

THE CHANGING FACE OF SCHOOL TEACHING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: PRE-, DURING AND POST-COVID

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As a STEM education consultant, working with primary and high schools, and a provider of teacher professional development (TPD), I have witnessed a rapid evolution in the mode of instruction, delivery and interaction from pre-COVID times to during and now post-COVID. Pre-COVID, school teachers and students thrived on face-to-face support, combined with the online sharing of resources and occasional Zoom. COVID-19 and lockdown necessitated that all instruction and interaction occurred online via Zoom, learning management systems (LMS) and cloud-native collaboration and productivity apps e.g. Google Suite. Fortunately for high school science students, they were often able to carry out mandatory investigations virtually using versatile online simulations. Primary age students were able to record basic experiments and share pictures and commentary back with their teachers. For teachers, Zoom workshops actually made TPD more accessible to regional and remote educators (and often cheaper), while 'breakout rooms' proved surprisingly successful at facilitating collaborative discussions and exercises. Post-COVID, the landscape has changed. Regional and remote schools feel more empowered to engage with online support. Even metropolitan schools recognise the benefits of cheaper support, the ease of online access and the minimal in-school disruption if delivered asynchronously and accessed after hours.

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