

Cool.org's Social Impact

Research Report 2024

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.ORG



Acknowledgement

Cool.org acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung and Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we learn and work.

We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and we recognise that sovereignty was never ceded. We extend our respect, gratitude and appreciation to all First Nations people across the continent.

We recognise their unwavering connection to Country, community and culture. We are committed to truth-telling in education as we listen and learn from First Nations peoples as they lead the way with their knowledge and aspirations for future generations.

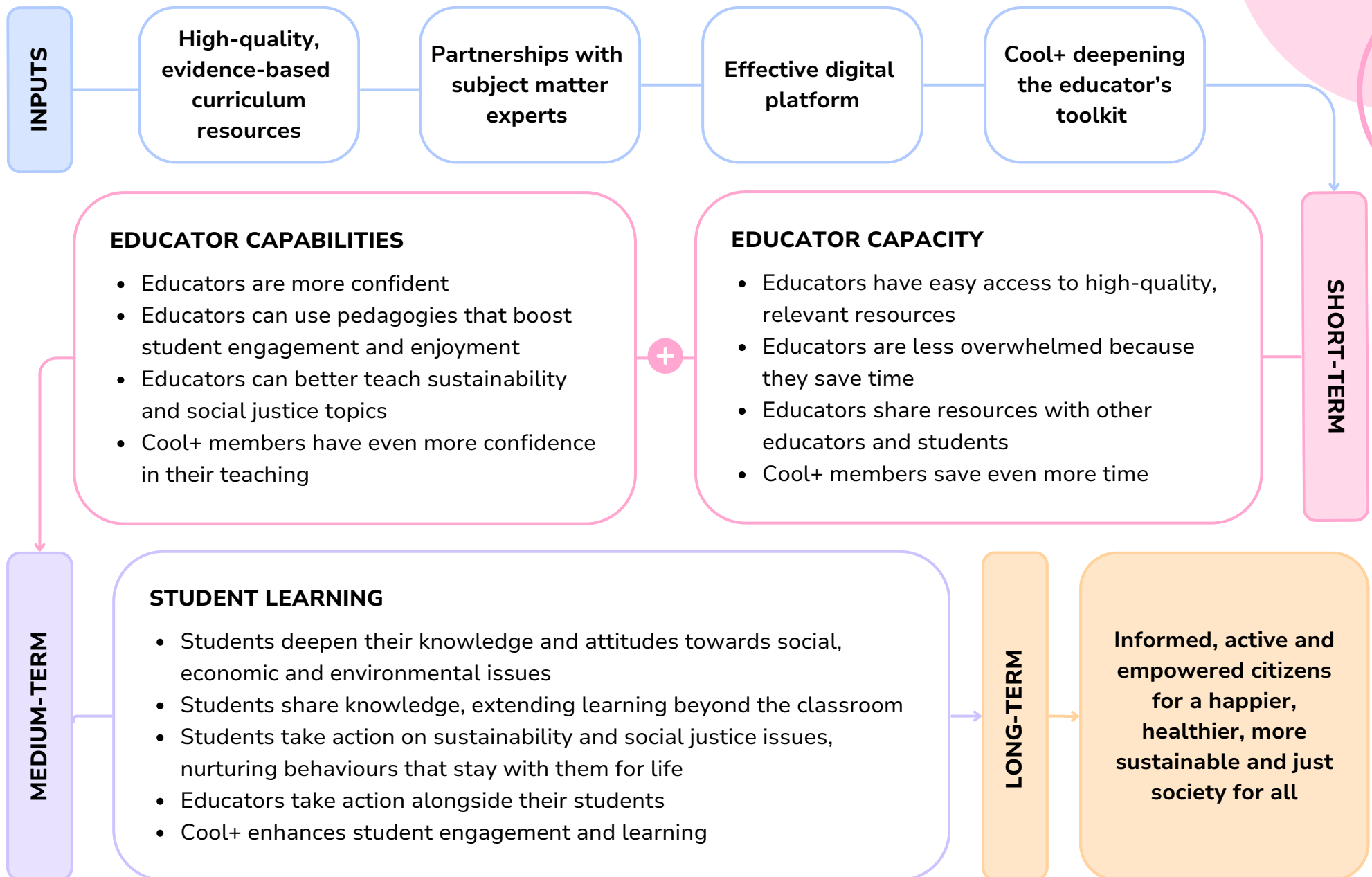


Tanna Hardinge

First Nations Education Specialist
Cool.org



Theory of Change



Why social impact matters

Cool.org engaged GoodWolf to conduct social impact research and evaluate our Theory of Change. Over three months, through focus groups, interviews and educator surveys, the GoodWolf team collected comprehensive insights and data on the organisation's effectiveness, impact and areas for improvement. This report examines the findings.



COOL
.ORG

As educators, we know firsthand the challenges of the job. During my time in the classroom, I found that I got the best out of my students when I felt supported and passionate about my teaching. The connection between a teacher's passion and student engagement is undeniable. At Cool.org, we are committed to relieving pressure so teachers can feel passionate about their important work.

Cool.org's work is reigniting the joy of teaching while empowering teachers and students to create a better future for all. Helping to alleviate the teacher retention crisis. The results of this social impact research are a testament to the dedication and passion of the entire Cool.org team.

Thea Stinear - CEO, Cool.org



GOODWOLF®

Impact measurement and management is so much more than simply communicating results. When approached well, it offers organisations the opportunity to ask their stakeholders good questions to understand change, use insights for organisational learning and help to refine the strategy. GoodWolf used rigorous research to inform the social impact of Cool.org.

Through qualitative and quantitative methods we have been able to develop a robust Theory of Change and Impact Framework that holds educator and student voices at the centre.

Nina Yousefpour - Associate Director

Key findings

Educator challenges

76% find their workload to be unmanageable¹

90% don't have time to effectively prepare for classroom teaching²

54% are dissatisfied in their teaching role³

40% of students are bored and disengaged with their learning⁴

Cool.org impact

76% feel less overwhelmed using Cool.org's resources

83% save time using Cool.org's resources, with most using this time to build student relationships

68% agree that using Cool.org's resources brings joy back to their teaching

76% increased student learning engagement after being taught with Cool.org's resources

Key findings

STUDENT IMPACT

78%

of educators report that students' knowledge, confidence and skills improved

75%

of educators report that students changed behaviours and attitudes towards issues

76%

of educators report that students' engagement levels have increased

TOP 6 REASONS EDUCATORS USE COOL.ORG

1

High-quality and trusted

2

Real-world and contemporary topics

3

Relevance of subject matter and easier to adapt

4

First Nations content and perspectives

5

Provides creative ways to teach

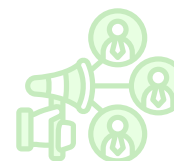
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Increase student engagement

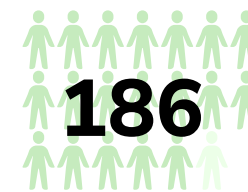
STUDENT MULTIPLIER



an Australian educator downloads a resource



shares with other educators



resulting in 186 students taught

One year period

Key findings

4 out of 5

educators report that they have



enhanced their knowledge



improved their teaching skills



greater confidence in teaching subject area



greater confidence in embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories & Cultures



taken action on social and environmental issues

83%

 of educators save time using Cool.org's resources

3 hrs

 saved per resource

249 k

 annual downloads in 2023

747 k+

 hours saved in lesson prep

3.5 hrs

 saved per resource for Cool+ members

With this saved time, educators

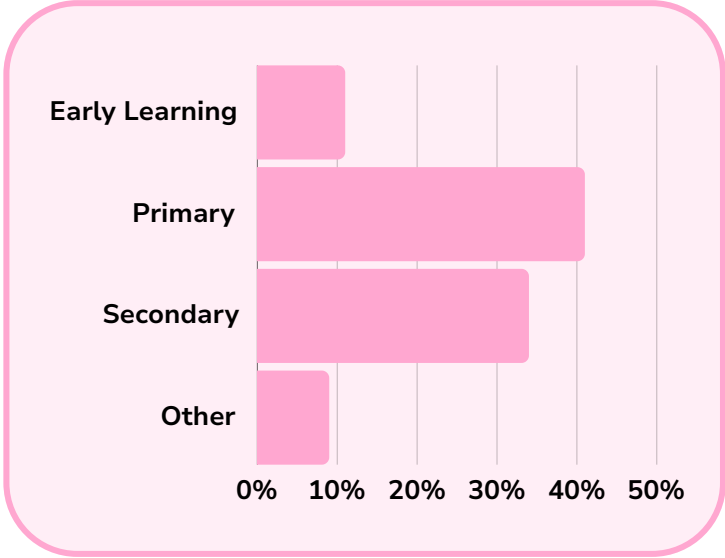
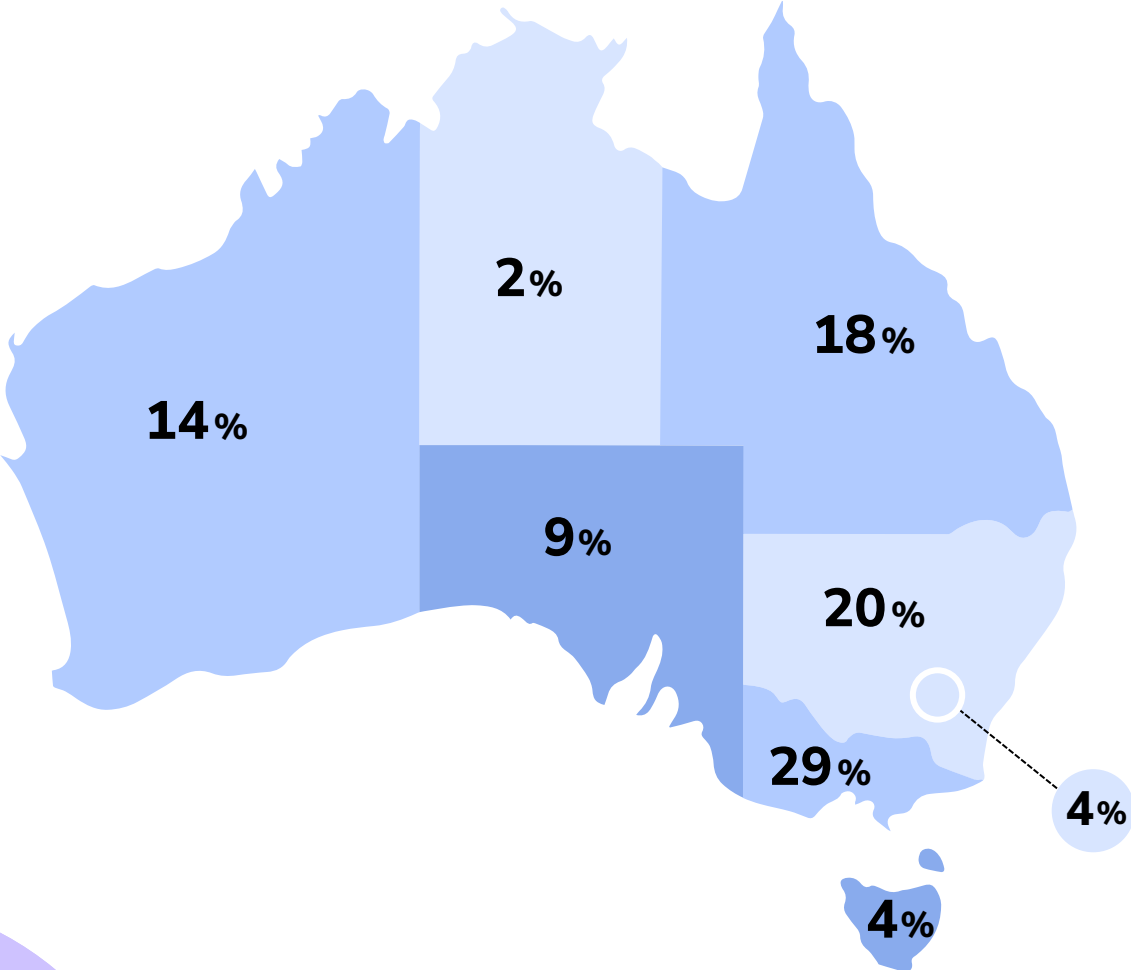


engage more with students



attend to their own wellbeing

Where research participants are located

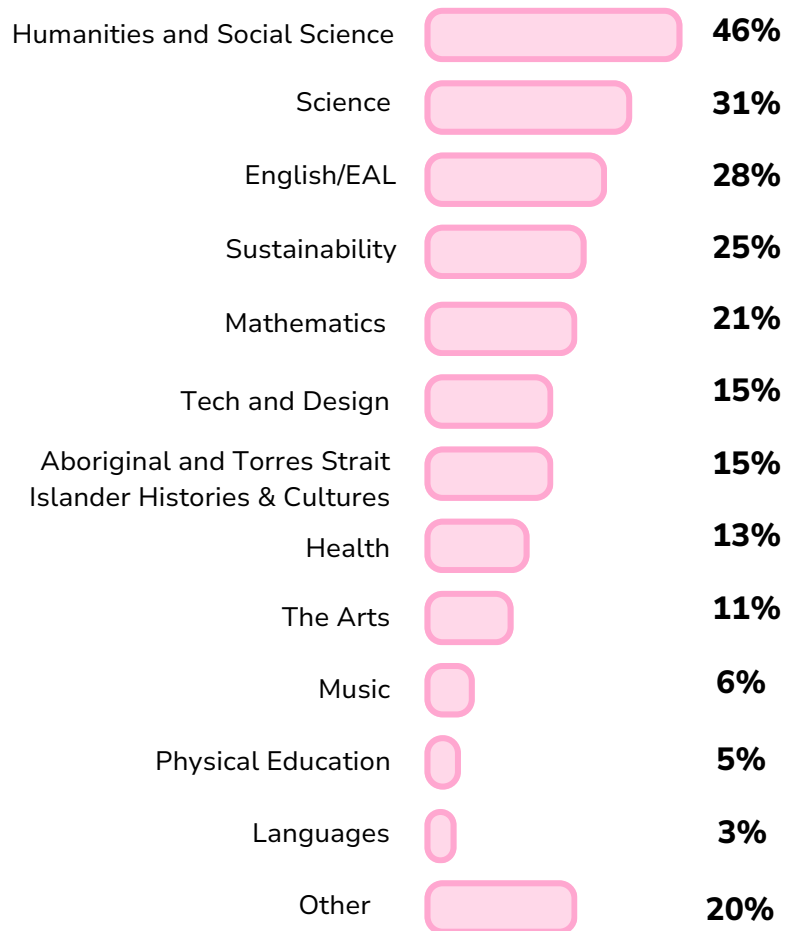


40% of Cool.org's Educators teach in RRR or low ICSEA schools

31% of Cool.org's Educators are school decision-makers

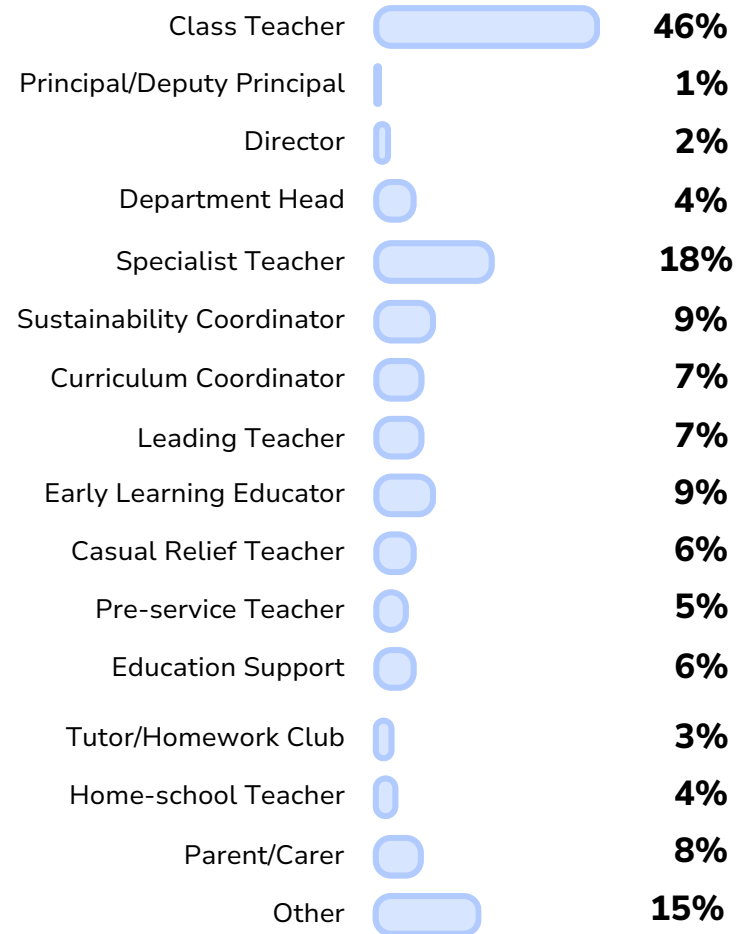
Who are Cool educators?

subjects taught



Other subjects include: Career Education, Wellbeing, Psychology, Environment, Agriculture

educator role



*Other roles include: Wellbeing Officer, Aboriginal Education Islander Officer, Pastoral Care Worker, Teacher Librarian, Grandparent

How Cool impacts educators

Quality teaching is the most critical in-school factor affecting student learning, but many teachers face significant challenges in delivering a high-quality curriculum.

Educators reported finding Cool.org's resources trustworthy, adaptable and high-quality, which helps them deliver engaging lessons.

Educators save time using Cool.org's resources, allowing them to further engage with students and support their wellbeing.

Educators enhance their knowledge of economic, environmental and social justice issues.

Educators value receiving newsletters from Cool.org, which curate resources on topical issues relevant to their classes.

The future of learning is in engaging kids to consider real-world connections. Cool.org delivers this kind of learning.





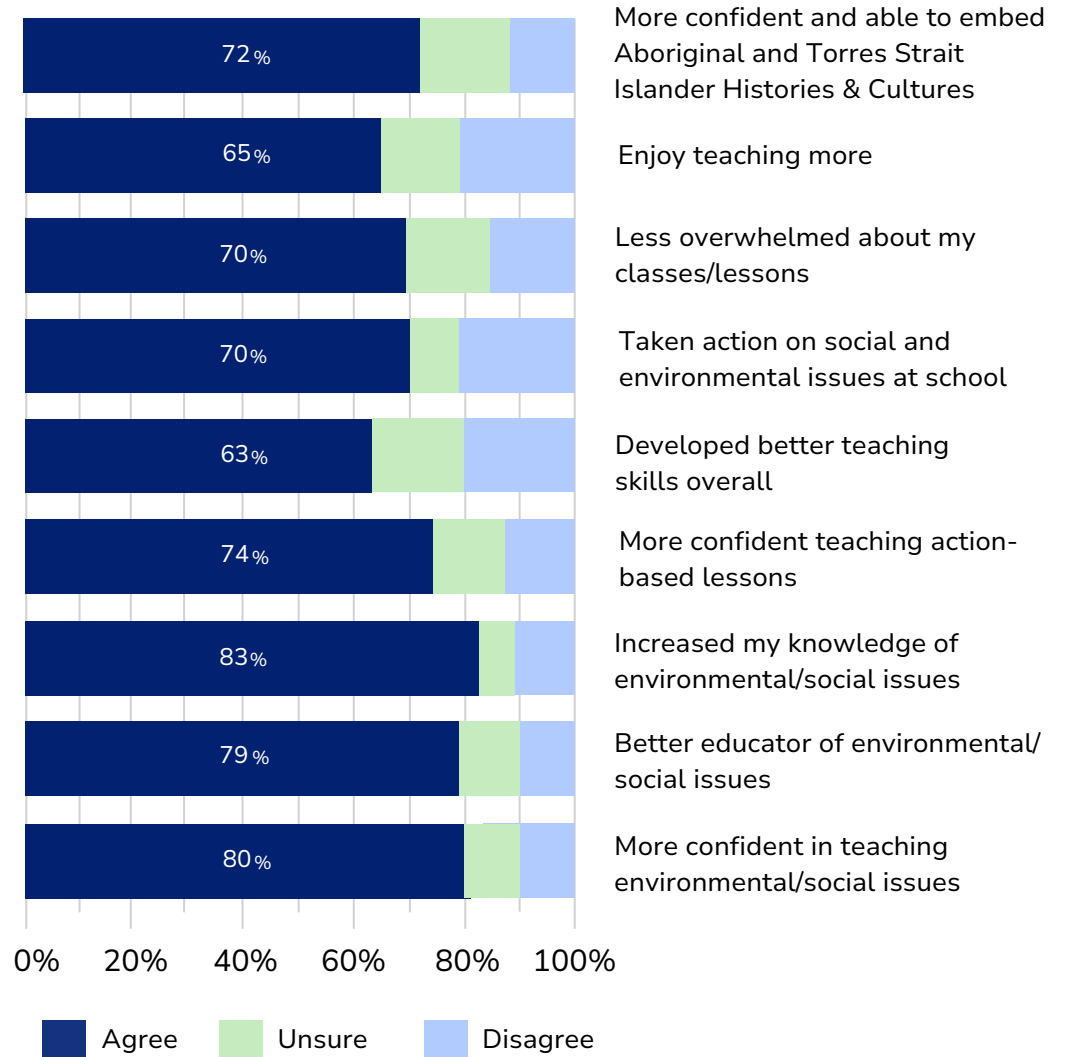
**72% of Cool Educators
are more confident in
teaching sustainability
and First Nations
Histories & Cultures**

Educators report deep impact on their teaching

Educators from RRR or low ICSEA schools, those in greatest need, agree at higher rates that they feel more confident and are better educators after using Cool.org's resources.

Cool+ subscribers agree at materially higher rates with most statements related to the impact of Cool.org's resources on themselves.

The future of learning is in engaging kids to consider real-world connections. Cool.org delivers this kind of learning.





68% of educators agree that using Cool.org's resources brings joy back into their teaching

Educators enjoy teaching more

Educators reported that Cool.org helps them connect to their core role of teaching and curriculum design. Cool.org's ideas and content helps to bring joy back into teaching.

Cool.org increases educators' enjoyment of teaching because of the real-world, creative ways it helps to engage students. The resources support educators in teaching in the ways they want to teach.

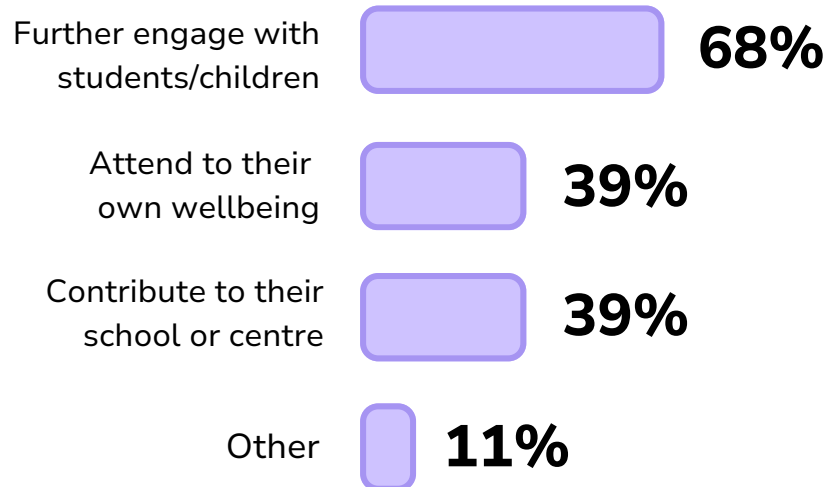
Cool allows me to be excited about teaching again. I was getting very weighed down in the workload and my joy of teaching was being affected. So thank you for giving me back my joy for teaching.



Educators save time and build relationships

As well as saving educators' time, Cool.org allows educators to spend more time building relationships with students and attending to personal wellbeing.

With the time they save Cool Educators



Other includes: plan better, community volunteering, differentiate my learning more for special needs students

83%

say they save time as a result of using Cool.org

Each educator saves 3 hrs per download

Most educators visit the website every 2-3 weeks

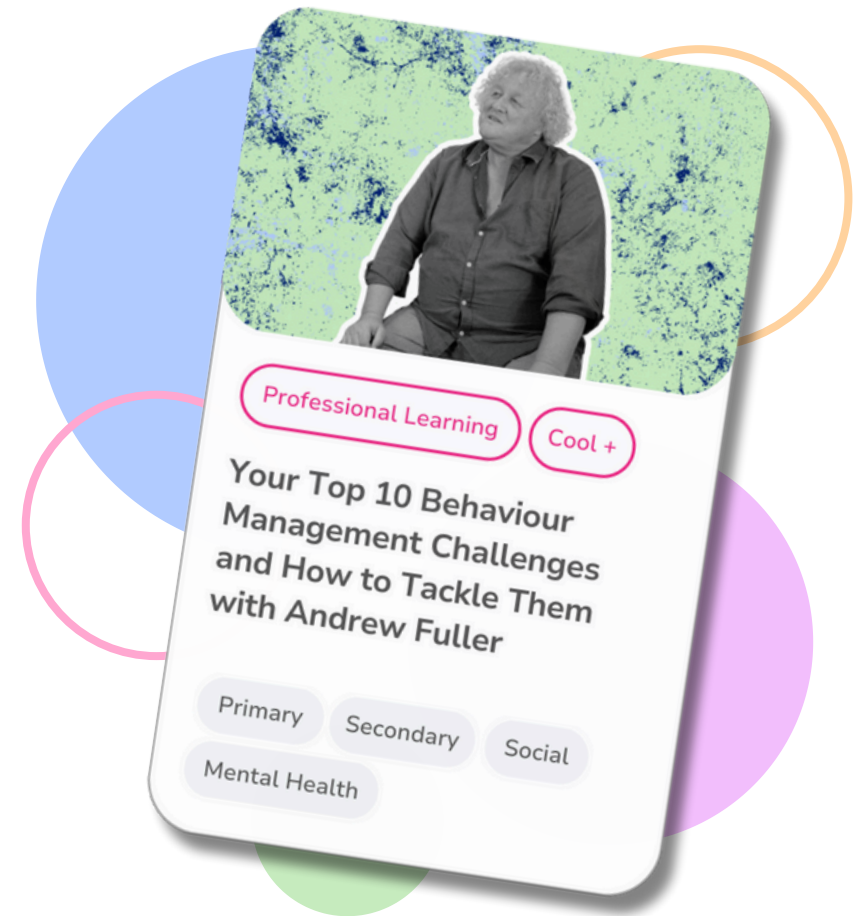
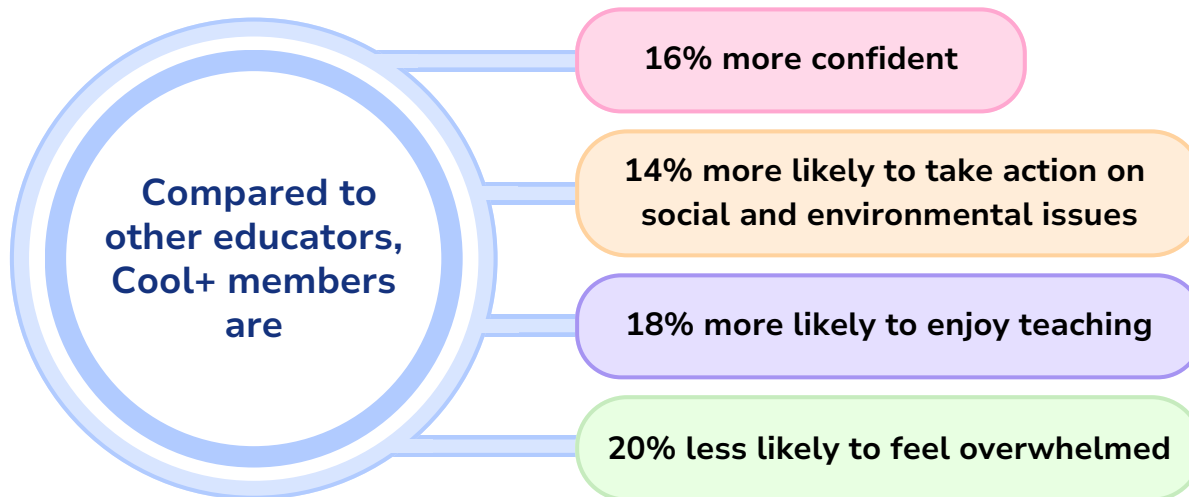
Cool+ members save 3.5 hrs per download and have greater confidence in teaching

Cool+ amplifies impact

Cool+ was introduced to the Cool.org platform in September 2023.

Cool+ is a paid membership that gives educators exclusive access to premium teaching content and innovative professional learning courses. All Cool+ resources and professional learning courses have been created in partnership with renowned education specialists. The content focuses on mental health, wellbeing, behaviour management, science, domain knowledge, literacy and First Nations content.

Cool+ members report higher rates of positive impact associated with using the resources for both educators and students.



Thanks for these micro PL courses. It's really fabulous to have access to so much up-to-date research and professional expertise in these areas.



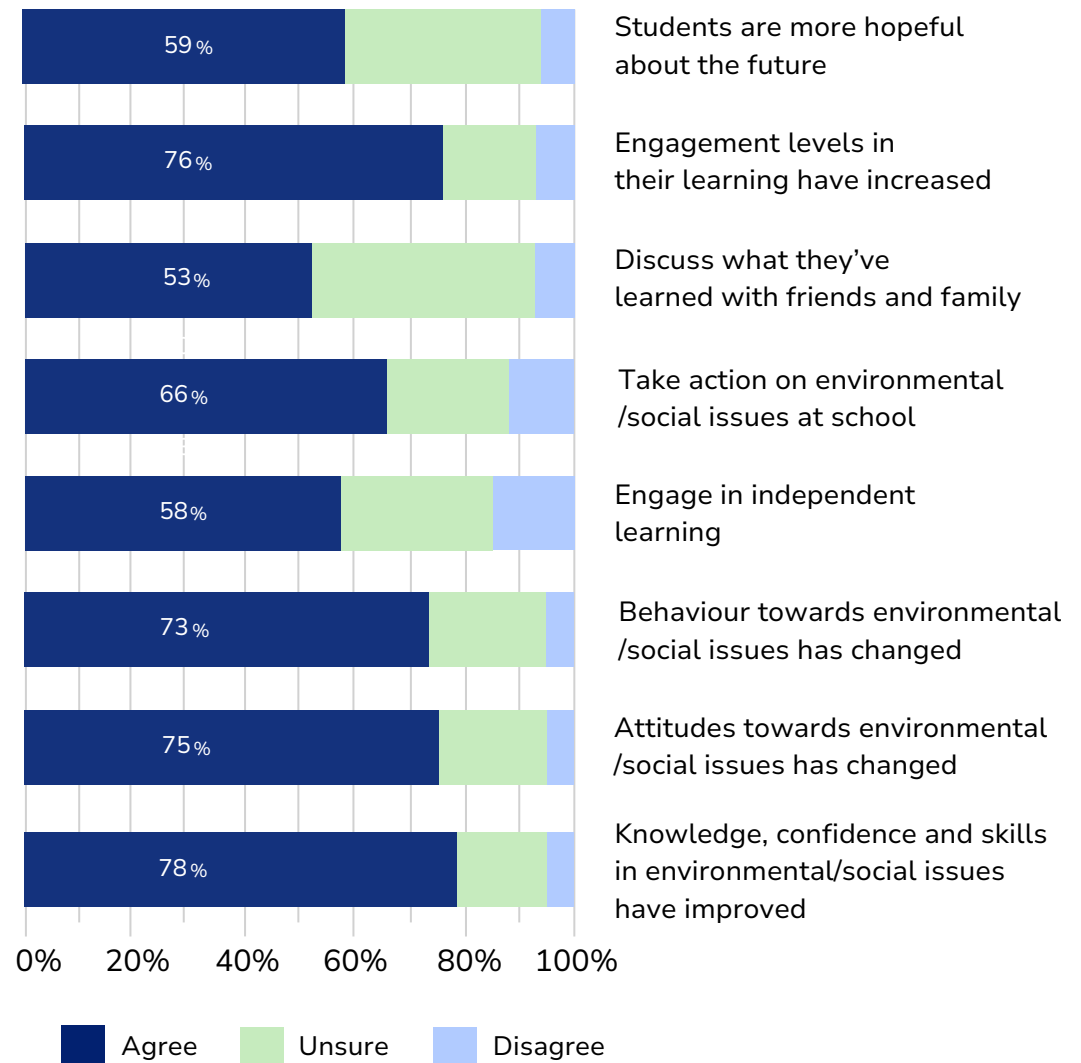
**70% of educators
report that they
have taken action
on social or
environmental issues**

Impact on student learning

Educators said that Cool.org's resources inspire them and their students to 'take action' on economic, environmental, and social issues in their personal lives and at school. Focus groups showed that this joint action between educators and students is critically important.

Educators expressed that the impact of using Cool.org's resources has rippled through their communities. While some impacts are much longer term, educators said that Cool.org resources are influencing a generation of 'change-makers'.

Cool supports teachers to take action on real-world issues. My students feel inspired and empowered to work alongside teachers to create change.



Higher student engagement and deeper learning

Educators from focus groups reported:

- Students are more engaged when educators use Cool.org's resources in class, including more conversations and questions about a topic. Students also research the topic themselves and engage in self-directed learning. Students talk to their families about their learning.
- Deeper learning occurs on topics because the resources are activity-based and applied in the real world.
- Some young people are more likely to miss school, including those from low socio-economic backgrounds, from regional and remote areas and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (ACARA 2023). While educators in disadvantaged schools experience and see many of the same outcomes as those from more advantaged schools, some focus group respondents expressed that student attendance is positively impacted when real-world applied resources like Cool.org's are used.

"Children end up taking action that is with them for life."

"I teach in a Flexible Learning Options school. A lot of the kids don't have internet at home. [For] vulnerable families, attendance is an issue. If the content doesn't relate to their life they just won't come."

"It's useful for teachers who are looking to really broaden students' horizons through topics of cross-curriculum priority like sustainability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. All these important things which ACARA suggests, but Cool.org particularly has a focus on."

“

Cool's resources have really brought sustainability to the front of my mind. Last year, because I was always thinking about it, I applied for two different sustainability grants and got them both for our school, and we were able to do so many projects. It really had this wonderful knock-on effect on our community.

”



Deeper impact for disadvantaged schools and Cool+ members

Indicator	All	Cool+	Low ICSEA	RRR
More confident in teaching environmental/social issues	80%	96%	81%	84%
Better educator of environmental/social issues	79%	96%	87%	86%
Increased my knowledge of environmental/social issues	83%	92%	93%	80%
More confident teaching action-based lessons	74%	86%	81%	76%
Developed better teaching skills overall	63%	80%	68%	63%
Taken action on social and environmental issues at school with my students	70%	84%	58%	66%
Less overwhelmed about my classes/lessons	65%	85%	71%	69%
Enjoy teaching more	72%	83%	64%	69%
More confident and able to embed the cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories & Cultures	72%	87%	71%	66%

Deeper impact on students from disadvantaged schools

Indicator	All	Cool+	Low ICSEA	RRR
Knowledge, confidence and skills in environmental/ social issues have improved	78%	94%	84%	87%
Attitude towards environmental/ social issues has changed	75%	87%	72%	76%
Engage in independent learning by investigating further what they have learned	58%	95%	50%	53%
Take action on environmental/social issues at school	66%	66%	50%	56%
Discuss what they have learned with friends and family	53%	66%	53%	47%
Engagement levels in their learning have increased	76%	91%	84%	80%
Are more hopeful about the future	59%	79%	53%	62%

Educator story of impact

Shannon works at a small rural primary school in NSW. She has been using Cool.org resources for seven years to help plan her inquiry lessons. She comes straight to Cool.org for anything about sustainability, climate change and STEM.

Shannon says, 'Cool.org is so easy to pick up and adapt into our learning program. I know I will get up-to-date, curriculum-aligned, relevant and topical resources to teach my class.'

Shannon finds that Cool.org creates deep learning for her students. She loves that they are linked to subject matter experts and the SDGs [UN Sustainable Development Goals].

Community is vital in her small town. Through a teaching unit called 'Bee Hotels,' Shannon's students have learned about the value of bees and their impact on the local ecosystem. The unit encourages students to take action in their local community. As a result, the students and their families are now committed to buying locally, which has spread to neighbouring towns.

When asked what her students would say about learning with a lesson from Cool.org, she commented, 'I think they'd say thank you for opening our world to real-world issues and invigorating our learning.'

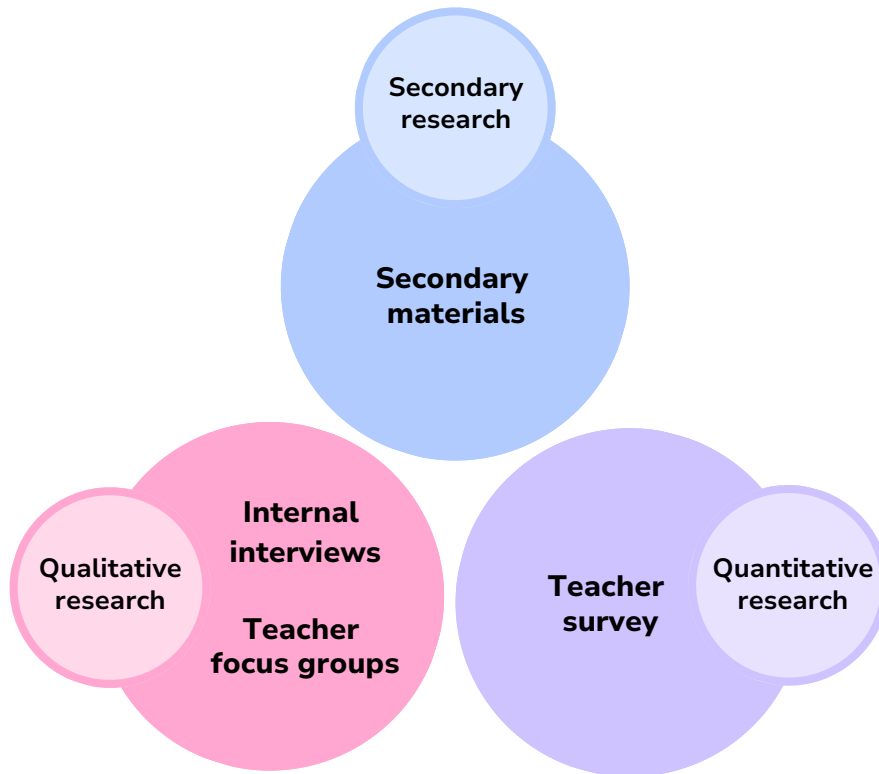


Research methodology

Objectives:

- Establish a view of the change (outcomes) that is enabled through the use of Cool.org's resources.
- Update the Cool.org Theory of Change.

A mixed methods approach using both qualitative and quantitative methods was used to provide insights into Cool.org's reach and social impact from internal and external stakeholders.



Secondary literature

Review of existing Cool.org materials, research, and other sources and literature

Internal interviews

Two group interviews with seven Cool.org staff and Board Directors

Teacher focus groups

Four focus groups with 45 teachers from early learning, primary and secondary schools

Teacher survey

Survey of 343 Cool.org Educators

GOODWOLF:

Cool.org's measurement framework meets ISO 20252 standards.



Thank you

Cool.org extends its heartfelt gratitude to all the educators who participated in this research. We deeply appreciate your time with our focus groups despite your many demands. Your insights and feedback are invaluable to us.

We also extend our sincere thanks to our funders, whose support makes our work possible. Without your generosity, we would not be able to support our network of 185,000 strong educators and work towards building a sustainable and just world for all. Your commitment empowers our charity to continue making a meaningful impact in education and beyond.



The Ian Potter
Foundation

Sidney Myer

SIDNEY MYER FUND

References

- 1. The Educator Australia (2020)** *'Teachers overworked and underappreciated'* - Monash University Research (<https://www.monash.edu/news/articles/study-shows-teachers-underappreciated,-overworked-in-classroom>)
- 2. Grattan Institute Report (2022)** *'Making time for great teaching: How better government policy can help'* (<https://grattan.edu.au/report/making-time-for-great-teaching-how-better-government-policy-can-help/>)
- 3. Australian Teachers' Perceptions of Their Work in 2022** - Monash University Research (<https://www.monash.edu/perceptions-of-teaching>)
- 4. Grattan Institute (2017)**, *'Engaging students: creating classrooms that improve learning'* (<https://grattan.edu.au/report/engaging-students-creating-classrooms-that-improve-learning/>)

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www.austockphoto.com.au/photographers/clairebonnor

Glossary

- **Cool Educator:** Any person on the Cool.org database who has signed up for the resources.
- **Cool+ Member:** Any person who has subscribed to the paid resources.
- **Decision Makers:** A Cool member with a decision-based role, such as Principal/Deputy Principal, Department Head, Curriculum/Sustainability Coordinator, Director or Leading Teacher.
- **Download:** Clicking the 'download' button for a teacher and/or student resource, usually for a lesson, although it could include factsheets or other resources.
- **Taught:** Taught any part of a Cool.org lesson (ideas or verbatim).
- **Resource:** Any lesson plan, activity, worksheet, or toolkit on the Cool.org website.
- **Class:** A class is a group of students who are generally taught the subject together in the same room. For example, a single school may have 6 different year 9 English classes (depending on the school size).
- **Lesson:** A lesson is a single session of teaching. In high school, this may correspond to a period (around 40 minutes) in length, although it may be longer or shorter. In primary school, lesson length may vary.
- **RRR:** Regional, Rural and Remote communities, classified as all areas outside Australia's major cities
- **ICSEA:** The Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage is a scale of socio-educational advantage computed for each Australian school.

Analytical note: Please note that the sum of percentages in questions may not equal to 100 due to rounding effects.



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