

Strathfield Girls High School

Learning from home

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation



Learning from home journey	Challenges to overcome
Getting ready for disruptions to face-to-face teaching - Developed an online learning policy for staff and students - Every staff member received a touchscreen laptop computer with a stylus pen Learning from home 95% of students learnt from home from 24 March 2020 - All lessons were delivered online and followed the regular school timetable - Staff chose whether they worked at home or school - Year 12 mid-year exams continued as per the existing timetable; the Years 7 to 11 assessment schedule was modified Transition back to face-to-face teaching - Year 12 students returned to school full time from 11 May 2020 - Years 7 to 11 students attended school one day per week between 11-22 May 2020 - Staff continued to work flexibly until all students returned to face-to-face teaching full time from 25 May 2020	Ensuring staff had the skills and equipment to deliver online learning: Staff had varying levels of digital literacy and many teachers did not initially have access to the hardware they needed to deliver high-quality online learning. Managing student and parental expectations: The school has an aspirational student and parent community who were concerned about how the disruption to face-to-face teaching would impact academic outcomes. Managing teacher workloads: The shift to online learning created extra work, particularly in terms of monitoring wellbeing, providing feedback, learning how to use online tools, and adapting existing programs.
	School context Strathfield Girls High School is a comprehensive secondary school in the inner west of Sydney with around 1,100 students. More than 90% of students come from a language background other than English and the school has a FOEI¹ of 54. Strathfield Girls High School has a reputation for academic excellence and high achievement in the creative and performing arts. The school prides itself on providing a nurturing, quality and holistic education that empowers girls to become confident, responsible and successful citizens of the 21st century.

¹ Family Occupation and Education Index – a school-level index of educational disadvantage with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 50. Higher values indicate greater levels of need.

What has worked to maintain learning continuity

Ensuring teachers felt supported to deliver high-quality online lessons

School leaders at Strathfield Girls High School decided that the best way to ensure continuity of learning was to move all lessons online. An online learning policy was developed that provided clear guidance for teachers on how to deliver 'live' online lessons. These lessons were expected to be as close as possible to regular face-to-face lessons, delivered according to the school timetable, and recorded and posted online for students to access at any time. Teachers were encouraged to have their videos turned on and to share their screens so students could experience real time explanations, annotations and worked examples.

To ensure teachers had the equipment they needed to deliver high-quality online lessons, the school purchased touchscreen laptop computers with stylus pens for every staff member. While the school's desktop computers could theoretically have been

loaned out to teachers, these computers did not have the capabilities required (such as cameras and stylus pens) to deliver online lessons effectively. For example, teachers felt that they would have been unable to include real time whiteboard sessions (that included worked examples and annotations) in their online lessons without a stylus pen.

The unplanned and rapid move to online learning meant there was no time to roll out extensive professional learning about delivering high-quality online lessons. Instead, the school drew on their collective expertise to build capacity across the entire staff and upskill teachers. Some faculties felt that in-person professional collaboration was so effective in helping them develop competence and confidence in delivering online lessons that they elected to continue working from school even when they were given the option to work from home.

Providing students and parents with as much certainty as possible

Students and parents were concerned about the impact of the unprecedented disruption on student learning and achievement. To overcome these concerns, the school developed an online learning policy and clearly communicated all aspects of their learning-from-home approach, including:

- How and when to access online learning: All students had access to online lessons according to the regular school timetable, and students received an access code for each subject.
- Student expectations: Students were expected to be on time and participate in all lessons. Teachers kept track of student attendance and engagement.
- Teacher availability: Teachers were available to respond to students and parents, outside of timetabled lessons, between 8:45am and 3:10pm on school days only.
- Accessing extra support: 'How to' guides were published on the school website, and students were welcome to contact their teachers and arrange a time to come to school for additional assistance with their learning.
- Assessment tasks: Social distancing measures were put in place so Year 12 could continue with their mid-year exams. A Year 12 student survey showed overwhelming support for the mid-year exams to go ahead as scheduled and the school reported 100% attendance. Years 7 to 11 assessment tasks were modified and submitted online with all students receiving handwritten feedback in a timely manner.
- Accessing the latest information: The school communicated all essential information promptly via email and through their website.

Using resources strategically to manage teacher workloads

School leaders were conscious that transitioning students to an online learning model so quickly had resulted in a significant increase to teachers' workloads. Teachers, irrespective of existing digital proficiency, needed to learn how to deliver high-quality online lessons in a short timeframe, find new ways to monitor student engagement and wellbeing, and dedicate extra time to new administrative tasks.

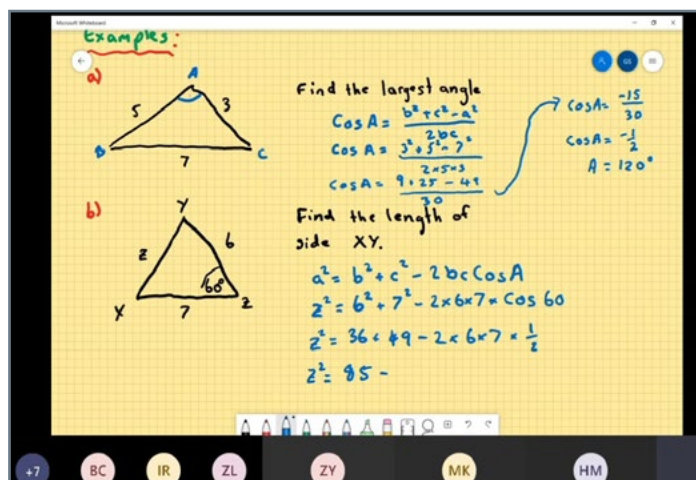
The school temporarily refined the roles of non-teaching staff to help teachers manage the additional workload related to student wellbeing and engagement. For example, SAOs² called parents regularly to identify issues that prevented students

from engaging effectively in online learning. Each SAO was allocated half a Year and recorded their findings in a whole-school engagement register. Teachers also added information about student attendance and participation in lessons, and the Community Liaison Officer managed the register and notified school leaders of concerns about particular students. The school also utilised office staff to reduce the administrative burden on teachers so they could spend more time focusing on teaching and learning. For example, office staff scanned and emailed teacher comments to students so they would continue receiving detailed, timely and handwritten feedback.

² School Administrative Officer

Appendix

Real time whiteboard sessions in mathematics



Video message from staff to students



“We wanted to make it [online learning] feel as normal as possible for the girls because it was hard enough for them, and they really succeeded. They got used to it, they managed their time well, they were able to come online for lessons and we trained them well so they could post their work.”

Greg Smith, Head Teacher Mathematics

Online Year 11 Visual Arts lesson



Year 11 Visual Arts painting instructional video



“We needed to contact every student. The office roles changed. Every SAO was contacting parents asking, “How are you going? How’s your daughter coping? Are there any issues?”. That allowed us very very quickly to deal with all the issues.”

Angela Lyris, Principal

More information about Strathfield Girls High School's learning-from-home approach, including instructional videos and student work samples, is available on the school's [Sway page](#).

CESE would like to thank the Principal, Angela Lyris; Deputy Principals, Sandhya Maharaj and Melinda Wong; Head Teacher Mathematics, Greg Smith and English Teacher, Nicholas Whittard for their valuable input to this snapshot.