 3. While engagement improved in Grades 4-6, improvement was more noticeable for girls where the number with low engagement fell to 6% compared to just 10% for boys.

Keeping students engaged was a bigger issue in high school, but much more so for boys than girls.

Teachers estimated almost 1 in 5 boys (19%) had low levels of engagement through Years 7-10, compared to around 14% of girls during this same period.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT TODAY COMPARED TO BEFORE COVID-19

(Based on score out of 10 where 0 = much worse and 10 = much better)

■ Worse (0-4 points)   ■ Same (5 points)   ■ Better (6-10 points)

The negative impact of COVID on engagement was also widespread among students - particularly boys.

In primary school, teachers estimated engagement among boys in Prep-Grade 3 was worse than before COVID for 59% of boys compared to 46% of girls, and for 33% of boys in Grades 4-6 compared to 21% of girls. But engagement was also better for around 1 in 4 girls and boys in these grade levels.

Engagement levels also deteriorated for more boys than girls at high school, particularly in Years 7-10, where it worsened for over 1 in 2 (53%) boys compared to 42% of girls.

In Years 11-12, teachers estimate engagement was worse for 38% of male students, compared to 33% of female students. Teachers also believe engagement was "better" for almost twice as many girls (20%) than boys (12%) in Years 11-12.

The survey shows some students struggled more than others with the changes to their academic lives during COVID. Based on their observations, teachers were asked which characteristics and behaviours were more likely to have been shown by students who struggled most to cope during and post COVID-19.
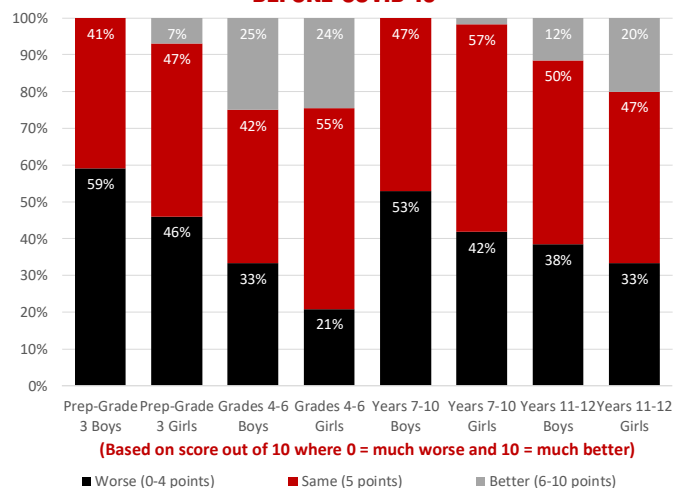
Numerous reasons were cited. Many centred motivation and lack of discipline. Teachers spoke of "students not motivated before COVID using it as an excuse to stay un-motivated", "not doing homework", and "inability to stay focussed on the set task". Teachers also cited technology as key pointing to "poor internet connection or IT resources" and "not logging on to classes often due technical difficulties". Others however were struggling "due to the nature of online platforms and lack of opportunity to ask questions in a one to one forum without drawing attention to themselves", "anxiety being on-camera" and "presentation of self, or not turning on camera during online lessons". For some, the main outcome was "poorer results in assessments".

Personality types were important with "extroverts missing the company of classmates" and "students who are very social and take learning cues from others struggling most". Others were thrown by changing routines, with teachers speaking of "return to normal school commitments, routine and assessment following a period of learning from home where there were very few events".

Some teachers cited "lack of social support from family at home, or interaction with friends", "family issues related to everyone being in the same space", "inability to focus, particularly when sporting clubs were shut down and students had limited physical outlets", "spending more time on screens and less time in face to face relationships", "difficulties connecting with peers and managing peer relationships via online platforms", and "too much time on social media and games during lock down."

Did COVID also impact teachers? When, teachers were asked to rate their own anxiety over the past few weeks, on average they reported relatively 'low' levels, self-scoring 6.3 points out of 10 (where 10 is excellent). Interestingly, teachers in VIC (7.4 points) said they were far less anxious than teachers in other states (5.6 points). Perhaps after the initial stress of having to move the classroom online with little time, VIC teachers during extended lockdown periods had more time to reinvent their classroom and embrace new ways of teaching. It was also clear that teachers at primary rated their stress levels somewhat lower than high school teachers.

Beyond the averages, the survey found that almost 1 in 2 (46%) teachers said their anxiety was worse than it was before COVID, and only 14% said it was better.

Teachers in VIC however bucked the national trend, with only 39% indicating their anxiety was worse (51% in other states), and 1 in 4 or 25% better (5% in other states). By year level, anxiety worsened for noticeably more teachers of students in Prep-Grade 3 (61%), and improved for most teachers of students in Years 7-10 (25%).

ANXIETY LEVELS AMONG TEACHERS

TEACHER ANXIETY TODAY COMPARED TO BEFORE COVID-19

(Based on score out of 10 where 0 = much worse and 10 = much better)
■ Worse ■ Same ■ Better
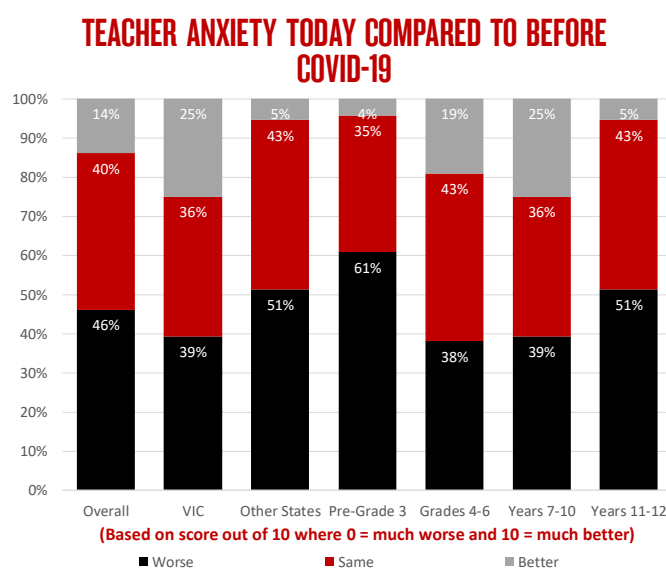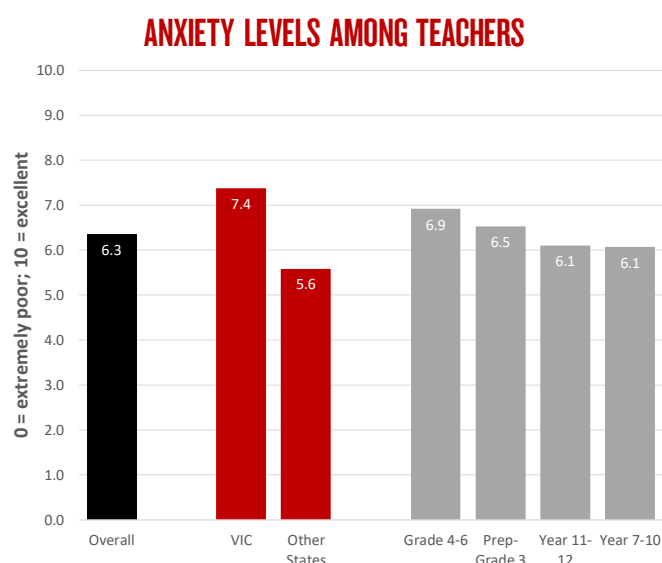
PART 2: HOW HAVE ASPECTS OF TEACHING CHANGED SINCE COVID-19

COVID-19 resulted in school closures across the country, causing a dramatic change in education with the distinctive rise of e-learning whereby teaching was undertaken remotely and on digital platforms. In this section, we look at the amount of time devoted to key aspects of teaching since COVID-19 - both during lockdown and back in the classroom.

EXTENT AMOUNT OF TIME DEVOTED TO THESE ASPECTS OF TEACHING CHANGED: DURING REMOTE LEARNING

■ More ■ Same ■ Less

EXTENT AMOUNT OF TIME DEVOTED TO THESE ASPECTS OF TEACHING CHANGED: BACK IN THE CLASSROOM

■ More ■ Same ■ Less
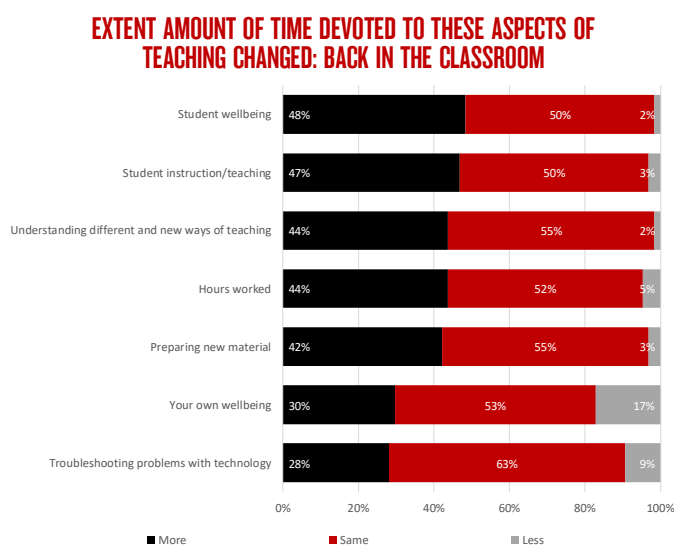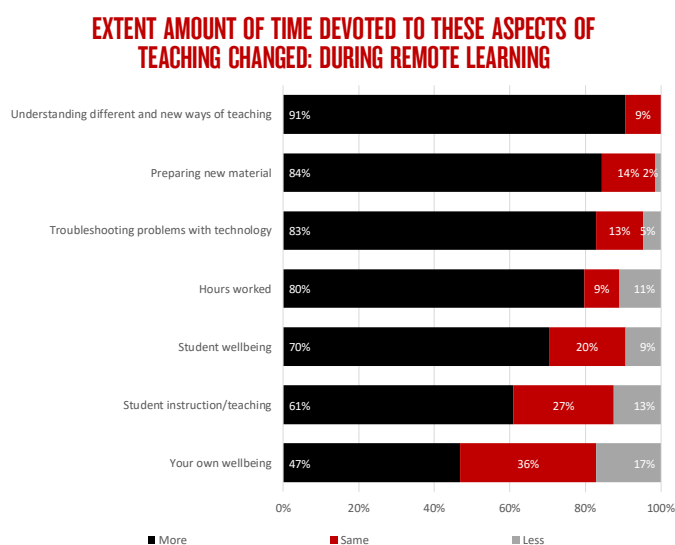
Over 9 in 10 (91%) said they devoted more time to understanding different and new ways of teaching during remote learning, compared to just 44% who devoted more time to this aspect of teaching when back in the classroom. Over 8 in 10 (84%) also said they devoted more time to preparing new material (42% back in the classroom), and 83% to troubleshooting problems with technology (28% back in the classroom).

These findings are not surprising given the sudden shift to online learning which required teachers to self-manage production and delivery of online teaching and learning materials, often without adequate training and resourcing.

Many teachers also said they worked longer hours (80% during remote learning compared to 44% when in the classroom), devoted more time to student wellbeing (70% during remote learning compared to 48% back in the classroom), and 61% more time on student instruction and teaching (47% in the classroom).

With greater demands on their time, it was particularly encouraging to almost 1 in 2 (47%) teachers also devoted more time to their own personal wellbeing, than when in the classroom (30%), although nearly 1 in 5 (17%) also indicated they spent less time on their own wellbeing during remote learning.

The tables below highlight key differences by state. Among the key take outs, noticeably more teachers in other states spent more time during remote learning on understanding new ways of teaching (95%) and preparing new material (89%) than in VIC 85% and 78% respectively), with noticeably more teachers in other states also devoting less time to student wellbeing (16%), student instruction and teaching (16%) and their own wellbeing (22%) than in VIC.

But far more teachers in VIC devoted time to student wellbeing (81%) than in other states (62%).

When back in the classroom, more teachers in other states said they devoted more time to all these aspects of teaching than did those in VIC, which is perhaps not surprising given they also spent more time back in the classroom than teachers in VIC.

EXTENT AMOUNT OF TIME DEVOTED TO ASPECTS OF TEACHING CHANGED: VIC & OTHER STATES

During Remote Learning	VIC	Other States	VIC	Other States	VIC	Other States
	More		Less		Same	
Understanding different and new ways of teaching	85%	**95%**	0%	0%	15%	5%
Preparing new material	78%	**89%**	4%	0%	19%	11%
Troubleshooting problems with technology	85%	81%	4%	5%	11%	14%
Hours worked	78%	81%	15%	8%	7%	11%
Student wellbeing	**81%**	62%	0%	**16%**	19%	22%
Student instruction/teaching	59%	62%	7%	**16%**	33%	22%
Your own wellbeing	41%	51%	11%	**22%**	48%	27%

Back in the Classroom	VIC	Other States	VIC	Other States	VIC	Other States
	More		Less		Same	
Student wellbeing	37%	**57%**	0%	3%	63%	41%
Student instruction/teaching	37%	**54%**	0%	5%	63%	41%
Understanding different and new ways of teaching	30%	**54%**	4%	0%	67%	46%
Hours worked	30%	**54%**	0%	8%	70%	38%
Preparing new material	33%	**49%**	0%	5%	67%	46%
Your own wellbeing	15%	**41%**	19%	16%	67%	43%
Troubleshooting problems with technology	11%	**41%**	**15%**	5%	74%	54%

Around 2 in 3 (67%) teachers also said they spent more time during remote learning on "other" aspects of teaching. These included things such as "calming, connecting and interacting with parents", "communicating with students via email if they were not present online during remote learning", "more emails and communication with administration and colleagues", "connecting with individual students", "seeking feedback" and "Zoom meetings".

But 3 in 10 (31%) also said they were spending less time doing "other" aspects of teaching during remote learning. Teachers spoke of less "behaviour management, disciplinary or playground issues". Others spent less time on things such as "classroom management", "communicating with colleagues", "out of work school-related activities", "incidental conversations", "social aspects of relationships with students", "demonstrating practical tasks to the class", "fun non-assessed activities", "assemblies" and "travelling to work".

When teachers were asked if there were also "other" aspects of teaching they did more or less of when back in the classroom, 56% said they had and 45% had not. Among those that had, they mentioned aspects such as "adapting learning to cater for a more flexible approach to learning", "assessment to make up for all that couldn't be done during home learning", "behavioural, playground and social issues", "catching students up with their work", "cleaning", "discipline and motivation", "more one-to-one with students", "reconnecting with the students and seeing how they are", "doing practical sessions" and "settling students into a routine".

Among those teachers doing less of "other" things they pointed to things such as "digitising lessons", "meetings", "planning and preparation as we only need to use one platform now, and verbal instructions from teacher are easier than written and recorded", and "screen time, technology and technology issues".

PART 3: COVID IMPACT ON STUDENT WELLBEING, BEHAVIOUR & PERFORMANCE

COVID-19 disrupted almost every element of daily life, and school was no exception. In this section, we asked teachers a series of questions to gauge their opinions on how student wellbeing and performance changed and what are some of the challenges and opportunities as we move ahead.

Teachers see the key challenge being the likelihood of a widening gap between the best and worst students because of COVID, with agreement among teachers highest for the statement "The gap between the academic standards of the highest and lowest performing students is likely to widen due to COVID-19" scoring on average 6.4 points out of 10 (where 10 is agree completely). But remote learning has also had positive benefits, with teachers next most in agreement about the statement "Due to remote learning, students have mastered a greater range of digital skills" (6.2 points).

EXTENT YOU BELIEVE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS

Statement	Score
The gap between the academic standards of the highest and lowest performing students is likely to widen due to COVID-19	6.4
Due to remote learning, students have mastered a greater range of digital skills	6.2
A greater reliance on devices due to COVID-19 is likely to impact students' development in areas such as interpersonal, cognitive, critical thinking & communication	6.1
Family financial pressures are having a negative impact on students and their wellbeing	6.0
The current school curriculum needs to be adapted to better prepare students well for the economic and social impacts of life and work post COVID-19	5.8
Due to remote learning, some students want more opportunity for self-directed learning	5.8
For students who have been victims of bullying, studying at home has been a welcome relief	5.7
A greater use of online tools could positively shift the role of teachers, making them more like coaches and mentors	4.9
Children are at risk of falling behind in their learning due to COVID-19	4.9
A drop in the overall workload & postponement of some testing has removed pressure and the fear of failure	4.2
A growing number of children are likely to have special educational needs due to COVID-19	4.1

0 = not at all; 10 = completely

While remote learning has improved technology skills, it has also had its drawbacks with teachers in next highest agreement about the statement "A greater reliance on devices due to COVID-19 is likely to impact students' development in areas such as interpersonal, cognitive, critical thinking and communication" (6.1 points).

The fallout from COVID is also filtering through to students indirectly, with teachers also in above average agreement with the statement "Family financial pressures are having a negative impact on students and their wellbeing" (6.0 points).

Teachers agreed least with the statements "A growing number of children are likely to have special educational needs due to COVID-19" (4.1 points) and "A drop in the overall workload and postponement of some testing has removed pressure and fear of failure" (4.2 points).

The chart below compares responses from other states against those in VIC.

It highlights some important differences, particularly around students wanting more opportunity for self-directed learning (6.8 in VIC; 5.1 in other states), mastering a greater range of digital skills (7.0 in VIC; 5.6 in other states), and relief from bullying (6.4 in VIC; 5.1 in other states).

One area where teachers in VIC agreed less was adapting curriculums to better prepare students for life post-COVID19 (5.5 in VIC; 6.1 in other states).
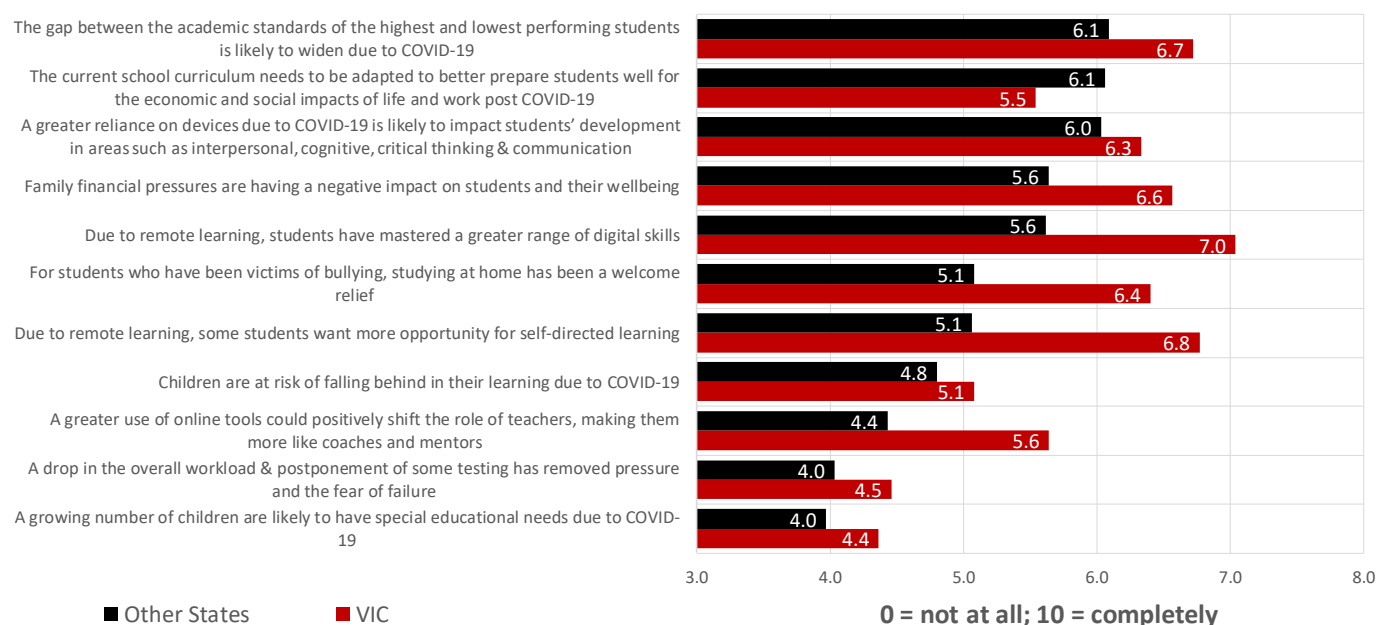
EXTENT YOU BELIEVE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS: OTHER STATES & VIC

Statement	Other States	VIC
The gap between the academic standards of the highest and lowest performing students is likely to widen due to COVID-19	6.1	6.7
The current school curriculum needs to be adapted to better prepare students well for the economic and social impacts of life and work post COVID-19	6.1	5.5
A greater reliance on devices due to COVID-19 is likely to impact students' development in areas such as interpersonal, cognitive, critical thinking & communication	6.0	6.3
Family financial pressures are having a negative impact on students and their wellbeing	5.6	6.6
Due to remote learning, students have mastered a greater range of digital skills	5.6	7.0
For students who have been victims of bullying, studying at home has been a welcome relief	5.1	6.4
Due to remote learning, some students want more opportunity for self-directed learning	5.1	6.8
Children are at risk of falling behind in their learning due to COVID-19	4.8	5.1
A greater use of online tools could positively shift the role of teachers, making them more like coaches and mentors	4.4	5.6
A drop in the overall workload & postponement of some testing has removed pressure and the fear of failure	4.0	4.5
A growing number of children are likely to have special educational needs due to COVID-19	4.0	4.4

■ Other States   ■ VIC   0 = not at all; 10 = completely

COVID-19 poses more challenges for students than just the obvious health challenges. In this section, we asked teachers to identify their top 5 concerns for their students about the impact of COVID-19 outside of the impact on their physical and mental health.

The single biggest concern according to almost 1 in 2 (48%) teachers was the effects of social isolation on their students. The next biggest concerns related to the impact on their social skills (45%), and about the time students spend on social media (41%) - refer to chart on the following page.

Other key worries included their level of engagement in learning (36%), greater disparity in learning outcomes between the top and bottom performing students (36%), cost of living pressures impacting the ability of families to afford independent education (30%), the impact on friendships (25%), and the ability of children to transition back to school (23%).

They were least concerned about the rising costs of university fees in some areas (4%) and bullying (4%). Only 1 in 10 (9%) teachers cited disruptions to meeting learning targets such as VCE or ATAR, poor hygiene and inability to practice social distancing at school, the ability for students to gain employment after school, and pressure of getting into a chosen course at university or TAFE as major concerns.

MAIN CONCERNS FOR YOUR STUDENTS FROM COVID
(ASIDE FROM PHYSICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH)

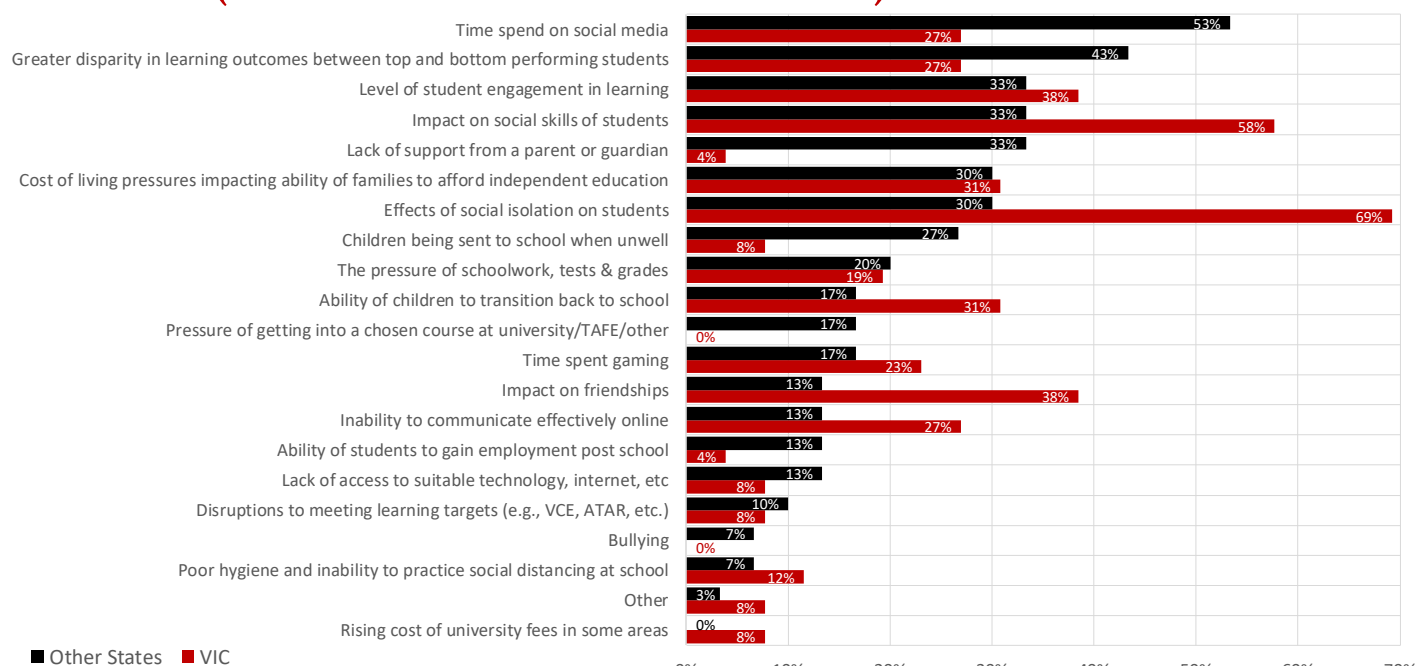| Concern	Percentage
Effects of social isolation on students	48%
Impact on social skills of students	45%
Time spend on social media	41%
Level of student engagement in learning	36%
Greater disparity in learning outcomes between top and bottom performing students	36%
Cost of living pressures impacting ability of families to afford independent education	30%
Impact on friendships	25%
Ability of children to transition back to school	23%
Inability to communicate effectively online	20%
Time spent gaming	20%
The pressure of schoolwork, tests & grades	20%
Lack of support from a parent or guardian	20%
Children being sent to school when unwell	18%
Lack of access to suitable technology, internet, etc	11%
Pressure of getting into a chosen course at university/TAFE/other	9%
Ability of students to gain employment post school	9%
Poor hygiene and inability to practice social distancing at school	9%
Disruptions to meeting learning targets (e.g., VCE, ATAR, etc.)	9%
Other	5%
Bullying	4%
Rising cost of university fees in some areas	4%

With students in VIC spending having spent a far more time learning remotely than in other states, teachers' responses in VIC differed significantly from those in other states.

Among some key differences was their heightened concerns about the effects of COVID of socialisation of children (a major concern for 69% of teachers in VIC compared to 30% in other states), the impact on social skills (58% VIC; 33% other states), and the impact on friendships (38% VIC; 13% other states). However, VIC teachers were also noticeably less worried about a lack of student support from their parents or guardians (4% VIC; 33% other states), the time they spend on social media (27% VIC; 53% other states), and children being sent to school when they are unwell (8% VIC; 27% other states).

MAIN CONCERNS FOR YOUR STUDENTS ABOUT IMPACT FROM COVID-19
(ASIDE FROM PHYSICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH): OTHER STATES & VIC

Concern	Other States	VIC
Time spend on social media	53%	27%
Greater disparity in learning outcomes between top and bottom performing students	43%	27%
Level of student engagement in learning	33%	38%
Impact on social skills of students	33%	58%
Lack of support from a parent or guardian	33%	4%
Cost of living pressures impacting ability of families to afford independent education	30%	31%
Effects of social isolation on students	30%	69%
Children being sent to school when unwell	27%	8%
The pressure of schoolwork, tests & grades	20%	19%
Ability of children to transition back to school	17%	31%
Pressure of getting into a chosen course at university/TAFE/other	17%	0%
Time spent gaming	17%	23%
Impact on friendships	13%	38%
Inability to communicate effectively online	13%	27%
Ability of students to gain employment post school	13%	4%
Lack of access to suitable technology, internet, etc	13%	8%
Disruptions to meeting learning targets (e.g., VCE, ATAR, etc.)	10%	8%
Bullying	7%	0%
Poor hygiene and inability to practice social distancing at school	7%	12%
Other	3%	8%
Rising cost of university fees in some areas	0%	8%

■ Other States ■ VIC

COVID also resulted in significant changes in aspects of student behaviour during remote learning and when back in the classroom.

During remote learning, over 7 in 10 (72%) teachers noted a sharp increase in incomplete assignments from their students. This compared to only 19% who saw more of this behaviour when back in the classroom (and 17% of teachers who also said their students exhibited less of this behaviour). But teachers noted more students were spending more time completing assignments during remote learning (28%) than when in the classroom (17%).

Remote learning also had a negative impact on students across other areas, compared to being back in the classroom. Teachers highlighted more anxiety among students during remote learning (66%) than when in the classroom (40%), trouble concentrating (64% remote learning; 28% in the classroom) and tiredness (62% remote learning; 43% in the classroom).

Absenteeism was also more problematic during remote learning (47%) than when in the classroom (28%). Fewer students were speaking up in class (17% remote learning; 23% in classroom), and slightly more students self-doubted or self-criticised during remote learning (30%) than in the classroom (25%).

There were however some areas where student behaviour patterns did not differ, namely seeking more reassurance from parents and teachers (42% remote learning; 43% in classroom), headaches or stomach aches (15% during remote learning and in the classroom), and checking and reviewing school work (23% remote learning; 21% in the classroom).

EXTENT ASPECTS OF STUDENT BEHAVIOUR HAVE CHANGED: DURING REMOTE LEARNING
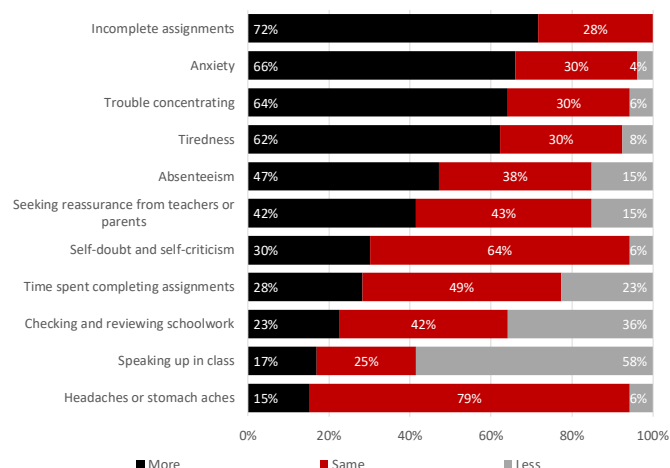
EXTENT ASPECTS OF STUDENT BEHAVIOUR HAVE CHANGED: BACK IN THE CLASSROOM
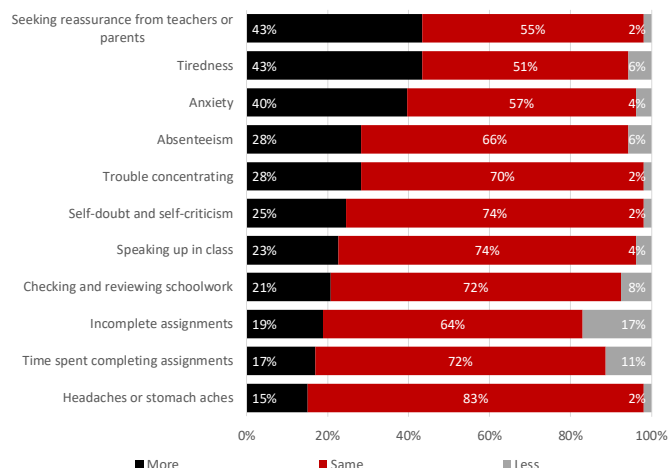
EXTENT ASPECTS OF STUDENT BEHAVIOUR HAVE CHANGED: VIC & OTHER STATES

During Remote Learning	VIC	Other States	VIC	Other States	VIC	Other States
	More		Less		Same	
Trouble concentrating	64%	64%	4%	7%	32%	29%
Self-doubt and self-criticism	24%	**36%**	8%	4%	68%	61%
Tiredness	**88%**	39%	4%	11%	8%	50%
Headaches or stomach aches	16%	14%	12%	0%	72%	86%
Incomplete assignments	76%	68%	0%	0%	24%	32%
Time spent completing assignments	**40%**	18%	20%	25%	40%	57%
Seeking reassurance from teachers or parents	36%	46%	16%	14%	48%	39%
Anxiety	72%	61%	4%	4%	24%	36%
Absenteeism	40%	**54%**	16%	14%	44%	32%
Checking and reviewing schoolwork	28%	18%	24%	**46%**	48%	36%
Speaking up in class	16%	18%	60%	57%	24%	25%

EXTENT ASPECTS OF STUDENT BEHAVIOUR HAVE CHANGED: VIC & OTHER STATES

Back in the Classroom	VIC	Other States	VIC	Other States	VIC	Other States
	More		Less		Same	
Trouble concentrating	12%	**43%**	4%	0%	84%	57%
Self-doubt and self-criticism	12%	**36%**	0%	4%	88%	61%
Tiredness	24%	**61%**	12%	0%	64%	39%
Headaches or stomach aches	8%	**21%**	4%	0%	88%	79%
Incomplete assignments	8%	**29%**	20%	14%	72%	57%
Time spent completing assignments	12%	21%	4%	18%	84%	61%
Seeking reassurance from teachers or parents	44%	43%	4%	0%	52%	57%
Anxiety	32%	**46%**	4%	4%	64%	50%
Absenteeism	20%	**36%**	12%	0%	68%	64%
Checking and reviewing schoolwork	20%	21%	0%	14%	80%	64%
Speaking up in class	20%	25%	8%	0%	72%	75%

A look at how student behaviours changed during remote learning compared to back in the classroom by state reveals just how pervasive the impact of longer-periods of remote learning were on students in VIC. Students in VIC exhibited more of all these behaviours during remote learning than when in the classroom (except seeking reassurance from teachers or parents) - see tables above. The biggest changes were incomplete assignments (76% doing more during remote learning compared to only 8% in the classroom), tiredness (88% vs. 24%), trouble concentrating (64% vs. 12%), and anxiety (72% vs. 32%).

The experience was somewhat different according to teachers in other states, with swings in behavioural changes far less pronounced for their students, except when it came to incomplete assignments (68% during remote learning; 29% back in the classroom) and trouble concentrating (64% vs. 43%). In addition, teachers noted a fall in the number of students who were tired during remote learning (39%) compared to when in the classroom (61%) - in stark contrast to the experience in VIC where it increased substantially.

Ideas from teachers to improve wellbeing for struggling students…

When teachers were asked for ideas to help improve wellbeing for students that struggled more than others during remote learning, they spoke of "spending time off devices", "focussing less on assessment", "mindfulness activities", making more time to socialise", working with other students online", "any initiatives to promote connection with peers and the school community to keep a sense of belonging", "connecting with peers other than by social media", "focusing on what they can control and finding pleasure in daily activities", "social groups on Zoom" and "hooking up young people with mentors".

When also asked for ideas to help improve wellbeing for students back in the classroom, they pointed to "dedicated social and emotional wellbeing sessions split into friendship groups", "a revised curriculum, including assessment requirements to allow for more time for personal wellbeing", "being open to changes in friendships", "encouraging all students to engage in class discussion, activities and small group tasks", "give opportunities to hear students opinions about social, political and health concerns today", "make time for fun activities and chat (among students and teachers)", "focus on physical interaction and activity", "more emphasis on group activity and practical work" and "returning to normality".

Ideas from teachers to help with learning for struggling students…

When teachers were asked for ideas to help with learning for students that struggled more than others during remote learning, ideas included "breaking things up and focusing learning for shorter periods", "more time for catching up on missed work", better access to one-on-one teacher conferencing", "taking regular breaks and exercise", "conversations and informal review of skills to ensure children don't feel disadvantaged or doomed to fail", "engage with others for accountability", "focus on learning attributes rather than knowledge", "forgive yourself if you didn't make good progress while learning at home", "get them to contribute with no fear of answers being wrong", "more one-on-one time with a trusted adult who can help talk through problems and concerns", "provide small group opportunities for connection with peers", "provide support to parents on how to support their children", "shorter lessons with breaks between" and "stop testing".

When also asked for ideas to help improve learning for students back in the classroom, teachers pointed to "individual delivery of content that was developed as online instruction being available for students to refer to and check", "more time to participate in group tasks", "ask questions to clarify learning", "designing classroom routines that reinforce connection, kindness, empathy and tolerance of peers", "having adequate time and support from extra aides in the classroom", "more freedom with tasks, less crowded syllabus", "time to consolidate online content", and "allow students who have developed high levels of self-regulation and self-directed learning to continue to learn in this style".

EXTENT SCHOOL'S WELLBEING INITIATIVES ARE HELPING TO IMPROVE STUDENT WELLBEING DURING COVID-19

Bar chart — y-axis: 0 = not at all; 10 = completely. Overall: 6.2; VIC: 6.4; Other States: 5.9
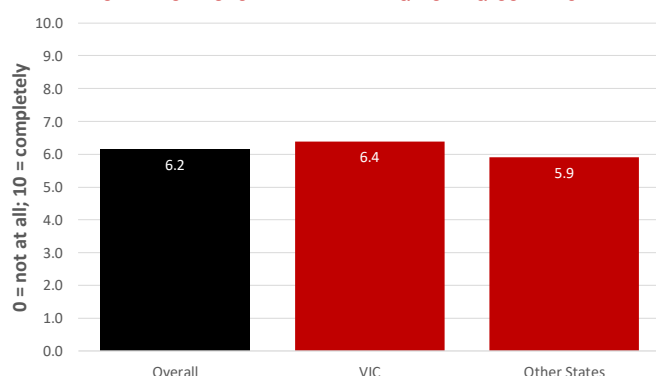
With anxiety on the rise due to COVID, it was particularly encouraging that over 9 in 10 (91%) surveyed independent school teachers said their school had a formal (structured, timetabled, embedded in curriculum) wellbeing program.

But when also asked based on their observations of their students, the extent they believe their school's wellbeing initiatives (e.g. coaching, meditation, fitness, counselling, etc.) are helping improve student wellbeing during COVID-19, on average they scored 6.2 points out of 10 - suggesting they are helping only 'moderately'. More specifically, around 13% of teachers said they were not helping much (scoring 0-3 points), around 58% moderately (scoring 5-7 points) and around 3 in 10 (29%) very much (scoring 8-10 points).

If I had the resources or power to do one thing at my school to make the biggest difference to helping teachers and principals better support students during COVID-19...

"Every student has a mentor after they leave school to assist them to holistically get their life together. This 'Life Coach/Mentor' is able to fill the professional knowledge that parents are not able to do."

"Focus on teaching/learning and way less testing at the primary level. Greatest benefit of COVID this year was no NAPLAN!"

"Fewer pointless staff meetings. Communication was done via email and teachers could just use what was relevant to them rather than sit and listen to things that didn't relate."

"Formally reduce the expectations of work that students are expected to do and take away the pressure of external examinations, ATAR scores, Uni entrance' etc."

"Take pressure off parents so they can better support children at home."

"Have the software and hardware for each student learning offsite/online to quickly, reliably, easily and readily access real time interactive activities no matter their age, where they live, or number of people using the internet at the same time."

"Implement better LMS, upskill teachers to do things efficiently online, improve pedagogical research for online teaching."

"Make class sizes smaller at all year levels - no more than 18 students per class."

"More sessions to laugh and enjoy the positives, and free from judgement to talk about how they feel about COVID."

"More whole school events where the focus is on group work and interacting without the need for assessment."

"Putting in place mechanisms for teachers and principals that supports their mental health and wellbeing. This will empower them to support kids better."

"Remove assessment stress and the huge amount of materials in the curriculum so we can focus on mastery rather than trying to cram in too much content in a short time."

"Revised timetable to allow for less screen time and more time for wellbeing initiatives."

"Shorten the school day"

"Offer a mixed setting of face-to-face and remote learning especially at senior secondary levels Years 11 & 12."

"Support teachers first. If teachers are struggling, they can't teach well. Reward teachers and move the conversation and actions away from solely supporting students."

"Provide additional teachers to assist in classroom spaces as we transition students back to onsite learning, enabling small group sessions to prioritise learning needs and peer connection."

COVID has clearly tested teachers, with reports of significantly higher workloads, reduced one-to-one engagement with students, difficulty in ascertaining the engagement levels of their students and the restricted ability to monitor individual student progress among the many reported challenges. But are there any aspects of teaching they believe have improved since COVID-19?

WHAT ASPECTS OF TEACHING HAVE IMPROVED SINCE COVID-19?

Aspect	%
More thinking about what really matters and what is most worth doing under these conditions	43%
More appreciation for what teachers actually do	43%
More parental insight into their child's everyday classroom activities	40%
More appreciation for the vital role schools play in society	36%
More virtual and/or less face to face meetings	32%
More use of online digital tools	26%
More communication between schools & parents on learning objectives and outcomes	17%
More time to focus on school work with fewer extra-curricular activities	15%
More postponement of some testing and/or a drop in the overall workload reduces pressure & fear of failure	13%
Other	8%
More ability to pivot rapidly and extensively	8%
More access to individualised, real-time data on how well each student is progressing	6%
More flexibility around timing and managing the pressures of tests	2%
More acceptance of fee relief/deferment for those families facing financial hardship	0%

WHAT ASPECTS OF TEACHING HAVE IMPROVED SINCE COVID-19? VIC & OTHER STATES

Aspect	Other States	VIC
More thinking about what really matters and what is most worth doing under these conditions	43%	44%
More parental insight into their child's everyday classroom activities	36%	44%
More appreciation for what teachers actually do	36%	52%
More virtual and/or less face to face meetings	32%	32%
More use of online digital tools	29%	24%
More appreciation for the vital role schools play in society	25%	48%
More postponement of some testing and/or a drop in the overall workload reduces pressure & fear of failure	18%	8%
More time to focus on school work with fewer extra-curricular activities	18%	12%
More communication between schools & parents on learning objectives and outcomes	18%	16%
More ability to pivot rapidly and extensively	14%	0%
More access to individualised, real-time data on how well each student is progressing	7%	4%
Other	7%	8%
More acceptance of fee relief/deferment for those families facing financial hardship	0%	0%
More flexibility around timing and managing the pressures of tests	0%	4%

■ Other States ■ VIC

The main positives according to around 4 in 10 teachers are being able to think more about what really matters and what is worth doing under these conditions (43%), greater appreciation of what teachers do (43%), and more parental insight into their children's every day classroom activities (43%).

Around 1 in 3 teachers highlighted greater appreciation of the vital role schools play in society (36%), and more virtual and less face to face meetings (32%). Around 1 in 4 (26%) highlighted more use of online digital online tools as a positive (26%).

Interestingly, not one survey respondent identified greater acceptance of fee relief or deferment for those families facing financial hardship as a positive.

Around 1 in 10 (8%) emphasised "other" things that improved, such as less time doing other "stuff" that takes away from face-to-face teaching or student support, less travel time for students and teachers, and seizing opportunities to learn differently and foster learning engagement using different tools and an open-ended approach.

Again, however, there was a wide gulf in perceptions between teachers in VIC and other states over what has improved since COVID.
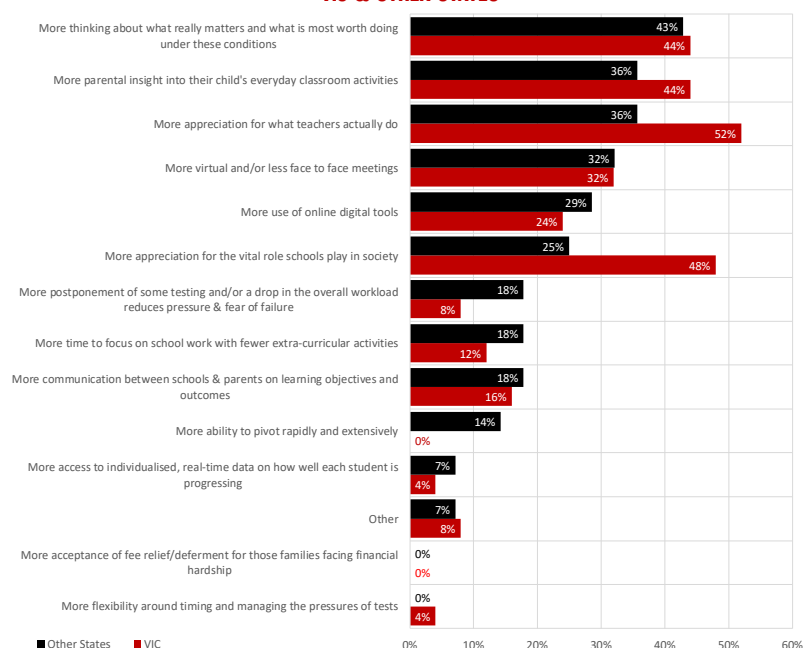
Almost twice as many teachers in VIC (48%), said that appreciation for the vital role that schools played in society had improved since COVID, compared to 25% in other states.

Noticeably more teachers in VIC also saw improvement around appreciation for what teachers do (52% compared to 36% in other states), and more parental insight into their children's every day class room activities (46% vs. 36%).
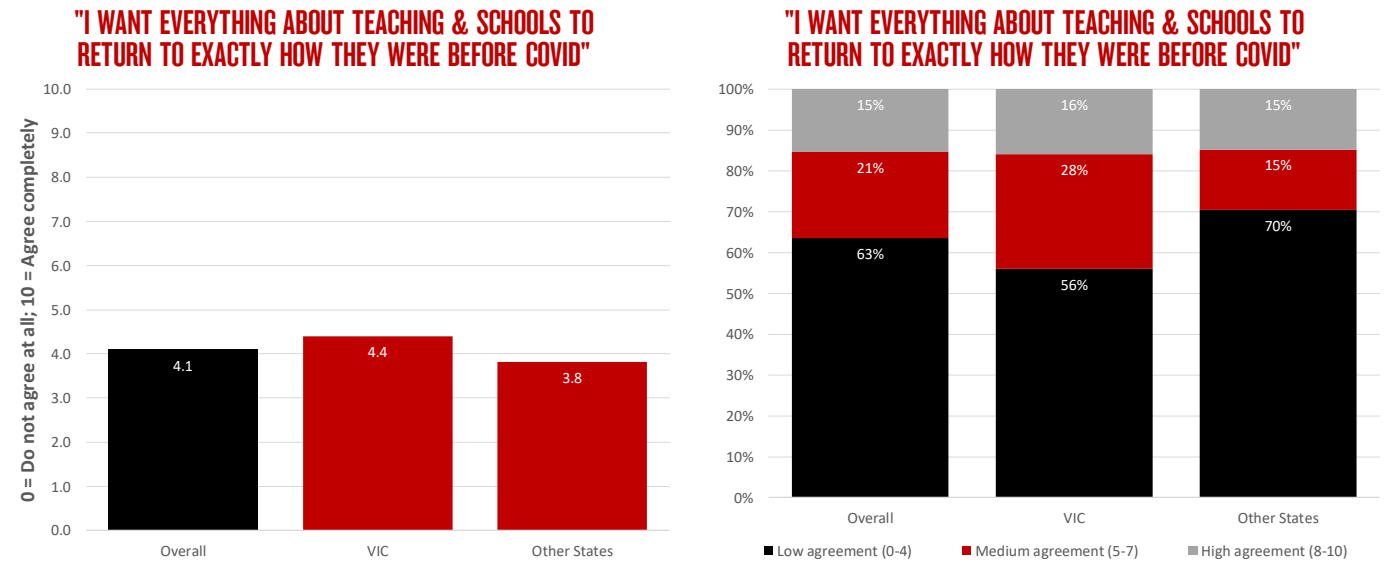
But noticeably more teachers in other states saw postponement of some testing or a drop in the overall workload reducing pressure and fear of failure for students as a positive (18%) than teachers in VIC (8%).

They were also more positive when it came to more ability to pivot rapidly and extensively (18% vs. 0% in VIC) and more time to focus on school work rather than extra-curricular activities (18% vs. 12% in VIC).

Finally, when teachers were asked the rate the extent they agreed with the statement "I want everything about teaching and schools to return to exactly how they were before COVID-19, it appears very few wish to pre-COVID ways. On average, they scored just 4.1 points out of a possible 10 (where 10 is agree completely). Agreement was however slightly higher among teachers in VIC (4.4 points) than in other states (3.8 points).

When breaking down the distribution of total teacher scores, it was telling that just 15% rated this statement 'high' (8-10 points) and wanted to return exactly to how things were before COVID. In contrast around 2 in 3 (63%) rated their agreement 'low' (0-4 points), signalling widespread appetite for change in how they teach and their schools. Appetite for change did however appear to be much stronger among teachers in other states (70%) than in VIC (56%), where noticeably more teachers were in 'medium' agreement (28% vs. 15% in other states).

"I WANT EVERYTHING ABOUT TEACHING & SCHOOLS TO RETURN TO EXACTLY HOW THEY WERE BEFORE COVID"

"I WANT EVERYTHING ABOUT TEACHING & SCHOOLS TO RETURN TO EXACTLY HOW THEY WERE BEFORE COVID"

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