

## ONLINE PARTICIPATORY FOCUS GROUPS

Section		ONLINE PARTICIPATORY FOCUS GROUP 1: 22 September 2021
1.	EW	How did you experience the challenges of stress during COVID-19?
2.	P1.1	Yes, one had no choice but to learn to be adaptable and so on. One had to learn to do stuff portion by portion and to see what is the most important and to ensure that it is done and then one moves on.
3.	R	So, I hear two things. I hear that you are very adaptable people and although many of us think we constantly stick to structure you were thrown into the deep end and you simply had to change. There were constantly changes and you just had to adapt and carry on. And then I hear creative solution. Creative problem solving, because stuff was dumped in your laps and you had to make a plan and you did not know what tomorrow would bring. So, it's that unpredictability with which you coped. It wasn't that you were so structured, you just could not get out of that groove, you were extremely adaptable.
4.	EW	Uhm.
5.	R	Do you agree EW? You've read the literature, I did not.
6.	EW	Yes. And what I also hear is prioritising. And it comes in with, and what I also hear is prioritising. I am jumping a bit ahead, but it comes in with one of the following strategies that is about things that distract your attention from matters that have to be attended to now. So, almost to prioritise, it also became clear to me in what you are saying. I don't know if that is what you meant, P1.1?
7.	P1.1	Yes, no, definitely, I don't know. I often feel I plan too far ahead and yes. I am not someone who is fond of changes, probably not. Because you were forced to learn new skills, I mean we had to do online teaching and make videos which had to be very interactive, especially with the little ones. They can't really do anything on their own. You can't just tell them, do this page, or read and learn it, one must simply learn to do interactive things and so on. So, you also had to learn new skills. I think it was initially difficult to make that head shift from what you are used to and then just... – so now we must be on Google Schools and do everything online and you cannot physically be in the classroom and help the children. So, I think it was, yes - we learn lots of new things, which was also good, learnt new skills, and yes ...
8.	P1.2	I think the most difficult for me was – as you say P1.1, you like planning, you are not someone who acts irresponsibly and... – I think the difficulty in my case was to prioritise what the most important was. So, you had to sort of educate yourself on how to use Google Classroom. Uhm, how to use videos, how to make meet recordings, where to save them and then to carry on and then, yes. So, I think the most important for me was to prioritise which was first to present the best possible you to a child who does not sit still in your classroom. I mean, he is going to see you on a screen and what he sees on the screen is a reflection of who you actually should be, although it is not necessarily who you really are. Uhm, so you cannot make that contact or joke which you would have done in a classroom, because the work has to be handled first - after which there may be time for casual conversation or banter. And I think many children who are not used to someone like me who usually speaks quite loudly uhm, would think that I am shouting at them. Where I have to tone down my voice when speaking over a microphone and then feel that I cannot hear myself. So, I think it was a great challenge to me to physically teach myself how to use it. And then, yes, I think that I have discovered a lot about myself in terms of, you know, as you've said, P1.1, we are adaptable. And, uhm, someone who likes white and black and lives according to it, eh-eh, I actually realised that, okay but, anything that jumps at me I should be able to do. I just need a little longer to take it in or to be able to do it, than, for instance someone who does not function in white or black, someone who is easy going, who is creative. Yes. I think it was the greatest challenge for me and I have now also learnt a lot about myself and, yes.
9.	EW	Okay. Thank you P1.2.
10.	P1.3	I think to also add to this: In the class environment it was half, as mentioned by P1.1 and P1.2, similar to a big adjustment on its own. To me it was also almost like meeting each other on the veranda and saying, my class is struggling with..., simple example, my grade two's – my children are still struggling with change (monetary term). Listen, could we quickly fit in another week for revision thereof? And especially in that hard lockdown period it was, nothing happened naturally. Everyone is just on the phone all the time. To me a phone or any technology is the most unnatural thing, and I don't enjoy it at all. I will... - the less I am busy with my phone or laptop the better and it was a great adaptation to adjust to that, because one becomes so dependent on it and it is almost the only medium that one uses. So, yes, again, that adaptation, but also half, the battle between communication. About, you can't just find out something quickly,

		everything now has to be worked out well in advance. And again, also not, because you cannot plan two weeks ahead. Because, you can actually just say, fine, what is happening next week. So, it's that, constantly, half that conflict between, you don't know what you should do, or not. Its, you don't just find out something quickly. Everything felt like this big discussion all the time. You can't just quickly say, listen, how do I teach this or, is this okay. It felt as if you had to go back all the time. It is half, okay, we must now arrange the meeting because we have to discuss something. So, it was just, yes, to me it was almost as if the inter-personalities or the interpersonal relationships were rather a challenge, apart from just teaching. To prepare the lessons amongst each other and then take it to class. So it was, yes, to me rather difficult to be busy with technology all the time, you must be constantly concerned with technology, because it is almost as if everyone is dependent upon it now.
11.	EW	Yes, I think many, as far as I have heard, there are many, uhm, many who now have had to adapt to using technology...where there have also been many adjustments in terms of technology. And I think it links up with P1.3's socio-emotional part of those interpersonal relationships that could have, uhm, a little, I wouldn't say they have suffered a loss, but presented more of a challenge in coping. And we will come to that. Understand? How it is dealt with. And what was done there.
12.	R	EW, can I interrupt you?
13.	EW	Yes
14.	R	I think, I think actually you should just talk.
15.	EW	Yes
16.	R	Doesn't matter if it is SD's stuff or EW's stuff.
17.	EW	Yes
18.	R	I think, you should just chat. I think. Because, SD, are you recording this session?
19.	EW	Yes
20.	R	No, you must switch on your microphone so that I can hear.
21.	R	No, man you should. I cannot see her. No please go and sit next to EW. Thank you. So, I think, just carry on and chat. What I heard from P1.2 – it is, it is, it was difficult for you to, to be human on a non-human platform, almost, not so? Because you felt you could not be there and the children could not... No, P1.3, don't go and hide.
22.	EW	You must stay in the circle so that we can hear.
23.	P1.2	Make the circle smaller P1.3.
24.	P1.3	My circle still looks very good.
25.	R	Now I can see all of you.
26.	EW	Okay.
27.	R	So, I think let this just be a chat, because I want to hear, P1.3 for instance from you – what have you done. If you now say you felt that the children did not yet understand change (monetary term). Did you call someone, or did you tell your head of department ...or what did you do about it?

28.	P1.3	One often sort of, you perhaps hear from one person, and then in the end one feels that you will handle it in your own way. You, you sort out that which you have to handle now. And I think it is the way that teachers in general deal with such a matter. And the reason why I think teachers could adapt so easily to all these things, contrary to most other occupations. Your every day is so predictable. Every day a child comes in who is usually so calm, and today they are so restless, so, and you have to adapt to it. In addition, you still need to carry on with your daily planning, or so. So, you often manage to do more. You often do slightly less of some tasks and try to catch up the following day, so I think to a certain extent I almost did my own thing. And then, after a while you just follow up and say, listen, this is approximately where I am because you don't want to say, listen, things are rough. You just compare yourself with someone else, or yes, just get some more inputs - to hear, listen here, how do you feel about this? And then the worst is, the answer is, listen, I felt just the same. I also felt it wasn't quite the case. So, I think, yes, it is rather difficult, because everybody probably felt the same, but no one communicated it to each other. Because everyone just felt, okay, what should I do. Each one has his/her own class. It is my responsibility. You know that all people have their own stuff. You just have to cope with what you have. So, I often think everybody feels the same, but you take what you have and do the best you can.
29.	EW	Yes
30.	P1.2	But it worked for you to do your own thing and then follow up later? Or would you rather have preferred that all of you met on a Monday by means of a <i>Zoom</i> meeting and say okay, these are the problems that we've experienced. Are we going to carry on or are we going to wait a while, or are we going ahead because the children understand it? And then, with you personally, have you spent more time with your friends? Because I know you are not like many other people who spend lots of time on the telephone, as you pointed out. But now you had to do it. Did you spend more time with your friends than on your own? And that is your own personal thing. It has nothing to do with academic matters. So, my two questions to you, P1.3, is: 1. For the academic [work], you enjoy doing your own thing, or would you rather have preferred a structured week on a Monday? And then 2. Did you spend more time on the phone with your friends or did you have more of that face-to-face value, as more people would have preferred to have?
31.	P1.3	Well, after a while, I have, if you yourself constantly have to determine how far you are with your tasks, then we definitely arranged a weekly meeting to say, listen, all of us are feeling slightly lost, all of us reach a point where we say, I am not sure any more. So, then we started to arrange meetings more often. Exactly once a week and we still do it. It just needs to be planned to quickly reflecting on where we are with the following week, does anyone think anything else is necessary? So, academically it has helped. Because one often feels, or I did, okay I do it now, but it is, perhaps something isn't working at all. And then it's just, someone else tells you what works for him or her and it is so easy. So, one must. One cannot be without it. You can't just say, okay, I am going to do my own thing, because then you are inside your little box and you don't broaden your knowledge or your manner of teaching in class. So, I think one must definitely do it. And then, like with the telephone, personally, I think I will be like the term, "I ghosted people". So, I did not, my phone was still not with me. It was very frustrating. I only used technology for academics, I just do not want a telephone.
32.	R	Okay, again I heard two things like what you said. Firstly, one learned, I again learnt two things in what you said. In the first place, you learnt, all of you learnt, or you had no choice but to think on your feet, and to tap in on your own strength and that within you, that in which we often do not believe. We are often very relaxed to think, no, I must find out about this work before I do it. But you were forced to do it, and later had the sounding board from your peers, to hear how they did it. And then you almost got affirmation from them of yes, the way I did it worked, or, I could also have considered this. But to me it is almost a biarticulate matter. The first thing was, think on your feet, find a solution for this problem and do it. And I think this connects to what P1.3 also said earlier, if he cannot be as he is in the classroom. So, he had to do something with that online platform to still try and have the same impact on the children, although by using other creative ways. So, thrown in at the deep end and had to do something else, is what I hear. P1.4 why so quiet, what are you doing?
33.	P1.4	No, I am waiting for an opportunity to speak.
34.	R	Well, you have it now.
35.	EW	There you are, it's yours.
36.	P1.4	No, I listen attentively. I don't know, I am a bit hesitant to speak, because I think what I want to say, I don't want to step on anyone's toes. Because, I understand that it has been a rough time for people, but I did not experience it as such. It was not difficult for me. Uhm, and I say it with respect. I really don't want anyone to feel that I look down on you. I do not say this out of haughtiness.
37.	EW	That it is not what I am thinking.

38.	R	There is no right or wrong.
39.	P1.4	I just don't want any of my colleagues to take offense and throw a pie at me tomorrow at school or something.
40.	R	They may write on your windscreen with lipstick, That's even worse.
41.	P1.4	Yes. That is exactly what I am afraid of. Especially from P1.3, but no I am joking.
42.	P1.3	Let me hear.
43.	R	Don't send her a WhatsApp she is not going to answer her phone.
44.	P1.4	Yes. No, I am joking. No, you know, I must say, it wasn't as rough for me as it was for other people. Uhm, I am definitely the opposite from P1.3 when it comes to technology. Technology is, I use my technology every single day. To me it is second nature. Uhm, it is part of who I am and how I do things, so it was very easy for me to begin using it in a work respect, but I think, uhm, if I can be honest about why it wasn't so difficult for me emotionally, is because of technology, I was constantly in contact with my friends and loved ones. Uhm, yes, I will say more about that in a moment. But I think the most important to me is that in which I am rooted. Uhm, I understand, I think in the section on faith, I answered quite strongly because I am grounded in my faith. Understand, I live to have a relationship with the Lord. That is priority in my life. That is first to me and it gave me security in a time when there was no security. I also experienced an unbelievable development at the time. I did, I mean I was appointed in a fulltime position at the school. Understand, a lot of things happened during that time which also gave me affirmation of my faith. So, to me it was not emotionally difficult. I definitely think the fact that, as I said, that I was technologically in contact, actually constantly with my friends and family, contributed to it. Some of you will possibly know <i>Discord</i> . <i>Discord</i> is a platform that people use to chat on while they play games together. Understand, I did not work fourteen hours a day, because there were not fourteen hours in a day's work. So, what did I do? I played games. And then I sat and chatted to my friends while we were playing. So, I think I wasn't home as much as most of you, and I say that with respect. I was one of the first who was called back, because I was with grade 7 at that stage. Uhm, so we were totally thrown in the deep end. No one really knew what to do when we arrived there and uhm, I was still privileged to work with Miss xxx. And she was absolutely an action driven person. So, she literally told us, okay, this is what they are telling us, this is what we must do, let's go. And, we made plans and we worked. And I think the biggest adaptation that I had to make was, in English, to do "expectation management" – I had to manage my expectations. I think, whatever you said, I am someone who prefers to plan ahead, and it simply wasn't possible. So, I had to be okay with being at the school all day with working on several things, making videos, or whatever. And then to pitch up at school the next day, just to be told okay, we're not going to do that anymore. And then, you haven't, you could not afford to be disappointed about it, because there were another bunch of things you had to do. So, I think we were absolutely focused on what we were busy doing. What are we going to do to make it work, and in the end for us, I think I and Miss xxx have discussed it at length, what we are going to do to help the children? Understand, our focus was the child. How are we going to help that child? I think especially in a subject like Maths, which one has to understand. It is something that one has to practice. It was important for us to constantly think, okay, if we do this, how will the child benefit? And that is what drove us the whole time and in the end. specifically, also at work. Sorry, I have spoken a lot now R. Am I forgiven?
45.	R	Yes, there is nothing to forgive.
46.	P1.2	Do you know, P1.4, I will join you in that. To me also emotionally, it wasn't so bad for me, you know, I had to get out of the house. And, you know, it was in a way to me, because I am so busy and I like to have things to do, I find it quite pleasant. You know, I could only paint so many rooms. I could only rearrange so many things, I could only fix so many things. Uhm, but, to us, and I (Name) talk about it often. To us, lockdown was one of the best things that could have happened in our family. I mean, we saw how xxx cut her first teeth. We saw how she rolled over. We saw how she started to crawl. We saw how she stood up against things, took her first step. You know, we saw all those things. So, for me and my family this lockdown was really one of the best things that could have happened. And I mean, we also learnt so much about each other. Now, with our second daughter, with xxx, then I think I, gosh, she could already roll over. I missed it the first time, when she rolled over. Uhm, I will, while at school ten to one, miss her cutting her first tooth, with my luck. And so on. So, if we should have another hard lockdown, I will again be very happy, because I know what I will receive during the time. And I also know how to handle myself during this time with teaching and to manage my family and do things. So, if there are again five weeks' lockdown – I am ready for it. As you say, we can play games, we can video call. I love this place. This place is very cool. We can do it more often.

47.	P1.4	This is cute, I also like it.
48.	SD	But yes. So, so P1.4, I can honestly tell you, lockdown was not emotionally so bad for me.
49.	P1.4	Yes.
50.	P1.2	Because you know, I could, I could understand everything better, I could also learn more about myself and also, I learnt more patience, actually patience. Uhm, but the academic part was a challenge for me. Because I am this loud person and this guy who cannot stand still in front of a class, but who walks around and who, uhm, cracks jokes and I think the image that I placed on a screen and the image I present face-to-face in class, did not correspond.
51.	P1.4	Yes, yes, it is completely different. Yes.
52.	P1.2	To me it was genuine one of my biggest challenges. Because, a video cannot tell me how I really am.
53.	P1.4	Yes
54.	R	So, what you say is, emotionally you depended, or you found comfort in that which held value for you. That is really what you are saying. Because, where P1.2 is now in his life...no, where you are going to, thank you. What is now important to P1.2, are those small bodies and that growth as a family and each other, and to really appreciate it. And what is important for P1.4 in his life is his faith. And you held on to that which is valuable to you, you possibly had more time for what is valuable to you in life and it was probably why it wasn't so emotionally difficult for you. In spite of the hard facts that the academic work was difficult. Because it was a process of adaptation, it was totally new. P1.1, did you want to say something? Because we are not giving you a chance.
55.	P1.1	No, no, no, I'm listening attentively.
56.	R	But we also want to hear you.
57.	P1.1	No, I just think it depends which part of lockdown we are talking about. Because the first part when we were not allowed to go out at all, when we were at home, I remember. I remember I was in (town) on a farm and we had to send out work-cards (for children) and it was frustrating. You send out a work-card and just hope it is correct. But, shame, you don't know if the children are doing it correctly. You don't even know if some of the children are doing it. You don't know how the parents struggle to explain it to them correctly.
58.	R	Struggled a lot.
59.	P1.1	Understand, I think it was difficult. Because when I was on the farm, there were two children and they also sent work to school. I had to help the children and I know it was a struggle because the children didn't want to work and it was also (unclear). However, it was older grades, but later on one succeeds. But when I saw what our school did in comparison to what their farm schools did, I thought, I felt very sorry for those parents because we are very structured. We gave them some work. You get this and this work card. That is how it is done. They were a bit disorganised and it was rather a struggle. But when we came back, the children could not come back yet. But we were there, it was fine, because it was, you went to work. You are there for a few hours. You work everything out for the week. Everyone sat together to do their tasks. Yes, it was difficult because you had to make videos and all kinds of things. But our grade sat together every day, outside in the sun and conversed and spoke about what we had to do, what was important. And there everyone started to understand, like P1.3 and I, who now work together in the same grade, I saw more of how she did the planning of the English. And all of us could contribute to it and where they could help me with maths, what they could contribute and so on – so it was actually very pleasant, because there were no extramural activities. It was just school. In your extra time you now had to go out of your way with extra videos and online things but there was time to do it and to play around and actually try and work out cool things and so on. And I feel when the children came back, yes, then things went crazy, because you noticed that some of the parents had really gone out of their way to help and they are aware of what was happening. Other children had simply done nothing during the entire period and they were almost a year behind. So, I think it was the difficult part, because of the lockdown and everything – it was hard and it was an adjustment when the children came back. To go from hey, these children are already going to grade 3 and other children cannot even write their own names. That was a bit rough. Then you had to do the same work, get everyone on the same page and some of the children had to catch up. But at the same time, you had to keep the children who know what is going on and keep them entertained. And you have to keep their attention, otherwise they will just sit and do nothing, understand so they sit and waste their time. To me that was difficult. And when the sport started again, <i>joh</i> . I think one got so used to sitting at home and doing your hobbies. Oh, and I

		can now do this, and do this, and do this. And I can go to so much trouble with lessons and videos and now that extramural activities and other things are added, one doesn't have time for those things. And, yes. I think things then started to become difficult. When everything had to be "mushed" together again and no one really knew what was going on, it was rough.
60.	P1.4	Listen, what you are saying is funny.
61.	P1.2	Literally, it is as you say P1.1, the tempo, from when you walked into the school, was like that. And when the children came it was like that, and we carried on. And when extramural started, everything sky-rocketed and, uhm, I was so scared that, because I was involved in so many things and everything had to be done because, uhm, the children must enjoy it. And then, on the other hand, one thinks about the academic work, that still ...those children, as you say, who have done nothing – they had to catch up. We see this in the sport and we see it in class. Especially in sport, children who, a year ago, played cricket, now don't know how to play. And they are younger than 10. Academic work; children who have done nothing and they come back, you almost have to coach them from start how to do it. So, you don't teach that child, you coach him now to be able to do these things. And then later, you as teacher burn out and you don't have those creative thoughts anymore. You don't want to do it anymore. You just want to get through this day, put up your feet, drink your wine and literally let go, but you can't. Because tomorrow is another day. And tomorrow will be even worse with its own challenges.
62.	EW	Can I ask something, in terms of, you now say, you know, the previous time's coping, I hear there is, I hear so much resilience in terms of emotions and people on whom we depend. And we learnt about technology and to me it is, this time is to me very insightful. And I think, SD, as with our study, we really looked forward to hearing from you. Uhm, but do you think that for instance, what you learnt last year and had to, had to cope with, and those skills that you – the growth process that you went through in the resilience – do you think it has been carried over to where we are now? Because look, now there are also, as you say, many challenges, also COVID-related and actually as result of the backlogs that took place. However, that which was determined last year in terms of how to prioritise, how to adapt, how to think on my feet, how to be creative. Do you think some of it has been carried over to where we are now?
63.	P1.4	Yes, for me definitely, yes. Absolutely yes.
64.	P1.2	Yes, I just think you, you handled last year as a guinea pig and this year you just carried on with what you had done. So, to me it felt like it has become second nature.
65.	EW	Okay.
66.	P1.2	That whatever problem comes your way, we sort it out and we carry on and move forward.
67.	P1.4	Yes.
68.	P1.2	I don't think; there's no time to stand still. Because you have to show progress.
69.	P1.4	Yes.
70.	P1.2	You can't worry about – and now it sounds very bad – you can't worry about that hind ox that dawdles on behind. You have him in the back of your mind. Like I have him in the back of my mind. But for now, as you said, P1.1. You have to do something for those children who in fact did some work, to still teach and keep them occupied. So, I think it literally spilled over and became second nature.
71.	P1.4	Yes.
72.	P1.4	I think what P1.3 mentioned earlier about what ... (some audio missing)
73.	EW	We are losing you P1.4, perhaps you should repeat it. There you are, please tell us again. We missed you.
74.	P1.4	Sorry, I was busy saying – P1.3 earlier spoke about we were forced to start talking to each other in a new way. We had to start sitting together and talk about how we do things.
75.	EW	Oh, yes?
76.	P1.2	P1.3, how do you do it?

77.	P1.3	P1.3 laughs. I am going to wait so P1.4 can tell me how I did it.
78.	EW	While we are waiting, I just want to ask something else – sorry R you must say if I should...
79.	R	No, I am just wondering about you and SD. Where's the wine? Didn't I say that you have to see that each of us at least has a glass of wine in this ...
80.	EW	I told him. But no. The man.
81.	R	Really?
82.	EW	No really, there were cocktails, wine, options and everything, but no ...
83.	R	So where is it? I mean...!
84.	EW	EW laughs.
85.	P1.2	I have wine!
86.	R	SD could have put everything here for us. This room that you created is lifeless. There aren't even flowers.
87.	EW	Virtual wine, yes.
88.	R	Sorry, EW, I interrupted you.
89.	EW	That it is why I asked what we brought over from then on until now. But what you mentioned earlier, P1.3, about, you just carry on and you're, you know, there's almost a burn out. Uhm, I don't know, if there is a general feeling of people around it, or what is it. And, uhm, are there other ways to use now to adjust it? Because, to look at something like this and we'd like to hear from you. But one should look at yourself in terms of handling it. But if you could expand on it. I would like to hear more about it if we have time, I don't know. P1.4, perhaps you should tell us what you wanted to say first, then we can come back to this...
90.	P1.4	Sorry.
91.	R	Excuse me, P1.4, I would like to quickly join up with EW. I think what it comes down to is that it was difficult. And P1.2 said, you, sometimes just want to, you can't wait just to lift your feet and relax. But you made it, and I know, the teachers were unbelievably tired at the end of last year. More so than I've ever seen them. So, it was a very tough year. But you made it. And I think that is what EW is asking, why did you make it? But, now P1.4 can go back to what he wanted – he has now, it seems to me, jumped out for a while.
92.	P1.4	The thing just decided to restart. It thought it was a good time. Uhm, sorry I was just busy to, yes, shortly, the communication that we were forced to acquire last year has helped me a lot this year. I just suddenly got heaps and heaps of more responsibilities this year and it actually placed me where I don't micro-manage as I previously did. Because I am someone who likes to know exactly what I am responsible for, I want to know exactly how it works and I want to know who did what about it and there just isn't time for it anymore, it has forced me to improve my communication with people.
93.	EW	To delegate?
94.	P1.4	Excuse me.
95.	EW	Sorry, no, I interrupt you. I just wonder, to delegate. And not that control...
96.	P1.4	Yes, yes, yes. Basically, to when I delegate, also communicate better about what needs to happen.
97.	EW	Okay.
98.	P1.4	Uhm, because it's easy to say to someone, listen here, do this for me quickly. And then when you have, you micro-manage it, you don't have to communicate constantly what you are doing, you can just keep on and on. However, I have now been forced to very shortly tell someone, listen, please do this quickly. That is what must happen, and then trust them to make it happen. Uhm, understand and there is not always time to handle everything yourself. It is definitely

		something that I learnt from last year. To know what is now the most important, what must I give attention to and what should I rather leave to someone else to do. Uhm, it meant a lot to me this year.
99.	EW	Okay.
100.	R	On the other hand, it teaches you to do better time management, not so? All of us are inclined to waste time on unnecessary things.
101.	P1.4	Yes.
102.	R	Uhm, you do actually have time management on your side.
103.	P1.4	Yes. I think, sorry, now that you are saying that, I also think to come back to something that I mentioned earlier on about managing my expectations better. Because if I ask someone to do something for me, I cannot expect that it is going to look exactly as I did it, so I have to be satisfied with it. This year has been a great one for me. Xxx is my assistant. When I ask him to present a class for me, then he does it differently from how I do it. The point is however still made, and I cannot be dissatisfied because his methods differ from mine; he did what I asked him to. And understand, if I can explain it practically, it is straightforward, but there are other aspects surrounding it.
104.	EW	Uhm.
105.	R	It connects with what P1.2 also said, around those expectations which one has to manage. The expectations around the children and to know what to let go and what to pursue. You are actually saying a lot of things. Many important things; P1.3, I want to jump back to what you said earlier, you're not keen on your phone or technology. Well look, I hate technology. This platform that we got hold of now is about the only one that talks to me and I resisted before I went on it, but then I did and I actually liked it. What did you do to get over that you had to use your phone last year?
106.	P1.3	So, yes, this matter of technology – it is not that I have a block against technology or struggle with technology. I think like with all these things on google, I adapted very easily. One learns to use it and you are able to do it. One just has to be open about it. But it actually is, I am more of a face-to-face person, than to send you a message: how are you? Then, once a month visit means much more to me than if I send you a message twice a week and say, I hope you are well, how are you? It feels so impersonal. I don't do it. But then I feel when I meet up with people, I am intentional. I will get to that. So, what was pleasant with COVID, I almost feel, teachers in general, are like that. That is why you work with children, or why you work with people. Staff members look each other up, you chat, you joke and you tell and make up stories. So, to me it was rather bad, you come back to school and it is your grade. It is all you see for months. If you don't see someone for a long time and this is possibly the most that I've seen P1.4 this whole year. It is rough out there. I think it was my biggest problem. I could not wait to go back to school, because then I can do what I want to. I want to be with children, I want to stand before them and talk to them. I did not study to give of technology. I did it because it is expected of one at the moment. But it is just, I enjoy personal contact. So, what was pleasant, one now had more time on your hands, because you can't get to the children now or necessarily the school; before the extramural were back you had more time on your hands, so then one walks the extra mile and you get to the people with whom you can have that interaction. And I think it was to me like, I need people, I am energised when I spend time with people. It doesn't tire me it makes me live. So that is then where I start finding it difficult. So, when I talk about technology it is not so bad that I am afraid of technology or cannot do it. I, all of us have now adjusted. You do your PowerPoint, perhaps you sit here and there...P1.1 is very good with the sounds and the animation on the PowerPoint. But you learn, you begin to adapt. It is now more... it was a challenge to me not to get that energy from people, because I am totally excluded from people's energy. However, what was pleasant, I know I need it. So, I did it. I followed up with friends. I made plans to spend time with friends and spend time with family. So, yes. But I definitely had to adjust to using technology. It simply is one of those things. You just have to do it. There is no other option. You can't ask a parent, listen, please come and see me quickly, I want to chat, you send a WhatsApp, you make the call, because that is what's expected of you. You adjust to that. It just isn't natural to me. I don't enjoy it. But you do what you have to do.
107.	P1.2	Do you know, P1.3, concerning that, P1.5 and I discussed it the other day. You know, we in the senior phase who roamed as we as staff are roaming teachers, we go past each other so quickly. Because you must get to that next class quickly. The periods are rather short, you have to get to the class. There are things that need to be done. And it is true, like you who work from people's energy, just to walk past that person and say, "Hi, how are you, we'll quickly chat during break" – is much better than to, as you say, send a message. But we spoke about it the other day – it isn't pleasant anymore to walk past each other and say; "Hi, how are you, it's fine, sorry, I have to go". Uhm, and you don't hear any more about what is happening in people's personal lives, when you actually do get together, you talk about how rough things are at school.



108.	P1.3	Yes, precisely, yes.
109.	P1.2	You can't anymore. This child is driving you crazy. This class is driving you crazy. So, I think that personal aspect of, how are you, genuine – is out of the picture.
110.	P1.3	Yes.
111.	P1.2	Hi. So, I think it is rather challenging. And you know, like us who so seldom see each other. It doesn't help to go and sit down one afternoon and have coffee or go and have a glass of wine, or whatever it may be. Because you can't, there are other things - extramural activities that have to be done. Sometimes one has just had enough. You literally don't want to do it.
112.	P1.3	Yes.
113.	EW	Hmm.
114.	P1.4	[cannot hear the words]
115.	P1.2	Yes P1.4, you.
116.	R	But lots of other things you are saying - what you are saying is actually interesting – much of what you are saying the children have also done. Xxx did his expo on how the grade 7 and grade 8 children experienced it. That some of those children are saying they still don't know what the children from the other schools look like, because they've never seen them without masks. And what you also said, P1.3, its almost, on this platform one can at least see each other. It came out strongly that what the children experienced very negatively was that they could not see the teachers' faces or mouths. Because just to see eyes is very limiting in terms of the message you are getting. How did you handle the children's emotions? And the children's frustrations?
117.	P1.4	P1.4 laughs. Yes.
118.	R	Are you playing on the computer P1.4?
119.	P1.4	If I may say, I have a very difficult grade. They are very, very busy. So, we had to be stricter in terms of debits and so on, but it was to uphold discipline. The children's emotions – it's difficult to say if they are just at that age where their hormones are starting to bother, or is it really the result of the lockdown. Although, if I look back, rather to last year, I remember when we just started and only the grade 7 kids were back, it was terrible. Those children sat in that classroom like zombies. They did not talk. Uhm, they literally looked as if they were panic-stricken. No one wanted to do anything. They just sat there and looked at you. You'd ask a question and, we are used to, while we teach, get feedback – such as, listen, what are you saying, do you remember, who can tell me what this is. To ask that type of a question and those children are literally sitting and staring at you. There is nothing. That to me was the biggest frustration when we just began to – those emotions, I don't know – I can't remember what we did to get the children going again. I think it happened naturally, oh okay, we can live again – they just had that realisation and carried on.
120.	EW	Hmm.
121.	R	I want to say it was due to your example. Because you were unsure and the children also had many fears. But it was the way in which you handled it that made it easier for them. What you do.
122.	P1.4	Yes.
123.	R	Because you remain their role models. We can say what we like at home, I mean, Miss P1.3 and Miss P1.1 are actually the ones who know. [I think she knows; she actually knows nothing] – overlapping voices. Who you were and who you are, was the reason that the children eventually relaxed?
124.	P1.4	I think for sure; I can refer to what I've seen. All of us know that Miss xxx is a very jovial, loud, active person. And that is also how she teaches. And I definitely think, R, that the children also took a lot from that. Miss xxx will say straight forwardly when the children are just sitting looking at her, she will shout, why are you so dull? And then she will start raging. And then they get a fright and think okay, it's okay to be normal, so I think definitely... [voice fades out]
125.	P1.2	You know P1.4, I think there ...where... half, the masks also played a big role to me, because you cannot see when the child smiles. They can't see when you smile. One can't really pick up the sarcasm in your or in a child's voice, because you speak half between the teeth and then there are really people who mumble and to top it all, behind a mask. It makes it that much worse.

126.	P1.4	I just wonder, P1.2, if it hasn't sort of forced us and the children to communicate our emotions better to people? Because we don't have our expressions to show everyone, we are forced to listen more to what people are saying. So, I think it has definitely improved communication.
127.	R	Hmm.
128.	P1.2	I think like P1.1, you P1.3, you who are in the foundation phase – you can't really give the child an indication that you are satisfied with him or you know, this child who is a non-verbal child – just smile at him and say, you know, it's okay, just to use your smile. Now you have to say it physically, that it's okay, and those – that non-verbal child, to retire into his shell, because he cannot read the emotions on your face.
129.	P1.4	Yes
130.	P1.2	So, I think the fact that we wore masks – in the beginning they were half afraid and felt they couldn't live – those are my thoughts – why they were so lethargic - and uhm, when you started walking a road with them, they started – okay, when teacher says this or that, then, uhm, he or she means it in this way, or whatever may be the case.
131.	R	You are saying something very true there.
132.	EW	Hmmm
133.	R	Because, if one thinks about communication and non-verbal communication – how large a percentage it actually is that we believe. And we couldn't see it. We could not see it behind a mask. So, you are saying something very true, and that the children over time possibly had to learn how to, uhm, express non-verbal, verbally. Because it doesn't come naturally, we just don't do it. I mean, it's not what we are used to. Very interesting what you are saying. P1.5, what are you doing now? But you have to turn on your microphone if you want to talk to us.
134.	P1.5	Okay.
135.	EW	He earlier mentioned that he had problems with his technology, so – “Hello, are you there?”
136.	R	All of us keep quiet.
137.	P1.2	He went to fetch xxx from school.
138.	EW	Oh.
139.	P1.5	But I am back again. Yes. Sorry.
140.	P1.4	You have a lot to catch up, P1.5.
141.	R	You must turn on your video, even when you sit at the pool with your whisky, it's okay.
142.	P1.5	No, I've now gone to the spare room.
143.	R	Is it in disorder or what is wrong, because P1.5 can come and paint it, I hear.
144.	P1.5	Me? Paint?
145.	R	P1.2, P1.2 can come and paint it.
146.	P1.4	P1.2 is going to paint it.
147.	P1.5	What? What, my spare room?
148.	R	P1.2 likes painting. He says in lockdown he enjoyed painting, but now he ran away. I see.

149.	P1.2	I am just trying to get to where I can see myself.
150.	EW	Are you ready?
151.	P1.2	Yes.
152.	R	P1.5 has thought out work for you. You can paint his spare room.
153.	P1.5	My spare room is actually painted.
154.	EW	Laughing.
155.	P1.5	He's just a bit mixed up.
156.	R	Well, welcome back.
157.	P1.5	Thank you. Thank you.
158.	EW	It's your turn now, you have a lot to catch up.
159.	P1.5	Okay, what must I say?
160.	EW	Laughing.
161.	P1.3	<p>Oh, can I quickly fall in here? I think for me and P1.1, I think I will agree with that, for the young ones the adjustment to come to school wasn't such a problem. They were there, they could see their friends again. To them, ...it was just something more. I think, or well for me, the biggest challenge was those energy levels that came into the classroom. You can imagine – to say to a Grade 2 learner, quickly do this work that the teacher has sent you. Uhm, I will just now, I just want to watch television quickly, or I just want to ... So, they are used to, throughout lockdown, be held busy and watched television, by doing anything except to concentrate for long periods. So now they come back into your classroom. One does one activity and then those little faces sit and dream and wander and you can see ...things are rough. And then you must quickly – “okay, everyone. Get up quickly, get up quickly, okay, blow like trees, okay, touch your toes, okay, look this side, look that side”. And you just do what you can and then you say, okay, sit. Come let's do the next activity. After 10-minutes you have to do it again. Okay, stand up again. Okay do this again, do it again. Okay sit. Another activity. So, for me, it was very difficult to get the children to again – you left your previous grade where they were ready to go to grade 3, you had just started to work with them, up to and till March. They've missed out completely. Now you get these strange zombie-children who cannot think for themselves. They can't concentrate. They don't feel like working. And now you must get them to do their work, to keep up the pace. “Okay, come now, we have to work now. We must be busy”. It is rather an adaptation to have to go back, to jump so far back is rather an adjustment, to say, fine, you can't expect them to do what you did in March or the previous time that you saw them. You have to go and fetch them where they were and say: “okay, fine, we're going to, now, take out your book, yes, it's the book of poems”. It was rather frustrating to have to jump so far back to again get them to concentrate, but it is also unbelievable to see where we are now. Now you say, “fine, take out your book, take your green pencil, take out your spelling book, open it on page 5”. And, the average child can do it. So, they have also grown. As we've adjusted, they've also arrived there. However, I think for the children, or - for me – it wasn't so bad that the children had to adjust more than that they had to adjust to academic work. And to get into that routine again. Because before everyone came back it was ...[unclear] girls Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, Tuesdays, Thursdays. Tuesdays and Thursdays. And they rotate every Friday. So, for them that routine is not there at all. When they are at school the teacher expects them to do all this work. The following day mom and dad are busy on their computers with work and say; “keep yourself busy, go and watch television”. And then I have to compete to get them off it to the following day and say, “fine do you remember Monday's work? It's now Wednesday. “We must continue”. You can't go and fetch them every day from Monday. We must now carry on. And the children were just total zombies. So, to me it was a challenge to get them back in routine, where they know, fine I am now expected to work, I must be able to do it and, uhm. Yes, amongst the friends, I feel children are much more adaptable with the mask stories than three quarters of the grown-ups I know. So, they know the rules. They tune each other – “your nose shows” or “your hands must be sprayed”. They just carry on, where in the academy specifically they found it difficult to get into that routine.</p>

162.	EW	Okay.
163.	P1.2	(Very far from the microphone) You have to excuse me please. EW, SD, R, thank you for the opportunity.
164.	All	Say goodbye P1.2 and thank him for his contribution.
165.	R	P1.5, over to you.
166.	P1.5	Are we talking about how COVID affected me, how it affected the children and how I see the situation?
167.	R	Actually, more how you coped. You did cope. You are stunning. Everyone thought, wow, how is it going to happen, how are these children going to get through school. And you made it! I mean, you made it happen. Why?
168.	P1.5	I think every person cope in his own way with different things. Uh, I think most of the people at school know my whole story and how I coped with the whole COVID by beginning to jog and it was my outlet. So, to me, to go back to school was not such a big deal. I did the work that I had to do. It was nice to see the children again, uhm, the workload, I felt, has definitely become more. Uhm, how we handled children definitely had to change. Uhm, yes, you couldn't anymore – just the childrens' emotions – you couldn't see it at all anymore. So, it was a new thing to learn, like reading eyes where one could usually see the whole face. Now you had to begin reading eyes, because you can't.... uhm, body language too. Body language has also started to play a big role, because you can't see the person's face at all anymore. I think it has also started to make many children insecure, those children who stood out by using their face to do things, have now fallen back. And the children who are reserved, who did not really show emotions, are now those who became more emissive, because, uhm, they can hide behind the masks. So, I think every teacher probably handled it in his own way. As I said, to me it wasn't such a hard time. I actually learnt more about myself, than I've learnt in the past 33 years. So, it has taught me to handle different situations. In teaching it was actually a very good learning year-and-a-half for me. I mean, we are never again going to have what we've had the past year-and-a half. So, I believe if one could get through this year-and-a-half, two years, then what lies ahead will be fairly easy. We have learnt to start from nothing, and we have a whole school who is at the school. Yes, we have all adapted. it was either you adapt, or you go down.
169.	EW	Hmm. It is very valuable, because it is precisely what resilience is, buoyancy is to get through difficult times to the other side and to be able to apply it in future. It's really very valuable. I just want to hear, are there other things? I know about the jogging but are there other ways that you've thought of that helped you through it?
170.	P1.5	What also helped me was the fact that I started doing other things, like at school I became part of the technology committee. It also took my mind off other things. It's never pleasant to ... and I know all of us are on Facebook and we are on Instagram, and when you open Facebook or Instagram there are negative stuff.
171.	R	I am not, I'm too old,
172.	EW	Neither am I, so sorry.
173.	P1.4	And neither is P1.3, don't worry.
174.	P1.5	When you open it, it's just negative stories. But we keep on looking at it. Yes, I try and see past the negative things, by staying busy with other things.
175.	R	You've said a number of things, P1.5, you talk about reflection, you talk about keeping yourself positive, you talk about becoming involved with new things. Those are strategies, that you... [overlapping voices]
176.	EW	It's very valuable.
177.	P1.5	I think it's also to try out new things. When we had that three months' lockdown last year, instead of watching TV, my wife, little daughter and I, built small hedges and did different things just to keep our brains occupied, not to just watch TV or sit and look at each other for three months. It's also where you start building up stress in your head, and then start taking it out on each other. So, yes, to remain busy was the most important. [It was important] not to get entangled in this bubble in which we are living now.
178.	R	It's almost like this is now our reality and we must cope. What is the best way to do it?
179.	P1.5	Yes, so I deal with it. We are here now. It is not going to go away, so learn from it and try and move forward.
180.	R	And that is what it is in essence, what resilience is.

181.	EW	Yes.
182.	R	Resilience is to be in a difficult situation and accept it as your reality. Resilience doesn't say we deny that there are negative situations. Uhm, but I had a look, what do you have in yourself and your environment on which you can depend, to make it work and to make the best of this and stay positive. And it is what you've done. Everything that you've said this afternoon, is what you've done. P1.4 got it through his games and technology. You had different ways of how you kept your children motivated, got them through it and coped. All of you coped with different challenges in different ways and on different levels; small children have their challenges and grade 7's has their challenges, on different levels. And that is totally different. Everything you say. EW and SD – do you have more questions? Or did you get what you were looking for?
183.	SD	Yes, R, sorry, I did.
184.	R	Did you hear what P1.3 said, she said personal contact with people is rather important.
185.	SD	Yes, R. I did.
186.	R	Did you make a note of it?
187.	SD	Yes, R. I am just wondering – before COVID we of course had things that were important to us. Or things that we had to do, or things that we had to get that were valuable to us, that give us energy and make us feel more positive, etcetera. I just want to know, during this COVID-19 time, is there anything of which you have experienced anew that actually is valuable to you now, that you feel you need to remain positive. Yes, as mentioned by P1.4, faith has always been important to him and in COVID-19 faith became even more important to him due to things that he went through. So, I would like to hear from the rest of you if there were things that you valued before COVID-19 that might have changed, or during this time that made you aware of what you feel now is really valuable to you now that you actually make time for because it contributes to your positive disposition to function, now.
188.	P1.1	I think it gave me lots of perspective, especially in the time that we had to be on our own and we were completely on our own... Or if you had COVID and you had to isolate or so, because I live on my own. So, it was actually rather bad. In the hard lockdown I was on the farm together with nine other people. So, I think, there are many ways to cope. Time helped tremendously, because initially it was bad. Everything was just, it is lockdown, it is happening now. Because I still – I had to move into a new house two days before lockdown. Everything just happened so fast and it was just like, this overload of fear and all of that. Only later one realises, okay, but it doesn't help to stress about everything now. There are things that need to happen. And, one realises later, okay, what must I prioritise. What will be important. What should I not stress about, but important things? Later on, one realises, it doesn't help I am now stressed about something. It is not going to help. And especially, then one begins to stress about work and this and that. And there are actually people dying from contracting this virus. In the beginning, everything was so terribly negative. Everyone watched the mortality numbers each day. What is going to happen today? The people with whom I went away, were terrible. The woman especially took us to the farm because she thought there would be a war that would be super intense. Everyone is anxious and, on the edge, and when you go to the shops its gloves and masks and before you enter its just ... just clean ... I think people just got perspective about what is important. I personally had to spend much time with myself, and I realised what is important to me. Such as, sometimes, especially at school, it takes over one's whole life. Because there is never a time when you think, phew okay, my work is done, I can now do something else. It is constantly, oh, but these books should actually be marked, or, that child is a problem, I must do something about it; oh, I still have five SNAs to fill out, or, all these things. There's constantly something. I think to prioritise yourself and to look at what you are interested in. Like P1.5, who started jogging, or P1.4, who plays games...say for instance, I enjoy working on my house and in my garden and to restore my furniture and things like that. And that one actually builds yourself up by doing that. Such as, I started playing tennis. I am extremely bad at it, but I started to play. I am not good at it at all, but I started doing it. Yes, it is also pleasant, one also has to build yourself up and not just work, work, work, because in the long run, it is also about yourself.
189.	EW	Self-care, yes.
190.	R	Self-care, teachers don't do it. We give so much to others that we never get to doing that. It's so true.
191.	P1.3	I think, if one had constantly watched the whole social media, during the first COVID, it was as if, everyone was half - what is that new skill that you have acquired. Whether it is baking a banana loaf, I think everyone did that one. Or did you attempt playing a new instrument. Everyone tried to fulfil the emptiness with something that you would not have done under normal circumstances. And then it is strange, I wonder, how many people actually had things on which they then spent time, how many of those things are they still doing. I then feel that is what we do. One fills your brain with so many things. You think, the more of these things I do, the busier I am, the more things or activities I engage in, the better it will be for me. But when things start getting hectic and you go back to those one or two things – it also made me realise, okay if I only had time, this would have made me feel better. If I had done more of this, it would have

		made a difference, but if you don't have that time, what is it that you are going to do that will make you feel better. And for me, P1.5, it was also to exercise. So, I know it doesn't help if I only have an hour in my day, it is useless to try and fill it with lots of unnecessary things that I think will make a difference. Because afterwards, one sits with that same fear or stress in your thoughts and you realise, <i>flip-it</i> , before the day after tomorrow, I still have to do this or that. So then that hour of relaxation has not helped at all, because you have not stepped away from it mentally. I think everyone realised they have that one thing. Whether it is to read a book for half an hour, or to jog, or whatever. But everyone I feel, reached a point where they knew, it works for me. When I feel like that, then I go and do it, because there was a pattern of each time when I applied it, it worked. So, for me it was to fill your life with things that did not hold much value in the end. It causes you to stress more or does not contribute and you walk away from the situation thinking, oh okay, now I've wasted half an hour because it has not helped at all. Where now, I focus on things that I am sure works for me and I go with that.
192.	EW	That is very valuable. To me it sounds as if it is about selfcare. And it is about that reflection of what works for me. And it is about – and tell me if I understand it correctly – and to me it is about being in the moment, instead of to worry about this and that, but it is about that bit of mindfulness and just being in that moment. Uhm, that is what I hear, I don't know if that is what you... It is really valuable.
193.	P1.5	I think in general COVID caused us to also look at our health. Not many people realise it, but one inevitably has to start looking at what you are putting into your body, you look at what you eat, how often you eat. Because all the stories that emerged, if you have diabetes, you are a high-risk patient, if you are this, you are a high-risk patient, overweight, underweight, this DNA, that DNA. There are so many stories that people went into a flat spin. And actually, in a positive way, people also started looking at their own health.
194.	EW	It is also a strategy. It's also a cognitive strategy. However, you want to do it, it goes with exercise, that you do, it is about nutrition and exercise. But it is part of the literature and that is what you are telling us now. It's a very good strategy that one uses and it helps with coping by eating healthy, sleeping well, jogging, exercise and everything. It's very valuable and it is in the literature, that you are teaching us now.
195.	P1.5	No, we don't teach you anything.
196.	EW	No, you teach us a lot.
197.	R	I said I would just pop in and look how long I am already sitting here.
198.	EW	We are keeping you busy for a very long time, Sorry. Yes, Okay.
199.	P1.1	I just want to add, I think what also helped a lot was to talk to other people such as colleagues who are going through the same. I know, me and P1.3 also made dates for video calls just to chat a bit and unload. But also, at the same it is important to surround yourself with the right people, because there were people who just carried on about the negativity of everything, how ill everyone was and so on. So, I think, one looked in depth at the people with whom you surround yourself. You were much more in contact with the few people you saw and they had a greater influence on you. The negative people one tried to push away quickly.
200.	EW	Yes, yes. I don't know if someone wants to add anything more. We are over what we wanted to mention to you, so we don't want to take up your time. We are here, if you would like to chat some more. It is really very valuable and discerning to me.
201.	R	It is unbelievable. From my side, thank you very, very much. I know how valuable your time is and I really appreciate it. Sorry, P1.4. I interrupted you.
202.	P1.4	No, I just wanted to say, I think you will have a rough time in your other groups that you will put together, because we have now said everything.
203.	EW	Yes, we don't have anything more to learn.
204.	P1.4	The other people don't talk as much as these people; I also hear it at school. These were talkers.
205.	EW	We appreciate it tremendously. Really, we know how valuable your time is.
206.	P1.5	I think the most important is, even if things become difficult and even if one goes through a difficult time, you have to, as far as possible, try and stay positive. I know I enjoy it a lot and I enjoy the song very much; Bob Marley's "Three Little Birds", where he says, "every little thing, is gonna be alright".
207.	P1.1	How does it go P1.5, sing it for us quickly?
208.	P1.5	No.
209.	EW	R, I will make it the title of my dissertation.

210.	R	What?
211.	EW	Three Little Birds. Thank you, P1.5.
212.	R	You can use it for one of your themes or sub-themes.
213.	EW	Hmm. No, I will. No, thanks a lot.
214.	R	We just quickly discussed a bit of the academic work of EW. P1.4, we interrupted you again.
215.	P1.4	No, I will rather not say anything. I am just laughing at P1.5. I just wanted to hear what the song sounded like. I don't know it at all.
216.	EW	All of us want to hear.
217.	P1.5	Go and listen to it. Everyone knows it.
218.	R	P1.3 is going to appreciate it more if you sing it, because she doesn't want to look for it on her phone.
219.	P1.5	No, I have a bit of a sore throat. I won't be coming to school tomorrow.
220.	R	Do you have other symptoms also?
221.	P1.5	Headache.
222.	All	Thanks, and goodbye.
<b>ONLINE PARTICIPATORY FOCUS GROUP 2: 28 September 2021</b>		
1.	SD	We predict in our study that you in fact are resilient. We believe that you are already resilient, because both our participants who are here at present, are teachers and you are here today. You also came throughout the past year-and-a-half. So, we predict that you are in fact resilient in this period, we are just going to dig deeper, how your resilience was, how you coped. So, which cognitive and psycho-social strategies you as teachers used to guide you through this period. EW, I don't know if you would like to add something from your side, before we give the floor to the participants to share their views with us.
2.	EW	Thank you, SD. All I would like to ask, P2.2, if you are right in the middle of the circle all of us can hear you clearly. So, to remain within the circle I think is ideal. And then I think one can move around as much as possible. If you don't mind, please turn on your cameras and unmute yourselves so that we can have a pleasant discussion. Hello, P2.1. Thank you. As SD said, there is no right or wrong answer. Uhm, it is merely that, you are the experts. We wanted to know – to see, after we have analysed our data, in the quantitative part that was a questionnaire. we saw that you are resilient. And I remember there was an inquiry in terms of, I wanted to write a bit more or say a bit more. This is now the me platform where we would like to hear what you wanted to say more. How you were resilient, because we could see that you were. There were many adaptations that we had to make. It was really just a new normal and we had to act and cope very differently. You know, there are no right or wrong answers, so we really want to open the floor to you to tell us what you experienced as valuable and how it was valuable to you.
3.	P2.1	I think too, for me personally it was, to still have contact with my family. Even telephonically, because we couldn't get there, but I could at least talk to them and hear that they are well and there were no problems. I think it also gives one a feeling of peace to know that all is well with your family. The second thing is that, I think, the partner with whom you are, has a very big influence on who you are and how you've experienced the whole matter. I know, through my colleagues who are single parents or are on their own, struggled terribly. It was terribly difficult for them. One friend of mine literally says that she has become lonesome and forlorn. My partner has however had an enormous impact on how I experienced it because I had an outlet all the time, just to say, this is what I feel like, this is how I don't feel, I hate it, I like this, this is horrible. I could share my feelings. The third thing was that, I think it depends from school to school, but I know that some of the grade groups struggle terribly, because they don't really have people with whom they socialise. But we, as a grade 4 group, the staff, are inclined to talk to each other. So, during times that we could not be in the staff room, we could see each other between class periods for 2 or 5 minutes, I think it eased the situation for me, just to communicate with other people. I don't know if someone else would like to say something while I ponder on it.
4.	SD	P2.1, May I ask you, uhm, during these contact sessions that you had between periods or breaks - were the contact sessions different from the ones you had previously? I mean, the interaction with people, was it different from what you had previously experienced, before COVID-19, if it was, how did it differ?

5.	P2.1	Because we had to do many new things technologically in classes, a little background, our school is one of the few that is still very set on protocols. because our headmaster wants things done correctly, which I respect, we as teachers still transition from class to class. In other words, you have to take your laptop, you have to take your cables, you have to take your, uhm, the papers of the children who are absent, with. You must take your own pen box, your own black board eraser, your own stationery, so the whole package that has to be carried from class to class is overwhelming. The other thing is that there is so much that you must have with you because today one learner is absent, tomorrow two are absent. But, one of them is only coming back in two weeks' time, who has already missed two weeks' work. All of it is in your classroom, so you have to go and fetch it. And every computer plugs in differently in each classroom. So, you must constantly be aware of how it will have to work. It therefore takes a lot of time out of one's periods. Where at first, we perhaps spoke about learners in general and some learners about whom we are worried, we did the discussions from before COVID, when we at first spoke about friends – listen did this child do his homework for your class? I don't know what goes on at his home, things like that, changed to – that plug doesn't work. Let's just keep our grade's black board rubbers in a specific place, because, uh...- You know, it's more that type of logistical discussions that took place and uhm, was an outlet – ugly words. It scares a person.
6.	SD	Of course. Yes.
7.	EW	Okay, so there were lots of...sorry, what I hear is that, apart from an interpersonal, emotional and social connection that one tries to uphold one should now think logically or logistically, as you say, and uhm, and actually plan. Lots of planning goes into it on a material level. So, it takes up one's head space. Not just to cope with the emotions behind it but to actually be – because I know you are quality teachers, to still provide the best learning experience for the children.
8.	P2.1	Yes.
9.	EW	Is that how it ...
10.	P2.1	Yes, it was. I mean today, just an example, uhm, I have five English classes. The videos of four out of five worked perfectly, the sound was fantastic and the children enjoyed it. But one class, uhm, for some reason that class's speaker tripped all the time. So, I couldn't play my video for that class today, which meant that my lesson did not work. So, I had no choice but to adapt to presenting the lesson orally when I had actually planned just to plug and play.
11.	EW	So, there were actually – like whatever we heard in previous sessions - adaptability? That actually links up with resilience.
12.	P2.1	P2.2, I don't know about you, but I am not a technological teacher. I am a contact person. I like to touch a child's shoulder and to say, you are doing well. Or, I give you a look – you are not telling the truth now. But, uhm, throughout this time we suddenly had to learn so many new skills. It is not something for which you received training beforehand, so, during this process we attended many courses to enable us to teach and mark in Google Classroom, it was, it is quite challenging for someone who is not a technological person, to suddenly, all these, and – if you are someone who does things correctly it loaded lots of stress onto you.
13.	EW	Yes.
14.	P2.1	It took me a long time before I could get my lessons onto Google Classroom in such a manner that I approved of it. So, it was terrible, the whole technological side thereof. Uh, yes.
15.	EW	Okay.
16.	P2.2	I must say, I am privileged – uhm, because I see it as a privilege. Not all our children have uhm, access to the internet and so on. So that pressure was taken off us, to constantly perform on Google Classroom. And it really makes a big difference, because, uhm, I mean, like, to prepare those extra lessons beforehand and some schools I heard, had to load their lessons two weeks before the time. So, I must say, I am very privileged, but with my school there are other politics and drama, I agree with you, logistically it is chaos. Because, you'd go to a class, and suddenly remember, oh my goodness, I've forgotten something. Then you have to run back and waste time, but you have to remain calm throughout. You must keep your cool, if I may say so. So, yes. And then, also as you said, you like touching people and so on. You had to set new boundaries. One must know what is comfortable for you, permissible for you as a person. I must say, truly, I am still okay with people and so on, but many children are not, because they had – everyone did not experience COVID the same. Many people have lost loved ones. I am privileged not to have had it. So, you have to set boundaries and be sensitive to each one's experience of the whole COVID situation.
17.	EW	Hmm.



18.	P2.1	And I know about many teachers who were absolutely terrified to mark books, because, uhm, there are 144 books you have to go through a few times a week. In our grades, I mean, they are still small, its snot and sputum and dirty and sticky, and so forth. And now I have that extra pressure of working through 144 different books that children touch all the time and I know it was a huge problem for people. I think the first few times I had to mark, I was, almost, I don't know, I didn't want to. But then, afterwards, it didn't bother me. However, I know for many other people it was a huge thing – I have to mark all these books.
19.	EW	Hmm.
20.	P2.3	I think what you are saying P2.1, is, one had so many fears and uncertainties because no one really knew – I mean we are fighting an invisible enemy – and we are also people with fears and uncertainties. But through all of this, these 25, 30 little pairs of eyes are sitting in front of you and they bring along their fears from home and see you as teacher standing in front of them in class. You must remain standing and if your wheels come off, all the rest will lose theirs. So, that pressure was also upon a person, to keep yourself intact, even when you feel you are losing the plot.
21.	EW	Hmm. P2.3 may I ask something? You are saying, you know, you have to make sure your wheels don't come off. Now, how did you manage that, that your wheels did not come off, because we see that you are here, you are resilient and did it so well. And P2.2 said earlier, if anything happens, you must keep your cool. So, we'd like to hear from you, how do you keep your cool? And, how do you make sure that the wheels don't come off. What did you do to manage it?
22.	P2.3	For me, I think it was, ugh, it was a process to unpack it for yourself and how do I get to work tomorrow in one piece. So, I would say, the first was to make time in the morning for my quiet time to get that Spiritual injection into my day and to say to myself, it is rough and everything, but that piece in the Bible where the Lord says that He will not send anything on your path that you cannot handle, uhm, told me, He believes in me and my ability to cope. So, I do in fact serve a purpose where I am, therefore I just have to take it day-by-day and yes, focus to remain standing and hold on to it. And then, as P2.1 also said earlier, I came back to a healthy environment in the afternoons when I came home from work. I found my joy in my children and my husband and plugged into them a bit and I almost want to say, stole some of their energy – positive energy. Uhm, such as, yes, to see the positive side, because previously people... – well statistics show that divorce figures are so high after COVID and the time that people had to spend time together at home during lockdown. So, broken children are sitting in front of you and broken people are all around you so you do your best not to focus on it, to focus on the positive circumstances at home. And then, I practice to keep the thoughts clear, gain some perspective and to break away from everything around me. I don't know what the clever people call it, but to self-talk and gain perspective while I jog. And then, yes, work, it is not always possible to break away. Teaching is an occupation which people believe one only works half a day, but one actually goes home and takes the work with you. However, at least, on days when I had lots of work to do at home, I could just disconnect for an hour or so and leave the work and the problems concerning it at work. I also got to know myself. On days when I feel, gee whiz, the burden is heavy. It is okay not to switch on my computer today and fiddle around with work. Tomorrow is another day; we'll handle it when I feel stronger again and able to handle it. And then, yes, I think, one is privileged to sometimes – the pressure is high – and, although management expects a lot from one, they are also supportive and human. It helps to turn to people who are stronger than oneself when one feels weaker, just to hear someone else say, everything will be okay.
23.	EW	Okay. So, you talk a lot about ...
24.	P2.1	Quiet time has also always been important to me. If I hadn't been for praying, those first few weeks were rather difficult on a psychological and emotional level. Uhm, I also think, P2.2, what you said – we had to submit everything two weeks in advance – we were like that. Well, we are still like that. And the trouble is that what one sometimes does in class, is not 100% the same as on Google Classroom. So, you put in extra hours. That Google Classroom takes 4 hours out of my week to set up. And, as subject head, another 4 hours to look at other peoples' and make sure it is correct. I have never, in my whole life been as tired as now and I have never put in as many hours into schoolwork as I do now. I now get a B-complex injection twice a week, no, every two weeks, I get an injection, because I don't make it.
25.	EW	Gosh. Hmm.
26.	P2.2	I must also say, definitely my faith. And people who stand with you. People who know you as person, can see when you are drained and so on, who will come to you, tap you on the shoulder and say, listen, I see that things are difficult, what can I do for you? So, your circle of friends is very important. You need to know who contributes to your good moods and who, how can I put it, your bucket – who empties it and who fills it up. How to avoid it. Something I had to learn was to set boundaries and to say no. And no isn't nice, because no causes conflict, but I also had to realise, this is my parcel and it is most important to me. So, I have to do it and say no, and it is not easy, because it causes conflict. To me it was quite something to realise – to stand up for yourself, also without being hard or harsh, and also – as P2.3 has said – that bit of just taking time for yourself – there comes a day when you have to decide enough is enough.

		Today I am leaving early to go home and that's it. I close up from school. As difficult as it may be, because at the end of the day, if you don't do it, you will continue to suffer burn-out and never reach your goal. So, twist to take a break.
27.	EW	Yes. Yes. So...
28.	P2.1	I started to overeat. I realised when I am very stressed and I learnt it from myself during the past few months – I realised that it is true when it feels as if my wheels are coming off, then, uh, my tuck-shop account is through the roof, that is terrible, when I say, so and so please go to the tuck-shop for me, the children are already shouting, "Miss wants a ' <i>papita</i> '", it's a chocolate. I realised I am eating.
29.	EW	Okay.
30.	P2.2	Oh, something I wanted to say about what I say, you must keep your cool in front of the children, that I also learnt – you must also be vulnerable in front of the children. They should also be able to see that you sometimes have a bad day. But that's how you then handle it, so that they can see, but wow, it's not only us who feel we are losing it. That you openly communicate. And I have also seen, if the lesson goes totally south, take 10 minutes and just talk to the children. Yes, you don't feel like listening to that story that you've already heard six times, but you know what, at the end of the day children need it. Because it doesn't help to fight and your lesson ends up nowhere. So that communication between you and the children, and that the children see that you are also vulnerable, you also struggle at times and it's okay, and you're allowed to ask for assistance and then we stand up and carry on.
31.	EW	Yes. Sometimes one thinks it's not okay not to be okay, not so?
32.	P2.2	Yes.
33.	EW	However, to, as you say, to sometimes show that vulnerability, is often valuable, because then you have support. But you have spoken a lot about – sorry, I have so many questions and then I am afraid I will forget what I want to ask. So, stop me if there is something. You spoke a lot about self-care, and it was noticeable; P2.3 with the jogging and self-talk and surrounding yourself with positive people.
34.	SD	And faith.
35.	EW	And faith, setting your boundaries. But what I also heard was that there was probably a time of reflection. P2.1, you said you learnt about yourself and the value that it added. Is it something you feel one can apply in this time, because you have learnt about yourself? You know how important self-care is and how important people around you are, as well as planning and logistics, actually things that work. Does it feel that it is something that has added value to possible future challenges?
36.	P2.4	Yes, definitely.
37.	P2.2	I think one astonishes yourself. It has also been a period of growth. Little more than a year ago none of us thought we were going to have an internet platform to teach with. It does cause more work and so on, but one surprises yourself. One did not know what you were capable of. So, one doesn't know what still lies ahead. However, I also thought we hoped that it would not last forever. That at some stage one could push these things aside.
38.	EW	Yes. No, it is.
39.	P2.3	I have a rather bad temper. Sorry, but I am now going to blatantly admit. I had to learn that the work stays the same so am I going to arrive at school and freak out about it, or am I going to enter calmly and accept it as it is. Because the outcomes will be precisely the same. So, will I arrive heavily upset for the whole day or will I just be calm and take it as it comes and the outcomes will be exactly the same.
40.	P2.1	But I've also seen some people will be fine for weeks and then they get this day when they're like, yikes, come out of your classroom, let's take a walk.
41.	EW	Hmm.
42.	P2.4	...[unclear], because I am afraid you may land up on the front page of The Citizen.
43.	P2.1	People were fine at different times, not so... and people, others, you know. I don't know of anyone who did not have a day that wasn't [difficult utterance], you know that people just helped each other and said, phew, okay. You know, you try and stay as calm as possible, but my personality just is like, I get one day that I just, that the last person...EW also found me on the veranda one day, where she was by accident the first person whom I met that morning. Then I just stand still, listen and then I feel better and then we carry on again. I think each of us had our moments when it happened.

44.	EW	Yes. And it's also okay.
45.	P2.1	Hmm. Then one carries on again.
46.	P2.2	I had to learn with whom to share what, because some personal matters I could not share with everybody, and some people do not understand one like others do. Many people battle to keep things to themselves, whether the aim is to hurt one or out of care... Therefore, you must know who you tell what and also request assistance. If you can't anymore, it's not because of weakness to ask for help, but by being strong. To me, I see it as a strength and not a weakness.
47.	EW	Yes.
48.	SD	Is there anything that, are there any strategies that you use more, now that the children are back full time. Because I think we've become so used to children that [unclear] or come every second day, or to full classes. And then, bam, all the children were back. How did you experience it and how did you get used to a full class again and a full day of school?
49.	P2.1	It was better for me that everybody came back because with them ... Luckily, we just for a short while only did half-half. So, it was boys – five classes Monday, girls – five classes Tuesday. So, you taught the same lesson 10 times. So, by class number 6 you are fairly... it was very nice, but I'm now ..., [unclear] were now ..., that was it. So, it's much better for me that they are all back full time, because then you teach the same lesson five times, which makes it much easier. And, as far as your organisation is concerned, it is easier to take five books and five sets of everything than 10 sets. No, back fulltime is much better.
50.	SD	Great.
51.	P2.2	It took me long to ..., okay I'm not going to say it took long to adjust, but here at school we use crates to transport everything. So, every morning I would kind of according to the timetable, so I know my grade 5 things are here and 6 things are here, then you are ready to carry on. So, I organise my stuff in the mornings and then I know everything I need is here. And also, when I am in my classroom I have shelves for certain things, if I have perhaps forgotten something, I know, okay I am not going to bother another teacher, because I quickly glance in my shelf, then I am out of the way again, So I think organisation is really important. And I come to school 10 minutes earlier, because we sit in our classes [unclear, background noise]. So, for me planning is rather, I am left-brained, so to me, everything must be... I prefer to come in earlier and get everything ready for the day, then I am set.
52.	EW	So, one's time planning, is actually... I think you also spoke about time, planning and so on. It was in fact a way of making coping easier.
53.	P2.2	Yes.
54.	EW	Okay.
55.	P2.1	I think the children also enjoyed being together again because they missed each other. They longed for each other and, uhm, to have normality again. So, I think for the children it was also better when we could open fully because we have all our strategies to cope, but children – after a week, it's to them as if it has always been like that.
56.	EW	Yes, they are rather resilient.
57.	P2.3	I think one could also notice the improvement in them. Being on one day and off the next, when that child comes to school again, everything the teacher has taught, is gone. Then teacher has to start again. So, I think it is not only good for them but also for teacher's wellbeing.
58.	P2.2	The children make me tired, but they also give me energy. I always say, I love my work, but I am not always crazy about my colleagues, but I am crazy about my work. So, I also get my energy from the children. Yes, they also drain it. I also enjoy listening to all the stories and you know, the other day I got a letter – and then I'm like okay, all this fighting and emotional break downs are worthwhile for that one child who brings you flowers or gives you a letter. I also get my motivation from the children, because my first goal is to be here for them and for no one else. The children are – I enjoy hearing all their chats and things. And we are sometimes the only positive influence they get. So, to know there are a few children in my class who think – yes, I will see this or that teacher today and I know she will smile at me, because I don't get it anywhere else.
59.	P2.1	Or, yay, we have English!
60.	P2.2	No, precisely.

61.	SD	I'm asking directly – in terms of your personal lives, are there things that you prioritise now, that you possibly did not prioritise previously. That you possibly realised during COVID-19, its important, I need it. Are there things that you make time for now, specifically? Or specifically prioritise to experience a satisfaction or to cope during this time?
62.	P2.2	I found someone with whom I did not discuss school matters. Sometimes when one has friends who are teachers, one tends to revert back to school matters. Sometimes one can go into a spiral – of, I psych you up and you psych me up – and it's a problem ...[unclear]...and then, mental break down. So, one has to find people with whom you cannot discuss school matters at all, random things, stupid jokes, silly things, just have fun, just make a bit out of the school environment conversations.
63.	P2.1	My time has become so limited, uhm, that I can spend. And for me it is a great personal crisis. Uhm, I don't know how to handle it differently at the moment, most mornings, I uhm, get up at 3:00 to finish my work and I am a fast worker, I work until 19:00, 19:30 at night. And I have to move towards the bedroom at 21:00, otherwise I cannot get up early to continue working. So, at the moment to me, currently, one of my crises is that I do not have enough time for my husband. And he has already said a few evenings, it's enough now. Then, okay, I am coming. It is still a crisis for me and I have to work it out personally and I don't know how. There just aren't enough hours in the day.
64.	SD	Of course.
65.	P2.3	I make a point of it to exercise, to jog or so, but then I have the same problem as P2.1. It comes with other feelings of guilt and balls that one tries to balance in the air, not to drop them, like the time I spend with myself, is time of which I deprive my husband and children. Or, if I still have something that needs to be done for work, uhm, yes. So, it's always a difficult balance to keep up.
66.	EW	Hmm. Yes, what you are saying is very valuable and I really hear your hearts. But P2.3, I think uhm, you know, work is one thing. And P2.1, then, we have to see what we can do about it. But anyway...On the other hand, I would like to say, you know, it is also about – this is not a session that comes from our side, we actually want to hear from you – it is similar to when we are in an aeroplane and there is something wrong, you have to put on your own oxygen mask before assisting someone else to put on theirs. So, selfcare is definitely important but P2.1, as you say, balance is important, because it is about your own well-being and all of our resilience at the end of the day. Resilience is that – resilience cannot be defined without adversities, otherwise it is not resilience. However, one should emerge from it more positively and that is what we strive and work towards at the end of the day. But the strategies that you have so far mentioned and sharing your hearts with us, are so valuable. Truly, there are many themes, because in the end one looks at themes and so on, we put them together and write them up in a study. But it is still – don't think that we forget we are talking to people and their hearts – we are so thankful that you are part of the study. Even though it is anonymous, we really appreciate you tremendously, yes.
67.	SD	Definitely.
68.	P2.1	Before COVID we went to school, you would make yourself a cup of coffee and go and sit down in the staff room and the meeting would start. And then, for a long time, we couldn't make coffee and we couldn't be there together. And what surprised me throughout this whole thing, was how important that cup of coffee and those 5 minutes were. That people started making coffee in secret places, because it was like, my precious. I can't start each day without this little number. Even if it happens against the rules and stealthily, the plans that people made for that gem in the morning – here the focus is firstly going to be on coffee and then we'll take it from there.
69.	P2.2	As result of the social distancing, we could not have the staff meetings, so we received it on a WhatsApp. And to me it was fantastic, because sometimes not to start the day and hear what on your to-do list is and how you did not submit this or that, to me, was fantastic. So, I don't know how the meetings in your schools are, but to me, not to sit there every day and think oh my word, I still have to do this, or that..., and you know, the morning meetings that we don't have, to me – it's fantastic.
70.	P2.3	It will possibly be an adjustment to us to do it again, if we have to. I started at xxx school just after lockdown, so I became acquainted with everybody with masks. The other day, we started to have openings in the hall again and the school song was mentioned. I only realised then, that I have never before heard this school's song. I then realised, all the things one is missing, such as to hear what a school-song sounds like, to have a staff barbeque at the beginning of the year, that so many people complain about, are actually privileges to get to know your colleagues on another level. I also thought, what keeps us going in a way, is the hope that it can change again and normalise – that I can hear a school-song or attend a barbeque or have that cup of coffee in the mornings in the staff room and pretend not to hear the principal when he reads out the to-do list.

71.	P2.1	However, that togetherness is actually important. Uhm, especially for me with the technology... just to be able to phone someone and to ask, are you also struggling? Did it also take you an hour, or am I the only one who struggles? You know, just to hear, no, I also struggle. That actually meant a lot to me, that I don't have to feel all the time, ... [difficult utterance]
72.	EW	Just to be able to sound-board a bit.
73.	P2.1	Yes, my beetle is falling off. Okay, yay, us two. who else's is falling off.
74.	EW	All of us are struggling with this. Yes Okay. SD, is there anything more that you feel we can...it was such valuable information
75.	SD	Yes. Definitely. It was really very insightful and we have quite a lot of themes that we will be able to use and write up. So, it was great. I don't think I can think of anything specific that I would want to know, except, are there any values that you have used to cope in this COVID-19 period?
76.	P2.4	Taught me to keep my mouth shut. Self-control. Self-control.
77.	P2.4	Not to... your facial expressions [unclear].
78.		A lot of voice overlapping occurs here.
79.	P2.1	You're not allowed to look like that in a meeting, Miss, then it is sort of, what are you doing?
80.	SD	Yes, yes.
81.	EW	But if one can only show it with the eyes, then you are actually good, because with the mask, then...
82.	P2.1	I must tell you, one thing that I discovered about the children and myself is: a) I did not realise how weak my hearing is, I did not know how much one should see people's lips to be able to hear properly. I never realised that I actually have a slight hearing problem. And with one of my test papers, I decided to test it. I placed photos of people with different facial expressions and all the children had to tell me was how the person felt. After a year of COVID there were lots of photo's that they could not identify. They could not distinguish between being cross or surprised, they could not make that distinction. And my photos were very clear, there were big differences. And I realised it with that exam paper, the children can't read facial expressions anymore. So, you [unclear] start off by telling them where you are on a level from o-o, o-o. They don't depend on facial expressions so much anymore. So, they don't see it anymore.
83.	EW	P2.1, I think you should do a study on it. Think how interesting it will be.
84.	P2.1	Between what? Between 2 and 3 tomorrow morning?
85.	EW	Between 21:00 the evening and 3:00 when you get up.
86.	P2.1	I am now the person P2.2, who you want to hit with something, but I am just going to say, no.
87.	EW	That's very interesting. Can you believe it?
88.	P2.1	Two weeks before the time – I showed them different slides and photographs and we spoke about the emotions and facial expressions and how long it took them to realise, oh, that is it.
89.	P2.2	Something I also had to learn – uhm, it sounds stupid, but was compassion. Because, we are all fighting a battle. Sometimes when someone goes off at you, it's actually not anything about them ... -the other day, the poor woman...-she was the last pebble on my heap and I exploded. Then I had to go and apologise. It's not always pleasant, I was just like, you know – it actually has nothing to do with you, why I exploded now. So, to apologise and also to realise, everyone is fighting their own battle. So not everything is about you. Therefore, if the person shouts at you, it isn't really always about you.
90.	P2.3	I ... what I wanted to say now is, patience. It is difficult to have patience some days, but when that colleague bursts in and goes off at you – sorry, don't kill the messenger. Just to understand, okay, something may have happened in the previous period or it possibly is a bad day. Yes, then don't take it personally and hold it against them, just continue tomorrow as if that incident did not upset you that day.
91.	EW	All of us have our own stories.

92.	P2.3	Yes.
93.	P2.1	However, it's astonishing to hear amongst the people, how many colleagues have started to use medication to cope.
94.	SD	Sjo.
95.	EW	Okay. Yes.
96.	P2.3	And it is frowned upon, isn't it? It's not funny.
97.	P2.1	No, they ask each other, do you have a tablet for me? It was for me like, what?
98.	EW	Hmmm. Yes, there are ways. We had a list of questions with a lot of – I can name all of them for you – a lot of strategies. So now we want to see if what you are saying fits in here and what we can correlate. There is a lot of different strategies, not necessarily right or wrong, but it is very personal. And it is why we – you know, we appreciate it so much that we could tap in just to hear what the experts say, what our resilience is like in this time. So, yes, we really appreciate it a lot. I would just like to mention quickly, it may perhaps take a while, but if we write all of this up and there are still a few questions, is it okay if we just, one calls it member checking, so we add it to our themes and say, this is what we picked up, do you agree with it? You are still welcome to give inputs, in terms of, I actually meant it like that. So, if you agree, we would like to, at a later stage – and it is not compulsory – have your voluntary participation, just by email.
99.	SD	Yes, we are basically just going to mention that we got these themes from all the sessions. Is it really what you meant or what you said? Then you can just give a sharp yes or no, or did you actually mean it. We will just amend it then, just to make sure that the data we pass on is a true reflection of what you really meant and used during this COVID-19 pandemic.
100.	EW	Okay.
101.	P2.3	It's fine.
102.	EW	Thank you. From my side it was very valuable. There is not necessarily anything that I specifically would like to – you are more than welcome to mention more details or to chat.
103.	SD	Yes.
104.	P2.2	Goodbye.
105.	SD	Yes, from my side, P2.1 and P2.3, I've also had enough from today's session so I don't have any more questions, but if you would like to add anything you're more than welcome. Otherwise, we are done with today's session.
106.	All	Thank you and say goodbye.
<b>ONLINE PARTICIPATORY FOCUS GROUP 3: 30 September 2021</b>		
1.	EW	Is there anyone who can start for us, can share? Something that stands out if one thinks back to last year and this year. I mean, we are still in it. Much has already changed. What made you cope? What has worked the best and what stood out? It's a lot of questions in one.
2.	P3.1	I think whilst we [unclear] were that one's family members who are around you, that we carried each other and so on, And...[Two individuals talking simultaneously] ...to focus on the children. It's not on yourself and the surroundings. It's more on the children, to help them and support them. Then you feel you are there for a reason. And I think it gives you something to look forward to and to work towards.
3.	EW	Okay. Something that makes it more purposeful?
4.	P3.1	Yes.
5.	EW	Miss P3.2, I think there is something wrong with Miss's sound, because we heard Miss and Miss P3.1 at the same time. Is Miss's microphone at the bottom switched on so that Miss can hear us?



6.	P3.2	Can you hear me?
7.	EW	We hear, yes.
8.	P3.2	Can you hear me now?
9.	EW	We hear. If Miss can be closer to the circle, it will be better still.
10.	P3.2	Okay. The sound is rather muted, sorry. No, I just wanted to hear, did you want to know about personal experience in the school situation, or school environment?
11.	EW	Personal and school. But you know what Miss P3.2, click near to me, just underneath me, then Miss will hear more clearly if we are closer to the circle, the sound will be slightly better. Just click there with Miss's mouse. Click there near me. Place Miss's mouse there underneath me then Miss just comes a bit closer.
12.	P3.2	O, okay.
13.	EW	There you are. Is that better?
14.	P3.2	Much better yes.
15.	EW	Okay, right.
16.	P3.2	What jumps to mind immediately in the school situation, and I see two of my school colleagues here as well. I can see that a number of us are standing together I think that what we could mean to each other and how we could give each other hope, was a strong coping mechanism in our situation. We shared a lot with each other and although we come from different environments, as far as our experiences and our school- and work experiences are concerned. So, for us, it was <span style="color: red;">[unclear]</span> .
17.	EW	Okay. So, Miss means experiences and previous circumstances where there were perhaps difficulties that one could almost transfer to these circumstances?
18.	P3.2	I mean, what we experienced, what was bad for us, what we enjoyed and what was sad, during the COVID time we shared with one another. So, we actually used each other as a sounding board.
19.	EW	Okay, it created a bit of togetherness?
20.	P3.2	Yes, some togetherness of which we had actually had a shortage when you were on your own.
21.	EW	Yes.
22.	P3.2	When we came out of the lockdown it was almost a relief to know all of us have had the same bad experiences and shared it with each other.
23.	EW	Yes, okay. Does anyone want to add anything? Remember, you are the experts. We have to learn from you now.
24.	P3.1	EW, I want to add – I think the support groups at the schools were very important. Uhm, we have the grade guardians in every grade group at school and we have also now for instance made a group, or we have our own WhatsApp group, where we also shared with one another. When we were in total lockdown and we were not allowed at school, we tried to once a week arrange a Teams meeting, so that we as heads of the grade could talk to each other, besides talking to our friends and colleagues at school. But, yes, just to share things with each other, because the children started to suffer. We carried the childrens' social burden also rather badly, So the childrens' social co-operation was very important.
25.	EW	What do you want to say, P3.3.
26.	P3.3	No, I just want to say, from a personal or private point of view, I just want to say – I think had it not been that my husband had started working from home, these two years– I think it would have been more difficult for me. Because at least there was someone at home who could handle things while I went to school. So, in that way it made things easier for me.

27.	EW	Yes, a little socio-emotional...- the context of one's circumstances and your system.
28.	P3.3	I think in the past I would have done the difficult things at home myself, uhm, because he was away. You know, he was on the road or away for work. Uhm, the rolls have now a little ...you know, he's more at home now, uhm, could arrange things here a bit more, uhm, he for instance took the helper away, that I used to do in the afternoons, or helped with the children, with something. So, it made it easier for me to concentrate at school on the difficult circumstances there.
29.	EW	Okay. If you say concentrate on the circumstances, was it for you to prioritise it so that it does not become half cluttered - to almost half ...- I don't know, I think of prioritising in terms of to do what needs to be done. Is it what you are referring to in both contexts?
30.	P3.3	I think specifically with us in the grade R's, I think we are, uhm, you know, at the beginning of the pandemic, it was almost, you have to get the children comfortable – to wear the masks, to get them away from their parents. I mean, it's something that perhaps does not happen at primary school, but our parents always brought the children to the class. So, it required a lot of energy from us to get them so far as to leave the children at the gate. And, uhm, you know those types of things – to keep their masks on all day, uhm, not to touch one another all the time. So that part of our grade Rs was rather hard work. Uhm, we had to make plans to get them so far as to leave their parents at the gate. Uhm, make plans to get them to the gate in the afternoons again. You know, such things.
31.	P3.1	Emotional support, that one had to do extra as well.
32.	EW	Yes. So, there was also almost lots of adaptability. That's what I also hear.
33.	P3.1	Sorry, EW, I cannot hear P3.3 at all. So, I cannot follow the discussion at all.
34.	EW	I find it strange. I wonder if you can't, just below her and P3.4, insert your mouse, click and then move closer. Move closer and see if it won't perhaps help.
35.	P3.1	Now I also see her, thank you.
36.	EW	I don't know what the problem is today, so I apologise.
37.	P3.1	Sorry. I don't want to repeat what she said or so...
38.	EW	No, its fine. We would like to hear everybody's perspective and everybody's experiences. That's what it is about yes. P3.4, I know you have less time, would you like to share some of your views before you have to go? Okay.
39.	SD	I wonder if p3.4 can hear us, because I notice that p3.4 is still muted.
40.	P3.4	I have unmuted myself. Can you hear me?
41.	EW	We hear.
42.	P3.4	I noticed how we pulled our children off from their parents. They don't want to come and we still have children who are in the mind space – they are afraid to come to school. It's a big problem with the seniors, because we have to submit and finalise our assessments, but the children don't come to school, because they are scared. We found with the seniors that they support each other and I must honestly say, it was something very positive that came out of COVID. Although the circumstances were very bad, to me it was very positive to see ...[unclear]... They went through the same trauma. Many of them lost grandfathers and grandmothers, and I must say, uhm, I noticed in one class how two learners were so uplifting towards each other because they had gone through the same within the same week. [unclear]. It was a rough time, and we still have children who are scared and we still have to try and lift them up and tell them ...[unclear]. But yes, we try our best to motivate them, but it can only go so far. So, yes.
43.	EW	Yes. Yes, I hear. It also drains one's own energy. And then one also has to cope on your own.
44.	P3.4	When you get home at night, you have to support your own family as well. [unclear] It drains one. [unclear]



45.	EW	Yes. So, that is what we would like to hear now. We are talking about the school now and the challenges at school. But, where you felt you were drained, what did you do to gain energy, to handle it and to cope with it? There were discussions about talking to colleagues, to form WhatsApp groups and support groups at school. But what other strategies do you think were valuable to you? And possibly the most valuable?
46.	P3.1	May I talk EW?
47.	EW	Yes, please.
48.	P3.1	To me it is just jog, exercise. And what I also enjoyed was, I am a member of a running club, and because one could not take part in races during that time, the club gave us - what they called a club challenge – they gave us a challenge every week. You know, during the hard lockdown and afterwards, they gave us a challenge that was rather hard to run. And it was for me personally it was very good, because it motivated me to keep on running. Due to not having a fixed routine when we were at home, look when one goes back to school again, then you have routine again, but at home there isn't [unclear] really you know we now started at 8:00 with Google Classroom, but no one bothered whether you were dressed and pressed - and things like that. But for me the jogging, it is my sanity, has been already for a few years – and it especially worked in that time. However, I think that extra challenge that they put to us every week has helped a lot.
49.	EW	Yes, it's almost a lifestyle that has always worked, but what has proved itself to you now as being very valuable.
50.	P3.1	Absolutely
51.	EW	Hmm.
52.	P3.2	I think the fact that one felt so restricted initially gave you the need to physically do something. I think I walked quite a lot. We went on long walks every morning and there was a certain routine of walking and ...my husband is retired, so it was good and pleasant exercise. I started doing Pilates as from the beginning of the year. I have gained from it tremendously. I am upset if for some reason I cannot attend it. So, I think if one can do it, not only Pilates, any physical exercise; it is an excellent outlet for any person. One doesn't realise it until you start doing it.
53.	EW	Yes. Yes. P3.3? P3.1?
54.	P3.3	For me, it was lovely to be at home, and I want to say, almost to sort out my own life and the things that I've been wanting to do for some time but never had time for. Then one again feels in control of everything and everything falls into its place again. Yes, I rather enjoyed to just do small tasks for which one doesn't always have time during a term or during holiday time to sort out and get in order.
55.	EW	Okay. To create some structure again.
56.	P3.1	I think that is the same for me also. Yes, I think, yes, I should probably get around to exercising and so on; that is a .... - but I think with our children and so on, things went crazy the last few years. However, uhm, I think, where one never had time, just to read a while and be lazy. That I think, just entered my mind. I know it must change at some stage and one will come back to it.
57.	EW	Different people have different ways of doing it, but at the end of the day it perhaps is what I hear – and you can tell me if I understand it differently or wrong – but to me it sounds like self-care. Understand. If it is important to sort out your house because you feel that you have control, then one feels better. If one exercises and you feel all those endorphins, it helps. When you read a while and have your bit of me-time, its selfcare. Peoples' ways of doing it differ and there is no right or wrong.
58.	P3.1	It's like trying new hobbies or trying out new recipes. Goodness, I think all of us have tried out new recipes. The kitchen and the children...
59.	EW	If you found flour in the shops at that stage, you did ...
60.	P3.2	I actually started digging in the garden. What I have always done, but what I now had a little more time for.
61.	EW	Okay.
62.	P3.4	We also dug our garden up a bit. It's as Miss P3.3 said, things we never have time for under normal circumstances, but ... [unclear]. I mean the family time that we spent in the garden, and I must say, I was very thankful for the lockdown at that stage. I am possibly the only person who says so. (Name) was born

		during that time and I have to confess, if it hadn't been for xxx to help me, I think I would probably have become rather silly. So, I was very thankful to have him here with me, and I must say, I am very thankful to have him here with me. I must also say, he works a lot and terribly hard... [unclear]. I was so thankful for the time that we could spend together. I also love jogging. If I can't go and jog, I feel frustrated. One feels like you can climb up the walls. To be able to be in the garden and walk around a bit to feel one gets fresh air and exercise meant the world to us.
63.	EW	Okay. Yes. It's wonderful.
64.	P3.1	P3.4 and xxx are former learners of mine.
65.	EW	We are happy to bring you together again.
66.	P3.4	It's a small world.
67.	EW	Yes, you also don't have to worry. What is said here, stays here. You are welcome to go and have coffee afterwards to connect again. Yes. No. It is. So, there are lots of lifestyle, selfcare and family time that sounds as if it was almost prioritised. And that is very valuable. Have you learnt new things about yourselves? Miss P3.2 said just now she enjoys Pilates. Were there other things that you learnt about yourself?
68.	P3.1	I clearly learnt that I will never be able to be a housewife.
69.	EW	Yes. Yes.
70.	P3.1	It's lovely at home, but I once again gained respect for people who do housework and for maids, because yes, I don't think I am fit for it. One also realises how much you have to be thankful for. Things that you always took for granted, you realise are ...even the small things in life that you've taken for granted – you realise are not so ordinary and obvious, one should appreciate that it is valuable.
71.	EW	Yes. Yes. There we see you now, P3.4. Oh, for a moment.
72.	P3.3	I can explain to you what she looks like.
73.	P3.1	I think I learnt very quickly what it is to keep the mask on. I already started trying out different masks in lockdown and had them delivered here. I thought you knew; I will never be able to keep it on my face. So, I've learnt now that one can do it if you want to. It was quite a battle for me, but yes. Half the time the mask was not completely on my face at school, and it still is not. But, yes, I learnt to live with it.
74.	P3.3	I think another skill that we acquired was to make videos and no more. [voice overlapping]
75.	EW	Technology.
76.	P3.5	With technology yes. Especially for people who were born before computers, we have lots of personnel who were not comfortable with computers. And then you have to make a video or something. And initially one is uncomfortable the whole time. And oh, yes. One records the stuff 120 times. And at some stage you just realise, everyone looks like that on the video. We just carry on. One makes peace, but I think the skills that we've acquired with online teaching to do all those types of things. It takes one to the next level. One underestimates yourself and thinks you won't be able to do it, but then it is actually unbelievable how much one learns.
77.	EW	Yes. Yes.
78.	P3.2	That's very true what you are saying.
79.	P3.1	I think much self-development has taken place in this time. That you've improved yourself.
80.	SD	Yes.
81.	P3.3	Yes, we were forced.

82.	EW	We had to adapt. Yes, and it is what we are seeing. We see resilient teachers and that is what ...So it really is amazing. I can see now how hard all of you are working, so. SD?
83.	SD	May I hear more specifically in terms of self-development what you've named now? In terms of that specifically.
84.	P3.3	No, it is as P3.5 also said. You know, technology doesn't really appeal to me. It really has not been a priority in my life, but as she says, we were forced. We had to attend Google Classrooms, we had to attend courses that taught us how to use Google Classroom.
85.	SD	Yes.
86.	P3.1	And one had to get out of one's comfort zone. And you had to risk and try to succeed in doing things. I think at a stage the stress levels were very high and so on, but if you've managed it, you feel like you've attained something. Yes, you feel you've empowered yourself. You feel you've improved yourself. Things that you would not have attempted earlier, or would have looked at, you investigated and realised that you can actually do it. Yes, as P3.5 said, you risked.
87.	P3.3	I can only corroborate.
88.	P3.2	I just want to say, I am one of the oldest teachers at school. So, for me it is a huge challenge. I am thankful for this time, because I acquired skills, that I would not have learnt if I had not been in this situation now. It was extremely stressful for me. But if one looks back on it now, you cannot imagine that you were actually so stupid. It is as if you've climbed a mountain.
89.	EW	Yes.
90.	P3.2	We have definitely learnt skills that we did not have.
91.	P3.1	I think emotionally also, one can actually cope with much more than you think you can. How can I put it, I think we carried and also supported one another, as P3.2 has said? But you also realised, you are a stronger person than you had thought. And it is not always as bad as you had anticipated it to be. I think one grows in your personality as well as in your being.
92.	EW	It is very valuable. And that is precisely what resilience is. The definition for Resilience is about – one cannot describe it as resilience if there are not challenges and if you are resilient, you emerge better on the other side. So, it is precisely what you are saying and it is wonderful.
93.	P3.5	They say if there aren't challenges, no growth takes place. The moment when there are challenges, you know, growth and development take place.
94.	P3.3	EW, I think, in my case, I am someone who likes what is familiar. To me it was actually a terrible story, especially the computer that came into the picture as well. So, it forced me to move on, you know, if I had not been forced to.
95.	EW	Yes. So, it is that adaptability and getting out of your comfort zone, as P3.1 said.
96.	P3.3	Yes. No, definitely.
97.	EW	Yes. No, it is very good.
98.	P3.3	Yes. So, I agree. I agree with that, yes.
99.	EW	Yes. SD, would you like to ask or add anything more. Or does anyone still have a ...uhm.
100.	SD	Yes, I am rather inquisitive about, about values, about your things that you value more, now, that you previously perhaps did not value so much. Things that you will now specifically make time for because you realised during this time, that it is necessary for me to have an enjoyable and a pleasant day or experience, in order to be able to cope. Is there anything specifically that came to mind that you realised?
101.	P3.5	I think I just realised, time with your loved ones is very, very valuable. We try to make time, because one never knows how long you have them. I think it has always been like that, but with COVID you see healthy people – you see them today, tomorrow they aren't there anymore. I think then one realises, time with your loved ones is very valuable and one should make time for it
102.	SD	Definitely.
103.	P3.1	I would also like to add, the fact that I think concerns us, especially for us who are in teaching, can so easily become entangled in our own rat race. You know, because it must be done, all the work must be finished, and I don't know if you also feel like that some days.... And that peacefulness that one had during lockdown, that you could feel gosh, but there is actually a life as well. Then one tries to half prioritise and say fine, when the school starts again, I am going to

		make time for my hobby, and I am going to make time ...before reality kicks in again. However, I think I got a bigger awareness of time with my family and my loved ones, but to also make time for a hobby and to do something that is relaxing, because, do you know, it's good for the soul because, you know to make time to paint or to sew; uhm, are what I felt add that value to my life. One should beware of not being so caught up in school tasks all the time, that you miss yourself. Self-care to me is actually a point on which I keep a close eye now. Yes.
104.	SD	And when we came back full steam with all the children and teachers, not every second day or a certain number of children in class, do you find it difficult to adapt and still have to function with this COVID-19 pandemic?
105.	P3.2	I think what was the most difficult, is that one wants to see an end to it, a beginning and end to things. It feels as if one almost thinks, okay, now I've overcome this just to realise, but we aren't there yet. I am an eternal optimist, so I always want it to turn out well, and then one must return to reality and say, no, it hasn't worked out the way you expected it to. It happens constantly, but to adapt and to remain adaptable is extremely important. So, I think it is a benefit, if one can do it.
106.	EW	Okay. P3.3, you wanted to say something earlier. I think you wanted to say something about values?
107.	P3.3	Yes, I wanted to say, I think what we have not always realised, one could not really plan, uhm, during that time. It's also something we discussed with the grade R's a number of times. One wants to book a holiday; it's actually something that one accepts as obvious, that one can plan tomorrow or the day after, the weekend and the holiday, but we just can't do it anymore. So, I think it brought me that reality – of, do you know things can change terribly fast. I mean, would we ever have thought things could have changed so rapidly? In my life I would never have thought something like that would cross our paths, with the result that one cannot plan anything.
108.	SD	Yes, one learnt to be flexible and adaptable. As circumstances vary one adapts to accommodate it.
109.	P3.5	Yes, and then one has to remain positive. If I can apply it to school activities, that one just... - it's part of school – sport and culture and activities; and suddenly everything is closed. Now it starts to reopen again and one prepares for a big sport assembly and then COVID-19 wave 3 appears – and two days before the sport assembly, they say, no sport will be allowed. Then it is cancelled. It is then the task of you as teacher to uplift the children, because they have looked forward to this day, which suddenly falls away. There is nothing left, no rugby, no netball, no hockey, no stirring up of enthusiasm. And I must say, I realised that at our school for instance – it was a terrible disappointment for the whole school. But how the teachers actually had to step in and uplift the children and say, guys, this is unfortunately what we have to deal, with, we cannot... - you know however one plans, it can change at the drop of a hat. That resilience that one should transfer to the children, because I think the children are struggling terribly with it. Uhm, but I must say, it was rather – I can't say a value in my life, but something that I realised and experienced in my life during this time is the fact that things we are used to having at school, are suddenly gone. It has an influence on the staff members and the children. Especially those who live for their culture, sport and so on.
110.	EW	Hmm.
111.	SD	Yes.
112.	P3.4	Miss P3.5, I agree with Miss. With us, we especially noticed with sport, the children are not as motivated to come, because they feel we practice and practice, and they ask, to what avail? In the end we can't give them an answer, because we also don't know what for. We know it's good for them, for their well-being, so we urge them to keep on exercising, because when things eventually re-open we can take part in sports events again. Our children can however not grasp it. They want to exercise for a reason and towards a goal. The same applies to us, but we understand the concept of it being good for our health [unclear] that self-care...But they want to see that event and know they are practicing for something.
113.	EW	I think her internet is perhaps a bit ...The sound is erratic.
114.	P3.3	At our school we often say to each other, especially in the junior phase, teachers must be adaptable. I notice that the children are also learning to adapt. You know, it's difficult for them, but they are also learning that skill to adapt. [unclear]...learning a characteristic that they probably never would have had and, uhm, I think their personalities are being strengthened. I saw with my own children, they played a match, and there were no supporters. It was bad for the first match, but afterwards ... just to take part was a privilege. So, I think they learn from the whole situation and take it with them.
115.	EW	Hmm.
116.	SD	Yes.
117.	EW	Yes, I have received so much valuable information from you today and it was so insightful. I think it is already my and SD's third session, not so?

118.	SD	Yes.
119.	EW	And it is unbelievable just to see how children (humanity) and how teachers have come through it. Specifically, how they came through it and specific things that helped all of them. And oh, it humbles me - it was really a privilege to have shared it with you. Thank you very much for the time that you have set aside. We don't want to keep you unnecessarily. We don't want to stretch things, so if its, we want you to share and be part of it, but if you feel there is not necessarily anything to share currently SD, if you would like to ask anything more...
120.	SD	No, from my side I am fine.
121.	EW	So, we really appreciate you and if there is anything more, we would like to hear...
122.	SD	We are perhaps in a while going to do member checking as soon as we've finished writing up our data, but it won't be very long. Maximum 10 to 15-minutes where we will just check in to say, this is what we got from you. This is how we report it in the research and where you just confirm to say, yes, it is what we meant. And, yes, it is what we said. Or, no, I did not mean it that way, this is what I meant – so that we can change it in our research just to ensure that what we write down is what we really got from you is true and stated correctly. But, uh, it will be in a while.
123.	EW	Yes, it will probably rather be by email. If there is anything you would like to say, you are welcome. If you don't feel like it, it still is voluntary.
124.	SD	Voluntary. Definitely.
125.	EW	So, if it can...otherwise. There is already so much valuable information and we've learnt from you; it correlates with what we've seen and with the statistics. So many, many thanks for your time. We appreciate it tremendously.
126.	All	Goodbye.
<b>ONLINE PARTICIPATORY FOCUS GROUP 4: 4 October 2021</b>		
1.	EW	We have seen from our quantitative data, or the statistics that we received, that you are in fact resilient, if we talk about resilience. Because that is what we've now tested, to see how resilient teachers are and what they've done to remain resilient during COVID. So, if you can perhaps, informally on the floor, open up and tell us what you did, what helped and supported you. Remember, there is no right or wrong, it could have been anything and in any manner, that worked best for you. Miss P4.1?
2.	P4.1	EW, I think, I was so busy in that time, I hope it makes sense. I was so busy that there was no time to cope. I don't know, can there be something like that?
3.	EW	Yes, there can, so one was almost – you had to prioritise other things? There you are. Yes, Miss?
4.	P4.1	Because when I realised, another week had passed. And then suddenly, we had gone through another wave, or I had had to handle something else. And, and one just had to jump in and swim. It's not as if the world waited for you. It's not as if everybody said – oh, it's now COVID, we'll quickly stop all the other things, so that all of us can recover, and once we've become used to all these things, we'll carry on. At a stage, I would think, <i>sjo</i> , where was I when we went from this level to that level. Where was I when we went from so many people had been hospitalised to so many hospitalised. To me it felt as though I had missed a few things. I don't know if it was a blessing in disguise, because the fact that I had missed it, did not bother me that much – however, when I realised, wow, how the numbers had grown, how far we are with Google Classroom for instance – then a lot of things had happened, and I had had no time to recover strength. I must say, only when someone very, very near to me fell ill, you know, did I [sound of fright] I think my eyes were big, and oh, if it can happen to him, who in fact, I think, you know, is someone who is a sporty type of person. He exercises, he, you know, he is not really overweight, he is not over weight, he is not diabetic. If it could happen to him and he became so ill, <i>sjo</i> , then this is a terrible disease. But luckily, dear Lord Jesus had carried him through, so.
5.	EW	We are thankful for it.
6.	P4.1	We are thankful. Yes. I must, I just want to say one more thing – I prayed a lot. I hope you are not judging me as – oh, there she goes again.
7.	EW	Not at all.
8.	SD	Not in the least P4.1.

9.	P4.1	As, you know, I drive quite a distance to school every day. And I switched off Jacaranda, just, when I knew it was time for the traffic report, quickly switched it on. But the rest of the time I was busy praying. And not always for anything specific, uhm, I just spoke to the Holy Father and said, please help me today, because I don't know how to do it. I wanted to be an example to other people on how to handle it, so I did not want to lose courage. Other people would notice and say, well, if she can't cope anymore, then, then we have a problem. Uhm, and thank you, Lord, because some people said to me, somewhere it will catch up with you, then you will just crack and have a meltdown. But thank heaven, it did not happen. And it is just mercy, because it is just mercy. Okay, now I have said enough.
10.	EW	Thank you very much. It is very valuable. So, it was actually prioritising and religion, and just positive thoughts? I understand Miss, if I add it all up?
11.	P4.1	Definitely, positive thoughts.
12.	EW	Okay. Thank you. I see (participant), said his internet is a little, he may just move in and out, but we will talk to him. Thank you, Miss P4.1. Miss P4.2?
13.	P4.2	I would like to agree with Miss P4.1. In the beginning it was strange and something new. We have never been confronted with anything similar and it was – the most important thing about it is, it is a worldwide pandemic – it almost grouped all human beings together and one saw how other people coped. Humans are made that way, God made human beings so that we have a mechanism to go into second gear and pull through. I mean, our forefathers walked over the Drakensberg. It took me back to my primordial instinct and, our Afrikaans culture which is to turn to God. And I must say, God carried us through. When I look back. I must say, Lord, You were with us when the shadow of death was lurking around. But what I pity is the bluntness that is noticeable with everybody. In the beginning we were prepared and we did the things they asked and I kept busy because I could not handle the monotony, of watching TV all the time, and keeping an eye on the number of deaths and so on. However eventually, you know, one felt, what must happen, has to happen. That to me is upsetting of people, the bluntness that appeared. I kept myself busy, I came through this and that is wonderful. Work keeps me busy so I don't have to think about it so much. As Miss P4.1 said, my family has survived it, survived COVID. I had COVID severely and after we had had it, we were again – all so were prepared, wore masks, took vitamins and made sure all of us were all right. And it made me feel scared and I was nearer to God again and God was nearer to me. But you know what, that also passed and, uhm, bluntness stepped in. I think one's nature is, you can't for so long, for 24-7, be adrenalin busy with this thing. Things must return to normality, otherwise you must take what comes to you. But throughout this I must say, my faith in God has been my anchor. To whom do I turn, except through You. I must say, throughout the whole process, my faith was strengthened. I don't want to know how anyone reacted or coped, if they were not anchored in Christ. That's all I will say.
14.	EW	So, for Miss, it was a very prominent handling mechanism?
15.	P4.2	Handling mechanism and absolutely, a root. I realised how deeply anchored my faith was - especially in the Christian religion – where God told us He would never abandon or forsake us. And I called upon God in this time. I am also going to say the same as Miss P4.1, I do not want to adhere to it, but to me it was an absolute growth in my faith. And I can call out – the Lord is alive! He will never abandon or forsake us. It was an absolute deepening. My family time has also deepened and it has enabled me to move forward. And of course, my work ethics are – keep busy. Don't concentrate on the negatives all the time. You are in this, you will get through, as all of us did over the years. It was an experience that I learnt a lot, I got to know myself. And in fact, a thankful experience. But as I say, the bluntness thereof, came with it. Yes.
16.	EW	I just want to ask – sorry, I have many questions and I don't want to bombard Miss. I would also like to get to P4.4 and P4.3. The bluntness - does Miss see it as a positive manner of how people coped? Because they – I want to understand it correctly – because they are not as focused on it anymore – Miss did not use the word, but in my head, “paranoid” comes to mind. The bluntness, was it a positive thing, or did Miss experience it as something negative, almost – emotions that were dulled and confirmed that people were not as connected anymore.
17.	P4.2	You know, one cannot experience these high adrenalin levels 24-7 – sometimes it is, I cannot handle this stress constantly. That one gets to a point where you say, do you know, just let go. And as my son says, let go and let God. The positive side is that you realise that the time has come for you to stand back and believe that God is in control. We have prayed and said, God must be in control, and now you want to do it yourself all the time. There are certain things one must not neglect – such as for instance, sanitise your hands, wear your mask. But to be paranoid about it, I believe, is not right. We are not made to be like that all the time. You cannot 24-7 be on this high adrenalin level all the time. You have to stand back, take a breath and say – you know, that helped me, I am a paranoid person. I am constantly stressed. My jaw has gone into a spasm for which I had to be treated. Uhm, what I should have known, now I must turn



		back, now I have to take a deep breath, now I must know, God is in control. As He has always been. And what must happen, must happen. We had COVID. I had my first vaccination; I had my second one. Now I must return, things must carry on normally. It is necessary for one to then [unclear] It is a good thing for me to...-yes, it's blunt, but to relax with this bluntness.
18.	EW	Okay. Okay. So, it's almost half a positive...?
19.	P4.2	Its positive yes.
20.	EW	Okay. Okay. No, I understand. Thank you. P4.3, P4.4, Do you ...uhm, we would like to hear from you. I don't know, P4.3, if you would perhaps like to tell us, what has helped for you, how did you handle everything?
21.	P4.3	All right, apologies P4.4, I am a bit ahead of you. I would like to say exactly what Miss P4.1 and Miss P4.2 have said. I think it was, to summarise, a personal journey for each one, for everyone actually the same. But for each one, for all of us it was actually the same, because all of us were in the same situation. As Miss P4.2 has said, worldwide, we are all in the same situation. Uhm, so absolutely also the religious part. We don't have to elaborate further now; I think it is a very personal thing how each person has grabbed hold of it. I think what was for me the biggest [unclear] – we have all been dumped together in the same mess. I wasn't the only one who had to wear a mask, I wasn't the only one who had to teach online with two children. I wasn't the only one who was suddenly in this situation, its all of us. Everyone's situation looked different, it's not as if, if we had to compare me and you for instance – your work circumstances in level 5 were perhaps more positive throughout the day, in the sense that your work environment was quieter which enabled you to be more productive. My work circumstances during the day were not so easy, because my responsibilities as family member and mother were required elsewhere. But it made no difference that one of us was in the situation slightly less and the way in which we...- yes, all of us had to wear masks and everybody had to stay home. And I feel actually, as teacher under very stressful circumstances, one must perform, you must teach and its totally different. But our big consolation was, you were never alone. You have many colleagues. An excellent school management board who said, listen, here's the plan. We were wondering what the plan looked like when it was already on the table. It was typed, neatly and told you, listen here friends, this is what we do, this is how we handle it, uh, let's make a success of it. Then you felt, oh, I don't have to think of a plan, I don't have to stress about it, yes - I think it was for me the biggest part. I almost want to say, if you compare the disease with something like cancer – it is something very lonely, because you and your family, or the concerned family are going through this specific something. But this was, for all of us the fear was the same. Everybody feared, firstly, will I get it, what will happen if I get it, uhm, that uncertainty was rife with everybody. You knew you were not alone in your uncertainty.
22.	EW	Okay. So, for you it was the togetherness and to know the people surrounding you were going through the same, actually, together with the aspect of faith, was of great value to you. Do I understand it correctly?
23.	P4.3	Yes, the burden that you have to carry is so much lighter, because you are not carrying it alone. So yes, it was the biggest part and, uhm, that also helped a lot – as they said, in the beginning we watched TV, kept an eye on the media and on the figures. But to do real research and to read up on the real facts, where you are finding yourself. Not to subject yourself to the hundred and two million thousand fake news reports. And you can bring it back to faith. Or, just to focus on the truth and the positive side. Yes, I think it is also about my view of life – I choose, it's a daily choice that I make – to choose to see the positive rather than the negative. To focus on what is good. Because if we had to focus on everything about COVID that is negative, – you will be in a permanent rut, because, if one really thinks about it, it is unbelievably big. And so many people are dying and it's so nearby. Just choose to see the positive, not to totally dismiss the negative, not to shove the negative aside, but to keep your focus on the positive. And also, all people in the world are not from the same religion... Choose to focus, as Miss P4.2 also said, choose where you place your focus, it makes a huge difference.
24.	EW	Yes. And the people who surround you, basically in it.
25.	P4.3	Hm.
26.	EW	Okay. Thank you P4.3. P4.4, can we hear from you? I see you said in the chat: "faith is what carried us in this time of uncertainty". We are very focused to make sure the children stick to the protocol and it was a big responsibility that rested upon us. Or rests on us. P4.4, are you there? Sorry, we'll hear again now. So, what I hear in the session today, and SD, please, you are welcome to join in as you see fit and the rest of you as well. Remember you are the experts here. So, we would like to learn from you and hear – it is positivity, faith and then the togetherness. That is what stood out for me, are there other strategies, socio-emotional, or possibly cognitive –that possibly helped? Hello P4.4 are you there?
27.	P4.4	Hi, sorry, I only got it right now.

28.	EW	No, its fine. Thanks a lot.
29.	P4.4	I feel that colleagues have also supported one another tremendously throughout this difficult time. In times when we felt unsure and afraid and wondered how we would get through this, the colleagues supported each other. And, if you felt you did not know how you would go forward, a chat with a colleague always made you feel better. Just to see all of us go through the same fears carried us through this time.
30.	EW	Did you sound-board a bit as well? You are welcome to switch on your cameras. You don't have to, but you are really welcome. Hello Miss.
31.	P4.1	I also think people opened up more and sound-boarded with each other.
32.	EW	Okay.
33.	P4.1	If I think back, I now think, my days just after we were back at school – remember, I did not have a class at that stage but then – at the end of the day I think, I have not done any of my work, but – five people came into my office and chatted. Sometimes about COVID. However mostly it was about something totally different. And then, when they had left, I thought I, gosh, I never realised something so small could upset one to such an extent or become so big. However, I just realised that COVID had actually pushed them to the brink of their endurance. Meaning that, what they had to cope with that day, was not so bad; when they came into my classroom, they probably wondered how they could approach the matter and share it while in fact their frame of mind and their emotions were filled with COVID. So, when they had to handle another small matter, it became a mountain. Yes, thank heaven, we could converse in that time, we could talk to each other because, one heard of people who became more and more depressed and worried about things, but when they could talk, it gave them some relief.
34.	P4.2	EW, can I say something?
35.	EW	Yes, please. Thank you, Miss P4.1.
36.	P4.2	If I think back, if I think back to those 6 weeks when we had the total lockdown, I remembered someone had said, as a baby needs its mother, a mother needs her baby. What I realised – I am a teacher. The 4 weeks was a welcome holiday, but later I longed – for teaching. I longed to stand in front of a class. It is my domain and I needed my children, my learners. I felt as if I got my energy-bounce from my children, my learners. I also realised the children needed me, as much as I needed them. It was interesting. I told my husband I am going to retire much later than I had thought I would. I needed my learners and I missed them. And they missed me. Someone once said, like a baby needs her mother, a mother needs her baby. What I realised was – I am a teacher. I decided to come into the class and I saw the children – I noticed that they were scared – as scared as we were. And I decided to do something more practical. I went inside, and it was as if the Lord – I hope you don't think this is a Biblical talk – but I felt God had lain it upon my heart to greet them. And I said, I greet you in the loving Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who was, who is, and will always be. And I taught them Ps. 46:10 – “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” At first, they looked at me, totally confused. But you know, after a while – if I came into a class and forgot - I had a few classes, five at the time - when I would come in and forget, they would put up their hands and say – we greet Miss in the loving Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, uhm, each time they came, they would put up their hands and say, “Quiet”. I must say, when I was cross with the children, and I have often been angry at them – it was a way in which to ground myself. To know, you know, each time, five classes – they said to me: “Be still and know that I am God”. But what I intrinsically realised is, I am a born teacher. Because I needed some of their energy to carry on. I told the principal, uhm, I need the energy from the children. I need the parents' complaints. I need my colleagues. What we also realised, this platform was good and well for a while, but it cannot take the place of a teacher. Now, after a year, we notice that people do not go to Google Classroom. They need a teacher, they need a classroom, they need the other learners. I need the complaining parents. And, what I'd like to say, at the end of the day, it is good to have obstacles to overcome, that is what keeps you alive. It makes you feel you are not a robot. It keeps you alive, to be a teacher in all facets. I want the good, but you know, I also want the bad, it keeps me alive to carry on as a teacher. And the children – the children need the teacher, they need their parents, their friends and to socialise. That is what we realised is very important for a child's development, the socialisation with parents, with children and with teachers. That is what I've learnt out of this whole matter.
37.	EW	Yes. So, I hear there was also much self-reflection.
38.	P4.2	Oh, Lots. Self-reflection and realisation – it's my breath, my learners. It is what I need to function, 129 learners. Naughty learners. Clever learners. Learners who have problems. It is what makes me grow and, I need it. I think the teachers will agree, it was not in the least enjoyable to do nothing, to stand and talk in



		front of a computer. I need that interaction from my learners. [unclear] don't ask me about it at the end of a term. No, I need nothing more. But after 4 weeks I embraced everything that encompassed teaching.
39.	EW	Yes.
40.	P4.4	P4.2, I want to agree with you there, I also missed the interaction with the children and the lessons. I felt no satisfaction with the online lessons. I did not have satisfaction.
41.	EW	Thank you P4.4.
42.	P4.1	EW, I can quickly say, it may mean something or you may understand if I tell you what the reason for it was. To me, it was bad - two things – in the mornings when we had to stand at the gate and measure the children's temperatures. It was almost as if I feared it, to press that button against her wrist and her temperature is high. Number 1, how am I, in such a manner, I have to let her stand aside for a minute to see if her temperature will decrease. But in that minute, you know, how does her little heart feel, about what is she worried. How is she experiencing it? So, I was really afraid – oh please, don't let there be a child with a high temperature. To me it was a sad part of the day. And the other thing; every day when we had to record the absentees – The parents let you know with an online form when children would be absent. And then the next question was, is it an illness, are they positive, which symptoms, when will they be back, and so on. That part of my day was also not pleasant. When I opened that Google form then it's, oh no, who is going to be positive today, uhm, is it a mom, is it a brother or a sister, is it one of them. I did not want it to happen with the children at this school. If I see it on that form, it is a reality, it is really happening. If I had to handle the children in the isolation station, oh, I felt so sorry for them, because you have to do it. You must remove them from the class and they have to sit there. You have to ask them if they cough, are they nauseous, what is their temperature. Now you phone the mom, and the mom says, she can't come right away. You go back to the child and tell her, her mom can't come now, but miss will stay with you. You can see the fear in the child's face.... So, to me it was the worst part to handle right in the beginning. You yourself are filled with fear and anxiety about this disease and you are obliged to help a child handle it. Uhm, also the protocols that the school has put in place, because not much of it was really in the end positive. However, one had to make sure. You had to handle it. It was perhaps nothing, but to me, it was the worst.
43.	SD	No, it's very valuable, P4.1.
44.	EW	Yes, yes. I just think about...Would anyone like to add anything? I want to ask – about a few other aspects. Can I move on. Right. Thank you, Miss, I think that is also a...you know, I would like to know how Miss usually handles it on a personal level. But then I will use a few examples. At the time and now, are there people who for instance start making other lifestyle choices. Is there anything in terms of what you have experienced that was valuable to you? I know Miss P4.1 said one had to do it and had to stay occupied. Some of you said you did not watch the news as a way to handle it, your environment that helped you cope. I am also interested, SD and I, about – personal ways, and Miss P4.2 spoke about how a person again realised your purpose, as well as your calling, and together with it a connection with people. Are there any handling skills that you found valuable?
45.	P4.2	Personally, I go back to, as I say – spiritual.
46.	EW	Spiritual, yes.
47.	P4.2	Things that we are used to, my family and I, if anyone came to visit us – We made it very practical - on Sundays we have Holy Communion
48.	EW	Okay.
49.	P4.2	Do you understand, that is the way in which we now cope. I depend heavily on my Faith. I felt, whosoever visits us and comes to lunch, I don't care who you are, I serve my family with Holy Communion before lunch is served. It is a habit that we have established. My sons are now aware of it. Sometimes when they bring their girlfriends to visit, I feel embarrassed to do it, but I go ahead. In the beginning we also started eating healthy. Yes, I have started my little boy on a healthy diet. I was on a diet for a while. Uhm, once again, bluntness set in. All of us are vaccinated now, so we do eat cake and so on. One must of course, make sure of what you put into your mouth. Remember, if diabetics contract the virus, they die. So, there was that fear. One is inclined to go back to old habits, The habit we formed over the past year is the Holy Communion. But we go back, eat and exercise less. That is what I've done practically. I don't know if I've answered your question?
50.	EW	No, it does, it does. Its lifestyle. In any manner.

51.	P4.2	The mechanism to cope is to know, if one does certain things then– one is not protected, but one receives strength from the Word of God. That is what I did, my children, my husband and my parents. That's what we did. It is something practical that we do. And of course, as I say – practical – I walk into the class and I bless the children. I know xxx miss, when the class leaves, when she leaves, she blesses the children. So, the school's children are blessed.
52.	EW	I am going to come and sit with you.
53.	P4.2	Yes, we bless them. There are probably many rituals that I began doing. If I came to a place where there was a cross, I lifted my hands and blessed Pretoria. My nature is to fall back, totally, Christian, to the Christian ways in which I grew up. Perhaps other people and other cultures will function in a different way. It just confirms, one falls back on ways in which you were brought up.
54.	EW	Okay. So, it's also cultural?
55.	P4.2	Yes, cultural. Absolutely.
56.	EW	Okay. I understand. It's very valuable, thank you. Miss. P4.3, what can you tell us...- or anyone. Miss P4.1, it looks as if Miss wants to say something?
57.	P4.1	I chose to put questions that I had about COVID, to one specialist only and that's all. Because the more people you ask, the more opinions you get and the more mixed up you become.
58.	EW	Yes. It is. Okay.
59.	P4.1	And I did not always like what he said. There in the beginning – I cannot even remember what he said – I cannot even remember what the medicine was called - Ivermectin or what? One can imagine, the farming community said, yes, send it on, take it, approximately three times a day. And he said, no, don't. So, it's not that I chose him because he said something that I liked to hear, but if there is anything I need to ask, then I ask him. What he does, I stick to. I also did not get caught up in arguments with people. If you start arguing about, whether to get your jab or not – that's when people (I think often the devil, I don't know) – uhm, use it – oh, here's a chance, she is now going to listen to me, let me start throwing all different negative things in here, that in fact have nothing to do with the vaccine. So, I chose to only listen to xxx my doctor and up to now it was good advice.
60.	EW	Yes. Good advice. Okay, that's good.
61.	P4.1	I think the more people you listen to, the more mixed up you become.
62.	EW	Yes, it can also increase your anxiety, because the one says this and the other one says that and one doesn't know which side to turn to.
63.	SD	Yes.
64.	P4.1	When I talk to mom, she says, did you hear what they say on RSG? Then I say no, I have not heard. Then I say – and don't tell me.
65.	EW	Good, so Miss also focused on who to associate with and what information to allow?
66.	P4.1	Yes.
67.	EW	Okay. It's also a very good way. Yes. P4.4 of P4.3, do you have anything that you would like to add?
68.	P4.3	I would almost say to be a mother or a teacher comes down to the same thing. I very early realised I need to be the parent over here. I have to be the adult and I need to set the example. Not only for my own children, but also for the children in class (as Miss P4.1 had said, if you carry stress or anxiety over to a child, they pick up on it very quickly and become afraid. I soon realised, one has to count your words and manage the discussions you have in front of children. It's my responsibility as a parent of two children, to take responsibility and lead in this situation. It's the same with me as teacher, with the children in my class. Although one needs to talk about it, it is necessary to lead the discussion with the little ones. Miss P4.2's children are bigger, her own as well as those in her class. But it comes down to the same, how one manages the discussion and what one allows – my children are much younger – so the level on which I discuss it is very elementary. It is really basic in their language. The children in my class are slightly bigger – to discuss it and the facts, as Miss P4.1 has also said – with one person, you know, not RSG or Jacaranda's facts but just the basic scientific facts thereof – there is no need for insecurity, the cards are on the table, this is the given situation. How we choose to handle it is what makes the difference. With my own children, uhm, how we handle most situations at home – we acknowledge a situation as well as the emotions that it awakens in us. Because nothing can be done to change the situation, it is something outside yourself. You can however change the emotions you experience – give me two seconds, I would like to quote something: “O Lord, give me the mental calmness to accept what I cannot change and the courage to change what I can and the wisdom to accept what I cannot change”. I think for a research project you can mention both by saying, this is how people who have a Christian conviction approach it, but one cannot base it on that. There is a huge difference between

		the given situation, the cards on the table and how one plays it. How one reacts towards the situation. If I could manage it, it's very important to set an example to show the children that it is extremely stressful and to manage it, so that the children see, oh, yes, it is very stressful, but my mom or my teacher or my aunt or whoever else, handle it systematically and get through it. It makes the anxiety levels - (I know the anxiety levels with my children were also originally very high, until they accepted that it is the situation, this is how we handle it and we carry on) – not to focus on the negative. And now - and the children are so – resilient really, there is not a good Afrikaans word for resilience, I feel, unless Miss P4.2 could help me here please – but that ability to stand up after you have been flooded. Whatever life throws at you, to get up and say, it's fine, I will move on. Uhm, it is a decision you have to take, every morning, every day. Children are very resilient, in the sense of, look how they've adapted. And now, understand, how many millions of children go to school wearing masks, as if it is normal. How many millions of children do social distancing – understand - everything that's what COVID now...- they accept it as normal. And they have been deprived of so much, [unclear] – if I can put it that way, over the recent year or two. Yes, I don't know, I am going to bore you.
69.	SD	Not at all.
70.	EW	Not at all.
71.	P4.3	Okay I have finished.
72.	EW	Thank you, P4.3
73.	P4.2	Children are resilient, but what was interesting to me, was how adaptable they are. They totally accepted their circumstances as they were, they did not complain about it. They adapted and that is what I appreciated about children, they adapted easily.
74.	EW	Yes, it is. As I have it, the Afrikaans word for resilience, is “ <i>veerkragtigheid</i> ”, so I hope I have it right. I agree with Miss. Do you think the teachers were the same as the learners were and are?
75.	P4.2	Yes, I think the teachers took it, grabbed the bull by the horns and said, we are happy to teach again, so grab the bull by the horns. There was an unbelievable energy between the teachers and the learners. They call us teachers and I must say, therein lay our strength – to connect with the children and be efficacious again. What one was born to do, you had the chance to do again. In the beginning it was a wow to me, to stand in front of a class again. I must truly say, that was what I had missed most, I your beloved teaching again and I adapted. Our senior phase had to rotate from class to class, while the Junior phase stayed in the same class. And, you know, we did it. It was no trouble to us. I would really like to say, I wish everything would return to normal again. The wow had receded, however, that absolute beginning was a learning experience, one longed to be amongst your learners again. It stood out for me, that I could be amongst my learners and could teach again and so on. They are so adaptable and we as teachers were also adaptable, in the beginning.
76.	EW	Yes.
77.	P4.1	I think there are probably professions that feel they had to sacrifice and adapt the most. But, think about it, from the moment we stop at school in the morning, before school, during break how we teach, how we mark books – everything had changed, but we grabbed hold of it and ran. Earlier when you mentioned how adaptable the children were, I actually expected much worse. Those questions that cropped up in the beginning made me realise – those were actually the insecurities of the parents that emerged, not that of the children. The children just came in and wore masks So, it was the parents' insecurities again, “will my child cope, what will it be like”, that they verbalised. It wasn't the children who couldn't cope. I remember trying to ensure a mom that it wasn't the school's rules which stated that grade 1's have to wear masks, it was that of the country. She just said, my child is not going to do it. I walked into the class that day, to find the child sitting in class, wearing a mask as if nothing was wrong. It just shows that although the mom thought he couldn't, he did it. Do you know what I've noticed during this time? That children are mimicking us teachers more than ever before.
78.	EW	Okay.
79.	P4.1	I walk into a class, and the first thing I notice is the teacher's mask under her nose. Then when I look at the children, their masks are also under their noses. Then I come back into my own class, look closely at my children, and see, no, their masks are over their noses, because I wear mine over my nose. It's not only about masks, it's also about social distance. They still have that... -I believe in what my teacher says, I believe in what she does, I take note of what she does, that hasn't changed. I think moms can say “wear your mask” as many times as she wants to, but if Miss wears her mask in a specific way, then they will also do it like that.
80.	P4.2	Human nature comes into play and demonstrates that you're a flock creature. If everyone, does it, you do it as well [unclear]. You don't want to be different, so because the groups wear masks, they also do it. At home when they are alone, Mom may have problems telling them what to do. But at school, everybody does it that way, then you follow suite. To remain adaptable.

81.	EW	P4.4, are you still with us? Would you like to add something?
82.	P4.4	Yes, I think, what I have also seen, it was difficult to wear masks in the beginning. I actually did not think it was possible to teach with a mask. But later on, people became used to it and one taught while wearing a mask; now one doesn't even realise you are wearing it. Yes, human beings are very adaptable and the children as well. The children adapted very quickly. It links up with what Miss P4.2 has said about we are adaptable and if everybody does it, you join in and do it as well.
83.	EW	Yes, as P4.3 also mentioned, all of us go through it, so we are not alone. We are already on an hour and we can still chat for a long time, but we do respect your time. SD is there anything more that you would like to ask? We had such a pleasant conversation. We got so much valuable information. I don't know if I might have missed anything that you might have wanted to hear, SD?
84.	SD	No, I think we have had a good informative session and your insight in our study is very valuable. I don't think there is anything specific that I want to question further. You have actually systematically answered the questions that I wanted to ask. So, it's fine. You were excellent participants in this session and we appreciate it tremendously.
85.	EW	Yes, we are so thankful for your time. Member checking information (delivered). Expression of gratitude.
86.	P4.1	I think the two of you are very clever to make something out of what we've said here.
87.	EW	Remember, there is no right or wrong. You are the experts not us. We now have to write it up.
88.	All	Good bye. (Expression of gratitude).
<b>ONLINE PARTICIPATORY FOCUS GROUP 5: 7 October 2021</b>		
1.	SD	We would like to say, thank you very, very much for your willingness to join us during the holidays in this session and that you form part of our research project. It is a privilege having you and we look forward to what you are going to share with us. Just a bit of background for those of you who do not know yet. EW and I, are working on a research project where - EW looks at the cognitive strategies and I look at the psycho-social or the emotional strategies that you as teachers have implemented during this COVID-19 period and how you became resilient. In the first phase of our data collection where you completed the online questionnaires, we already saw (Hi P5.1, welcome) that you are resilient. The aim of this focus group session is to find out in more detail about which strategies you implemented of what you have already answered in order for us to expand on what you've done to be able to cope or become resilient in this COVID-19 period. Yes, just one or two ethical matters – we are going to record the session, just for me and EW, when we write our chapter on this data, just to make sure that we have in fact written down what you had said. If you are not comfortable with the recording you can tell us now, then we won't record the session and we'll just write till it comes out of our ears. We are also not going to mention your name or that of the school where you are involved at all in the chapter. So, this is truly a safe, free environment to really tell us how you coped and what was possibly challenging to you in this COVID-19 period. EW, I don't know if I missed anything in this intro, or is there anything you would like to add.
2.	EW	No, I think its fine. Thank you, SD. I think, to us it is actually about - really to hear what worked for you, what worked best for you, what was the most effective way and cope is the English word that we use - in relation with the challenges that COVID caused, personally and in your work. What did you do and what worked best for you, about how to handle it, because we noticed that you are resilient, as SD had said earlier in the questionnaires that we analysed earlier. So, how did you do it and what worked best for you? We'd like to hear from you. It's an informal discussion and yes, you are welcome to join in at any time. Does anyone want to open the floor?
3.	SD	You can tell us now. P5.1, I don't know if you'd like to begin and tell us how you coped throughout this COVID-19 period? What did you do to be able to cope?
4.	EW	We are not hearing you.
5.	SD	Sorry, P5.1, the sound is a bit too low. I thought it was perhaps my sound that was turned off, but I am struggling a bit to hear.
6.	EW	While we are waiting, I don't know if P5.5 or P5.3 would perhaps like to tell us? P5.6, I know you are struggling to talk there. I am struggling to hear.
7.	SD	I will see if I can perhaps do something from my side.

8.	EW	Sorry, I can't hear.
9.	SD	No, sorry P5.1, still not.
10.	EW	There you are, that's better. There was something. There you are.
11.	SD	There you are, now we can hear you.
12.	P5.1	It felt to me, in the time of COVID, the school's protocol – you know, the Department of Basic Education, in the end really determined how we coped with it.
13.	EW	Okay.
14.	P5.1	So, what usually happened at our school was, that a COVID official was appointed – it was one of our deputy-headmasters. And to me it felt if we basically in that time, until now, lived a day-to-day existence, because you are waiting for them to dictate what a school day will be like. We waited for them to let us know when we could resume our extramural activities. We waited for them to tell us when the schools could be attended in full numbers again. I don't know of many other schools in Pretoria, but I do know most of the Afrikaans schools, especially here in the East, have continued in full numbers since February this year. We did not attend school in half numbers as I know many of the other schools in the country did. So, cope was just to wait. To me specifically it was, just to wait to hear precisely what happened. Do we have holidays. Don't we have holidays. When can we do extramural activities, when not? How the children are allowed to sit in class. Do you sanitise. What do you do when someone falls ill in class? So, it made up a very big part of COVID. That waiting, and just – each morning, check in on your emails to see what today's protocol are and carry on. When things started to relax and the levels became lower, I personally, I am the choir teacher at school – so at last we could bring music back into the school again. It meant that, slowly but surely, the children could start practising choir again, until they closed us and said choir practising was not allowed at all. Uhm, luckily for me, some of my university friends are also choir conductors so they started an adult choir. So, I coped by attending choir every week. Yes, I sing in two different choirs and in the end, it was how I started feeling normal again, especially at work. I know it was difficult for the children, especially for children who take part in sport. That's where we are lucky in the choirs, because the choir is usually a large group of children. My choir this year consisted of about 65. How I could make it work, was, I divided the choir into two sections. Luckily, from the start my choir consisted of only two grades. I have the junior choir, so it's the grade 2's and the grade 3's. So, on one day I could practise with the grade 2's and on the next day I could practise with the grade 3's. So, it meant that between 25 and 30 children could experience some normality in their lives, where they could see their friends and we could again do something pleasant, which was practising choir. I could see that the children who took part in sport, they were really suffering. We spoke about it the other day – it was as if, kind of, they've lost their identities. And they had to regain their identities, because the child who was always known as the rugby child, or the netball child, or the hockey child, had to find something else with which to express themselves. Yes, as I said, I think we were privileged that there was quite a number of children involved in the choir. It gave them the opportunity to express themselves and socialise. Especially that social element of choir singing, something I think that was rather important to them. I hope it answers your question.
15.	EW	Yes, it helps. We would like to hear how the teachers themselves did it and we know the children also went through it. Every day in school we see how resilient they also are. However, what you said about choir singing in which you had also started taking part is very interesting and valuable, because it contains so many elements. It may be a passion and it may be a connection between people. So, what about the choir stood out for you in coping?
16.	P5.1	It helped by establishing a measure of routine again. I knew on Monday and Wednesday evenings I would go to choir practise. And when I am there – choir is a wonderful thing in that respect of, because it is something that 70, 40 – (once upon a time 70), but 40 people do together at one point in time and that connection it makes between people played an important role to create a feeling of community. Especially after being on our own after so many months.
17.	EW	Yes. Okay, that bit of, uhm, that togetherness, almost.
18.	P5.1	Hmmm.
19.	EW	Okay. Thank you. Very valuable.
20.	SD	Miss P5.2, Welcome to this session.
21.	P5.2	I apologise for being late. Can you hear me?

22.	SD	Not at all. Not at all. We can hear you clearly, yes. No, Miss is not late at all, we have just begun by saying that we record the session, that we write down the right things in our chapter and that we would like to hear from you as teachers, what you did and how you coped in this COVID-19 period with the uncertainties. What did you do to manage the children, your personal lives and your school obligations? Yes, so I don't know if Miss can contribute anything.
23.	P5.2	To me it feels as if COVID has just left and I am on holiday now so I am not thinking about COVID.
24.	EW	That's good.
25.	P5.2	However, in April at the time it was rather rough because the schools commenced late in February. To catch up on all that work- load, especially with the matrices. And that stress, which children are online, which children aren't. Because it was usually your strong children who did well online. But those children who still want personal attention, who still need the acknowledgement, who still want you to walk through the class and say, you're okay, don't worry – they suffered. So, I picked up those things. Then it was wintertime and we had just started with examinations and it was a bit of a problem with the children who became ill. And they were in lockdown for two weeks, they missed out on their exam papers and they were really ill, they couldn't really study. It caused stress and the sport season had just begun, then it was stopped again. I enjoyed not having sport, because I could concentrate on the other academic tasks. Then I had sport again during the term that I haven't been used to having it, the third term. In between one also had to exercise. The children enjoyed sport even though they were not the best, just to get that exposure and get out, they needed it. Well, yes, we'll have to see how it works out because they have just written their preliminary examination, Of course, there is still a lot of work, so we are again stressed to get them going next Monday when school starts. That is my quick summary of how I experienced the recent times.
26.	SD	I know, at a stage the whole world was on a wave, when we had the goal to learn something new, from baking to gardening to learning new dancing steps. Is there anything new that you learnt to remain positive throughout this time?
27.	P5.2	I have a husband who worked from home. We fixed a number of things at home, and built new things. I think the children really enjoyed their pets. The dogs had the chance to see that there actually are people in the house and they aren't away due to activities. And we got the garden sorted out. I could unpack all my cupboards, clean and arrange them the way I want them to be, but we were actually at ease. I am also a mom of primary school children. I enjoyed seeing how their primary school gave them tasks to do during the time to remain active. We also did things so that they could complete their tasks on time last year. This year we were at ease because they did not have to attend school full time, so it wasn't a problem.
28.	SD	Of course. and from you, P5.4, is there anything you would like to add? What did you do to get through this COVID-19 period?
29.	EW	SD, I know P5.6 said he struggles a bit with the signal over there. We hope to hear from him. You are welcome to enter into the discussion at any time, P5.6.
30.	SD	O, okay. P5.5 from your side? Or Miss P5.3, from your side?
31.	P5.3	Hi SD, all of you. Thank you, I appreciate being included in the discussion. You know how we coped. Well, I had my second daughter slap-bang, in the second week of the hard lockdown. So, I missed much of the adaptation at school with being on maternity leave for three months. So, when I came back, the other people were already used to everything. But I must say, it was, as P5.1 also said, you take it day-by-day. One cannot plan weeks ahead. You decide, okay, today they say this and you just do it. Tomorrow, it changes. I think it was something that I realised was rather difficult for parents, they did not know how to handle it and were very panicky. "But how, I don't know and when am I going to know and how will I handle it". What they did not realise was that nobody knows. No one could give an answer. I think it's that – almost, one can say, a mentality – almost a "hurry-up-and-wait" type of thing. But, yes, just to relax and to know I don't have to and I cannot control everything. I am also not going to control everything. Just go with the flow. So, I think in a way it's just to let go and to be in the moment. When everything works out, you take it and carry on. But at other times, you can't. I think it's that notion that you cannot control everything. Many people who are control freaks and who like to plan everything, I think they suffered. But then you just realise that you can't do anything about your situation, you just have to be, there, there. As soon as it changes, you carry on. So, I think it was almost, just, take it from day-to-day. One cannot plan ahead and I think what is unique about our teaching situation is, and you, P5.2 will agree - we are at the same school - you plan for plan A, but at the same time there is a plan B, C, D, E, A2, B2, because one has to consider all options. So, one has to bear all these things in mind. I think – one was forced to consider other situations and to work around them. Therefore, you did not ... - in a way, it was a very "narrow-minded" - environment, because you were only allowed to do a certain number of things. However, you were also forced to look at the situation in other ways, or, to handle situations differently, because you're not allowed to handle them as usual. You are forced to acquire a new way of thinking, doing and learning to use. So, I think it is –you had to think differently. You couldn't do it as usual. Yes.



32.	EW	Yes. Well, its valuable. I hear lots of – tell me if I’m wrong, but creativity, problem solving and planning, even if one cannot really plan.
33.	P5.3	Yes, you plan for any possible situation. You plan for, the school that starts tomorrow. But then the school starts tomorrow, only for the boys, or the school starts tomorrow with all the children. The school starts tomorrow with only this grade. You really have to, yes. ...
34.	P5.3	Adaptability.
35.	EW	Adaptability. yes. And you had mentioned the relaxation and let go. Is there anything specific that you did in the moment? Because those are such valuable strategies. Is there anything specifically that you did to apply those strategies – your relaxation or let go or your ‘be in the moment’?
36.	P5.3	I really don’t know. I think it is just when one realises, one has to realise you cannot control everything. You psychologists and psychiatrists will have a good word for it. But there are so many people who – and one hears it everywhere – but if you can’t do anything about the situation, either leave it or just go with it. I do, however, think this was a way of saying, you know, you can do nothing now, so I am forcing you. It’s as if the world said, I am forcing you to relax.
37.	EW	Okay.
38.	P5.3	And to stay in the moment. But I cannot say I was in a situation and decided, okay P5,3, you can do nothing about it, just carry on. I think it is that resilience that you had mentioned. You are in this situation, what are you going to do to survive. And you just do it. I don’t think there was something definite that I did, but I do think the fact that I was on maternity leave during the hardest lockdown also helped. Because you have this tiny person for whom you are responsible with an older sister who does not really understand. So, one needs to create normality for them because if they notice that mom and dad are tense, they become tense and afraid as well. So, I think the fact that you are responsible for another little person contributed to the fact that you, despite everything, were the best person that you could be.
39.	EW	Thank you.
40.	SD	I still have another question. P5.2, you can perhaps answer with P5.3, in this case. P5.5, I don’t know if you have children, or P5.4, but did you find it difficult to distinguish between your role as a mother and that of a teacher at home? Even being a teacher, how did you maintain the balance to be at home all the time and to divide yourself in these different roles that are expected of you. As well as a partner and everything.
41.	P5.4	The first day when the primary schools went online and I had to teach, I had to clean the house and I need to be quiet when my husband has meetings when he has to work, I cried that evening. He also decided that it wasn’t working. I told my grade R child that I resign as his grade R teacher, he is welcome to look for another grade R teacher, and he decided that he still wanted to pass grade R. We then decided to work together because no one was happy.
42.	EW	Oh shame.
43.	P5.4	It was rather rough and I could understand why many moms say on Facebook that they need alcohol to cope. I can understand why, it is rather difficult. I myself am a high school teacher, not a primary school teacher and now I have to make time for them somehow or other and it was rather difficult. So, some days we saw what we could do and what not, other days we decided we could do those things that we have not yet felt able to handle. We just had to prioritise it differently, but it was rather a shock that first week to decide what the new normal was and how to handle it.
44.	EW	And how did the two of you handle it? How did you handle it? What did you do?
45.	P5.4	My husband was very sweet, he realised that it wouldn’t work. So, in the mornings we had to do primary school things. If it was Thursday, they had to spit and paste or bake and brew, we did that on Thursday and Friday. That was our measuring stick. And when I had to make video recordings and record lessons – so, in the evenings when they were quiet, I made my videos at night, to show that I am also academic and actually have a job
46.	EW	So, it was a bit of an adaptation and perhaps a change of routine? To get everything done effectively, if I understand correctly.
47.	P5.4	Yes. So, we decided – my husband was headmaster, there was no TV in the mornings. They were only allowed to watch TV after 14:00. Just to teach them a bit of – there’s a time for work and a time for play. Just to put that routine in place.
48.	EW	Yes, boundaries and so. Okay.
49.	SD	Nice. P5.5 we could.
50.		Voices overlapping.
51.	EW	Sorry, everybody is talking at the same time.

52.	SD	It's my fault, sorry.
53.	EW	P5.3, perhaps you should quickly and then we'll hear from P5.5. Apologies.
54.	P5.3	My daughters are still young. The one turned 4 recently and the other one is 18 months old. So, we haven't yet had homework from nursery school. What was cute was, every third day, the nursery school had a zoom meeting for the children. So, we let our daughter sit here in the TV room with the computer and I kept the baby quiet. They could then see their friends. It was also nice, because, my daughters are dropped off at 7 am and I only fetch them at 16:00 – so one usually does not see the other parents and now one could see the parents as well because they had to make sure that their children were also there. They sent things like – we are going to learn about the egg today, so please make the little one a slice of toast with an egg inside. So, there were things we did and as I said, I was on maternity leave the first time. I did however have unbelievable colleagues who managed all those things. Luckily when we went back to school, the nursery schools also reopened, so it was easy. It wasn't like the primary schools that we had to have them at home. But I must say, if it weren't for my support system – my mom and dad and my sisters who lived so close to us, I would really have suffered in that hard lockdown. My husband was on leave for the first week and it was okay then because he could keep elder sister occupied. He started working from home, then we were the villains – approximately 9:00, my dad would drive in, load the children and myself in the car and drive to their house. We would then spend the day with them. My husband would then fetch us around 16:00 when he had finished working. So, there was that support to help with elder sister and the tiny baby. So, we were definitely villains who drove around when we not allowed to. I think that support of my parents and my family helped me a lot.
55.	EW	It is a very valuable strategy, definitely. Parental and family support and that socio-emotional connection that SD had mentioned earlier. P5.5, we would like to hear what you want to say. We missed you earlier.
56.	P5.5	Hello. I did not hear the last teacher at all, so please excuse me if I perhaps say what she has already said.
57.	EW	No not at all. We want to hear from all of you.
58.	P5.5	I think my situation differs from that of all of you. I teach at a small school, a(n) (indication) school here in the East of Pretoria. There are approximately (number indicated) children in the whole school and we are (number indicated) teachers. Initially last year, when the president announced the lockdown, I personally was very excited. To think we have a slightly longer holiday and with our children who had already left home – but we were almost lost in the beginning. We went nowhere. We just wandered through the house and looked around for something to eat. That was just about what we did. When we could not go back to school, the first week when it should have opened, we started teaching online. It was very difficult in the beginning because one had no interaction with the children. You did not know if they could do the work and what you can or cannot send to them. We very soon discovered that Zoom did not work for small children. I am in the fundamental phase, so we made PowerPoints and videos so that they could see us. It was hard work. To me it was much harder work than standing in front of a class. I had contact with my colleagues and previous colleagues and they sometimes phoned me and asked; "where should we begin with this video", because when one stands in a class you know exactly what to say and where to begin with the work. However, one is unsure about a video, where to start and what your first words should be. But our children did the work, all of them did their work and brought work cards back to school. I do however think there was no practicing or fixation during that phase. The parents just made sure that the children did the work and I do not blame them because they are not teachers, they did not necessarily know what to do and how to do it. The third term when schools had to reopen according to the old timetable, we went back to school, everybody went back, except I, because I have comorbidities. I told our principal that I won't be coming back yet. We were very, very afraid that one of us would contract the virus and infect others, and we did not know that the consequences might be. The principal appointed a tutor to take my class, although I still did the work and sent the videos. I only went back to school at the end of September last year (2021). I had a long holiday, but I worked very hard during the long holiday to get everything in order, make the videos and so on. And since we went back, I was just back for two weeks when one of the children in my class contracted COVID, which caused myself and the rest of the class to be in isolation. After that, everything went well and we never had to isolate. Till today, every morning we screen the children to make sure that they are healthy, we take their temperature and so on. It is done very quickly because there are not many children. In the classes it is very difficult to keep social distance because our classrooms are small. Even if you have six children in your class it remains difficult to keep that social distance. The children – I am absolutely amazed at our children who wear their masks faithfully and never remove them. Perhaps now and then you have to tell a child to cover his or her nose, but they never remove those masks, except when they are eating. They played during playtimes; initially they sat in blocks, which we soon notices weren't working either. So, play times, and I mention it in this small group, there was no social distance at all. Children played normally and they are still doing it. To us, as from the beginning of the year – everything is completely back to normal at school and at home.



59.	EW	Oh, that's wonderful, yes. I would like to ask something that you mentioned P5.5, thank you for your participation. I can hear it was a challenge for many teachers to get used to the technology you had to use. You mentioned that you had discussed it with colleagues. Was it a general strategy or was it specifically about the technology? I am trying to see what you did to get through it that helped you to become resilient. What did you do to help you in this time?
60.	P5.5	Yes, I taught myself to put a reasonably decent PowerPoint together. The times that we as colleagues spoke to each other it was more about, I would almost say, how to start this, what to put in and what to leave out. For a small child you can also not make it too long, but you can also not say too little, because then they don't know what to do. We tried very hard to make it for the children in such a way that they could do the work on their own. Because we were aware that the parents also had to work from home and would not necessarily have time to help the children. So, we tried hard to do the work so that the children could do it themselves. When there were new concepts and so on, we tried to explain via a video or a PowerPoint, or a video within a PowerPoint. And the children rather enjoyed seeing our faces. If we now make a video, just so they feel – I've seen my teacher again. Yes, so, further, I read a lot ..., that I thoroughly enjoyed.
61.	EW	Did you do any recreation activities?
62.	P5.5	Yes.
63.	EW	Okay. Thanks a lot.
64.	SD	Is there any teacher who perhaps would like to tell us about, I mean, there are always things that are important to us as people that we feel are part of our lives, and then the pandemic came. Is there something that you realised you really need, to be able to cope, or to have positive thoughts about an unknown situation or life circumstances of which you were not so aware before COVID-19, but became aware of in COVID-19 and still today are trying to make part of your daily activities because it is important to you?
65.	P5.6	SD. Good afternoon, all.
66.	EW	Hello P5.6.
67.	P5.6	Can you hear me?
68.	SD	Yes, we can hear.
69.	P5.6	It's a bit on and off, on and off, on, off. I will talk as fast as possible, before the sound goes off again. I am not going to answer your question SD, but I am just going say what I experienced with the uncertainty. The biggest challenge for the children was the uncertainty – whether they are up to date. So, there was never a determination of whether I was up to date or not up to date. We could only determine that after approximately 8 months. So, it was bad, and I think, the grade R's and 1's were a bit, not behind, but there are activities that they did not do. And we can see clearly in our grade 4's, who did not write exams in grade 3, they are struggling with the tests. We can see it and it does cause stress for them at this stage. And socially, it was very bad for the children. The boys were separate, and the girls were separate. Some of the girls rather enjoyed it, because the boys could not bother them as much at school. And yes, I think we have...-there is a big misperception that the parents were very involved with the children during COVID. That is not so. Parents themselves worked, so there was a short period, if parents were involved, it was only an hour or two that they were involved with the children. The children did not have 7- or 6-hours' teaching, that they are used to now. I also noticed with reading; children have fallen behind and they don't have that routine with reading any more. I further noticed with discipline - it took them some time to get used to that routine. Schools did not decide on another disciplinary system, those were the COVID rules. What came out positive however, was that many children have learnt to work independently, they had to put shoulder to the wheel. The discipline at schools – I have spoken to many teachers who are discipline-heads at other schools; they claimed that the discipline was much better, because we had followed the COVID protocols. Something that I have noticed with children and staff members, our children are visually oriented, everything is on television, on their tablets, on their phones. They learn much faster visually which put them light years ahead of us, which helped those that had lagged behind, to see it two or three times and did not only hear it from the teacher in class. I myself have twins who are still young; there were challenges but in the end of COVID they said, they were much happier to see their teacher in class again as me at home.
70.	EW	Then we'd like to hear from you, what you did to cope. We'd like to know.
71.	P5.6	No, worked out lessons. I am very adaptable, so it did not really ...going out, that one couldn't go anywhere, that was bad. The sport training that we couldn't do, many of our boys suffered, so did our daughter who could not practise sport. We also notice with the sport that now begins again. They are three years

		behind and remember, the grade 4's did not have an under-9 year in grade 3, so the last time they had sport was in grade 2. One can notice it on their bodies as well, small, big, strength-wise. There will have to be CDA programmes to get those children back on track. We could see it with our boys, with those six weeks' rugby practice, one match and COVID was back. So, yes, to them it was a big frustration, many of them, for instance, depended on bursaries, which did not materialise. Financially wise, many of the parents were also looking forward to the bursaries, it comes down to a few rand which could have contributed to their school funds. The schools cannot decide to whom the bursaries will go, at high schools, money is not allocated to bursaries, salaries must be paid which adds up to 30 percent of the budget. So, yes, we coped. I did not enjoy being a teacher at home because having twins, presents its own challenges. [unclear] – my daughters are now at that age where they are extremely clever. So, yes, it was a challenge, but we made it.
72.	EW	Okay. Thank you, Thank you very much.
73.	SD	Thank you P5.6. I would like to repeat my question.
74.	P5.6	Sorry SD I would like to say quickly, I think one of the most important skills that our children learnt, that we will only notice 15 years from now, is the fact that they learnt adaptability. They adapted much easier than the adults.
75.	EW	Okay. Thank you.
76.	P5.6	Thank you, all. If I switch off now it is not due to bad manners.
77.	EW & SD	That's fine, thank you P5.6.
78.	SD	I am going to repeat my question quickly. What did you realise was valuable or necessary for you, as a human being to be positive, that you enjoy doing, that you would like to include in your daily activities, now that we are kind of back to normal? Uhm, things that you perhaps did previously, before the COVID-19 period and perhaps did not realise is important to you. Something that with COVID-19 you realised, gee, I really need it and now, still in your daily activities or planning, include it to remain positive.
79.	P5.1	I really need my friends and family in my life. I never realised how valuable it is to arrange a <i>braai</i> for a weekend.
80.	EW	Oh, yes.
81.	P5.1	...[unclear]...we make pizza, are you coming to visit tonight. My husband and I, think I still suffer from it, I feel so guilty, because I haven't seen these people in ages. Then I realise, I could not see them and I have friends that – we are not yet back where we were. Uhm, the... the...- it's strange, because it's as if one has forgotten to get back into the routine of seeing each other on weekends or having a quick coffee. And now it's almost as if you don't take the trouble because people are still afraid of COVID so they don't leave their homes. One doesn't even pick up the phone to ask, because you don't think of them anymore. It's because you expect them to say no, they are too scared, or they don't feel comfortable with it and so on. So, it was important to me to say, I can at least phone my loved ones and say, let's meet for a coffee, come for a visit, let's see each other. The most important was that I realised, what I need in my life is to see my friends. Something I realised this week – P5.3 spoke about people who are control freaks. I've never thought of myself as a control freak, but I am and I think it is the fate of every teacher. I don't know about your schools but at our school they expect one to be 'on it'. The parents must receive the correct info the first at time and not be confused by different messages of plans that have changed. That matter of, we don't know, we can't tell you what is going on – was difficult for me. I don't think I never really switched off, P5.3, I am super proud of you because you said, listen here, I have to stop now, I cannot anymore. I constantly think, how I myself...-and that is what I've learnt about myself, that I've never realised – I had really thought I am a very chilled, laid-back person, remember, I am a music person, we are supposed to just, go with the flow. I did however realise that I need to feel safe and relaxed because of who I am and the type of teacher I am. I wanted to have control and it had been taken away totally. I am currently studying, I am busy with my HOD and it has actually saved me, because there was some routine. One still had to submit tasks, you still had to make sure that everything was up to date. I never thought I would say it, but thank heaven for my studies during that time. But yes, it is...we spoke this week, my husband and I .... I struggle to communicate. In the sense of, (gosh, we are going in deep).
82.	EW	We want to learn from you, you are the experts.
83.	P5.1	I struggle to say when I do not cope. Because it was expected from us as teachers to cope. The children are watching you, when you walk into the class .... when they come into the class, you are supposed to show them – it's okay. Even when things are not okay. They looked at you and made sure, you know.... And children are wonderful, especially the little ones. I don't really know what things are like at the high schools, I spent three days there last week when I had to practical and I just realised that the two schools are worlds apart. The smaller children just glance at you and they can judge whether you are feeling well or if there is something amiss, it's actually crazy how they do it. We had to learn how to be actors and actresses and I am still struggling to get out of it, due to my

		inability to show my feelings of uncertainty about what is happening. To be able to say, I am worried, I am not okay. It's a strange feeling, especially, I don't know if one expects things to be easier if you are over 30 years of age and then the pandemic happened and we are uncertain again. The other thing is, we love travelling and we had planned our second overseas trip, we would have gone to Iceland. I miss that tremendously, just to see those people and to break away. Yes, it's difficult if you want to see the world but you're not allowed to and have to stay home. Well, that was a mouth full and I am not sure whether I've answered your question, did I? Sorry.
84.	SD	Definitely. Thank you.
85.	EW	It's very valuable, it's amazing to hear, and thank you for sharing with us so. It tells of tremendous growth and self-reflection in your being, that so much positive emerged from it. It is so valuable to be aware of oneself. So, thanks very much for that. Does anyone want to deal something related to SD's question with us?
86.	P5.5	I can also say, I did – I think, previously one took so many things for granted and the pandemic has jerked us back. It jerked us back and showed us the important things in our lives. I also realised that I definitely need people, I get my energy from people, from interaction with them, it still is bad for me, as P5.1 has said, that many people are still scared of going out and I miss phoning friends on a Saturday afternoon and saying, let's go out tonight for something to eat. It was terrible not being allowed to see our children and grandchildren. One could not escape anywhere, because it was everywhere. You could not say, let's go here or there, because it was not safe. The most important thing for me is that we need people, the interaction with them And I think P5.6 mentioned finances, I would like to respond to that. At our school we are dependent upon school fees because it is a private school. We also feel the effect of COVID now because parents fell behind with payments and could not pay the full amount. No one can be forced to pay school fees if they do not have the finances to do it. So, we lived off the school's reserves for quite some time. We know now that it is very difficult because we are now struggling to make ends meet. Something that he said that I have to agree with is that the children are behind with their work. I refer to what I said earlier that the work has not been inculcated in the children's minds. In school one teaches and the last part is the independent work that they have to do. Now, they only did the independent work, they either had no or very little teaching and they are definitely behind, compared to where they should have been.
87.	EW	Thank you P5.5. P5.2, you also wanted to say something?
88.	P5.2	Sorry, I press buttons on the phone and then I lose you then I can't see who is speaking.
89.	EW	That's fine, thanks.
90.	P5.2	My youngest son had his birthday during lockdown, and he turned 7 years of age. It was rather bad for him, because with his brother whose birthday was in March, the family could come and visit, and he couldn't understand why no one visited him on his birthday. Then it was again bad for him this year, because it was level 3 or 4 on his birthday and we could again not arrange a birthday party for him. So, it is now his greatest wish, for his 8 <sup>th</sup> birthday, to invite all his friends to his birthday party. I also realised that there is a real need, in our family life to include our loved ones who are near to our hearts, to make time for them again, because this illness has taken us away from our loved ones, who are far away from us. We are not near to a grandmother or grandfather, they are in another town, another province, which makes it difficult to see them.
91.	EW	Thank you P5.2. P5.3, is there anything you would like to add?
92.	P5.3	Yes, I would just like to say, I have never seen myself as a person who wants to touch or needs contact. I was half [unclear] and, uhm, when I realised with this pandemic, I do want to be able to touch people, I do want to hug them, I want to, if a child is in class and I can see this child is not coping, I want to hold that child's hand and say, do you know what, be sure, you are okay. That is what I miss at this stage, to take a child's hand or to touch a child's shoulder and say, it's okay, I see you, I understand. Or, you will come through this. It is something that I miss terribly, and I am sure the children also miss it because they possibly do not always have it at home. That is why they often get it at school. So, I have, a few times, when I noticed that a child was not coping at all, hugged him or her because it is the only thing that helps. So, I realised I am really a person who enjoys touching – (touching people sounds very weird) – but, just to, yes – that physical nearness. I was never like that. I never thought I was, but just to be close to people, I realised is really a human need. And I mean, it is known as being 'skin hungry' and I mean, I've experienced it – that skin hunger.
93.	EW	I think one sometimes realises things about yourself that you didn't know.

94.	P5.1	I totally agree with that, well, it was difficult at the primary school. That first instinct when a child falls and gets hurt is, you pick up, hold and wipe tears and not to have been able to do it was very difficult. I see the children don't bother anymore. I had to laugh - last week, just before schools closed down, we had a car racing day - a piece of normality in this crazy era – it was totally different from what it used to be in the past when country sport was included. Then, in the end, they enjoyed it more than the previous sports days. I realised there – when one of the classes realised that they had won, well, protocol, social distance was totally out the door. They grabbed and hugged each other – and it was just - and one could see, the children, especially the little ones – don't have any inhibitions. So, if they feel like hugging teacher, how can one say, “no my darling, Miss is not allowed?” No, I totally agree P5.3, it was difficult in the beginning. Especially when they feel sad and you're not allowed to touch them – because there is always a child in class whose mother is very strict about things like that; so, if they go home and say, “there were hugs in class today” ...Oh, my word. It seems as if we are over the worst because children are saying things are better at home. That is what's nice about a primary school child, I don't know how things are at high school but in primary school they quickly come and tell you if something interesting has happened at home over the weekend.
95.	EW	Thank you P5.1. SD, would you like to add anything, or do you have any questions? He is our main host today,
96.	SD	Yes. From my side, EW, I think we've received valuable information from the teachers today, I don't have any specific questions anymore. Before we conclude I will just go around and hear if there is anything more that you would like to add to our study. Anything more that you would like to mention, P5.5, from your side?
97.	P5.5	I can't think of anything now, SD, but you have my email address, if you would like to ask anything or are wondering about or think I can still add anything, I will gladly try.
98.	SD & EW	Thank you P5.5.
99.	SD	Miss P5.2.
100.	P5.2	Okay. All I'd like to say, I wish the masks would go away. It makes it very difficult for them to read my mouth while I am wearing the mask, to explain sums or if they need to read my emotions when I joke or am serious. So, if there is one thing I feel can just go away and make our task easier, it is that the mask must not be part of our education.
101.	EW & SD	Great. We agree.
102.	SD	Miss P5.3.
103.	P5.3	I agree with P5.2. These masks I feel – gee – the day they say we are not allowed to wear it I am going to make a bonfire like... [unclear].
104.	SD	We are with you on that one.
105.	P5.3	Because it's so bad, you only know the child's eyes. In the beginning I found it difficult to read the children; you don't know if they understand or not. What I found rather interesting with us who teach languages – when the children do oral exams or speeches, they come to class one-by-one. Then I would say, listen, stand one step back and remove your mask, I will keep my mask on then I can assess you easier. Sometimes those children look completely different than what you had thought, and I think, just to be able to see facial expressions – as P5.2 said, that children can see when one means something as a joke. There is so much that can be read in a teacher's facial expression when new work is explained. For our languages – when Language resources need to be explained, but the child cannot hear if you are saying a “t” or a “d”. So, often that mask slips off then I quickly tell them the word so that they can see how my mouth is formed. Vocals, diphthongs, then we just carry on again. So, those masks, when they go, I am going to have a huge party [unclear].
106.	EW	We agree.
107.	SD	Miss P5.1, is there anything more you would like to add?

108.	P5.1	I think I was too honest today. No, I totally agree [unclear]...is rather important, but I think we will only see a few years from now what had happened, what the pandemic has caused, for the teachers and for the children. Uhm, I rather wonder what it would be like in the future, to see how everybody have been affected in the end.
109.	SD	Well, we've seen in today's session how adaptable you were and what problem-solving skills you used, and how you used your creativity to spend time with your family; the relaxation techniques and routines you followed to get through this strange and unknown period. All these aspects are going to make a valuable contribution to our study together with our findings in the previous sessions that link up to it perfectly. So, I would really like to, from my and EW, many, many thanks for your time and the contribution to our study. It is great and exciting. Possibly in a few months' time, we will send you an email, when we have written up all of it in our chapter, just to check that it is what you have written and meant. You can just reply by email and tell us, yes, it is in fact what you meant, or not. It's just a research process that we call member checking, where we, just after having written up this data, check in if it is what you had said and if we have written it down correctly in this chapter. So, you can expect another email from us, but it won't be an online session again. If you'll just respond to it, it will be great.
110.	EW	Yes. It's also voluntary.
111.	SD & EW	Thanking and goodbye.