

2022 school survey report

The voice of Australian educators

**The challenges and priorities
for education in 2022**

1,005 Education Professionals
from over 460 Australian
schools share their insights.

education
horizons



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"It has been an incredibly tough year. I have appreciated the resilience of our staff and their amazing support. I wouldn't have been able to manage all the upheaval without them."

Head of Junior Campus – VIC



04 Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to present the third *Voice of Australian Educators* survey report. It is hard to imagine a more challenging period to launch our Education Horizons schools survey!

As we enter 2022 we face continued and ever changing uncertainty as a result of the global pandemic. The full impact of this disruption on our students, educators, leaders, families and communities remains to be seen. What has been remarkable though is the absolute focus of educators on wellbeing before and during COVID-19.

This is perhaps the most interesting result of this third survey report – the absolute consistency of message coming from Australian educators.

- Leaders remain primarily focused on the wellbeing of their staff and students. Education leaders are focused on driving consistent implementation of best practice pedagogy for all students under their care.
- Teachers are still looking for the holy grail of less red tape, more time, better insights and tools for deeper wellbeing and learning engagement with each student.

- And as we ask more and more of our information systems during remote learning periods, IT teams remain focused on security and consistency across a growing number of integrated systems and applications.

The most powerful change over the last twelve months has been evidence of school adaptation to the challenges of disrupted classrooms and remote learning. This year's survey shows:

- A 22 per cent increase in the level of preparedness in schools for remote learning compared to 2020;
- An 8 per cent drop in how challenging schools found remote learning; and
- The emerging challenge of reengaging students with learning when coming back into school and the classroom.

As schools continue to adapt to COVID disruption, these challenges reinforce the core underlying focus of Australian Educators on student and staff wellbeing.

We have been honoured to have 1,005 respondents from over 460 schools around Australia complete this survey at the end of another gruelling year.



My key conclusion from these responses is that the message about what Educators need to succeed every day has not changed.

- The challenge remains for those of us who work with schools to find new ways to help educators, leaders, families and students connect better for learning.

This means using information to know and understand each learner, every day. It means helping busy school communities capture, access, communicate, report and analyse essential information about each member of their school community in real time. And it means using this information to support the deeper human connections that shape our wellbeing and learning.

Thanks again

to the 1,005 educators that shared their voice with us and I look forward to another year working with schools to help them succeed every day.



David Weickhardt
CEO, Education Horizons

Executive summary

1,005 total respondents
460+ schools represented



07

Top challenges of 2021

Major challenges by role

school leadership

Ensuring the wellbeing of staff and students (60%)

teaching and learning leadership

Managing COVID-19 related disruption (46%)

teaching and learning

Too little non-classroom time for planning, PD, marking and other tasks (52%)

school management

Managing and supporting staff (38%)

school administration

Ensuring the school community receives relevant communications (39%)

technology

Managing security risks (55%)

Note: Further analysis of challenges is provided later in this report – organised by role type.

Top priorities for 2022

Top priorities by role

school leadership

Ensuring the wellbeing of staff and students (57%)

teaching and learning

Improving my workflow to reduce workload (47%)

technology

Improving the integration between existing systems (57%)

teaching and learning leadership

Consistently embedding best-practice pedagogy across the school (61%)

school management and administration

Streamlining administrative tasks (50%)

Overall top priority for schools

Student and staff wellbeing is the top priority ahead of academic outcomes

72%

selected "Student and staff wellbeing" as their schools top priority for 2022.

COVID-19 key findings

COVID-19 related disruption

85%

of respondents found dealing with COVID-19 related disruption to be challenging to some degree

91%

of respondents felt their school was between 'fairly prepared' and 'extremely prepared' to transition to remote learning

28%

rated the transition to remote learning as difficult (4 or 5 out of 5)

38%

rated the transition to remote learning as not difficult (1 or 2 out of 5)

54%

of respondents selected 'Keeping students engaged with learning' as one of their top challenges

51%

of respondents selected 'Managing ongoing COVID-19 uncertainty' as the most challenging part of returning to face-to-face learning

Top priorities for schools

Student and staff wellbeing most common priority ahead of academic outcomes

All respondents were asked to choose the top three priorities for their school in 2022 from a list.

Student and staff wellbeing	72%
Academic outcomes	60%
Parent and community engagement	43%
Individualising learning	37%
Teacher professional development	26%
Upgrading technology and resources	24%
Financial sustainability	22%

COVID-19 disruption and remote learning



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COVID-19 disruption and remote learning

How challenging did you find dealing with COVID-19 related disruption

This year all respondents answered specific questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

15%

Not challenging

55%

Somewhat
challenging

30%

Challenging

"Teachers in general seem to have managed the COVID situation very well, with little thanks or acknowledgement. Most teachers don't look for thanks but would be grateful for more planning/marking time and somewhat reduced face to face hours."

Patricia, Head Teacher – NSW

COVID-19 disruption and remote learning

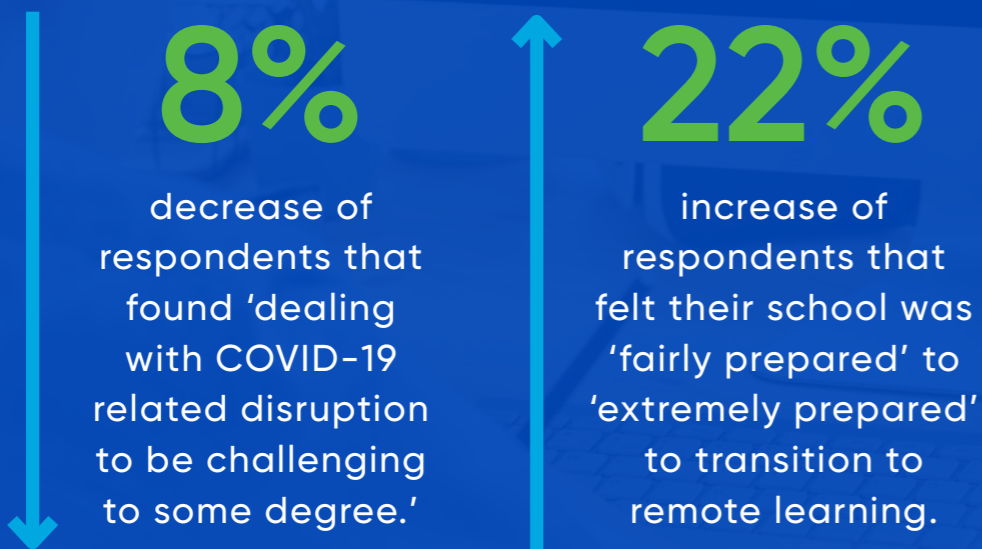
Were there any new work practices implemented during remote learning that you'd like to expand or keep permanently

Respondents could select any that applied. Many respondents noted that these were no longer new work practises, after implementing many of the options in 2020.

Using online learning platforms to deliver online or blended learning in the classroom	48%
Technology enabling students to submit work online	38%
Online assessments	30%
Phone or online student/parent engagement	29%
Greater focus on individual student wellbeing	27%
Giving students options to show evidence of their learning	26%
No	16%

85% found dealing with COVID-19 related disruption to be challenging to some degree.

In general, the transition to remote learning was less difficult in 2021 than in 2020.



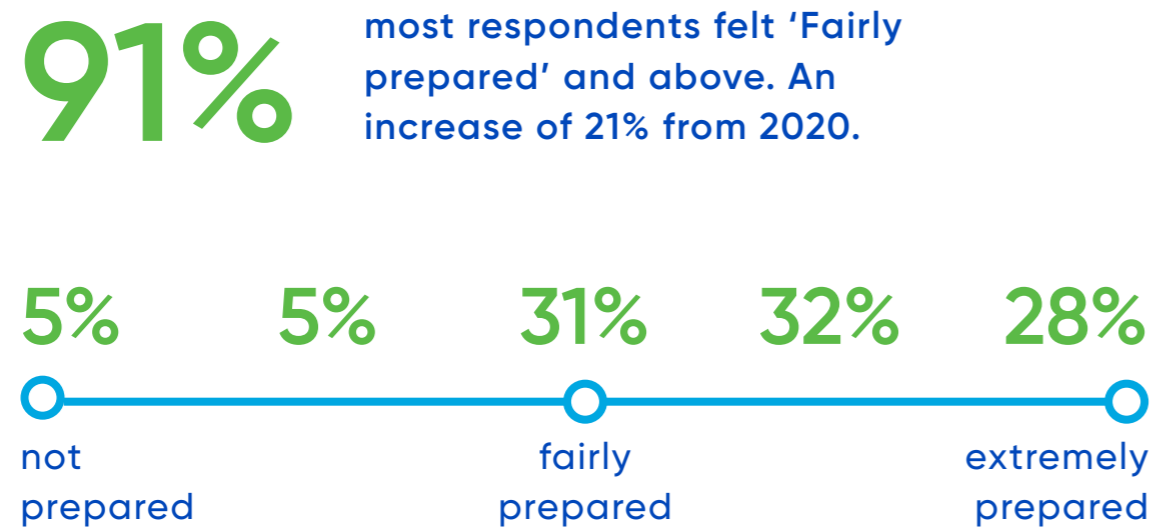
Experience with remote learning

86% of respondents worked at a school that delivered remote learning due to COVID-19 in 2021. These respondents answered specific questions about remote learning.

COVID-19 disruption and remote learning

How prepared was your school to transition to remote learning

Respondents chose a rating out of 5 indicated how prepared their school was.



Teachers reported the lowest level of preparedness, with 14% selecting a rating of below 'Fairly prepared', compared to all other 4%-8% roles selecting below 'Fairly prepared'. However this disparity was less than reported in the previous years' survey.

91% most respondents felt 'Fairly prepared' and above. An increase of 21% from 2020.

COVID-19 disruption and remote learning

How difficult was the transition to remote learning at your school

Respondents rated how difficult they found the transition to remote learning – on a scale of 1 (Not difficult) to – 5 (Very difficult).



The transition to remote learning was less difficult than reported in 2020.

8% Less people reported the transition to remote learning as being difficult (4+) compared to those who selected 'not difficult' rating (1-2). In 2020 it was the opposite with more people selecting 'difficult' compared to those selecting 'not difficult'.

IT managers found the transition to be the least difficult with 0% giving a rating of 'Very difficult', compared to 7% of teachers

COVID-19 disruption and remote learning

What were the most challenging parts of remote learning

Respondents could select up to THREE responses. Student engagement was noted as a major challenge in 2020, so we added additional responses related to this challenge. Overall, the changes in responses from 2020 to 2021 reflect that whilst people were more experienced and prepared, engaging with students was still a challenge.

	2021	2020
Keeping students engaged with learning	54%	N/A
Staying connected with students learning remotely	38%	51%
Tracking the level of student engagement	28%	N/A
Supporting students with pre-existing or emerging mental health concerns, behavioural challenges, or disabilities	28%	34%
Delivering learning to students with limited internet access	26%	38%
Ensuring all learning abilities were catered for	26%	37%
Delivering engaging remote learning content	24%	N/A
Upskilling on new technology	19%	36%
Communicating effectively with students and parents	17%	25%
Tracking how teachers were delivering the teaching and learning program	10%	11%
Safety concerns for students (home environment/online safety)	7%	9%

Other challenges mentioned in the comments:

"Hybrid learning causing workload increase."

"Technology access for some families."

"Practical subjects not transferring to an online learning environment."

"Being a parent to school age kids and a teacher."

"Staying connected as a community."

"It's extremely challenging leading a school though very rewarding. COVID has been a constant challenge. There are not enough hours in the day to get everything done."

Principal - NSW

COVID-19 disruption and remote learning

What are the most challenging parts of the return to face-to-face learning

A new question for this year's survey.

Managing ongoing COVID-19 uncertainty	51%
Managing student wellbeing during and post lockdown	41%
Managing student engagement with learning	36%
Supporting staff wellbeing during return to onsite	31%
Managing student and visitor movement	20%
Managing parent expectations	20%
Navigating hybrid/remote learning	20%
Managing density and capacity limits	20%
Capturing vaccination status of visitors/students/parents/staff	10%

Several other challenges emerged from comments in this question including: student re-engagement, gaps in learning, more challenging student behaviour, managing COVID-19 protocols – e.g. masks, capacity limits, social distancing, Teacher burnout.

COVID-19 disruption and remote learning

What would make delivering remote learning easier for you in the future

There were 275 responses to this optional comment field, themes include:

- More access to technology and devices for learning
- More training on systems for teachers, parents and students
- Better parental engagement
- Having shared resources, to reduce each teacher or school creating their own
- One system or reduced systems that integrate with one another and are easy to use, access and encourage collaboration
- More time to prepare

COVID-19 disruption: featured comments

"To have Department facilitators implement resource hub activities to relieve the burden on classroom teachers who were working around the clock. Free access to paid resources for families with children who have diverse learning needs."

"More professional development on how to best support student learning and wellbeing during online classes (i.e. data supported strategies)."

"I think we need to engage with parents next to upskill them to support their children i.e. zoom, google classroom, user online safety."

"Fully interactive two-way system of class interaction. Students upload work and teachers provide feedback on the work they deliver. All in one online class environment."

"We were well equipped with tech access and knowledge of staff, students and parents, however many families were unequipped to manage their children's behaviour and participation in learning activities (e.g. students not attending all lessons)."

"Access to quality ICT resources and connectivity for all families, and an agreed platform for delivery of remote learning. Upskilling of all teachers for online capability."

"Easier cheaper and faster internet services for families in rural and remote areas. More devices, some families have one or two devices for all the children and adults to use."

School leadership findings

"The main challenge was connecting staff with each other as they just longed to be back in the classroom."

Principal - NSW

School leaders represented
12% of total respondents

24

School leadership

Top three challenges during 2021

School leaders selected their top three challenges from 2021. The top three responses were:

- 1 Ensuring the wellbeing of staff and students (60%)
- 2 Managing COVID-19 related disruption (54%)
- 3 Keeping students engaged* (33%)

*New response option for 2021 survey.

School leadership

Most challenging areas for leadership

School leaders rated how challenging they find common tasks and areas of responsibility. The top three areas rated as challenging or somewhat challenging were:

95%

Balancing diverse student needs with pressure to achieve academic excellence

85%

Having a consistent approach to teaching and learning across the school

82%

Giving parents insight into their child's school experience

"It has been quite a challenge at times throughout the year. It has left principals exhausted."

School leadership

Top challenges your teachers faced

School leaders were asked what the top challenges of their teachers were.

School Leaders say:

1

Managing wellbeing and stress (59%)

2

Managing student mental health and/or behavioural challenges (41%)

3

Accommodating multiple learning levels within the one classroom (40%)

Teachers say:

1

Too little non-classroom time for planning, PD, marking and other tasks (52%)

2

An overloaded curriculum (47%)

3

Managing your own wellbeing and stress (40%)

School leadership

Top three priorities for 2022

School leaders selected their top three priorities for 2022.

The top three responses were:

1

Ensuring the wellbeing of staff and students (57%)

2

Consistently embedding best-practice pedagogy across the school (48%)

3

Improving academic outcomes (29%)

School leadership

What will your school invest in during 2022

Respondents could select any that applied to their school. Once again Staff professional development and building works are the most common areas of investment for schools.

Staff Professional Development	67%
Building works	41%
Implementation or update to Learning Management System	27%
New equipment or resources	24%
Improving IT infrastructure	23%
e-learning/online learning systems	22%
Improvement or upgrade to school's systems	20%
Implementation or update to Student Information System	16%
Asset and facilities management	15%
Initiatives to reduce environmental impact	12%
Other	11%
Implementation or update to finance/payroll system	9%
Implementation or update to Asset Management System	2%

Themes from the comment section:

Several respondents mentioned challenges around recruiting and retaining staff especially due to staff burnout. Which reinforces the need for more focussed wellbeing and professional development.

"It has been really difficult to provide Professional Development in 2021, with teachers' workload excessive doing online teaching. As a leadership team we have scaled back immensely and will continue to monitor staff wellbeing back on site."

"Managing staff burnout is a real issue in our school."

Teaching and learning leadership findings

"Too many stake holders placing demands on curriculum so that it is far too overloaded. Covering the essentials is almost impossible. More time needed to reflect and review so knowledge is retained."

Bronwyn, Deputy Principal - WA

Teaching and Learning Leaders represent **14%** of total respondents

31

Teaching and learning leadership

Top challenges from 2021

Teaching and Learning Leaders selected their top three challenges from 2021.

1

Managing COVID-19 related disruption (46%)

2

Consistently embedding best-practice pedagogy across the school (35%)

3

Managing diverse learning and behavioural needs within the classroom (34%)

Teaching and learning leadership

Most challenging areas for leadership

Teaching and learning leaders rated how challenging they find common tasks and areas of responsibility. The top three areas rated as challenging or somewhat challenging were:



“Building teacher capacity and getting best practices to be shared across each class [and] throughout the school would be ideal”

Iris, Leader - VIC

Teaching and learning leadership

Top three priorities for 2022

Teaching and Learning Leaders were asked what the top three priorities are for 2022. The top three answers were:

- 1 Consistently embedding best-practice pedagogy across the school (61%)
- 2 Improving teacher workflow to reduce workload (50%)
- 3 Identifying and supporting students at educational risk* (35%)

*New response option for 2021 survey.

Teaching and learning findings

"A genuine balance between improvement and realistic time demands, not just work-life balance rhetoric."

Teacher - VIC

Teachers represented
39% of total respondents

35

Teaching and learning

Top challenges from 2021

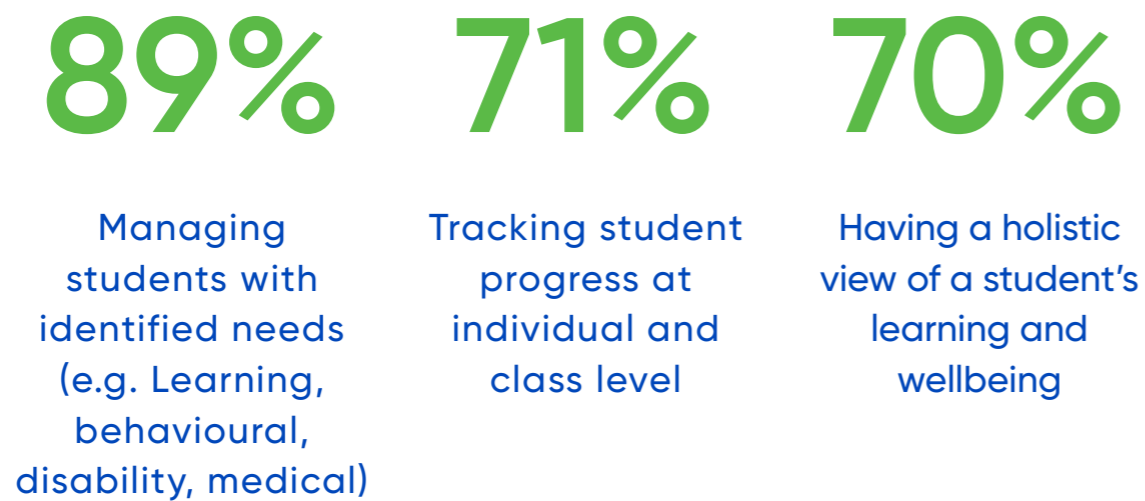
Teaching respondents selected their top three challenges from 2021. The top five answers are presented rather than the top three to provide more insight into the type of challenges that teachers face.

- 1 Too little non-classroom time for planning, PD, marking and other tasks (52%)
- 2 An overloaded curriculum (47%)
- 3 Managing your own wellbeing and stress (40%)
- 4 Managing student mental health and/or behavioural challenges (33%)
- 5 Accommodating multiple learning levels within the one classroom (33%)

Teaching and learning

Most challenging areas

Respondents rates how challenging they find common tasks and areas of responsibility. The top three areas rated as challenging or somewhat challenging were:



"We are losing too many excellent teachers from assessment overload and accountability. Teachers have little energy left for preparing excellent classroom experiences because they are overworked and underpaid."

Teacher - NSW

Teaching and learning

Top priorities for 2022

Teaching respondents selected their top priorities for 2022.

- 1 Improving my workflow to reduce workload (48%)
- 2 Incorporating best-practice pedagogical strategies into my teaching practice (39%)
- 3 Increasing collaboration with colleagues (28%)
- 4 Managing student wellbeing (28%)

School management findings

This section includes the responses of School Managers (8%) and School Administrators (12%)

39

School management

Top challenges from 2021

School Management and School administration staff selected their top challenges from 2021. The top four responses were included as the results were close between the 3rd and 4th challenge.

- 1 Managing and supporting staff (37%)
- 2 Ensuring the school community receives relevant communication (33%)
- 3 Building an engaged school community (31%)
- 4 Attracting new students (30%)

School management

Most challenging areas

Respondents rated how challenging they find common tasks and areas of responsibility. The top three areas rated as challenging or somewhat challenging were:

73%

Engaging the parent community

70%

Capturing all future student data and touchpoints in one place (enquiry to application)

70%

Maintaining accurate student records during whole student lifecycle (application to graduation)

"Two years of lockdowns has had a significant impact on community wellbeing (staff, students, parents) as well as the financial attractiveness of a high fee school thereby putting pressure on enrolments."

Fiona, Development and Marketing Manager - VIC

School management

Most challenging areas in finance

Respondents involved in finance rated how challenging common tasks are. The top three areas rated as challenging or somewhat challenging were:

78%

Managing your school's budget

75%

Meeting fundraising goals

68%

Generating insightful finance reports

"Building confidence in Philanthropic activities in a globally uncertain economic time has been challenging."

School management

Top three priorities for 2022

Respondents selected their top priorities for 2022, the top three responses were:

1

Streamlining administrative tasks (50%)

2

Improving data management of student and staff records (47%)

3

Increasing enrolments (45%)

School management

What will your school invest in during 2022

Building works	52%
Improving IT infrastructure	38%
Improvement or upgrade to school's systems	30%
Staff Professional Development	24%
New equipment or resources	23%
Implementation or update to Student Information System	22%
Initiatives to reduce environmental impact	21%
Asset and facilities management	16%
Implementation or update to Learning Management System	12%
e-learning/online learning systems	12%
Implementation or update to finance/payroll system	10%
Implementation or update to asset management system	8%
Other	8%

2020 Survey Differences

In 2020, Staff Professional Development ranked the top investment priority at 54%.

School management

Enrolment growth expected in 2022

	2020 Survey	2021 Survey
Low (<5%)	38%	42%
Medium (6-10%)	38%	35%
High (>10%)	8%	13%
None	6%	5%
Unsure	10%	3%
Negative (reduction in enrolments)	N/A	2%

Technology findings

“Managing integrations between our multiple systems remains a challenge. Moving data and ensuring it is up to date.”

Technology staff represented
14% of total respondents

47

Technology

Top three challenges during 2021

Technology staff selected their top challenges from 2021. The top three responses were:

- 1 Managing security risks (55%)
- 2 Ensuring data security standards are met (42%)
- 3 Delivering services needed, within budget (33%)

Technology

Most challenging areas

Respondents rated how challenging they find common tasks and areas of responsibility. The top three areas rated as challenging or somewhat challenging were:

86%

Ensuring data security standards are met

85%

Ensuring privacy standards are met

61%

Upgrading and maintaining hardware, system software and applications

Technology

Top three priorities for 2022

Technology staff selected their top priorities for 2021.

The top three responses were:

1

Improving the integration between existing systems (57%)

2

Improving cybersecurity through a range of measures (e.g. training, policies, technology changes and governance)* (54%)

3

Improving cybersecurity awareness in staff* (40%)

*New response options for 2021 Survey.

Technology

Cloud-based system vs on-premises

Respondents were asked which system they generally prefer. Respondents also commented that it depended on the system.

Cloud-based systems

On-premise system

45%

2020 Survey

31%

2020 Survey

↓ 33%

2021 Survey

↑ 42%

2021 Survey

Note: Other: 18%, Unsure: 7%

Technology

Technology budget in 2022

↑ 33%

of schools have an increased technology budget

↓ 16%

of schools have a reduced technology budget

	2020 Survey	2021 Survey
Large increase +20%	9%	11%
Small increase +10%	19%	22%
No significant change +-5%	32%	29%
Small decrease -10%	14%	10%
Large decrease -20%	4%	6%
No	16%	

Note: 23% of respondents were unsure.

Technology

System integrations

77%

Schools with integration challenges

Which statement best describes the status of systems/technology used at your school:

68%

We have multiple discrete systems that meet functional requirements and integration challenges exist.

23%

We have fully integrated systems that meet functional security, privacy and all school requirements across school management, teaching and learning and finance, payroll, asset management.

10%

We have multiple discrete systems that do not fully meet functional requirements of the school.

Technology

Which systems are you considering changing in 2022

74%

of respondents indicate they are considering changing from between 1 to 9 systems in 2022.



An increase of

4%

Average number of systems they are considering changing: 2

School Management	38%
Student Information	35%
Excursion/permission forms	33%
Finance	29%
HR Management	29%
Payroll	28%
Learning Management	25%
e-Learning/Online Learning System	20%
Community collaboration	16%

Note: None: 15%, Other: 14%

Research demographics

1,005 total respondents

460+ schools represented*

(*Approximate number because School Name was optional)



55

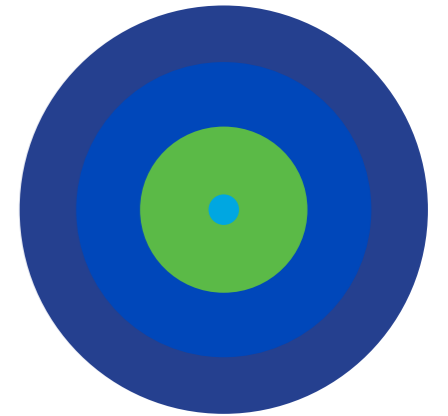
Research demographics

School Sector

39%

Independent Schools

1% International
20% Catholic
39% Independent
39% Government



School Type

41%

Secondary

41% Secondary
40% Combined
16% Primary
3% Special

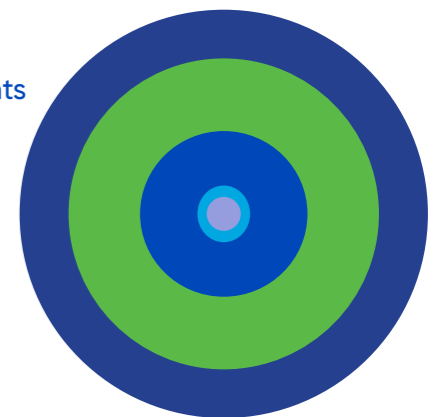


School Size

78%

500+ Students

Number of Students
40% 1001+
38% 501-1000
19% 101-500
2% 51-100
2% <50



57

Research demographics

Roles represented

39%

Teacher

12%

School Leadership

14%

Teaching and Learning Leadership

14%

Technology/ICT

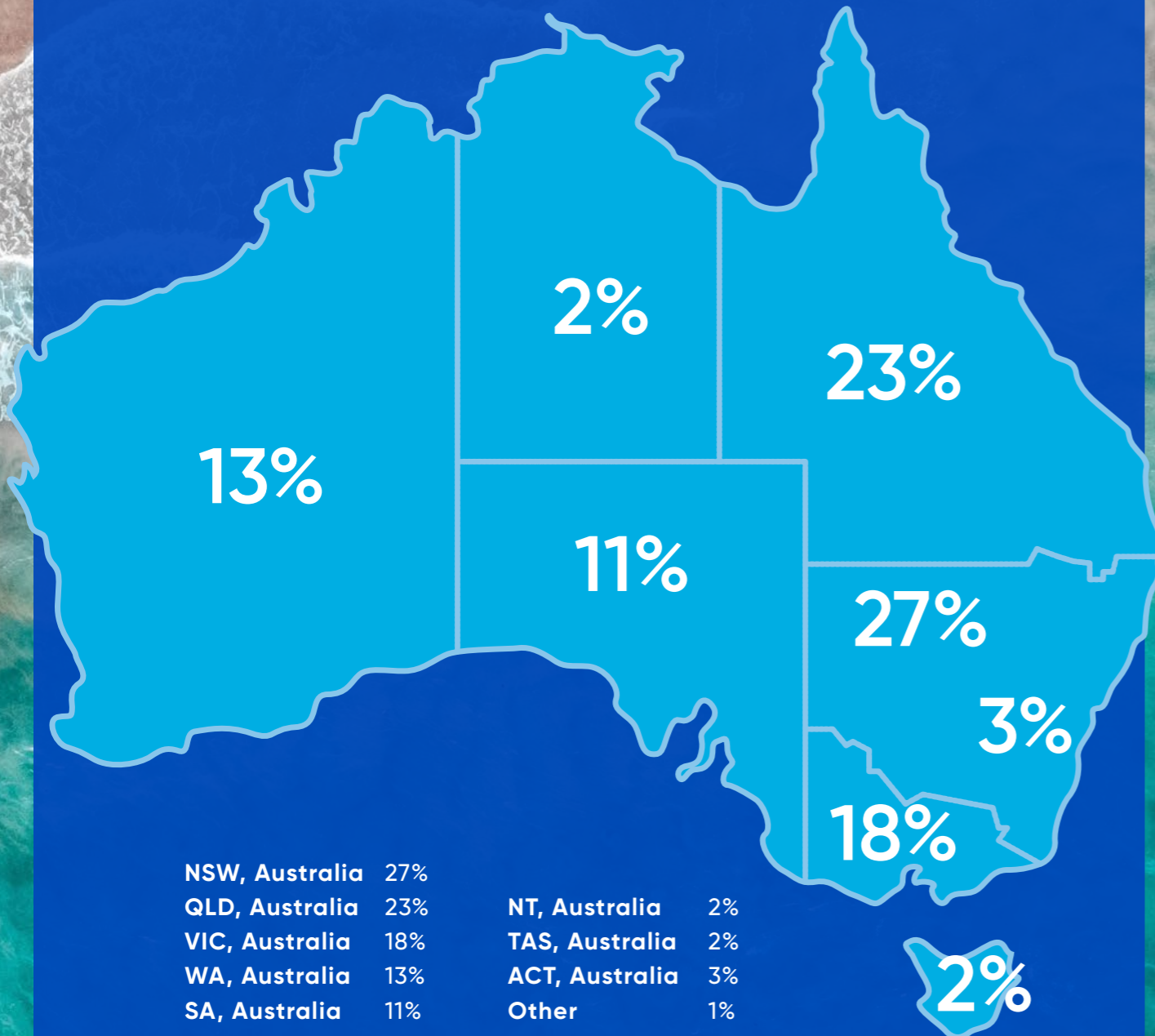
12%

School Administration

8%

School Management

Research demographics



Research demographics

Role categories

School Leadership:

Principal/Head of School/Head of Campus

Teaching:

Senior Teacher/Leading Teacher/Classroom Teacher

Teaching and Learning Leadership:

Deputy Principal/Faculty Head/Head of Department/Head of Curriculum/Head of Teaching and Learning/Head of e-Learning

Technology/ICT:

ICT Director/IT Manager/ICT Support/Administrator

School Administration:

HR/Administration/Finance and Accounting Staff/Marketing

School Management:

Business Manager/Registrar/Bursar/CFO

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