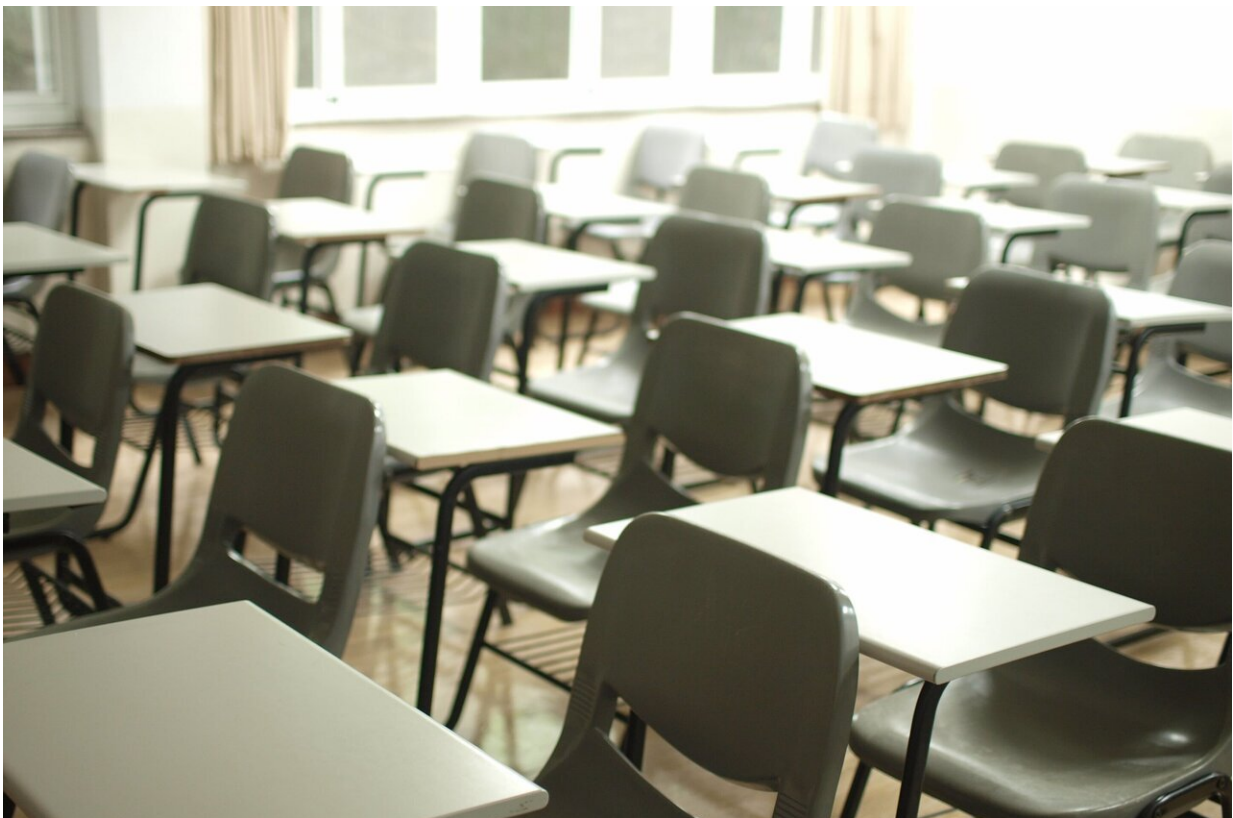


# Leading schools in lockdown: Community, communication and compassion key during remote learning

July 26 2021

---



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

A Monash University study into the experiences of school leaders in 2020 found those who engaged in community, communication and

compassion-based responses, successfully led their school community through crises and times of uncertainty.

"What you realize really quickly in times like this is that you're actually a community leader. What I mean by that is outside of sort of a political voice that our members of parliament have, it seems that the next voice that many [community members](#) go to, particularly families, is to school leaders," says Danni, a government secondary school Principal.

Schools across the globe have experienced widespread closures, changes in physical arrangements to ensure physical distancing and reductions in the range of activities that students can participate in. In Sydney and Victoria, the closure of school sites is continuing to see students and teachers move to a remote learning model.

The study conducted by the Faculty of Education at Monash University collected [research data](#) from eight school leaders across Victoria during 2020, when schools were working through significant changes as a result of the first community lockdowns and introduction of remote learning.

Lead researcher and author of the paper, Dr. Fiona Longmuir, said the data identified four key areas in which all participants and their schools had been impacted.

"The participants reported that their attention was predominantly directed to the wellbeing of their communities. They noted an increase in the community leadership aspect of their role and the requirement of effective, timely and honest communication. They also demonstrated prospective sensemaking capabilities in their ability to generate a positive and productive outcome from their disruptive experiences," said Dr. Longmuir.

School leaders identified that the lockdowns heightened their connection

and relationships with their wider school community, with members of the community turning to school leaders as calm and authoritative voices during times of confusion.

Finding ways to communicate within the remote learning and socially distanced environment was also a key focus of attention for these school leaders and demonstrated the importance of effective communication.

"Overall, the strongest message from all participants was just how all-encompassing and important wellbeing became during the pandemic. Leaders reported that the caring and compassionate aspects of their role were the most necessary as they supported their communities," added Dr. Longmuir.

School leaders also identified the challenges of extreme workload and emotional drain that they experienced themselves and noticed in their colleagues throughout the lockdowns.

"There were a lot of conversations where teachers really just spoke about how tiring it is, and ultimately you really just need to listen to that ... and acknowledging, and saying "Make sure that when you do get that opportunity you do take a break, or do something that you really love once a day," or whatever it might be," said Kaleb, Head of School at an independent school.

By understanding how key educational leaders and stakeholders made sense of and responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, the research findings identified an unprecedented opportunity to explain change experiences and the prospects for schooling to evolve and develop in new and innovative ways.

The research showcased what [school](#) leaders experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic and how their disruption can shape future

leadership scenarios in times of need.

**More information:** Fiona Longmuir, Leading in lockdown: Community, communication and compassion in response to the COVID-19 crisis, *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* (2021). [DOI: 10.1177/17411432211027634](https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432211027634)

Provided by Monash University

Citation: Leading schools in lockdown: Community, communication and compassion key during remote learning (2021, July 26) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-07-schools-lockdown-compassion-key-remote.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.