



EDUCATOR FOCUS GROUPS

NATIONAL EVIDENCE INSTITUTE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SKILLS
AND EMPLOYMENT

FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT

The Australian Government and state and territory governments are jointly establishing a National Evidence Institute (the Institute), to position the nation's educators at the forefront of education research and improve learning outcomes for all children and young people. The Institute will generate new research evidence on education, translate existing evidence, and mobilise evidence to be used effectively by teachers, school leaders, early childhood education professionals and policy makers.

METHODS

ARTD was commissioned by the Institute to conduct 21 online focus groups with teachers/school leaders and early childhood education workers in August 2020, to obtain first-hand views from educators on the following areas.

1. The issues around which they believe they most need, and would use research evidence in order to improve student learning
2. The types of resources they currently access in order to make decisions regarding their work, such as, in the case of teachers, to plan their lessons, and in the case of school leaders, to choose strategies and interventions for their schools
3. The way they access these resources, and factors that make these resources useful or otherwise
4. Any experiences they may have had to date in making use of research evidence, and factors in the success or otherwise of those experiences.

KEY FINDINGS

RESEARCH TOPICS

The research topics most requested across all educators encompassed student mental health and wellbeing (11%); students with learning and/or physical disabilities and/or special needs (10%); teacher workload, conditions and wellbeing (10%); teaching the curriculum (9%); and ICT, online learning and technology (9%).

The most frequently mentioned research topic by government school educators was around teacher workload, conditions and wellbeing (14%) and student mental health and wellbeing (13%). Requests for research around teaching the curriculum and content selection were most common from those in the Catholic education sector (23%). Educators from government schools (10%), Independent schools (10%), and rural and remote educators (22%) commonly requested research around ICT, online learning and technology. Early childhood educators and teachers commonly requested research on students with learning and/or physical disabilities and/or special needs (19%) and general teaching strategies (13%).

Primary school principals/ executives mostly requested research on effective teaching strategies (23%), student mental health and wellbeing (14%) and teacher relationships with parents and the community (12%). Secondary school principals/ executives mostly requested research on ICT, online learning and technology (17%), teaching the curriculum to equip students with the skills to succeed after secondary school (16%) and assessment, feedback and reporting (15%).

SOURCES OF RESEARCH

School leaders rely predominantly on packaged programs, which have translated research knowledge into practical resources and lesson plans. These programs are rolled out off the shelf or are tailored to the needs of the specific school.

Teachers rely on school leaders, professional learning consultants, and information on state-based education department websites, to distil the evidence from research for them. Colleagues are also a valuable resource for teachers, and personal and virtual networks are cultivated and accessed. Where teachers actively seek out evidence, this is commonly from credible government sources and research institutes. Subject matter experts or educational specialists are another primary source of trusted research evidence. Early childhood educators and teachers, like school teachers, rely predominantly on their colleagues, their workplace, government resources, independent education research centres and social media for sources of research.

Secondary school teachers noted they are time poor and rely on evidence being translated, packaged and presented to them. Primary school teachers appear to be more active in their search for resources and evidence. Those in Catholic and Independent schools who spoke of developing resource materials themselves, are less likely to tap into some of the existing state-based resources, utilised by their government school colleagues.

RESOURCE FORMATS – UTILISING EVIDENCE

Government school leaders are interested in off the shelf products and resources that are ready to be rolled out across their school, as these can efficiently be applied with minimal modification or tailoring to the school context. These evidence-based programs, designed by those with experience in the classroom, may include videos or demonstrations of practice, a learning plan or project that can be implemented immediately within the school, to meet the needs of the school.

Educators across all school sectors prefer resource formats that provide an opportunity to interact and network with colleagues. Formats that illustrate practice in a real-life classroom setting, such as videos or webinars that model the practice, are vital as this is the essence of knowledge translation for educators. Hard copy resources that summarise strategies or include a model lesson are considered a must as they are of most use. Online networks, communities of practice or social media networks are used widely and are highly valued as they tap into the vast knowledge of educators' colleagues.

Videos, webinars and podcasts that include practical demonstrations are the preferred format for early childhood education leaders and educators. Pre-school kindergarten

teachers preferred face-to-face professional development, as this active learning enabled them to ask questions and was more engaging.

SUPPORTS REQUIRED WHEN IMPLEMENTING A NEW PRACTICE OR APPROACH

The implementation of a new practice or approach requires an authorising environment from the school leadership team or the manager/ supervisor within the early childhood education service. This finding is consistent across all groups. Educators also need to understand the benefits of a practice or approach to support change. Smaller changes could be supported by coaching from colleagues. Larger changes require training from consultants or school champions via in-house training, videos, observations in like schools or observations of more experienced teachers. Educators want practical resources that step out the approach and assist with planning and implementing the new practice in a classroom.

Changes within early childhood education services can be implemented through staff meetings or, for more complex changes, with the support of consultants. Coaching, guest speakers, early childhood consultants or advisors, and colleagues are also valued supports.

Time is critical to implementing anything new. Teachers need to become familiar and confident in the new approach by observing others, and when they are ready, by being observed and receiving feedback, coaching or mentoring on their practice.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE POLICY CONTEXT

The Australian Government and state and territory governments have agreed to jointly establish a National Evidence Institute, with the purpose of positioning the nation's educators at the forefront of education research and improving learning outcomes for all children and young people. The Institute will generate new research evidence on education, curate and translate existing evidence, and mobilise evidence in such a way that it can be used effectively by teachers, school leaders and policy makers.

An inaugural director and establishment team are developing an initial research agenda and strategic plan for the Institute. The research agenda will set out the education issues that the Institute will investigate, while the strategic plan, among other functions, will set out how the Institute intends to disseminate its work. In developing both documents, a wide range of views is being sought.

1.2 THE RESEARCH PROJECT

ARTD was commissioned by the National Evidence Institute to conduct 21 online focus groups with teachers and school leaders and early childhood education workers in August 2020, to obtain detailed, first-hand views from educators on the following research questions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. The issues around which they believe they most need, and would use research evidence in order to improve student learning
2. The types of resources they currently access in order to make decisions regarding their work, such as, in the case of teachers, to plan their lessons, and in the case of school leaders, to choose strategies and interventions for their schools
3. The way they access these resources and factors that make these resources useful or otherwise
4. Any experiences they may have had to date in making use of research evidence, and factors in the success or otherwise of those experiences.

1.2.1 METHODS

The focus groups were held online using a videoconference platform, and each group had between four and eight participants. A total of 128 people participated (80%) of those invited to participate.

The composition of the 21 focus groups is outlined in Table 1 below. The participants were sourced throughout Australia.

TABLE 1. WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE FOCUS GROUPS

Sector	Participant grouping	No. of groups	Total number of participants
Government schools	School leaders	2	14
	Teachers	6	38
	Mixed	1	6
	Sub-total	9	58
Catholic schools	School leaders	1	5
	Teachers	2	16
	Subtotal	3	21
Independent schools	School leaders	1	8
	Teachers	2	14
	Subtotal	3	22
Rural and remote teachers (mixed)	Teachers	2	10
	Subtotal	2	10
Early childhood education	Cert III or Diploma qualified educators	1	6
	ECEC service directors and leaders	1	4
	Degree qualified teachers in non-school-based settings	1	8
	Pre-school or kindergarten teachers in school-based settings	1	5
	Subtotal	4	23
GRAND Total		21	134

RECRUITMENT AND INCENTIVES

ARTD subcontracted Stable Research to recruit educators from their market research panel (see Appendix 3 for the screening questionnaire). The Victorian Department of Education recruited a group that comprised two school leaders, two primary school teachers and two secondary teachers. All focus group participants received a \$100 eGift voucher in acknowledgment of their time and were given the opportunity of receiving a summary of the final report findings.

FACILITATING THE GROUPS

The focus groups were facilitated online using the Zoom videoconference platform; with the use of Google Sheets, which allowed all participants in a focus group to make written comments on the same document (utilised in question 1). With the permission of respondents, all focus groups were recorded to allow notes to be checked for accuracy.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. The National Evidence Institute wants to know what their research priorities should be to help educators in their work. What topics would be most helpful to you? Why?
2. Where do you look for research to inform your practice as a teacher OR leader? For example, lesson planning, pedagogy, teaching practices, classroom management.
3. What is an example of a resource explaining research findings that you have found useful? And why was it useful?
4. Research evidence can be presented in many ways, what works best for you?
E.g. topic sheets, evidence summaries, guidance reports, case studies, audio books, podcasts, webinars, videos, frameworks, toolkits, other forms.
5. Say you've keen to try the research evidence in your service OR classroom OR school. What support would you need as you try to implement a new practice or approach? For example, coaching, observation by more experienced teacher, other.

1.2.2 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

GOOGLE SHEETS AND THE RATING SYSTEM

Google Sheets was used during each focus group for participants to brainstorm what research topics would be most helpful to them. This platform allowed a live contribution among multiple participants.

Participants were asked to list research topics in column A. They were then asked to select their top five topics and rank these topics from the most to the least important, with '1' being the topic of most importance and '5' being the topic of least importance. Participants could add a comment next to their rankings to further explain why they had ranked certain topics.

FIGURE 1. TEMPLATE OF HOW ARTD USED THE GOOGLE SHEETS PLATFORM

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1		Rate Your Top Five					
2	What topics would be most helpful to you?	Participant 1		Participant 2		Participant 3	
3		Rating	Comment	Rating	Comment	Rating	Comment
4	Topic 1	1					
5	Topic 2	2		5		4	
6	Topic 3						2
7	Topic 4	3		1			
8	Topic 5			2			
9	Topic 6						1
10	Topic 7	4		4			
11	Topic 8	5					3
12	Topic 9						5
13	Topic 10			3			

Once all participants had ranked their top five research topics, ARTD focus group facilitators questioned participants further on any topics that were unclear to more clearly understand the research needs of participants.

RANK SCORING SYSTEM

To determine which research topics were most important to educators, each rating was assigned a score, with topics with the highest score reflecting the most important research topics. Because each participant could only assign one rank to one topic, a singular participant can only provide a maximum of 15 points.

TABLE 2. RANK PRIORITY AND SCORE ASSIGNED

Rank priority given	Score assigned
1	5 points
2	4 points
3	3 points
4	2 points
5	1 point
Not ranked	0 points
Maximum score sum per participant	15 points

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF TOPICS

ARTD consultants took detailed notes during the focus groups and recorded each session once consent was given from all participants. The analysis of the research topic data was completed using a coding framework and human coding. All topic data was coded in Excel against a qualitative coding framework. The coding framework was developed collaboratively by several consultants who facilitated or took notes during the focus groups. The framework was designed for the research topics to be grouped by themes, and to be analysed against the objective of understanding the issues around which educators believe they most need

and would use research evidence in order to improve student learning. The coding framework and a detailed description of the topics is illustrated in Appendix 1.

1.2.3 CONFIDENCE IN THE FINDINGS

We understand that the qualitative research data in this review are produced from social interactions and are to some extent constructions of interpretations. That is, interpretations made by participants who answered the questions, and/or by the ARTD researchers who wrote up their observations and analysed the data. However, with appropriate processes in place, researchers captured these interpretations accurately and minimised the risk of distortion.

We adopted a series of processes to ensure credible inferences were derived from the focus groups.

- The research project questions were kept as the primary focus for all analysis and interpretations.
- We developed a coding framework, where each code/ theme can be linked to the specific composition of each focus group. This ensured our analysis explicitly addressed the areas of interest for the research project, and data was coded and analysed in a systematic manner.
- Debriefing sessions were conducted during the coding process – the two coders met twice during the coding process to discuss how each coder was making decisions, to ensure alignment. This also provided the opportunity to raise questions and clarify any issues around where items should be coded, to ensure they were coded correctly.

Rank ordering was used for participants to assign the relative importance of different topics. This methodology creates some limitations for analysis. It forces participants to assign different rankings for different topics, even though they may consider them all of equal importance. Therefore, the relative importance of the different topics should be interpreted cautiously. For the purpose of the analysis of the research topics, we have assumed a hierarchy of the ratings.

2. RESEARCH PRIORITIES TO ASSIST EDUCATORS

This chapter outlines the research topics of most interest to educators and provides context about why these topics are of interest. It looks at the topics that educators believe they most need and would use to improve student learning. The differences in views on research topic priorities by sector, school level and location are presented.

2.1 RESEARCH TOPIC PRIORITIES

The National Evidence Institute wants to know what their research priorities should be to help educators in their work. Focus group participants were asked what research topics would be most helpful to them and why.

2.2 HIGHEST RATED RESEARCH TOPICS

In Table 3 below, using the coding framework and the rank scoring system, the overall highest rated research topics across all focus groups are presented.

TABLE 3. SUM OF RATINGS BY CODES, RANKED BY TOTAL

Topics by theme (code name)	Total sum of ratings	% of ratings
Student mental health and wellbeing	213	11%
Students with learning and/or physical disabilities and/or special needs	200	10%
Teacher workload, conditions and wellbeing	193	10%
Teaching to the curriculum	173	9%
ICT, online learning and technology	171	9%
General teaching strategies	154	8%
Differentiation	121	6%
Behaviour management	120	6%
Student engagement	114	6%
Assessment, feedback and reporting	112	6%
Teacher professional learning	88	4%
Lesson and program design	82	4%
Curriculum review	66	3%
Relationships with parents and the community	58	3%
Students of diverse backgrounds	43	2%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/ Indigenous students	30	2%

Topics by theme (code name)	Total sum of ratings	% of ratings
Student relationships	10	1%
Other	28	1%
TOTAL	1,976	100%

* The Sum takes the ratings into account. For example, if a topic is rated 5, it adds 5 to the Sum, and if rated 1 it adds 1, etc.

**Each participant can give a 5,4,3,2,1 rating, so can provide 15 rating points.

2.2.1 BY SCHOOL EDUCATION SECTOR

The research topics requested by educators across the different school education sectors, and the proportion of rating points that were awarded to a topic code/ theme by each sector, is presented in Table 4 below.

For the purpose of this analysis, school sectors included those educators in the:

- Catholic education system
- Government education system; and
- Independent education system.

The proportion of rating points by school sector in Table 4, shows that:

- **across all sectors**, there were a high number of requests for research topics around **student mental health and wellbeing** (11% of total) and students **with learning and/or physical disabilities and/or special needs** (10% of total)
- the most requested research topics from **government school** educators were **teacher workload**, teaching conditions and teacher wellbeing (14%) and the **mental health and wellbeing** of students (13%)
- requests for research around **teaching to the curriculum and content selection** was most common among those in the **Catholic sector** (23%). Many educators in the Catholic sector also requested research around general **teaching strategies** (13%) and student **mental health and wellbeing** (13%)
- educators from Government (10%) and Independent schools (10%) were more likely to request research topics around ICT, online learning and technology than educators from Catholic schools (4%)
- educators from Government (13%) and Catholic schools (13%) were more likely to request research topics around student mental health and wellbeing than educators from Independent schools (7%).

TABLE 4. PROPORTION OF RATING POINTS, BY SECTOR

Topics by theme (code name)	Catholic	Government	Independent	TOTAL
Sum of all ratings provided**	327	967	682	1976
Student mental health and wellbeing	13%	13%	7%	11%
Students with learning and/or physical disabilities and/or special needs	7%	10%	11%	10%
Teacher workload, conditions and wellbeing	2%	14%	7%	10%
Teaching to the curriculum	23%	4%	8%	9%
ICT, online learning and technology	4%	10%	10%	9%
General teaching strategies	13%	6%	8%	8%
Differentiation	2%	8%	6%	6%
Behaviour management	8%	6%	5%	6%
Student engagement	3%	7%	6%	6%
Assessment, feedback and reporting	2%	6%	7%	6%
Teacher professional learning	6%	4%	5%	4%
Lesson and program design	5%	3%	6%	4%
Curriculum review	6%	2%	4%	3%
Relationships with parents and the community	4%	2%	3%	3%
Students of diverse backgrounds	2%	1%	4%	2%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/ Indigenous students	0%	1%	3%	2%
Student relationships	0%	1%	1%	1%
Other	2%	1%	1%	1%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Proportion of rating points that were awarded to a topic code by each sector,

** The Sum takes the rating into account. For example, if a topic is rated 5 it adds 5 to the Sum, and if rated 1 it adds 1, etc.

***Each participant can give a 5,4,3,2,1 rating so can provide 15 rating points.

2.2.2 BY ROLE

The research topics requested by educators in different roles and workplaces, and the proportion of rating points that were awarded to a topic code/ theme by each sector, is presented in Table 5 below.

For the purpose of this analysis, roles and workplaces included:

- Early childhood educators
- Primary school educators
- Secondary school educators
- Primary school principals/ executives; and
- Secondary school principals/ executive.

The proportion of rating points by role in Table 5 shows that:

- the research topics most requested by **early childhood educators** were around **students with learning and/or physical disabilities and/or special needs** (19%), and general teaching strategies (13%) and **professional learning** (10%)
- the research topics most requested by **primary school educators** were around **student mental health** (12%), students with learning and/or physical disabilities and/or special needs (11%) and teacher workload, conditions and wellbeing (11%). The request for research around **student engagement** (10%), was higher amongst primary school educators than other educator groups
- the research topics most requested by **secondary school educators** were around **student mental health** (14%) and **teacher workload, conditions and wellbeing** (14%), followed by ICT, online learning and technology (10%)
- secondary and primary school educators were much more likely to request research topics around **student mental health** and **ICT, online learning and technology** than early childhood educators
- the research topic most requested by primary school principals/ executives was around general **teaching strategies** (23%) and the ways teachers **can build relationships with other staff, parents and/or the community** (12%)
- the research topic most requested by **secondary school principals/ executives** was around **ICT, online learning and technology** (17%) and **teaching to the curriculum** (16%). The request for research around **assessment, feedback and reporting** (15%), was higher for this groups of educators relative to other groups.

TABLE 5. PROPORTION OF RATING POINTS, BY ROLE

Topics by theme (code name)	Early childhood educators	Primary school educators	Secondary school educators	Primary school principals/executives	Secondary school principals/executives	TOTAL
Sum of all ratings provided**	344	650	569	180	233	1976
Student mental health and wellbeing	6%	12%	14%	14%	6%	11%
Students with learning and/or physical disabilities and/or special needs	19%	11%	5%	7%	9%	10%
Teacher workload, conditions and wellbeing	10%	11%	14%	3%	2%	10%
Teaching to the curriculum	7%	6%	9%	8%	16%	9%
ICT, online learning and technology	1%	9%	10%	6%	17%	9%
General teaching strategies	13%	5%	4%	23%	5%	8%
Differentiation	4%	5%	8%	9%	6%	6%
Behaviour management	7%	6%	9%	0%	1%	6%
Student engagement	1%	10%	5%	0%	7%	6%
Assessment, feedback and reporting	2%	6%	5%	3%	15%	6%
Teacher professional learning	10%	3%	5%	3%	1%	4%
Lesson and program design	6%	7%	0%	8%	1%	4%
Curriculum review	0%	6%	4%	0%	3%	3%
Relationships with parents and the community	3%	1%	2%	12%	1%	3%
Students of diverse backgrounds	6%	2%	0%	2%	1%	2%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/ Indigenous students	3%	0%	2%	1%	1%	2%
Other	2%	0%	1%	0%	5%	1%
Student relationships	0%	0%	1%	0%	2%	1%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Proportion of rating points that were awarded to a topic code by each sector.

** The Sum takes the rating into account. For example, if a topic is rated 5 it adds 5 to the Sum, and if rated 1 it adds 1, etc.

***Each participant can give a 5,4,3,2,1 rating so can provide 15 rating points.

2.2.3 RURAL AND REMOTE

There were two focus groups with educators (teachers) from rural and remote locations.¹ For the purpose of this analysis, educators in these two groups included those:

- living and teaching in towns with populations of less than 20,000 people.

It must be noted that there was a very small number of participants that we could confidently count as remote. Therefore, these findings should be interpreted cautiously.

The rating points from educators in rural and remote locations, as compared with all other groups not identified as rural/ remote,² show that:

- educators from remote/ rural locations were most likely to request research topics on **ICT, online learning and technology** (22%), **student mental health and wellbeing** (22%), and teaching the curriculum (18%). These topics were more likely to be requested by rural/ remotd educators than regional/ metropolitan educators
- educators from remote/ rural locations made significantly fewer requests for research topics on **students with learning and/or physical disabilities and/or special needs** (1%) and **teacher workload, conditions and wellbeing** (2%) than regional/ metropolitan educators.

2.3 RESEARCH TOPICS WITHIN EACH THEME/ CODE

This section outlines the topics that were prioritised by educators under each theme (level 1 code) outlined in Table 3. The analysis in this section outlines which topics were more important to educators, based on sector (Government, Independent and Catholic school educators; early childhood education), and role (early childhood educator; primary and secondary school educators).

2.3.1 STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Student mental health and wellbeing was the most commonly requested research topic (11% of total). Research on student mental health and wellbeing was more important to Government school educators (13%) and Catholic school educators (13%) than Independent school educators (7%). Student mental health and wellbeing was more important to secondary school educators (14%) and primary school educators (12%), than early childhood educators (6%). While this research topic was important to educators from regional and metropolitan schools (10%), it was of particular interest to educators from remote/ rural schools (22%).

¹ Focus Group 15 and 16. N=10.

² For the sum of ratings by codes and location, ranked by total score, see Table 13 in Appendix 2.

Both primary school educators and secondary school educators (though more so secondary school educators) wanted research on how to support students with anxiety, and how to better identify indicators of mental ill health in their students. Some educators also wanted information on meditation and relaxation techniques to manage stress and anxiety in students.

Educators also wanted research on how to connect/ develop rapport with students who have experienced trauma and how to support students with trauma. A few educators also raised the need to focus on the impact of students' physical health their wellbeing and learning outcomes.

Primary school educators were mostly looking for research about how to foster resilience and agency in primary school students; the impacts of bullying; the impacts of social and research on emotional learning on student development.

Specific research topics requested included:

- the impact of mental ill health on student learning outcomes
- the impact of remote learning (particularly during/ post-COVID) on student mental health
- techniques for educators to identify indicators of mental ill health in their students
- ways to instate student mental health support positions at their schools, such as counsellors or mental health practitioners, with information on local adolescent mental health service providers
- techniques to manage students' stress and anxiety, such as mediation and relaxation techniques or the use of therapy animals in the classroom
- the impacts of bullying on student wellbeing and student learning outcomes
- the impacts of social and emotional learning and development on student learning outcomes
- the best positive psychology models to embed in their schools
- specific information on how to support students with anxiety and trauma
- understanding trauma-informed practice, intergenerational trauma and trauma related to students from migrant/ refugee backgrounds
- strategies to support students experiencing home issues/ family breakdowns
- ways to allow students of all ages to have a voice, and best practice techniques to foster resilience, a sense of agency and independence

2.3.2 STUDENTS WITH LEARNING AND/OR PHYSICAL DISABILITIES AND/OR SPECIAL NEEDS

Supporting students with learning and/ or physical disabilities and/ or special needs was another common research topic requested by educators in the focus groups (10% of total). This topic was more important to Government school educators (10%) and Independent school educators (11%) than Catholic school educators (7%). This topic was also more important to early childhood educators (19%) and primary school educators (11%), than secondary school educators (5%).

Early school educators were particularly interested in the best ways to approach parents if they identify symptoms or suspect a diagnosis of a learning disability. They also wanted research on how to best manage the behaviour of children with special needs/ learning disabilities, how to accommodate their needs, and how to foster inclusion, particularly at mainstream (as opposed to special) early childhood education services.

Primary school educators were also focused on the best way they could accommodate the requirements of students with special needs, particularly noting accessible teaching tools and procedures, and how to best support students with special needs to integrate into mainstream schooling. Secondary school educators requested the same research topics as early childhood and primary school educators, although less frequently.

Specific research topics requested included:

- best practices for managing the behaviour of children with special needs
- the best ways to accommodate the requirements of students with special needs in the classroom, particularly having access to resources on accessible teaching tools and procedures
- the best ways to support and engage students with specific special needs. Listed special needs included: dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, sensory processing disorder, vision and/or hearing impairment, Tourette's syndrome, Down syndrome, and cerebral palsy
- the best ways to support students with special needs to feel included and integrate smoothly into mainstream schooling; and
- the best ways to approach a student's family should an educator suspect a diagnosis.

2.3.3 TEACHER WORKLOAD, CONDITIONS AND WELLBEING

Requests for research into teacher workload, conditions and wellbeing was a research topic frequently requested by educators in the focus groups (10% of all topics). It was requested more so by Government school educators (14%) than Independent (7%) and Catholic school educators (2%), and more so by educators from regional and metropolitan schools (10%) than educators from remote and rural schools (2%). Research into teacher workload, conditions and wellbeing was requested relatively evenly across early childhood (10%), primary and secondary school educators (11% and 14% respectively).

Secondary school educators were more specific than primary school educators regarding their research needs—and more commonly wanted research on how they can better balance work and life, and better manage increasing workloads and responsibilities. Early childhood educators were interested in research and resources to help them manage their own stress levels.

Specific research topics requested included:

- techniques for educators to manage their stress, workload and achieve a healthy work/ life balance, such as mediation and relaxation techniques
- the relationship between workload and the impact on teaching practice
- approaches for staff to manage increasing workload expectations

- time management and stress management practices for educators (particularly primary school educators) with overcrowded curricula/ programs
- approaches for schools to assist teachers to manage workload expectations
- ways to streamline data collection during learning programs
- best practice strategies to deal with unsafe or hostile work environments
- research on optimal working hours and breaks, with a focus on casual teachers
- teacher burnout and staff wellbeing programs
- clearer policies and procedures and more support for casual primary school educators
- research on developing an equitable pay level for casual teachers.

2.3.4 TEACHING TO THE CURRICULUM

Requests for research about teaching to the curriculum were made by 9 per cent of educators. Secondary principals/ executives requested research in this topic (16%) more than secondary school educators (9%) and primary school principals/ executives (8%). Catholic school educators (23%) requested research on teaching to the curriculum significantly more than government (4%) and Independent school educators (8%). Educators from remote and rural schools (18%) requested this topic significantly more than educators from regional and metropolitan schools (8%).

Educators, regardless of school level, sector and location, expressed interest in research that would help them equip their students with the skills and attributes for success in the next stage of their learning. Educators were interested in research that could help them make decisions about selecting content from the curriculum, and the best ways to teach that content.

Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) was mentioned as a topic of interest by both primary and secondary school educators, and many educators were interested in the best ways to teach reading and writing. Primary school educators were particularly interested in phonics approaches to teaching reading and writing to younger primary school students.

Early childhood educators wanted research on how to teach early childhood learners to self-regulate, and research on how to get young children ready for primary school. Secondary school educators, and particularly secondary principals/ executives, were also interested in how to teach higher order and critical thinking skills, and how to best encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, equipping their students with the skills they need for success in further study or in the workforce.

Specific research topics requested included:

- the pros and cons of a phonics approach to teaching reading in primary schools, research on specific phonics programs and how to create their own phonics program at their school
- the best teaching strategies to encourage academic integrity, innovation and critical thinking
- the best teaching strategies to improve spelling for primary school students

- literacy and numeracy, particularly on how to support secondary students in literacy and numeracy interventions
- Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics (STEAM)
- how to equip students with skills to thrive post-schooling in the 21st century, including innovation, entrepreneurship, creative and critical thinking, knowledge on sustainability, data analysis, information literacy and writing resumes
- best practices techniques to ensure students are ready and equipped for the next stage in their learning (early childhood to primary school to high school to further study/ the workforce)
- best practice techniques to encourage early childhood learners to self-regulate.

2.3.5 ICT, ONLINE LEARNING AND TECHNOLOGY

Information on how to teach ICT (information, communication and technology), how to best conduct online and remote learning, and the use of technology in the classroom, were common topics brought up by educators, particularly secondary school principals/ executives (17%) and educators from rural and remote schools (22%). This research topic was also more commonly requested by educators from government (10%) and Independent schools (10%) than Catholic schools (4%).

Only two early childhood educators requested research under this theme, and both wanted research on the impact of screen time on young children's learning and development.

Specific research topics requested included:

- accessing learning technologies for use in lessons, particularly for schools in low socioeconomic areas
- best practice for incorporating technologies into lessons and assessments, particularly for students with special needs
- how to engage students through online/ remote learning, including the effects of online/ remote learning on students' development
- best practice for teaching students to be 'cyber safe' and avoid 'digital overload'
- how to best engage students in ICT learning, such as learning computer use skills, particularly for girls
- information on the policy and regulatory landscape surrounding providers of e-learning platforms.

2.3.6 GENERAL TEACHING STRATEGIES

Research into effective teaching strategies was requested by 8 per cent of educators. Research into this topic was more commonly requested by primary school principals/ executives (23%) and early childhood educators (13%), than secondary school (4%) and primary school educators (5%) and secondary school principals (5%). It was also an important topic for Catholic school educators (13%).

Early childhood educators wanted research on play-based inquiry, particularly outdoor play, and the benefits it provides to children. Primary school educators, and particularly primary

school principals/ executives, were mostly interested in research on effective teaching strategies, such as visible learning, inquiry learning or project-based learning.

Secondary school educators also requested research on effective and practical teaching strategies, such as collaborative learning, group-based projects and the best teaching strategies for 21st Century learners.

Specific research topics requested included:

- the impacts of different teaching strategies for different age groups: specifically, inquiry learning, visual learning, project-based learning and collaborative learning
- the pros and cons of play-based inquiry for early childhood and primary school students
- the pros and cons of homework and group work, particularly for secondary school students.

2.3.7 DIFFERENTIATION

Requests for research on differentiation were brought up by 6 per cent of educators. Educators requested topics that focused on two key differentiation areas: differentiating learning for students based on ability; and differentiating standards when adopting differentiated learning. There were no significant differences between educators from different sectors or school level in the amount of responses requesting research under this theme. Educators from rural and remote schools did not request research on differentiation at all.

Specific research topics requested included:

- encourage differentiated learning approaches in class, based on school data collected
- learning approaches for gifted and talented students (for example, Accelerating)
- learning approaches for EALD students
- differentiating approaches that are equitable in support, extending and catering to student needs
- differing standards under ACARA for students under differentiated learning approaches
- addressing needs of Queensland senior students who are not QCE ready, but do not fit the old QCIA model.

2.3.8 BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Requests for research on behaviour management were brought up by 6 per cent of educators. This finding was consistent across early childhood educators, primary school educators and secondary school educators. Educators from rural and remote schools requested research on behaviour management more than any other group of educators (13%). All groups of educators wanted research on best practices for managing challenging behaviour and/or bullying.

Specific research topics requested included:

- best practices for how teachers can manage large or unruly classes
- best practice techniques for instigating meaningful consequences that encourage positive behaviour change in students with challenging behaviour
- behaviour management techniques that are specific for 21st century students and secondary school students
- best practices for combating bullying, including successful examples from other schools.

2.3.9 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Requests for research about ways to improve student engagement in learning were brought up by 6 per cent of educators. Compared to other groups of educators, mostly primary school educators (10%) requested research on this topic, although some secondary school educators (5%) and secondary school principals/ executives (7%) also requested research on this topic.

Primary school educators wanted specific information on how to engage boys in their senior years of primary school, how to engage primary school girls in STEM (though particularly Maths) subjects, and spelling interventions that will keep students in their senior years of primary school engaged.

Secondary school educators wanted research on how to reengage students who have disengaged from learning. However, like primary school educators, secondary school educators also wanted research on how to engage adolescent boys, how to engage any students in Mathematics, and how to engage secondary school students who have fallen behind and have low literacy and numeracy skills.

Specific research topics requested included:

- best practices on how to foster authentic learning experiences that can be related to real-world situations
- best practices on how to reengage students who have disengaged from learning, particularly adolescent boys and students with low numeracy and literacy skills
- targeted programs to reengage more senior students in spelling and literacy, as current spelling interventions are targeted from early childhood to Year 2 and are not engaging for upper primary or secondary school students
- best practices on how to engage students in Mathematics
- best practices on how to engage adolescent girls in STEM.

2.3.10 ASSESSMENT, FEEDBACK AND REPORTING

Requests for research on assessment feedback and reporting were brought up by 6 per cent of educators. This topic was more important to secondary school principals/ executives (15% of their total requested topics) than any other group of educators, including primary school principals/ executives (3%). Educators from rural and remote schools did not request research on this topic at all, and there were no significant differences between school sectors.

Under the area of 'assessment, feedback and reporting', there was strong interest among educators on topics that focused on: the type of assessments available; choosing the most appropriate assessment; feedback strategies; standardised testing's impact/ usefulness; and responsibilities when reporting.

Specific research topics requested included:

- evidence-based strategies to collect data on student learning through formative assessments
- structuring assessments to align with NSW Education Department Key Learning Areas (KLAs)
- how to give strong effective feedback to students and peers
- providing effective feedback on individual subjects
- adopting feedforward approaches in the classroom
- appraising the benefits of NAPLAN
- the time spent preparing students for NAPLAN
- examples of how to apply summative tasks from the IB's Primary Years Programme (PYP)
- research that interrogates and/or redefines quality when assessing the development of early childhood learners
- comparing standardised assessment tools from different providers
- the role of reporting in improved learning outcomes
- information on the structure of observed learning outcomes (SOLO) taxonomy model
- the role of tracking student data.

2.3.11 TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Research into this topic was requested by 4 per cent of educators. This topic was more important to early childhood educators (10%) than primary (3%) and secondary school educators (5%). There were few differences between sectors.

Educators strongly requested topics focusing on regular professional development programs and approaches to increase professional development opportunities within schools. Secondary school educators were also interested in research about developing leadership skills for teachers and having resources that clearly define career progression policies and procedures, so that all educators can interpret them in same way.

Specific research topics requested included:

- the Institute's role in running regular PD workshops for educators on latest practices
- the use of performance and development plans for staff
- clear professional development and career progression guidelines
- resources to develop leadership and team-building skills among educators
- clear career progression policies and procedures for secondary school educators
- PD opportunities focusing on Middle Leadership in Schools
- mentors for early career teachers; and
- the use of Team Teaching.

2.3.12 LESSON AND PROGRAM DESIGN

Research on lesson and program design was requested by 4 per cent of educators. There were no differences in the topics requested between sectors and school levels.

Specific research topics requested included:

- how to develop a learning program, including recommendations on the amount of time given to planning and developing a program; how to relate a new learning program back to the curriculum and align it with student outcomes; the duration of a program; and how to timetable a program.

2.3.13 CURRICULUM REVIEW

Requests to review the curriculum, update the curriculum and explore curricula abroad were made by 3 per cent of educators. Requests for this topic was not made by early childhood educators.

Educators were interested in how a national or revised curriculum would be designed and implemented and requested research on how a new/ revised curriculum would reduce the administrative load facing teachers.

Specific research topics requested included:

- revising the curriculum or introducing a national curriculum
- research comparing the effectiveness of teaching systems throughout the country and abroad
- how to prioritise and manage all subjects in a curriculum
- how to streamline the curriculum to reduce teaching load; and
- how a curriculum can become more 'transdisciplinary', particularly for the primary school curriculum.

2.3.14 RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

Research on this topic was requested by 3 per cent of educators. There were no differences between educators from different sectors, although educators from rural and remote schools did not request research on this topic. Primary school principals/ executives requested this topic (12%) significantly more than any other school level group.

All educators nominating this theme wanted research on ways to effectively engage parents in their children's learning and development, communicate student outcomes to parents and manage parents' expectations.

Specific research topics requested included:

- techniques on how to engage parents to be more involved in their children's learning and development, communicate student outcomes to parents and manage parents' expectations.

2.3.15 STUDENTS OF DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

Research on this topic was requested by 2 per cent of educators. There were no differences between educators from different sectors.

Early childhood educators were mostly focused on wanting to know how to best respect the culture and practices of their students and students' families. Secondary school educators and primary school educators both wanted research on the best ways to support culturally and linguistically diverse students to be literate and numerate, and ways to engage their families in a culturally safe way to join their children on their learning and development path.

Specific research topics requested included:

- the impact of socioeconomic status on access to learning technologies and student learning outcomes, and how to support children from low socioeconomic backgrounds
- more resources to support CALD students in literacy programs in primary school, but also specific secondary EAL curricula for subjects outside of secondary school English
- how to best respect the culture and practices of students and their families, as well as how to best engage, specifically, CALD families in their children's learning and development.

2.3.16 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER/ INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

Research on this topic was requested by 2 per cent of educators. There were no differences between educators from different sectors.

Educators were interested in culturally sensitive ways to engage and build positive relationships with local Aboriginal communities for learning opportunities. Secondary school educators also wanted a dedicated Aboriginal education curriculum that embeds Aboriginal perspectives. Secondary school educators and primary school educators both wanted research on the best ways to support Aboriginal students to be literate and numerate, and ways to engage their families to join them on their learning and development path.

Specific research topics requested included:

- best practices to sensitively engage local Aboriginal communities
- the best ways to embed Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum, as well as having a dedicated Aboriginal education curriculum
- resources to support Aboriginal students to improve literacy and numeracy, foster connection to country and improve engagement with learning.

2.3.17 STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

Research on this topic was requested by 1 per cent of educators, and requests were made entirely by secondary school educators and principals/ executives from remote and rural schools.

Specific research topics requested included:

- how to provide students with the requisite social skills to navigate the world and form healthy relationships with their peers
- how teachers can form positive and nurturing relationships with their students, while maintaining the appropriate professional boundary.

3. RESOURCES CURRENTLY ACCESSED BY EDUCATORS TO INFORM THEIR PRACTICE

This chapter describes where educators seek research evidence to inform their practice and why they find the resources from those sources useful.

3.1 OVERALL FINDINGS

School leaders rely predominantly on packaged programs, which have translated knowledge into practical resources and lesson plans. These programs are rolled out off the shelf or tailored to the needs of the specific school.

Teachers predominantly rely on school leaders, professional learning consultants and information on state-based education department websites (for example, in Tasmania the Professional Learning Institute; in Victoria, the High Impact Teaching Strategies; and in NSW, the NSW Department of Education Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation) to distil the evidence from research for them. Where teachers actively seek evidence, this is from credible government sources and research institutes, such as the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA); Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER); and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). Subject matter experts or educational specialists are another primary source of research, for example Berry Street for trauma-informed practice, John Hattie, and Marzano. Colleagues are a valuable resource for educators. Teachers and early childhood educators have networks within their school and further afield. These communities of practice may be formal or developed organically through social media platforms.

Secondary school teachers are time poor; and primary school teachers are more active in their search for resources. Those in Catholic schools and in Independent schools are less likely to tap into some of the existing state-based resources utilised by their government school colleagues. Early childhood educators, like teachers, rely predominantly on their colleagues, their workplace, government resources, independent education research centres and social media for sources of research.

The sources of evidence used to inform practice also vary by the teacher's role within the school, the sector in which they are working, and the age of the students they are teaching. A more fulsome list of evidence sources is illustrated in the following tables (6 to 9).

EARLY CHILDHOOD ONLINE RESOURCES

Below is a list of specific resources accessed by those in the early childhood sector.

TABLE 6. STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESOURCES

State	Resource	Comments from participants
South Australia		The Department facilitates training and development using their educators and heads of departments.
Tasmania	Tasmania Professional Learning Institute	Runs programs and brings in speakers.

The early childhood educators we spoke with said that some state education departments run face-to-face groups for educators to network and share ideas.

TABLE 7. OTHER RESOURCES ACCESSED BY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

Early childhood education research service resources	
Resource	Notes
Early Childhood Australia	
The Early Learning Association	Monthly newsletters are helpful resources.
The Teacher Learning Network	
ACECQA	Monthly newsletters are helpful resources.
The Early Childhood Resource Hub	Useful for educators wanting to incorporate the Early Years Framework.
Raising Children	A parenting website with helpful information for early childhood educators.
Play Australia	A loose-leaf resource that provides ideas for creative play based on natural products from the environment.
Australian Childhood Foundation	
Australian Library Information Association	
Australian Council for Education Leaders	Includes webinars with speakers such as John Hattie and Dylan Williams and presents high level research and impact.
VCOP (Vocabulary, Connectives, Openers and Punctuation)	

Resources from privately run early childhood services	
Resource	Subject matter
Care for Kids	Provides a newsletter for early childhood educators and also has a library of resources.
Firefly	Provides resources to support teaching different subjects and helps educators plan their time effectively. Also offers professional development workshops.
Early Life Foundations – Walker Learning	Information on play-based and project-based teaching strategies.
KU	Inclusion support staff are valuable; the website also has reports, publications and helpful factsheets.

Unions as resources	
Union	Notes
The Independent Education Union of Australia	Monthly newsletters are useful resources, and the union also offers professional development training.

PRIMARY SCHOOL AND SECONDARY SCHOOL ONLINE RESOURCES

Specific research or resources accessed by school leaders and primary school teachers and secondary school teachers to inform their practice, are outlined below.

TABLE 8. SOURCES OF EVIDENCE – STATE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION

State	Resources/ websites/ organisations	Comments from participants
Victoria	High Impact Teaching Strategies	10 instruction practices that reliably increase student learning.
	The Victorian Bastow Institute of Education Leadership	
	The FUSE website	The amount of content depends on the subject matter. There are limited examples for curriculum outside of Maths and English Curriculum Companions and English.
	The Victorian Centre for Strategic Education	
New South Wales	Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE)	
	NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA)	
Queensland	Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA)	

South Australia		The Department facilitates training and development using their educators and heads of departments.
Australian Capital Territory	ACT Teacher Quality Institute	
Tasmania	Tasmania Professional Learning Institute	Runs programs and brings in speakers.

TABLE 9. OTHER RESOURCES FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS

Education research centre resources	
Resource	Notes
Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)	Especially useful for ESL teachers.
Australian Centre for Education Research (ACER)	
Australian College of Educators	
Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)	Has particularly useful videos and links for beginning teachers.
The Professional Standards Council	
Victoria Association for the Teaching of English (VATE)	Often provides links to useful publications in their newsletters and hosts their own professional development events.
Modern Language Teachers Association Queensland (MLTAQ)	Has useful publications and hosts professional development events for educators.
Evidence for learning website	Useful for small changes such as implementing changes to timetables. Contains details around the source and reliability of evidence, costs associated with practice changes and provides summaries of evidence.
Nationally Consistent Collection of Data	Provides an annual collection of information about Australian school students with disability.
Teach Starter	An essential learning toolkit with standard materials to support different Year levels.
Resources from subject matter expert organisations	
Resource	Subject matter
Berry Street	Focuses on trauma-informed practice, education, out of home care, family violence and youth engagement.
Blue Knot Foundation	Has clinical guidelines for trauma-informed care.
Smiling Minds	Provides resources to improve student and teacher wellbeing.

US Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse	Reviews research on programs, products, practices, and policies in education.
ASCD	US-based site that recommends books for educators taking the 'whole child approach'.
Community Languages Victoria	Provides many activities that enhance linguistic and cultural maintenance.
Visible Learning	Provides literature, translating the research of Professor John Hattie into a practical roadmap for implementation in the classroom and school-wide.
Early Life Foundations – Walker Learning	Information on play-based and project-based teaching strategies.
Microsoft and Apple websites	Contains good, free resources about ICT.
Marzano Resources	Provides information and resources on topics such as assessment and grading, competency-based education, curriculum, teacher effectiveness, instruction, leadership, student engagement and vocabulary.
Tactical Steps	Offers teacher professional development in all aspects of literacy and thinking skills, such as Tactical Teaching Reading and Tactical Teaching Writing.
Essential Skills of Classroom Management	Subject matter experts in classroom management.
Trusted authors as resources	
Author/ book	Topics
Brene Brown	Understanding trauma, mental health, the psychology of human learning and the impacts of stress.
<i>The Body Keeps Score</i> , by Bessel Van der Kolk	The impacts of childhood trauma on the brain.
Judith Herman	The impacts of childhood trauma.
<i>The New Art and Science of Teaching</i> , by Robert J. Marzano	Maximising student engagement and achievement, fostering student learning.
Unions as resources	
Union	Notes
NSW Teachers Federation and the Australian Education Union	Monthly newsletters provide evidence summaries and recommends further reading, linking to articles.
Other unions	Provide leadership courses and networking opportunities to teachers, or can run courses at schools, such as Classrooms at Work , which teaches generic skills and work-related attitudes in academic and vocational high school classrooms.
Useful groups and forums	
Forum	Notes
On Butterfly Wings	Various Facebook groups, depending on subject matter.

Bunnings Teachers Hacks	A Facebook group for Australian educators to share ideas.
Science of Reading	A Facebook group for parents, educators, school administrators, educational advocates, school board members, and anyone else who believes in incorporating the science of reading into teaching for all students.
YAMMER	A forum for students and staff at various education and workplace settings.
Other subject- and location-specific Facebook groups, e.g. French Teachers Australia and Queensland Senior Mathematics Teachers	Helpful to interact with educators teaching the same or similar subjects as you.

3.2 GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

3.2.1 LEADERS

GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERS VALUE PERSONAL, PRACTICAL AND LOCAL SUPPORT

Government primary school leaders access research from a variety of sources to inform their practice. One of their main sources is their local school network system. For example, one leader spoke about a community network with two other local schools, where the focus was on projects facilitating a positive teaching approach. Another leader spoke about a local school network of teachers who volunteer to facilitate on an area/ topic. This could vary from how to use Google Sheets to curriculum topics.

Consultants were accessed for specific areas of the curriculum (such as Maths and English) and for professional development. The Guidance Officer/ School Counsellor and School Chaplain were accessed for student wellbeing. Internal peer mentoring programs, including observations and positive critiques of teaching practices (in areas such as classroom management, behavioural issues), were also utilised by some.

A positive impact of COVID was seen to be an opportunity to record and reflect on your own work. Colleagues and peers (university friends) provided a forum for sharing recorded videos of explicit teaching. Government department and education research institutes, together with subject matter experts, social media networks and libraries, were also mentioned.

3.2.2 TEACHERS

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS LOOK TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING THROUGH THE SCHOOL TO INFORM THEIR PRACTICE

Most primary school teachers are kept up to date on best practice through the professional learning provided at the school in which they are working. This includes both mandatory

training for all government primary school educators and training specific to the approach of their school. The training may also include observations and pedagogy talks. Whilst some teachers noted that observations of their practice by other teachers had the greatest impact on them, others noted that they would prefer greater access to observations of their practice by more experienced teachers.

Going into other classrooms to see different ways of doing things... this has the biggest impact on me. It's good to observe what other teachers have got built into their daily routines. (Government primary school teacher)

Professional learning about specific teaching approaches was mentioned by several teachers. For example, one teacher spoke about receiving support from a regional external teacher regarding differentiated support for their school. This included introduction to various tools and strategies. Another teacher spoke about 'signature practices' in reading, writing and behaviour management for their school. Based on evidence-informed practice, the school identified specific approaches for the teachers to use, for example Mazarno or Sharon Fuller.

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ALSO SHARE THROUGH NETWORKS WITH THEIR COLLEAGUES

Formal and informal networks of colleagues were considered valuable to teachers. These networks may be with colleagues within their school, sister school or cluster school group. Social media was also used by teachers to engage in professional learning communities.

Government primary school teachers also spoke about learning via professional development teams. Based on a shared professional goal and built on trust, teachers worked together, learning collaboratively from each other. This could include discussing a book or participating in organised networks, such as Professional Learning Communities, both within their school and further afield.

Community of Schools called the Bongal Bongal Community Schools – I got to sit in on one of these before COVID hit – it's a great way to share information and tips and tricks. (Government primary school teacher)

The Internet and general professional reading were also mentioned by government primary school teachers.

3.3 GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS

3.3.1 LEADERS

Government secondary school leaders noted that they were time poor and often sourced resources from staff development days or teacher professional learning courses (both online and face-to-face). Executive staff directed research to the school leaders.

Colleagues were important sources of information. As too were reputable online sources such as ACER, AITSL and in Victoria the Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership.

Occasional experts in residence, for example community members on the school council, provided expertise and advice in certain areas, for example, waste management.

Online information sources included YAMMER, a forum for teachers, and other social medias such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

3.3.2 TEACHERS

GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ARE OVERWHELMED AND OVERLOADED BY INFORMATION

There was a consensus among the government secondary school teachers that they are overwhelmed by the volume of information they receive through emails. This will provide a challenge for the Institute in cutting through and reaching teachers.

There is too much to digest. (Government secondary school teacher)

Teachers spoke about receiving emails from a range of sources, on most days. Whilst an occasional email caught their eye, or a few emails from tried and trusted sources were read, often the emails were deleted immediately. A hard copy resource was acknowledged as being a permanent part of the teachers' toolkit, for example the Victorian Department of Education's High Impact Teaching Strategies book.

We are lucky, have a Dean of Teaching and Learning whose job it is to find research and he emails us with all of the stuff, and often it is just too much. I get too much through my networks, Facebook networks. (Government secondary school teacher)

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FROM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES OR TRUSTED COLLEAGUES PROVIDE AN INFORMATION FILTER

Teachers highlighted a range of resources from both the professional development courses in which they participated and resources that had been recommended by trusted colleagues. For example, 'Tactical Teaching Reading' and 'Essential Skills of Classroom Management'.

Colleagues within the school community of teachers provided reading suggestions or posted relevant and applicable articles and videos on Facebook groups.

3.4 INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

3.4.1 LEADERS

The Independent school leaders drew on sources such as ACER, university and state library catalogues and colleagues for their resources. Some also drew on state education department resources and websites.

3.4.2 PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

INDEPENDENT PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS SOURCE THEIR OWN MATERIALS

The teachers from Independent primary schools described a range of sources they access, including professional development and school readings, their colleagues, current affairs, reputable online sources such as AITSL, the National Library and social media. Team teaching was mentioned by one teacher.

My friend works there (at AITSL) and was my mentor when I started, so I tend to go there. They are trying to do more around creating videos and portals, but they are not very good at advertising it. (Independent primary school teacher)

I look to life... the current issues, events, affairs and interests. I take my knowledge from teaching and mash the two with the curriculum, e.g. the Melbourne Show was linked into the curriculum in my last week. (Independent primary school teacher)

3.4.3 SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

INDEPENDENT SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS DO THEIR OWN RESEARCH

Independent secondary school teachers were more likely to source their own materials through university libraries, journals and research centres such as ACER. Colleagues also often point them in the right direction.

3.5 CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

3.5.1 LEADERS

The Catholic school leaders drew on sources such as a principal's network, webinars, learning consultants and educational publishers such as Corwin.

3.5.2 PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS THE KEY INFORMATION SOURCE FOR CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Catholic primary school teachers relied on professional development and learning days, and their professional learning teams for information. They put a high level of trust in the resources that they received from principals and teachers to support their teaching practice.

Professional development was often guided by an annual school improvement plan, where the priorities and pedagogy practices were identified by the principal or the school leadership team. External professional development needed to fit with the practices of the school. The Teacher Learning Network days were particularly important for specialist teachers to share resources and research ideas.

Social media also plays a large role in knowledge sharing. Universities, webinars and learning consultants were also mentioned.

3.5.3 SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS OFTEN DO THEIR OWN RESEARCH

Catholic secondary school teachers spoke predominantly about doing their own research for specific subject content. Teachers often started with a general Google search and followed the threads until they found what they wanted. Although some teachers suggested that their school would do the research for them, they mentioned there was no hub for teachers to access resources.

Information and resources for subjects such as *Health and Personal Development*, *Health and Physical Education* were plentiful (national and international resources). Those teaching less common subjects, like Dance, tended to rely on sources such as Facebook network groups where ideas and resources were shared.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS ARE VALUED

Catholic secondary school teachers also spoke about utilising their own personal and professional networks as information sources, particularly to inform their teaching practice. Networks were formed within their current school or with friends at different schools.

I start in my own school community, networks in subject teams, university colleagues, professional organisations like LinkedIn, Google searching (look at Vic resources first and then other education resources). (Catholic secondary school teacher)

If it is pedagogy, then I would always go to my teachers first. People beats Google every time. (Catholic secondary school teacher)

Online networks or social media networks specific to their subject area were also valued. This enabled teachers to rapidly broaden their networks and share resources.

3.6 RURAL AND REMOTE SCHOOL TEACHERS

Much like those in other government schools, the primary school teachers from rural and remote areas utilised online departmental or other reputable organisations' resources, specialists within the state departments of education and professional development resources.

Primary school teachers in remote areas also utilise their own networks. These networks include more experienced teachers, and local initiatives such as a teacher book club or a school district graduate network coordinated by a principal.

Rural and remote secondary school teachers relied predominantly on professional development provided by their school. School leaders, colleagues and sharing within the community of schools were also information sources, as were libraries and social media.

3.7 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Early childhood educators accessed a range of sources to inform their practice. These predominantly were colleagues, their workplace, government resources, independent education research centres and social media.

EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERS PREDOMINANTLY LOOK TO THEIR COLLEAGUES TO INFORM THEIR PRACTICE

Early childhood leaders were most likely to turn to their colleagues when looking for research to inform their practice. These personal and professional networks provide a forum for discussion, debriefing, critical reflection and new ideas. This allows ECEC leaders to draw on the diverse range of experiences and passions within their network.

PRE-SCHOOL, KINDERGARTEN AND DEGREE QUALIFIED TEACHERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS SHARE RESOURCES WITH COLLEAGUES AND VALUE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Pre-school and kindergarten teachers viewed colleagues as a valuable source of knowledge and often shared resources. Professional development opportunities were also of interest to pre-school teachers as they could seek out courses based on their specific interests. Information about professional development opportunities were often suggested by their service or the local service network. Educators occasionally visited another service or school to observe a new approach. This provided them with an opportunity to see and hear what works well and the challenges of the approach.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CERT III/ DIPLOMA EDUCATORS RELY ON THEIR MANAGERS OR SUPERVISORS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The early childhood educators with a Certificate III or diploma were heavily reliant on their managers or supervisors to provide professional learning material. This was usually via paper-based documents at staff meetings or as part of training.

VIRTUAL NETWORKS PLAY A VITAL ROLE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

These sources create virtual networks for those working on their own, or for those who wish to bounce ideas around or broaden their networks based on their interests. These social media groups are either formal or informal and span sources such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Messenger.

Also speaking with the other educators – there's about 60 of us across Australia. As a sole practitioner, it's different now as I am on my own and not on campus as a teacher, so I'm always on Messenger. (ECEC leader)

People post resources and comment on what works for them, they provide a range of practical ideas that can be investigated further if they interest you. Following on Facebook is good because it comes up on the feed and becomes part of your routine. (ECEC educator)

4. WHAT KINDS OF RESOURCES ARE MOST USEFUL TO EDUCATORS?

This chapter provides examples of resources that educators find useful to plan their lessons, and in the case of school leaders, also to choose strategies and interventions for their school. The resource formats preferred by teachers are also highlighted.

4.1 OVERALL FINDINGS

Government school leaders find off the shelf products and resources ready to roll out across the school most useful, as these can be applied with minimal modification or some tailoring to the school context. These evidence-based programs, designed by those with experience in the classroom, are useful where they include videos or demonstrations of practice, a learning plan or project, that can be implemented immediately within the school to meet the needs of the school. Delivery formats considered most useful are those that provide teachers with an opportunity to build networks and share learning experiences.

Educators prefer resource formats that provide an opportunity to interact and network with colleagues. This both cements the learning and ensures a consistency of approach across the Year or school. Ideally, this is provided face-to-face. Formats that illustrate the practice in a real-life classroom setting, such as videos or webinars that model the practice are vital. Hard copy resources that summarise strategies or include a model lesson plan are a must.

Online networks, communities of practice or social media networks are used widely and highly valued as they tap into the vast knowledge of educators' colleagues.

4.2 GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

4.2.1 LEADERS

GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERS PREFER OFF THE SHELF PRODUCTS READY TO ROLL OUT ACROSS THE SCHOOL

Government primary school leaders are interested in resources that are easy to read and apply. They are interested in practical knowledge that has been translated into an evidence-based program that includes a model learning plan or project that can be implemented immediately within the school, with minimal modification.

Their resource format preferences include:

- booklets and hardcopies of resources (for example the Victorian High Impact Teaching Strategies book)
- face-to-face professional development/ learning, which provides an opportunity to network with colleagues and meet like-minded people

- online professional development courses, which provides an opportunity for teachers and leaders to broaden their existing networks
- model lesson plans.

4.2.2 SCHOOL TEACHERS

GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS PREFER PRACTICAL, INTERACTIVE RESOURCES READY FOR IMMEDIATE USE

Government primary school teachers prefer resources that are supported with evidence and are ready for immediate use in the classroom. Some teachers spoke about receiving professional learning on using a specific program or resource before being implemented within their school. Other teachers were required to source training for the program or resource themselves. Resources were implemented off the shelf or tailored to the specific needs within their school.

Amongst primary school teachers, there was a preference for shared learning with colleagues. This provided an opportunity to learn, digest, reflect, discuss and put into practice research evidence. This could include discussing a set passage or a learning walk, where you explain a new learning topic to others in a group.

As a new teacher, I am a bit of a sponge. That group approach is great for learning. Sharing ideas with people and being able to ask questions and observing strategies to allow that information to sink in and stick. (Government primary school teacher)

In-house professional development with practical examples and a rationale for use was also seen by many as ideal. However, training sessions in the middle of the day were viewed as disruptive and those at the end of the day not conducive to learning.

Other research formats preferred by primary school teachers include:

- Podcasts, which can be listened to on the way home from work. A limitation though is that you cannot ask questions
- hard copy resources that teachers could keep and highlight areas of interest to them
- videos that demonstrate research in practical settings
- examples of lesson plans.

Time constraints and constant change were noted as challenges.

It always seems every term there is something new to learn. The biggest thing is time, as we are always jumping to the next new thing. (Primary school teacher)

Specific examples of useful resources identified by primary school teachers are described below.

- The *What Works Best* course from the NSW Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation outlines quality teaching practices that are known to support school improvement and enhance the learning outcomes for students. This resource was described as bringing together lots of ideas that can be practically applied.

- *Respectful Relationships Program* (Department of Education) was perceived as well formulated and includes lessons with accompanying resources.
- Writing resources included:
 - Seven Steps to Writing
 - Big Write
 - Spelling Mastery program
 - Contracts of Writing
 - Smart spelling
 - 6 + 1
 - Writer's Notebook.
- Mathematics resources included:
 - Eddie Woo, an engaging resource enjoyed by children
 - Maths Placemat, which outlines the ideal structure of a Maths lesson
 - George Booker.
- Resources from leading educators such as Kath Murdoch for the enquiry approach, Andrew Fuller for behaviour, and John Hattie for teaching strategies and assessment.

We love John Hattie...he is like our Bible. (Government primary school teacher)

4.3 GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS

4.3.1 LEADERS

SECONDARY SCHOOL LEADERS FAVOUR PRACTICAL LEARNINGS THAT ARE READILY APPLIED IN THE CLASSROOM

Government secondary school leaders seek knowledge translated for immediate use in the classroom and that can be tailored to their specific classroom.

Online professional courses were perceived as convenient, cost-effective and easier for rural and remote teachers to access. They were also perceived as more self-directed than compulsory professional development. However, the volume of on-line course options could make the choice for leaders and teachers more difficult. Webinars were seen as valuable when tailored to the level of experience of the teacher, for example primary or secondary, experienced or beginner.

In-school training was helpful when tailored to the school's context. However, it was described as often pitched in the middle – not catering to more experienced teachers and too advanced for beginner teachers.

Regardless of the way that research is presented, hard copy resources that are short, sharp and to the point are required to share with other staff at the school.

4.3.2 SCHOOL TEACHERS

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ARE TIME POOR AND NEED BITE-SIZED RESOURCES

Government secondary school teachers are stretched for time. Many teachers felt fatigued from the constant and overwhelming stream of emails. For these teachers, the most useful resources are those that are current and user-friendly. Printable resources are a must.

Secondary school teachers trust practical resources developed by educators with proven classroom teaching experience. Teachers prefer pedagogies with local Australian context in mind (or adaptable to the Australian school system), although they will not immediately dismiss research from overseas. Presented via case scenarios or videos illustrating a pedagogy, teachers want to see strategies that work in the 'real world'.

There was a strong preference among secondary school teachers for face-to-face learning, as this interactive 'hands on' approach assisted teachers to integrate their learning. Learning off campus allowed teachers to focus on learning rather than manage competing priorities.

Written information needs to be brief and engaging with colourful infographics and pictures. Secondary school teachers are increasingly time-poor and unlikely to read a journal article, preferring dot points to 'slabs of text'. Interactive, visual, short, sharp resources would ensure the accessibility and inclusivity of the resources for all teachers, including for example those with dyslexia.

Brief-format resources such as short videos, or portable formats like podcasts are valued. Short, interactive webinars of 10-15 minutes that provide snippets of key findings are effective in providing teachers with an overview of a topic. Links to further information could be provided for those who want to know more.

Resource banks and toolkits that allow teachers to click to more information and search for topics were helpful.

Specific examples of useful resources included:

- the Victorian *High Impact Teaching Strategies* book, which assisted with planning. The information was clearly presented and the strategies 'well stepped out'. Teachers noted that as a hard copy resource, they could keep it with them and use it to remind them of the strategies. For example, the structure of a Maths lesson
- The *Evidence for Learning* website illustrates how strategies used by teachers affect (costs and benefits to) a student's development. Time, cost and benefits are discussed, for example, homework pushes children's development back X months
- The Queensland *Beginning Teachers Program* is an intensive 2-day research-based face-to-face professional development session
- *Mental Health First Aid* was useful for students at risk of poor mental health
- The *NSW Education Standards Authority* website has useful information (although can be overwhelming with the volume of information and navigation challenges) for accreditation and professional development progression across all teaching stages

- Wellbeing resources, such as the *Smiling Mind* program for mindfulness at the start of each teaching period and the *Invisible Child* for identifying strategies to prevent students from 'slipping through the cracks' were noted
- *Drama Victoria* released a document on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drama, which could be easily included into the Drama curriculum
- Game-based practices (e.g. game-based maths exercises) were a good way to engage students.

4.4 INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS TEND TO GO IT ALONE

4.4.1 LEADERS

School leaders from Independent schools spoke more broadly about finding partnerships with universities useful, including access to university libraries and academics.

Resources were perceived to be useful when they were Australian, specific and easy to access. Some educators, such as Shirley Clarke and Gillian Williams, were mentioned. However, teachers often had to do a bit of exploring to find exactly what they want.

Independent school leaders sought research that was presented in a short, sharp and digestible format. Documents needed to be upfront about the information being provided so that teachers could quickly glean if the content was relevant. Format preferences included podcasts with subject matter experts, videos of initiatives or interviews about implementing an approach.

A search engine/ catalogue of Australian educational research with a search bar and broad search terms would be very useful.

4.4.2 PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Primary school teachers preferred face-to-face learning. Partially because of COVID fatigue, given the amount of time they already spend on line, but mainly as face-to-face was more engaging and they learnt by watching a new approach being implemented in practice. This was particularly the case when an external professional attended the school, or they attended an external event.

We need to engage the students... what about engaging the teachers too. (Independent primary school teacher)

Often when you see a professional you are engaged more as they make you do the activities. (Independent primary school teacher)

Sharing learning amongst staff was valued. This could include watching others work or receiving input from another teacher watching you work.

Specific resource examples included:

- the *High Impact Teaching Strategies* resource, which was perceived as valuable as everything was in one place. All the strategies could be put into practice and the resource included a rationale for use
- the *Harvard Thinking Course*, which was seen to provide classroom strategies to make thinking visual for children, and to assist them to make links.

4.4.3 SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Independent secondary school teachers spoke generically about journal articles, and also about the Grattan Institute paper on improved learning research. They sought short snippets of information that could be followed up if one is interested. For example, layered content like a cheat sheet, then a 30-minute video and then a book or journal. Practical implementation examples were a must. A podcast could be 20 minutes in length.

Research by educational theorist, Alfie Kohn, was mentioned, noting his work on the effectiveness of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in learning.

4.5 CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

4.5.1 LEADERS

CATHOLIC SCHOOL LEADERS SEEK RESOURCES IN THEIR SIMPLEST FORM

For this group, research needs to be presented in a clear, crisp form. This may be through a case study, visiting other schools, or online resources that could be accessed when convenient. Online resources could be presented via text article, video, webinar or TED talk.

4.5.2 PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Catholic primary school teachers prefer practical resources with specific advice for real-world scenarios. Catholic primary school teachers sought a variety of research formats, including online modules, fact sheets, succinct summaries with further links, and forums. Videos and case studies were powerful tools when they provide in-depth and real-world examples of practice. Interactive professional learning sessions allowed teachers to ask questions.

Examples of specific resources seen as particularly useful included:

- *Visible Learning Plus* by John Hattie. This resource provides current research and policy on the impacts of teaching on student outcomes. Specific modules to support students with disability are available. The resource provides in-depth scenarios for practical application
- *The Power of Inquiry: Teaching and Learning with Curiosity, Creativity, and Purpose in the Contemporary Classroom* by Kath Murdoch provides a deeper understanding of inquiry learning and why it is powerful for students

- *The Kids Matter* website has comprehensive and easily understood online learning modules with a focus on student engagement. The knowledge translation allows practical classroom application
- The *Nationally Consistent Collection of Data* website provides information on how to better support students with disability.

4.5.3 SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Secondary school teachers spoke about being guided to specific resources by the school at which they work. They spoke more about the difficulties in finding resources rather than provide specific examples of resources. For example, when looking for life skills resources one teacher stated that:

It was like trying to find a needle in a haystack. I could not find a central place to find the information I needed. I was relying on word of mouth to build the information. (Catholic secondary school teacher)

Catholic secondary school teachers want brief evidence summaries or ‘snapshots’ of the findings in an easy to read format. Attention grabbing, visual infographics that are easy-to-read were ideal. Links to or an index of further information could allow teachers to explore further if required.

Some specific resource example included:

- a range of national and international health information resources from various organisations, including the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare*, the *United Nations* and the *World Health Organisation*
- wellbeing resources from the *The Resilience Project* were mentioned as being useful for the middle years when teaching gratitude, empathy, and mindfulness. This resource was perceived to engage students in practice.

4.6 RURAL AND REMOTE TEACHERS

Rural and remote teachers sought quality explicit teaching information that included visual and interactive resources, which provide direction for implementation in the classroom. This may include lesson plans. Rural and remote teachers were open to a variety of formats including toolkits, case studies, podcasts, webinars and explicit teaching videos.

Specific resources mentioned by rural and remote primary school teachers included:

- a professional development course with scholar Dylan Williams provided teachers of one school with resources and a structured method to implement formative assessments
- The Australian Childhood Foundation’s *Making SPACE for Learning* resource was user-friendly and easy to apply in the classroom.

Specific resources mentioned by rural and remote secondary school teachers included:

- graduate certificate courses from the University of New England (UNE)

- the *Teaching Channel* (US TV channel), which illustrates teaching practices.

4.7 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

4.7.1 LEADERS

Videos, webinars and podcasts were preferred by early childhood education leaders. Other formats included visuals and graphs, a presentation broken up with a video, a case study with a real-life story, and physical resources.

Early childhood education leaders want examples of the research findings applied to a real-life scenario, for example a case study of how to embed the practice within a classroom with 20 students, or a lesson plan to enable teachers to use learnings in the classroom.

Make the evidence real-world and practical. (Early childhood leader)

Leaders spoke about integrating resources. For example, one pre-school, known for supporting children with challenging behaviours and those needing assistance with verbal communication and self-regulation, drew from the *Circle of Security* as a roadmap for the security of the children, Nathan Wallis for brain development, and visuals for English second language and key word signing.

Other resources included:

- *Lifestart*, with good articles and blogs on inclusion
- the Early Childhood Australia website and its *Every Child* journal
- the *Second Step* and *Pause* programs to assist with the social and emotional development of children. These programs run for over a year, introducing various topics and strategies such as emotions, play or developing new friendships. The prompts from these resources were viewed positively.

4.7.2 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CERT III/ DIPLOMA/ DEGREE QUALIFIED TEACHERS IN ECEC

This group of early childhood educators prefer accessible resources that illustrate practical applications through case studies, videos and webinars. Concise information with links, a demonstration and printable resources were preferred. The early educator toolkit was useful.

These educators referenced general resources, such as:

- Facebook groups to ask questions and get information
- *Success Factors* blogs about organising classroom activities and planning 'in the room' printable resources separated by age groups
- online sites such as the *Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange*, for self-directed, experiential learning in relationship-driven environments, and author Claire Warden, who writes about mud/ water play.

4.7.3 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PRE-SCHOOL/ KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

Pre-school or kindergarten teachers preferred face-to-face professional development as the interactive nature enabled them to ask questions and was more engaging.

Other formats could include:

- Podcasts, e.g. *Parental As Anything*
- TED Talks on YouTube
- webinars
- Facebook and Instagram posts.

Specific resources mentioned by pre-school and kindergarten teachers included:

- *Orff Schulwerk* course for musical education, which provides practical resources, Spotify playlists, hands-on activities and group time activities
- Australian Education Union membership magazine, which provides up-to-date research
- VCOP writing program (writing vocabulary, connectives, openers and punctuation), introduced through professional development. This training included UK-based videos and more recently Australian content. The program was seen perceived as practical-based.

5. ADOPTION OF RESEARCH: SUPPORTS FOR EDUCATORS TO IMPLEMENT NEW APPROACHES OR PRACTICES

This chapter provides information on the supports that would assist educators to adopt research findings about practices or approaches.

5.1 OVERALL FINDINGS

TAKING UP NEW APPROACHES REQUIRES AN AUTHORISING ENVIRONMENT FROM SCHOOL LEADERS

The implementation of a new practice or approach requires an authorising environment from school leaders or the leadership team. This finding is consistent across all the focus groups. Educators also need to understand the benefits of the new practice and approach.

Whilst smaller changes could be supported by coaching and demonstrations of practice from colleagues, for larger changes, educators want to receive training from consultants or school champions via in-house training, videos, observations in like schools or observations of more experienced teachers. Educators want resources that provide a step-by-step approach to planning and implementing the new practice within a classroom or school.

Time is critical to implementing anything new. Teachers need time to become familiar with and confident in the new approach by observing others, and when they are ready by being observed and receiving feedback, coaching or mentoring on their practice.

Make it authentic. It needs to be real. (Government primary school teacher)

A lot of the programs are great ideas but are run by people who are not in the classrooms where they just don't understand the environment. (Government primary school teacher)

5.2 GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

5.2.1 GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERS

To implement a new practice or approach, government primary school leaders need an authorising environment – support from leadership within the school.

Additional supports include:

- more consultants and specialists in curriculum areas (Maths and English)
- peer support, for example constructive observation of classes by more experienced teachers, mentoring or coaching

- teachers' aides (who may have known the children since they started at the school and could assist within the classroom)
- physical resources, such as books, equipment, dice and counters.

5.2.2 GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Teachers want to know the benefits of the approach and demonstrations of how the approach can be implemented. Observing the practice implemented in a classroom by a professional or colleague and a step-by-step guide on what to do in the classroom were essential supports. Resources, and how to differentiate the approach were also required.

At an individual level, teachers need to prepare and reflect on the lesson and practice implementing the new approach. Once comfortable, many would like someone to observe them and provide them with constructive feedback or receive coaching.

5.3 GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS

5.3.1 GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEADERS

Leaders seek the evidence that the approach works and how the approach can be applied across different socioeconomic settings. Socialising the approach at leadership meetings was seen to assist uptake. Champions within the school could enable implementation of the new approach, as this could seem more organic and at a grassroots level, as opposed to a top-down approach.

5.3.2 GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Secondary school teachers required support from both school leadership and their colleagues to roll out a new practice or approach. The evidence for the new approach could be presented by modelling the approach, short videos and role plays. Instantly accessible support through a search engine or phone advice would assist teachers when implementing the new practice or approach. Forums and Facebook groups could provide further support.

Teachers need time to learn and plan how to implement research into their practice. For larger changes, it was helpful when consultants came to the school to train teachers. Teachers appreciate discussing the new practice and receiving individual feedback. The timing of training (not Friday afternoon) was considered important. Care needs to be taken to include casual teachers, to ensure they are part of the team and that their professional learning needs are addressed. Resources, such as techniques and templates were valued.

5.4 INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

5.4.1 LEADERS

Leaders in Independent schools said that authorisation to adopt new approaches includes a willingness to trial and pilot initiatives or approaches, and

...to be Ok if it doesn't work. (Independent secondary school leader)

Money for professional development and time to discuss, learn about and implement a new approach were also necessary.

5.4.2 PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Primary school teachers at Independent schools were interested in both observing other teachers and being observed to receive feedback on their practice. Learning together was generally viewed as valuable. Time and resources were also essential.

We need time. It is all well and good to try something new, but if you don't have the time to plan and do it well it won't work. (Independent primary school teacher)

When you have the resources in front of you, you've watched someone do it, then you feel ready to do it. You need those factors together to have the confidence to roll it out. (Independent primary school teacher)

5.4.3 SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Secondary school teachers at Independent schools said trust is required from the school to trial new approaches, with a sense from some teachers, that leaders were risk adverse. There was space within the curriculum to apply new approaches, and they emphasised there is a necessity for content for assessment to be included.

Resources using real world examples, case studies and clear, simple aids were sought.

5.5 CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

5.5.1 LEADERS

Catholic school leaders need staff and leadership buy-in to implement a new approach. In addition to the evidence, there is a need to see how the approach works within the context of their school.

Leaders want to be able to access expert and ongoing support from someone experienced in the approach. Changes need to happen slowly and in a staged manner so as not to overwhelm leaders, given all the other demands on their time. The benefit to children of the new approaches needs to be communicated to parents.

5.5.2 PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

The 'gold standard' of support was seen to be a network of educators (across schools), through which teachers can share and receive critical feedback as they are implementing the same practice.

Time is required for dedicated coaching and mentoring, check-ins, reflections, trials of new practices, observation of practice and feedback.

It was thought that perhaps specialist teachers had more freedom to implement a new practice in their class, while non-specialist teachers were expected to implement whole-of-Year or whole-of-school level practices.

Casual teachers may need support to implement new approaches as they are not always linked into broader school-based practice supports.

5.5.3 SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Secondary school teachers from Catholic schools spoke about the need for support to be provided to their colleagues, their department and school. The willingness of students to try something new was also mentioned. For teachers with challenging students, there was a sense that they could have to carefully pick their timing when trying something different. Teachers were interested in accessing resources that support a new approach to be provided ahead of time through digital platforms. This would allow teachers to prepare for the training.

Teachers appreciated seeing how 'like-schools' implemented or experienced the new approach/ research. Discussing ideas with more experienced colleagues and team teaching were useful practice supports.

If you convince one of your colleagues to have a go it helps because you have a shared experience you can discuss and tweak further. (Catholic secondary school teacher)

Team teaching is done at my school, rarely do I teach on my own, so need to make sure team members have the resources and same knowledge before teaching. (Catholic secondary school teacher)

I find it odd that all schools have to create everything. Why isn't there a central place where teachers can share and find resources. Why are all teachers in all schools doing this themselves? Why can't there be a central place where we can contribute and share, why do we all have to start from scratch? (Catholic secondary school teacher)

Functional Information Technology was critical to the adoption of new practices.

You want to make sure your IT is working, nothing worse than going into a classroom and you have a new great idea and then your laptop doesn't fire up. (Catholic secondary school teacher)

5.6 RURAL AND REMOTE TEACHERS

Rural and remote teachers sought to understand the benefits of a new approach. Smaller changes in day-to-day teaching practice could be supported by coaching and practice. Larger changes required school leadership support.

Demonstrations of the new approach by experts or other teachers (in person or by video), sharing experiences of what works through mentoring and coaching, receiving feedback on practice, and clear implementation steps, were valued supports.

5.7 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

5.7.1 LEADERS

Early childhood education leaders preferred supports for a new practice or approach to be internal through staff meetings, where they could learn together and reflect on the learnings to have a shared approach. If the approach is more complex, early childhood leaders would prefer to receive support through consultants.

Early childhood education leaders sought a step-by-step plan to introducing a new approach and a guide for anticipated hurdles. Written resources, and physical program resources, were preferred. Simple things like a phone call or email support would be helpful.

An introduction to the practices, and an observation of how to work with students, was expected. Educators could then reflect and check-in to receive feedback and guidance on the new practice.

5.7.2 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CERT III/ DIPLOMA/ DEGREE QUALIFIED TEACHERS IN ECEC

Most professional learning is directed by managers/ supervisors. Educators at smaller childcare services tend to have more autonomy over implementing new approaches.

Coaching, guest speakers, early childhood consultants or advisors were contacted to support the implementation of new approaches, in some instances.

5.7.3 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PRE-SCHOOL/ KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

Pre-school or kindergarten teachers need support and buy-in from school leaders and management.

Support from other colleagues provides a safe environment from peers to trial and teach the new approach.

Resources and funding to attend professional development, or to visit other schools to observe their approach would support the implementation of new practices.

APPENDIX 1 CODING FRAMEWORK

THE CODING FRAMEWORK

The coding framework included 18 high level codes (or themes) to sort and analyse the topics (see Table 10 below). The coding team applied the framework to a sample of topics to ensure reliability and identify any adjustments needed to the framework. Throughout the coding process, the team kept definition and decision logs to ensure consistent coding. Research priorities and topics that were common across the groups were combined and analysed together so we could obtain an overall picture and effectively identify differences in views between school sectors, levels and location.

As some topics included or touched on more than one code, coders would read the additional comments provided in the sheet, and/or the notes taken in the group, to understand the topic further and make their coding decision. Some topics that were mentioned by educators that were not necessarily for research but were top of the mind for educators, have been grouped and coded together.

TABLE 10. CODING FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCH TOPICS

Level 1 Code	Topics
1. Curriculum review	Any mention of a curriculum review, national curriculum or looking to international models to develop a revised curriculum.
2. ICT, online learning and technology	Information and Communication Technology (ICT) & Online Learning, including how to use ICT safely, responsibly and ethically. This code includes remote learning. Even if a topic covers several codes, if it is about how to teach something online or through technology, it should be coded here.
3. Assessment, feedback and reporting	Assessment, feedback and reporting on student learning and performance. NAPLAN related topics/ issues to be coded here.
4. General teaching strategies	Pedagogies and teaching strategies aimed at engaging the students in learning, including communication strategies in the classroom. This includes teaching models. For example, phonics and whole language.
5. Lesson and program design	Programming includes planning, structuring and sequencing learning programs. Includes Integrated learning.
6. Student engagement	Student engagement in learning.
7. Differentiation	Differentiating teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.
8. Behaviour management	Managing challenging student behaviour in the classroom, but also includes positive behaviour strategies. Includes bullying, and violence, and teaching students about consequences.

Level 1 Code	Topics
9. Student relationships	Managing student's relationships with other students in the school, in the classroom and with the teacher.
10. Students of diverse backgrounds	This includes students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds.
11. Students with learning and/ or physical disabilities and/ or special needs	Strategies to support full participation of students with disabilities and/ or special needs, including topics around inclusion.
12. Student mental health and wellbeing for students	Topics around the mental health and wellbeing of students, including trauma-informed practice, how to identify and manage mental ill health and stress, developing dedicated psychological counsellor role in schools and fostering resilience.
13. Teacher professional learning	Teacher engagement in professional learning to improve practice and application of learnings – including with colleagues and access to resources. Includes clear guidelines for career pathways and promotions.
14. Relationships with parents and the community	Managing a teacher's relationship with parents/carers and the community. This code includes any topics raised about relationships outside of the teacher-student relationship. Includes how to manage parental expectations and how to engage parents/carers in the educative process.
15. Teaching to the curriculum	Content selection and specific topics to teach. This code includes all standard subjects/ topics, for example, literacy and numeracy and STEM, but does not include ICT. This also includes teaching critical thinking skills, innovation and entrepreneurship.
16. Teacher workload, conditions and wellbeing	Teacher workload, conditions and wellbeing: anything about teachers themselves. Includes conflict resolution and pay grades, but also anything about teachers managing workloads and responsibilities.
17. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/ Indigenous students	This topic includes strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Includes topics about understanding and respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non -Indigenous Australians.
18. Other	Any topic that does not fit in any of the above codes. Only to be used as a last resort.

APPENDIX 2 RESEARCH TOPIC PRIORITIES

TABLE 11. SUM OF RATINGS BY CODES AND SECTOR, RANKED BY TOTAL SCORE

Topics by theme (code name)	Catholic	Government	Independent	TOTAL
Sum of all ratings provided**	327	967	682	1976
Student mental health and wellbeing	13%	13%	7%	11%
Students with learning and/or physical disabilities and/or special needs	7%	10%	11%	10%
Teacher workload, conditions and wellbeing	2%	14%	7%	10%
Teaching to the curriculum	23%	4%	8%	9%
ICT, online learning and technology	4%	10%	10%	9%
General teaching strategies	13%	6%	8%	8%
Differentiation	2%	8%	6%	6%
Behaviour management	8%	6%	5%	6%
Student engagement	3%	7%	6%	6%
Assessment, feedback and reporting	2%	6%	7%	6%
Teacher professional learning	6%	4%	5%	4%
Lesson and program design	5%	3%	6%	4%
Curriculum review	6%	2%	4%	3%
Relationships with parents and the community	4%	2%	3%	3%
Students of diverse backgrounds	2%	1%	4%	2%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/ Indigenous students	0%	1%	3%	2%
Student relationships	0%	1%	1%	1%
Other	2%	1%	1%	1%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

* The Sum takes the rating into account. For example, if a topic is rated 5 it adds 5 to the Sum and if rated 1 it adds 1, etc.

**Each participant can give a 5,4,3,2,1 rating so can provide 15 rating points.

TABLE 12. SUM OF RATINGS BY CODES AND ROLE, RANKED BY TOTAL SCORE

Topics by theme (code name)	Early childhood educators	Primary school educators	Secondary school educators	Primary school principals/executives	Secondary school principals/executives	TOTAL
Sum of all ratings provided**	344	650	569	180	233	1976
Student mental health and wellbeing	6%	12%	14%	14%	6%	11%
Students with learning and/or physical disabilities and/or special needs	19%	11%	5%	7%	9%	10%
Teacher workload, conditions and wellbeing	10%	11%	14%	3%	2%	10%
Teaching to the curriculum	7%	6%	9%	8%	16%	9%
ICT, online learning and technology	1%	9%	10%	6%	17%	9%
General teaching strategies	13%	5%	4%	23%	5%	8%
Differentiation	4%	5%	8%	9%	6%	6%
Behaviour management	7%	6%	9%	0%	1%	6%
Student engagement	1%	10%	5%	0%	7%	6%
Assessment, feedback and reporting	2%	6%	5%	3%	15%	6%
Teacher professional learning	10%	3%	5%	3%	1%	4%
Lesson and program design	6%	7%	0%	8%	1%	4%
Curriculum review	0%	6%	4%	0%	3%	3%
Relationships with parents and the community	3%	1%	2%	12%	1%	3%
Students of diverse backgrounds	6%	2%	0%	2%	1%	2%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/ Indigenous students	3%	0%	2%	1%	1%	2%
Other	2%	0%	1%	0%	5%	1%
Student relationships	0%	0%	1%	0%	2%	1%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

* The Sum takes the rating into account. For example, if a topic is rated 5 it adds 5 to the Sum and if rated 1 it adds 1, etc.

**Each participant can give a 5,4,3,2,1 rating so can provide 15 rating points.

TABLE 13. SUM OF RATINGS BY LOCATION, RANKED BY TOTAL SCORE

Topics by theme (code name)	Educators not from rural or remote schools (regional or metropolitan)	Educators from rural or remote schools	TOTAL
Sum of all ratings provided**	1841	135	1976
Student mental health and wellbeing	10%	22%	11%
Students with learning and/or physical disabilities and/or special needs	11%	1%	10%
Teacher workload, conditions and wellbeing	10%	2%	10%
Teaching to the curriculum	8%	18%	9%
ICT, online learning and technology	8%	22%	9%
General teaching strategies	8%	4%	8%
Differentiation	7%	0%	6%
Behaviour management	6%	13%	6%
Student engagement	6%	7%	6%
Assessment, feedback and reporting	6%	0%	6%
Teacher professional learning	5%	1%	4%
Lesson and program design	4%	0%	4%
Curriculum review	4%	0%	3%
Relationships with parents and the community	3%	0%	3%
Students of diverse backgrounds	2%	0%	2%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/ Indigenous students	1%	4%	2%
Student relationships	0%	4%	1%
Other	2%	0%	1%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

* The Sum takes the rating into account. For example, if a topic is rated 5 it adds 5 to the SUM and if rated 1 it adds 1, etc.

**Each participant can give a 5,4,3,2,1 rating so can provide 15 rating points.

APPENDIX 3 SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

200907 - EDUCATION GROUPS - TEACHERS AND SCHOOL EXECUTIVES - ARTD

INTRO - Intro

Our client is conducting online market research groups for teachers and school executives.

A National Evidence Institute for education is being established. The Institute is a new body that the state, territory and federal governments are setting up to translate research evidence into recommendations and resources for educators.

The National Evidence Institute wants to hear from teachers and school leaders across Australia to help identify how, what, where and when teachers access (and want to access) research, information and evidence to inform their practices and improve student learning outcomes.

These Zoom groups will run for 1 hour and in appreciation of your time you will receive \$100 eGift voucher.

Would you be interested in participating?

- Yes, please record the best contact number and time of day for us to call you (1)_____
- No (2)

CALLMON - Call Monitoring

Please be advised that Stable Research calls may be monitored for training purposes only. Is this OK with you?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

TERMSANDCOND - Terms and Conditions

If you are booked into research you must agree to the terms and conditions regarding the collection, use, disclosure and handling of your personal information contained in our privacy policy. Stable Research panel members Terms and Conditions - [Click to go to terms and conditions](#) Privacy Policy - [Click to go to privacy policy](#)

- OK (1)

DATES - Dates Available

We have Zoom groups running on the following dates & times.

Please select ALL that you are available for:

Please note that your answers ultimately determine the group that you qualify for. This is just a preference choice and may not necessarily be the date/time of the group that you do qualify for

- Thursday, 10th September at 4:30pm (1)
- Monday, 14th September at 4:30pm (2)
- Tuesday, 15th September at 4:30pm (3)
- Tuesday, 15th September at 6pm (4)
- Wednesday, 16th September at 4:30pm (5)

- Thursday, 17th September at 4:30pm (6)
- Monday, 21st September at 4:30pm (7)
- Tuesday, 22nd September at 4:30pm (8)
- Thursday, 24th September at 4:30pm (9)
- Monday, 28th September at 2pm (10)
- Wednesday, 30th September at 2pm (11)
- Unavailable (z)
- I am interested but not available for the dates or times listed (97)
- I am not available for any of the dates or times listed (99)

INSTITUTIONS - Q1 Do you currently work in any of the following institutions?

Do you currently work in any of the following institutions?

- University (1) **AR**
- Secondary School (2)
- Primary/Infants School (3)
- Kindergarten/Day Care Centre (4)
- None of the above (5) **AR**

ROLES - Q2 Do you currently work in any of the following roles?

Do you currently work in any of the following roles?

Please select all that apply

- Principal - Secondary School (yrs 7-12) (1) **GROUPS 2 AND 4 TO CODE 1, 2 OR 3**
- Deputy Principal - Secondary School (yrs 7-12) (2)
- Executive Teacher - Secondary School (yrs 7-12) (3)
- Teacher - Secondary School (yrs 7-12) (4) **GROUPS 8, 9, 10, 12, 14 AND 16 TO CODE 4**
- Principal - Primary School (yrs 1-6) (5) **GROUPS 1 AND 3 TO CODE 5, 6 OR 7**
- Assistant Principal - Primary School (yrs 1-6) (6)
- Executive Teacher - Primary School (yrs 1-6) (7)
- Teacher - Primary School (yrs 1-6) (8) **GROUPS 5, 6, 7, 11, 13 AND 15 TO CODE 8**
- Director Early Childhood Teaching - Childcare Centre (9) **GROUP 19 TO CODE 9**
- Early Childhood Teacher in Childcare Centre (10) **GROUPS 17 AND 18 TO CODE 10**
- Early Childhood Teacher - K-1 in Primary School (11) **GROUP 20 TO CODE 11**
- Other, please record (12) _____ **SR**
- None of the above (13) **AR**

STATUS - Q3 Please indicate your current employment status.

Please indicate your current employment status.

- Working full-time (1)
- Working part-time (2)
- Working casually (3)
- Retired from teaching (4) **AR**
- Other, please record (5) _____ **SR**

SECTOR - Q4 Please indicate which sector you teach in.

Please indicate which sector you teach in.

GROUPS 15-20 TO CODE ANY OF CODES 1-3

- Catholic (1) **GROUPS 3, 11 AND 12 TO CODE 1**
- Government (2) **GROUPS 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 AND 10 TO CODE 2**
- Independent (3) **GROUPS 4, 13 AND 14 TO CODE 3**

APPENDIX 4 TOPIC GUIDE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

I would like to begin by acknowledging and paying respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we meet today. I would like to pay our respects to Elders, past and present and to acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders here today, extending our respects to your Elders, past and present.

INTRODUCTION OF ARTD

Hi, my name is xx from ARTD and I will be facilitating the focus group today. Thank you all for attending. Note taker to introduce themselves.

Where relevant: We also have with us tonight (person X) from the Institute. Would you like to introduce yourself?

We will start by going around the group and if you could say your first name and the state/territory you are from, that would be great.

BACKGROUND – FACILITATOR

A National Evidence Institute for Education is being established. The Institute is a new body that the state, territory and federal governments are setting up to translate research evidence into recommendations and resources for educators. The National Evidence Institute wants to hear from educators and school leaders across Australia to help identify how educators access (and want to access) research, information and other evidence to inform their practices and improve student learning outcomes. The Institute is also interested in knowing what support you need as you try to implement a new practice or approach.

This focus group will be 1 hour in length. The focus group will be recorded, and notes will be taken during the group. Participants will not be identified in the report. The audio recording will be backed up onto ARTD's secure server and deleted from the recording device once it has been saved on the server. The recording is for our note taking purposes.

Notetaker to record Zoom session – and note the names of attendees.

QUESTIONS

1. The National Evidence Institute wants to know what their research priorities should be to help educators in their work.

What topics would be most helpful to you? Why? (Brainstorm different topics on Google Sheets)

Notetaker to copy and paste link into the chat and open link:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets...>

For this question we're going to use Google Sheets. Go to the chat section at the bottom of your screen and click on the link. You should be able to see an Excel spreadsheet. Can everyone see the Excel spreadsheet? If you have any troubles, don't worry – we will check in with you to ensure we include your ideas.

In the first column, we'd like you to write down some research topic areas that would be most helpful for you. There is also a column next to your name to add in any comments about these topics. We will have about 10 minutes to do this.

When everyone has finished listing areas of interest, we'd like you to rate your top five across all the ideas suggested (just write '1' being the most important to you through to '5', next to the topics that are of most interest to you)

For those who can't access Google Sheets we will read out the topic list and you can write down your top five. Then we can add them in for you.

Now before we move onto the next question – can everyone please close Google Sheets.

4. Where do you look for research to inform your practice as a teacher OR leader? E.g. Lesson planning, pedagogy, teaching practices, classroom management.

(Prompt for names. Give examples if needed, such as websites, journals.)

- Why those sources?
 - AITSL (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership), ACARA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority), CESE (NSW) (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation), experienced teacher at my school.
5. What is an example of a resource explaining research findings that you have found useful?
 - And why was it useful?
 4. Research evidence can be presented in many ways, what works best for you? E.g. Topic sheets, evidence summaries, guidance reports, case studies audio books, podcasts, webinars, videos, frameworks, toolkits, other forms? Example links:
 6. Say you've keen to try the research evidence in your service OR classroom OR school. What support would you need as you try to implement a new practice or approach? (10 mins)
 - E.g. coaching, observation by more experienced teacher, other.

Thank you. We really appreciate your thoughtful comments today. The views you share will be incorporated with those of other stakeholders and help to inform decisions about the research topics the Institute prioritises and the way it presents its work to educators. The Institute will be launched this summer and start to do its research and publish materials in 2021. We can email you a summary of the findings from this research.