The future of education 2020

Exploring wellbeing, post-school pathways and the role of schools in building community

mccrindle

education future forum

Contents

Research objectives

The Future of Education 2020 report summarises the key trends affecting the education sector, to equip school leaders and teachers for strategic decision making. The purpose of this research is to:

- Provide a greater understanding of students within the classroom

- Explore wellbeing and community within schools

- Give insight into sentiment around post-school pathways

- Understand educators experience of working in the education sector

Methodology

The Future of Education 2020 report collates quantitative data from both parents and educators.

The survey of parents was in field from 6 to 11 March 2020. It was completed by a sample of 1,003 Australian parents. Throughout this report these respondents are referred to as parents.

The survey of educators was in field from 9 March to 30 April 2020. It was completed by a sample of 401 educators. Throughout this report these respondents are referred to as educators. The section on teaching in COVID-19 is based on a subset of the educators. Responses included in this section are from those who completed the survey from 24 to 30 April 2020.

Data labels on the graphs in this report have been rounded to the nearest whole number and may, therefore, sum to 99% or 101%. Any calculations where two data points have been added are based on raw data (not the data labels on the graph) which have been rounded once combined.

Where no sample size has been specified in the report for graphs, the responses represent the total survey sample parents (n=1,003) and educators (n=401).

Understanding the students of today

The 2020 school year began like any other; teachers and students gathered, refreshed, and inspired to learn. Unbeknown to us, the greatest disruption to education in recent history was on the horizon – the COVID-19 pandemic. To help reduce the spread of infection, many states and territories shifted to at-home learning arrangements for most school students.

Almost nine in ten Australians with school aged children (88%) kept them home from school during this time, while just 12% continued to send them to school. The experience of online education has been a largely positive one for Australian households (71%). This is a testament to the hard work and adaptability of teachers and schools across Australia when they were thrust into delivering education online in a short amount of time.[1]

The delivery of education has evolved throughout the years. This is due to the technology available and the unique characteristics of each generation. The relatively smooth adoption of online delivery during COVID-19 was due to both the ubiquity of online learning and communication platforms, and the technological agility of today's students.

To effectively teach, educate and lead the next generation of students, it is important to understand who they are, and the world they have been shaped in. Today's students are comprised of Generation Z (born 1995-2009) and Generation Alpha (born 2010-2024).

Much research has been conducted to understand Generation Z. As a generation they are defined by digital, visual, mobile, social, and global characteristics. They have been shaped in a time where online engagement supersedes time spent face-to-face[2], when the digital is increasingly replacing the physical, and where global influences are often more potent than local ones.

Who is Generation Alpha?

Generation Alpha is the youngest of our current generations and describes those born since 2010. They populate our schools, with the oldest now entering their tween years. There are 2.8 million Gen Alphas born globally each week, and with an expected final number of 2.2 billion, this generation will be the largest in history. In Australia, within four years they will outnumber the Baby Boomers, and most will live to see the 22nd century. With the first iPad released the same year they began being born (2010), Generation Alpha have only ever lived in a world where glass is linked to interaction and connection. Technology and customisation have shaped their childhood. Where Generation Z experienced the rise of customisation, Generation Alpha have seen personalisation – where everything from Nutella jars to story books can be ordered featuring their name. For Generation Beta, the ones to follow and who will begin being born in the year 2025, it is likely they will be impacted heavily by the rise of prediction, where algorithms and Artificial Intelligence will pre-emptively provide them with products and services, before they even know they need them!

Upageing of Generation Alpha

In a world that has come to prioritise the digital, students of today are still experiencing the joys of self-directed play without screens. More than seven in ten Australian parents (72%) suggest their child engages in self directed play at least daily, while three in ten (31%) engage multiple times throughout the day. This is largely through playing with toys (60%), playing outside (56%) and playing with friends (55%) or siblings (52%).

Although children are still engaging in self-directed play, parents and educators feel the tension of this generation upageing (growing up faster than they need to). Almost half of educators (48%), and one in five parents (20%), believe upageing is a barrier for this generation to thrive. Consistent with this, almost nine in ten parents (87%) and educators (90%) are concerned that children are losing their innocence too soon. At the same time, however, parents (79%) and educators (84%) struggle with the tension between protecting a child's innocence and educating them for their safety.

The growth mindset of Generation Alpha

Educators believe the mindset of Generation Alpha is different to Generation Z. When faced with a challenge, educators believe Gen Alpha is more likely to persist (64%), while Gen Z is more likely to give up (52%). Educators think Gen Alpha is more likely to ask for help (79%) while Gen Z will struggle in silence (69%). When failure occurs, educators believe Gen Z is more likely to see it as a personal deficiency (68%) while Gen Alpha is equally likely to see it as a personal deficiency (50%) or an opportunity to learn (50%). As Generation Alpha grows up it will be interesting to see how this mindset shapes their experience and approach to life.

> *Educators believe Gen Alpha is more likely to persist (64%), while Gen Z is more likely to give up (52%)*

Generation Alpha is seen as smart, spoilt and fun

Although just a generation apart, Generation Z and Generation Alpha have unique characteristics. Parents are most likely to describe Gen Alpha as smart, spoilt, fun, happy and tech savvy. Educators see Gen Alpha as being curious, smart, energetic, tech savvy and creative.

The picture is slightly less positive for Gen Z, with parents likely to describe Gen Z as smart, lazy, independent, entitled and tech savvy. Educators are similar, describing Gen Z as smart, tech savvy, curious, anxious, and self-absorbed.

The unique characteristics of Gen Z and Gen Alpha reflect the changing world we are living in. Just as the world around us is changing, it is likely that education will continue to adapt and innovate to engage, educate, and prepare students for the future.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES CHILDREN OF TODAY?

Educators n=401

α Gen Alpha   Z Gen Z

When faced with a challenge

	Persist	Give up
α	64%	36%
Z	48%	52%

Respond to a new situation with

	Confidence	A lack of confidence
α	67%	33%
Z	42%	58%

Respond to challenge by

	Embrace challenge	Avoid challenge
α	67%	33%
Z	39%	61%

See failure as

	An opportunity to learn	A personal deficiency
α	50%	50%
Z	32%	68%
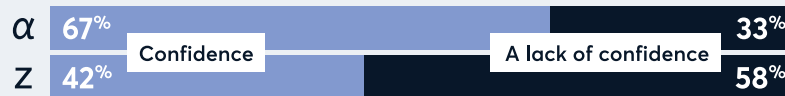
When experiencing difficulty

	Ask for help	Struggle in silence
α	79%	21%
Z	31%	69%

Executive summary

The education sector is currently experiencing its greatest disruption in recent history with the COVID-19 pandemic. The sector is responding well, however, with households across Australia finding the experience of online education to be largely positive. This is due to the unique characteristics of the students of today, as well as the hard work of the education sector. As the world continues to change, so too does the experience of education.

Rising pressure for success

A good education is said to open many doors and set students up for success. In an increasingly globally connected world, parents are feeling the pressure to set their children up for success. More than two thirds of parents (67%) believe the pressure to set their child up for success has increased in the past five years. This pressure is particularly evident for high school students facing pressure to do well in exams and assessments (77% educators, 60% parents). At times, the pressure parents feel to set their child up for success has been transferred to their child. Almost half of parents (49%) feel they have placed too much pressure on their child to achieve at school at some point.

Balancing curriculum and wellbeing

As the focus on wellbeing continues to rise, so too does the tension of balancing wellbeing support with curriculum. In the last five years, three in five parents (60%) believe the expectations they place on their child's school to support student wellbeing have increased (significantly/somewhat/slightly). This is up 12 percentage points from 48% in 2019.[3] Educators are feeling this pressure, with four in five (83%) believing the tension between supporting student wellbeing and teaching curriculum has increased in the past five years. The significant challenges school communities will face over the coming 12 months such as supporting students with mental health conditions (52% parents, 73% educators) and improving literacy and numeracy (49% parents, 51% educators) centre around both wellbeing and curriculum. This highlights that it is not either or, but support for both curriculum and wellbeing that is required within Australian schools.

Support network of community

Schools provide hubs of community not just for the students but for parents and staff too. 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%). In a time where traditional forms of community are breaking down, four in five parents (82%) can count on their school community to be supportive in times of need.

Navigating gender identity

The discussion around 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. 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). 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.

Teaching during COVID-19

The experience of COVID-19 has provided a unique opportunity to gain insight into what the experience of full-time, online education delivery could be like. Educators are more likely to agree that students are highly engaged in classroom learning (90%) than they are in online classes (69%). Although students are less engaged in online classes, educators believe the support from parents to provide an effective learning experience is consistent across in-classroom (83%) and online (77%) learning experiences.

Looking to the future, it is expected that increased hygiene protocols (such as when using sports equipment or shared computers) are here to stay. More than one in four educators (27%) expect these protocols to remain in place until the end of 2020, while three in ten (30%) expect them to continue beyond 2020.

What skills and attributes are most important for success?

To futureproof students in a time when career pathways are increasingly adaptable and fluid, there is often a focus on students' core competencies and character qualities.[3] Currently there is a disconnect, however, in what parents and educators believe is more important for success. Parents are more likely to believe that skills (such as literacy and numeracy) matter more for success than character qualities like adaptability and leadership, for example (57% cf. 43%). Educators, however, are more likely to believe that character qualities matter more than skills (58% cf. 42%).

Parents are more evenly divided when it comes to educational outcomes. Half of parents (51%) believe a secure pathway to employment matters more, while 49% believe the ability to adapt to the changing environment matters more. Educators, however, are much more likely to believe the ability to adapt to the changing environment matters more (72%) than a secure pathway to employment (28%).

Transition to the workforce

More than nine in ten parents (92%) and educators (95%), believe the students of today are equipped to thrive in the workplace in the decade ahead. Parents are still most likely to encourage their children to take the post-school pathway of university. This has, however, decreased slightly since 2019 (65% cf. 72%).[3] To help prepare students for the future, parents and educators believe it is necessary to implement new approaches in the Year 11 and 12 curriculums. These include life skills classes (76% educators, 66% parents), in-built employer internships for work experience (63% educators, 53% parents) and stronger relationships with local businesses that provide teaching opportunities (55% educators, 42% parents).

Working in the education sector

Like any sector, working in education can have its challenges but these are outweighed by the positives. So much so, that more than nine in ten educators (93%) are likely to recommend a career in teaching to someone looking to start or change careers. More than half (53%) are extremely or very likely to recommend a teaching career. When considering employment benefits and conditions, educators are more likely to rate those offered to educators as better than other professions. The highest is in the social connection and workplace community (84% better cf. 16% worse), followed by a broad and interesting job description (77% cf. 23%).

Schools are delivering on expectations

Almost nine in ten parents (88%) are satisfied with their child's schooling experience, with almost half (46%) being extremely or very satisfied. Sentiment towards the education sector is positive. Parents are four times more likely to believe the school their child attends will be better in the future than worse (43% cf. 11%). Educators are even more optimistic about the school they work in, being 12 times more likely to believe it will be better in five years' time than worse (71% cf. 6%).

Looking ahead

As this generation of students moves through the education system, it is important to continually work to understand them so that we can lead and educate them well. Once we have developed a greater understanding of the students who sit before us, we can build on their strengths and support their weaknesses. As leaders we need to continue to build the communities of support in our schools to provide an environment where students are safe to engage, thrive, and flourish.
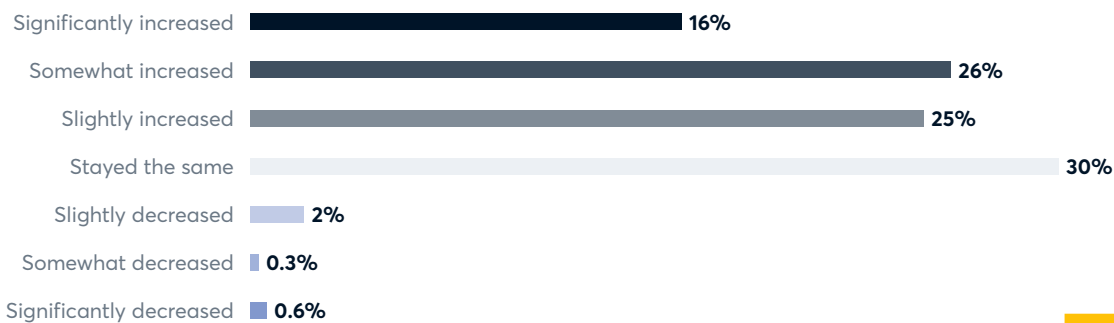
Rising pressure for success

In an increasingly globally connected world, parents are feeling the pressure to set their children up for success. In the last five years more than two thirds of parents (67%) believe the pressure to set their child up for success has increased (significantly/somewhat/slightly). The pressure parents are feeling to set their child up for success is at times being transferred to their child. Almost half of parents (49%) feel like at some point they have placed too much pressure on their child to achieve at school.

The pressure to succeed is one of the top challenges for both primary and high school students. More than three in four educators (77%), and three in five parents (60%), believe the high pressure to do well in exams and assessments is extremely/very challenging for high school students, making it the number one challenge for high school students today. Similarly, more than half of educators (54%), and two in five parents (42%), believe the social pressure to be a high achiever is extremely/very challenging for primary school students.

IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS HAS THE PRESSURE YOU FEEL TO SET YOUR CHILD/REN UP FOR SUCCESS INCREASED OR DECREASED?
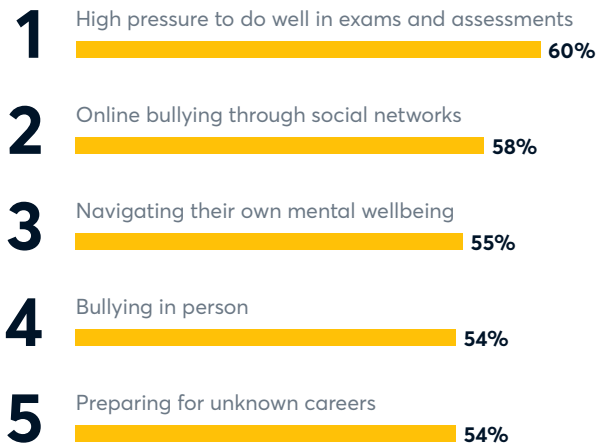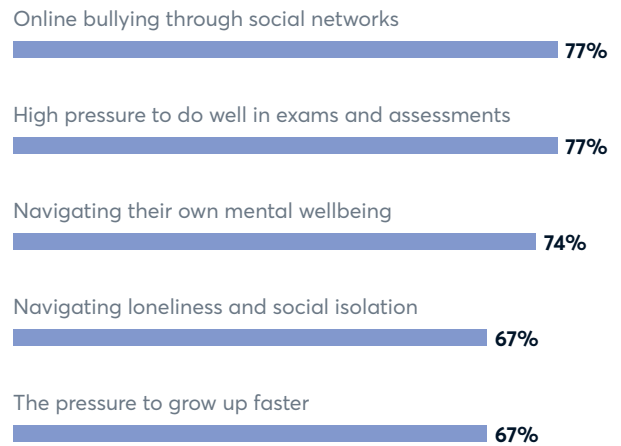
Significantly increased	16%
Somewhat increased	26%
Slightly increased	25%
Stayed the same	30%
Slightly decreased	2%
Somewhat decreased	0.3%
Significantly decreased	0.6%

TOP FIVE CHALLENGES FOR TODAY'S HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Extremely/very challenging

Parents

1. High pressure to do well in exams and assessments — **60%**
2. Online bullying through social networks — **58%**
3. Navigating their own mental wellbeing — **55%**
4. Bullying in person — **54%**
5. Preparing for unknown careers — **54%**

Educators

1. Online bullying through social networks — **77%**
2. High pressure to do well in exams and assessments — **77%**
3. Navigating their own mental wellbeing — **74%**
4. Navigating loneliness and social isolation — **67%**
5. The pressure to grow up faster — **67%**

TOP FIVE CHALLENGES FOR TODAY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Extremely/very challenging

Parents

1. Bullying in person — **50%**
2. Online bullying through social networks — **48%**
3. Navigating their own mental wellbeing — **43%**
4. Social pressure to be a high achiever — **42%**
5. The pressure to grow up faster — **42%**

Educators

1. Online bullying through social networks — **60%**
2. The pressure to grow up faster — **58%**
3. Social pressure to be a high achiever — **54%**
4. Navigating their own mental wellbeing — **51%**
5. Navigating loneliness and social isolation — **51%**
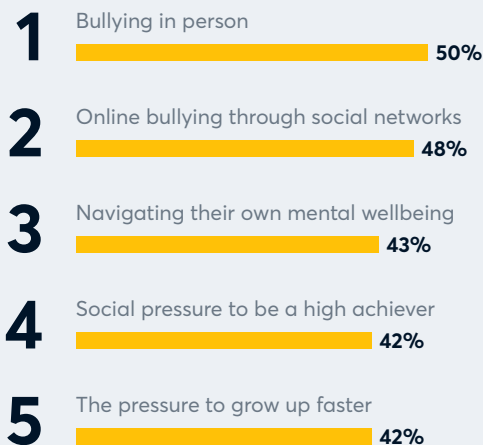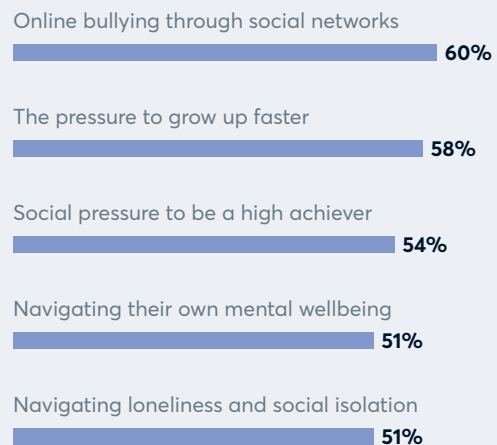
Balancing wellbeing and the curriculum

In the last five years, three in five parents (60%) believe the expectations they place on their child's school to support student wellbeing have increased (significantly/somewhat/slightly). This is up 12 percentage points from 48% in 2019.[3]
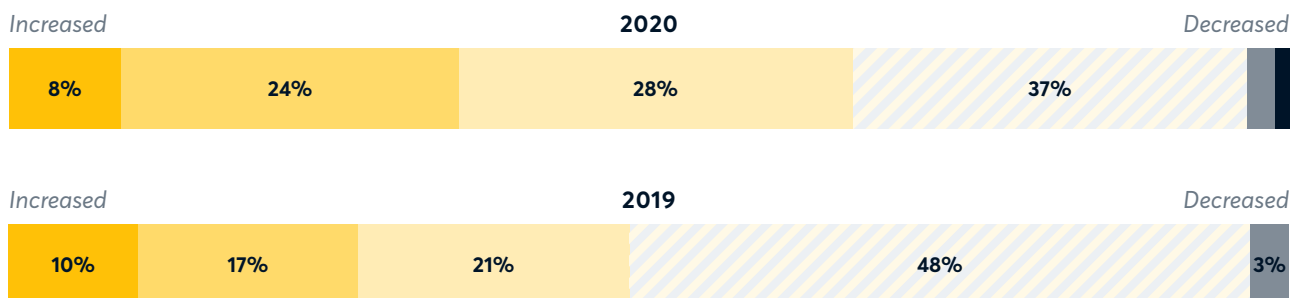
As the focus on wellbeing has increased, so too has the tension of balancing wellbeing support and the curriculum. In the last five years, almost three in five parents (57%) believe the tension between supporting student wellbeing and teaching curriculum has increased (significantly/somewhat/slightly), while almost two in five (39%) believe it has stayed the same. Educators are experiencing this too, with more than four in five (83%) believing the tension between supporting student wellbeing and teaching the curriculum has increased (significantly/somewhat/slightly).

IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS, HAVE THE EXPECTATIONS YOU PLACE ON YOUR CHILD/REN'S SCHOOL/S TO SUPPORT STUDENT WELLBEING INCREASED OR DECREASED?

Increased — **2020** — *Decreased*

| 8% | 24% | 28% | 37% | |

Increased — **2019** — *Decreased*

| 10% | 17% | 21% | 48% | 3% |

Significantly increased   **Significantly decreased**

Somewhat increased   **Somewhat decreased**

Slightly increased   **Slightly decreased**

Stayed the same

IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS, HAS THE TENSION BETWEEN SUPPORTING STUDENT WELLBEING AND TEACHING CURRICULUM INCREASED OR DECREASED?

Increased   **PARENTS**   *Decreased*

| 8% | 18% | 31% | 39% | |

Increased   **EDUCATORS**   *Decreased*

| 40% | 26% | 17% | 14% | |

Significantly increased ▮   Significantly decreased ▮

Somewhat increased ▮   Somewhat decreased ▮

Slightly increased ▮   Slightly decreased ▮

Stayed the same
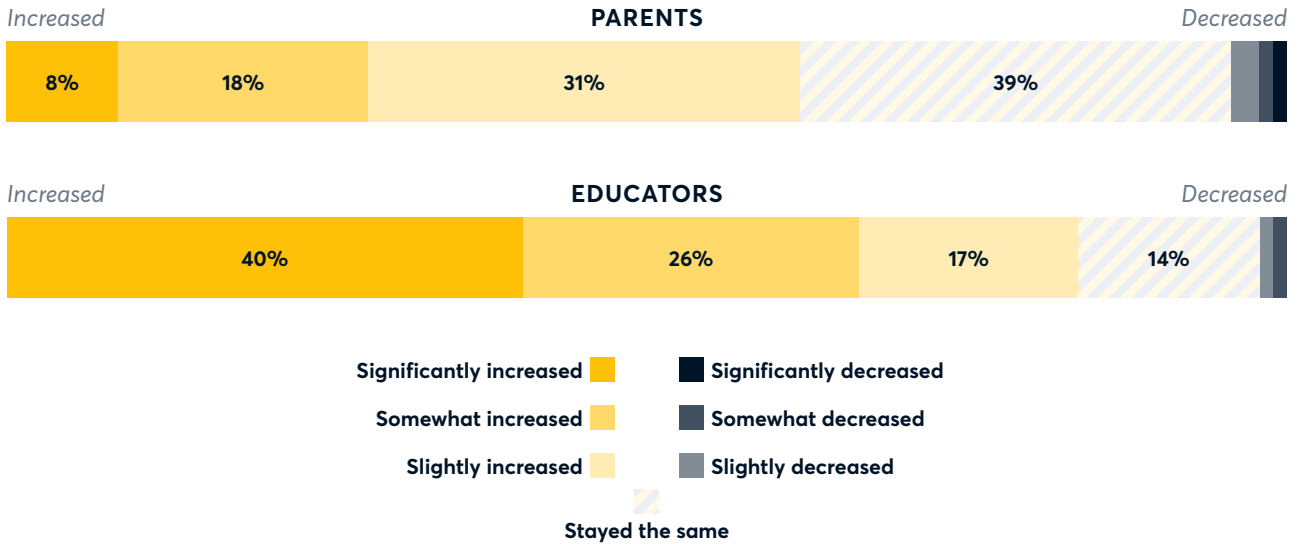
The desire for individualised education

From storybooks to advertising, our world is becoming increasingly customised and individualised. It is likely that in the coming years education will follow suit. More than nine in ten educators (96%) and parents (94%), believe schools should, at least to some extent, provide individualised education. More than a third of parents (35%) and a quarter of educators (27%) believe schools should provide individualised education for all students. The largest proportion of educators (38%), however, believe schools should provide individualised education to some students (cf. 26% parents).

While the desire for individualised education is strong for both educators and parents, they differ on how realistic they believe it is to achieve it. Seven in ten parents (71%) believe it is realistic for schools to provide individualised education to all students, compared to half of educators (55%). Expectation gaps such as this can become areas of conflict if not addressed. It is important for schools to communicate effectively about their ability to provide individualised education.

Support for curriculum and wellbeing is not either/or, but both

The significant challenges school communities will face over the coming 12 months centre around both curriculum and wellbeing. This highlights that it is not either/or, but support for both curriculum and wellbeing that is required within Australian schools. Parents believe the most significant challenges facing school communities are addressing bullying (66%), supporting students with mental health conditions (52%) and improving literacy and numeracy (49%). Educators have similar expectations but believe the number one challenge is supporting students with mental health conditions (73%). Educators also believe improving literacy and numeracy (51%) and better engaging with students in learning (47%) are significant challenges facing school communities.

From storybooks to advertising, our world is becoming increasingly customised and individualised. It is likely that in the coming years education will follow suit.

Flourishing school communities

Many parents believe the greatest strength of their child's school is the community. One parent described the greatest strength of their school as "the community. My children have made many friends, as have we, with other parents."

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%).

Schools provide hubs of community, not just for the students, but for parents and staff too. Positively, parents agree the school community provides them with the opportunity to make good friends (75%), they feel known by the school community (71%) and can count on their school community to be supportive in times of need (82%). The sense of feeling known by the school community is slightly stronger among non-government school parents (76%) than government school parents (67%).

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. More than four in five educators (84%) believe 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.

Educators (82%) and parents (79%) agree that compared to five years ago the school environment is safer for students of all ethnicity, religions, and gender identities today.

SCHOOLS ARE HUBS OF COMMUNITY

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

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

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.

Teaching in COVID-19

Educators' ability to teach with the assistance of digital learning technologies was put to the test this year with COVID-19. Positively, more than nine in ten educators (93%) feel equipped to teach with the assistance of digital technologies, with two in five feeling extremely or very equipped (39%).

Parents are similar, with more than nine in ten (95%) feeling equipped to assist their child with assignments, school learning and learning technologies. Almost half (45%) feel extremely or very equipped.

Students more engaged in the classroom than online

The following COVID-19 related questions were completed by a subset of the educators' sample (n=233).

The experience of COVID-19 has provided a unique opportunity to gain insight into what the experience of full-time, online education delivery could be like. Educators are more likely to agree that students are highly engaged in classroom learning (90%), than online classes (69%). Although students are less engaged in online classes, educators believe the support from parents to provide an effective learning experience is consistent across in-classroom (83%), and online (77%) learning experiences.

Educators feel equipped by the school to teach in the classroom and online

If online education was to continue, educators would need more support. Nine in ten educators currently feel well equipped by the school to teach in the classroom (89%), while three in four (76%) feel well equipped to teach online. Training would also need to shift, with almost nine in ten (87%) believing their training effectively prepared them for teaching in the classroom, while two in three (66%) feel their training prepared them to teach online. Positively, the strong support of leadership teams has remained consistent for both in-classroom (87%), and online learning experiences (82%).

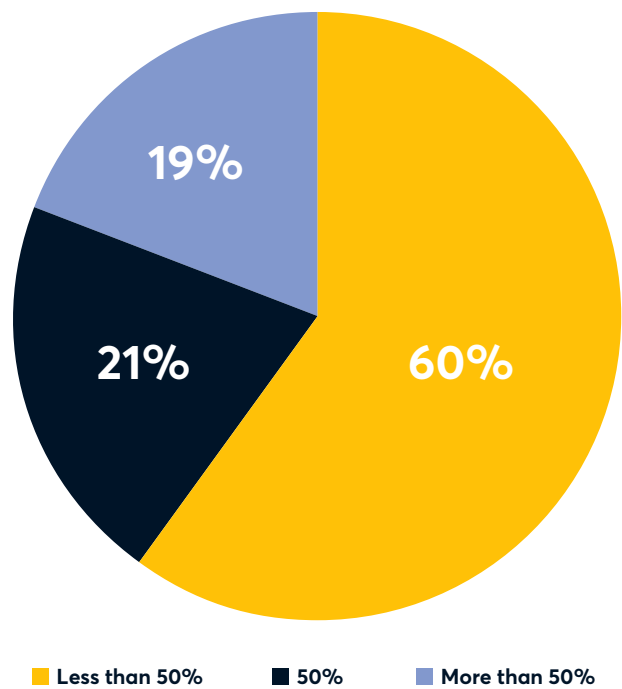## Is online schooling here to stay?

Two in five educators (40%) believe that online schooling is not only here to stay, but that it will eventually comprise at least half of all the schooling delivered.

Looking to the long-term future, three in five educators (60%) believe less than 50% of schooling will be delivered online. One in five (21%) believe 50% of schooling will be delivered online, while almost one in five (19%) believe more than 50% will be delivered online in the long-term future.

WHAT PROPORTION OF SCHOOLING DO YOU THINK WILL BE DELIVERED ONLINE IN THE LONG-TERM FUTURE?

Educators n=233

19%

21%

60%

■ **Less than 50%**   ■ **50%**   ■ **More than 50%**

Two in five educators (40%) believe that online schooling is not only here to stay, but that it will eventually comprise at least half of all the schooling delivered.

Increased hygiene protocols will be in place beyond the end of the year

Increased hygiene protocols, such as when using sports equipment or shared computers, are expected to be in place for some time to come. More than one in four educators (27%) expect these protocols to remain in place until the end of 2020, while three in ten (30%) expect them to continue beyond 2020.

Two in five educators (40%) expect social distancing in the classroom to remain for most of term two, while three in ten (29%) believe it will be in place until the end of term three. One in five (21%) believe it will be in place until the end of the year.

Reduced social interactions on the school grounds are on a similar timeframe, with educators expecting them to remain in place for most of term two (39%) or until the end of term three (30%).
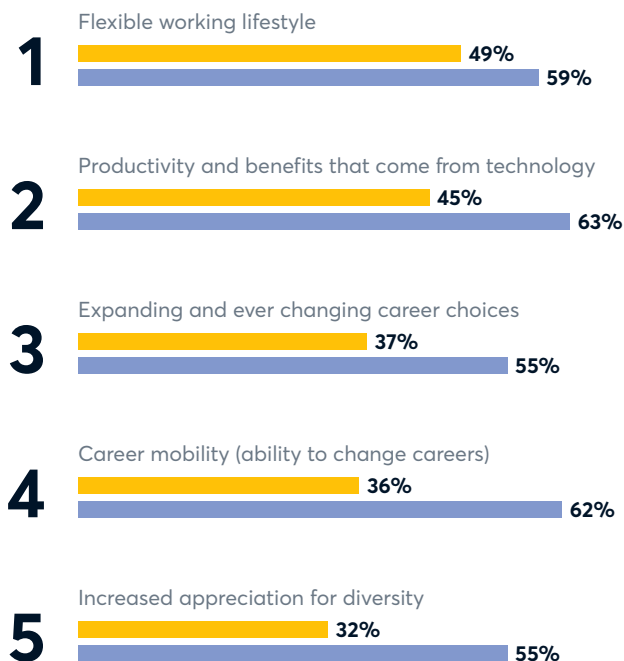
Setting students up for success

Parents and educators believe the greatest opportunities for students today are centred around the new world of work. Parents believe the greatest opportunities include a flexible working lifestyle (49%), productivity and benefits that come from technology (45%) as well as expanding and ever-changing career choices (37%). Educators see the greatest opportunities as productivity and benefits that come from technology (63%) but also highlight career mobility (62%) as a significant opportunity for this generation.

WHAT ARE THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE STUDENTS OF TODAY?

Top five

■ **Parents**　■ **Educators**

1 Flexible working lifestyle
- 49%
- 59%

2 Productivity and benefits that come from technology
- 45%
- 63%

3 Expanding and ever changing career choices
- 37%
- 55%

4 Career mobility (ability to change careers)
- 36%
- 62%

5 Increased appreciation for diversity
- 32%
- 55%

Increased mental health pressures the greatest barrier to thriving

The topic of mental health is on the minds of parents and educators, with many highlighting it as a challenge for school communities and students personally. The extent of this challenge is so great, that parents (49%) and educators (74%) believe the greatest barrier for this generation to thrive is increased mental health pressures. Parents see the second greatest barrier as uncertainty of the future (38%). Educators, however, highlight a lack of resilience (68%) as the second greatest barrier. Both parents and educators agree on the third greatest barrier, which is a lack of inter-personal skills (35% parents, 58% educators).

What is more important for success?

To futureproof students in a time when career pathways are increasingly adaptable and fluid, there is often a focus on students' core competencies and character qualities.[3] Currently there is a disconnect, however, between what parents and educators believe is more important for success. Parents are more likely to believe that skills matter more for success than character qualities (57% cf. 43%). Educators, however, are more likely to believe that character qualities matter more than skills (58% cf. 42%).

Interestingly, government school parents are more likely than non-government school parents to believe that character matters more (46% cf. 39%).
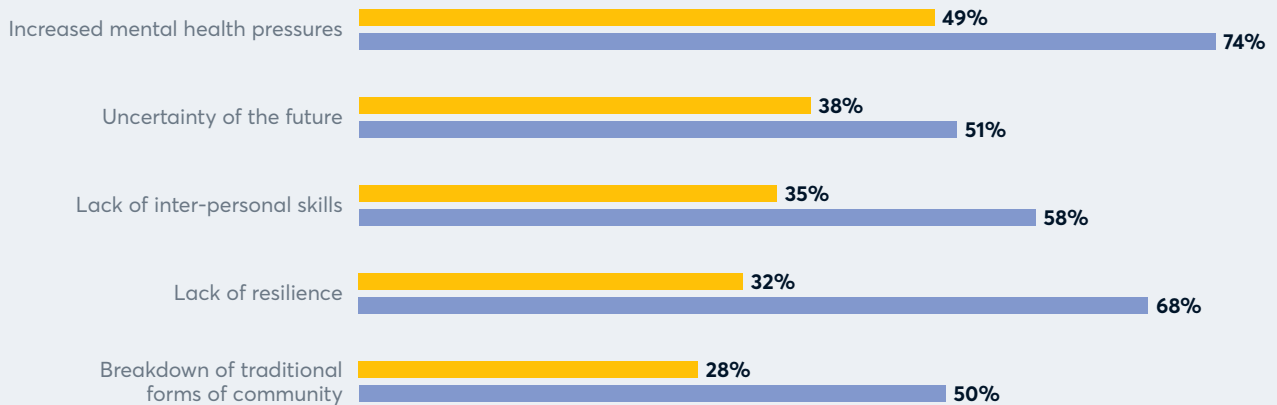
When it comes to preparing the students of today for an unknown future, it is a combination of both skills and character qualities they will need to thrive. As robotics and automation replace some jobs, new ones will be created where both technical skills and character qualities will be required. This is important for equipping the students of today for lifelong learning, multiple careers and an adaptive future.

WHAT ARE THE GREATEST BARRIERS FOR THE STUDENTS OF TODAY TO THRIVE?

Please select all that apply

■ Parents ■ Educators

Barrier	Parents	Educators
Increased mental health pressures	49%	74%
Uncertainty of the future	38%	51%
Lack of inter-personal skills	35%	58%
Lack of resilience	32%	68%
Breakdown of traditional forms of community	28%	50%

WHICH DO YOU BELIEVE IS MORE IMPORTANT FOR SUCCESS?

Skills e.g. Critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, communication
Character e.g. Leadership, adaptability, persistence, empathy

Skills   **PARENTS**   *Character*

11%	21%	25%	23%	12%	9%

Skills   **EDUCATORS**   *Character*

11%	10%	20%	24%	17%	17%
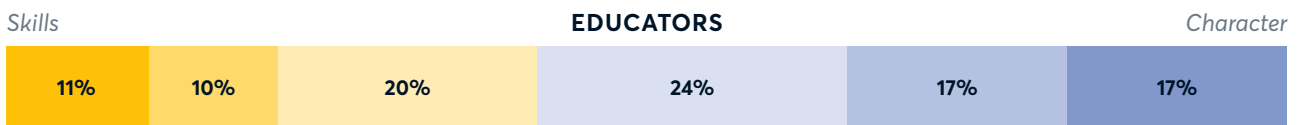
Skills matter significantly more ▮   ▮ **Character matters significantly more**

Skills matter much more ▮   ▮ **Character matters much more**

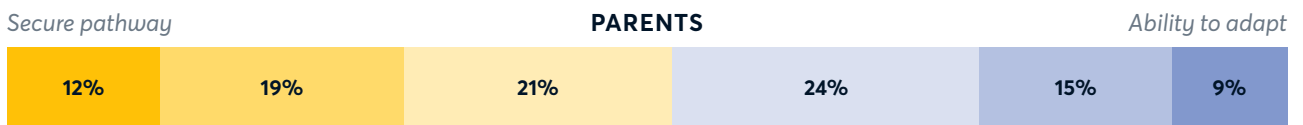**Skills matter a bit more** ▮   ▮ **Character matters a bit more**

Parents are evenly divided when it comes to educational outcomes. Half of parents (51%) believe a secure pathway to employment matters more, while 49% believe the ability to adapt to the changing environment matters more.

Educators, however, are much more likely to believe the ability to adapt to the changing environment matters more (72%) than a secure pathway to employment (28%).

WHEN THINKING ABOUT EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES, WHICH DO YOU BELIEVE IS MORE IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN TODAY?

Secure pathway to employment or the ability to adapt to the changing environment

Secure pathway   **PARENTS**   *Ability to adapt*

12%	19%	21%	24%	15%	9%

Secure pathway   **EDUCATORS**   *Ability to adapt*

10%	10%	8%	21%	25%	26%

A secure pathway matters significantly more ▮   ▮ **The ability to adapt matters significantly more**

A secure pathway matters much more ▮   ▮ **The ability to adapt matters much more**

A secure pathway matters a bit more ▮   ▮ **The ability to adapt matters a bit more**

The importance of digital literacy and success

Parents are caught in the tension of embracing the integration of technology as a way of life, while wanting to provide healthy boundaries for their child around technology.

Nine in ten parents (90%) and educators (88%), agree children need to be digitally literate to succeed. They are aware that digital literacy involves screen time, and as such, seven in ten parents (70%) and educators (69%) agree that children need to spend time on screens to succeed. The tension comes into play, however, in that more than nine in ten parents (91%) and educators (95%) believe children spend too much time on screens.

In five years' time, parents believe it will be most important (extremely/very) for students to be digitally literate in the areas of coding (53%), artificial intelligence (51%) and robotics (47%). Educators are consistent with this, however, instead of robotics they place a higher priority on video production, editing and animation (51%).

90% Parents

88% Educators

90% of parents and 88% of educators agree children need to be digitally literate to succeed

91% Parents

95% Educators

95% of educators and 91% parents agree children spend too much time on screens

> *Parents are caught in the tension of embracing the integration of technology as a way of life, while wanting to provide healthy boundaries for their child around technology.*

TOP THREE AREAS OF DIGITAL LITERACY FOR STUDENTS IN THE FUTURE

Extremely/very important

Parents

53% Coding

51% Artificial intelligence

47% Robotics

Educators

58% Coding

52% Artificial intelligence
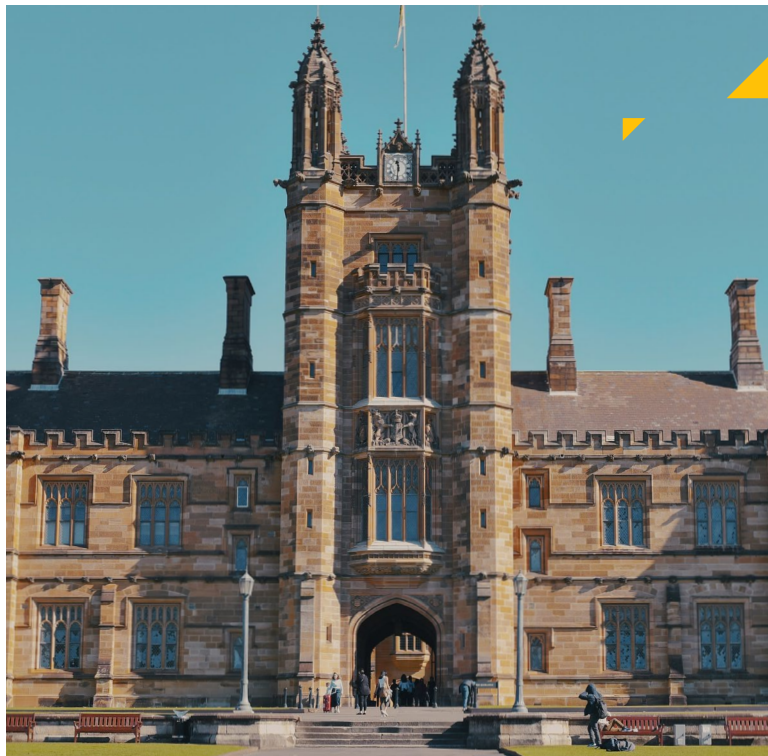
51% Video production, editing and animation

Post-school pathways

Navigating post school pathways is a challenge for parents as much as it is for students. Almost two in five parents (37%) feel extremely or very informed to help their child navigate post school pathways, while more than half (56%) feel only somewhat or slightly informed. Non-government school parents (45%) are more likely than government school parents (32%) to feel extremely or very informed to help their child navigate post-school pathways.

Parents' conversations about post-school pathways are most likely to start when their child is 11-14 years old (44%). One in four (26%) will start having the conversation with their child between 7-10 years old, while one in five parents (19%) will start having conversations with their child about post-school pathways when they are 15-18 years old.
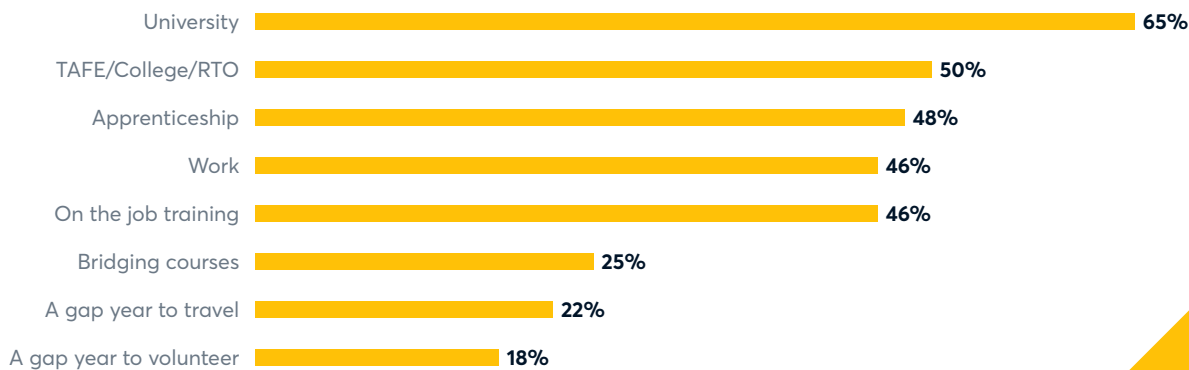
University continues to be the preferred post-school pathway parents encourage their child to partake in

University continues to be the most likely post-school pathway parents will encourage their children to pursue. This has decreased slightly, however, since 2019 (65% cf. 72%).

WHAT POST-SCHOOL PATHWAYS WOULD YOU ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD/REN IN?

Please select all that apply

Pathway	Percentage
University	65%
TAFE/College/RTO	50%
Apprenticeship	48%
Work	46%
On the job training	46%
Bridging courses	25%
A gap year to travel	22%
A gap year to volunteer	18%

Quality of education is the most important factor when choosing an education provider

The most important factors when choosing a post-secondary education provider are similar factors as when choosing a school. The quality of education (64%) is the highest priority followed by affordability (52%), specialisation in interest areas (47%) and location/proximity (46%).

TOP FIVE FACTORS WHEN CHOOSING A SCHOOL OR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION PROVIDER

School

59%
Proximity/location

49%
Quality of education

40%
Affordability

37%
School facilities

32%
School community

Post-secondary education provider

64%
Quality of education

52%
Affordability

47%
Specialisation in interest areas

46%
Location/proximity

42%
Reputation of provider

42%
Flexible study options

Parents are open to a shift away from standardised testing

With NAPLAN testing cancelled due to COVID-19 and significant changes to Year 12 exams nationally, commitment to standardised testing is waning. More than nine in ten parents (92%) are open to a shift away from standardised testing, with more than half extremely or very open (55%). Educators are even more open to a shift away from standardised testing (95%), with almost seven in ten (69%) extremely or very open.
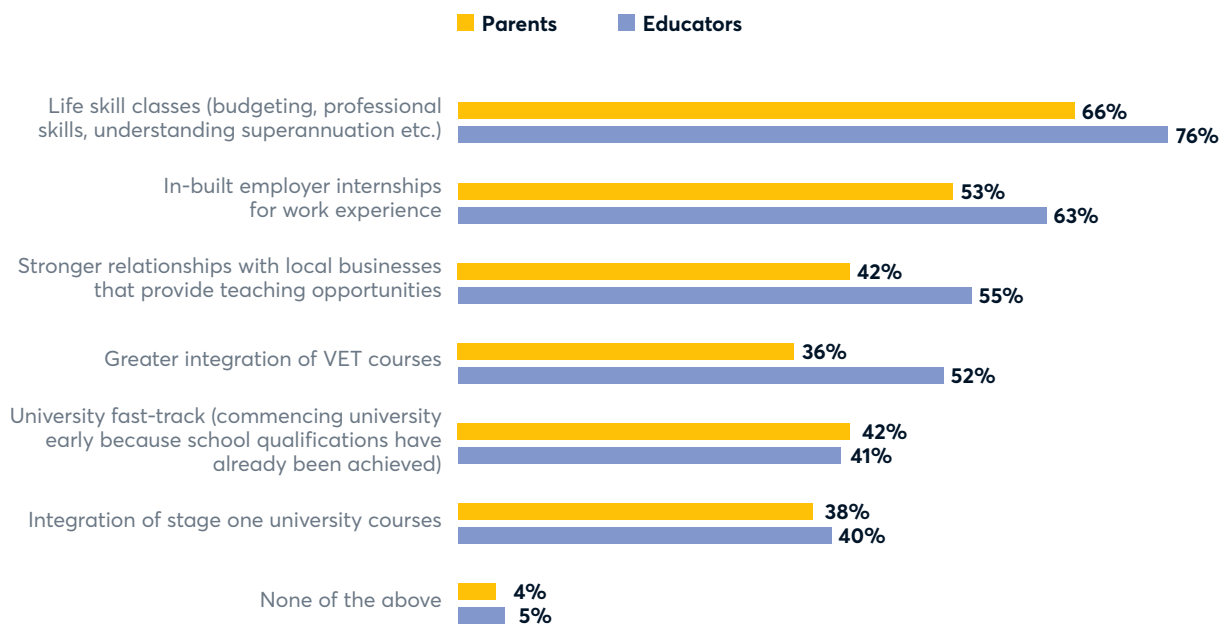
To help prepare students for the future, parents and educators believe it is necessary to implement new approaches in the Year 11 and 12 curriculums. These include life skills classes (76% educators, 66% parents), in-built employer internships for work experience (63% educators, 53% parents) and stronger relationships with local businesses that provide teaching opportunities (55% educators, 42% parents).

More than nine in ten educators (95%) and parents (92%) are open to a shift away from standardised testing (NAPLAN, HSC, VCE, QCE) in Australian schools.

DO YOU THINK IT IS NECESSARY FOR THE FOLLOWING TO BE IMPLEMENTED INTO SCHOOLING IN YEAR 11 AND 12?

Please select all that apply

■ **Parents** ■ **Educators**

	Parents	Educators
Life skill classes (budgeting, professional skills, understanding superannuation etc.)	66%	76%
In-built employer internships for work experience	53%	63%
Stronger relationships with local businesses that provide teaching opportunities	42%	55%
Greater integration of VET courses	36%	52%
University fast-track (commencing university early because school qualifications have already been achieved)	42%	41%
Integration of stage one university courses	38%	40%
None of the above	4%	5%

Are today's students equipped to thrive in the future?

More than nine in ten parents (92%) and educators (95%), believe students of today are equipped to thrive in the workplace in the decade ahead. There is work to be done, however, with just one in three parents (29%) and educators (27%) believing students are extremely/very equipped to thrive in the workplace in the decade ahead.

Non-government school parents (37%) are more likely than government school parents (24%) to believe students are extremely or very equipped to thrive in the workplace in the decade ahead. Parents of Gen Alpha are more optimistic about the future than parents of Gen Z, with one in three (32%) believing students are extremely or very equipped to thrive compared to one in four (26%).

Working in the education sector

Like any sector, working in education can have its challenges. The positives, however, outweigh the challenges. So much so, that more than nine in ten educators (93%) are likely to recommend a career in the teaching to someone looking to start or change careers, with more than half (53%) extremely or very likely.

When considering employment benefits and conditions, educators are more likely to rate those offered to educators as better than other professions. The highest is in social connection and workplace community (84% cf. 16%), followed by a broad and interesting job description (77% cf. 23%).

> *More than nine in ten educators (93%) are likely to recommend a career in teaching to someone looking to start or change careers.*
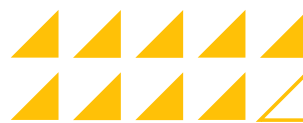
THINKING ABOUT EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS AND CONDITIONS OFFERED TO EDUCATORS, HOW DO THESE COMPARE TO THOSE OF OTHER PROFESSIONS?

Educators n=401

👍 **Better**   **Worse** 👎

	Better	Worse
Social connection and the workplace community	84%	16%
Broad and interesting job description	77%	23%
Training and career development	69%	31%
Empowering leadership and management styles	67%	33%
Remuneration, including leave and non-monetary rewards	62%	38%
Work-life balance (work hours, flexibility, holidays)	59%	41%
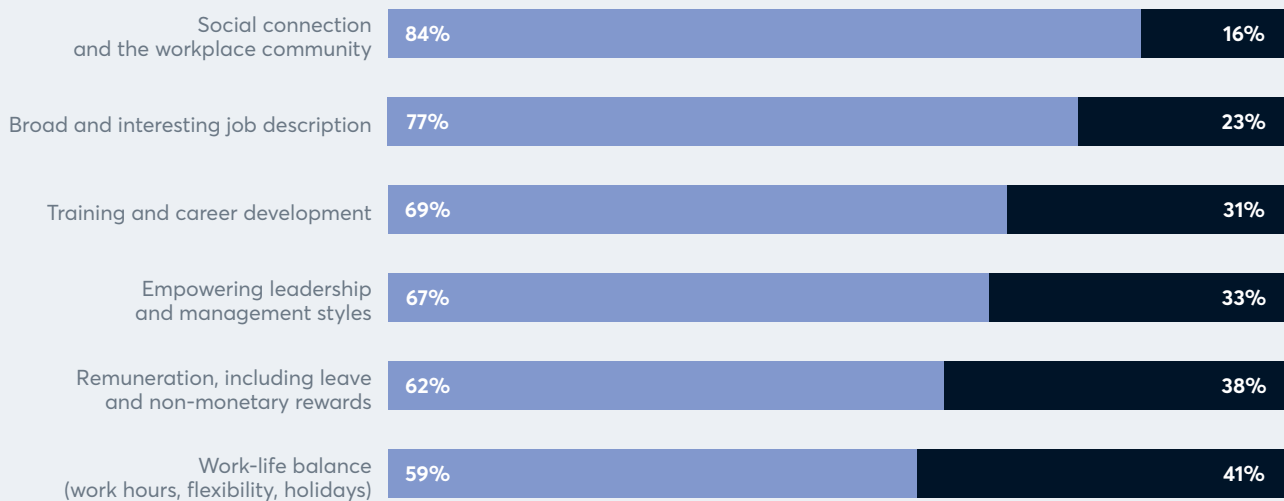
School values influence recruitment

When it comes to choosing a school to work in, educators are choosing schools where the values align with their beliefs (47%). The desire to make a positive impact (47%), and the school vision and values (44%) are also key reasons for chosing their current places of employment.

When thinking about future employment, educators most value an inspiring purpose (45%) and job security (42%). The sense of community then comes into play, with two in five educators (38%) valuing social connection/belonging. Educators also value professional development (35%) when thinking about future employment. This is important for school and business leaders to take note of when seeking to attract and retain top talent in the education sector.

EDUCATORS TOP FIVE REASONS FOR WORKING AT THEIR CURRENT SCHOOL

Educators n=401

1 The school values aligned with my beliefs

2 I wanted to make a positive impact

3 School vision and values

4 Professional opportunities

5 School reputation

Educators feel supported by leadership

Considering the emphasis educators place on professional development, it is positive to see that more than four in five agree (strongly/somewhat/slightly) they are receiving sufficient support (84%), and career development opportunities (81%) from their school leadership. There is some room for improvement, however, with just over half, strongly or somewhat agreeing they receive sufficient support (59%), and career development opportunities (52%) from leadership.

When asked what the school could do to bring out the best in them in their role, educators highlighted the importance of support from the school. This could be from the leadership team, other teachers or even administration staff.

Being overworked and stressed is the biggest blocker to thriving

While educators are largely positive about their experience of working in the sector, the greatest blocker to educators thriving at work is being overworked and stressed (39%). Leadership can also be a blocker, with resistance to change (23%) and management structures/hierarchy (23%) being blockers to educators thriving in the workplace. Despite these challenges, one in five educators (21%) feel they are thriving at work.

Location and career opportunities are the main reasons educators consider other employment

The number one reason educators would consider another place of employment is location, most often one that is closer to home. Closely following this is career opportunities, leadership, and remuneration. Educators are also looking for new opportunities that enable them to grow professionally.

Highly engaged workforce

Educators are passionate about their role and are highly satisfied working in the education sector with an overall Net Engagement Score (NES) of 27. To highlight the strength of this score and the following net score results, any score above zero is good, a score around 10 is great, a score above 15 is seen as excellent, and anything above 25 is superlative. The NES is calculated in the same way as the Net Promoter Score, showing that when it comes to engagement with their job, more than two in five educators (43%) are considered promoters (scoring an 9 or 10), while two in five (41%) are passives (scoring a 7 or 8).

This high engagement flows on to a positive workplace culture. The Net Culture Score (NCS) – which measures how likely educators are to recommend their organisation as a place of work where relevant to a friend or contact – is 21.

Retention across the industry is also reasonably high with a Net Retention Score (NRS) of 9. The NRS measures the likelihood, if it was up to the employee, that they will still be working in their current place of employment in three years' time. Within this framework, two in five educators are considered promoters (40%) while three in ten (29%) are passives.

The number one reason educators would consider another place of employment is location, most often one that is closer to home.

NET ENGAGEMENT SCORE

Thinking about how engaged you are in your current workplace and role, on a scale of 0-10 please rate your current engagement with your job.

Promoters   Detractors

Score = [9+10] - [0+1+2+3+4+5+6]

Okay   Very good   Excellent

27
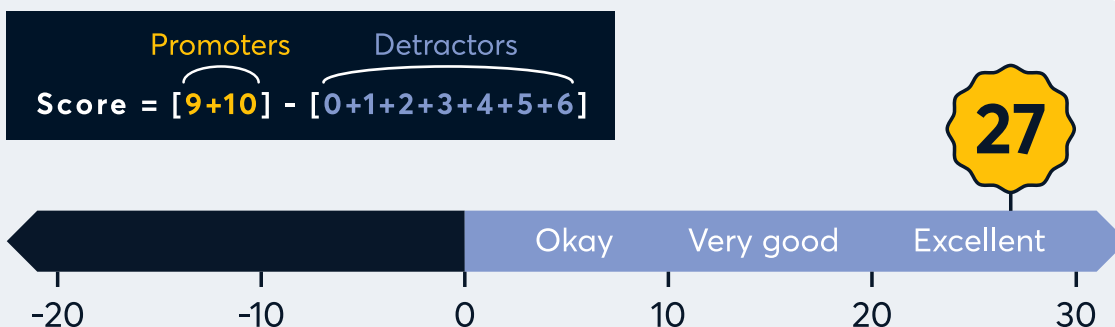
-20   -10   0   10   20   30

Schools are delivering on expectations

While it may seem that parent expectations of schools are always on the rise, almost nine in ten parents (88%) say they are satisfied with their child's schooling experience. Furthermore, almost half (46%) say they are extremely or very satisfied.

Schools are effectively educating today's students

More than nine in ten parents (96%) and educators (97%) believe schools are effective in educating today's students to set them up to thrive in the future. More than two in five parents (43%) and half of educators (51%) believe schools are extremely or very effective.

Parents are likely to recommend their school to a local family

Parents are likely to recommend their child's school to a family looking for a school in the local area, with a Net Promotor Score (NPS) of 14. Parents are largely satisfied with their choice of school. If they were given the opportunity to go back in time and choose again, they would be likely to remake the same choice with a Net Repeater Score (NRS) of 16. The NRS is an effective measure of post-choice satisfaction. It supplements the NPS and is a purer measure of individual engagement in that it overcomes any personality influences of promoter measures.

> *Almost nine in ten parents (88%) say they are satisfied with their child's schooling experience.*

Education sector to improve over the next five years

Sentiment towards the education sector is mostly positive. Parents are 2.5 times more likely to believe the education sector will be better in five years' time than worse (39% cf. 16%). Parents are even more optimistic about their child's school, being 4 times more likely to believe the school their child attends will be better in the future than worse (43% cf. 11%).

Educators are even more optimistic about the school they work in, being 12 times more likely to believe it will be better in five years' time than worse (71% cf. 6%). When considering the education sector as a whole, educators are 4 times more likely to believe it will be better in five years than worse (53% cf. 13%).

4x 👍 43% 👎 11%

Parents are four times more likely to believe the school their child attends will be better in the future than worse.

12x 👍 71% 👎 6%

Educators are optimistic about the school they work in, being 12 times more likely to believe it will be better in five years' time than worse.
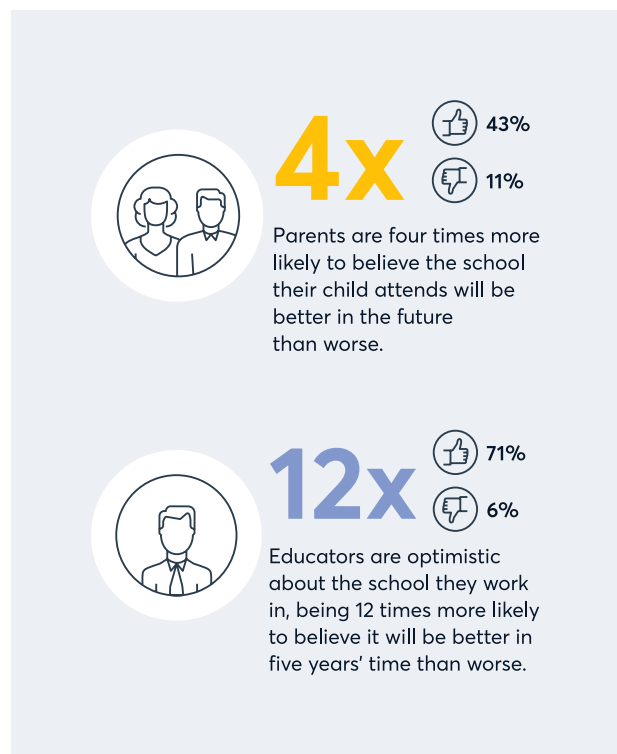
Next steps for the education sector
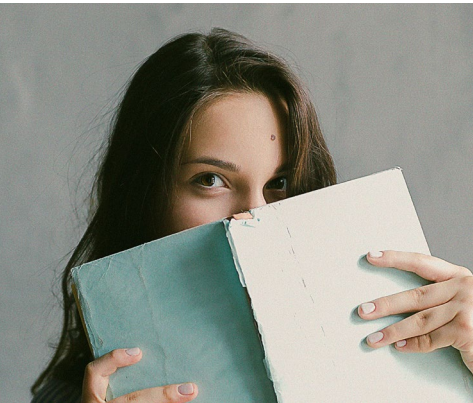
Understand students

In a world that is rapidly evolving, leaders who stay abreast of the current trends are positioning their organisations to thrive. To effectively engage, teach and lead the next generation of students, it is important to understand where they come from and how they see the world. As we take the time to understand the world this generation have been shaped in, this provides us with greater opportunities to engage and connect in meaningful ways.

Build community

Once we have developed a greater understanding of the students who sit before us, we can build on their strengths and support their weaknesses. Schools provide a hub of community for their students, parents, and staff, and this became evident to many when schools shifted to schooling from home during COVID-19. The school community provides a support network of role models and allows students, parents, and staff to feel seen and known. As leaders we need to continue to build communities of support in our schools (for both students and teachers), particularly with the breakdown of other traditional forms of community.
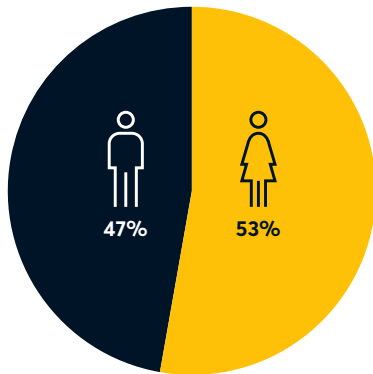
Invest in educators

Educators believe in the education sector. They are in their roles because their values align with their schools and they believe in the next generation. We know that workers today don't seek jobs as they much as they seek opportunities, and educators are no different. With career opportunities being one of the top reasons educators would move schools, providing opportunities for career development and training should be an important part of every school's attraction and retention strategy. Educators are the ones on the frontline, leading, engaging and educating the next generation so let's equip them to do this well for the future of education in Australia.
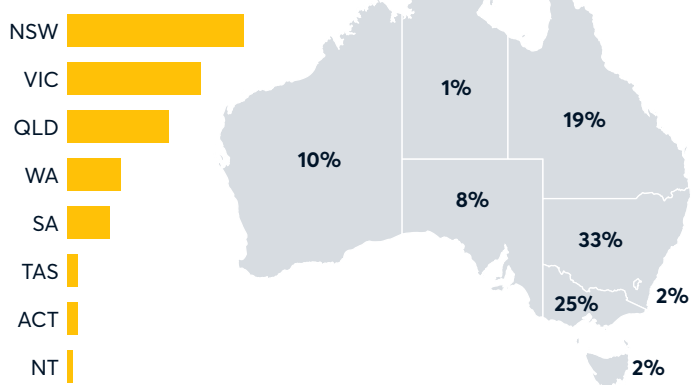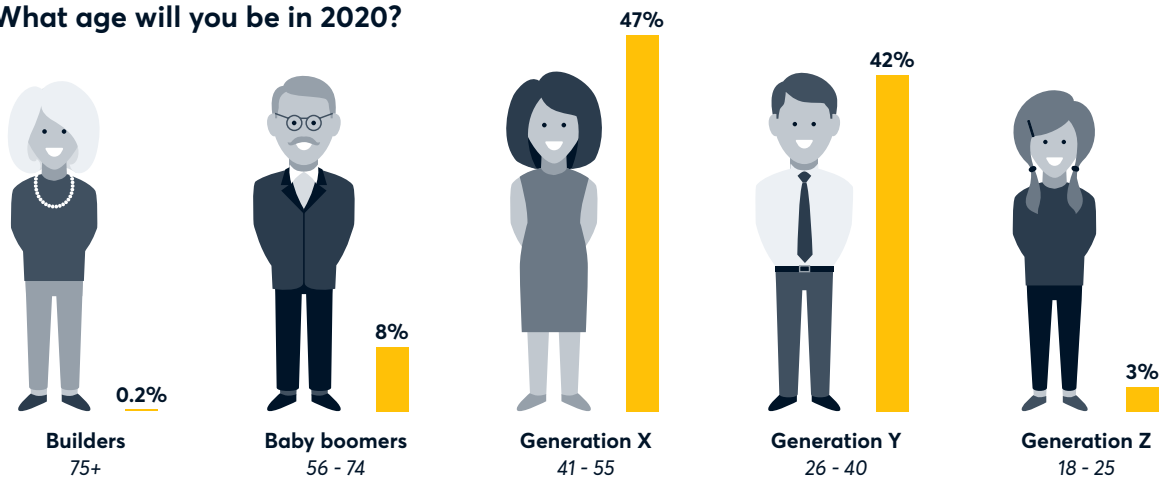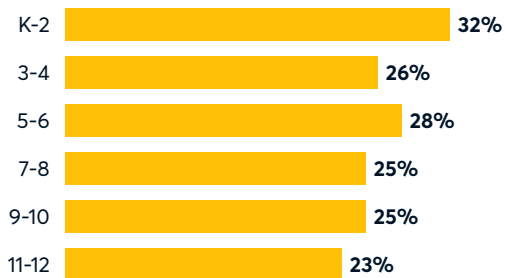
Demographics

Parents

Are you male or female?

- 47% (male)
- 53% (female)

Where do you usually live?

- NSW
- VIC
- QLD
- WA
- SA
- TAS
- ACT
- NT

Map values:
- 1%
- 19%
- 10%
- 8%
- 33%
- 25%
- 2%
- 2%

What age will you be in 2020?

Builders 75+	Baby boomers 56 - 74	Generation X 41 - 55	Generation Y 26 - 40	Generation Z 18 - 25
0.2%	8%	47%	42%	3%

Child's grade

- K-2 — 32%
- 3-4 — 26%
- 5-6 — 28%
- 7-8 — 25%
- 9-10 — 25%
- 11-12 — 23%

Type of school

- Government — 63%
- Independent — 23%
- Catholic — 21%
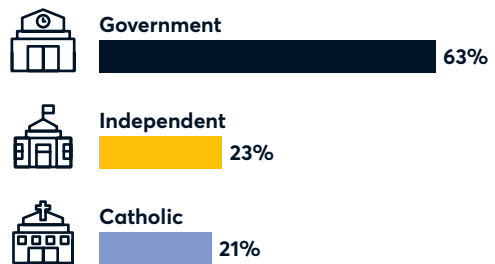
Educators

Are you male or female?
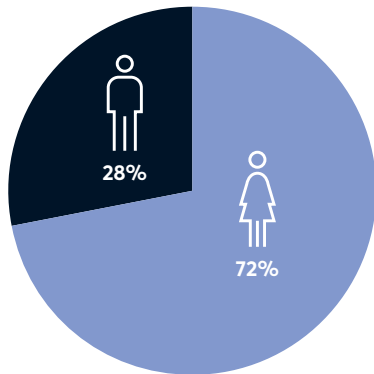
- 28%
- 72%

Where do you usually live?

- NSW
- VIC
- QLD
- WA
- SA
- TAS
- ACT
- NT

Map percentages:
- 0%
- 14%
- 9%
- 7%
- 42%
- 23%
- 2%
- 3%

What age will you be in 2020?

Builders 75+	Baby boomers 56 - 74	Generation X 41 - 55	Generation Y 26 - 40	Generation Z 18 - 25
1%	24%	26%	35%	14%

Predominant work area

- Primary — 29%
- Secondary — 41%
- K-12 — 30%

Current role

- Teacher — 51%
- Executive — 30%
- Support staff — 19%

Length of time in education sector

- < 2 years — 9%
- 2-5 years — 21%
- 6-10 years — 20%
- 11-15 years — 12%
- 16+ years — 39%

Type of school

- Independent — 47%
- Government — 40%
- Catholic — 13%
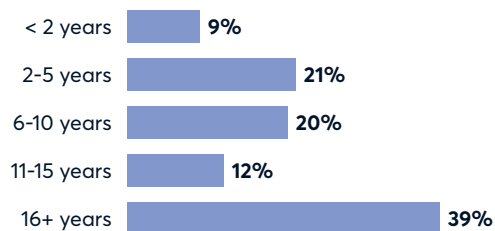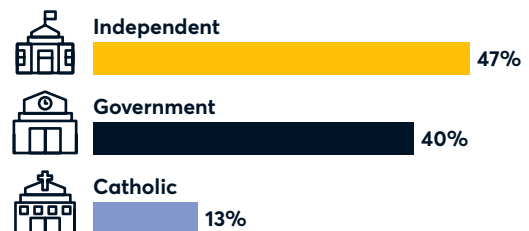
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mccrindle

About McCrindle

McCrindle delivers a clearer picture to inform and guide strategic decision making.

As a social research agency, McCrindle uses an evidence-based approach to know the times. From there we communicate the trends to maximise impact for sustainable success.

We do this through online surveys, focus groups and in-depth interviews. The insights are then presented through crafted visualisation, engaging keynote presentations and advisory workshops.

If your organisation is interested in understanding the people, places or products surrounding you, we would be excited to work together!

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