

“I thrive on interaction with humans”

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The COVID-19 pandemic prompted rapid, widescale responses in the education sector with drastic changes to teaching and learning instigated at very short notice. For learning areas such as Drama, where the primary tools of teaching are often the teacher and students as living, breathing presences in the same physical location working together, this presented particular challenges and huge workload increases. For the research and analysis of performing arts teacher responses to the [Teaching and Learning in COVID-19 Times](#) survey study, a cultural-historical framework was used with a focus on the Vygotskian concept of ‘perezhivanie’. This meant acknowledging the affective and emotional dimensions as well as the cognitive, in particular looking at difficulties, critical incidents, and how teachers worked ‘through’ these times.

The stories of performing arts teachers revealed some shared areas of similar concern with other teachers – namely a rapid increase in using different technologies and online tools and a huge increase in workload. Teachers expressed concern for those students who became ‘invisible’, and for the ‘invisible’ aspects of the classroom and learning that was difficult to replicate online. When learning moved online, Drama and Performing Arts teachers particularly missed embodied, social and relational aspects of learning. They missed their students and the reciprocal energy of the teaching space. These are qualities of performing arts teaching and learning that drama teachers worked to maintain and some found ways to innovate with the tools and technologies available. The research highlighted the importance of the ‘human dimensions’ of learning in these art forms and the important role played by professional and peer networks.