

# **EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO DIGITAL INNOVATION IN SECONDARY EDUCATION**



**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
WEDNESDAY, 12 AUGUST 2020**

**SESSION ONE**

**Members**

**Ms J.M. Freeman (Chair)**

**Ms J. Farrer**

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup**

**Mr R.S. Love**

**Ms S.E. Winton**

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**Hearing commenced at 10.04 am****Mr MICHAEL KING****President, Educational Computing Association of WA, examined:****Mrs SHALONI NAIK****PD Coordinator, Educational Computing Association of WA, examined:**

**The CHAIR:** On behalf of the committee I would like to thank you for agreeing to appear today to provide input and comment on remote learning, with particular reference to lessons learnt as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This follows last year's inquiry into digital innovation in secondary education. My name is Janine Freeman. I am the Chair of the Education and Health Standing Committee. On my left is Sabine Winton and on her left is Shane Love, who you have met before. Ms Josie Farrer is an apology, and Zak Kirkup may walk in at any moment. It is a busy time in Parliament at the present time.

It is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of this committee may be regarded as contempt of Parliament—I am sure you will not do that. Your evidence is protected by parliamentary privilege; however, this privilege does not apply to anything you might say outside of today's proceedings. Can you introduce yourself for the record? And you know Sarah and Jovita, and this is the Hansard reporter. We really appreciate you coming. Is there anything that you want to start off with in terms of the topic or shall I just launch into questions for you?

**Mr KING:** I am good. I think if we go straight to the questions will probably be more helpful.

**The CHAIR:** It was a really interesting time to be a local member of Parliament, seeing how schools coped in different ways with remote learning. What did your members see as the greatest challenges in shifting to remote learning, both teachers and students, understanding that it was just before going on holidays and then, really, people came back? So, there was an expectation it was going to be for longer, but the actual reality was something shorter. I think you are in Catholic Ed?

**Mr KING:** I am in Catholic Education.

**The CHAIR:** So, it was a longer period as well, yes—just taking that into account.

**Mr KING:** I will start. Our membership, they acknowledged that it was a challenging period of time. Some people commented that the workload increased dramatically in trying to prepare lessons that they would traditionally teach face-to-face in a digital environment, or even preparing to do that because at that stage we were preparing for term 2 would be remote. Some of the comments from our members were that in some learning areas where there seem to be good resources available online already, it was quite a smooth transition. There were some really good resources available to digital technology teachers, and that is most of our membership. Some also commented that there were some pretty good things like Mathspace available for maths teachers. So, that kind of made switching to the remote-style learning a little bit easier for those learning areas.

Some of the challenges that came up were around internet access, particularly for the students if they were working from home and they had limited or no access to the internet, it made things very difficult. One member from a remote school mentioned that none of their students have got access to the internet, so unless they turned up to school, there was very little that they were able to help them with. Some mentioned that—not the infrastructure so much, but the experience for some students was not as good as the others. In my case, we were preparing students for this for about

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three weeks before CEWA made the call to move fully remote and make the school available for those that had no other opportunity. So we were encouraging students to update their computers every day for about two weeks. Those students that did not do that struggled for the first couple of lessons.

**The CHAIR:** When you say “update the computers”—not buy new computers?

**Mr KING:** No, just make sure that the software on the computers, the Windows updates, were all good to go, so that when we moved to that, their computers were ready to deliver online. Those kids that did not do that or that process did not work fully functional for them, they struggled a little bit. I mean, they were assisted, but it is experiences like that that kind of made it a little bit inequitable.

**The CHAIR:** In terms of that, you are a “bring your own device” school, so the kids, when they come to school, they have to purchase a laptop, I gather?

**Mr KING:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** And you already specify what sort of laptop they have?

**Mr KING:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Can they bring recycled laptops, re-used, or do they have to have a certain capacity in terms of the laptops?

**Mr KING:** In my case, the school takes care of a lease, so every student has the same laptop.

**The CHAIR:** So the school buys a lease and the parents pay for the leasing costs?

**Mr KING:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Can you tell us how much those costs are?

**Mr KING:** Not off the top of my head. I would be happy to get that to you.

[10.10 am]

**The CHAIR:** Yes, that would be great. I will be really interested to know. The experience in some of my schools was that kids just did not have devices. In any event, we can talk about that a bit later. Do you want to talk about the experience for staff and the challenges and your experiences in terms of students?

**Mrs NAIK:** I am coming from the government schools—public independent schools. The schools that had already implemented BYOD and online learning platforms found the transition to online learning relatively easy. They were quite happy with the amount of PD that was provided by ECAWA during this period, because all our sessions moved online. We found teachers were actually engaging more with PD because they wanted to learn more. We found teachers were pushed to upskill. In this particular school that had a BYOD, they can bring any device but it needs to meet minimum specifications. Those devices are approximately \$1 100 to \$1 400, so you can pick which one suits your budget, and there are leasing options. It is a Mac school, so you have to have a Mac. They were all on a Google platform and transition was very easy; students all had internet. They were so used to learning online with their computers that they did not really find much of an issue at all.

**The CHAIR:** Are you able to say which school that was? We got some case studies here from the education department about schools.

**Mrs NAIK:** This particular one is Ashdale Secondary College. It is a technology specialist school. It has only been open 11 years, but it is very ahead of its time in terms of technology integration.

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**The CHAIR:** The difficulty is the expense for those devices. Can you use second-hand Apple devices?

**Mrs NAIK:** Yes, you can purchase your own. You are not subjected to buy from the purchasing portal. We just provide it to parents as a means in case they do not want to, but they can go to Harvey Norman, Gumtree and buy whatever computer they want. To be honest, in the last two years we have transitioned to BYOD any device, so you can come with a PC. If you can only afford a \$400 PC laptop, you can bring that, as long as it meets the minimum specification requirements.

**The CHAIR:** Just tell me, the minimum specification is in terms of speed and —

**Mrs NAIK:** Yes, memory and what it needs to operate the software. We have two specification lists. One would be for a tablet, so if you are going to bring some form of a tablet, whether it be an iPad or a Samsung tablet, it will say that you have to have a keyboard, because the kids need to practise typing for NAPLAN. If you have got a laptop, then it must have X, Y and Z.

**The CHAIR:** Does that mean, effectively, that the computer cannot be more than three or four years' old? If you are asking for that sort of speed and capacity, does that mean that you cannot use anything that is four or five years old? I will tell you the background I have. I had kids who did not have devices, so I became acquainted with an organisation called Laptops for Students and was dealing with them. That was okay in our schools; we were able to get laptops for them. But they have said that there are some schools where the laptops that they can get for them do not meet the specifications because they are just too old. Is that what happens—there is a critical age aspect?

**Mrs NAIK:** It does happen, but to be honest if you are buying Apple products, they last for up to five to six years. We have students in Ashdale who have two or three siblings. The MacBook program starts in the grade 4/5 cluster, so by the time the students get to grade 7, they might be handing down to their siblings. As long as the computer is taken care of, it can last up to six years. The minimum specifications are quite low, let us put it that way. They do not need to operate any fancy software. Really, it is just Word, internet capacity, online documents, Connect, the learning management system.

**Mr KING:** You sent through a question along these lines to us and I asked the network administrator at my school. We are in a different context, obviously, but as a network administrator he was saying that one of the problems would be if the technology to connect to the networks at the school were a little bit older than what they were looking for, it can compromise the connection for all of them. Security problems came up from another person that gave us some advice on this question. We asked our executive on Wednesday last week, when we had a meeting, for some feedback as well, such as security of some of those devices. We were having a conversation out in the lobby while we were waiting. Especially in some of the departments—you might be able to talk to this a little bit more—if you have got an IT technician there who is already under the pump with how much work that they need to do and if you have got an older device that needs a little bit more maintenance, it might be a little bit more difficult to keep that part of the fleet going.

**The CHAIR:** It is that issue of the gap. You have kids that do not have access, so you find where they can get access and then they cannot actually use it as such.

**Mrs NAIK:** The other school I am coming from is Ellenbrook Secondary College, which is literally 11 minutes up the road from Ashdale but the total opposite context—there is no BYOD, students did not have computers, they made teachers make hard copy packs for every single class for a three-week period, which actually only 20 got picked up. That could really have been asked for at the point of demand, like if a parent called up. There were no computers. We have two technicians who were running around trying to take laptops off laptop trolleys, and then we actually loaned out 100 laptops to students. The ICSEA number for Ellenbrook is about 980-something, so it is quite low.

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We had students who, if they had access to a computer at home, it was another family member's, so they could only use it for 20 minutes and they could not finish the work that was due, and they only used Connect, which is an issue. When we are getting teachers to upload, the two weeks of uploading to Connect was an issue onsite at school because of the internet and infrastructure and all the teachers trying to upload and also lack of skills on how to —

**The CHAIR:** The education department told us that Connect worked very well. Okay—and she breathed!

**Mrs NAIK:** I think it could have for some schools. I mean, it is a small example. We offered training to teachers and we made sure that if they were using videos, they were not uploaded.

**The CHAIR:** I have a primary school that basically did not use Connect at all.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** In regard to Connect, not necessarily just at your schools but through your membership, were teachers using other platforms, then, as a workaround or as an alternative? I talk very much in the primary school sector and that there is not necessarily a systematic approach—different teachers and different schools are using a variety of different platforms that work better for them. Did you find that?

**Mr KING:** I will just kind of summarise some stuff. A lot of people talked about using OneNote and Office 365 as a platform, some talked about Google Classroom as a platform, and I think that those schools that had used that prior to COVID occurring were able to transition quite nicely. Some people listed that they just used email and Connect as a way to communicate work with students and for students to give feedback and ask questions of their teachers. SEQTA, Webex for videoconferencing, Teams and Zoom for teleconferencing—they were the kind of platforms that were in place. Connect was mentioned a couple of times by the education department, so the education department teachers—no-one came out and said anything like it worked really well or did not work very well for them; they just outlined it as a portal that was used to provide some work for students.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** With the online learning that was occurring, to what extent were teachers trying to establish face-to-face learning opportunities for kids, and what were some of the barriers for teachers being able to do that?

**Mrs NAIK:** From our end, teachers were trying to use Webex. For senior school, they ran lectures online, but for junior school, it was quite limited. I think it also varied on their skills—if they were able to actually set up a meeting and log on and connect with the students.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** Particularly in their early years, to have that connection with teachers as opposed to just receiving emails or “here's another piece” to stay connected with students in the real world.

**Mrs NAIK:** At a school like Ashdale it was very high. Teachers were logging on to live classes throughout the whole day because that is what they were used to. At Ellenbrook, it was very minimal; in fact, they were even worried about being seen on the web camera.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** Do you think that is an important aspect to focus on in terms of going remote with students—to have that connection between teachers and their students?

**Mrs NAIK:** I think it is very important.

[10.20 am]

**Mr KING:** I think having school occurring during COVID was important, because kids still had some kind of normal timetable and they had the opportunity to connect with their friends and peers through things like this. My context at our school, those teleconferences were optional but a lot of our teachers ran sessions—at least one or two a week, at a minimum—and it was really interesting

that the kids, I think, quite enjoyed it, especially when they had capacity. We are a boarding school; some of our boarding students had some difficulty connecting all the time, but they made it when they could. Some of them can only connect to the internet via cellular technologies, like 4G or through mobile networks, and their quotas for data got chewed up pretty quickly. So we tried to make sure we were uploading content to platforms like Stream or YouTube as well, so that they could use it on demand rather than the peak times for whatever plan they were on and download their lessons via OneNote or OneDrive when off-peak allowances were in place to try to manage that. But the connect to school was important. I think the ability to see their peers sometimes was very important. One of our members mentioned that that actually caused a little anxiety for some of their students in that the students were feeling as though their face is on camera and it is the focal point for someone for about 45 minutes and that was increasing their anxiety and reluctance to engage with the lessons as they were.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** It is no different to us as we learnt to use Zoom, right?

**Mr KING:** Exactly, and you are really conscious about what you are doing. No-one is physically in the room with you, so you have to really take care of what your facial expressions are. Yes, I think it was good; it was well received. Some people expressed an anxiety. Some of our staff members were a little bit anxious about it initially. Our school actually went with a policy of: we want you to be in the meetings, but we do not necessarily want you on camera, so we turned the webcams off. Talking about the keeping safe curriculum that we introduced, we actually want to keep the kids safe and we wanted to make sure that anyone else in their house was safe, so we did not want them to have to worry about mum or dad, or little brothers or sisters walking behind them on the camera, so we went with a cameras-off approach and that worked quite well. It also decreased the bandwidth required as well, so it made it a little bit easier for people.

**The CHAIR:** Was there any particular software or digital technology—because you talked about quite a few and you talked about Zoom—that proved particularly useful and popular that was previously not well used, like that sort of meeting platform? Was that really picked up on? Do you think that was something that had not been used very much before?

**Mrs NAIK:** For my schools, the three software packages that came up were Connect—it was taken very positively at Ellenbrook. The teachers were very happy with it, and the principal—they were happy with the use. I think if they do not know how to use anything else, they cannot really compare it anyway, but they were very happy with that. Then the other two were Teams. They were very positive on Teams, sharing files, chatting, learning area meetings and whole-school meetings. We noticed that a lot of teachers actually shifted into their 365 online apps, so that was very positive.

**Mr KING:** Our context at the school I work at was we were pretty much online delivering content anyway, so Office 365 and OneNote was the main one that we used, but Teams was one that we had not really used beforehand and that one became very popular where it was when most of our teaching occurred, and that is reflected from our membership as well.

**The CHAIR:** When you say it was when most of your teaching occurred, so they used Teams to do the classroom teaching aspect of things?

**Mr KING:** Yes, we used it to take attendance, to outline what the lesson was and where the lesson was located. Quite often it would be a link to the page in OneNote, which the kids would be directed to. It was just an opportunity for, at the start of a lesson, this is where you go, so that they knew what they had to do for that day. It would point them to OneNote and then in OneNote or in Stream or whatever the delivery was going to be, or if it was a meeting you had a link to the meeting. Then we knew that the kids were all starting at the same spot, and then if it was a meeting, we would be able to communicate with the students. If it was one that was a little bit more independent learning

through OneNote, then we would be able to look at their work live and give them feedback and comments as they went along—a good opportunity to keep some of those students accountable as well, because engagement was one thing that some of our teachers discussed. Then we would also, in our context at Mazenod, we would put our expectations for homework and what to do after the lesson in that space. If a student missed the lesson, they also knew that they could go to Teams and see kind of a chronological order of what happened during the lesson as well. That worked quite well for us. I do not know how it worked for other schools, but it was a nice, easy expectation that was sent from admin very early in term 1 that if we were going to move to remote learning, this is where you need to skill up and our staff were able to do that and use it quite well.

**The CHAIR:** That was because you guys did training at your school. What about learning Teams and all of those things at Ellenbrook?

**Mrs NAIK:** With the government schools, the students do not have access to Teams—the administration has switched that off. So, it was the opposite for us. Teams was mainly used for staff—meetings, PD, training, file sharing, chatting, messages. It became a staff tool. The students did not have access to it.

**The CHAIR:** And that is because they did that through Connect?

**Mrs NAIK:** Yes, they accessed everything through Connect, and any videoconferencing was done using Webex. The feedback was that they would have liked to have used Teams. It is just nobody knew why our students were not activated. In the government schools, the students do not have access to that platform because from the head office IT, it has been locked.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** We were talking about attendance and engagement, I guess I asking for any feedback that you have been able to gather from school sites and your colleagues outside of your two campuses. I know with my daughter, who goes to a private school, what impressed me, and obviously their IT as well, is that she was held totally accountable from the start of the school day to the end of the school day through that system—attendance was taken. I even remember when I was home with her, she could turn the camera off but she knew that she could not wander too far because the teacher knew that she was there. I guess, what I am asking is: to what extent do you think teachers are confident in terms of the attendance or absences throughout that period in terms of how much kids actually bought in during that time? Was that being monitored? I am sure teachers were doing it individually with their classes, but what is your sense—were schools understanding where the gaps were, where the kids were falling off and not part of the process?

**Mr KING:** At my school, we took attendance at the start of the lesson and then we tried to monitor what they were doing. Some people turned up at the start of the lesson and then were not very engaged. Some of the comments that came from our membership were that engagement was a problem, it was an issue, and it was a little bit heartbreaking that they were putting so much time and effort into having these lessons created for them so they could learn from home, but they had limited engagement. And then support from parents was patchy in that they would follow up things and then parents might not be fully supportive. I kind of get that because it was a turbulent time and it might not have been the priority at that stage. I had one comment from a member that said that some students actually thrived in that environment in that they were able to kind of dedicate the amount of time that they wanted to the subjects, and they had some kind of agency in what they were learning and how much time they were doing it with. I also had other comments that said that engagement was low, particularly for those students with low ability or who were already unengaged. This was something that made the problem a bit worse.

**The CHAIR:** And you are in the public school system?

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**Mrs NAIK:** The leadership did not mandate for attendance to be taken, so no teachers monitored attendance. I notice at my daughter's school, they wanted you to login in the morning on Google Classroom, but it was quite individual. But if it was not mandated at a leadership level then it —

**The CHAIR:** When you say "it was not mandated at a leadership level", it was not mandated at the principal level or it was not mandated in the central office level?

**Mrs NAIK:** At the principal level, because if the principal said, "We expect you to take the attendance," then they would.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** I guess my question following on from that is: were we to go to lockdown again, like the Victorian experience where all of a sudden remote six weeks plus, what do you think needs to happen so that we can try and get some systems in place where we do monitor that? Notwithstanding in some schools it is as basic as they do not have internet connection or do not have the right equipment, but I am saying, beyond that, let us say in a perfect world where the kids have got the equipment, the schools have got the capacity to connect with kids, are you comfortable that we have learnt and have got processes in place if the next time round comes?

[10.30 am]

**Mr KING:** I think we have learnt lessons, definitely. I think some of the things that you can do in a classroom when you know a student is engaged or disengaged is a little bit more difficult when you are teaching remotely. I tried to think of an example. In the classroom, if I know someone is disengaged, I will either ask them a question to kind of snap them back into things or I will go and have a chat with them, and that is just a little bit more difficult when we are not in the same room with someone. I think some of the support structures to try to keep kids with that connection to their friends and their teachers is good. I think students themselves—I am a pastoral teacher in year 9—and we had some kids that came back and were pretty honest with me and said, "Yeah, I took a couple of weeks off." But they realised when they returned that they were a little bit behind, and they felt bad, or they felt disappointed in themselves that they had wasted that opportunity. I think some kids are going to be able to reflect on what happened earlier in the year, and if it were to happen again they would probably approach it a little bit differently. I think, having an active accountability and being very clear with the expectations that are expected of teachers, parents and students makes that kind of accountability easier to check up on. I was looking at my kids' work as they went along and when they were doing good stuff I was giving them praise, and when it kind of looked as though kids were disengaged, I was sending them an email or communicating with parents when I could get on to them.

**The CHAIR:** Does that mean you were ringing parents?

**Mr KING:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** And were you ringing kids at any stage?

**Mr KING:** No. All of our communication was on Teams because it was a private setting, but it was open to the IT staff. We are very conscious that we want to make sure that we are encouraging good IT practices with our students, and when they tried to communicate with us outside of what we expected, we would always point them back towards Teams.

**The CHAIR:** Is that just for safety reasons as well as everything else, and that sort of aspect of things?

**Mr KING:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** What about public schools, how did they communicate with students? Obviously, you could not see if they were absenteeing, but teachers must have known if they were repetitively —



**Mrs NAIK:** I think predominantly teachers were monitoring through the submissions on whatever platform they were using. If an assessment was due and it was not handed in, then they would find out that that student obviously has not been doing any of the work. I think from the government school perspective, students and the teachers have learnt a lot, but I think going forward it is important for a more solid direction to be given to the leadership teams within the schools so that they can make the right choices; for example, implementing—because Ashdale delivered all their classes online, they came up with a guide that every teacher had to use, which was teaching students how to switch their web camera off, how to mute your microphone, how to have your video off and put on an avatar. There was like a guide on how to deliver.

**The CHAIR:** But school by school by school there was not anything coming from —

**Mrs NAIK:** No, there was not.

**The CHAIR:** So the Department of Education says it has got this learning at home webpage. Do you know if people were accessing that webpage or if that webpage gave that sort of direction? If you were a parent at home trying to help your kid turn on your mike, have an avatar, whatever, was that capable —

**Mrs NAIK:** No. There was many a website that provided links to external websites for online learning, like maths games and things, so resources. Some teachers used it and then put those links into their learning platform, but I do not think it gave parents that sort of direction.

**The CHAIR:** So there was not that simple “This is what’s happening for you”. It was on a school-by-school basis; there was no direction.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** And teacher by teacher.

**Mrs NAIK:** When the schools have a good leadership team, they will mandate downwards: this is the way we are going to operate, this is the way we will run, these are the expectations for communication. But if they do not have that experience or knowledge, then how were they able to pass that down to the staff?

**The CHAIR:** And that was based on a leadership team that has familiarity with learning by the web, or e-learning. You gave us these two examples of one school which had an online learning platform and one which produced a whole bunch of packs of which you said only 30 per cent were picked up.

**Mrs NAIK:** Twenty packs were picked up out of 1 500.

**The CHAIR:** How did they manage to ensure that kids were doing learning in that period of time or was that just simply they were not?

**Mrs NAIK:** They could not. They had no way of tracking the students. The teachers did not have enough skills. They have no BYOD, so kids did not have computers. A lot of the students—80 per cent of the students actually did no work for a period of four weeks.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** Do you think, if we went into lockdown again that would be different?

**Mrs NAIK:** I do not think so. If the support structures are not provided to rectify some of the challenges they faced, then it will not change.

**The CHAIR:** Has that been fed back to the department, do you know?

**Mrs NAIK:** I think it has. I think principals have been asked to provide feedback.

**The CHAIR:** It is my understanding principals have been asked to give feedback.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** Can I ask a slightly different question. We are talking about technology and I guess I have got my primary school teacher hat on, but it probably applies to secondary. The digital

platform, some learning, and also for kids with disabilities, but the early years really do require printing out of materials. I know that some schools did very much give the handout packages et cetera. Did you hear any feedback about kids' capacity to also print out materials and being able to have that submitted back to teachers? My understanding of teaching is that it is not just all about seeing that stuff online, you actually have to sometimes print it. Did you think that was an issue?

**Mrs NAIK:** From our schools, it was not an issue—students did have a print facility.

**Mr KING:** In my context, any work that we wanted to see, if we had it on OneNote, we would be able to see the students.

**The CHAIR:** And they did that through notebook, did they not?

**Mr KING:** That is right. Our device also has the ability for the kids to write directly on to the screen, which makes some of that stuff a little bit easier as well.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Can I ask—for either of you: there was a period of time where there was a mixture of attendance, in person and remotely. I suspect different schools had different experiences there. I wonder if that presented any particular issues in having that mix of a fairly considerable cohort of people in both physical and remote presence?

**Mr KING:** I will start. We were directed by CEWA to go remote, and then when term 2 started again students could attend and they were going to be welcome to attend, but they would be doing online learning on the school campus, which worked out all right. In our context, teachers, if students were on campus, they would be able to give some additional assistance if they required; students off campus would get one of those Teams meetings. One person did say that with that mix of students at home and in class made it quite difficult because there was no way that they were going to ignore the student in front of them if they needed assistance, and then also needed to be teaching the students that were remote, so that kind of increased the workload for them.

**Mrs NAIK:** From my perspective, when term 2 opened, the students that came back to school, the percentage of schools differed. In Ellenbrook, because of the low sociodemographic area, we actually had 85 per cent of students come back on the first day of school. School is like their safe place. Teachers just went straight back to teaching again. Depending on the capacity of the particular teacher, if they could manage maintaining a relationship with students that were at home, they would, and if they could not, they just focused on face-to-face learning. Whereas, at Ashdale, in the first few weeks, only 45 per cent of students came back, which meant that parents were happy with the online learning. A lot of the parents were probably at home to be able to support that process and they did not feel it necessary for students to go back immediately. Again, when students arrived, everybody went back to face-to-face teaching, using the online platforms that they had created but everybody got back to teaching.

[10.40 am]

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** Would you say there was a particular emphasis or priority given to year 11 and 12 students?

**Mrs NAIK:** In our schools they were. We kept waiting for SCSA to release documents surrounding modifications to assessments, externally set tasks, so priority was there.

**Mr KING:** And for us, the same thing. I am a middle school leader at our school, so we had lots of conversations about making sure that the experience for the 11s and 12s was as good for them as we could make it. The 11s and 12s went all the way to week 10 of term 1, whereas we asked parents that their kids attend the online lessons for up to year 10. That additional time for teachers was

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given to skill up in case we were going to be doing the same thing in term 2, and start preparing the resources so that we were ready to go at the start of term 2.

**The CHAIR:** Talking about skilling up, the education department, in its submission, did not talk about the training that you offered. Do you know, in addition to the training that you offered—the PD that the association offered—how did teachers approach upskilling with online learning? What other things were available for them in terms of that support?

**Mr KING:** There were a lot of webinars from a wide array of organisations, like Microsoft and Google, about upskilling people on their particular platforms. I know in our school we had a team of confident staff using these products giving PL internally to other staff members, and I imagine that that is where a lot of teachers were skilled up—from colleagues at their school. I guess that would be very dependent on the school on how that was approached. From about week 6 we were running afternoon sessions for teachers on some of those baseline skills that we wanted everyone to have so that they had enough time. We were kind of on tenterhooks for about two or three weeks, anticipating that we were going to be moving to remote, so we were just trying to skill people up as quickly as we could.

**Mrs NAIK:** That was exactly the same for government schools—a lot of PD was run internally and then they had a website where you could pick external providers.

**The CHAIR:** If you were going to say one positive—never waste a crisis, they say—and one negative? We are going to move on and I really appreciate your submissions, both in the previous hearing and this hearing—they have been invaluable to us. If you were going to say one positive and one negative, do you want to sum up?

**Mr KING:** The positive for me—the amount of cooperation between teachers. Everyone was in it together and trying to work together. There was a phenomenal amount of PL being undertaken by all teachers to try to prepare for what we were walking into. It was really impressive to see some people who in the past had been hesitant to engage in that space were engaging in that space and trying to make sure that the delivery for their students was going to be as good as it could be. I think the negative, and I can almost spin it as a positive, is that it highlighted some of the issues that exist—some of the inequalities between schools and students. The digital divide was clear—that there are schools and areas in the state that have got better access to technology and even the underlying internet to be able to engage in those spaces. The collegiality between teachers was amazing, but it also highlighted that there is a digital divide, even though we are pretty well off in WA.

**Mrs NAIK:** They would be the same things for me. The positives were the teachers upskilling in schools, where they were pushed to upskill and then realised how important it is to embed ICT and use technology, so they had to change their mindset. The negatives would be the inequality in access to the technology required. I know it is probably a silly example, but if schools have hover cams, webcams, access for teachers to make their own material, that still creates a barrier at a school that does not have any of that—they cannot videorecord, they do not know how to write on PDFs. There is just such a big difference that it really changes the outcome for the student. So it would be good if we could be a bit more equal.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** Can I just ask one final question. There is always the potential that we might need to go back, if you look at some of the experiences in other states. What do you think should be urgently done, in terms of getting us better prepared if there is a second time? Are there short-term things that could address some of those things? I am talking about realistic things.

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**Mr KING:** One of the members said something along the lines of there should be resources available all the time, so even though we might not need them at that moment, if the resources are there. That learning from home website, we could use that to our advantage and continuously update that and make that available, so that if we did have to return to a teaching-from-home situation, at any moment we have got resources there and we do not have to start from scratch each time. That would be achievable in the shortish term and that could have an impact.

**Mrs NAIK:** I think what would be required is a better, like a mandated approach to principals to say that these are the expectation levels that we require and your job is to make sure that the executive team at the schools are producing at the same level. And more direction from the department. The principals were attending webinars often, regularly online—every day nearly. I do not know whether they personally felt they did not have the ability to make the decisions. I do not understand, from a principal's perspective, why you would not sit down with your team and say, "Right, these are the platforms we are going to use." We are not allowed to use Google Classroom. I do not understand why. Every other school is doing it. Like, "These are your mandated platforms. This is what we are going to do. This is the etiquette for online conferencing." And look at e-learning models that are working around the world. Most of the PD I did was global, from different countries. Take the best practice and mandate that this is the format we will be using across Western Australia, and then it gets given to everybody.

**Mr KING:** Just to add on to that, I think making that clear, but as simple as possible as well. If we had a platform that we were expected to be able to use, that makes it a little bit easier. I feel like my school did that quite well in that we had some baseline expectations and that was the expectation. I heard from other schools where they were just being fed or given emails, "Here, try this, try this, try this". Some of those things were overlapping and that confused teachers in what they were expected to be able to do.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, I think that is a big thing—that whole aspect of being able to have baseline expectations, plus the structure that gives clarity in those periods of time; they are really important. I need to wrap it up, but I do notice that there is one question that I have not asked and, if you would not mind, we can ask it via email. It is about students with disabilities and how they were catered for during that period of time, if that is okay. It was on my list of questions to ask but we got involved in that other one. So, thank you very much.

**The WITNESSES:** Thank you.

**Hearing concluded at 10.49 am**

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