

## 4.3 Teaching and learning that is interesting

Understanding teacher practices from the perspective of students provides important insight into how pedagogy impacts student engagement, motivation and learning behaviours. The pedagogy used within the classroom frames student engagement – with students as passive recipients of instruction in didactic approaches or as empowered participants in active approaches.<sup>101</sup> Active learning increases the participation of students and is an essential component of effective teaching and learning. Providing opportunities for students to learn through a variety of experiences, including through interaction and discussion with peers, increases engagement with learning. Teachers can also use various methods of teaching, adapting their approach so that students are supported to reach learning goals.

Student opinions on the teaching methods they prefer provide important insight into the conditions and contexts for engagement.<sup>102 103</sup>

### Survey findings

- 62 per cent of Year 7 to Year 12 students agreed with the statement that ‘Teachers try new and different ways to teach’.
- 42 per cent of Year 7 to Year 12 students disagreed with the statement that ‘Teachers are too strict in this school’. The remainder (58%) was either undecided or agreed with this.
- 1 in 2 students who reported that they don’t like school said that this is because they ‘don’t like the way that [I’m] being taught’.

In the Year 7 to Year 12 survey, participating students were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements relating to teaching methods and learning.

In regard to innovation in teaching and preparedness to help, nearly two-thirds of students agreed with the statements that at their school ‘Teachers try new and different ways to teach us’ (62.4%) and that ‘Teachers go out of their way to help students’ (61.2%). Around 15 per cent of students disagreed with both of these statements (16.0% and 13.3% respectively).

In regard to rules and strictness, 17 per cent of students agreed that teachers in their school are too strict and 25 per cent said that the rules in their school are too strict.

**Table 4.8: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students agreeing or disagreeing with selected statements about their school and teachers**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Teachers try new and different ways to teach us	18.1	44.3	21.6	9.4	6.6
Teachers go out of their way to help students	15.3	45.9	25.6	9.6	3.7
Teachers are too strict in this school	5.7	11.3	40.9	32.9	9.1
The rules in this school are too strict	8.1	17.1	30.4	34.4	10.0

Teaching pedagogy and individual approach were critical factors for students who reported not liking school. One-half of these students said they don’t like school because of ‘the way that [I’m] being taught’.

Many students made learning-related comments in response to some of the open narrative questions included in the survey (‘What do you most enjoy about school?’ and ‘Think about teachers you like. What do you like about them?’).

Overall, Year 7 to Year 12 students were less likely than Year 3 to Year 6 to speak of an innate enjoyment of learning new things and instead spoke about their preference for teachers who made learning more interesting, enjoyable and fun and did not put too much pressure on students. Students also asked for more hands-on activities and new and different ways of learning:

*“[Teachers who] do lots of fun activities like [...] play bingo to help our vocabulary. They try to make learning fun and enjoyable.”*

*“[Teachers who] don’t apply pressure to understand the subject [...] they try other ways of teaching the information to help it become better understood.”*

*“More choices of learning.”*

*“To include multiple and interesting ways of learning.”*

The questionnaire for Year 3 to Year 6 students did not include any specific questions about teaching methods.

## Group discussion findings

*“In Year 2 for science we made cocoa balls. I loved it because everyone got a turn at mixing the ingredients (and eating them!). I liked it because it didn’t feel like it was school but I was still learning (it was really fun).”* (Year 3 to Year 6)

*“Because you can learn about history like listening to your Elders or family members or read a book.”* (Year 3 to Year 6)

*“I really like learning when the class is fun and interesting, and when it’s not all about writing pages and pages of notes that don’t mean anything at all.”* (Year 7 to Year 12)

Within the group discussions, students were asked to consider a time when they really liked learning at school and why they liked it, what helps other students to like learning and what makes it hard for students to learn. Students across Year 3 to Year 12 said they were engaged in learning when they were having fun and were interested in what was being taught.

From the students that were asked these questions only one response from each year grouping indicated that the student/s never liked learning.

*“Never!!”* (Year 3 to Year 6)

*“School was rarely fun when learning. NO normal person would think learning might be fun.”* (Year 7 to Year 12)

Through the group discussions, several important messages about teaching methods and learning emerged:

- Students appreciated and were engaged when there was diversity in teaching methods and learning experiences, with a clear preference for interactive learning experiences. This included learning through hands-on activities, games, strategies, excursions, incursions, and involving discussion and purposeful use of technology.
- Clear explanations were consistently raised as essential for enabling engagement and minimising anxiety.
- Students wanted to be empowered to be actively involved in their learning – through active learning and choices about their learning experiences.
- Learning experiences that were meaningful and appropriately challenging were engaging and provided motivation for learning, particularly when facilitated by support for learning and experiences of success.
- Encouragement and recognition of their effort motivated students.
- Competing demands were a source of stress and made it difficult for students to promote their own health and wellbeing, which affected their learning and motivation.

Engagement with learning was hindered by learning experiences that were too easy, too difficult, repetitive or not interactive.

Learning experiences contributed significantly to student perceptions of, and engagement with, learning, school and relationships with teachers. However, some students also acknowledged their own role in learning – discussing behaviours that support and negate engagement with learning.

## Pedagogy

*“Sometimes students like to learn in all different ways but the most common one is making it fun, instead of always making notes from a PowerPoint.” (Year 7 to Year 12)*

The ways teachers taught (or teacher pedagogy) strongly influenced student interest in learning. A range of teaching methods were suggested by students across Year 3 to Year 12 to enhance their engagement with learning. Students did not advocate for a particular method but rather expressed a desire for variety.

*“I think it makes people like it more when we do things differently e.g. on our laptops or just doing stuff that we don’t normally do.” (Year 3 to Year 6)*

*“Try to make it fun and educational at the same time.” (Year 3 to Year 6)*

*“A variety of different ways to learn, instead of just writing notes from a board constantly. Instead they like:*

- *interactive learning*
- *watching relative films or documentaries for the subjects.” (Year 7 to Year 12)*

*“[It’s hard to learn when] You get textbook work/worksheets lesson after lesson (more variety).” (Year 7 to Year 12)*

There was a clear indication that learning experiences that were hands-on, interactive, enabled choice and autonomy, and were facilitated by clear explanations increased emotional and cognitive engagement with learning. Many students expressed that learning in these ways did not feel like learning or did not feel like school, and made learning enjoyable, interesting, simplified and easier to remember. Some also referred to their enjoyment of earlier years of school, such as Kindergarten and Year 1, where learning occurred predominately through play. Year 7 to Year 12 students in particular referred to earlier school years as being ‘stress-free’.

Importantly, as students explained, learning in these ways made students feel involved in their own learning, particularly when compared to more passive learning experiences.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<b>Hands-on and practical</b>	
<p><i>“Maths because I did measuring around school buildings. It helped me learn about perimeter and was fun because we physically did it.”</i></p> <p><i>“Science experiments because we get to do lots of fun and interesting activities.”</i></p> <p><i>“I liked learning at school when I was programming robots because it was ‘hands-on’ and I was good at it.”</i></p> <p><i>“I liked basketball because we learnt lots of stuff and I don’t like work and tests.”</i></p>	<p><i>“I liked it because we went outside and did an interactive roleplay (that included food) which helped us to learn easier and quicker whilst having fun.”</i></p> <p><i>“It was hands-on and interactive – not boring.”</i></p> <p><i>“Science – pracs help to fully understand ideas.”</i></p> <p><i>“Doing more intellectual thinking activities and projects.”</i></p> <p><i>“Working with machines.”</i></p>
<b>Interactions with other students</b>	
<p><i>“To be able to work in groups and to be able to share your ideas.”</i></p> <p><i>“When the teachers let us work in pairs.”</i></p> <p><i>“When in groups and with friends.”</i></p> <p><i>“I like it when we do Opti-Minds because we get to work with other students and share our ideas.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Discussing topics so we get involved and learn.”</i></p> <p><i>“Doing group work (it’s more interactive/enjoyable).”</i></p> <p><i>“I like learning when teachers make activities to interact with students more. That makes it more interesting e.g. physical activities.”</i></p> <p><i>“Discussing our learning so we remember it.”</i></p> <p><i>“Working in groups with other people when you discuss problems/issues about the topic.”</i></p>

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<b>Games and strategies</b>	
<p><i>“Games that are educational are cool because it helps people learn while having fun.”</i></p> <p><i>“I liked Year 1 because we learnt everything in songs (it helps me remember).”</i></p> <p><i>“When the work is made into games.”</i></p> <p><i>“More fun activities that simplify tricky things.”</i></p> <p><i>“Using the Split Strategy so then it doesn’t seem hard anymore.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Educational games about subject i.e. Run the River.”</i></p> <p><i>“Scavenger hunts (like the Amazing Race) as a competition as well as exam revision. It helped keep us mentally healthy (as well as physically) and was extremely helpful for revision.”</i></p> <p><i>“I like learning because in math we have an awesome teacher who makes rhymes and songs about math and work/test.”</i></p> <p><i>“Learning games, for example in humanities we played a game called ‘Treasure Island’ it was a fun way to learn about trading supply and demand.”</i></p>
<b>Excursions and incursions</b>	
<p><i>“I like some incursions and excursions because you can learn things at the same time as laughing.”</i></p> <p><i>“I loved the day we went to the Duyfken because it was fun and helped you learn about the history aboard the ship all in one.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Mayor talk, I liked it because I got a hands-on experience with what it’s like to be a town leader.”</i></p> <p><i>“When we go to excursions related to what we are learning that term.”</i></p>
<b>Purposeful use of technology</b>	
<p><i>“When they get to use technology.”</i></p> <p><i>“iPad learning apps.”</i></p> <p><i>“When the teachers put on a video to explain how to do it.”</i></p> <p><i>“When our teacher watched videos on YouTube sometimes it helps.”</i></p> <p><i>“Maths online because it helps me learn quicker by doing it online instead of worksheets all the time I think doing it online helps me enjoy maths more.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Watching documentaries/movies – easy to keep focus on and it’s fun and interesting.”</i></p> <p><i>“Lots of kids find visual learning easier or when the teacher shows a slideshow.”</i></p> <p><i>“Lessons that involve technology.”</i></p>

Not surprisingly, students outlined that it was difficult to learn when teaching methods and learning experiences were boring. Generally, practices based on didactic methods – that is, lectures, textbook work and copying notes – were considered unenjoyable by students. Such practices typically do not foster critical thinking, do not involve class or group discussions and do not empower students to be actively involved in their learning or develop self-direction.<sup>104</sup> Further, learning was also considered boring when students could not see the relevance of the work or did not feel the work catered to their learning style or ability.

The use of technology did not automatically make lessons interesting, instead students stressed that technology use must be carefully planned and be purposeful. Students in Year 7 to Year 12 also wanted choice regarding technology use as some preferred to write rather than type, whereas others had concerns about losing work.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>"No hands-on!!"</i></p> <p><i>"The teaching style."</i></p> <p><i>"When you are given big worksheets about the same things."</i></p> <p><i>"Instead of teaching us he pulls up a YouTube video and the teacher has favourites."</i></p> <p><i>"When teachers keep talking about stuff for a long time."</i></p>	<p><i>"Boring lessons with nothing entertaining or engaging."</i></p> <p><i>"Too much info at one time."</i></p> <p><i>"If teachers don't teach to your learning style."</i></p> <p><i>"Separate class according to learning style."</i></p> <p><i>"They don't understand the way it's being taught."</i></p> <p><i>"When you are doing textbook work! BORING!"</i></p> <p><i>"Lectures lasting 30 minutes."</i></p>

Feelings of stress and pressure negatively influenced student perceptions of learning. There were a range of teaching strategies and teacher practices that made students feel stressed about their learning. A lack of time, too much work and tests were all noted as creating stressful situations as students felt less able to concentrate on the task at hand. Students in Year 7 to Year 12 referred to comparisons between students or when results were made public as also creating a stressful environment.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>"Don't give you enough time."</i></p> <p><i>"Not enough time."</i></p> <p><i>"When you have a really busy schedule."</i></p> <p><i>"NAPLAN."</i></p> <p><i>"Tests with times."</i></p> <p><i>"Surprise test."</i></p>	<p><i>"Pressure from tests and projects that are due."</i></p> <p><i>"Too much stress – not enough time for homework or class work."</i></p> <p><i>"When the school work is rushed."</i></p> <p><i>"Assignments/tests at unfair times."</i></p> <p><i>"When teachers have 5 tests in one day."</i></p> <p><i>"Stress from too much homework, family, teachers and lots of tests."</i></p> <p><i>"Expectations from teachers, family and friends. As well as the fact that there is much more assignments and exams in high school."</i></p> <p><i>"When teachers intimidate students by publicly calling out scores. Makes me anxious."</i></p>

## Clear explanations

The explanations provided by teachers were identified by students across Year 3 to Year 12 as critical for learning. Clear explanations, demonstrations or examples were consistently raised as being helpful to learning as students were then enabled to engage in and complete their work.

Conversely, poor explanations or no explanations from teachers were unhelpful to learning and made learning difficult and unenjoyable. Students in Year 3 to Year 6 suggested that a lack of information led to a sense of stress and isolation, particularly when it appeared peers understood the work or instructions. In contrast, students in Year 7 to Year 12 expressed frustration.

Throughout the consultation, students emphasised the importance of appropriate and tailored support for learning. Students wanted teachers to proactively check for levels of understanding and pay attention to students who may require additional support or who may be too shy or embarrassed to ask for assistance – as discussed further in Chapter 4.2 – A supportive classroom environment. When students felt unable to complete their work, they were more likely to disengage from learning.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>“When the teachers explain things to you in an easier way to understand.”</i></p> <p><i>“Teachers explaining what to do and how to do it.”</i></p> <p><i>“Explaining how answers occur.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Woodwork, how they talk thoroughly about the project and how to do it.”</i></p> <p><i>“It was well explained, making it easily understandable.”</i></p> <p><i>“My teacher doesn’t go into confusing detail, he tells/ explains in simplest form.”</i></p>
<p><i>“It makes it hard when the teacher doesn’t explain what you have to do.”</i></p> <p><i>“They don’t understand it. Explain it too quickly.”</i></p> <p><i>“When everyone else knows how to do the work but you don’t.”</i></p> <p><i>“When the wording isn’t clear or understandable.”</i></p> <p><i>“Some teachers make it hard to work, they explain it hard.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Hard to understand.”</i></p> <p><i>“When teachers suck at explaining!!!”</i></p> <p><i>“When teachers expect you to know everything and don’t go through it.”</i></p> <p><i>“Teachers don’t explain anything properly then move on to the next lesson.”</i></p> <p><i>“Teachers explanations are sometimes very hard to comprehend.”</i></p> <p><i>“Gibberish instructions.”</i></p> <p><i>“Finding work too unclear.”</i></p> <p><i>“They are a bit shy and don’t always understand questions.”</i></p>

## Choice and autonomy

Opportunities to be autonomous and to exercise choice in their learning were important for students. Through these opportunities, students across Year 3 to Year 12 described a sense of empowerment, enthusiasm and ownership of learning. Providing students with choice can enable students to learn in ways they prefer and in subject areas they are naturally curious or interested in, increasing motivation to learn and engagement with learning. Supporting students to exercise choice in this way decreases student frustration with particular teaching methods, as noted above. In addition, students develop a sense of self-efficacy, responsibility and skills for self-directed learning.

Students also valued expressing themselves and their choices through learning tasks, directing their own learning and discussion with others.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>“The choice to do stuff.”</i></p> <p><i>“I really liked when I had really hard spelling words in Year 2 like enthusiastic and we got to choose what words were too hard or too easy.”</i></p> <p><i>“I liked it in Year 2 when we had more freedom because now I feel like we have to do stuff exactly like they tell us to.”</i></p> <p><i>“It would be good if we had a free period on Friday where we could relax, do homework and do sports.”</i></p> <p><i>“When we did narratives and you could write anything.”</i></p>	<p><i>“When I got to choose the study method/type of activities which I had to do in order to work as productively and efficiently as possible.”</i></p> <p><i>“I liked school when the subjects we did had a time limit with the level of difficulty and whether we wanted to learn. There’s no point in school if students aren’t paying attention or wanting to learn more about it.”</i></p> <p><i>“When I get to have a say in what I learn about.”</i></p> <p><i>“I like options in my learning:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>choosing what you want to do in class</i></li> <li>• <i>[in] cursive text you get to choose what subject you want to write about.”</i></li> </ul>

Within a school environment there are multiple opportunities for autonomy at varying levels of control that can be provided to students – and importantly is critical to creating a child safe environment.<sup>105</sup> Classroom management strategies, learning activities, curriculum content and school organisation are all areas in which students can contribute – and have provided valuable insight through this consultation. Supporting students to have a say in their learning increases connectedness to learning, the school and education more broadly, and enables them to learn in ways that make sense to and suit them.

## Competence, experiencing success and confidence

Students were cognitively and emotionally engaged in learning when it was appropriately challenging, they felt capable and they were supported to develop their level of competence. Students outlined they were interested in learning when they were able to complete the work, the work was easy and they understood what they were doing.

In contrast, students were less likely to enjoy learning when they did not understand the content area or did not possess prerequisite knowledge. In these instances, students lost interest in learning due to their frustration or anxiety. Not understanding content also made students feel shame and embarrassment, which made asking for assistance difficult and learning unenjoyable.

Similarly, when learning was too easy students lost interest because they found the work boring.

Students explained that work that was not tailored to their level of understanding sometimes led to behavioural disengagement. Similarly, not experiencing success negatively impacted motivation and persistence with learning, making students more likely to withdraw from learning.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>"Being good at it. You know what you're doing."</i></p> <p><i>"Doing maths at school because it is fun and easy."</i></p> <p><i>"I like spelling because I'm a good speller."</i></p> <p><i>"I really liked learning about the Olympics because I was familiar with the Greek God King Zeus and knew much about him."</i></p> <p><i>"When we do things that are easy to learn and understand."</i></p>	<p><i>"Complex but simple at the same time."</i></p> <p><i>"I like work when it is easy."</i></p> <p><i>"Because we were learning something that I had a lot of knowledge on."</i></p> <p><i>"I felt like I understood the topic we were learning."</i></p> <p><i>"Math because you can understand easily and the teacher is Lit."</i><sup>06</sup></p>
<p><i>"Because they think they can't do it so they choose to not listen and then they don't learn it then they can't use it in later life. It needs to be put in their head."</i></p> <p><i>"Because they give you hard work!"</i></p> <p><i>"NAPLAN because it is hard."</i></p> <p><i>"Not having any practise on school work."</i></p> <p><i>"Something they don't understand."</i></p> <p><i>"The question you might not know that word."</i></p> <p><i>"Really hard problems."</i></p> <p><i>"Making it more challenging than it is."</i></p> <p><i>"Our class people need a lot of help but the teacher pays no attention to the really smart people and only to the people who need help. We need to be graded by ability not age so that everyone gets attention."</i></p>	<p><i>"Don't understand the things being taught."</i></p> <p><i>"When teacher says you should have learned this at primary school or last year and so they don't explain it!!"</i></p> <p><i>"Constantly failing puts students off trying."</i></p> <p><i>"It's hard to keep with everyone in class when writing notes because we all write at different paces."</i></p>

Tailored and individualised approaches were important to create motivation, encourage engagement, minimise boredom, frustration or stress, and ultimately enable student progress in learning and success. Students recognised that teachers use a variety of strategies to cater to students' different levels of ability, understanding or learning progression. When teachers tailored work to the varying abilities in the class, students felt valued as learners and that the teacher cared for their learning. These strategies were viewed as beneficial for individual students and the class more broadly.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>"It helps when the teacher asks if this is the way that you like to work."</i></p> <p><i>"I like when some kids find it easy but other kids can find it SO hard so we do activities like really fun stuff and that helps them learn."</i></p> <p><i>"Having others that are your skill levels to sit with them to help."</i></p> <p><i>"When the kids that don't know how to do something they get different work."</i></p> <p><i>"It's hard for some kids to learn because they don't quite understand what they are being taught and they need to be told in depth so it can be sinked into their heads. Or it's hard because they don't listen."</i></p>	<p><i>"Finding a learning method that helps for you."</i></p> <p><i>"Teachers that understand 'your' learning/acting."</i></p> <p><i>"Examples that are understandable for our age – not what they understand."</i></p> <p><i>"More precise streaming more levels for learning so that kids at each level can learn the subjects."</i></p> <p><i>"Smaller classrooms so teachers can do 1 on 1 with students."</i></p> <p><i>"Having a teacher who teaches YOU as INDIVIDUALS rather than just a class."</i></p>

Through their achievements, students are enabled to view themselves as successful learners. Student self-belief contributes positively to self-esteem, motivation, persistence and engagement with learning. Being provided with opportunities to develop their competence was important to students, particularly when they could see improvements in their learning or abilities, or when learning contributed to their own personal development. Learning that contributed to their future beyond school was also important for student enjoyment of learning, as discussed further in Chapter 4.4 – Teaching and learning that is relevant.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>"Sport/soccer: because the teacher taught me what I already knew, but he made me go over and get better at the skills."</i></p> <p><i>"Having an opportunity to practise."</i></p> <p><i>"When we do things that we know and when we improve on it."</i></p> <p><i>"Math helps me to be confident with myself. And to farm."</i></p> <p><i>"Rigg because you get to learn how to spell harder words."</i></p> <p><i>"We love to write narratives because, same with art, lets your imagination run wild, because it builds character."</i></p> <p><i>"I love reading because it makes all your skills develop."</i></p> <p><i>"When it brings deep conversation and it builds your personality."</i></p>	<p><i>"Because I finally understood something! It is honestly the best feeling once you understand a maths problem!"</i></p> <p><i>"When I finally completed my essay I felt a sense of achievement and I was proud."</i></p> <p><i>"Sport because I was able to participate in team building."</i></p> <p><i>"When I was getting good grades."</i></p> <p><i>"We weren't just learning for a test, it was for fun."</i></p> <p><i>"Sport because it's fun and learnt a lot about how to train myself."</i></p>

## Encouragement and recognition

Positive attention and reinforcement from respected others, such as school staff and family members, were effective in motivating students to engage in learning. Recognition of their efforts and learning progress built self-belief, self-confidence and contributed to motivation as well. Those who outlined such strategies as important for enjoying learning described motivation to learn and satisfaction with learning. Encouragement could come through acknowledgement or praise from school staff, rewards including food, games, movies or free time, or through structured reward systems.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>"Rewards to get motivated to learn."</i></p> <p><i>"Encouragement to do better in school and class because some aren't as cooperative as others."</i></p> <p><i>"They need congratulations."</i></p> <p><i>"The time I liked learning at school is when I got to go to the office for good work."</i></p> <p><i>"It helps kids learning if you set a reward for them. Example: math hour after small sports game for 20 mins. Set a goal for students."</i></p> <p><i>"An encouraging teacher."</i></p> <p><i>"Friends supporting them to do their best."</i></p>	<p><i>"Being encouraged to achieve well at school."</i></p> <p><i>"Motivation to succeed."</i></p> <p><i>"When friends support the work the student does."</i></p> <p><i>"Awards (being recognised)."</i></p> <p><i>"Reward system – rewarding success through objects and or appreciation by peers."</i></p> <p><i>"I liked learning when there were chocolates and prizes involved."</i></p>

## Valuing learning – student actions

Students acknowledged learning is not a unidirectional process. Whilst teachers have a significant role to play in the provision of engaging and appropriately challenging learning activities, students noted that they too have a role in their own learning. Students described learning behaviours and individual strengths that support learning, such as active listening, reading, self-confidence, perseverance and resilience. The previous chapters highlight the relational aspects of schooling and how they play an important role in student attitude, learning behaviours, academic self-concept and ultimately engagement with learning.

Students also identified individual student behaviours that were not helpful for learning.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>"Listening to the teacher. Look at the teacher."</i></p> <p><i>"Read the question carefully."</i></p> <p><i>"How much you are confident."</i></p> <p><i>"Concentrating."</i></p> <p><i>"They find education important and fun."</i></p> <p><i>"Kids need to put their hands up."</i></p> <p><i>"It helps them if they don't give up."</i></p>	<p><i>"Entering class with a positive attitude."</i></p> <p><i>"Becoming more confident."</i></p> <p><i>"Concentration."</i></p> <p><i>"Talking to your teacher if you are having problems with the learning content, or possibly your grades."</i></p>
<p><i>"Not listening."</i></p> <p><i>"[...] Or it's hard because they don't listen."</i></p>	<p><i>"Don't use the resources provided to their advantage."</i></p> <p><i>"Not doing work (homework)."</i></p> <p><i>"Not using time wisely."</i></p>

## Suggestions from students

*“I think we should make work a little more fun.” (Year 3 to Year 6)*

Overwhelmingly, students in Year 3 to Year 6 wanted learning to be more fun to increase engagement. The suggestions on how to make learning more fun were parallel to the learning that students found engaging – that is, learning that was hands-on, interactive and relevant. Within learning activities, students wanted to be provided with clear explanations, be appropriately challenged, have choices, be able to work with other students, and receive encouragement and recognition.

Similar suggestions were made by students in Year 7 to Year 12, however, not as often as by those in Year 3 to Year 6.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<i>“Make learning more fun, because it lets the students enjoy what they’re doing and they would want to learn more.”</i>	<i>“Teaching Strategies – rather than just re-reading the book, sing, experiments, videos, activities and other alternatives.”</i>
<i>“Fun subjects because it can make students more positive about going to school.”</i>	<i>“Teachers – we need more fun and less strict work and less stress as we are still young and our brains are still growing.”</i>
<i>“We should have more hands-on learning.”</i>	<i>“Teachers who care about fun learning rather than learning something just for a test.”</i>

Instead, students in Year 7 to Year 12 were more likely to refer to reducing stress and pressure associated with learning. School was stressful when students had many competing commitments, when several assessments were scheduled in close proximity, or when planning or working towards graduation and their lives beyond school. Regular communication and support for work and graduation requirements would minimise stress for students.

Year 7 to Year 12

*“More time for homework, or less homework (too much stress).”*

*“Don’t put too much emphasis on Year 12 exams. If you do bad in the exam take your average off the rest of the year.”*

*“Notified about tests/assignments more often.”*

*“GAT expectations.”*

*“Teachers that understand that we have other class work/homework and extra-curricular activities.”*

*“Don’t tell us ATAR is the only option.”*

*“Longer breaks.”*

*“Testing*

- *less tests*
- *mark day-[to]-day work instead.”*

The timing and workload of assessments across subjects was sometimes problematic for students in Year 7 to Year 12 as it affected their ability to structure their own time for learning and activities that support their wellbeing. Students expressed a desire for teachers to collaborate and map assessment tasks across the year, taking into consideration the demands of assessment pieces, homework, general study and their lives as young people. Students emphasised the importance of teaching staff to consider their lives outside of school, which could include sport, work and family commitments. Some students felt that school and learning commitments made it difficult to feel that they had a break from school and to spend quality time with their families or engage in activities that promoted positive health and wellbeing.

Year 7 to Year 12

*“Teachers cooperate with one another – organise assessments to be on different days/weeks.”*

*“Organise it so all our assessments are not due at once – spread them out amongst the term.”*

*“Assignments spread out more evenly.”*

*“Less assignments given to us right after we've just finished one. Give us a break.”*

Improved resources and use of technology for learning was a particular focus for students in Year 3 to Year 6. Purposeful use of technology made learning easier for some students and was important to others for their future economic participation.

Year 3 to Year 6

*“I would like more electronics, lots of computers and iPads. Everyone would have an electronic for them to use. The reason why I want this is more people would learn and the people who have mental blocks can learn much easier.”*

*“More computer time because everyone will be using computers in the future.”*

*“I would like better tech: iPads, computers to take home so we can do homework.”*

*“We should have a computer lab again, because over 70% of jobs in the modern world need computers or use technology.”*

To support their engagement, a small number of students across Year 3 to Year 12 also requested work to be more challenging. Work that was too easy decreased their engagement, with students indicating work was ‘boring’ and this sometimes contributed to behavioural disengagement (e.g. disrupting the class).

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>“We need more school work.”</i></p> <p><i>“I would ask for harder maths, and harder spelling words.”</i></p> <p><i>“More hard maths because it is good fun.”</i></p> <p><i>“More extension classes so children can learn things according to their ability.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Better extension work.”</i></p> <p><i>“More gifted programs.”</i></p> <p><i>“If the work was a bit more challenging.”</i></p>

Students also acknowledged that it was their own responsibility to practise behaviours that support learning. This included approaching learning with a positive attitude, applying effort, listening in class, seeking assistance when required and to persist. These behaviours were supported and enhanced when teaching and learning were interesting, quality interpersonal relationships existed and when working within a positive environment.