

SSE Focus Group March 2023

5th Year

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Question 1-10 from AP 1 Meeting

These questions focused on what learning means to them and how they learn best.

- Standard responses to what learning means to them and how they learn best reflecting a **range of learning styles** and favourite subjects.
- For room layouts most said it depends on the subject but **rows of two or groups of four** were preferred to single desks **unless they were likely to be distracted**.
- In at least half of their classes, students were **able to discuss work** with classmates **before and during classwork tasks**. The vast majority found it significantly **more helpful than distracting**.
- Answers about time for feedback were mixed but students admitted that they were **not using the feedback from tests or homework tasks as frequently as they should be**.

Question 11-16 from Looking at Our School 2022

- Most students **don't volunteer to ask questions** in class and admitted that their likelihood of **speaking in class has significantly reduced since Covid**. Students also stated that no one wants to be the first person to ask a question but **once the first person asks a question then they are far more likely to ask one themselves**. **Most students said they would be willing to risk incorrect answers** but didn't take the opportunities to do so in class.
- The **majority admitted that they do not reflect on their learning** unless there are tests coming up and even then not as frequently as they should.
- The focus group admitted that a significant group of **students do not take responsibility for their learning** as much as they should and that it can depend on the subject or the teacher. When asked why many students said that **Covid 19 is frequently used as an excuse**.
- When questioned further the group discussed why responsibility for learning is not being taken:
- In the last few years **students have been given Junior Cycle results without ever having to complete an exam**, including most of the current 5th years.
- The group also pointed to advice from older relatives or friends as not helpful as these older peers had **Leaving Certificates with estimated grades or exams that were significantly cut down when no provisions will be made for this group of 5th years**.
- Both factors have resulted in a **mistaken perception that "everything will be fine without the need to put in any work"**. Students admitted that this perception was misguided but that it is the widely held belief among 5th year students and along with Covid 19 being used as **an excuse not to take responsibility for learning**.

What conclusions can we draw from the focus group?

Varied use of questioning - Layout of rooms

Use of groupwork has hugely increased and is very beneficial for the vast majority of students

Students need to use feedback to improve

There is a perception that responsibility for learning can be put on the teacher or is unnecessary due to Covid and recent Leaving Cert students having predicted grades or exams with greater level of choice.