



Capturing Student Voice

student perspectives on their
alternate education
experience and COVID-19

Snapshot

Context

Background

In the first three months of 2020 Australia was deeply impacted by the COVID-19 global pandemic. As COVID-19 spread across Australia, strategies were put in place to slow the spread within the population and keep the community safe. On 27 March 2020, the Queensland Government announced pupil-free days for schools from Monday 30 March to Friday 3 April to facilitate preparation for the remote delivery of curriculum in Term 2 (teaching and learning from home). Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) developed Alternative Education Provision (AEP) which was enacted following the Queensland Government's decision for schools to operate under a home-based learning model for the first five weeks of Term 2 (20 April to 22 May).

In the context of significant change for BCE schools, the importance of connecting with students and getting their feedback and ideas on what they need during this time, presented a significant opportunity for BCE to 'hear' the voice of students. To engage as many students as possible, the BCE Student Voice initiative led by the Professional Standards and Student Protection Team, in collaboration with the Student Voice Consultants and Student Voice Advocates, conducted the *School Over the Coming Months* survey. The survey was distributed to schools who expressed an interest in participating in this Student Voice initiative.

Purpose

The purpose of the survey was to give BCE students an opportunity to share their views about COVID-19 and learning from home, to identify what is working well, and contribute to improving students' learning-from-home experience. This document provides an overview of key findings from the survey.

Survey Categories

Information was gathered about the following topics.

Learning from
home

Student safety,
support & wellbeing

Engagement of
student voice in
planning

Snapshot

The *School Over the Coming Months* survey gave BCE students an opportunity to share their views about their COVID-19 world and learning from home; identify what is working well for them and give feedback to contribute to improving students' experience of learning.

Who Participated?

Gender



What students identified as their top concern

1. Family's physical health (COVID) **28%**
2. Own physical health (COVID) **20%**
3. Impact on learning **20%**
4. Mental health **15%**
5. Staying connected with friends **10%**
6. Other **7%**

Concerns students have about learning from home

1 in 2 were extremely concerned about impacts on their learning

1 in 4 were concerned about staying connected with friends

1 in 4 were worried about their mental health



"Well my family is my biggest concern right now. I am worried my parents will lose their jobs."

Learning

1 in 3 students were moderately/very concerned about the following:

- their ability to understand and learn online
- not having the structure and support of learning at school
- their ability to remain engaged in learning.



76% of students felt they had good access to a device and **68%** reported that they had reliable internet.

"I feel my school is doing everything they can in their power to make us have the best learning experience we can have from home."

Safety & Wellbeing

1 in 5 were moderately/very concerned about their ability to access supports for their safety or for their friend's wellbeing

1 in 2 had no concerns about their ability to access support for their wellbeing

8% were extremely concerned about their safety at home



"I know that the school will help support me but it's scarier reaching out online instead of face-to-face."

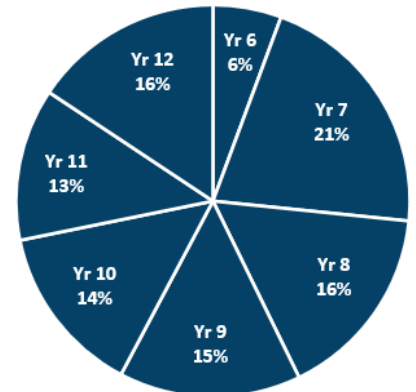
Number of Participants

1138

Year Levels: 6-12

Number of Schools

18



School Planning

Students really appreciated school staff:



Planning quickly for learning from home

Communicating this plan to students and parents

Ensuring that students had access to resources and devices

Connecting with them online

Making Changes in the school to increase health & safety

Providing care and reassurance.

"We are able to contact any needed teachers or peers at any time with usually very quick responses."

Student Input

1 in 3 felt that they had been given no/minimal opportunity to take part in finding solutions to identified challenges when learning from home

1 in 2 felt that they had the opportunity to raise their concerns about learning from home

1 in 2 felt that they had no/minimal opportunity to participate in school planning about learning from home

"The school should be sending out more surveys to students to gauge what they want rather than making final decisions without student input...asking students openly for their ideas or concerns, and possibly setting up a party where students can discuss and contribute their ideas."

Key feedback from students

Learning from Home

1. Maintain the school and classroom structure as much as possible whilst still building in flexibility
2. Use consistent learning platforms
3. More engagement and connection – videos, discussions, and games
4. Scheduled, regular individual and groups check-ins with students
5. Identify back up plans if systems 'go down'

Student Voice

1. Seek student input about online learning & teaching approaches
2. Provide different options for students to share their thoughts & ideas. Seek feedback regularly
3. Support student-led initiatives to enhance student learning, safety & wellbeing
4. Continue formal methods for engaging student voice
5. Report back

Safety & Wellbeing

1. Clearly communicate the school support plan
2. Develop students' skills needed to learn online (supporting them to structure their time at home & teaching them wellbeing skills to build their capacity to cope)
3. Promote a sense of community & social connection
4. Offer a range of ways to connect with a Guidance Counsellor based on individual circumstances
5. Facilitate activities to keep people connected & healthy
6. Partner with students to develop creative ways to promote wellbeing

School Planning/ Practical Support

1. Be transparent & communicate regularly with both students & parents, using a range of methods
2. Be clear about the plan when most students return to school
3. Maintain safe practices like social distancing (staggered attendance & lunch breaks) and hygiene (access to soap & sanitizer)

