

Flourishing school communities



The role schools play in building and providing community was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools were missed during lockdown – not just by busy parents having to juggle their own work with monitoring their child’s learning, but because schools are key to [community](#) (within the school) as well as being a place of connection within communities.

Our research shows that many parents believe the greatest strength of their child’s school is in fact the community. Almost nine in ten parents (88%) agree the school community has a positive impact on their child’s education, and the community provides good role models for their children (87%).

FOR STUDENTS



88% parents agree the school community **has a positive impact** on their child's education



87% parents agree the school community **provides good role models** for their children

Schools are hubs of community for parents and staff too.

While schools fulfil the important role of providing a place of community for students, they also are hubs for parents to connect and interact. Three quarters of parents (75%) agree the school community provides them with the opportunity to make good friends and they feel known by the school community (71%). Positively amidst these uncertain COVID times more than four in five parents (82%) agree they can count on their school community to be supportive in times of need. Interestingly the sense of feeling known by the school community is slightly stronger among non-government school parents (76%) than government school parents (67%).

FOR PARENTS



82% parents can count on their school community to be **supportive in times of need**



75% parents agree the school community provides them with **the opportunity to make good friends**



71% parents **feel known** by the school community

Educators also appreciate the sense of community their school provides. Educators are most likely to describe their school as caring (64%), friendly (58%), professional (54%) and people-centred (51%). The community is also seen as a benefit of working in the education sector with more than four in five educators (84%) believing the social connections and the workplace community is better in the education sector than other professions.

Building stronger communities

A key strength of school communities is the safe environment they provide for their students. Positively, four in five educators (82%) and parents (79%), believe that compared to five years ago their school environment is safer for students of all ethnicity, religions, and gender identities.

The challenge of loneliness and social isolation

Despite the strength of today's school communities, many are experiencing a sense of loneliness and isolation. Two thirds of educators (67%) and almost half of parents (49%) believe it is extremely/very challenging for today's high school students to navigate

loneliness and social isolation. To a lesser extent, navigating loneliness and social isolation is also a challenge for primary school students today (51% educators, 40% parents). The challenge of loneliness in Australian schools is expected to continue. More than a third of parents (36%), and two in five educators (43%), believe students experiencing loneliness is one of the most significant challenges that school communities will face in the next 12 months.

Navigating gender identity within the school community

Over the past few years, schools and educators have been on a journey of navigating gender identity reforms. A third of educators (33%), and a quarter of parents (25%), believe navigating gender identity reforms will be one of the most significant challenges for school communities in the next 12 months. Navigating gender identity is a challenge for the community and the students themselves. Parents (35%) and educators (43%) believe navigating gender identity is more challenging (extremely/very) for high schoolers than primary school students (25% parents, 32% educators).

The discussion around teaching about gender identity in Australian schools is a complex one to navigate. Parents and educators are more open to older students being taught about gender identity in a school environment, than younger students. More than half of parents (53%) and educators (55%), are extremely or very open to students being taught about gender identity from the ages of 15-18. Two in five parents (41%) and educators (45%) are open to 11-14 year olds being taught about gender identity and three in ten are open to it being taught to 7-10 year olds (30% parents, 32% educators). For 4-6 year olds, however, parents and educators are more likely to be not at all open (40% parents, 34% educators) than extremely/very open (27% parents, 28% educators).

Interestingly, parents of Gen Z (44%) are more likely than parents of Gen Alpha (35%) to be not at all open to 4-6 year olds being taught about gender identity in a school environment.

Government school parents are less open to gender identity being taught in a school environment than non-government school parents. Government school parents are more likely than non-government school parents to be not at all open to 4-6 year olds (43% government, 35% non-government) and 7-10 year olds (32% government, 23% non-government) being taught about gender identity in a school environment.

Schools play an integral part in building community for students, parents, and staff. This became evident to many when schools shifted to schooling from home during COVID-19. A key strength of the school community is that it provides a safe space to learn, explore and

understand alongside a support network of role models allowing students, parents, and staff to feel seen and known. It is important for school leaders to continue to build communities of support in our schools for students, parents and teachers particularly as we see the breakdown of other traditional forms of community in our society.

The future of education 2020
Exploring wellbeing, post-school pathways and the role of schools in building community

[Download the FREE report here](#) 



The image shows the cover and an open page of the report 'The future of education 2020'. The cover features a young boy and the title 'The future of education 2020' with a subtitle 'Exploring wellbeing, post-school pathways and the role of schools in building community'. The open page shows a section titled 'Rising pressure for success' with various charts and text.

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