



Study shows high levels of public trust and value for Australian teachers

Ahead of World Teachers Day, new research from Monash University has found the role of teachers continues to be recognised as important and influential in developing students' social and emotional development - which became even more important during COVID-19 remote learning.

The nationwide study led by Dr Amanda Heffernan, Senior Lecturer in Leadership, from the School of Education, Culture and Society in Monash University's Faculty of Education, found a substantial majority of the nationally-representative sample of respondents - 72 per cent - trusted that teachers' work was in the best interests of students.

The increase in public appreciation of teachers' work was a direct result of COVID-19 and the shift to remote learning. Australian families reported merit in exploring more flexible learning arrangements into the future.

The report also found that 76 per cent of respondents agreed that teachers in Australia cared for the wellbeing of their students.

Around half of the 1,012 respondents agreed that teachers were respected by parents (55 per cent) and students (51 per cent). In addition, 58 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that teachers in Australia prepare students well for life after school.

"The findings from the study reflect a high level of public trust for Australian teachers and an awareness that teachers care for the wellbeing of their students. It's also clear that teachers continue to play an influential role in developing the social and emotional skills of students and this aspect of a teachers role should continue to shape the discussions around the teaching profession more broadly," said Dr Heffernan.

The report identified that 74 per cent of the public valued their past teachers and were able to articulate a positive influence that a teacher had on their lives. Efforts to continue to acknowledge the broad positive influences of teachers' work will be important to support overall teacher retention.

When asked about what skills should be taught in school, 76.5 per cent of the public felt that problem solving skills were most valued, followed by social and emotional intelligence (67.2 per cent), critical information literacy (65.8 per cent), future career preparedness (65.6 per cent) and resilience (65.5 per cent).



“The findings show that the public’s emphasis on skills that would prepare young people for a changing world is reflective of the importance of preparing young people for a rapidly changing future,” added Dr Heffernan.

Responses also showed that members of the public were aware of the complexity of teachers’ work and the many challenges faced by teachers. The majority of responses recognised these challenges in the form of student disengagement with learning (80 per cent), mental health and wellbeing of selves or colleagues (85 per cent), complex student needs and diverse needs in classrooms (84 per cent) and administrative demands on teachers’ time (88 per cent).

When looking at the impact of COVID-19 on the public perceptions of Australian schooling, 41.6 per cent of respondents said their perceptions of teachers’ work had improved as a direct result of COVID-19.

A substantial majority of respondents, 91.9 per cent also indicated the importance of students from low socio-economic households to be provided with subsidised or free access to laptops and other devices necessary to complete their schoolwork at home.

The study also found there was perceived merit in a hybrid or more flexible approach to schooling with 76.6 per cent of participants in support of rethinking the way schools operate in the future by creating a more flexible model where students attend school but have the option to take some classes online.

Over half of the respondents, 56.7 per cent, believed the shift to remote learning during COVID-19 was successful in Australia.

The report, titled: *‘Perceptions of Australian schooling: What matters in 2021,’* examined the perceptions of over 1,012 Australians, to develop a deeper understanding of effective teaching and schooling, while taking into consideration the current challenges faced by teachers and schools.

Dean of the Faculty of Education at Monash University, Professor Viv Ellis, said the report offers a better understanding of the public’s perceptions of teaching and schooling in Australia.

“The findings of this study provide us with nuanced insights into the current state of education across Australia. The study identified the significant and influential role of teachers in supporting students socially and emotionally and this aspect should be centred in future discussions about the teaching profession more broadly. The findings will also contribute to



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evidence-based policy-making and inform public discussion and awareness about policy and practice,” said Professor Ellis.

There are approximately 288,294 teachers working with close to four million students in 9,542 schools across Australia. Teachers play a vital role in the community and they have far-reaching influence.

For more information and to download a copy of the report, please visit:

<https://www.monash.edu/thank-your-teacher>

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