

Student Voice Matters 2023 Report

What students are telling
us about their learning,
well-being, and skills
development



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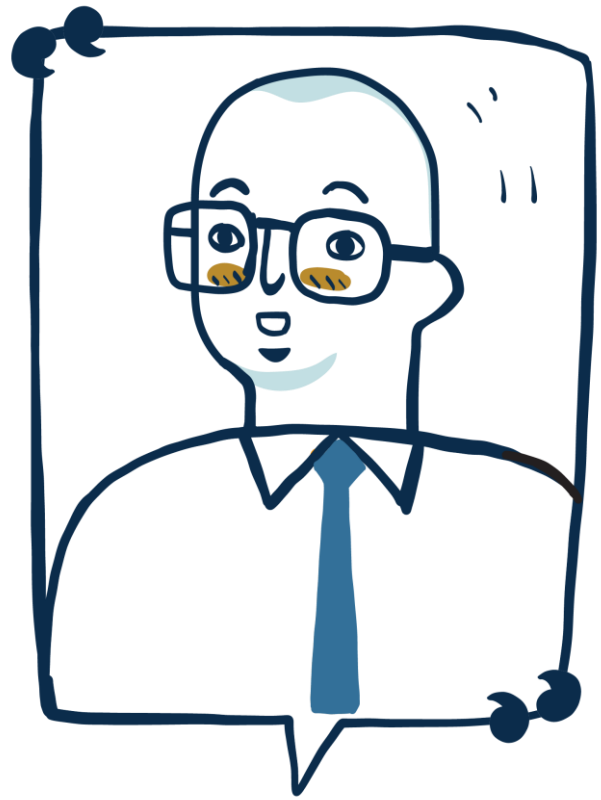
CEO's Foreword

The state of learning is constantly evolving: from the early adoption of online learning during pandemic lockdown, to extra classes on Zoom and Teams after in-person schooling hours, and most recently, the rise of short-form content learning on TikTok and Facebook.

Project ID's annual, student-centred Student Voice Matters (SVM) survey seeks to better understand this changing landscape. In SVM 2023, we hear from students directly as they share their thoughts on the current state of learning, as well as what they expect and want to see in the future. We also explore what it means to support students' wellbeing as well as their post-secondary education and career aspirations.

One key finding of SVM 2023 I want to highlight here, is the deeper integration of digital resources into the current state of learning. Students recognise the learning potential of digital as they grow more adept at leveraging these resources. As such, in spite of detracting from valuable in-person interactions, SVM 2023 finds students proactively requesting to strike a balance between usage of the two as they see fit.

Adapting forward to these digital shifts may no longer seem necessary given the return of in-person schooling—but it can be a choice policymakers and schools make, for more effective and meaningful learning. Perhaps it is time to join hands with those in edtech, to curate a student experience that best incorporates in-person schooling with self-paced learning at home.



With this in mind, whether you are a policymaker, school leadership, teacher, parent, or student, our responsibility as consumers is to carefully consider how these insights can positively impact the next actions that will shape our Malaysian education. Last but not least, to the students who made this possible—thank you.



You are the changemakers not just of the future but of the present, and I hope you continue to give voice to whatever you find passion in

Happy Reading! Feel free to reach out to **hello@project-id.org** with any thoughts or feedback.

Best,
Kelvin Tan,
Chief Executive Officer
Project ID.

Why Student Voice Matters?

Student voice is an important first step in empowering students to take ownership of their own learning—and later on, their lives. When students take responsibility, they are doing more than just engaging: they have potential to influence peers and communities to bring positive outcomes.¹

Since its launch in 2020, SVM has been an invaluable platform for students to advocate for themselves. Project ID believes that the findings from SVM 2023 can similarly offer insights to actionable, student-centered strategies for policy-makers and educators.

Students voice at three levels²:

How Project ID leverages student voice

Top-level:
Building capacity
for student leadership

- Students innovate alternate ways of learning for the future (Young Educators Challenge)³
- Students develop and present policy recommendations in Parliament (KidsTakeover: Kita Peduli)⁴

Middle-level: Students work alongside adults in partnership to accomplish goals

- Students co-design programme objectives and workshop flow
- Students co-facilitate during workshops

Bottom-level: Students' opinions are heard

- Students provide input on current state of learning (Student Voice Matters)⁵
- Students share feedback at the end of every programme

¹OECD. (2018). The Future of Education and Skills Education 2030. [https://www.oecd.org/education/2030/E2030%20Position%20Paper%20\(05.04.2018\).pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/2030/E2030%20Position%20Paper%20(05.04.2018).pdf)

²Mitra, D. (2018). Student voice in secondary schools: the possibility for deeper change. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 56(5), 473-487. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jea-01-2018-0007>

³Young Educators Challenge (YEC) is a competition where students compete in teams to ideate and design their ideal learning experience. Over the years, YEC has seen 156 young educators take up a proactive role in their learning experience through curation of 52 innovative lessons.

⁴KidsTakeover: Kita Peduli, is a 3D2N camp that supported 40 students to develop 6 policy recommendations for a safer learning space. Done in collaboration with UNICEF Malaysia and the Ministry of Education, these policy recommendations were later presented to the Malaysian Parliament.

⁵Through the annual Student Voice Matters survey.

Executive Summary

In SVM 2023, Project ID wants to understand how students perceive their current state of learning, and how digital learning can effectively and meaningfully complement in-person classes. We also looked into supporting student well-being, as well as post-secondary career skills development and readiness.

This year, we heard from 1,200 Malaysian students between ages 13-18. In addition to the SVM 2023 survey, we also conducted validation sessions and focus groups in Bahasa Malaysia and English.



Overarching themes identified from the findings of Student Voice Matters 2023 are:

Themes	Students shared...
Current State of Learning	<p>There is a slight improvement in the hybrid/in-person learning experience, compared to the previous year of online classes</p> <p>1 in 2 students find 'lack of motivation to study' as their biggest learning challenge; the second biggest challenge is 'worries about upcoming exams'</p>
Future of Learning	<p>Students are comfortable supplementing knowledge obtained from in-person classes with online resources; 53% prefer to revise with resources from the Internet</p> <p>Close to 50% want a supportive environment that allows them to have sufficient time for rest</p>
Student Well-being	<p>58% indicate that the top factor of anxiety and stress is the expectation that students should perform academically</p> <p>Peers and parents play important supportive role in improving students' mental & emotional well-being</p>
Skills Development and Career Aspiration	<p>There are few opportunities for students to learn about stress management; 1 in 4 students do not have the opportunity to access stress management skills</p> <p>70% of students are clear on their career choice; however, their confidence level of pursuing this career is only at 6/10, on average</p>

Education for 2023: Our Call to Action (CTA)

#1

Complement in-person learning with an effective digital experience

#2

Teach students stress management strategies, with focus on peer-to-peer support

#3

Incorporate rest in students' learning routines

#4

Strengthen aptitude and skills development to build career readiness

STUDENT

VOICE '23

MATTERS

Findings

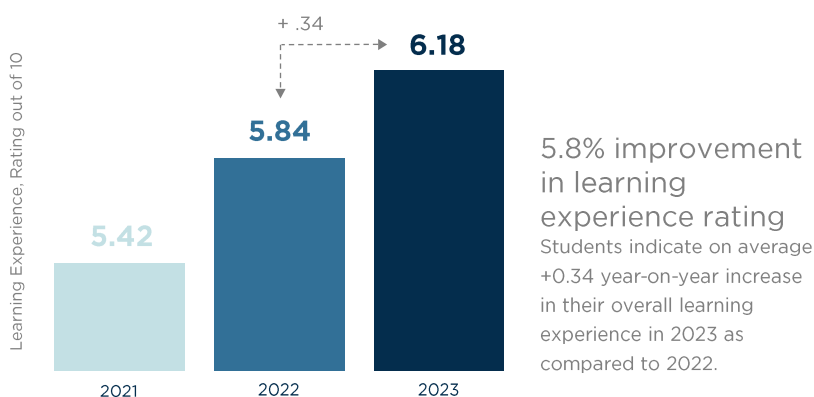


Part I : State of Learning

Here, students offer their perspective on the current state of learning as well as challenges they face in today's education system.

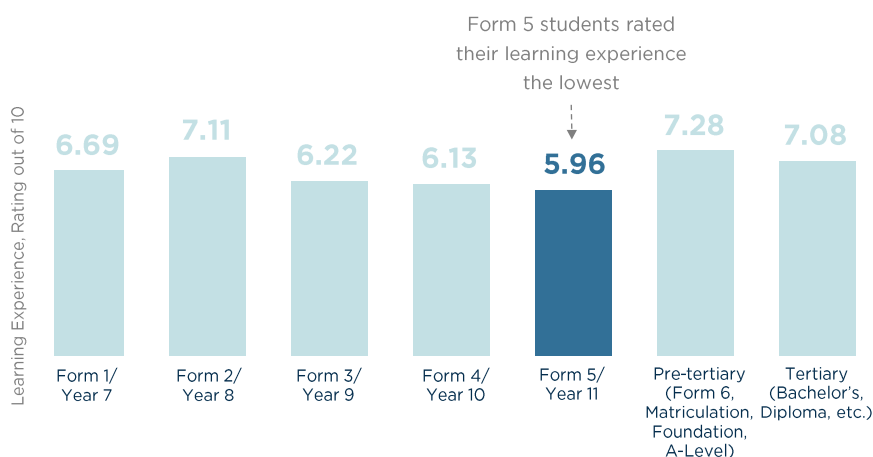
STUDENTS' LEARNING EXPERIENCE SLIGHTLY IMPROVED AS THEY STARTED RETURNING TO SCHOOLS IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

Mean Rating of Learning Experience, 2021-2023



Sources : Student Voice Matters 2021 (Mar - Apr 2021, n = 761.), Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan - Feb 2023, n = 1,210) "How would you rate your overall learning experience in the past 12 months?"

Learning Experience, by Year of Study



Sources : Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan - Feb 2023, n = 1,210) "How would you rate your overall learning experience in the past 12 months?"



"I have learned a lot of new things throughout the year. I think it is one of my best learning experiences yet. **The programmes organised and held by the school have taught me a lot and made me gain more friends at the same time.**"
Form 2 student from Kuala Lumpur

"**There are many things that I couldn't catch up** to due to online learning in the past few years, as teachers are still rushing to finish the syllabus. Sometimes I am able to understand the concept of the topic but never able to answer/ understand the questions that were given in the exams."

Form 5 student from Selangor

"The **anxiety of the SPM** has caused me to overeat to try and calm down."

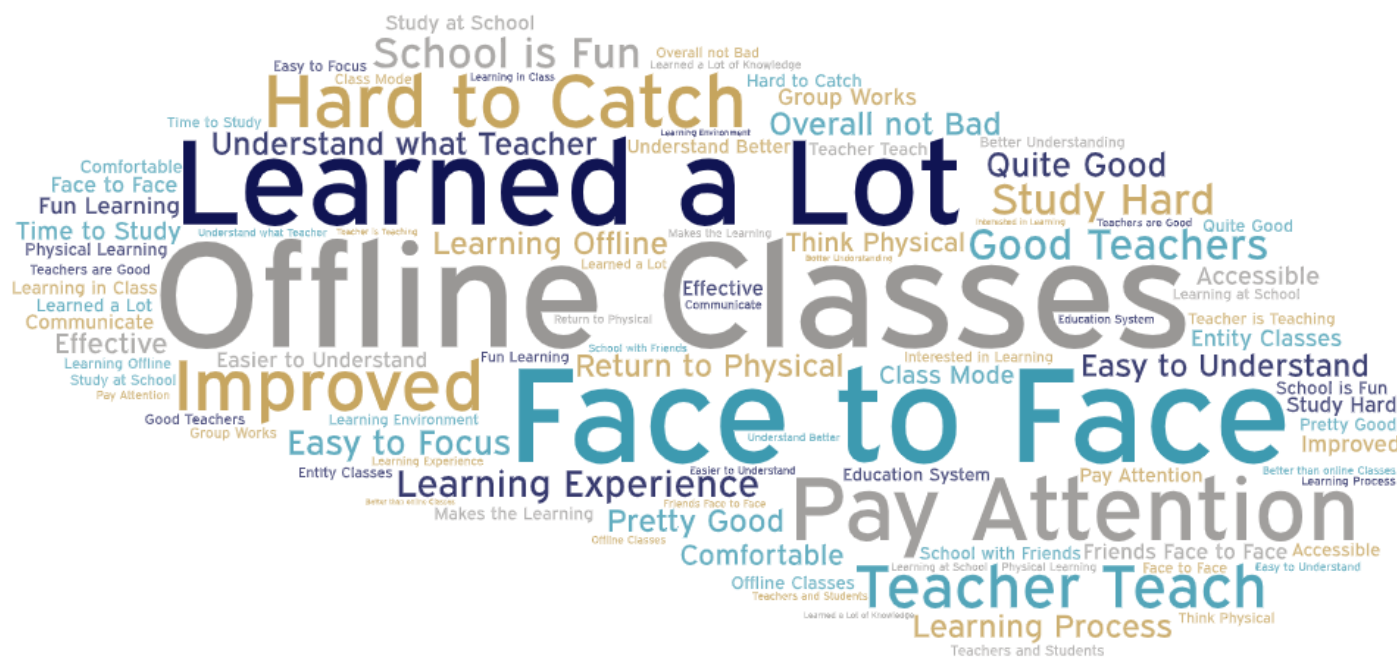
Form 5 student from Selangor

In focus groups, Form 5 students highlight that they face an increase in learning pace and more pressure to finish the curriculum as part of preparation for SPM examinations.

Key findings

- Students rate their learning experience in the past 12 months to be 6.18/10 on average. This is a slight improvement compared to SVM 2022, in which students scored their learning experience to be 5.84/10 on average.
- Compared to students in other forms, Form 5 students rate their learning experience to be the lowest.

STUDENTS APPRECIATE RETURNING TO IN-PERSON CLASSES AS IT PROVIDES DIRECT INTERACTION WITH TEACHERS AND PEERS



Source: Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan-Feb 2023, n = 1,210), "Are you satisfied with the quality of teaching that you have received from your teachers? Why do you rate your satisfaction level as such?"



"In my opinion, I think physical class is more effective as it trains me to be more disciplined since I need to pass up my homework everyday. Furthermore, **I feel more guided in physical class in school.** [...] Besides that, I can interact with my friends, this strengthens our friendship."

Form 5 student from Pulau Pinang

"Setelah sekolah kembali dibuka dan pembelajaran dijalankan seperti biasa, tiada lagi masalah untuk saya terus mengikuti sesi pembelajaran [...] Kini, **suasana sesi pembelajaran yang dijalankan secara bersemuka adalah lebih efektif** dan sangat membantu saya dalam menerima pengajaran daripada guru. Saya juga mendapati bahawa prestasi saya meningkat."

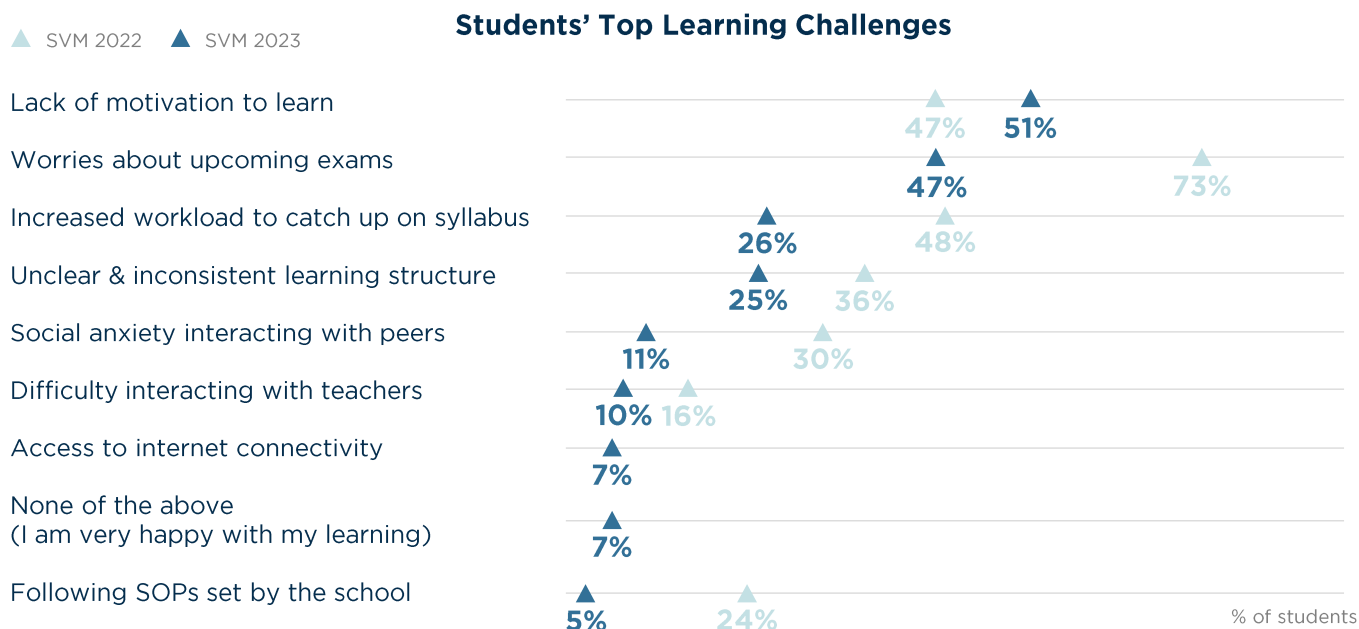
Pelajar Tingkatan 5 dari Sarawak

In focus groups, students share that now that they are in schools, they no longer face challenges with online learning like difficulties in focusing, Internet connectivity issues and lack of interaction with classmates.

Key findings

- Students highlight that they enjoyed the direct learning and support from teachers and peers during in-person classes.

STUDENTS' TOP LEARNING CHALLENGES ARE 'LACK OF MOTIVATION TO STUDY' & 'WORRIES ABOUT UPCOMING EXAM'



Sources : Student Voice Matters 2022 (Feb - Mar 2022, n = 1,140), "What are the biggest challenges that you face as you return to school?", Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan - Feb 2023, n = 1,210) "What are some of your biggest learning challenges in the past 12 months?"



"Learning and teaching needs to be more creative, so that we can motivate students to participate in activities."

Form 4 student from Kuala Lumpur

*"There are ups and downs, because sometimes learning could be mentally and emotionally draining for me. I always **lose my motivation to study and worry if I won't get good grades** and disappoint my parents, and then I'll start to have a breakdown."*

Form 3 student from Kuala Lumpur

*"Apabila pembelajaran disambung secara bersemuka, momentum untuk belajar berkurangan. **Silibus terlalu banyak dan pembelajaran terpaksa dilajukan.**"*

Pelajar Tingkatan 4 dari Putrajaya

In focus groups, students share top factors contributing to a lack of motivation to study:

1. Increased pacing of teaching/ difficulty to catch up with syllabus
2. Struggle to attain deep understanding of subjects
3. Less engaging pedagogy approach

A validation session held after the survey reveals that having clear academic goals and getting students' physical health back on track would contribute to their overall motivation to learn.

Key findings

- When asked about their biggest challenges in returning to schools, 51% cite a 'lack of motivation to study'.
- This is a slight increase from SVM 2022, where 47% of students cited the same factor as their biggest issue in returning to school after the pandemic.
- The second biggest challenge students cite, are worries about upcoming examinations.

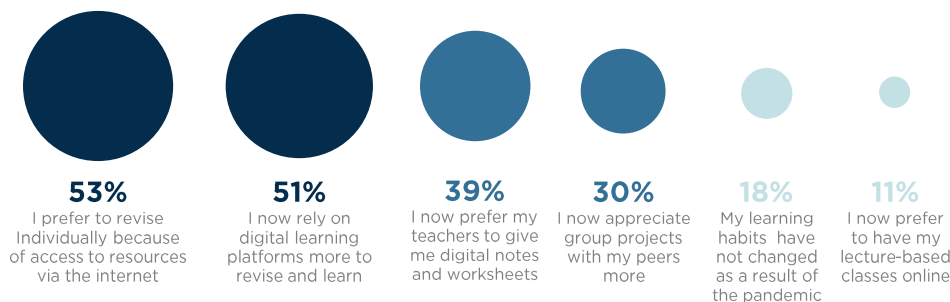
Part II : Future of Learning

Here, students share how their preferences for learning and assessment style have changed. Students also share how they would like to be supported, and how learning and assessment can both be effective and meaningful.

STUDENTS CONTINUE TO INCORPORATE DIGITAL ELEMENTS INTO THEIR LEARNING ...

How learning habits have changed in the post-pandemic education

Over 1 in 2 students prefer to revise individually because they have greater access to resources through the internet and rely more on digital learning platforms (apps, websites & digital notes). This year, students became less inclined to have lecture-based classes online.



Sources : Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan-Feb 2023, n=1,210), "We are interested to know what is/are your learning habit(s) currently."

... WHILE MAINTAINING PREFERENCE FOR LECTURE-STYLE CLASSES

Lectures Rank Most Highly in Students' Preference of Learning

- Lectures**
(teacher, presentation, slideshow, demonstration)
- Study Group**
- MOOC (digital learning)**
Self-paced online course, video tutorials)
- Group Projects**
- Individual Revision**
(homework, revision, assignments, writing notes)
- Writing Notes**
(teachers' notes)
- Guided Group Discussion**
- Individual Projects**

Sources : Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan-Feb 2023, n=1,210), "How do you like to learn? Please rank your preferences for the following methods.."



"...Academic-wise I will **still prefer to learn at school for 2-3 hours**. After that I will **create/ join a study group with 6-10 people** [...] We will learn what was taught at school and understand it, and if none of us couldn't understand a topic well, the next day at school we will ask the teacher or learn it from any online platform like YouTube ..."

Form 4 student from Selangor

"Saya suka pembelajaran secara bersemuka. Tetapi pada pendapat saya cara pembelajaran yang saya impikan ialah **setiap pelajar tidak perlu menggunakan buku dan setiap pelajar akan dipinjamkan e-book untuk belajar** agar beg sekolah tidak terlalu berat."

Pelajar Tingkatan 4 dari Sarawak

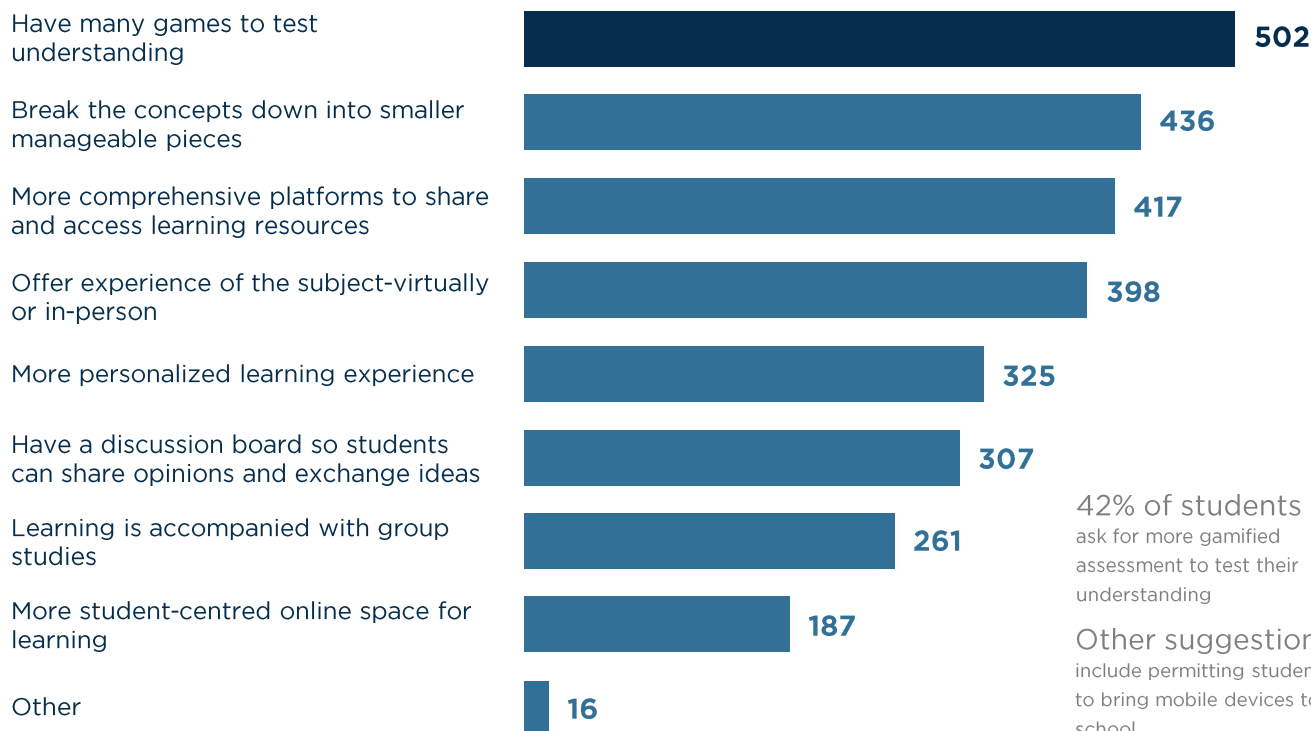
In focus groups, students mention the need to improve their research and evaluative skills. Given the wealth of resources on the Internet, students need to critically consider the usefulness of a resource beyond the number of likes.

Key findings

- Students supplement offline learning with digital resources, whether revising individually with resources on the Internet (53%) or relying on digital learning platforms (51%).

STUDENTS PREFER GAMIFIED ASSESSMENT AND BITE-SIZED LESSONS

Students' Perspective : How Can Digital Learning Be Better?



Sources : Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan - Feb 2023, n = 1,210)
 "In your opinion, how can digital learning be improved in order to help you in your studies?"



"[My ideal learning environment is] digitally, like through a game on that certain subject or topic."

Form 5 student from Kuala Lumpur

"[My ideal learning environment is] online: I would like to have interactions between the teachers, play games through Quizizz, watch videos to learn."

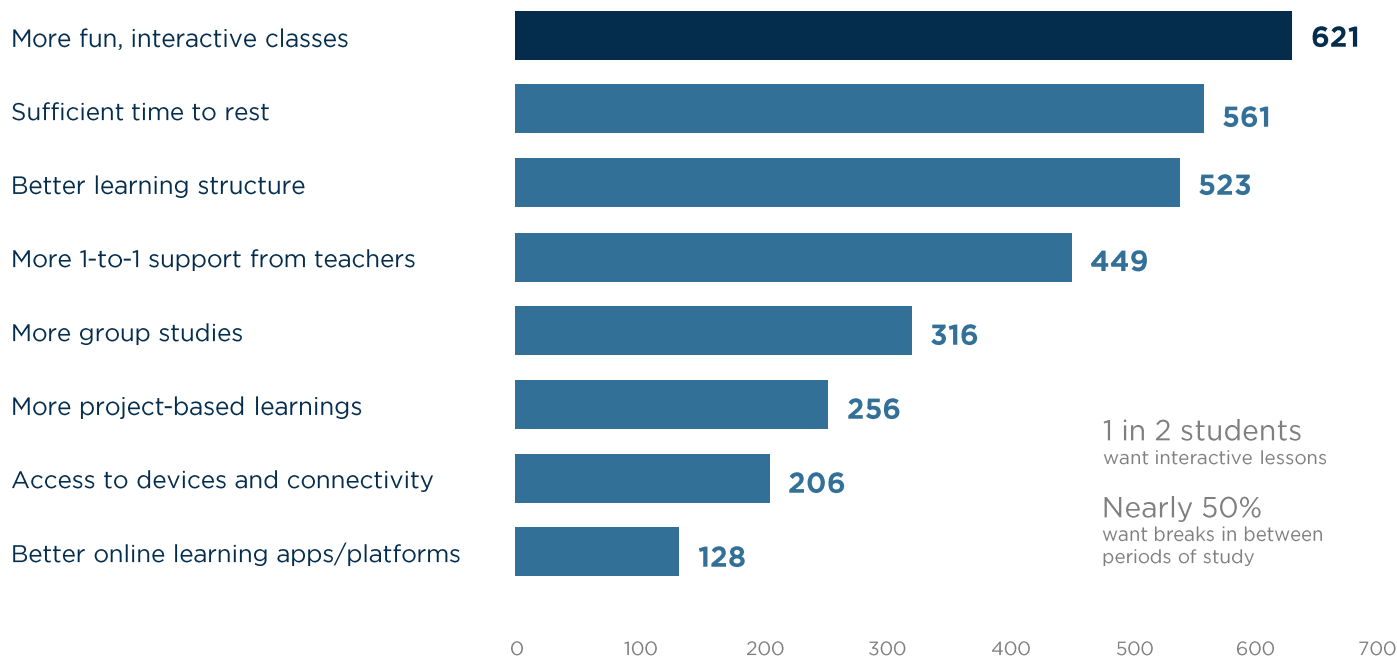
Form 4 student from Kuala Lumpur

Key findings

- For better delivery of digital assessment, 42% of students prefer game-based learning.
- 36% have an inclination towards micro-learning, which breaks down learning material to bite-sized lessons in the form of quizzes or videos.
- Overall, this is consistent with **SVM 2022** findings where students indicated that interactive classes with a clear and consistent learning structure was a top priority to improve learning experiences.

STUDENTS WANT ENGAGING LESSONS AND SUFFICIENT REST TIME

What Students Are Asking : Interactive Classes & Sufficient Time to Rest



Sources : Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan - Feb 2023, n = 1,210) "What support do you need to improve your learning experience?"



"As a study group we will have some **interactive games and rest in between studying**, yet we will be able to have our peace of mind. This will make studying better and fun."

Form 4 student from Selangor

"I want to be able to learn without rushing, and with **sufficient time for us to rest**. I would like homework but not overload, and sufficient time for us to complete it. I want learning to be interactive and motivating and not just for the sake of an A."

Form 3 student from Johor

"Saya kerap mengalami sakit kepala dan kurang tidur akibat **kurang rehat daripada pembelajaran**."

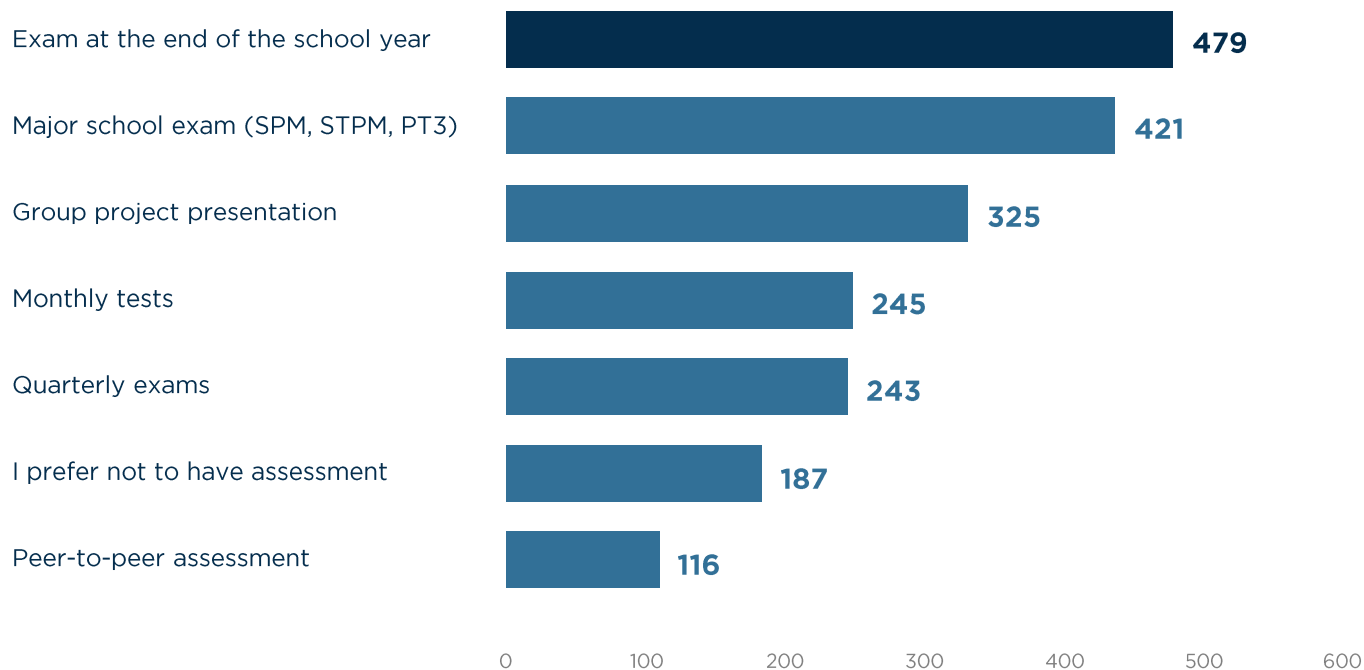
Pelajar Tingkatan 3 dari Kedah

Key findings

- Consistent with 'lack of motivation' as a top learning challenge, 1 in 2 students indicate that they want more interactive classes in order for their learning to be effective.
- Students also face pressure to catch-up with the syllabus, and struggle with the physical effects of attending prolonged online classes. Close to 50% want a supportive environment that prioritises rest in between studying, extracurricular activities and socializing.

STUDENTS PREFER EXAM-BASED ASSESSMENTS

Academic Assessment : What Students Want?



Sources : Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan - Feb 2023, n = 1,210) "How do you like to be assessed academically?"



"For assessments, I think open-book tests are best because we won't be forced to memorise everything, and we could be tested if we actually understand the concept of all topics."

Form 4 student from Kuala Lumpur

"I think I can master what knowledge teachers were trying to pass to us, but I can't really know if I can get a good result in the exam because our school has no test."

Form 1 student from Johor

Key findings

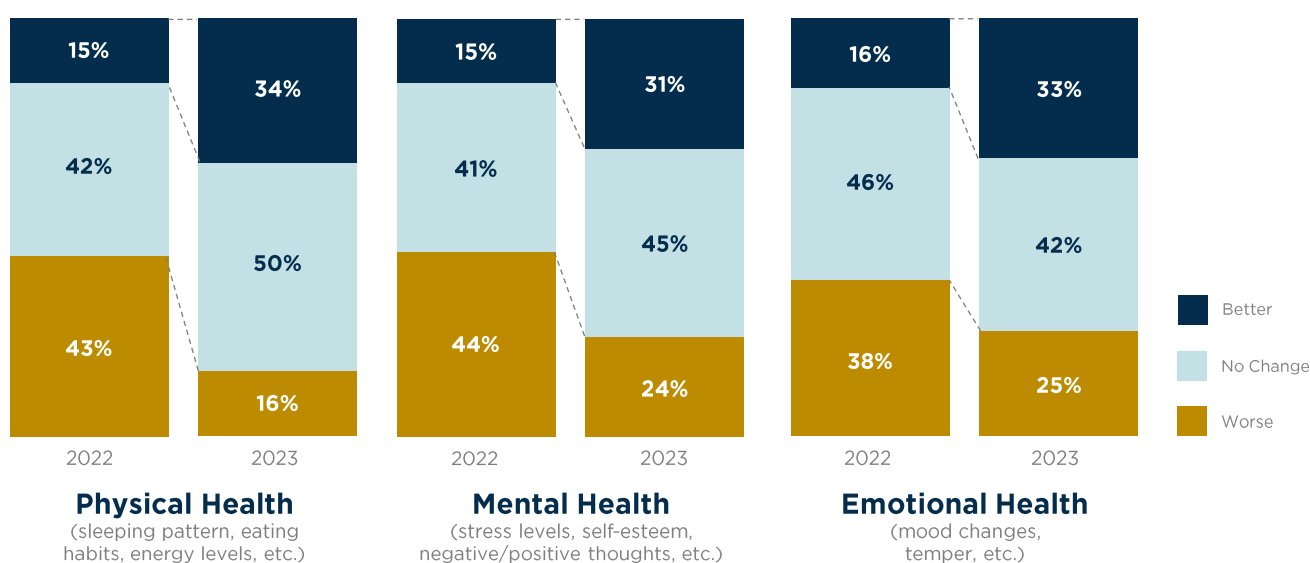
- Students recognise that assessments have a role to play in education - assessments are a structured way of measuring their understanding of learning material.
- 40% indicate that they still prefer to have year-end exams, followed by about 35% in favour of national exams such as PT3, SPM and STPM.
- Consistent with students calling for hands-on learning experiences, about 1 out of 4 students want to be assessed through group project presentations.

Part III : Students Well-Being

Here, students share their thoughts on their physical and social-emotional well-being, as well as about their sources and systems of support.

STUDENTS INDICATE GENERAL IMPROVEMENT IN WELL-BEING OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS

Change in Students' Well-being Over the Past 12 Months



Sources : Student Voice Matters 2022 (Feb - Mar 2022, n = 1,140), "How has your health changed for the past 12 months?" Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan - Feb 2023, n = 1,210) "How has your health changed since last academic year (2021-2022)?"



*"I have been able to physically attend classes which not only helps me to focus more, but also allows me to **socialise with my friends which has positively impacted my mental health.**"*

Form 5 student from Kuala Lumpur

*"This year has put more pressure on me because I am currently in Form 4 and there's a lot of hard topics that I need to catch up on. My **physical health might have been better due to learning in school. I've been burned out with a lot of homework and group work.**"*

Form 4 student from Selangor

*"Secara fizikal, saya tiada berubah selain daripada berat badan yang tidak konsisten disebabkan **kurangnya aktiviti fizikal dan banyak gaya hidup sedentari kerana banyak kelas atas talian.**"*

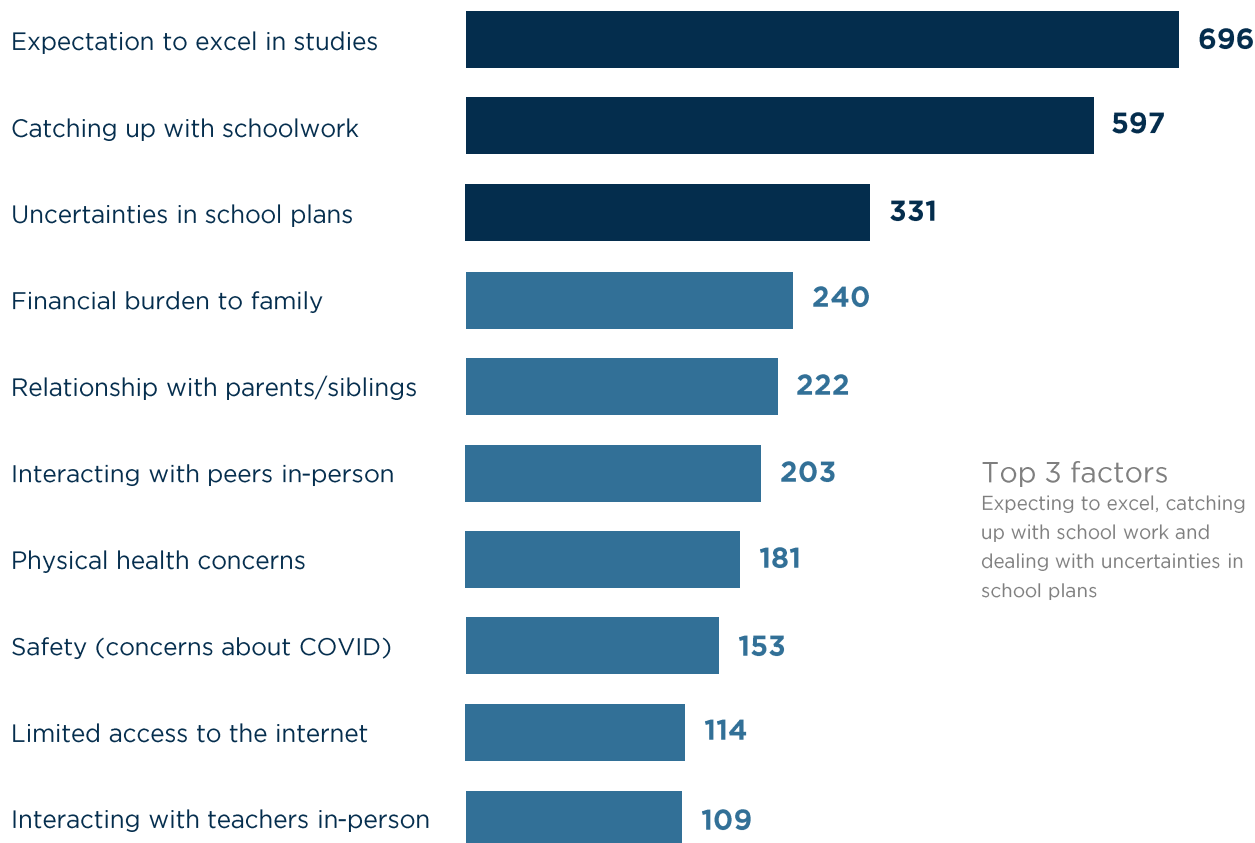
Pelajar universiti dari Kuala Lumpur

Key findings

- Overall, students this year rate their well-being more positively, where 35% reported an improvement in their mental, physical or emotional well-being.
- This is consistent with schools reopening, where students get to actively engage with in-person learning, physical extracurricular activities as well as socializing with their friends.
- While there is general improvement, we still recognise that 1 in 4 students express a decline in mental and emotional health.

TOP FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO ANXIETY AND STRESS IS THE EXPECTATION FOR STUDENTS TO PERFORM ACADEMICALLY

Factors Contributing to Students' Anxiety and Stress



Sources : Student Voice Matters 2022 (Feb-Mar 2022, n = 1,140) "Which of the following factors contribute to your anxiety and stress?"



"I feel mentally and emotionally drained from all the pressure from school and my parents. **Since they have high hopes for me, I feel bad whenever I'm not doing well** in school. I tend to binge eat food or sleep so that I won't have to think about my problems, which have made me unhealthy."

Form 5 student from Selangor

"**Lack of structure towards learning** provided by the school has caused anxiety and stress due to being worried about the lack of time to learn the material [...] This causes stress and **pressure to self-study.**"

Form 3 Pulau Pinang

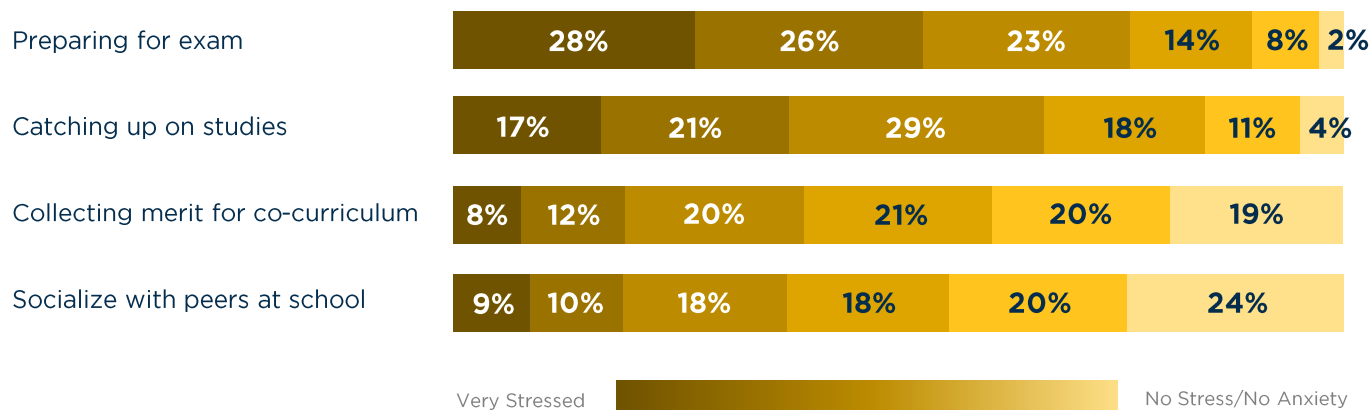
"Saya berasa **tertekan dengan latihan yang banyak** kerana tidak tahu mahu siapkan yang mana terlebih dahulu. [...] **Emosi saya berubah menjadi turun naik** seperti kadang-kadang gembira, stress, rasa nak nangis, tidak puas hati, sedih dan kadang-kadang merasa sangat penat kerana otak **terlalu banyak memikirkan kerja dan latihan sekolah yang terlampau banyak.**"

Pelajar Tingkatan 1 dari Sarawak

TOP FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO ANXIETY AND STRESS IS THE EXPECTATION FOR STUDENTS TO PERFORM ACADEMICALLY

Students' Anxiety/Stress Level in Different Contexts

Student rated their anxiety levels the highest when preparing for exams (average rating :3.4 out 5) and the least stressful when socializing with their peers at school (average rating : 1.9 out of 5)



Sources : Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan-Feb 2023, n = 1,210) "How would you rate your anxiety/stress level in the given situation?"
Rating scale 0 (no stress/no anxiety at all) to 5 (very stressed)



"During the past year I have been [...] **feeling that I am not enough** compared to my other exceptional relatives. **With the stress of SPM and studies in general.** Plus co-curriculum stuff that I need to complete. I reached a point where I was afraid of doing anything I didn't want to do anything other than sleeping. That was when I found out that I was burnt out."

Form 5 student from Kuala Lumpur

"I don't exercise much now because I'm busy with studying and I think my **emotional and mental health is not really good now, as the exam is near.**"

Form 5 student from Pulau Pinang

"Emosi saya semakin teruk sejak tahun lepas disebabkan **tekanan yang saya rasa untuk mendapatkan keputusan peperiksaan yang bagus** daripada guru."

Pelajar Tingkatan 3 dari Negeri Sembilan

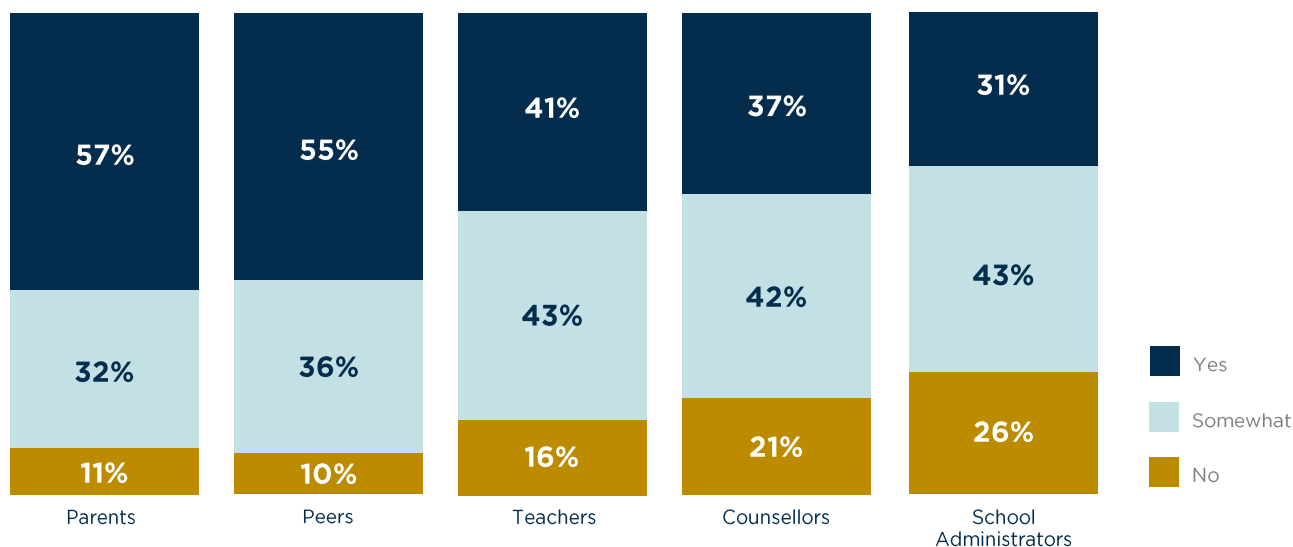
Key findings

- 58% rate the expectation to perform in their studies as the primary factor for their anxiety and stress.
- The amount of schoolwork and uncertainties in school schedule follow as a close second and third reason.
- Asked to indicate their stress levels in the given situations, students' most stressful time is when they need to prepare for examinations (28%), and their least stressful time is when they are collecting merit marks for extracurricular activities (8%).

PEERS AND PARENTS PLAY IMPORTANT SUPPORTIVE ROLE IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' MENTAL & EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Support System for Students' Mental & Emotional Health

More than 50% of students cite parents and peers respectively as the best supporters of students' mental and emotional health



Sources : Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan - Feb 2023, n = 1,210) "Are you satisfied with the support for your mental & emotional wellbeing?"
Numbers are the percentage of students indicating response/total respondents



"... berkenaan ibubapa saya, mereka seorang yang memahami dengan keadaan saya dan mencuba untuk memahami saya. Di samping itu, guru kaunseling selalu berkongsi maklumat berkaitan kesihatan fizikal, mental dan emosi saya..."

Pelajar Tingkatan 3 dari Sabah

"Saya lebih seronok apabila berjumpa dengan rakan-rakan hingga menyebabkan mental dan emosi saya lebih terkawal"

Pelajar Tingkatan 3 dari Pulau Pinang

"With the company of friends around me, I feel more cheerful. I felt very depressed during the pandemic, but now I feel much better."

Form 4 student from Selangor

In focus groups, students highlight that they are more open to share when they perceive comfort, familiarity and trust between them and the other party.

Key findings

- Overall, students share that they experienced different levels of support for their well-being from people around them.
- Parents (57%) are the biggest sources of support, followed closely by friends (55%).
- Many also express gratitude for their teachers who support them with the transition back to in-person learning.

ACTIVE LISTENING AND WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AS STUDENTS' PREFERRED METHODS OF SUPPORT

By not comparing ourselves to other classes or students, as we each have our own difficulty. [...] Lastly, don't assume you know a student's life, you never know what the student have gone through.

Form 2 student from Johor

They can start by saying more positive words like 'I know you can do it', or 'I'm proud of you for getting this far', instead of comparing us with our peers or even the batches before us.

Form 5 student from Melaka

Mendengar masalah saya secara terbuka tanpa buat ekspresi muka dan memberikan solusi yang terbaik. Tidak membandingkan saya dengan orang lain.

Pelajar Tingkatan 5 dari Selangor

Guru boleh memberi sokongan dengan menyediakan bahan belajar yang dapat membantu pelajar diluar waktu belajar ataupun sentiasa bersedia apabila diajukan soalan. Ibubapa boleh memberi sokongan kepada anak dengan cara meluangkan masa bersama dan menyediakan keperluan kepada anak demi akademik mereka. Para kaunseling dapat membantu pelajar dengan cara memberi nasihat yang efektif, dan tidak pecahkan rahsia mereka kepada orang lain.

Pelajar universiti dari Kuala Lumpur

Key findings

- When asked how parents, teachers, and counselors can better support their well-being, many students want a listening ear and words of encouragement.
- Additionally, students would prefer less comparisons of academic performance being made between themselves and their peers.

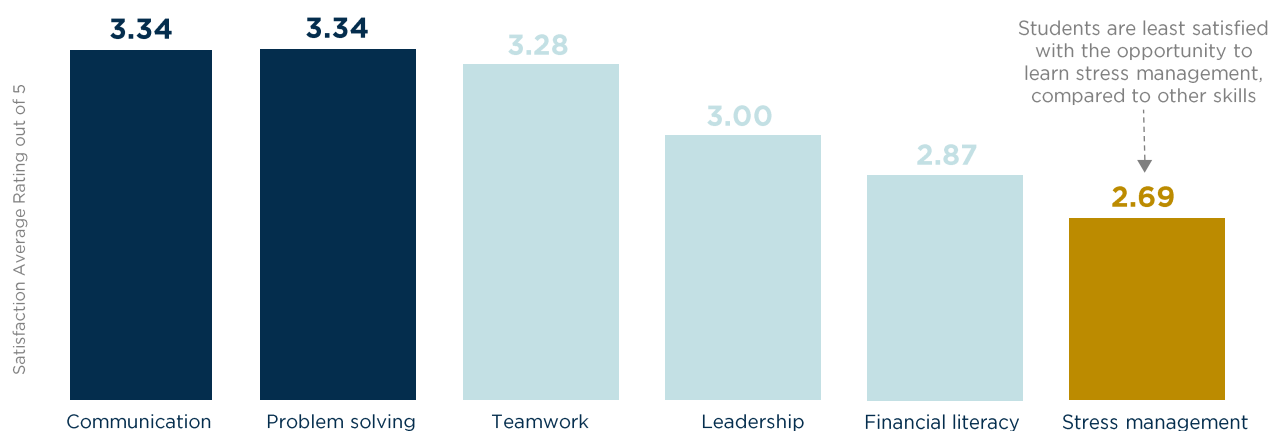
Part IV : Skills Development and Career Aspiration

According to a 2022 report by Nuffield Foundation⁶ and World Economic Forum Education 4.0 Taxonomy,⁷ students who possess collaboration, communication, leadership and problem-solving will be highly valued in the future. Newly emerging are also skills in self-management such as emotional intelligence and stress tolerance.

Here, students share how and where they are learning these skills. Given that Form 1 students who experienced pandemic learning loss in 2019 are now in Form 5, they also share their thoughts about post-secondary education and career readiness, in preparation for their next phase of life.

STUDENTS ARE LEAST SATISFIED WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN ABOUT STRESS MANAGEMENT ...

Soft-Skills Learning Opportunity Satisfaction



Sources : Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan - Feb 2023, n = 1,210)
"Please rate your satisfaction with the opportunities to learn these soft skills in the past 12 months?"



"I'm really grateful that I have learnt many **things through these programmes [extracurricular activities]. I have learnt some soft skills including communication, teamwork and of course, confidence.**"

Form 2 student from Selangor

"We **learn about stress management only a few times** within the academic year. For Form 1, it is during orientation; for Form 5, in the months before facing SPM. So those in between, like us Form 4 or Form 2, couldn't get much exposure to stress management."

Form 4 student from Kedah

⁶Taylor, A., Nelson, J., O'Donnell, S., Davies, E. and Hillary, J. (2022). The Skills Imperative 2035: What Does the Literature Tell Us About Essential Skills Most Needed for Work? Slough: NFER

⁷World Economic Forum (2023). Defining Education 4.0: A Taxonomy for the Future of Learning. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Defining_Education_4.0_2023.pdf

... WHILE 1 IN 4 STUDENTS INDICATE THAT THEY DO NOT LEARN STRESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS FROM ANYWHERE

Soft-skills Learning Resources for Students

Opportunities to learn stress management skills can be said to be rated the lowest due to a lack of available and accessible resources. 28% of students share that they have not learnt stress management skills from anywhere

	Stress Management	Communication	Problem-Solving
Extracurricular activities at school	23%	46%	38%
Subject-related group projects with my peers	15%	48%	42%
External programmes (online workshops, camps)	11%	14%	15%
Watching my parents at home and at work	17%	17%	23%
Working during my free time (part-time, internship, after school)	11%	13%	13%
Online (YouTube, MOOC, TikTok)	32%	20%	21%
I have not learnt from anywhere	28%	10%	11%

Sources : Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan - Feb 2023, n = 1,210) "In the past 12 months, where do you learn these soft skills?"
Numbers are the percentage of students indicating response/total respondents

Key findings

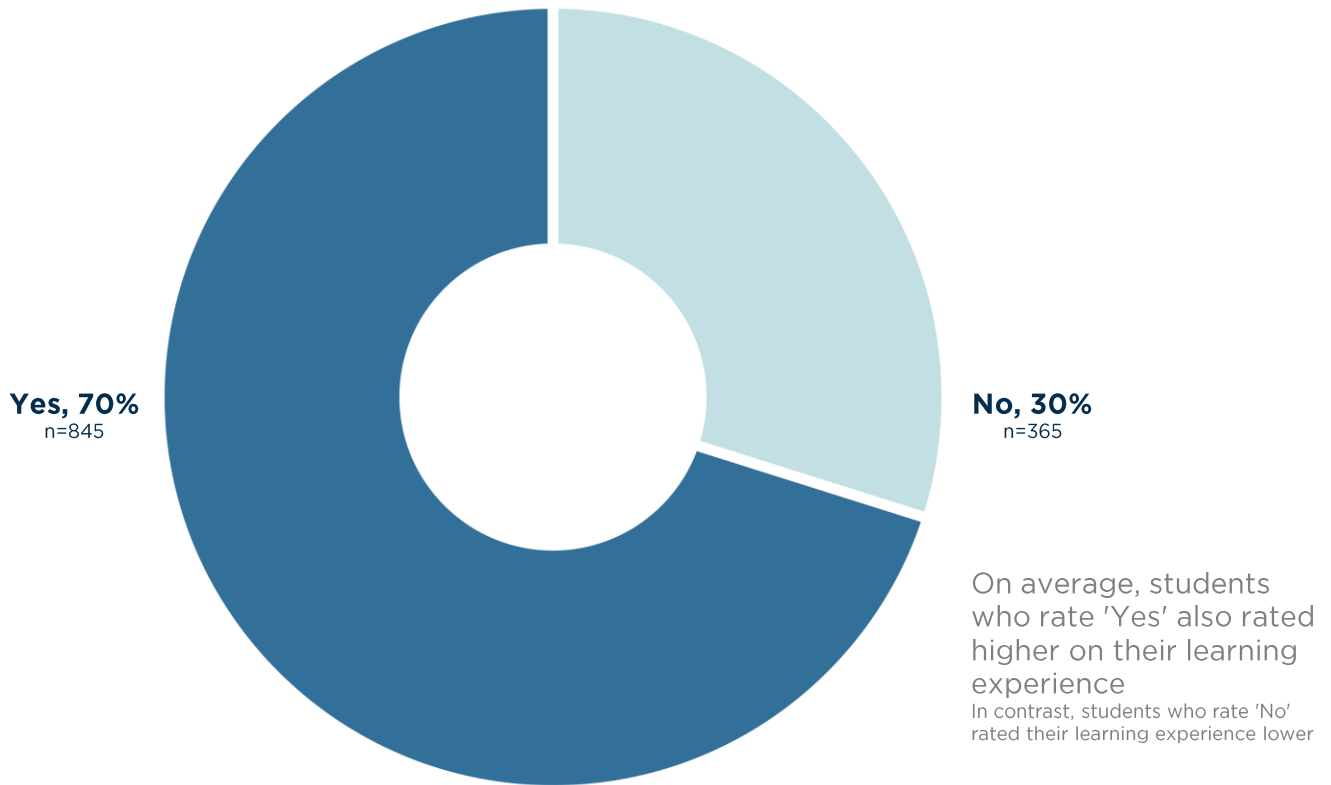
- Asked to rank amongst 6 listed soft skills on which had the most learning opportunities, students rate problem-solving and communication skills the highest (3.34/5 on average). 1 in 2 students indicate that they learn these skills in school, through extracurricular activities or group projects.
- Despite students feeling anxious and stressed, stress management is rated the lowest (2.69/5 on average). 1 in 4 students indicate that they do not learn stress management from anywhere.

⁶Taylor, A., Nelson, J., O'Donnell, S., Davies, E. and Hillary, J. (2022). The Skills Imperative 2035: What Does the Literature Tell Us About Essential Skills Most Needed for Work? Slough: NFER

⁷World Economic Forum (2023). Defining Education 4.0: A Taxonomy for the Future of Learning, https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Defining_Education_4.0_2023.pdf

70% OF STUDENTS ARE CLEAR ON THEIR CAREER CHOICE ...

Career Pathways : Have Students Identified Their Career Choices?



Sources : Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan - Feb 2023, n = 1,210)
"Please rate your satisfaction with the opportunities to learn these soft skills in the past 12 months?"



"...Saya **ingin menjadi Chemical Engineer seperti ayah** saya yang merupakan Production Manager di tempat kerjanya. Abang saya juga yang sedang belajar di UNIMAS Kuching mengambil kursus Chemical Engineering untuk mengikut jejak langkah ayah kami."
Pelajar Tingkatan 4 dari Sarawak

"I want to **work in the medical field**, specifically in Psychiatry. So of course I will have to attend university to study Medicine first."
Form 4 student from Negeri Sembilan

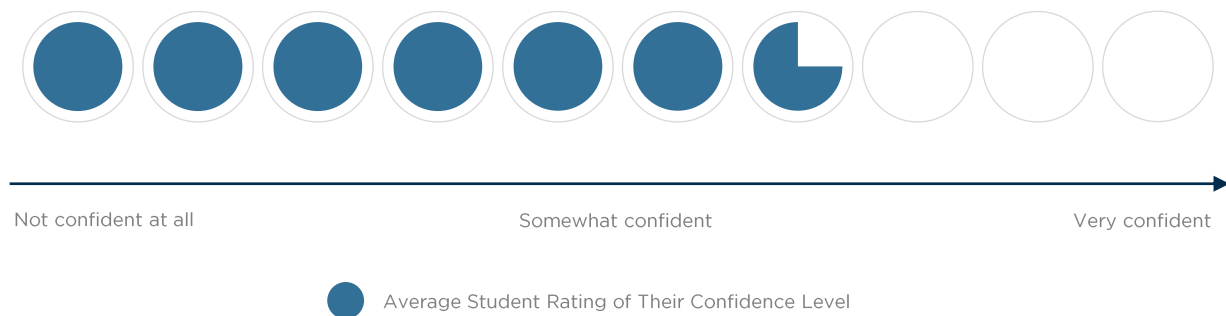
"I'm scared to determine a career because I don't believe in myself enough to be able to achieve a certain goal. Another thing is, **I don't want to experience failure and disappointment.**"
Form 4 student from Pulau Pinang

In focus groups, students highlight the importance of a career that provides financial stability, even though it is not necessarily enjoyable. Students are also unsure on how to embark on their career of choice.

... BUT ARE ONLY MODERATELY CONFIDENT IN THEIR ABILITY TO PURSUE THESE CAREERS

Student Confidence Level In Pursuing Career of Choice

Those who had already determined their career of choice (70% of students) rated their confidence to pursue their chosen career only at **6.61/10**.



Sources : Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan - Feb 2023, n = 1,210)

"If you have identified your career of choice, how confident you are that you will be able to pursue the career of your choice?"

“““

*"I need to **consider whether the things I love are realistic, feasible, profitable**, etc. And most of the time, I feel that the things I like can't be turned into jobs, and I'm afraid that I'll be bored after my love (such as literature, philosophy, humanities and culture) becomes a job."*

Form 4 student from Kuala Lumpur

*"I have a lot of interests in many things but my parents hope that I can find a career that **can pay me a lot.**"*

Form 5 student from Selangor

*"Kerjaya yang ingin saya lakukan pada masa hadapan **mungkin tidak dapat mencari rezeki.**"*

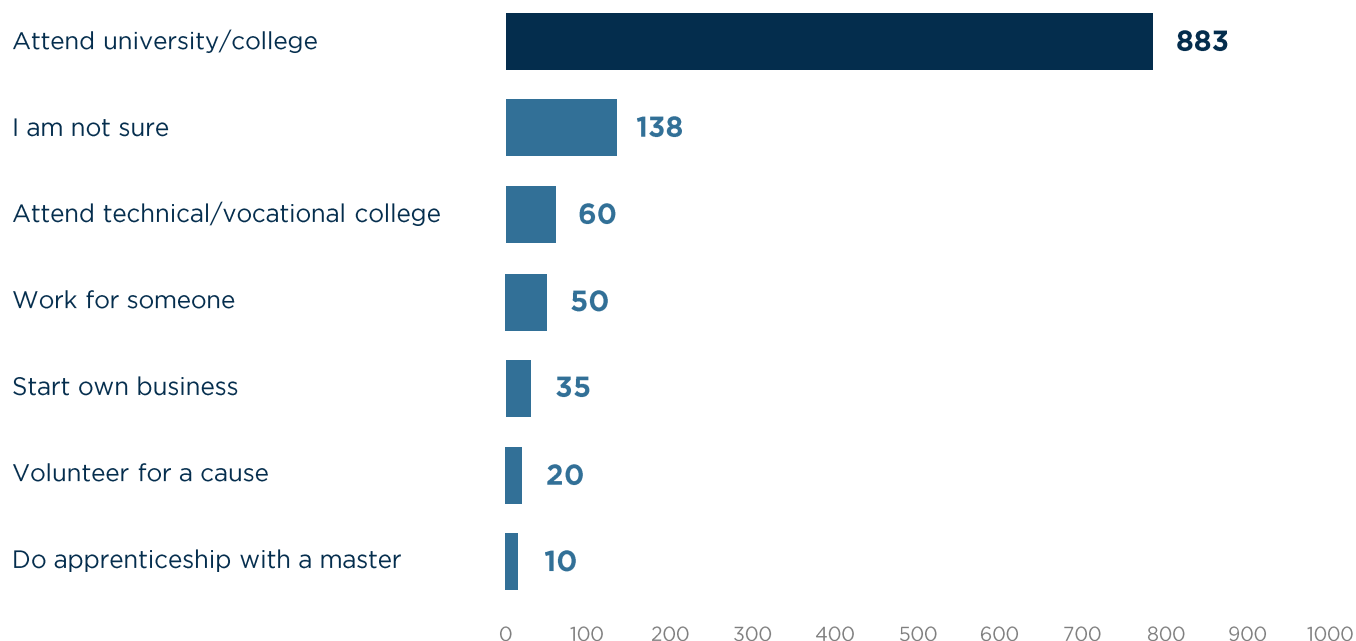
Pelajar Tingkatan 4 dari Kuala Lumpur

Key findings

- 70% share that they had already identified their career of choice. For those who had yet to do so, major reasons include a lack of career exposure, an inability to identify their own interests and strengths and that students are unable to match school subjects with future career prospects.
- Of those 70%, students rate their confidence level of achieving their target career at 6.61/10.

MAJORITY OF STUDENTS PLAN TO PURSUE TERTIARY EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITIES OR COLLEGES

What Students Want to Do Next After Secondary School



Sources : Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan - Feb 2023, n = 1,210)
"Which options you prefer to do after graduating from secondary school?"



"I would want to **upgrade myself further before I step into the society**. But of course, I will probably try to find part-time jobs during my university life."

Form 5 student from Selangor

"Saya memilih universiti/ kolej kerana **pilihan ini lebih selamat bagi saya**. [...] Dengan menyambung pelajaran saya sekurang-kurangnya **dapat mengasah ilmu pengetahuan sebalik menjejakan kaki ke alam pekerjaan dan berfikir tentang kerjaya yang saya betul-betul mahukan**."

Pelajar Tingkatan 5 dari Pulau Pinang

In focus groups, students who are uncertain about their post-SPM plans share about their confusion with many post-SPM options given and their lack of time to consider their future plans as they are very occupied with present studies.

Key findings

- 73% plan to attend university or college after completing SPM, whereas 10% indicate that "I am not sure".
- The other 18% want to attend vocational school/ complete an apprenticeship, start earning by entering employment straightaway or starting their own business, or take a break from studies by volunteering.

STUDENT

VOICE '23

MATTERS

Education for 2023:
Our Call to Action



#1 Complement in-person learning with an effective digital experience

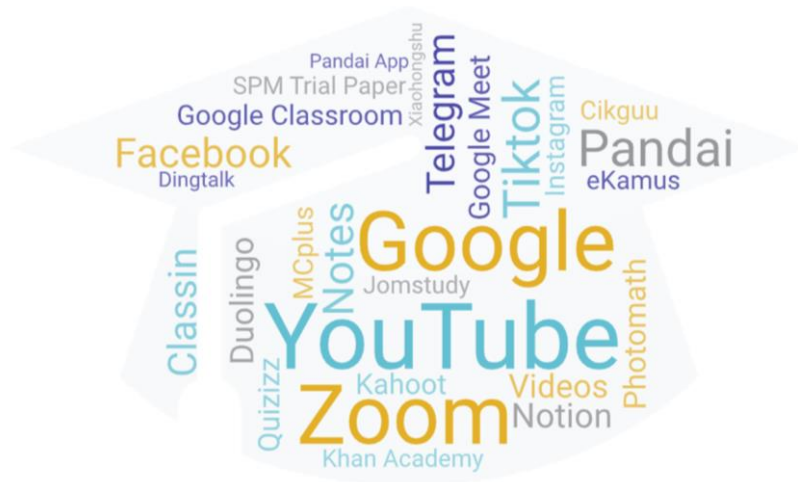
1 in 2 students supplement offline learning with digital resources.

42% prefer game-based learning and assessment.

36% have an inclination towards micro-learning.

There is a need to invest in more careful design and delivery of how digital can complement in-person learning. As is, students have continued to learn on digital via various social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok and Facebook. This confirms personalized and self-led learning as an education trend, found especially in developing countries.⁸

DIGITAL PLATFORMS THAT STUDENTS CURRENTLY USE FOR LEARNING



Sources : Student Voice Matters 2023 (Jan - Feb 2023, n = 1,210)
"What are some of the apps you are using to learn now?"



"For some other subjects, I believe that **learning through play would be very effective** such as through Quizizz, Kahoot, or even in-person games such as the ones included in our government textbooks."

Form 4 student from Melaka

"**At home I would revise from online platforms** to recall what I learnt throughout the day."

Form 4 student from Selangor

Beyond that, there is growing recognition of the value of gamified learning and assessment (quizzes, mini-competitions, educational games) to the academic setting, which our respondents have also intuitively seemed to pick up on. This is consistent with global trends of game-based learning gaining momentum and being recognised as a positive development, according to OECD paper Trends Shaping Education 2019.⁹

When planned and facilitated effectively, digital can be a promising solution to address learning gaps. After all, students already recognise what type of learning works best for them—all that is left is to provide them with the tools and resources to do so.

UNICEF's Trends in Digital Personalized Learning¹⁰

Digital personalised learning also has the potential to close education gaps for lower-achieving students in low- and middle-income countries.⁵

⁸Groff, J. (2017). Personalized learning: The state of the field & future directions. Center for Curriculum Redesign. https://curriculumredesign.org/wp-content/uploads/PersonalizedLearning_CCR_May2017.pdf

⁹OECD (2019). Trends Shaping Education 2019 Spotlight 18. <https://www.oecd.org/education/cei/Trends-Shaping-Education-Spotlight-18-Play!.pdf>

¹⁰UNICEF (2022). Trends in Digital Personalized Learning. <https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/reports/trends-digital-personalized-learning>

#2 Teach students stress management strategies, with focus on peer-to-peer support

1 in 4 students express a decline in mental and emotional health.

1 in 4 students indicate that they do not learn stress management from anywhere.

Psychosocial resilience in students refers to their ability to adapt, cope, and thrive in the face of various challenges encountered. Indeed, mindsets have been shown to be strong predictors of success, much more than socioeconomic background.¹¹

Stress management strategies play a crucial role in cultivating psychosocial resilience among students. A positive attitude towards stress, especially beneficial stress known as eustress, can help students by motivating them to raise grades or pursue an extracurricular opportunity. However, left unaddressed, stress can have long-term detrimental effects.

There are direct benefits of teaching students how to manage their own stress. A growing body of research including that from Iran¹² and Japan¹³ relates stress management training in school with better academic performance among students. A study from Islamic Azad University in partnership with National University Malaysia has also correlated the practice of stress management to a positive stimulation of cognitive processes.¹⁴



*"I would like **the school counselors to focus on more current issues, like how to deal with stress and so on.**"*
Form 4 student from Melaka

*"In my opinion, these great people (parents, teachers and counselors) can find ways to spend more time with students **and allow them to be vulnerable about their emotions** when given the right circumstances and timing. Secondly, I think these people can also **encourage students to participate in activities/hobbies** like meditation, journaling/ diary, yoga, philosophy and lots of others that can benefit the student's well-being."*

Form 4 student from Kuala Lumpur

Next page ►

¹¹McKinsey & Company. "How to Improve Student Educational Outcomes: New Insights from Data Analytics." McKinsey & Company, <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/how-to-improve-student-educational-outcomes-new-insights-from-data-analytics> (accessed 18 May 2023)

¹²Moghimislam, M., Jafari, P., & Hoseini, M. (2013). Impact of Stress Management Training on the Girl High School Student Academic Achievement. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 89, 22-26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.08.803>

¹³Hirokawa, K., Yagi, A. & Miyata, Y. An Examination of the Effects of Stress Management Training for Japanese College Students of Social Work. *International Journal of Stress Management* 9, 113-123 (2002). <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1014906820573>

¹⁴Chinaveh, M., Ishak, N. M., & Salleh, A. M. (2010). Improving Mental Health and Academic Performance through Multiple Stress Management Intervention: Implication For Diverse Learners. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 7, 311-316. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.10.043>

#2 Teach students stress management strategies, with focus on peer-to-peer support

1 in 4 students express a decline in mental and emotional health.

1 in 4 students indicate that they do not learn stress management from anywhere.

Of all stress management strategies, peer support can be particularly fruitful when it is provided by individuals with similar experiences and backgrounds.¹⁵ The Journal of Mental Health found that these interventions, even through online platforms, can be effective in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety in adolescents.¹⁶ This type of support is also particularly important for students who live far from home; several Malaysian tertiary education institutions have initiated peer support programs to a varying degree of success.¹⁷

Whether self- or peer-guided, students who successfully navigate stressful experiences become more emotionally resilient, and they are set up to discover how far they can extend their own capabilities.

Peer support intervention in Kesteven and Sleaford High School in Lincolnshire, UK

Kesteven and Sleaford High School effectively implements a system¹⁸ which guides students on how to obtain assistance for their mental health and well-being. This school is based in Lincolnshire, UK and has ~750 students on average.

This system has five levels:

- Level 1 : Making students aware of the importance of mental health and well-being in everyday life
- Level 2 : Training student ambassadors to offer peer-to-peer support
- Level 3 : In-school listening service
- Level 4 : Tailored support from outside agencies, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services from the UK National Health Service
- Level 5 : Confidential counselling service run by charity Counselling and Support for Young People

Staff at the school also receive training to understand emerging mental health issues.

¹⁵Ali, K., Farrer, L., Gulliver, A., & Griffiths, K. M. (2015). Online Peer-to-Peer Support for Young People With Mental Health Problems: A Systematic Review. *JMIR Mental Health*, 2(2), e19. <https://doi.org/10.2196/mental.4418>

¹⁶Ali, K., Farrer, L., Gulliver, A., & Griffiths, K. M. (2015). Online Peer-to-Peer Support for Young People With Mental Health Problems: A Systematic Review. *JMIR Mental Health*, 2(2), e19. <https://doi.org/10.2196/mental.4418>

¹⁷Rafidi, R. (2019). Benefits of peer support for mental health. *New Straits Times* <https://www.nst.com.my/education/2019/10/528298/benefits-peer-support-mental-health>

¹⁸Lee-Potter, E. (2022). Supporting good mental health: Two case studies. *SecEd* <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/supporting-good-mental-health-two-case-studies-well-being-pastoral-pandemic-students-schools/>

#3 Incorporate rest in students' learning routines

Students report facing pressure to catch-up with the syllabus, and struggling with the physical effects of attending prolonged online classes.

Close to 50% want a supportive environment that prioritises rest in between studying, extracurricular activities and socializing.

In fast-paced, high-pressure learning environments, there is a need to put rest at the heart of well-being. Rest is crucial for learning and memory consolidation. The Harvard School of Medicine suggests there is a correlation between rest in the form of sleep and changes in brain plasticity, which allows learning and memory to function properly.¹⁹

Educators and parents can help students learn more effectively by structuring brain breaks during studying. In the classroom, brain breaks are quick, structured breaks using physical movement, mindfulness exercises, or sensory activities such as taking a walk or listening to music. In a study by researchers from University of South Carolina, 10 minutes of classroom exercise breaks significantly improved on-task behavior of students.²⁰

Rest from school is an essential part of learning well. Not only does it give space for students' minds and bodies to recharge, rest can also be a valuable opportunity to pause and reflect on current habits and behaviors.



“Jadual yang terlalu padat boleh merosakkan kesihatan mental seseorang murid. Jika kelas dijalankan dengan sesi pembelajaran dan rehat kemudian meneruskan pembelajaran, itu akan menjadi lebih baik.”

Pelajar Tingkatan 3 dari Kedah

“Furthermore, the school timetable is so packed and the amount of homework given currently is honestly way too much, which is taking a huge toll on student's health. [...] Therefore, I hope that the school timetable will be less packed to give some space for students to just relax and have their alone time.”

Form 4 student from Malacca

Food for thought: Homework or no work?

A study published by Stanford University Press suggests that there is often no significant positive correlation between the average amount of homework assigned in a country and the corresponding level of academic achievement.²¹

¹⁹Why Sleep Matters: Benefits of Sleep. Division of Sleep at Harvard Medical School. <https://sleep.hms.harvard.edu/education-training/public-education/sleep-and-health-education-program/sleep-health-education-4/>

²⁰Howie, E. K., Beets, M. W., & Pate, R. R. (2014). Acute classroom exercise breaks improve on-task behavior in 4th and 5th grade students: A dose-response. *Mental Health and Physical Activity*, 7(2), 65-71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhpa.2014.05.002>

²¹Baker, D. P., & Letendre, G. K. (2005). National differences, global similarities : world culture and the future of schooling. Stanford University Press. <https://www.psu.edu/news/research/story/too-much-homework-can-be-counterproductive/>

#4 Strengthen aptitude and skills development to build career readiness

70% of students are clear on their career choice ...

... but their confidence level to pursue these careers is only at 6.6/10.

In leaving secondary and tertiary education, students need more than academic qualifications to succeed in the competitive working world. There needs to be a space for students to develop crucial self-learning aptitudes and interpersonal skills while in school.²²

Providing students with more career exposure can help them make informed decisions, bridge the gap between education and the workforce as well as reduce skill gaps and unemployment rates. In the longitudinal research UK British Cohort Study, it was found that adults who took part in career talks back in their school years are associated with significantly better earnings at age 26.²³



*"[Melalui EduKerjaya] Saya dapat **mengenal pasti hala tuju kerjaya saya**. Bukan itu sahaja, saya juga dapat dapat mengetahui perjalanan hidup saya selepas tamat SPM. Akhir sekali, saya dapat tahu apa minat saya yang jarang saya ceritakan pada orang lain dan RIASEC test sangatla membantu."*

Pelajar Tingkatan 5 dari Kuala Lumpur (Alumni EduKerjaya)

"I do not have sufficient exposure and details regarding different careers, so I do not know if I would actually enjoy the job while being able to earn enough. I'm also unsure regarding the job market, whether I will have the choice to work in Malaysia or overseas."

Form 5 student from Pulau Pinang

*"[Halangan yang menyebabkan saya tidak mengenal pasti kerjaya idaman] adalah saya **tidak dapat mengenalpasti kekuatan diri saya**."*

Pelajar Tingkatan 4 dari Kedah

EduKerjaya: Learning by doing

EduKerjaya is a 3-month long career aspirations programme run by Project ID in partnership with various industry professionals. Via programme workshops, industry professional talks as well as in-person mini-internships, students gain the opportunity to learn by 'doing' in real-world contexts.

Since 2021, 190 students have participated in EduKerjaya and 65 have gone on to pursue mini-internships with Project ID industry partners.

- Students rated the overall programme to be highly effective in improving career readiness.
- Students reported higher clarity in career pathways after their mini-internship ended; those who participated planned out new, actionable goals after their mini-internship ended
- Students also showed positive improvement on their skills, zeal, enthusiasm and self-confidence, while expressing stronger motivation to study for the SPM examinations.

²²World Economic Forum (2023). Defining Education 4.0: A Taxonomy for the Future of Learning. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Defining_Education_4.0_2023.pdf

²³Mann, A., Denis, V., Schleicher, A., Ekhtiari, H., Forsyth, T., Liu, E., & Chambers, N. (2020). Teenagers' Career Aspirations and the Future of Work. <https://www.oecd.org/berlin/publikationen/Dream-Jobs.pdf>



““”

“Students have a lot to say when it comes to the education system. We want more elements of the digital world in our classroom, we want to know how to handle stress properly.

SVM is crucial to capture what students want to tell everyone else. At the end of the day, it is students who are most affected by changes to the education system—and we are hopeful for an education system that can bring out the best of us.”

Ariana, 17 year old student, Selangor



Appendix

How to cite this report:

Project ID (2023). Student Voice Matters 2023.

<https://project-id.org/student-voice-matters-2023>

Methodology:

- Pre-survey: Desktop research was conducted to develop thematic survey questions; survey questions then reviewed and validated by education experts; two (2) rounds of focus groups with diverse student representation conducted to test reliability and validity of survey questions
- During survey: Survey launched in first week of January 2023 and ran for five (5) weeks; total 1,210 respondents between ages 13-18, with 65% of them identifying as female
- Post-survey: Source data coded and compiled for analysis; validation session of survey results with students held in March 2023 to triangulate key findings and gain deeper insights

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PROJECT ID 
impianku destinasi

About Project ID

Project ID is an education startup that runs high-impact programmes that empower underserved students to lead self & others with 21st century skills. Our work focuses on three (3) pillars –

- **Student leadership - Students co-create and take a leadership role in their learning**
- **Socioemotional learning (SEL) - Students cultivate psychosocial resilience and strengthen adversity-ready mindsets**
- **Career aspirations - Students are equipped with knowledge and skills to pursue their dreams**

In all our initiatives, we strive to highly center our work around the student voice: students keep us accountable and our work hyper-relevant to their needs.

Project ID has reached over 13,000 students from communities across Malaysia, conducting upwards of ~300 workshops and long-term engagements. Since the pandemic, we also publish Student Voice Matters, an annual survey on how students want to learn - with over 15,000 readers, having presented to the Deputy Minister of Education, and featured in various media platforms.





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