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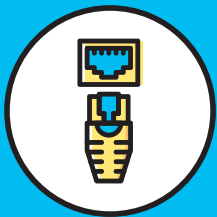
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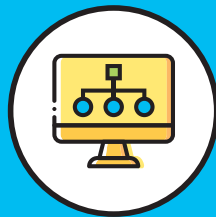
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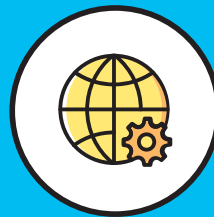
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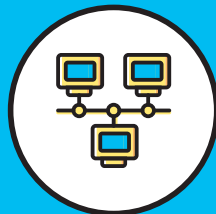
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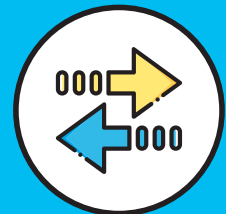
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Inside

Term 3, 2017 Issue 5

news

- 05 News Round-up:** Education news from around Australia
- 11 EduTech:** EduTech post coverage and highlights

education

- 16 Special Report:** Strengths-based school culture
- 18 Principal Speaks:** New generation learning space project
- 20 Indigenous Education:** Aboriginal knowledge for the science curriculum
- 22 Teaching Aids:** Teaching aids help neutralise special needs

teachers's desk

- 26 Real Schools:** Make sure parents listen to you, not the shock jocks
- 28 Teacher Talk:** Teaching, learning and culture at Tennant Creek
- 31 Tools For Teachers:** Getting 'app-happy' can enhance teaching

what's hot

- 32 What's Hot:** The latest trending education industry products

profile

- 34 Leopold Primary School:** Restorative practice for strong relational culture

teaching resources

- 37 Book Reviews:** New to the bookshelf
- 38 Science Education:** 'Learning by doing' fuels science engagement
- 40 Robotics:** It's robotics FIRST for these STEM students

administration

- 42 Multifunctional Photocopiers:** An essential tool for schools



- 44 Case Study - Portside Christian College:** Industry partnership 'equipping students for life'

- 46 School Seating:** Student seating for the modern learning environment

- 50 School Uniforms:** Enhancing school identity with school uniforms

external learning

- 53 Victoria:** Science, outdoor adventure plus civics and history aplenty? Victoria has it.

- 60 Incursions:** Real world learning without the logistics

sports & recreation

- 62 Victorian Teachers Games:** Victorian Teachers Games: communicate, celebrate, educate

food & beverage

- 64 School Water Options:** Healthy, sustainable beverage options for the staffroom

- 66 School Water Options:** How school water stations encourage healthy life choices

health & safety

- 68 Floor Safety**

property

- 70 Air-conditioning:** Control classroom climate for optimum learning

- 73 Boarding Schools:** Traditional boarding experience in a modern context

Editor's Note

Term three is upon us! Where did the time go? This issue, you'll find further Gonski 2.0 updates in News Round-up, with a message from the AEU about the scope of a new panel's brief.

Our school profile spotlights Leopold Primary in Geelong, discussing restorative practice to transform, educate and strengthen relational culture at school.

We hear from registered psychologist and author of *The Strength Switch*, Dr Lea Waters, on expanding a child's capability, by switching the focus away from their weaknesses and onto their strengths.

We also look at teaching aids for students with special needs to ensure education is truly inclusive.

Term three means National Science Week, so we'll hear about Barker College's robotics triumph, and look at science educational equipment for the contemporary school lab.

We revisit innovative learning areas with a focus on seating for the modern learning space, and in Principal Speaks, we hear from Churchie's headmaster, Dr Alan Campbell, on research conducted into how teachers utilise modern learning spaces.

What's changed in 21st century boarding schools? We hear from industry experts on boarding for the future, against the backdrop

of intricate family life, and the staggering challenge of maintaining cyber safety for students 24/7.

For staff and student health and comfort, we explore drinking water options for a healthy school culture, and air conditioning to maintain optimum learning temperatures.

We've piled the Teacher's Desk high this issue. Adam Voigt shares tips on getting in front of parents, so they're not getting their 'facts' from radio 'shock jocks', and we touch on 'app-happy' teaching tools that embrace your students' love of apps and devices.

We introduce our new Teacher Talk segment. Teach For Australia associate, Will Lutwyche appeared in SBS documentary, *Testing Teachers*; he shares his experiences in Tennant Creek and his thoughts on Indigenous diversity, and connecting with students.

You've done the Canberra tour of duty; what's next? Why not 'wander Victoria'? We cover accommodation, attractions, and activities for a Victorian adventure.

Until next time - noli cedere cognoscere (don't stop learning).



Suzy Barry, editor,
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Education news from around Australia



Gonski funding and reactions to the review panel

The Australian Education Union (AEU) has expressed serious concern about the federal government's move to prevent the new panel charged with reviewing student outcomes from considering school funding allocation.

The AEU is urging the government to immediately broaden the panel's mandate.

The panel members will lead the *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*, but are being restricted to only examining strategies to improve educational outcomes.

Australian Education Union president, Correna Haythorpe, says the government's decision to limit the panel's purview demonstrates they are not interested in levelling the playing field and properly funding public schools.

"This panel cannot solve the problems facing our most vulnerable and disadvantaged students if it is explicitly prevented from considering school funding," said Ms Haythorpe.

"The initial Gonski Review provided a comprehensive analysis of schools funding and showed the way forward for our schools. By comparison, this review will simply tinker around the edges of the government's flawed funding scheme.

Funding decisions not in interest of equity: AEU

"The government have already arbitrarily decided to limit federal funding to 20 percent of the Schooling Resource Standard for public schools - meaning that whatever recommendations this panel makes, many of our schools will still be severely under resourced even after six years," Ms Haythorpe said.

"Under the government's plan, not only will schools in the areas of highest disadvantage, such as Northern Territory and Tasmania, receive the lowest increases in funding, but they fall well short of what would be provided to some of the richest schools in the nation.

"Students with disabilities are already facing funding cuts under the Turnbull Government's plan. Funding for public schools in five states and territories is being cut - and this will have a terrible impact on the students who most need our support. This panel should be allowed to consider how we can make sure funding is going to our most vulnerable students so they are not being left behind.

"We will not close the gap in education achievement by cutting funding to schools and then conducting another review that looks at only one part of the issues. Children across Australia need and deserve an equitable education system that delivers the support, resources and teachers they need to thrive," said Ms Haythorpe.

Australian Capital Territory

The ACT suburbs according to educational disadvantage

A June *Canberra Times* report indicated that students in Belconnen and Tuggeranong are twice as likely to miss school as those attending schools in the inner south, according to a report released this week.

And, according to the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre analysis, children in central Belconnen were almost four times as likely to miss school as those in Deakin.

The *Educate Australia Fair?* report revealed areas of educational disadvantage throughout the ACT. Overall, children in the ten suburbs with the most educational disadvantage, measured on a range of domains, had a non-attendance rate of 10.4 percent. The non-attendance rate in the top ten suburbs was measured at 5.5 percent.

Non-attendance was measured as how many days students attended school versus how many they should have attended.

The Canberra suburbs with the most educational disadvantage were Richardson, Charnwood, Giralang, Gilmore, Belconnen,

Holt, Gordon, Kambah, Theodore and Isabella Plains.

The ten suburbs with the least educational disadvantage were Deakin, Aranda, Kingston/Barton, Weetangera, Forrest, Chapman, Garran, Red Hill, Curtin and Hughes.

ACT goes hard against violence

The Education Directorate has released a new reporting policy in a bid to end occupational violence in schools.

The ACT government builds on their plan to roll out specialist occupational violence teams for schools. AEU ACT secretary, Glenn Fowler, told *The Canberra Times* that cultural change was necessary and called on a gathering of principals to "reject the old 'it's part of the job' mentality".

Education minister, Yvette Berry, released a statement saying, "the new Occupational Violence policy outlines our commitment to effectively respond to occupational violence, while the management plan provides a future direction for staff about how the government will provide the skills, support, resources and culture required to ensure staff remain safe at work".

Almost \$6 million in school violence related compensation has been paid to Canberra public school teachers since 2012. ►



Almost 700 ACT school staff were assaulted in a single year



New South Wales

Ground-breaking program helps principals flourish

Flourish Project is a research-based initiative created by Dr Adam Fraser and school principal Bob Willetts – designed to reduce burnout and boost efficiency for principals across NSW.

It began as a collaboration between Fraser, Deakin University Business School, and The Shoalhaven Primary Principals' Council. The program brings principals together once a term and encompasses three phases; the research phase, the intervention phase and the re-testing phase, all of which are designed to help participants understand and overcome the issues affecting them the most.

One principal who participated in the workshop said that after participating in the program, his outlook at work had become more positive: "I'm now in a better headspace when I'm at work because I'm more relaxed and productive." The post project research will be completed in term four, 2017.

Over two thirds of year nine students can't sit HSC



The new requirement for year nine students to achieve at least a band 8 in NAPLAN is underway.

Despite some impressive results at the top of the bell curve, preliminary results are showing almost 70 percent of the current year nine cohort will need to pass an online test in at least one area to be eligible to sit for the HSC in 2020.

The preliminary results from NAPLAN, released on Wednesday, show NSW achieved some of its best results since the national tests began in 2008, topping the country in year nine numeracy and was second for year nine reading. According to *Sydney Morning Herald* article, 'NAPLAN 2017: Year 9 results improve, but 68 per cent will still have to re-sit an exam', only "32 percent (28,403) attained band eight or above in all three, which means they have already qualified for their HSC".

HSC heist at Scots College



A *Sydney Morning Herald* article reported that Scots College was forced to cancel one of its trial HSC exams after two papers were stolen in a late-night break-in, just hours before the exam was due to begin.

"The school is under pressure to expel students if they are found to have been behind the heist,

which saw two physics papers go missing from a storage cupboard in the school's Bellevue Hill grounds on Monday night", the report read.

Scots head of curriculum John Montgomery said the college was reviewing its procedures for the storage of trial exam papers and would co-operate with police inquiries. A new exam was written and the test rescheduled for the following week.

Northern Territory

NT Christian Schools convicted over 2015 sports carnival death

NT Christian Schools were convicted and fined \$50,000 over the death of 12-year-old student (Jethro) at Gawa Christian School.

Jethro was killed during a "Troupy Pull" event at the school's annual sports carnival in August 2015.

Jethro tripped and fell while dangerously close to the moving four-wheel-drive, and the man steering the vehicle did not see the boy disappear under the wheels.

Mark Thomas, prosecuting, said a fine should serve a "significant

penalty imposed" to deter other organisations from neglecting their duties to provide safe schools and workplaces.

Judge Elizabeth Morris said the organisation had shown "deep remorse" and gone to great lengths to help the Gawa community come to terms with Jethro's death.

"Our hearts and prayers continue to be with the family and community members who have suffered as a direct result of this incident," a statement from NT Christian Schools read.

A world of words - letters from Manyallaluk

Queen Elizabeth and Essendon Football Club megastars have been recipients of letters from junior and senior primary students at Manyallaluk School.

The remote school — north-east of Katherine — is using the strategy to help children feel excited about writing by creating authentic writing experiences.

Teaching principal Ben Kleinig said students once demonstrated "significant reluctance to write", but the responses to the letters are generating "real excitement and an eagerness to keep writing".



Students Hadassah Ashley-Brumby, Nathan Alangale, Aralise Fredricks, Alice Fredricks, Dastan Wurramarrba, Susan Lawrence with gifts from Essendon FC, and Ben Kleinig (back)



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◀ “We slowly introduced letter writing last term, and then realised its potential,” he said. “The kids chose their favourite football players, and The Queen — someone pretty popular with our students.

“The enthusiasm is being translated into more effort, greater self-belief, a have-a-go mentality and more time devoted to writing. One outstanding improvement is in kids gaining the confidence to move away from copying the teacher, instead being brave enough to sound out words and be open to feedback. It's part of our learning that mistakes are okay, that's how we learn, and that attitude is catching-on.

“Children wear big smiles and jump for joy when replies to their letters arrive. I estimate that up to 40 letters have been written, and the possibilities are limitless.

“In her letter to The Queen, our Grade 2 student Alice wrote: ‘Dear Queen Elizabeth. Did you have a birthday cake? Old Mary was sitting down drinking a cup of tea watching the dogs chase a buffalo. But don't worry, she can run fast. From Alice.’”

The children were delighted with the response from Essendon Football Club, and Mary Robinson, Lady-in-Waiting to Queen Elizabeth.

Queensland

Beach safety catches new wave of funding

The Queensland state government has renewed funding for the surf skills program. Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk pledged \$100,000 for Surf Life Saving Queensland's (SLSQ) Beach Safe Schools program to run to May 2018.

She says Queensland is known for its “sand, surf and sunshine” but emphasised the importance of getting “lifesavers in front of more students to educate them about



how to be safe on Queensland beaches”.

Health minister, Cameron Dick, said, “this funding will enable SLSQ to expand the program and provide additional trained presenters and facilitators to run educational sessions in regional areas including Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Bundaberg, Gympie and the Sunshine Coast, Greater Brisbane, Lockyer Valley and the Gold Coast”.

Minister for fire and emergency services, Mark Ryan, said “SLSQ members are passionate about water safety and proactive in leading the way in advocacy and community leadership programs, striving to make our beaches and public waterways safe and healthy for everyone”.

Advancing STEM for Indigenous Queenslanders



Queensland has launched a plan to advance STEM skills for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students, who will be able to develop and test their coding and robotics skills at public libraries statewide.

Queensland minister for innovation, science and the digital economy, Leeanne Enoch, announced the eight communities who will benefit from \$157,000 in grants to support libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres

in their delivery of STEM.I.AM coding and robotics activities.

“In partnership with State Library of Queensland and local councils, the STEM.I.AM coding and robotics activities will be available to young people in Aurukun, Cook, Douglas, Gladstone, Logan, North Burnett, Paroo and Townsville.

State librarian and CEO, Vicki McDonald, said libraries provide a supportive, hands-on environment where everyone has access to technology, information, and creative skill building.

“Providing opportunities to build digital literacy skills is vital for Indigenous communities who often experience digital exclusion,” Ms McDonald said.

South Australia

SA opposition wants sniffer dogs in schools

SA opposition leader, Steven Marshall, has vowed to introduce random school drug checks if elected premier at the next election.

An ABC report indicated that this is “a policy the police commissioner has not asked for and principals do not want, according to the state's police minister”. Police minister, Peter Malinauskas, says police can already conduct school checks if they suspect trafficking is taking place. Mr Marshall has said as a father of two teenagers, he wanted to win the fight on drugs on “all fronts”.

“My message to the drug peddlers, those who are seeking to exploit our kids and subject them to a life of addiction, is simple,” the ABC quoted. The

police minister wondered if he actually wanted to be the premier or actually had aspirations to be the police commissioner, and suggested he might be attempting to cover both roles.

“He will be instructing the police commissioner to take sniffer dogs away from catching known criminals and instead start sniffing around lockers and lunchboxes — it's an absurd policy,” Mr Malinauskas said.

Proposed bill to prevent abuse at school

There will be tougher penalties to anyone who behaves in an offensive or abusive manner on school grounds, under proposed changes in the Education and Children's Services Bill 2017.

The bill, which represents the most significant reform in this area in over forty years, will trigger new penalties – up to \$2,500 – for those who behave in an offensive manner or use abusive, threatening or insulting language towards principals, teachers and other staff at government and non-government schools, or through other communication channels.

Let them sing at Christmas

More than 98 percent of parents and school staff back Christmas carols in public schools. Only 19 of 1179 respondents to a survey by parent group, the SA Association of State School Organisations, said they would support a ban on carols.

The survey follows an April story in the *Advertiser* that triggered a furore, after questioning whether certain wording in a policy about religious freedom meant that the government wanted to discourage or ban carols. Education minister, Susan Close, has repeatedly rubbished the suggestion, according to a subsequent (August) *Advertiser* report, and all seems well for the future of Christmas carols in SA.

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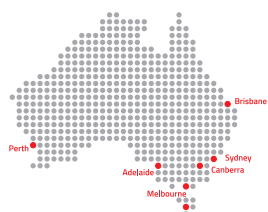
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Tasmania



Tasmanians don't want lower school starting age

A poll of 1,000 Tasmanians has shown about 75 percent oppose the current government's plan to lower the school starting age, according to an ABC report.

Currently it is compulsory for children to start prep in the year they turn five, but the liberal government wants them there six months earlier, bring the preschool start age to only 3.5 years.

A new EMRS poll commissioned by the United Voice Union surveyed 1,000 Tasmanian adults from August 3-7, with 760 people rejecting the proposal to lower the school starting age.

Five hundred respondents were from the south, 250 from the north and 250 from the north west and west coast regions.

United Voice secretary Jannette Armstrong told the ABC that close to a third of people surveyed also expressed they were less likely to vote for the Liberal Party because of the policy.

Victoria

New 'reportable conduct' to protect children

School principals in Victoria started term three with a new regulatory regime setting high standards for child safety compliance. On July 1, 2017, amendments took effect to the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic), which introduce a "reportable conduct" scheme.

School law expert, Paul O'Halloran, a partner at law firm Colin Biggers & Paisley in Melbourne, said the laws "encapsulate three important duties which are now legally imposed upon schools, to identify, investigate and report on child safety risks posed by employees".

O'Halloran says the reportable conduct obligations will be invoked if a "reasonable belief" can be formed that reportable conduct has been engaged in by an employee towards a child, in areas including sexual offences; sexual misconduct involving children; significant violence or emotional or psychological harm towards a child; or significant neglect of a child.

Schools will need to identify, investigate and report all allegations of reportable conduct allegedly committed by employees, volunteers and contractors.

Interestingly, O'Halloran indicates the laws extend to the conduct of priests who run many of the Victorian Catholic primary schools. It is a criminal offence (a fine of \$1,554.60) for an organisation to fail without reasonable excuse, to comply with its obligations under the new scheme.

Vic principal caught lying

Former Melbourne primary school principal, Michael Giulieri, 63, has been convicted by the Victorian County Court on charges of lying to anti-corruption officers.

The former headmaster of Essendon North Primary School, pleaded guilty to making false or misleading statements to the Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption Commission in 2014 and conspiracy to attempt to pervert the course of justice. It seems the lying was intended to protect an education department official.

Western Australia

WA to clean up after "dud deal"

Western Australia is slated to receive a boost in funding under the federal government's new funding packages.

Education minister, Simon Birmingham, said, at Australind Senior High School in early August, "Western Australia is a great beneficiary of our reforms, because previously WA got a dud deal on school funding. And we are implementing something that treats every state consistently, based on the individual need of each student and each school community, as it should be".

The minister took the opportunity to acknowledge what the school had achieved despite its apparent underfunding: "It's just so inspiring to get the chance to come and see students in schools like this one - the Australind Senior High School

- a school that is really delivering in terms of new technologies, new opportunities, inspirational learning experiences for its students."

WA students flying high

Students in Perth's south-eastern suburbs are the first in Western Australia to take part in an innovative model of school and industry collaboration that will give them real-world skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Minister for Education and Training Simon Birmingham visited the Southern Perth Pathways in Technology (P-TECH) pilot at Cecil Andrews College in Seville Grove.

"By forging partnerships between local employers and schools, we're helping the next generation build the vital skills they need for the jobs of the future," Minister Birmingham said.

"This is the first P-TECH pilot in WA and it's part of our national expansion of the program to 14 sites across the country where employers can work alongside schools in preparing young people for success in further study and work." Secondary students involved in the pilot will be on an industry-supported pathway to complete their Western Australian Certificate of Education and then continue their studies to gain a STEM-related diploma, advanced diploma or degree. ■



Simon Birmingham with students at Cecil Andrews College.

EduTech post coverage and highlights

From June 7 to 9, teachers, principals, librarians, and professionals from the tertiary sector, vocational education and training converged at the International Convention Centre in Sydney, sharing knowledge, and connection with inspirational technology, and innovation in action.

The event attracted 8,760 attendees, who were enthralled by 200 exhibitors and 253 speakers, delivering free seminars and optional extra conference presentations.

With eight parallel congresses on the go, there was knowledge on the breeze, and inspiration in the air. The EduTECH congresses and masterclasses offered coalface educators, IT and administration teams, along with leadership teams looking for real life case studies, and an array of awe-inspiring talks from world-class speakers. Some participants started early with nine pre-event masterclasses and the EduTECH networking dinner was attended by 600 guests.

The annual free EduTECH exhibition is the largest of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere, and visitors were encouraged to walk around the exhibition, exploring the latest on offer for Australian education and beyond.

If the conference program is, as organisers phrased it, "where the learning, theory and inspiration happens" – though I would say plenty of learning and inspiration occurred on the show floor – then "the exhibition is where



testing, networking and product interaction happens".

School News operated a booth at EduTECH and from that vantage point, staff were able to drink in the excited enthusiasm of punters. *School News* sales executive, Michael Piantoni, said, "the robotics exhibition was amazing; the kids at Barker College had developed robots to achieve set tasks, and people just flocked to it. Lucky I'm tall or I wouldn't have seen a thing!"

School News sales executive, Pip Casey, added that any demonstration with a STEM or STEAM theme was "standing room only"; as educators clamoured for new approaches to using and teaching STEM and, specifically technology to their students.

The conference line up was replete with experts, with an informed voice to elucidate on

educational technology from every angle. We heard from school leaders doing amazing things with online education, such as Abi Woldhuis of Roseville College on digital literacy – what is it and how do we teach it? We delved into 'Makerspace culture' with Anita L'Enfant, who spoke about discovering authentic learning in the makers' playground, incorporation of design and many more related topics across the program.

For libraries of the 21st century, open access is paramount, according to University of Technology, Sydney librarian, Mal Booth. With technology changing so rapidly, and some concepts difficult to visualise, how do you keep up?

The 2017 EduTECH Conference and Expo covered topics such as understanding how to use technologies like robotics,

drones, 3D printing and virtual reality to teach STEM more effectively. The Makerspace was also in focus; with project based learning and creativity at the forefront of (at least one stream of) educational discourse, visitors and delegates were alert and engaged, keen to incorporate a Makerspace culture at their schools on a shoestring budget. Charles Leadbeater offered free tips on the Expo Main Stage on inspiring students' inner creativity and innovation.

It seems likely that the teachers, school leaders, and other stakeholders in the education field have walked away with ideas aplenty, new connections, and a greater understanding of the role of technology in education, in the classroom, for library management, and to ease the burden of school administration.

In a world where futurists and educationalists herald a future for our youths underpinned by connectivity technology, topics such as open access research facilitation, digital literacy, and unleashing creativity with tech were welcome. The profusion of products, services and approaches that act as scaffolding for students' online learning and creative digital expression was exciting – possibly a tacit admission that the wheels of progress not only roll on, but also, the strains of development proliferate - in a most 21st century fashion. ■

By Suzy Barry,
Industry Reporter



Cyber safety sorted with Family Zone ecosystem

Jessica Hill of Family Zone said the EduTECH exhibition was a huge success: "The Family Zone staff at EduTech were so pleased to be completely run off their feet, as we are very passionate about getting our cyber safety message out to schools."

"Cyber Safety is certainly on the forefront of every educator's mind. The dangers and the distraction are a real problem for those on the front line, as is dealing with the aftermath of cyber-bullying incidents," Ms Hill reported.

"Educators were pleased to see somebody with solutions."

How does Family Zone help schools?

Family Zone is a complete cyber safety service. "Not only do we have the products and applications to help keep kids safe online, we also partner with industry leading cyber experts who offer, among other things, education services - so we can help schools and families have all the information, education and support they need to keep kids safe online," Ms Hill told *School News*.

Partnering with experts such as Alannah & Madeline Foundation, Dr Kristy Goodwin, Brett Lee from Internet Safe Education and Ysafe Solutions, Family Zone offers a fully integrated product and service that covers home and school use.

"When students are at school, on their mobile devices, or at home, they are protected," she said. During school hours, the school has visibility and control of their online behaviour, and after hours the responsibility passes to the parents.

The tech low-down

"School Zone is a student welfare service that keeps



your students safe and secure when they're using the school's internet and provides the tools they need to become good digital citizens," said Ms Hill.

"It's a web-based application that is an integral part of their response to the challenges of the cyber age. It provides administrators, teachers and students with easy to use tools that enable them to do what they need to do, when they need to do it."

"Family Zone is unique in offering the full ecosystem of cyber safety, even incorporating personal devices, through Mobile Zone. This groundbreaking new service helps schools maintain their duty of care by ensuring that students using 3G/4G mobile devices are protected on school grounds."

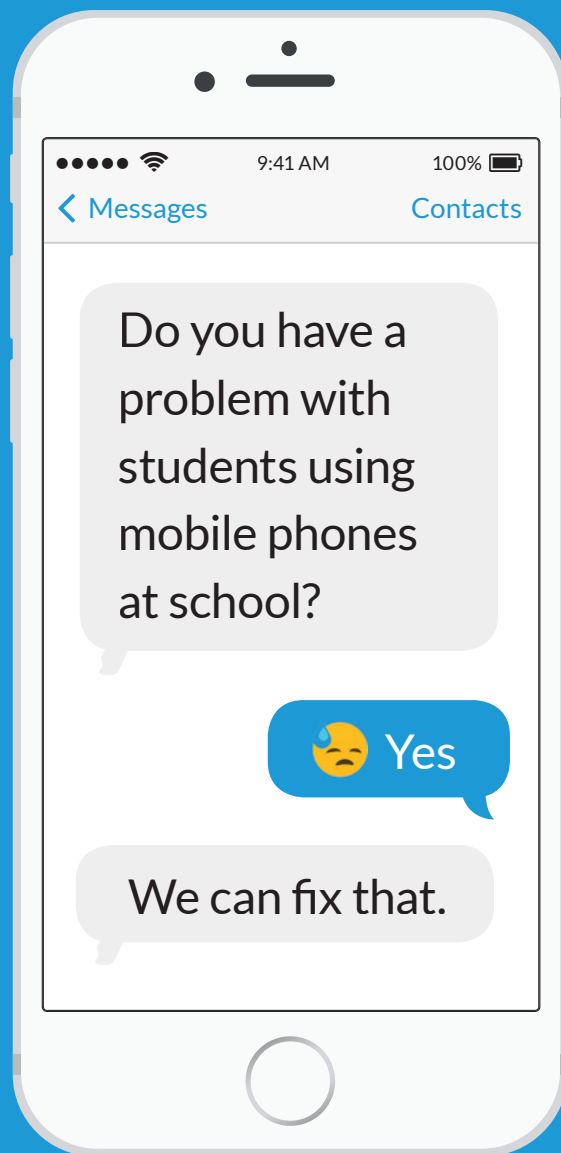
Ms Hill said: "While installed by parents, Mobile Zone is fully integrated within the Family Zone ecosystem, which means Mobile Zone functions are not

only accessible through the stand-alone Mobile Zone portal and administration interface, but also through your School Zone service".

"It delivers control and visibility, reports on student mobile devices, and enforces your school's acceptable usage policy on those devices," she noted. Ms Hill says Family Zone strives to ensure students enjoy the educational benefits of the internet in a safe and secure cyber setting. ●



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'Timetabling fun' no oxymoron with Edval

Visitors to the Edval booth at EduTECH were introduced to a new concept: 'timetabling need not be tedious.'

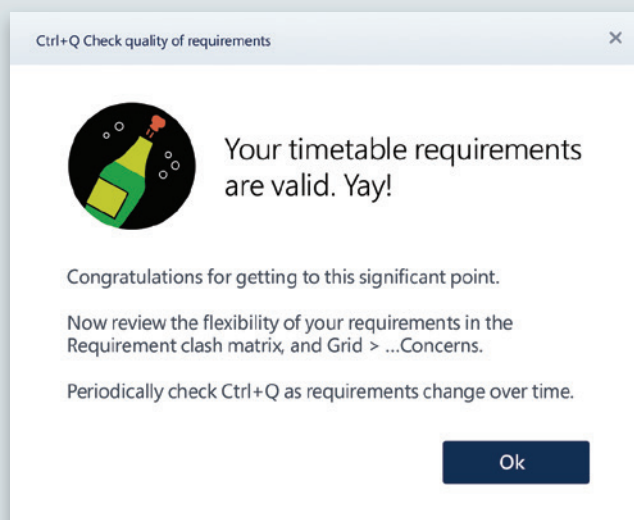
Edval events manager, Sarah Emmanuel says Edval is focussed on empowering leaders to reach better outcomes for their schools through quality and creative solutions.

Ms Emmanuel, said, "EduTech was a great success for us in 2017, with sustained interest from the education professionals in attendance".

"We will definitely be back next year with a much bigger exhibit, and we will also be conducting presentations, along with a showcase of our system in action."

"We did present to several schools after the event and look forward to presenting to others who have shown interest."

Ms Emmanuel says the



Edval team stays in touch with market requirement through an extensive events schedule: "We attend numerous conferences throughout the year in Australia and overseas. These conferences are a great opportunity for school leaders to connect with us to discuss their needs. We also frequently run onsite demonstrations for schools or groups of schools for

more in depth discussion and product demonstrations."

"With an increase in co-curricular requirements, timetabling is becoming more complex all the time, especially for schools with a large student population. We really enjoy hearing how Edval has mitigated a lot of the frustration and...well...boredom usually associated with timetabling tedium."

As English teacher Brigitta Ragg from Adelaide's Nazareth Catholic College has phrased it in the past: "Timetabling is a funny job; only one person in a school does it, so nobody really understands why we get so stressed about it."

Edval Timetabling has Ms Bragg laughing out loud, wondering who wrote the program, with such a "cute sense of humour".

"There's this champagne icon with a retro 1980s King's Quest feel to it that pops up when you have a solution that fits all requirements," Ms Bragg told *School News*.

Messages such as "Doh! The room is too small for class you have allocated. Consider double decker desks or try something else!" are also a welcome distraction.

Not all fun and games; it's practical: Ms Ragg says the program can be taught to pick up issues such as co-requisite ineligibility due to pre-requisite requirements and other potential clashes.

Edval is smooth and easy to learn; with users expressing surprise at its logic and scope, and frankly - drawing a genuine giggle (not a delirious one) from the administrative quagmire of annual timetabling is no mean feat. ●



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“We empower leaders to reach better outcomes for their schools through quality and creative solutions”



Strengths-based school culture

This issue, *School News* features Dr Lea Waters, author of *The Strength Switch*. By focussing on kids' strengths, rather than correcting their weaknesses, Dr Waters demonstrates how optimism, resilience and achievement can be encouraged by those working with children. We spoke with Dr Waters about how schools can bring about a 'strength-based cultural shift.'



Dr Lea Waters, Photo: Andrew Campbell

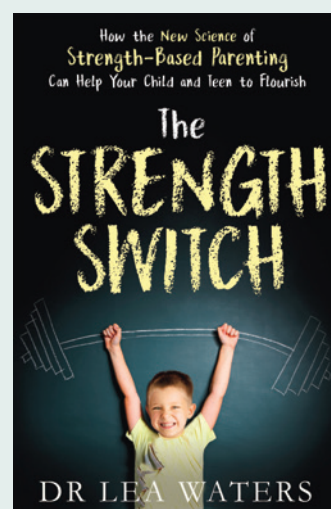
Suzy Barry: Can you briefly describe your research on wellbeing in schools? What did you find?

Dr Lea Waters: I have evaluated the effects of various positive psychology curriculums on student wellbeing. The curriculums have been designed to help students learn a range of psychological skills that help to increase gratitude, mindfulness, use of strengths, kindness and resilience. The research shows that these programs significantly improve a range of wellbeing outcomes for students, including increases in optimism, self-esteem, self-acceptance, and life satisfaction as well as reductions in stress, anxiety and depression. In some studies, wellbeing programs have also been shown to improve academic grades.

SB: Are these issues that can be addressed via a strength-based culture? What is this 'strength-blindness' how can it be 'cured'?

LW: A strength-based culture has four key benefits:

1. **Higher performance and greater likelihood of reaching one's potential:** when schools put the bulk of their resources into lifting low performance (either in students or staff) a lot of effort is spent to moving from poor to average. When we work on weakness we can only take our kids to a point where the weakness no longer exists. It's when we work on strengths that we get them to high performance.
2. **Diversity and inclusion:** everyone has unique strengths and when we adopt
3. **Wellbeing:** research shows that when teachers and students play to their strengths it boosts a range of wellbeing outcomes such as life satisfaction, positive emotions and optimism.
4. **Fosters better teacher-student bond:** Strengths provide a positive common ground for teachers and students to connect because



a strength-based culture we get to see the differences in others from an appreciative perspective. We also get to utilize people's strengths more intentionally, in order to have each staff member and each student contribute to a positive culture. We bring together all strengths – the communicators, the problem solvers, the energisers, the analysers, the change agents, the relationship builders, the creatives and so on - and each person is valued for what they add.

they both have strengths. Teachers and students bond when they find they have similar or complementary strengths. When they have different strengths, they can appreciate the differences. Strengths break down hierarchy - they are a social equaliser because everyone has them. In one school, students engaged in a week of 'strengths spotting' of their teachers. They wrote down the strengths they saw in their teachers and these messages were then displayed on the electronic board across the school examples included:

"Mr Green always displays his strength of humour. He plays birthday music for our birthday and we all sing along" and "Ms Berg is really persistent. She told me that it was her mission to get me to love and understand maths. She continues to ask if I am ok and if I need help."

Strength blindness is the term that psychologists use to describe the phenomenon of people not seeing their strengths clearly. Strengths are the things we perform well, are energised by, and are self-motivated to do. Our strengths come naturally to us and, thus, require less effort to use than our weaknesses. As such, we tend to take our strengths for granted and we become blind to them - not seeing them as strengths and assuming everyone has the same qualities as us. The downside of strengths blindness is that we then don't think to use our strengths intentionally to build our wellbeing and performance.

SB: How can school leaders/teachers implement the concepts discussed in your book?

LW: The two key processes in my book for strength-based parenting are first learning how to see strengths in yourself and others; then learning how to build strengths in yourself and others.

These two processes are equally relevant in schools as they are in families. The book shows parents how they can better see and use their own unique strengths in their role as a parent and my research shows that when parents do this,

they have higher self-efficacy and more positive emotions. The same would apply for teachers. All the surveys, exercises and activities in the book can be used and adapted to the classroom and I have woven a number of teacher stories throughout the book.

SB: You indicate that parents need to let their kids 'slack off' sometimes - should teachers give students 'down-time' at school as well? Why/why not?

LW: Yes, when teachers structure down-time into their classes, rather than fill the class time with formal instruction, they are actually helping their students to learn. This might seem counter-intuitive, but neuroscience now shows that when students slow down and turn inwards, although they don't look busy on the outside, their brains are actually super busy and fully firing.

When the brain's external-focused, task-mode turns off, an alternate mode in the brain turns on. Neuroscientists have labelled this mode the 'Default Network Mode'. Down time shifts a student's brain into the Default Network Mode - DFM for short - which is critical for learning because it is when we are using our DFM that the brain pauses to:

- integrate information;
- consolidate learning;
- process emotions;
- clear 'cerebral congestion';
- and refresh and restore our brain's capacity for attention.

So, building in down-time, play, mindfulness and opportunities to slack off in class are an important part of helping students learn.

Basically, our brains use down-time to untangle and order all the thoughts and feelings we've had that day. Downtime helps us clear our 'cerebral congestion'. This is as necessary for teachers and all school staff as it is for students.

SB: How can strength-based practices be of use when working with students with specific challenges?

LW: Strengths are a powerful way to build confidence and wellbeing in kids who have learning challenges or who sit along the spectrum. Research on positive parenting

with children who have attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) shows that while it doesn't change their deficit disorder, it does improve their behaviour. ADHD children whose parents use praise, positive emotions, physical affection, and positive engagement as regular features of their parenting have fewer conduct problems, fewer mood issues, fewer sociability problems, and less hyperactivity.

One mother in my book described to me how discovering the core strengths of her son, who has Asperger's syndrome, allowed her to see his powers of observation of others' emotions that hadn't been as noticeable before:

"Fin has Asperger's syndrome, so it was a surprise to me that he has social intelligence as a signature strength. I didn't really believe it until I asked others who know him well. His teachers said it made perfect sense to them—Fin notices details that others don't and is very perceptive of others' emotions, even though he may not always respond or know what to do with that emotion. Seeing that this was a strength for Fin helped me to understand that he could observe people's emotions but needed help on appropriate responses. Sometimes when he has friend over, he'll tell me the friend feels "uncomfortable" and he'll explain what he sees in the friend's face. Then we talk and he can think about how to help resolve the situation."

SB: Schools can only do so much - do you have some suggestions for engaging and educating parents to support you in your strength-based culture?

LW:

- a.) Introduce parents to the strength-based approach through a parent night.
- b.) Start parent-teacher session by identifying the strengths you see in their children.
- c.) Incorporate strengths-spotting into the student diary. Have a section where the students record the strengths they used that week and parent sign off on it.
- d.) Bring strengths into the parent newsletter: have a strength

of the month and showcase examples of where students and staff have used that strengths

- e.) Include strengths into the school's mission and purpose statements
- f.) Integrate strengths into report cards, school assemblies and sports reports
- g.) Provide parents and teachers with opportunities to learn more deeply about strengths through the Strength-Switch course that can be facilitated at your school.

SB: What about those weaknesses. Do we just ignore them? Won't that mean they won't progress?

LW: Taken a strength-based approach is not about ignoring weakness, these still need to be addressed. But when you come first from strengths, you'll naturally find more constructive ways to deal with weaknesses and this is for two reasons:

1. The student knows that you see the good in them and that you're on their side; they know you see them in a balanced way - good and bad. This means they are more open and less defensive to you helping address their weak spots and poor behaviour.
2. Sometimes you can use a strength to help address a weakness. If you have a student who is struggling academically but has high persistence, you can help them through the learning challenges by drawing on that strength. If you have a class clown who is disruptive, look for a strength in them and channel that. Maybe they have humour but are misapplying it or maybe they're very social, or even have leadership, but are using these the wrong way. Connect them to their strength and show them how to use it in ways that work for them rather than against them. ■

*With Suzy Barry,
Industry Reporter*

New Generation Learning Space Project

At the heart of all good schools are great people (staff, students, parents, and alumni) and rigorous educational programmes. I am proud to say that Churchie has benefited immensely in both these areas over its 100-year history and I look to continue developing young men of exceptional spirit, character and academic rigour who are guided by professional and dedicated staff.

Beyond its people and its programs, the environment in which learning takes place is also crucial. A school's classrooms, research areas, collaborative working spaces and co-curricular facilities provide the space for engagement and learning. We strive, therefore, to provide world-class facilities to support student learning and educational practice.

However, how can we know that the building programmes we see in schools around the world will result in improved teaching and learning for our students? Does the classroom space make a difference? This has been an area in which, as a school, Churchie has sought to investigate over several years. What we have found has informed the most ambitious building project undertaken in the school's history.

By way of background, there has been a resurgence of interest in classroom and school design.



The Centenary Library, Churchie

This has highlighted just how little we know about its impact on teaching and learning. Historically, literature in this area has focused on the design of buildings rather than their actual use—the pedagogies and learning experiences that occur on the inside. Furthermore, there has been a lack of research methods capable of measuring, empirically, the impact of the physical learning environment on teaching and learning. A pressing concern to the school leadership was for future financial and human investment to be considered and support our exceptional staff to

create those learning experiences that we know have the greatest positive impact on our students' learning.

To develop a methodology for researching the impact of learning spaces, Churchie's Dr Terry Byers partnered with Dr Wesley Imms, associate Professor at the University of Melbourne, to create the New Generation Learning Space (NGLS) project.

Between 2011 and 2016, NGLS completed four studies to produce an approach, and a suite of tools to measure the pedagogical impact of different

learning environments.

This novel approach isolated the impact of different learning environments to examine how they influenced student and teacher activity. We discovered that considering the impact of the physical learning environment on learning, how it is inhabited and used, is at least as important as its physical design and fit out.

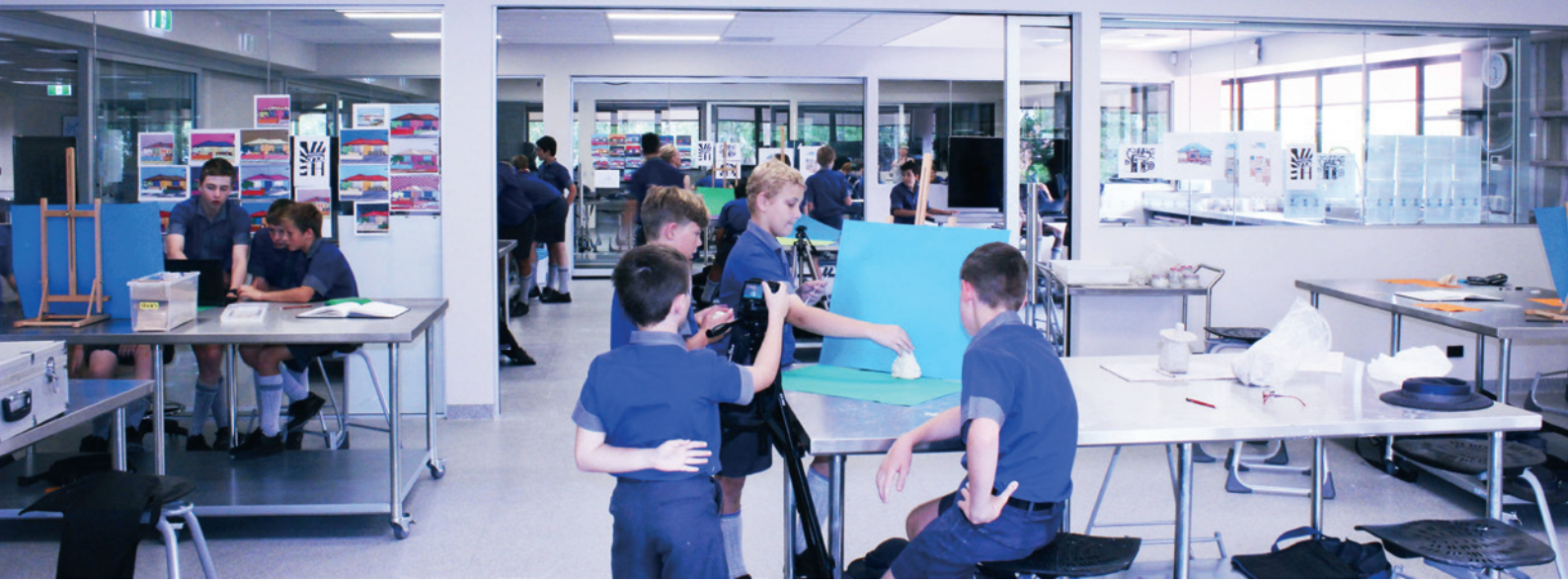
Beginning as a pilot study of a single retrofitted classroom in 2011, at no additional financial cost to the school, the study expanded to a major building refurbishment.



Hayward Midson Creative Precinct, Churchie



Spaces for study at the Centenary Library, Churchie.



Students hard at work in the Hayward Midson Creative Precinct, Churchie

This phase saw the completion in 2016 of a flagship precinct that houses arts, design and technology areas; the Hayward Midson Creative Precinct. The spaces created by the refurbishment of two adjacent buildings embody a dramatic application of the principles of innovative learning environments. They are multi-modal and technology-infused, with flexible layouts to shift learning from traditional or teacher-dominated spaces to something that is focused on students. The spaces are adaptive and purposeful, giving users the ability to move elements and shape the space to their own environments.

The NGLS project provided an iterative and longitudinal process of evaluation of not only the design, materials, and technologies that worked (and those that did not), but also the pedagogical return on improved student learning experiences and outcomes. It also developed the knowledge and skills of its teachers. By this time, the NGLS project and the partnership with the University of Melbourne had become reinforced by two Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Projects and the 2014 Melbourne Graduate School of Education Research Partnership Excellence Award.

A key finding of the research at Churchie was that the practice of teachers in the new learning space neither conformed to traditional or progressive pedagogical models. The greatest academic gain was observed by those teachers whose dominant pedagogical approach was

best described as full-guided instruction. Repeated lesson observations revealed that teachers significantly refined their explicit instructional approach, in contrast to the overtly didactic, whole class and lock-step instruction observed in a traditional layout (static desks arranged in a set layout facing the front of the room).

A greater prevalence of formative evaluation elicited through class discussion and questioning refined the explicit instruction of concepts to address gaps in student understanding. The refinement of this instruction then led to a greater prevalence of responsive student-led and informal learning experiences in different communities of learning (individual, pair and small class) and spatial settings. Teachers had increased opportunities to move about the space and provide more focused instruction and feedback to individual students. In fact, greater differentiation of learning was observed, not because of the spatial design, but the process of evaluation providing the impetus for reflection, feedback and professional growth for all teachers.

Dr Terry Byers and Associate Professor Wesley Imms have recently published an article in *Learning Spaces* (2017 Issue 3:3) about the Hayward Midson Creative Precinct. However, the most recent and dramatic change to the Churchie landscape has been a new building project—our largest and most ambitious—which has, as its foundation, the impactful knowledge gained from the New Generation Learning

Space project. The Centenary Library brings together several Churchie departments that are all focused, in their own way, on the delivery of an educational, pastoral, or technical service to the academic life of our students. Operating as a tertiary-inspired library environment, with extended operating hours, there are many dozens of learning spaces that have been informed by our research.

The Centenary Library seeks to promote creative, flexible, and effective approaches to thinking and learning.

Students may participate in a range of activities and communities of learning that extend from an individual through to mixed aged classes.

In addition to large class learning areas, there are numerous small group study rooms and over 80 individual learning places.

The Centenary Library is also a vibrant research site where the learnings and measurement processes developed by the New Generation Learning Space project actively monitor and assess the way in which students are using the rooms and teachers are delivering their classes. I was proud to announce last year Dr Terry Byers' appointment to the newly created role of director of The Centenary Library.

As we embark on our second term of schooling within this building, Dr Byers will continue to review how students are using the spaces, how teachers exploit the affordances for pedagogical gain, and how The Centenary Library benefits the wider Churchie and educational community. ■

By Dr Alan Campbell,
Headmaster, Anglican Church
Grammar School, East Brisbane



Hayward Midson Creative Precinct, Churchie

Aboriginal knowledge for the science curriculum



This image was taken by ESO photo ambassador Yuri Beletsky. Photo: Andrew Campbell

The Western view alone limits students. Aboriginal knowledge enhances science education with examples of Aboriginal science.

Aboriginal knowledge

Aboriginal Knowledge has become an accepted term for the beliefs and understandings that Aboriginal people acquired through long-term observation and association with a place.

It is knowledge based on the social, physical and spiritual understandings which informed the people's survival. Synonyms include Indigenous Knowledge, Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), Indigenous People's Knowledge (IPK), or 'folk knowledge.'

Aboriginal science

If we understand 'science' to mean a systematic approach to acquiring knowledge, then 'Aboriginal science' is the science that Aboriginal people developed through empirical knowledge of their natural environment.

As is the case with Western science, Aboriginal science is the

practical application of theories of knowledge about the nature of the world. Increasingly Aboriginal people blend Western scientific and Aboriginal knowledge, creating niche expertise or unique business opportunities.

How can Aboriginal Knowledge help teaching science?

There are two main reasons Aboriginal Knowledge can help students in the science curriculum:

Increasing awareness: Students can learn that Aboriginal culture is not limited to stereotypical areas such as arts. Learning how Aboriginal Knowledge reaches out into science extends student's awareness of the depth of this culture.

Broader perspectives: Tackling problems with a Western mindset excludes other possibilities upfront.

Seeing problems through the cultural 'goggles' of Aboriginal people helps students think out of the box and come up with different solutions.

Examples of Aboriginal science

There are many achievements that could find their way into a science curriculum:

Physics: Aboriginal people developed the boomerang and other sophisticated weapons (e.g. woomera).

Astronomy: They knew how the tides are linked to the phases of the moon, while Italian scientist Galileo Galilei was still proclaiming, incorrectly, that the moon had nothing to do with tides! Others had figured out how eclipses work.

Maths: In some cases, Aboriginal people had sophisticated number systems.

Editor's note: More information can be gleaned by researching Michael Cooke, and reading his publication: 'Seeing Yolgnu, Seeing Mathematics', Batchelor, N.T. 1990.

Navigation: How could they traverse this great continent without compasses, but using stars and oral maps?

Landcare: Aboriginal people managed country carefully through controlled burning to maximise

productivity. They possessed ethno-botanical knowledge linked to specific places and environments. This resulted in fantastically fertile soils.

Editor's Note: For more information, read 'The biggest estate on earth: how Aborigines made Australia' by Bill Gammage.

Chemistry: Aboriginal people had an intimate knowledge of bush medicine, and how to treat poisonous plants to make them usable for food or medicine.

Warfare: They organised fierce resistance to the British invaders, and sometimes won significant military victories such as the raids by Aboriginal warrior Pemulwuy or Jandamarra.

You might be forgiven for not knowing. The old paradigm of "primitive natives" is still deeply ingrained in Australian society, keeping us from opening to the notion of "intelligent and sophisticated Aboriginal nations" which is closer to reality.

Next time you talk or teach, show that there is far more to explore than the common stereotypes of Aboriginal culture. ■

By Jens Korff, Creativespirits.info

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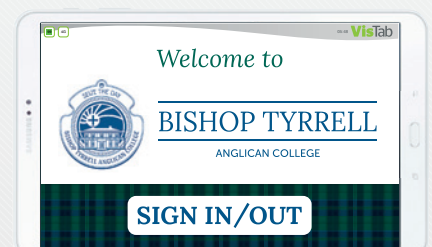
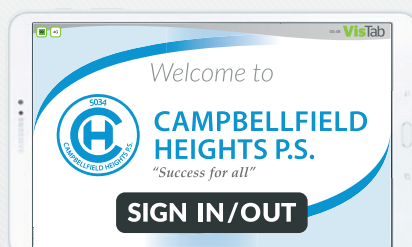
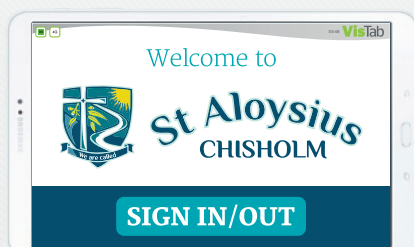
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Photo: Adaptions

Teaching aids help neutralise special needs

Learning difficulties, special needs, physical and emotional limitations; these are all factors that can devastate a student's educational experiences and outcomes. As awareness grows, innovators are creating solutions that level the playing field and allow students to focus away from their weaknesses and onto their strengths.

Richard Branson is dyslexic, and has famously credited his success (in part) to his journey with dyslexia. He told Bloomberg's Cory Johnson in 2015 that "if you have a learning disability, you become a very good delegator." He also said, "it's made me keep things simple and clear-cut", which he says has contributed to the affinity people feel with the brand.

These role models – and there are plenty of them – provide an excellent basis for building confidence, but not all students aspire to fervent entrepreneurialism like Sir Richard. What we do want, however, is students able to focus on their strengths, as Branson suggests. "When you have a learning disability, you know what your weaknesses are and you know what your strengths are, and you make sure that you find great people to step in and deal with your weaknesses". At school, we can't enlist friends to help with exams but, luckily, designers of all persuasions are working on solutions to aid learning.

Industry views

Dyslexia and reading

School News spoke with Karl Francois from Adaptions about assisting students with dyslexia at school. He says that educationalists have long questioned the emotional impact of exam conditions on dyslexic students. Mr Francois quoted research conducted by Garner Education Services in the UK to illustrate how dyslexic students might experience reading: "Dyslexic students may not lack understanding; the problem is created by their inability to read the jumping, moving, incomprehensible formation of shapes that are commonly known as words; this is the crux of the problem." He says portable readers can assist: "Scanning pens contain a high accuracy optical character recognition (OCR) that enables you to capture text and listen to pronunciations through a headset during exams."

For general reading help, scanners with a selection of extra features are available. Mr Francois says these devices can save text files for easy transfer to your computer, and the models not for use under exam conditions include electronic dictionaries.

He says assistive technology is allowing schools to help students 'troubleshoot' small 'disabilities' to

allow strengths to be realised: "A switch-adapted mouse is an ideal interface for individuals who can move a mouse around, but may have difficulties with clicking the mouse button. A single-button is connected to the mouse, providing an easier alternative to clicking the mouse button. Aides or carers can move the mouse around and the individual can make their choice by pressing the larger button."

He said, "special needs technology is manufactured in other countries and it has been difficult to source these aids in our region." However, along with accessible toys, communication aids and assistive software; switches and interfaces are now available in Australia, with many products attracting exemptions on import duties and taxes.

Inclusive education through easy listening?

For students with hearing impairment, effective augmentation is the difference between learning and frustration. *School News* spoke with David Brady, who mentors hearing impaired teens with Australasian charity, Hear For You to ascertain the best technology for the job.

As a deaf high school student, Mr Brady was fitted with hearing aids that connected to an audio-frequency induction loop (also

called 'personal FM'). The system takes an audio signal and converts it back to high quality audio for hearing aids to receive.

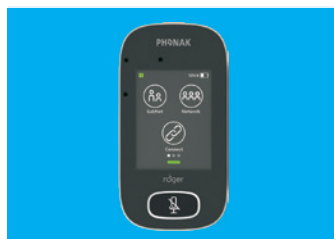
He says having to arrange set up with the teacher every lesson meant loop systems singled students out through a visible display of difference, "which is the last thing a teenager wants!"

The transmission is also received by the 'tele-coil'; an element present in adult hearing aids. Mr Riddle of Hearing Loop says audiologists do not activate this in modern hearing aids for children because it is difficult to manually switch between microphone and radio receiver.

Soundfield: one system to enhance understanding for all

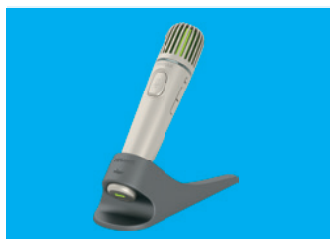
Mr Riddle says new integrated digital tech, which includes a general broadcast to the class as well as targeted transmission to aids, promotes seamless inclusivity and suits current specification for children's hearing aids: "The sound can project across a room from a Soundfield speaker and assists all students." Mr Brady said, "the new tech is for everyone to some extent; it's brought everybody in together – those with auditory processing disorders, or more sensitive hearing, even students at the back of the classroom."

Roger™ Dynamic SoundField – *Better hearing for everyone*



Roger Touchscreen Mic

Featuring a new, simple and intuitive interface for use in the classroom and allows both the teacher and students to easily know the microphone is working. Roger Touchscreen is capable of transmitting simultaneously to Roger receiver wearers and Roger SoundField listeners.



Roger Pass-around Microphone

Designed to enhance classroom discussions so that not only teachers, but all students are heard clearly.

With an appealing design it is the optimal size for kids and teens to hold and fully control.



Roger Multimedia Hub

This versatile transmitter used in a Roger network features audio mixing from computer TV or IWB.

This allows a teacher's voice to be heard simultaneously with an audio signal.

Roger™ Dynamic SoundField

Delivering exceptional sound quality with the capability to produce crystal clear voices throughout a room, while maintaining a static-free environment.

Hearing well in a classroom setting is important for students to truly excel and have the best learning experience. Modern classrooms can make hearing challenging for children due to factors such as background noise, poor acoustics and the distance between teacher and students. In order to overcome these everyday difficulties, SoundField classroom amplification is essential. Having a system which clearly amplifies sound via a loudspeaker has been proven to enhance their listening and learning skills.



Our SoundField is designed to reach all children in a classroom and helps with Auditory Processing Disorder (APD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and even for ESL. This approach also means teachers don't need to raise their voices to be heard, therefore reducing vocal strain, hoarseness and in cases of temporary voice loss, even time off work.



Roger MyLink

Receiver to connect to T-Coil for Hearing Aids and improves one-on-one communication for hard of hearing students.



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◀ “The old personal FM ‘picked up’ everything,” Mr Brady reported, and Mr Riddle says this is because the old analogue systems could only support channels in five classroom without interference: “Using wifi technology, the system ‘channel hops’, which is why so many classrooms can operate independently.” Meet Roger: “a propriety technology developed by Phonak that works on a frequency

2.4GHz”. Roger works with the system to allow a direct feed into hearing aids across these wifi channels. “A touch screen device connects directly to hearing aids and from a media hub to channel audio from a TV or projector or a portable mic,” Mr Riddle explained.

From an end-user perspective, Mr Brady says the new technology has reduced interference and improved sound quality for students:

“The teenagers love that it is for everyone, and they think connecting their hearing aids to YouTube is ‘really cool’”

Editor’s Note: For info on Hear For You or to seek mentoring for your hearing impaired students: www.hearforyou.com.au and David Brady can be contacted on david.brady@hearforyou.com.au

Furniture to support learners of all abilities

Mark Higgins of CAP Furniture says students with postural challenges benefit from postural support chairs, which are fitted with a large range of optional attachments. The purpose-built chairs allow students to participate fully in class activities, rather than being somewhat removed sitting in their wheelchair.

Small adjustments to furniture can

make a big difference to students with autism. Mr Higgins says tables with a chest cut-out, combined with postural support chairs helps quell anxiety in students with autism, by marking out their personal space.

Mr Higgins says schools require a wide range of equipment to suit the diversity of their learners. “For some kids just having a fidget toy to play with may help, for others they need to be more contained using the cut-out of a table to stop them easily moving around the classroom whenever they feel like it.”

“Standing tables give fidgety children a standing environment that offers respite from sitting, and can help keep them focused on classroom activities,” Mr Higgins added.

“From our experience children with autism can be more focussed when they are not being forced to sit and



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do the same activity for too long. I guess a variety of learning situations could be the short answer to the question," he suggested.

"Our core belief is that children of all abilities deserve support and assistance in their learning, so working with teachers and therapists to produce purpose-designed furniture can help achieve that."

"Naturally, some schools are reluctant to purchase a special item of furniture for one child on the basis that it 'may' help. It isn't widely known that some education departments (e.g. Queensland) have a pool of equipment that can be loaned for a trial period to assess whether a purchase is suitable."

Inclusive education doesn't only mean learning together. "The integration of special needs children into schools requires schools to provide modified furniture to enable them to be included in classroom activities."

Deep pressure for sensory seeking students

Libby Tricarico of KloudSac says educators integrating children on the spectrum (ASD) into mainstream schools require supportive equipment for their students. Commonly, ASD students will engage in 'sensory seeking' behaviour when confronted with transitions or taxing interactions.

"Children who require proprioceptive (deep pressure) sensory input as part of their sensory profile often have difficulties regulating their emotions, so once they become anxious and distressed they find it very difficult to calm and regulate without an external influence." She said, "once an ASD student is overstimulated and showing signs of anxiety and

distress, 'Kloud time' improves receptivity to other familiar strategies - e.g. social stories, visual cards/schedules. Teachers say they are re-joining their peers faster".

Mrs Tricarico says it's the foam filling that does the trick: "The deep pressure (proprioceptive) sensory input students receive calms their nervous system, which in turn helps the student to self-regulate emotions. Once they are receiving the sensory input they require, this enables them to calm and focus, allowing them to better engage in their surroundings."

Other ways to achieve this involve wrapping or 'cocooning' in a blanket or weighted vests, or collars that provide sensory input to soothe anxiety. Mrs Tricarico said, "students on the spectrum need to maintain their 'sensory diet' to cope with the demands of the school environment and remain focussed".

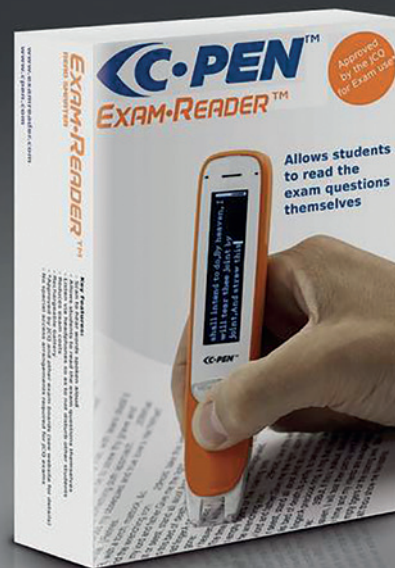
It's not just ASD students who benefit: "Students with other sensory processing issues as well as ADHD can benefit. Also, Rett syndrome, cerebral palsy, Angelman syndrome and fibromyalgia sufferers can all benefit."

Inclusive education involves practices within the school that ensure students are not disadvantaged, and sometimes, structural change, such as classroom reformatting, ramps, and rails. It involves educating staff and students about diversity, but it also involves sourcing equipment and solutions that support students to reach their potential and participate fully in the school environment. By managing student challenges through the provision of targeted teaching aids, we can truly take the spotlight off their weaknesses and focus on strengths. ■

By Suzy Barry,
Industry Reporter

DO YOUR STUDENTS HAVE READING DIFFICULTIES SUCH AS DYSLLEXIA?

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Simply pass the nib across a word to display the definition and the human-like digital voice will read it out aloud.

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Make sure parents listen to you, not the shock jocks

Adam Voigt

Founder and director
of Real Schools



The morning the latest NAPLAN results were released, Adam Voigt woke to judgement of teachers, once again. He filmed an encouraging video reminding teachers to switch off to the self-appointed "experts" and back themselves. It's on his YouTube channel if you missed it. In this article, Adam explains what we can do to make sure parents are getting their information from their children's teachers instead of the radio.

The cult of expertise that's flooding across the national schools conversation concerns me. It seems that, these days, anybody who has walked past a school in the last three or four decades is fully qualified to comment on your decisions, your craft, your technical skill, and your capability to complete the task of educating.

I often make the joke that if merely using the system (even as a student a loooooong time ago) qualifies you fully as an educational expert – then surely using a toilet qualifies you as a plumber!

Further, this subjective criticism seems to be more pointed and acute for teachers than for any other profession. You wouldn't tell your doctor how to fix your



injured knee, you wouldn't tell your lawyer how to build her concluding remarks to a jury and you wouldn't tell your mechanic the only way you wish your car to be serviced. You trust their expertise. And above all the petty squabbles over the minutiae of what is happening at schools, it's that absence of trust at the root of this problem. So how do we begin the task of winning back the position of trusted advisors so that when a prominent shock jock speaks up on the edu-issue of the week, we don't come under attack?

I'd contend there are four key things that we can do to at least sneak us past the Alan Jones and Steve Prices of the airwaves:

Communicate through non-traditional means

What works for the shock jocks is that they have a captive audience for the school run or the trip home from work. Your school or class newsletter doesn't achieve that.

But what does get their attention is their pride and joy... their children. Could you send home a video of the class work focus of the week starring your students? Could you run a weekday webinar (recorded for those who can't attend) about how parents can help learning at home? Could you move on from print communication being your default means?

Talk about your purpose and your expertise

THE CHEAT SHEET

Don't have time to soak in the whole article today?

Here's the big points ...

1. Choose to be an education authority for yourself.
2. Use tech and your students to communicate.
3. Comment on the big stuff of schools.
4. Get ahead of the potential crisis points.
5. Speak to future employability factors.

Eliminate from your key communicative devices all operational aspects that can be found out in other easy ways (such as TiqBiz). Talk about pedagogy (and use the word!), talk about learning outcomes, talk about contemporary learning approaches, talk about ICT integration, and discuss how you are explicitly working with parents to build empathetic and successful citizens out of their children.

Get ahead of the game

Ensure that your parents have heard multiple messages from you about your responses to poor behaviour choices, bullying, instructional style and your intentions for parental involvement ... before the you-know-what hits the fan. At crisis point, parents become emotional and we say some outrageous, destructive, and unproductive things when under duress if we don't have the information already in our heads to refer to. If there are no surprises when these challenges arise, then we're far more likely to have them on our side.

Speak to the future

As many parents are referencing their questions on a very outdated view of what the educative purpose is, it's important to make distinctions between what school was for back then and what it's actually for now. The Institute (University of Phoenix) has released a 'Work Skills 2020' report, which detailed the ten skills our kids will need. They include

sense making, social intelligence, novel and adaptive thinking, cross-cultural competency, computational thinking, new-media literacy, transdisciplinarity, design mindset, cognitive load management and virtual collaboration. These are particularly handy hooks and justifications for why a child's educative experience needs to be very different to the one we all had. They make the differences in your approach to previous approaches far more valid. And they make you sound outrageously clever too – so thanks ITFT!

In a nutshell, our parents are paying more attention to the voice on the wireless than to ours because of the authority with which that voice speaks. That authority doesn't come from years of expertise, from mountains of research or from synthesising and evaluating contemporary approaches. That authority is a choice – they've chosen it for themselves. Your positioning as an authority, as a trusted advisor and as an expert is a choice too. And that choice, that confidence, needs to shine through in your communications to parents more than any mundane, operational task. ■

Adam Voigt is the Founder and Director of Real Schools. Built upon years of experience as a successful Principal, Real Schools helps schools to build and sustain strong, relational school cultures. A speaker of local and international renown, Adam has delivered a TED Talk and is the schools/education expert for *The Project*.

AITSL STANDARDS FOR PRINCIPALS

... and you addressed them by reading!

The Big One

- 3.7 Engage parents/ carers in the educative process.

But also ...

- 1.2 Understand how students learn.
- 3.5 Use effective classroom communication.
- 7.3 Engage with the parents

Great leaders focus on their own wellbeing



Register Now – Principal Wellbeing Workshop

Principals Australia Institute invites school principals to take time to reflect and participate in this one-day workshop, addressing current health and wellbeing issues for principals. PAI understands the importance of principal health and wellbeing, and the impact this has on the every day running of a school and the interactions between staff, students and the school community. By taking time to reflect, this workshop will ask leaders to consider: how they can better manage their own wellbeing, how they can develop their resilience and adaptability in stressful situations, and how they can support the health and wellbeing of their team.

Presented by a facilitator with experience and expertise in school leadership, the Principal Wellbeing Workshop will help achieve positive outcomes for principals and their schools. To find out more about Principal Wellbeing, visit our website pai.edu.au or contact us on **08 8394 2100**.

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Teaching, learning and culture at Tennant Creek

Teach For Australia (TFA) is part of Teach For All – a global network of over 40 independent, locally led and funded partner organisations with a shared vision for expanded educational opportunity. Each organisation recruits and develops diverse individuals from a range of academic disciplines to commit themselves to teaching for two years.

In Australia, these 'associates' are placed in schools with a high level of need for transformation, due to disadvantage. TFA 'partner schools' are in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, ACT, Victoria and Tasmania – with a plan to expand to other states.

These schools find attracting and retaining staff a challenge. Will Lutwyche was an associate with the 2015 cohort and was placed at Tennant Creek, in the Northern Territory. Five hours from the closest major town, Tennant Creek is a unique place, rich in culture, but like many schools in the NT, it struggles to retain teaching staff.

Will was also one of the teachers featured on recent SBS documentary, *Testing Teachers*; he spoke a little on the show of the uniqueness of working with the multilingual and multicultural Indigenous student population at Tennant Creek. *School News*



Will Lutwyche with year 10 students, Ruth Katakarinja(L) and Kirsty White(R) at Tennant Creek High School as featured in *Testing Teachers* - A ScreenTime Production for SBS. Photo: Kelly Gardner

caught up with him to hear a little more about his time at Tennant Creek.

SB: There was a brief segment in episode one about teaching local Indigenous history, regarding the Stolen Generations. It was mentioned that you had redesigned the course to suit the students. Why did you do that, and how did it feel having to 'teach' this content to a class of students whose connection with these events was so real?

WL: I didn't really teach the content to them so much. It was more like we were learning together in many ways, which was great. I was interested in using culturally relevant pedagogy and when we started talking about these things in class, although it was difficult for some students, they could relate to it. Many of them had heard about Indigenous rights and everything that goes along with it, but they had never had the opportunity to talk about it, particularly with a non-Indigenous teacher.

It was great to tap into that and give them my own perspective. I got to understand their stories as well. In the end their stories really drove the history unit, along with the stories of community members. It was more relevant and integral to their lives, and their families and the town of Tennant Creek. They engaged well with it and started to reflect deeply and use critical thinking, which is not always easy to do without relevant content.

I knew that in most transformational classrooms, students and teachers wrestle with injustice and discussing topics like prejudice and expectations related to things like

race, class, sexual orientation, and learning difficulties comes up. I wanted to be a teacher that could provoke learning on the local and cultural histories of oppression that many students had experienced – and do it in age appropriate ways – to question the racism that had existed for so long within Australia and that community. I had done a lot of research into culturally responsive teachers, but I didn't know what it looked like in a classroom. It's very easy to say I want to have a culturally responsive classroom but to know what that looks like was a bit more difficult than I thought.

SB: That involved a whole range of things, didn't it? From simple things like acknowledging the traditional owners before a class to honouring the diversity within Aboriginal culture with an identity map of their language groups and moieties. (see fig 1). Can you give us a few other examples?

WL: Getting community members in to share their stories and have 'yarning circles' was effective. I got kids to do some family tree stuff; they ran a lesson, which was something they'd never done.



Fig 1. Will's 'Identity Map' of the cultural make-up of his diverse year 10 and 11 classes. Photo: Supplied

I also found some great local resources that hit the curriculum points really well.

SB: Are we talking about human resources here?

WL: Both, I found some great written resources that you had to delve deep in different books to find, and a ABC DVD called *Coniston* about the Coniston Massacre, just south of Tennant Creek.

SB: You had some big moments there with the students, didn't you? In fact, it was a ten-week-long program, with depth and complexity that *Testing Teachers* didn't really convey.

WL: Yes, a student found out through learning about *Coniston* that her great grandmother was a killed in the massacre. That kind of stuff is powerful. It gave them a point of reflection - it was a good modern resource that kids could engage with.

SB: You had to vary your responses to behaviours in class a fair bit. You talked about needing to relax a little. Which factors in the students' lives made this necessary? Are they specific to Indigenous kids do you think?

WL: I was in my second year when the show was filmed so I'd already had a year to process and understand why certain kids had issues. I did a lot of reading on trauma-informed teaching. *Calmer Classrooms* is a great resource that I used quite a bit in my classrooms.

SB: So, the clip in question was at the start of the year - you hadn't taught that class before. (For those who haven't seen *Testing Teachers* yet, Will is trying to get a troubled student out from under a table, and does so in a gentle way.)

WL: That's right, I have some deeply embedded routines in my class. At the start of the year, they just weren't used to the routines of doing vocab at the beginning of each lesson, and then quiet reading or writing, or a bit of



Will Lutwyche and year 8 student Lachlan Dunemann at Tennant Creek High School as featured in *Testing Teachers* - A ScreenTime Production for SBS. Photo: Kelly Gardner

mindfulness practice to calm them down.

SB: So, you were in the establishment phase then? Building relationships and rapport?

WL: I was building relationships with the kids, making sure that they feel successful in my class. I'm a calm teacher, kids say things to me that don't really bother me, I'm not going yell at them. Once kids realise I'm not going to get angry with them, they settle down. I like kids to feel as safe and comfortable as possible in the classroom.

SB: "Indigenous kids are, on average, six times more likely to be below national standards than their non-Indigenous peers." In your opinion, why is this so?

WL: It's a complex issue. One of the things that does a disservice, people think there's a silver bullet; broad sweeping policies for all Indigenous students that don't address needs for all. In one of my classes, I had nine different language groups; there's incredible diversity within Indigenous Australia. Indigenous diversity is so undervalued in Australia.

With my year ten class, we mapped their cultures onto a photo of the Indigenous Map of Australia. Students in only one class were affiliated with 17 different culture/language group - though most of them had numerous responsibilities and affiliations through different family lines.

SB: And you said the differences are not isolated to language, right?

WL: Absolutely, even within the Tennant Creek community, there are cultural ceremonial differences, kinship difference, totem differences. It's all relative as well. Tennant Creek is a unique place and would be different to an Indigenous community in Western Australia or South Australia. They're all so different.

Speaking on national standards for a moment, it doesn't surprise me when a program works well in Northern Queensland, but then doesn't in South Australia; people are so different. Lumping them all in is counterproductive.

SB: Would you say it's a good case for groups determining their own approaches to improving educational outcomes?

WL: Absolutely, I think that's what Tennant Creek are doing so well. ►



Sorry Day 2016 hand prints mural to commemorate the Stolen Generations. Photo: Supplied



Will Lutwyche with students against their 'sustainability graffiti wall' at Tennant Creek High School as featured in *Testing Teachers* - A ScreenTime Production for SBS. Photo: Kelly Gardner

- ◀ They are upholding best practice, and trying new things. The principal there, Maisie Floyd, is doing an incredible job at negotiating what's best for the kids, and it's locally contextualised for those students.

SB: what do you see as the most important ways to 'close the gap' in education - at a government level, for school leaders and for individuals working with Indigenous students?

WL: Those three levels all have a responsibility, but in different capacities. A collective contribution at each level speaks well to something I discovered in my history class - that's having explicit learning about reconciliation.

To have students fit themselves into that narrative, and see where they are now and where they've come from, I found to be effective. They could see 'oh wow, it's incredible that we're at school, and we're doing really well'.

This ties in with TFA's broader mission of empowering leaders in the classroom. Their hope is

to inspire students in schools where students experience disadvantage. In the case of Tennant Creek, these leaders could return after their studies and effect change in their own communities.

That's important for governments who are making the policies, but talking about race; culture and history is so important, especially in the context of Tennant Creek.

SB: Are you saying we need to get rid of the elephant in the room and explicitly teach our racial history in Australia?

WL: Possibly, but using narrative and open dialogue in a positive way. 'This is the past; however, you are the people that can change that, this is how things have been done in the past, but you can make Australia a better place.'

SB: What would you say about the role of both-ways education in Indigenous education? Did you employ any examples of it?

I had a couple Indigenous mentors - Elders - if I developed curriculum I would run it by them

first. They also introduced me to contacts in the community, people came to speak to the class. Kids in Tennant Creek live in two worlds, they have a rich cultural life and then their life in our education system. School is where they intersect.

SB: If you controlled government funding, what would those kids get?

WL: Well, they'd get great facilities, access to VET programs, but really, in my view, it's not just about funding - you've just got to have the right people. In these contexts, Indigenous educators should be the aim. You want community members studying and coming back to community to teach. It's about finding ways to bridge the two worlds and encourage students to return to Country after being out there working within the dominant system.

SB: Are you using what you learnt in your new posting in Sydney at Waranara Centre (which has a 30 percent Indigenous population)?

WL: I'm using my experiences,

sure, but these kids are different, city kids, they're not in the middle of the desert. I hope I can use some of the strategies, but I'm just building trust now. You need to get to know the kids really well before you can do this stuff. There needs to be mutual trust to establish your legitimacy. They can't gauge your authenticity straight off.

SB: Finally, Indigenous cultures have a lot of strengths - how can educators build on these when working with Indigenous students?

WL: That's right. I realised through teaching Indigenous histories and narratives, that there is incredible resilience and courage in these 'against the odds' stories. They're inspirational, and you see the same in the kids. You meet these students who live so far from everything, come to school most days - so strong willed. I think acknowledging past has given them strength and resilience. These qualities can be built on as a way forward for the entire country. ■

By Suzy Barry,
Industry Reporter



Getting 'app-happy' can enhance teaching

If there has been a battle to keep electronic devices and its associated tech out of the classroom, it is all but lost. Perhaps for good reason. When used judiciously and deliberately under the teacher's control, there may be less to lose and more to gain from the little hand-held distractors. 'If you can't beat them join

them' is one approach, but for the classroom, the better (though admittedly less catchy) maxim might be this: 'if you can't beat them, put them to work to enhance learning'.

While students harness technology to manage their own priorities, which are largely social, teachers can employ the same 'app-happy' mentality

to learning outcomes. How to ascertain what tech can do for you? Well, there's probably an app for that. In 2017, there could be an app for everything.

At *School News*, we scoured the offerings and have outlined a few free teacher-friendly apps below:

Kahoot

At the Kahoot website, teachers can transform a boring lesson into a game show. You enter your prepared questions and an online game is created.

Students download the Kahoot app to use as a buzzer and, hey presto, you have a game show.

Dropbox

Most teachers are probably already familiar with Dropbox, but the dedicated app also lets you create and edit Microsoft Office files on your mobile device; upload and store presentations, photos, assignments, and videos, so you can access them wherever you are and share links with students and parents.

TED

The official TED app is scintillating content at your fingertips, including oodles of fascinating TED Talks, featuring engaging lectures from industry and subject matter experts.

Great for getting discussion started.

Remind

The Remind app offers fast, efficient school messaging, easing communication between teachers, students, and their parents. From class announcements and group chats, to contacting individuals privately, the app covers all situations, and can be translated into 70 different languages.

ClassDojo

For teachers who use rewards and star charts, this app lets teachers supplement the 'rewards' with positive feedback messages.

Parents can log on and view their own child's 'behaviour profile' throughout the day and teachers can use the app to communicate with parents.

Seesaw

Want parents to see what you saw at school today? The app allows students to store a portfolio of work, and post their best samples to share with parents.

Teachers can access the app to illustrate progress to parents at reporting time. ■

By Suzy Barry,
Industry Reporter



WHAT'S HOT

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Restorative practice for strong relational culture

Why do teachers teach? It's not for the corporate perks; they want to make a difference in the lives of young people. They want to inspire their students to achieve their potential.

Professor John Hattie says teachers who have created positive teacher student relationships are more likely to have a higher impact on student achievement.

In a climate where scrutiny of teachers and their impact is at an all-time high, yet desired outcomes continues to elude us, resulting frustration seems apparent in record levels of teacher attrition. With student behaviour a frequent cause of stress, anything to ease the burden is worth exploring. If Hattie is right, and impact is largely reserved for those who have cultivated positive relationships with students, relational culture is more than a 'feel good' approach.

A relational school culture is focussed on all relationships in the school. If we accept that teaching and learning are social functions, then relationships matter. They will underpin all functional exchanges, from the transmission of information and skills in class, to the efforts made by school leaders and teachers to maintain a school culture that is safe, pleasant and promotes learning.

Disciplinary approaches, or 'behaviour management' are a source of much debate, but proponents of a relational approach to discipline say the proof is in the pudding. Restorative practice (RP) is a feature of a relational school culture, and has become a much-discussed response to behaviour concerns countrywide.

In general society, restorative practices can form a more inclusive approach to justice - and in a school setting; to behaviour management. Examples of restorative justice in the adult world include 'circle sentencing' or community sentencing, which have been used with reported success in Indigenous



Ilona Sliwa, Adam Voigt and Cheryl Hair.

communities. Elders and community members manage a process, whereby those affected by the transgression describe the impact of the action, and suggestions are circulated about how it can be righted, or their wellbeing 'restored'.

RP in a school setting follows a similar format. The method involves a lot of talking, in circles, in restorative meetings after an event, and during 'meta-classes', to build empathy and skills in affective expression.

RP is a sharp turn away from traditional discipline, characterised by external judgement of a child's behaviour and deeds, followed by an arbitrary list of punitive responses. RP highlights *how actions have affected other community members and how equilibrium may be restored*. Loosely: 'What has happened?'; 'Who has it affected?'; 'How can I make it right?'.

The approach builds connection, while encouraging children to take responsibility for their actions, and

work towards reparations; a far cry from the passive role a child plays as punishments are doled out - often in a manner that feels arbitrary to many recipients of discipline.

In the case of a bullying incident, teachers support the 'victim' to share how the offender's behaviour has impacted their learning and sense of wellbeing. The 'offender' is then supported to workshop a resolution. The onus is on the child to repair relationships. These opportunities empower both offenders and victims to practice agency in relationships, and by extension, in society.

Research shows that students play different roles in different conflicts. The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) indicated that "In fact, three-quarters of the adolescents who reported that they had bullied others were also victims of bullying," as reported in *The Conversation*, by Anne Kavanagh, Tania King and Naomi Priest.

Students will play a different role in each conflict; learning

each time, how to also take part in the solution. The learning opportunities here are manifold and schools are taking note.

Most teachers now accept that research indicates students must like you to learn from you. They don't have to see you as a friend, but they should respect and trust you. 'Firm and fair' are the buzz words, and where there's a buzz, there is usually a cause for the assenting swarm.

The Australian Society for Evidence Based Teaching published an article titled, 'What Everyone Needs to Know About High-Performance, Teacher Student Relationships', which emphasised the importance of both friendliness and "press" - that is pressure/encouragement/expectation to achieve.

An authoritarian teacher, according to the article, will exhibit "a high amount of press" but "low amounts of care", and "they view their relationships with students as an *us-vs-them* phenomenon, where it is important for them to come out on top". This interacts



Leopold's four school values underpin all school interactions. Photo: Leopold Primary School

poorly with a relational culture. The article continued that a "high performance relationship" will be high on "press" and high on "care". If impact is what we're after, and positive relationships are key to impactful teaching, RP seems an obvious step.

So, RP in theory is great, but to get an idea of RP in practice, *School News* interviewed the RP team at Leopold Primary School in Victoria. The school embarked on their RP journey three years ago and they haven't looked back. Leopold is a large school with 700 students from years prep to six.

Principal, Jan Rollinson, says it's all about relationships at Leopold: "We are investing as much we can in communication."

The school has adopted a social discipline model (see fig 1.). The teachers are now managing discipline "with" the students, they are no longer doing it "for" or "to" them. Ms Rollinson says relational

culture means withdrawing from a "punitive" (doing to) or "permissive" (doing for) style where students "didn't have to think or problem solve".

"Our conversations are richer," Ms Rollinson added, saying that when discipline was punitive, during the 'talking' part of the process, the student was distracted, worrying which punishment would be doled out.

Ms Rollinson said learning about RP "has changed the way we look at (and feel about) behaviour". "Learning is messy," Ms Rollinson added, suggesting that, while things don't always follow a neat set of policies and outcomes, students and teachers are learning all the time from each practice.

Integration into the school culture has been enhanced by integration with the school values and staff culture. Ilona Sliwa is a lead teacher, who acts as

the annual implementing team leader of student engagement and wellbeing. Ms Sliwa leads a team of nine teachers and representatives from all grade levels. This level of integration is indicative of how Leopold has embraced and engaged with relational cultural. Ms Sliwa's role "builds a collective and distributed staff capacity to implement a relational culture through a restorative approach," Ms Rollinson explained.

Ms Sliwa said, "we focus on our four school values each fortnight, which we implement through our check-in and check-out circles, prep through year six."

This integrated approach has reaped results, which were evident in a recent school feedback survey: "We've seen improvement in students' attitude to school and in student wellbeing." Ms Sliwa reports a palpable increase in student displays of empathy.

She says responses have been positive from most quarters, and student wellbeing meetings are held three times a term to monitor progress and discuss: "One great thing has been really opening up our practice."

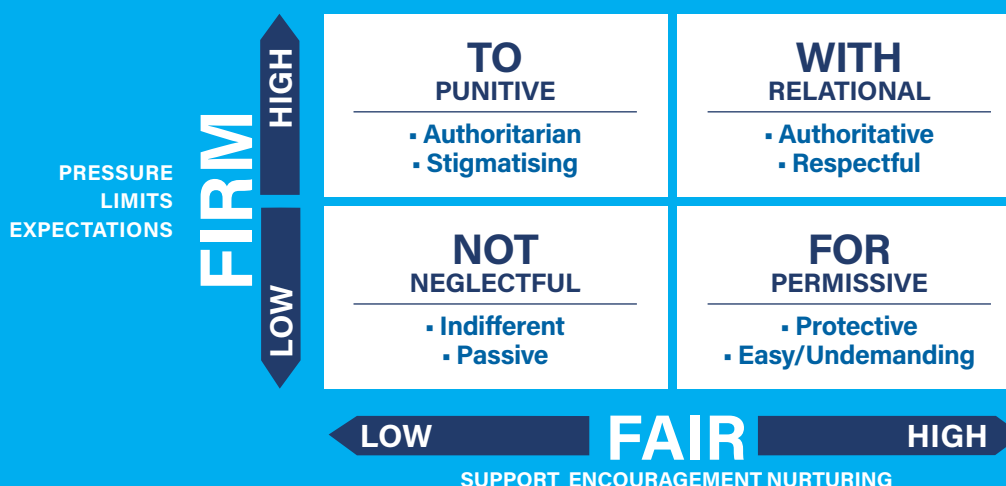
Australian educationalist (and Leopold's 'relational culture mentor'), Adam Voigt, rates this 'opening up of practice' as a major contributor to their success: "They bought in very strongly to being explicit about how they practise, and how they support teachers to make that change in practice."

Ms Sliwa says Adam Voigt's enthusiasm for SLIWA and relational school culture infected most teachers initially, but now results have done the rest and most have the relational success fever: "If you walk around the school, you hear conversations. There's dialogue everywhere. I would say, most, if not all staff are using this process well; we've come so far."

Fig. 1.

The Restorative Operating Domains

Sometimes called the Social Discipline Window



real schools

It's called Restorative Practice for a reason - so Practice!

Then you can keep your circles under 15 minutes most of the time!

“Leopold is a really large primary school, and to build a positive safe relational community of that size, you need to be really explicit about it - doing more than hoping that if you’ve got good people in the classroom good things will happen,” said Mr Voigt.

After three years of tireless and “persistent” application, Mr Voigt says the school is seeing the rewards - and the Leopold leadership team says it’s well worth it.

Ms Rollinson says they were committed to a whole school transformation but it happened in layers. They would make a change in one area and then find an “issue” somewhere else in their practice.

Mr Voigt’s view? “As they got clearer about what the restorative practices were all about, they started to see things in their school that both *were* restorative and *weren’t*. It wasn’t as though they just turned one rock over and found another problem, they were there all along. They had taken themselves to a whole new level of skill in being able to discriminate between good practice and unhelpful practice in their school.”

Mr Voigt says “picking and choosing” bits of RP will obstruct a cultural shift: “You only get genuine cultural benefits when you commit completely, and 50 percent effort does not equal 50 percent result.”

He says Leopold’s “genuine and very manifest commitment” has transformed the culture of this school to a ‘relational culture’.

Nuts and bolts - lots of talking

“I think that we have learnt to always be ready to talk,” said assistant principal, Cheryl Hair, who is responsible for student engagement and wellbeing at Leopold. She also acts as an RP mentor and coach to students and staff.

“We’ve needed to tune students into their feelings, and they’re learning to talk about the behaviours, and how things feel, body and mind.

“We’re investing as much we can into (using and teaching the use of) affective statements to create better relationships with our children so they can understand what we expect.”

Natasha Rae is Leopold’s wellbeing officer - counselling and culture building. She said, “kids can’t learn when things are not ‘emotionally right’ for them. If neural pathways are blocked, due to stress from home, or when kids come to school without developing ‘a social language’, it’s about creating an environment that promotes building optimism”.

She says, occasionally, parents can be more of a challenge than students, but explicit practices can help demystify RP for parents

who are used to (and employ) traditional punitive approaches to discipline: “Opening up your practice is important, to your fellow colleagues, and to students and parents, and explicitly explaining to them why you are doing things helps.”

She says it’s also about explicitly teaching values and social skills like empathy: “Schools need to be ‘hand-in-hand’ with the students. It involves a high level of support, and really working with students.”

She says a punitive approach won’t ultimately improve outcomes for a troubled student, and can represent “a deadend”, whereas, “I’m going to walk with you” can support a student to succeed.

The inherent democracy of a circle

In practical terms, the process is underpinned by a culture of dialogue, and circle time as a way of life. These circles can vary in purpose and location, but never format.

Ms Rollinson says circles can happen ‘any which way’: “Sit down, stand up, hanging from trees; the only rule is to have everyone, including the teacher, on the same level. All voices have equal value. Quickest to manage are the stand-up circles, especially for a ‘learning circle’ - short, sharp and shiny”.

Purpose-wise, they can be as

a “check-in” at the start of the day, or a “check-out” at the end. Ms Rollinson says these serve to catch any issues incoming or outgoing, ensuring teachers are aware that a student needs support.

Circles can serve to prepare students for change, while ‘response circles’ will occur when an issue has arisen and needs to be discussed. ‘Learning circles’ can find out what the children know or let students know what is expected of them.

The process is ongoing and the learning opportunities infinite. Far from being the hard road, Leopold’s leadership team report an ease in behaviour, a reduction in repeat offending and a happier school. “It’s just as quick as well. It takes three minutes to sort out most issues, and the time we do invest is more powerful,” Ms Rollinson said. “We also feel better doing it.”

According to Adam Voigt, RP is the way of the future. He says the RP methodology better aligns with the way our brains are formed, how we process information, and the way we inhabit a social system. He echoed the words of educationalists and futurists with: “What do our kids need to be employable? They need to be creative collaborative problems solvers; that’s what this teaches them.” ■

By Suzy Barry,
Industry Reporter

New to the bookshelf

The Perfect Thing



By Sally Morgan

Lily's grandpa can solve any problem. He always knows the perfect thing.

Grandpa suggests a walk in the park, but Lily has other ideas - and lots of weird and wonderful objections.

But no problem is too great for grandpa - he has weird and wonderful solutions. Grandpa always knows the perfect thing!

For readers 4 to 6
Scholastic

Kid Normal



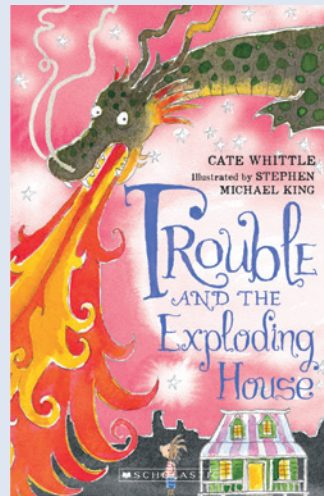
By Greg James & Chris Smith

When Murph Cooper rocks up to his new school late in the term, he feels out of his depth, not because he can't find the loo, but because his mum has enrolled him at a school for superheroes by mistake.

But just because you don't have superpowers, it doesn't mean you can't save the day.

For readers 8 to 12
Bloomsbury

Trouble and the Exploding House



By Cate Whittle

When a man from the government struggles up the mountain where Georgia lives with her family and Trouble the dragon, it means trouble, and not with a capital T. Even though they didn't ask for their house to be stolen and plonked down in a Wildlife Park, Georgia and her family have settled in and want to stay. So when Georgia finds out the man wants to blow up their house she knows she has to stop him!

For readers 7 to 10
Omnibus
Scholastic

Feathers



By Phil Cummings & Phil Lesnie

At first, this book seems to be about the predictable process of birds migrating to safer, warmer places when winter portends, and with it, harsher times. It's not really about birds though.

The birds migrate dropping their feathers as they go, into the lives of people whose winters have indeed closed in on them.

Yet they lack the means to fly to safer and warmer climes. We end the story with Mia, who has been lucky enough to be born somewhere warm and safe, and the bird joins her there, leaving behind those people the bird passed, locked in circumstances they did nothing to cause.

A boy in the rubble of an earthquake; a family wading through flood waters, and a long line of refugees, who may wish they could flap their arms and fly to safety like the migrating birds.

Interesting discussions will follow each reading, and kids with their outlook yet unmarred, may wonder why we don't do more to help others.

For readers 7/8 and up
Scholastic

The Great White Man-Eating Shark



By Margaret Mahy

A Margaret Mahy classic retold in full colour for early readers. Norvin is a very good actor, but rather plain.

In fact, he looks very like a shark, and more than anything, he loves to shoot through the water like a silver arrow.

But his cunning plan to clear the water at caramel cove badly misfires - An utterly charming story now accessible to children making the transition to longer texts.

For readers 5 to 7
Hachette

The Explorer

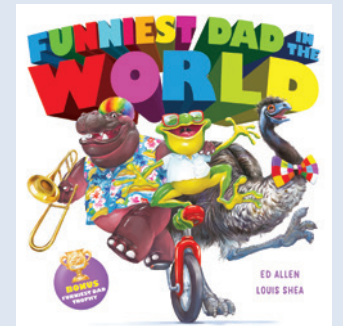


By Katherine Rundell

Fred watches from the plane as the Amazon jungle pass below him. His dream of becoming an explorer, of making history and of reading his name amongst the lists of great discoveries seems far way. As the plane crashes into the canopy, Fred is suddenly left without a choice; his adventures must begin. He and the three other children may be alive, but the jungle is a vast, untamed place. With no hope of rescue, the chance of getting home feels impossibly small. Except, it seems, someone has been there before them.

For readers 9 and up
Bloomsbury

Funniest Dad in the World



By Ed Allen and Louis Shea

The animals are trying to work out who has the funniest dad. Is it the dad who can juggle pizzas? Or the dad who burps the alphabet? Or the dad who tells jokes while playing the trombone? Find out whose dad is so funny, he is out of this world!

For readers 5 to 8
Scholastic

'Learning by doing' fuels science engagement

In a document titled, *Empowering science teaching*, the then assistant minister for science, Karen Andrews said this of STEM related subjects: "Teachers of these subjects are on the frontline in preparing our young people for the careers of the future, arming them with the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to become tomorrow's scientists, researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs." She says that science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines have never been more important to Australia's future.

How does science education look in 2017?

With inquiry-based learning a buzz term (with good justification, considering futurists predict workers of tomorrow will need to be of the problem-solving variety), digital resources are more frequently the focus of science lessons.

The rise in university partnerships has delivered dial-an-expert style lesson content to many schools lucky (or perhaps prudent) enough to have brokered one



of these arrangements. This may well be the way of the future, and an excellent way to bring expert knowledge, not to mention enthusiasm, to a student population with reported dwindling interest in science.

Perhaps one day, virtual reality will be an option, but for your average school science

laboratory, that's a long way off. There's only so much a student can learn by watching, listening, and reading. The best science learning is done by doing, and to do this, equipment is needed.

Lab coats, test tubes, Bunsen burners; these are the symbols of legitimacy I remember when I transitioned from my primary

school science class, littered with stencil paper, leaves and often mind-numbing work sheets. High school science opened me up to the proper setting for a budding scientist. Donning the uniform of lab coat and protective glasses signalled an entrée into scientific inquiry that felt much more official. We had arrived. We were mature enough to perform risky procedures. We had been assigned test tubes, coats, and safety glasses – we were scientists.

After a lesson in a proper science laboratory, I felt like science was mine; it was all of ours, and we could participate. There are commentators from within science who want that for primary aged students, especially against the backdrop of diminishing STEM engagement, and corroding science and maths confidence.

An article published on *The Conversation*, titled, 'Primary school science education – is there a winning formula?' emphasised the importance of engendering a love of science at a primary level.



The article quotes Brian Schmidt, Nobel Prize winner, Distinguished Professor, Australian National University, saying, "research indicates that if you do a bad job teaching kids science and maths in primary school it's extraordinarily hard to get them back on track, no matter what you do in secondary school, and in university for that matter."

Also quoted was Vaile Dawson, Professor, Science & Mathematics Education Centre, Curtin University: "Many of the big issues Australian society is going to be facing in the future are around science and technology, energy, resources and climate change. All of these require students to engage with science."

Whether you manage a primary school looking to set up a science lab, or a high school with an



A note on hazards

Science experiments must be done safely, and safety equipment required will include protective lab coats, safety goggles and gloves.

Storage: All Australian schools are required to comply with the relevant Australian Standards for the storage of hazardous substances.

These standards include AS1940 for Flammable Liquids, AS3780 for Corrosive Substances; AS2714 for Organic Peroxide, AS/NZ4452 for Pesticide; and AS/NZ 4452-Class 6 for Toxic Substances. Regulations exist for the storage, labelling, and reporting around hazardous substances.

Regularly referring to www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au will ensure that your school remains compliant and staff members can be kept informed of safety requirements.

existing lab looking to improve your kit, finding good quality, purpose-built equipment from a supplier that knows education is paramount.

Australian providers of science equipment will have ranges well-suited to the curricular demands of Australian classes at all levels. Common lab equipment includes

glassware, such as pipettes, test tubes, beakers, and Petri dishes; and consumables such as cotton swabs, and gloves. A variety of utensils may be required, such as forceps, clamps, rings, scissors, sterilised knives, and blades. Biological sciences will require dissecting kits, and a microscope, complemented by lenses of various magnifications.

Measuring paraphernalia will also feature, such as graduated cylinders, burettes, and pH test strips. Other items that may be required in a science lab include Bunsen burners, balances, chemicals, and corrosive/flammable liquid storage cabinets. An exhaustive list of possibilities will be available from your supplier. ■

*By Suzy Barry,
Industry Reporter*



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It's robotics FIRST for these STEM students

Robotics students at Barker College in Sydney are still collecting themselves after a whirlwind of competitions, and a year of dazzling success. *School News* spoke with robotics coordinator and computer science teacher, Lael Grant, for the details.

Currently ranked 20th in the world, the Barker Redbacks took out the regional title at the New York City FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) and were awarded the Chairman's Award for their worldwide contribution to robotics. The only Australian team to compete at the inaugural Shenzhen Regional FRC Competition in China, the team took first place there. In addition to this title, the team bagged the Innovation in Control Award and the Excellence in Engineering Award. They competed in the South Pacific Regional against 43 teams; they won that too. They were awarded their second Excellence in Engineering Award.

Simple beginnings

Mr Grant says the program was student-initiated: "Mike Heimlich visited Macquarie University to start an FRC team there. He came to Barker to promote FIRST and recruited three students to the Macquarie University team in 2011." The robotics enthusiasts were hooked: "Students were asking science teachers at schools if they could start a



Barker College Redbacks team with their robotics coordinator and mentors.
Adults: Back Row from left: Lael Grant (co-ordinator), Anthony Brian (mentor), Jeser Becker (coach).
Front Row from left: Daiane Rodrigues (coach)

student robotics team at Barker."

Needless to say, they relented, and when a robotics coordinator was sought, Mr Grant had the skillset to fit: "I teach computer programming and I had been playing with Arduinos and doing hardware control so I had enough technical understanding for the job."

"And I like building things..." he conceded. The program is a co-curricular elective with 35 students currently enrolled from years nine to 12, and despite

their achievements, Mr Grant emphasised that they didn't start out as experts. They formed their Barker Redbacks team in 2013 and entered 'Duel Down Under'. Their robot was simple: "literally a drive base and a net on top."

"For those who are starting out, the Vex Robotics competition is ideal. We will be hosting it in Sydney and the robots are much simpler." Mr Grant suggests this level is a good introduction to robotics and urged people to contact him for help and advice on getting started.

Competition structure and rules

The teams are given six weeks to design a robot to 'play a game'. The robot must perform a certain task, such as shooting balls into a hoop. The period of development is strictly monitored, and once the six-week program is completed, robots are tagged and bagged, and only opened on the competition floor under supervision. No modifications are allowed between competitions.

Secrets to their 2017 success?

"Last year, we built a great robot, but it was unreliable. This year we put in place a very strong off season training program," said Mr Grant. While no extra preparatory work is allowed on the competing robot prior to the build phase, only practice makes perfect.

The Redbacks practised their skills in the off-season to hone their process, and implemented a higher level of prototyping. Their improved process means students now make six or seven prototypes in the first two weeks, then select two, test those vigorously, and settle on the robot body early.



They also gave the programming sub-team more time: "The competition involves 15 seconds of autonomous operation; these routines must be programmed. Handing over to the programming team early – before week four – made a significant impact."

The students have mentors but the ideas must be theirs: "Each sub-team has a mentor, but the students are ultimately responsible for each decision. The role of the mentor is to offer coaching when it is apparent that they need more understanding than they have."

The team just returned from China, where they were invited to train Chinese teams after gaining notoriety in their "rookie competition year" as well as the 2017 season. The competition circuit is a little punishing, and Mr Grant tells of packing up while



running backwards and forwards to receive awards, rushing off to get the ferry to the airport, then off to compete again at the Sydney regional within 24 hours – where they scored the highest qualifying ranking points achieved to that point.

He says students make "incredible

sacrifices" to participate: "The schedule is hectic from January to late May, with five hours a day on robotics. They plan ahead with their parents to ensure holidays don't clash with the robotics season; they are liaising with teachers to manage assessment schedules."

So how much of Lael Grant's time does this level of achievement commandeer? That question elicited a hearty laugh and two words: "a lot." He says the six-week build period starts early January, (cutting short school holidays), then it's evenings, weekends, and late nights.

"It's a lot, but it's incredibly rewarding to witness the growth in students - it builds their capacity, understanding, and depth of technical knowledge." He says it requires high levels of motivation, and students learn to be collaborative operators: "We spend a lot of time encouraging students to communicate effectively in high pressure situations." ■

*By Suzy Barry,
Industry Reporter*

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An essential tool for schools

In the earlier years of the desktop computer age, there were confident predictions that the average office would soon be paperless. Those predictions have proved to be far from the mark, with many offices and schools handling more paper than ever.

Those early predictions almost certainly did not consider the rapid transformation of the photocopier. Earlier versions were extremely limited in functionality and tended to jam frequently. Printing had to be done separately.

However, even these far simpler machines were still a modern scientific miracle. Few in a contemporary office will recall what situations and tasks were endured, before photocopiers liberated us. Imagine having to resort to making carbon copies of important documents?

Or worse, let's cast the historical net even further back and imagine the tedium of making copies of things by hand.

In essence, a copier works because of one basic physical principle: opposite charges attract. Static electricity is the copier's secret.

Inside a copier there is a special drum. The drum acts a lot like a balloon; it can be charged with a form of static electricity.

Inside the copier there is also a very fine black powder known as toner. The drum, charged with static electricity, can attract the toner particles. There are three things about the drum and the toner that let a copier perform its magic:

- The drum can be selectively charged, so that only parts of it attract toner. In a copier, you make an 'image', in static electricity, on the surface of the drum. Where the original sheet of paper is black, you create static electricity on the drum. Where it is white, you do not. The idea is for the white areas of the original sheet of paper not to attract toner. This selectivity is accomplished using light, which is why it's called a photocopier.
- Somehow the toner has to get onto the drum, and then onto a sheet of paper. The drum selectively attracts toner. Then the sheet of paper gets charged with static electricity and it pulls the toner off the drum.
- The toner is heat sensitive, so the loose toner particles are attached, or fused, to the paper with heat, as soon as they come off the drum. The drum, or belt, is made out of photoconductive material.

This is only a small part of the technology involved.

The complexity of the lighting and lenses involved could seem baffling to all but advanced experts in their fields.

This very short introduction might just be enough to demonstrate that even the earliest versions involved highly sophisticated science, delivering us from the drudgery of the carbon paper age.

The age of the multi-function-device

Photocopiers have come a long



way since those early models.

Far from a simple tool for making copies of worksheets and school documents, today's photocopiers have merged with printers, allowing users to copy, print, scan and fax documents.

The latest multifunctional photocopier models (MFDs) can also access the internet, be a portal for using software applications, and wirelessly interact with smart phones, laptops and tablets.

There are many benefits to using a multifunctional photocopier in place of a range of standalone devices. In particular, the cost savings can be quite significant.

The technology involved in MFDs has evolved to the point where the cost per page is much lower than that of stand-alone desktop printers. MFDs also offer functions of greater flexibility – whether that be print, via colour control tools; distribution, via scanning to email/network/internet/USB or hard drive; or document output finishing, via punching, stapling, folding and booklet making.

As well as being cheaper to run overall, MFDs also utilise reporting technology that

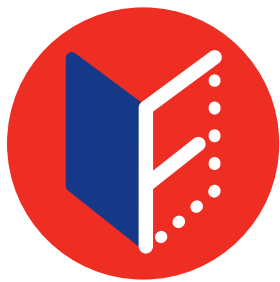
means schools can track costs and monitor departmental or individual usage.

With current technology, schools can set limits for certain staff or students, and can set rules that recommend another print device be used. These print rules are chosen by the school, based on factors around cost-effectiveness, usage trends and security.

As MFDs and printers are an integral part of a school's document workflow and process, security becomes a serious concern. Securely managing department and user data is critical for the integrity of schools. The suite of integrated security features incorporated into MFDs are designed to help protect information and document assets.

A recent trend emerging is card or pin access for MFDs, which can be extended to other 'purchases' around the school. Parents can view all transactions and add value online if the school is on-charging, which allows flexibility in controlling spend, across multiple areas of a student's typical school day. ■





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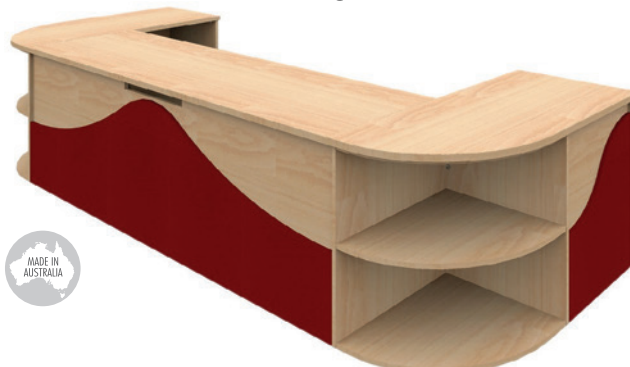
Displays books face out, providing a fresh change to boring spines.

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- 3 x 300mm deep bins per unit (tallest is 900mm from the ground)
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Industry partnership 'equipping students for life'

Portside Christian College is well on its way to becoming a digital College, but it wasn't always this way. A new principal was appointed in 2015, and in 2016, Paul Connelly was employed as Head of eLearning and charged with an explicit brief: develop a strategic vision for Portside as a digital College and implement it.

Mr Connelly says there had been an ad-hoc approach to technology in the College, but change was nigh. With funding from the Digital Education Revolution, previous management had rolled out a years seven to 12 one to one laptop scheme, which was working, but had some gaping holes, the most obvious of which was that primary students had little access to technology.

Step one was to evaluate the wide scope of digital technologies and identify appropriate devices for each age group – the result was a “four-device mix”. Years one to three have iPads, years four to six have Chromebooks, years seven to nine have Windows laptops, and years ten to 12 have a BYOD option. This way students have ample opportunity to try different operating systems and platforms. “We can't predict what will be the predominate operating system or platform in the future, so we want students to be nimble with digital technology,” Mr Connelly noted.

In fact, nimbleness is at the core of their vision for a digital Portside, which reads:



Portside students and teachers confidently, safely, and nimbly use digital technology to deepen their understanding of the world and themselves.

Mr Connelly then turned his attention to Portside printing procedure, characterised by clunky systems, “and a myriad of devices scattered across the College”. An industry partnership facilitated the streamlined system Portside printers now enjoy. “We established a relationship with Canon, who have been amazing, particularly in the way they have wanted to partner with us,” Mr Connelly said. “It's not often that you want to use the word ‘partner’ with a supplier, but Andrew Maxwell from Canon sought to understand us as a College, and design a solution that was going to fit us - and that's exactly what he did.”

Mr Connelly says Mr Maxwell did this by centralising their printing

system, by deploying a system called ‘follow me’ printing where staff and students can initiate a print job from any device. The print job is then sent to a central print server, which communicates with every printer around the College. The individual then accesses any machine that is convenient, swipes their card, and selects their own job to print.

Mr Connelly says this has delivered two main benefits; accountability and connectivity to the Cloud. The reduction in “unregulated” printing has been considerable. When students log on to computers and impatiently press print 20 times, saying ‘it's not printing!’, the Canon system “provides a bit of capture”. The user then swipes their card, sees 20 jobs lined up, realises, and deletes 19 of them.

Their next digital leap is one of connectivity and collaboration, and their centralised printing set up is ideal. “We have now become a ‘G Suite for Education’ College,” Mr Connelly explained. G Suite is an integrated communication and collaboration solution, which involves uploading their operations to the Google Cloud.

“Through Canon's tech, we can hook into Cloud print, so users shoot print jobs through to our printing server via Google print.” This is particularly useful for iPads that don't have regular printing drivers.

Portside needed industry expertise to achieve their digital vision and printing and scanning

workflow was smartly transported to the 21st century. Next on the team's agenda is the “critical area” of the College's 40-year student record backlog. Canon and Mr Connelly are putting their heads together on a digital storage solution that promises to be secure and simple.

Mr Connelly acknowledged that any major change has challenges, but the College community has been largely positive. The college's mission statement is ‘equipping students for life’, and Mr Connelly says everyone appreciates that working with digital tech platforms is doing just that, and they have enjoyed the extra engagement in their children's learning through Google Classroom. “Parents have legitimate concerns about cyber safety,” Mr Connelly noted, but says they understand that deploying tech is a way to teach students to manage online challenges.

How are the teachers coping? He says there's a strong cohort of really excited teachers to champion the new technology, and their successes are galvanising the more nervous teachers. The next stage is to support staff as they undergo the pedagogical shift into digital Colleaging, with a plan to arrange personal devices for teachers.

Portside is powering ahead with participation in the NAPLAN Online trials: “It's important for us that our parents see we are on the front foot with these things.” With their motto at the fore, and a bit of help from their friends, they are well on their way to ‘equipping students for life’. ■

By Suzy Barry,
Industry Reporter

Photos courtesy of
Portside Christian College

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Student seating for the modern learning environment

Any discussion about seating for the 21st century classroom must acknowledge that appropriate and inclusive 'seating' options might include anything but sitting. Research continues to support the notion that some children just concentrate better when their bodies are engaged in something else - this could be foot tapping, fidgeting, or... the dreaded fidget spinner.

Evidence for active learning

Author and educator, Eric Jensen, found that stimulating the vestibular and cerebellar system through movement activities (spinning, jogging, rolling) can result in "significant gains in attention and reading." His research was published in his book, *Teaching with the brain in mind*. A revised edition was released in 2005, and for those interested, it's a fascinating read.

Eva Shoval published an article on the subject in *Instructional Science*, 2011, titled, 'Using Mindful Movement in Cooperative Learning while Learning about Angles'. She found:

"The more the learners used learning activities with movement, the higher their academic achievements." So how can we keep kids active and still teach the material?

Good for the mind. What about the body?

Health advocates will tell us that



Prince Alfred College - Nesting mobile tables. Photo: Resource Furniture

simply standing instead of sitting can improve fitness. As an example, www.startstanding.org tells us (via their online calculator) that a 15-year-old girl, who is 168cm tall and weighs 63kg will burn 75 calories per hour sitting, and 125 per hour standing. In the face of statistics that indicate children are consuming an excess of calories from sugar, this could be a valuable tweak.

Another recent trend is the 'active' or 'dynamic' seat. Instead of the old-world selling point of 'stability', the salient feature of this chair is 'instability'. These seats have a weighted self-balancing curved (convex) base, which means they move when you sit on them, forcing you to engage your core abdominal muscles to stabilise yourself. While this concept is not new, (brightly coloured 'fitness' or 'gym' balls have been bouncing around offices for decades) the distraction potential of a bright bouncing ball has kept them out of most classrooms. Specific data for wobble seats

was not apparent, however, the calorie burn for sitting on a fitness ball is reported to be six percent higher than sitting on a stable chair. Healthy for bodies and minds - but how does it interact with the objectives of a 21st century learning environment?

A brief overview of the key characteristics of the 21st century classroom:

Versatility: The facility to *easily and quickly* reformat spaces for collaborative work, classic presentation phases, as well as quiet reflection spaces. Teachers must be able to reformat the space with ease and speed to optimise the 21st century learning space.

Comfort: Students work better when they feel comfortable, and schools are moving to create more relaxed spaces.

Tech-enabled: The ability to

integrate technology seamlessly into the space in ways that support whole class attentive phases, as well as independent or small group enquiry.

The first two points have obvious implications for seating in the classroom, but also in multi-purpose halls, the library, and shared lab or workshop spaces around the school. As schools vary learning experiences, spaces can be repurposed on a daily, or even intra-daily basis, to create, 'uncreate' and recreate varied environments to optimise engagement in a demographic with a comparably short attention span.

Keeping their attention

This issue features an interview with psychologist, Dr Lea Waters, author of *The Strength Switch* (see our *Special Report* on page 16 for the full interview). In her book, she covers the development of attention span through childhood. At age three, they have around three to five minutes up their sleeves - that's it; between age six and 12, we can expect ten minutes of focussed attention. A modest increase culminates in a spurt to 25 to 35 minutes at age 15, and then we plateau.

Apparently, this is evolutionarily. She says becoming absorbed in something for too long on the savannah may not result in a long and procreative life. She suggests we get real about attention spans, and varying activities is a great way to work with students' real attention capacity, but to do this, we need versatility. ▶



Encounter Lutheran College - Collaborative nesting mobile tables. Photo: Resource Furniture



Good Shephard Lutheran School - Collaborative mobile tables. Photo: Resource Furniture



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Smart spaces for study places

Employers today are desperate for employees with finely honed soft skills. Space design plays a big role in helping students develop these skills.

The soundproof Longo Pod provides a private space in which students can meet to collaborate, discuss and make important decisions together. It fosters team work and other valuable skills such as time-management, problem-solving and leadership.

It's a smart space for any study place.



◀ Versatile furniture with integrated seating

This is where furniture designed with versatility in mind is paramount. While many offices provide 'collaboration nests', 'creativity pods', and even sleeping pods in the more 'hip' industries, schools are lagging. However, progressive school leaders are sprinting to catch up.

A furniture supplier with a dedicated focus on education will have ideas aplenty, but the key point is this: a chair is no longer *just a chair*. There will be modular and interconnecting solutions for a multi-faceted learning environment, including reading pods, wired collaboration stations, chairs that spin with shifting in-built tables, standing stools where

students don't sit at all - they perch - and the 'dynamic' seats mentioned earlier.

Seating can come with auxiliary elements, such as built-in barriers to improve focus, by blocking out visual (and aural to an extent) distractions.

Soft furnishings for reading and reflection

Seating options for the modern classroom can also include beanbags or foam-filled sacks, which enhance comfort during quiet reflection, but also offer valuable deep sensory pressure for students with special needs. Anyway, how many people sit bolt upright on a hard-backed chair to read a book at home?

Despite extensive research into environmental design indicating

a positive correlation between comfort and productivity, hard-backed chairs persist in many traditional classrooms.

Researching for this article was fascinating. There was plenty around on increasing productivity in the workplace - there were specific measures like 'dynamic' seats for enhanced fitness and blood flow. There were also articles about creating, 'home sweet home' and comfort in the workplace' and plenty on the link between workplace comfort and productivity.

However, despite more than 90 years passing after John Dewey wrote, "nature has not adapted the young animal to the narrow desk, the crowded curriculum, the silent absorption of complicated facts", nobody seemed that interested in kids' comfort...until now.

Lucky for today's students, furniture manufacturers are, and more school leaders and teachers are embracing 'the comfort method' as they see the improvements it can achieve. Comfort means different things to different people. For your child on the spectrum, it could be the ability to disappear inside a pod, or legal stimming on a wiggly chair.

Brainstorming pods, soft foam-filled sacks for quiet reading, and desks that can glide in and out of formation with swan-like fluidity. The comfort, versatility and functionality of school seating all contribute to the educator's ultimate objective: student learning. ■

By Suzy Barry,
Industry Reporter



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Purpose-built furniture for modern learning

Scott Reed, director of veteran school furniture provider Resource Furniture said, “our extensive product range includes seating, soft seating/ breakout furniture, tables and desks, display, storage and specifically designed STEM furniture are designed to support the objectives of the modern learning space”.

“The ‘Talent Table’ was developed in response to a gap in the market for a mobile, height-adjustable table that flips for reconfiguration and nests away for storage.

Product design can facilitate a better learning experience through flexibility and simplicity: “The gas-lift adjustment is quick and easy to operate, and much safer than electric versions as no electrical cables are required,” Mr Reed noted.

He says educators are after furniture that creates a distinct learning space: “The Longo Pod has a collaborative focus which, due to the soundproofing properties, allows a private space to be acoustically secluded for small group work.”

Mr Reed says Resource was prompted to “explore new approaches to space design” by the divide between “what is known about the learning experience and the spaces that are built to support them”. ●



Deep sensory input for calm and connected learners

With modern learning spaces, non-traditional seating is easy to integrate. Manager Shane Tricarico says KloudSacs are flexible, portable, and best of all comfortable.

“Unlike regular beanbags, the shredded foam filling contained within the inner bag of a KloudSac provides stability, comfort and sensory input that helps children to relax. Particularly beneficial to those with autism, or children with challenging behaviours, a KloudSac in a 21st century classroom can help calm a student, regulate their emotions, and engage them in curricular activities.”

Suitable for indoors or outdoors, they are easily incorporated into different learning areas and come

in various sizes, for a single student, or for multiple students working together. With a life expectancy of seven years and interchangeable covers, Mr Tricarico says schools can

purchase multiple KloudSacs to suit all settings and update covers as needed. All covers are machine washable, and the bags are silent, without the constant crunching of

beans as fidgety children shift their weight. Their versatility, comfort and aesthetic appeal mean teachers can incorporate KloudSacs into the classroom and make learning more fun! ●



Enhancing school identity with school uniforms

School uniforms should be abolished – for or against?

While this may be a classic high school debating topic, the majority of Australian schools remain firm that uniforms are preferred and here to stay.

School uniforms are valued in the dominant school culture as a way to equalise the appearance of economic disparity and shift students' focus (especially teens) off physical appearance and fashion, and onto learning. School uniforms are said to create a sense of belonging and school pride. They also act as an identifying tool for community members observing questionable behaviour before and after school.

These are accepted as valid points, yet, the landscape of our student body is changing, in more ways than one. Students are reaching puberty earlier, and according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 25 percent of children are obese.

In other news, patience is wearing thin in the public domain for gender segregated uniforms. As indicated in journal article, 'Ritualized girling: school uniforms and the compulsory performance of gender' published in *Journal of Gender Studies*, "skirts and dresses restrict movement in real ways; wearers must negotiate how they sit, how they play, and how quickly they move. Skirt-wearing, consciously and unconsciously, imposes considerations of modesty and immodesty, in ways that trousers do not".

While a large number of schools have updated their policy to a gender-neutral uniform, some schools need more of a push and parents, female role models, advocates and academics have banded together to deliver it. Girls Uniform Agenda was formed following Simone Cariss's petition to have a Victorian school allow her daughter Asha to wear pants to school.

Australians acknowledge the benefits of a school uniform it seems, but they want it to be non-discriminatory, suitable for different body shapes, climate-



suitable and durable. For some insight into why schools value their uniforms, and how they are responding to shifting expectations, we caught up with Hope Jameson of school uniform supplier, LW Reid.

Industry view

Ms Jameson says that while schools have responded to families' desire for flexibility, comfort, and often gender neutrality, the school uniform is here to stay. She said, "wearing a uniform is a badge of pride. Wearing your school uniform is important to a student; it says, 'we're all in this together' – this 'membership' builds self-confidence". She says uniforms reinforce that sense of connection to community that children crave and defines a school's identity.

Uniforms are changing: "School uniforms are becoming less formal overall," Ms Jameson said, and "for schools still looking to maintain a specific girls' uniform we have given a more casual approach

to the traditional school dress by making a 'Polo' school dress – combining the casual feel and bright colours of a polo with a dress-friendly option – in a 'put on and go' (no ironing needed) cotton back fabric."

"Skorts are gaining popularity for girls who prefer skirts, but want a range of movement unrestricted by modesty concerns when they want to do a cartwheel at school!"

Ms Jameson says that with changing body profiles, shorts, skirts, and pants with a flexible waist offer a good solution: "Designed with the growing child in mind, an adjustable waist gives students more length options, and also addresses expanding waistlines." What else has changed? As with most markets, consumers have become more price and competitor savvy: "More parents shop at retail chains, which detracts from the school's uniform shop fundraising, but parents will return to the uniform shop, if value for money is offered." ►



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- She says lowering prices on everyday products and making sure items are durable will bring them back to the convenience of the uniform shop.

While comfort is king, durability is also important.

"Fabric hybrids are gaining popularity. A higher cotton blend, (60 percent cotton/40 percent polyester), will balance comfort and performance. The high cotton breathes easy against the skin whilst the polyester provides excellent colour fastness and helps the garment maintain its shape through repeated washing and hard play," Ms Jameson explained.

She says microfibre is "just made of stronger stuff": "Microfibre is our most popular fabric due to the durability, high UPF rating



and ability to hold its colour even when out in the sun." For sportswear, she said, "the cotton/polyester blend fabrics are moisture management materials, which means they draw sweat away from the body, keeping the wearer cool and comfortable".

Sportswear design demands also shift: "Over the last year we have revised some of our popular everyday styles with a contemporary sports cut - providing lo-rise and active side splits for added mobility. For sports day/carnivals, schools want team branding -screenprinted or embroidered."

Versatility reduces cost to families: "With school and sports day in mind we designed a reversible microfibre bucket hat - one colour in a neutral school colour, and the reverse in the school house colours. One hat for all purposes."

School branding can be added to almost anything, from school bags, to sun hats.

Ms Jameson said, "library and book bags have become more popular, and are a great way for schools to send homework books and school notes home".

Many uniform shops stock bags in all shapes and sizes, with

features such as extra pockets and compartments, or additional shoulder strap support.

"Great for those little ones still adjusting to not having mum carry everything," Ms Jameson commented.

Uniform suppliers will offer solutions that suit school budgets, and should have ways to manage the long lead time required to produce branded items, and the cash flow implications of ordering well ahead of student purchase: "School orders change year on year, with students, and with seasons. Initiatives such as LW Reid's extended credit allow schools to order uniforms with no payment for seven months." ■

*By Suzy Barry, Industry Reporter
Photos Supplied By: LW Reid*



Science, outdoor adventure plus civics and history aplenty? Victoria has it.

While Canberra has long been a national school trip destination, much of the political, historical and science-based educational opportunities have 'sister' experiences in other states. With schools beginning to mix it up a bit and head interstate more often, we shine the spotlight on Victoria.

For curriculum aligned attractions, students will benefit from tailored programs operated by numerous Victoria government bodies; including the Parliament of Victoria, the Australian Electoral Commission, Victoria Law Reform Commission and the Sentencing Advisory Council. For museums and other historical educational venues, try the Immigration Museum, Museum Victoria, National Trust of Australia, Old Melbourne Gaol, Old Treasury Building or the Victoria Police Museum.

The Victorian Parliament House offers role plays to excite/create aspiring politicians in your ranks, and senior students have the opportunity to 'pass a law' through a scripted roleplay.

For your senior legal studies students, a tour of Victoria's courts, tribunals and legal institutions is a great way to get students interested in the legal system. Information on Victoria Law Foundation website indicates that tours (and school visits) are available throughout the year, but special tours and events are also offered during Law Week which takes place in May each year. Courts that can be visited are the Supreme Court of Victoria, County Court of Victoria, and Magistrates' Court of Victoria.

Museums offer educational programs tailored to the Australian Curriculum. The Victoria Police museum should keep your little thrill seekers engaged with programs like CSI: Forensic Science Workshop or Law and Order: Past and Present. Or perhaps, your students would like to reopen a cold case and see if there are any more charges

to pin on our most infamous bushranger in the program titled: Ned Kelly Case Files.

For architecture, town planning and sociology related curriculum objectives, the Old Treasury Building is a unique resource for students and teachers. According to their student program, the "magnificent gold rush building reflects the growth of 'Marvellous Melbourne' and changing life in the city. From the basement vaults where gold was stored in the 1860s, to the elegant Executive Council Chamber, still used regularly by the Governor of Victoria, students experience one of Australia's most beautiful and historic buildings". Learning activities cover the history of gold in Australia, the growth of democracy, early Melbourne, and life in the city and urban environment.

Science and nature

Natural wonders abound in Victoria and while the obvious Victorian destinations include the Great Ocean Road, the snowfields or a visit to the penguins on Phillip Island, there are wildlife parks and national parks aplenty to tick off learning outcomes from sport through most facets of science, geography, and sustainable practice.

National Parks

Parks Victoria offers a range of tours, guided activities, and self-guided excursions that support students of all ages learning in parks. Parks Victoria coordinates experiences that cover everything from the environmental science to geography and history, with special experiences that provoke critical thinking into issues such as past, present, and future food security and topographical shifts over time.

Cross-curricular priorities are well served through programs such as 'Geography; Victorian Aboriginal Languages', where students explore the use of language and its links to culture, kinship and the environment. ►



Melbourne Aquarium Photo: Discovery Group



Phar Lap as he now appears at the Melbourne Museum.

Photo: Discovery Group



Students at Melbourne Metro YHA. Photo: YHA



Students at Melbourne Metro YHA Photo: YHA

◀ With Parks Victoria rangers, they examine the different ways a traditional culture shares information through stories, dance, art, and sign language, and how stories are interwoven with, and inseparable from, the landscape.

A night to remember

For something truly special, Scienceworks in the inner Melbourne suburb of Spotswood offers sleepovers at their education facility for groups of between 20 and 65 primary-aged students. "We offer a Planetarium show and structured activities on the night of your sleepover, space to roll out your sleeping

bag, supper, breakfast and overnight security," a Museums Victoria booking officer explained. As an autism-friendly museum, Scienceworks provides social scripts for students on the autism spectrum to help them prepare for their visit. A colour-coded printout of a sensory friendly map of Scienceworks (may also be useful. All available from their website.

Regional centres

Bendigo

This regional city has an abundance of history to share. To keep kids enthralled, quirks like a morning ride on a 'vintage talking tram' can be juxtaposed

against a trip into the dark past of the perilous life of a miner, 228 metres underground in the Central Deborah Gold Mine. Follow up with visits to the Old Post Office and Bendigo Town Hall. Art education on offer could include a visit to Bendigo Pottery – boasting 150 consecutive years of production; or a tour of cultural treasures like the Ulumbarra Theatre, Bendigo Art Gallery.

Cycling and Walking Trails

An interconnected network of walking paths and bike tracks weave through the bush. Explore the Goldfield track and Bendigo Creek Trail. Early pioneer Andrew O'Keefe has been recognised for his part in the establishment of

railway lines in the region and has a linear trail called The O'Keefe Rail Trail named after him.

Ballarat

Touted as a "family friendly town", this famous gold rush town is 'school-group friendly' as well. Attractions like the open-air museum of Sovereign Hill, or the popular Golden Nugget Discovery Tours will take your students back to this frenzied time in Australian history.

Younger students might also get a kick out of the land of knights and princesses at the medieval Kryal Castle, or for the older ones, there are fun tours like the Ghost Tour, which introduces you to residents 'passed'.

Botanical Beauties

Both Bendigo and Ballarat boast botanical gardens of great beauty and botanical discovery. In Bendigo particularly, there's evidence of early white settlers hankering for England and replicating formally designed gardens.

For traditional school camps, Victoria offers rural and coastal locations with activities ranging from canoeing, abseiling, ropes courses and mountain biking to survival skills, such as hut and raft building, orienteering and bush cooking. With so much to explore in Victoria, a single article can't do the state justice. ■

By Suzy Barry, Industry Reporter

For further information, check out these sites:

Melbourne:
whatson.melbourne.vic.gov.au

General attractions:
visitvictoria.com

Museums:
museumvictoria.com.au

National Parks:
parkweb.vic.gov.au
(they have a teacher portal)



Photo: Space Hotel



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Get your 'Up' on at UpUnlimited climbing venues

"UpUnlimited offers 60+ 'Clip N Climb' challenges across two venues in Richmond and Moorabbin. Plus, we have the only indoor caving obstacle course with 85m+ of tunnels," said co-owner, Emma Moore, who has observed an increasing emphasis in building resilience through both individual challenges and team-building.

"Unlimited challenging fun for everyone is our motto and when students tackle activities at their own comfort level, leaps in personal confidence and satisfaction occur. Our venues welcome everyone and cater for special needs."

Safety first governs operations
- UpUnlimited staff have more

than four years' experience 'under their harnesses' and comprise teachers and outdoor education practitioners: "As the original Clip N Climb in Victoria, we have the most experienced staff," Ms Moore explained.

"We have set ratios and compulsory pre-climb 15-minute safety briefings. All harnesses are checked, and we adhere to strict daily, weekly, monthly, biannual and annual maintenance schedule."

"We love encouraging students to 'get their Up on' and when we receive feedback such as, 'pulsating music, colourful climbing constructions'; 'engaging care, attention, and encouragement', and 'a paradise of climbing paraphernalia'; we know we're on the right track! The best compliment ever received; 'I feel re-born!'" ●



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Great customer service in school-friendly Space

Space Hotel accommodates school groups and sports teams at “the quiet end of town” in Melbourne’s CBD. “Our northern city location means no noisy city party goes, but good access to sites,” said COO, Yossi Gallor.

“We are right across the street from the Old Melbourne Gaol and a stone’s throw from the Melbourne Museum and Royal Exhibition Building,” Mr Gallor continued.

Comfort and customer service at a reasonable price has long been a focus at Space Hotel, leading to induction into the RACV Victorian Tourism’s ‘Hall of Fame’ for consistent excellence.



Booking with Space Hotel is simple and stress free. So simple, that Mr Gallor says some teachers have students manage arrangements for ‘real world learning’ - though he recommends teachers stay in

the loop to avoid oversights.

Mr Gallor says group facilities abound at Space Hotel: “We have special room rates and allocations; group meals and transport assistance; as well as

popular features, such as a mini movie theatre, rooftop deck with Jacuzzi and 270 degree views, gym and a laundry for convenience – and a meeting room for teachers to book at no extra charge.” ●

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Centrally located in the Melbourne CBD, the award winning Space Hotel is the ideal accommodation option for large groups with it’s close proximity to major attractions and state of the art security and facilities.

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For Enquiries & bookings contact:

Yossi Gallor E: yossi@spacehotel.com.au P: 1800 670 611

www.spacehotel.com.au

YHA Metro runs school trips like clockwork

"Here at Metro we do everything from start to finish," said Marilyn Langeveld, Victorian Groups Coordinator at YHA Melbourne Metro.

Systems and planning have school trips running smoothly: "Room allocation is done prior to arrival of groups; breakfast can be timetabled to suit specific group schedules; luggage is stored conveniently, and a special meeting room is available for use by up to 20 people at a time."

Continental breakfast is included in the package, and Ms Langeveld says other great meals for lunch and dinner are available to pre order.

Located in a quiet neighbourhood of North Melbourne but not far from free tram zones, proximity to sites such as Melbourne Zoo,



Melbourne University, Queen Victoria Market, Melbourne Sealife; Imax and Melbourne Museum, and National Gallery

of Victoria takes care of traditional external learning. For schools, security is paramount: "Located in a residential area,

and with 24/7 staff, as well as CCTV throughout the building, teachers and group leaders feel safe and relaxed." ●

Rest easy with the school travel experts

Jason Shanley of Discovery Group said, "15 years of working with schools has proven that we are 'group travel experts'". He says the group offers a comprehensive service including accommodation, catering and the bonus of their free planning and itinerary service.

"We want school groups to access the best of Melbourne's attractions, and our experience with school groups means we understand how activities can be matched to learning outcomes in curricular subjects such as arts and culture, HPE, history and geography, but also extracurricular areas such as social awareness."



Discovery works with schools from Melbourne, regional Victoria, interstate and overseas: "We offer dorm-style accommodation with shared bathroom facilities with secured floors for both primary and secondary schools. With

security a priority for schools, Mr Shanley said, "the site offers secured rooms with an overnight security guard, CCTV & 24-hour reception to ensure groups can sleep easy".

And schools keep coming

back: "We have schools that return every year for camps and our accommodation. Our CBD location is a definite advantage - with free tram access or an easy walk simplifying travel between attractions." ●



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Real world learning without the logistics



An InRhythm drumming extravaganza is underway at this primary school.

A study published in *Psychological Science*, titled, 'Physical Experience Enhances Science Learning' found that "activation of sensorimotor brain regions" through science learning that involved "physical experience" resulted in "significantly improved quiz scores".

So, full sensory learning is only for science? No. Dr Ben Mardell, researcher with Project Zero at Harvard Graduate School of Education is an advocate for the rights of young children to have their education suit them. He has said, "kids learn through all their senses" and "they like to touch and manipulate things". Attuned teachers know this, and while they are popping a vein trying to come up with new ways to achieve this, external learning providers might be able to take the pressure off.

Hosting an incursion (no, not the military kind – it means in-house (ex)cursion), where the learning comes to you, has numerous benefits for student engagement and experience, and can take the pressure off the teacher to constantly provide the stimulus for learning. The students gain

access to expert knowledge, delivered by a specialist in their area, who can provide a learning experience that speaks to their specific passion in a way a layperson just can't emulate.

Teachers learn from incursions too. A single visit from a marine biologist with a portable tank of sea creatures can provide a day of sensory stimulation, excitement and learning and a shift of focus from the teacher, to the presenter. This spotlight shift allows the teacher to gather facts, jot down questions for the expert, as well as new areas for exploration.

Possibly, best of all, the teacher can observe his/her learners from the shadows of their attention. They can discern what excited them, what didn't, and identify any students with special interests in the topic. He/she can also get to know each student as a learner, by watching them respond to instruction. Clearer understanding of your learners means more impactful teaching.

Incursion options

Types of educational experiences will depend on practical considerations such

as portability of specialised equipment, your school's location, and the age of your students. Visits from sports associations, science; arts and music, civics, and cross curriculum priorities are all on offer.

Fascinating elements of nature can be brought to you, such as farmyard fur babies, reptile handlers and sustainability experts.

Cultural visits from local Indigenous community members can provide an education to young Australian students that non-Indigenous teaching staff just cannot deliver with the same authority.

Performing arts incursions remain popular, with experiences ranging from circus or theatre to energising visits from bands of music educators with instruments in tow. Available genres range from classical to rhythm and drumming. Vibrant musical or theatre visits can inspire students to brave the gaze of fellow students and try performing arts. Passionate presenters can transform your multi-purpose hall into a cultural extravaganza, engaging even the littlest of theatre or music lovers

in motivating music or rhythm exploration.

Student wellbeing workshops

Increasing concern about bullying and student mental health has triggered an influx of wellbeing-related school visits. Not-for-profit organisations run workshops specifically targeting certain areas, such as cyber-bullying or traditional (playground) bullying.

They support schools by providing education and experiential learning for young people, with role-play and restorative practice sessions.

They can assist school leaders and teachers to promote a safe and supportive school climate where all students are accepted.

Other workshops cover resilience, body image, cyber bullying, the promotion of legal and ethical online citizenship; leadership skills and rites of passage; and affective processing. In an environment where school kids are clearly struggling, there's plenty of help available.

Drumming workshops to captivate, relax and inspire

Australian students are still stressed. Perhaps this is why InRhythm director, Tim Orgias, says schools have embraced their rhythm and mindfulness programs with increasing enthusiasm.

He said, "our drumming and rhythm workshops bring about a natural release of stress and tension, regulate the brain and nervous system. They help bring cognitive functions online, enhancing students' capacity to learn new things and shift perspectives."

Mr Orgias says InRhythm offers a range of super fun, educational sessions for primary and secondary schools countrywide: "These

include African drumming, body percussion, and boom-whackers (groove tubes). The focus and outcomes of our sessions also range, between musicality and culture, mindfulness and stress relief; leadership, and transition."

"Teacher feedback has been so positive," Mr Orgias shared.

"We've been recognised for being 'highly organised and extremely professional' and 'giving students a huge amount of opportunity to be active participants and the workshops in age appropriate ways'".

"We bring an instrument for every student and guide them through a fun and powerful experience with 100% participation. It is the perfect platform to explore a wide range of desired outcomes." ●



Why are more teachers 'ordering in?'

It's just easier. The laws of logistics are clear – it's easier to bring a small number of adults to a large number of children than the reverse. With safety assessments, transport planning, permission notes, packed lunches, excursion uniform requirements, traffic issues, and time constraints, ordering in from a growing menu of educational experiences makes good sense.

When it's time to experience what you've planned, you are only tasked with the unexceptional assignment of compelling a class of students

to transport themselves to a designated area. Excursions, on the other hand, involve, transporting a class of 30, whinging because they are hauling heavy bags containing packed lunches, water bottles and notebooks. Meanwhile you have a large bag full of medication, emergency medical packs for anaphylactic students; spare pencils, worksheets, a class list with phone numbers, and a wad of special instruction sheets for potential medical emergencies. While it's great to get out and about, there's plenty to see that can't be brought to school, so many teachers are saving their excursion energy for destinations that simply *must* be visited. ■



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Victorian Teachers Games: communicate, celebrate, educate

Every year, Victorian teachers leave their classrooms, playgrounds and school sports days behind and head to a Victoria regional location for their own carnival of fun, fitness, connection and learning.

School News spoke with the event's social media and communications manager, Raff Agostino, about the Victorian Teacher Games (VTG): "VTG started in Geelong in 1995 by a teacher who wanted to create an event for teachers to come together and have fun around sport."

As the peak body for School Sport in Victoria, School Sport Victoria (SSV) took over the management of the event in 2014. School Sport Victoria (SSV) is a sub-committee of the Department of Education and Training and the event is coordinated each year by a dedicated team of sports and recreation enthusiasts.

VTG is a state-wide program held annually in a regional area that attracts over 2500 participants across four days. Sporting and social events are scheduled, with the intention of having lots of fun while also building stronger collaborative relationships.

This year the games will be held in Ballarat starting Sunday 24 September to Wednesday 27 September 2017: "We run the games in regional locations on a two-year cycle. We went to Shepparton in 2015 and 2016, and this year and next year,



we are in Ballarat." Over 100 volunteers support the VTG events crew to offer a program packed with sport, novelty games, and opportunities for social connection with other teachers. Participants register through the VTG website, and book their accommodation privately in the area, bringing tourism dollars, state-wide attention and an economic injection to a regional Victorian location. The locals love them. Netball to lawn bowls or mind sports like trivia.

The event is epic: "We've recently started running some opportunities for teachers to undertake professional development; we've only just added this in, but expect it to grow."

Not just for teachers, the competition is open to anyone employed by the Department of Education: "Anyone employed in a school: cleaners, computer technicians, principals, canteen staff, anyone. Staff from independent schools who hold a VIT registration are also eligible to compete."

Mr Agostino says health and well-being underpins the core reason VTG exists. Participants are given great opportunities to gain professional development, build leadership teams and have significant networking opportunities with past colleagues and teachers from other education sectors, regions and schools within Victoria.

As the hosts of VTG in 2017, some of the events are particular to Ballarat, such as the trots (harness racing), Sovereign Hill and orienteering, with other opportunities for participants to engage in sporting and social activities such as AFL 9s, netball, darts, winery tours, basketball, lawn bowls, go karting, brewery tours, swimming, trivia challenge, and so much more. VTG caters for all staff members, whether they consider themselves 'sporty' or not.

Not in Victoria and think your state should follow suit? A crew from New Zealand visited the VTG in 2015/16 and have established their own New Zealand Teacher Games (NZTG).

"We would love to see a VTG-style event across the entire nation, but that is really up to the other states to initiate. When NZTG came over, they worked with us for two events, and we were happy to play a part in their games taking place," said Mr Agostino.

Registrations close in August every year. If you've missed this one, make sure you connect at www.victeachersgames.com.au for next year. ■

By Suzy Barry, Industry Reporter
Photos supplied by: Victorian Teachers Games



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Want to help your students learn resilience, punctuality, good social skills and the importance of being reliable? **Try Rowing Australia's school rowing program, Riggers.**

Riggers has been specifically developed for primary schools, as part of the Australian Sports Commission Sporting Schools initiative, giving students an opportunity to try rowing in a safe and fun environment.

Up to 6 indoor sessions, using rowing machines, are available to give primary school students an opportunity to try a new and exciting sport in their school program. This is a great way to engage children in a fun and enjoyable sport. Games are played to learn how to row.

Shortly, Rowing Australia will be providing an online training course available to all school teachers, via the University of Queensland, that will enable teachers to deliver Riggers themselves (indoor rowing component only).



For more information contact **Ron Batt** via email: rbatt@rowingaustralia.com.au or telephone: 0410 583 474.



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AIRC are proud to support the Robert Connor Dawes Foundation, with a percentage of entry fees going towards brain cancer research, care and development.

If your school is interested in hosting or being part of an AIRC event, please contact **Ron Batt** via email rbatt@rowingaustralia.com.au or telephone: 0410 583 474 and hear about how you can get involved!

Healthy, sustainable beverage options for the staffroom

Water is a fundamental requirement for life: it feeds our cells, flushes out our pulmonary systems and research shows that even slight dehydration can reduce cognitive function in school students.

A study conducted by Ghetti, S. et al. tested the hypothesis that "changes in hydration status throughout the day may affect cognitive performance with implications for learning success in the classroom". The study was published in academic journal, *Appetite*, in an article titled 'Hydration status moderates the effects of drinking water on children's cognitive performance'.

The study involved 52 children aged between nine and 12 years, and tested the following hypothesis: 'does the benefit of drinking water on working memory and attention depends

upon children's hydration status throughout the day'. It seems that it does. The results suggested that "focusing on adequate hydration over time may be key for cognitive enhancement". The study also found that "changes in hydration status throughout the day may affect cognitive performance."

While the study was conducted with children, the implications are clear for the entire school community. Adequate hydration is vital to ensure students and teachers give their brains the best chance of succeeding at the important work of teaching and learning, and the best way to hydrate is with water. Bubblers and water fountains are dotted over most school grounds, but teachers don't always have time to seek them out, nor the desire to bend at the waist to take a drink amidst a robust game of 'tiddy'.

To work out how to keep every demographic in the school community consistently hydrated, we called upon Peter Molloy of BIBO Water for some industry insight on what's possible for schools.

Industry view

Cognisant of the importance of hydration for concentration, schools strive to supply a steady stream of good quality water for their staff and students – with cooling options for those hot Australian summer terms. Solutions range from bottled water stocked in tuckshops, to bubblers and water coolers integrated into school water systems. Government bodies are increasingly encouraging the installation of UV filtration systems in schools where 'town water' is not an option.

How that water is dispensed will vary according to budget, where the facility is located, and who is using it. BIBO Water supplies a low cost, convenient solution for water provision in school offices, staffrooms, and other common areas on campus.

Schools can acknowledge their teachers' hard work by kitting out their staffroom with the same sort of instant hot and cold water dispensing unit commonly found in commercial offices. Peter Molloy of BIBO Water says options for staffroom drinking water can vary but "a 'water bar' style unit; a compact, countertop water dispenser that provides filtered, purified, chilled, warm, and boiling water at the touch of a button" is ideal for meeting the refreshment and rehydration requirements of busy teachers with short lunch breaks and a great need for tea and coffee!



Renting offers schools flexibility; new refrigeration equipment can be quickly placed where and when your school needs it. Return rental refrigeration equipment at the end of the term without loss and upsize or downsize your display fridge or freezer when the need arises.

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So how does it work? The machine is plumbed into the mains supply using flexible quarter-inch pipe; drainage plumbing is not required due to a removable drip tray, which can be emptied.

"The water passes through a 1.0-micron multi-stage carbon filter, which removes tastes, odours, chemicals (such as chlorine), heavy metals (such as

lead), and microorganisms, such as giardia and cryptosporidium. "The water then splits off to either the hot or cold tank where it is exposed to ultraviolet light from a UV lamp inside the tank to prevent regrowth of microorganisms. The option also suits communal areas such as year 12 common room, or a communal kitchen within a boarding school. The units are also portable, and when schools open their

facilities to host special events and conferences, no extra water catering is required.

In light of the ever-present budgetary concerns of school boards and finance departments, Mr Molloy says the option is highly cost-efficient: "You should expect your staffroom water bar to last you up to ten years, depending on level of use, with a filter change only twice a year."

Considering the sustainable focus of school curricula, energy saving features, (like a sleep mode for times the machine is not in use), will align with a school's sustainability efforts. In fact, "the units use less energy and waste far less water than boiling a kettle many times a day," he added. And we all know how often teachers boil that kettle.

And finally, replacing soft drinks at the canteen and eradicating those vending machines with

sugary drinks is paramount to creating a healthy water drinking school culture.

It's about making that healthy living culture pervasive throughout the school. Bubblers all over the school sends a great message to students, but if your teachers are walking around with cans of soft drink, mixed messages are inevitable.

Mr Molloy says water bars are well suited for teaching and administration staff areas, providing support for hardworking teachers to stay hydrated and recharge their batteries with healthier beverage options:

"It's also important to note that every glass of water from a water bar is one less PET plastic water bottle polluting our precious environment." ■

By Suzy Barry, Industry Reporter

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How school water stations encourage healthy life choices

School environments play a significant role in shaping our life habits from a young age. They not only facilitate academic and cognitive development, they also train us to develop self-expression, social behaviour, physical fitness, dietary and lifestyle habits.

Many schools are choosing to install drinking water fountains and bottle refill stations as an intelligent way to encourage healthier lifestyle choices. Some Australian manufacturers produce drinking water systems that also include customisable signs within their design. This allows schools to create fun and educational backdrops to enhance their appeal and communicate the benefits of water consumption to younger users.

Educating students on healthy living is an area of concern for many schools. Recent studies by the Bureau of Statistics have found that the number of overweight or obese Australians has risen to one quarter of children aged between five and 17, and over 60 percent for adults. Children who are overweight or obese have higher risks of developing a number of health conditions later in life, from type 2 diabetes, to liver and heart problems, sleep apnoea and depression. Setting good lifestyle habits from a young age is important so that children can avoid preventable health conditions developing later in life. With such a high proportion of society presently overweight or obese, there has never been a more pressing time for schools to take the lead in addressing this problem.

Of course, the causes for children becoming overweight are multifaceted. Poor diet, sedentary lifestyles and the convenience of modern transport and computer technology have all affected children's activity levels and therefore physical health. Today, processed foods and sweetened drinks, in particular, make up a major part of many children's diets. Many online sites recommend a

maximum added sugar intake of between five and seven teaspoons per day for both children and adults. A single 600ml bottle of soft drink, on the other hand, typically contains 16 teaspoons of added sugar. Encouraging children to eat more fresh food and drink water is simply logical.

Aside from physical health and weight management, there is also significant research to indicate that students who drink more water perform better in the classroom too. As well as avoiding dehydration, reports indicate that children who drink water instead of sugary drinks show improvement in overall cognitive function, ability to focus on their work, and enhanced performance on the sporting field.

But how do we get children to drink more water during the school day?

One approach is to integrate regular water drinking as a part of school children's daily routine. Students can bring their water bottles to class and refill them in their breaks. They can also be brought along to sports lessons and after hours activities. Schools can install drinking water fountains, chillers and bottle refill stations to encourage this. Placing these near classrooms and throughout the outdoor grounds makes them easily accessible throughout the day. Some manufacturers also make them in different sizes to accommodate different age groups.

Some Australian-designed, outdoor water drinking fountains and bottle refill stations also feature customisable graphic panels. Having educational messages on these units, combined with fun colours and graphics, can make the experience of drinking water for younger school children especially fun. Many councils and government bodies who install these units in public spaces are making use of this feature too, by promoting their



Kempsey High School students have embraced their new fountain.

Photo: Aquafil

local initiatives and brands.

As well as outdoor units, a range of indoor water stations are also available in Australia. Some are freestanding and easy to install, while others can be built into wall units for extra durability and a more discrete, aesthetic finish. Indoor units are particularly useful near school gyms and canteens, and are a good alternative to outdoor water stations when the weather turns sour.

After Kempsey High School installed a filtered water drinking fountain and bottle refill station on their campus, staff noticed an immediate improvement in classroom performance. They also received positive feedback from the students who enjoyed the cleaner taste.

"Students have flocked to the new filtered water bubbler and spoken to me frequently on how

much better the water tastes, and how they want another one on the other side of the school", said teacher Mark Baxter.

"Because the students are drinking more water we have fewer temper tantrums and headaches... [so now] we are saving up to get another one!"

There are a number of reasons why schools should install a range of drinking water stations. By discouraging consumption of sugary drinks and encouraging students to drink water, schools are teaching healthy lifestyle habits from a young age. With a range of drinking fountains, water bottle refill stations, filters and chillers available in Australia – including some with educational signage – it has never been easier for schools to lead this change. ■

By Danny Brookes



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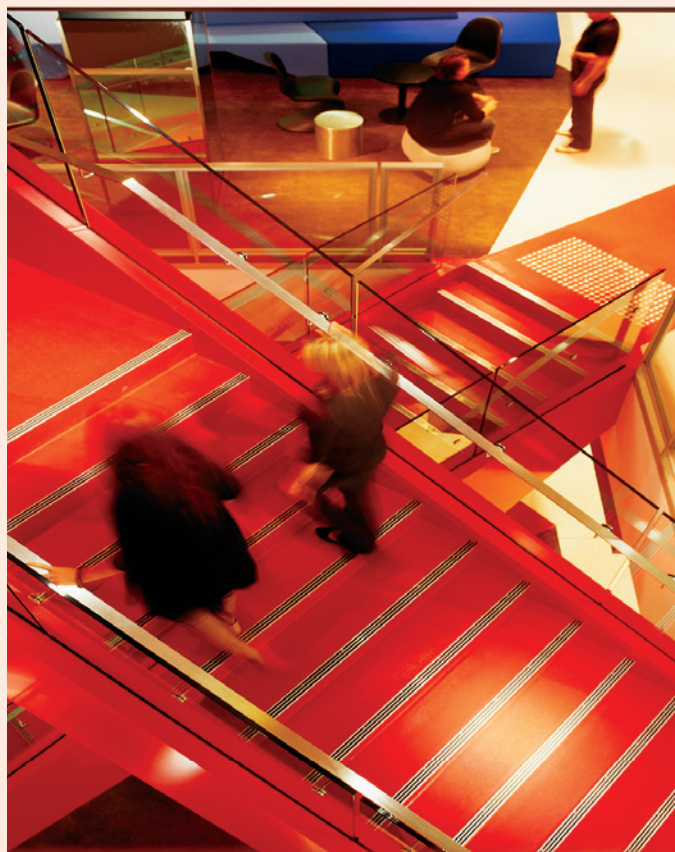
Comcork flooring the natural solution

Good architectural and interior design of schools are vital for the integrity of the learning environment.

The choice of floor coverings for the various spaces found in all schools is one that must be very well considered, as choosing the ideal and correct floor covering has advantages for both students and teachers alike.

Most would agree that floor coverings used in schools need to be hard wearing, anti slip, and easy to clean. However often the ability of a floor covering to absorb noise and impact is overlooked. Large numbers of children, no matter what the age, create noise. Active children are healthy children, and talking, laughing and running are all part of the usual school day for children.

To find a floor covering that can withstand the harsh treatment from hundreds of young feet whilst at the same time reducing the impact and level of noise to the immediate environment, is a challenge that Comcork Flooring has been successfully addressing for decades. Comcork's unique combination of natural cork and rubber is the secret to its ability to absorb noise and impacts, without compromising its extremely hard wearing properties. The secret is that cork is basically made up of thousands of trapped air cells, and these cells act as noise breakers and tiny cushions when used in Comcork.



Whether it be in the classroom, corridors, canteen or sports hall, reducing the noise level emitting from these areas is welcomed by all. Quiet and calm environments aid our ability to learn and feel peaceful. This is a win win situation for both students and teachers. An area often overlooked is the covered external spaces immediately outside of the classroom, like the locker area. Exposed to the

elements, most resilient floor coverings cannot be used here. Comcork Low Profile and WalkEasy Textured profile are very successful when used in these applications, as the flooring is not affected by water.

Most Australians are saddened by the demise of the Australian manufacturing, and many would be surprised to know that this exceptional floor covering range is manufactured in Victoria by

an Australian owned company. Support of this range ensures the viability of the factory and keeps the knowledge around this unique product on our shores.

Another very important current issue is reducing waste and land fill. Comcork flooring is produced from cork, a renewable resource as the cork tree is not felled in the harvesting of the cork bark. These trees are harvested every seven years and can produce cork for up to 250 years.

With a life expectancy of in excess of twenty years for your Comcork floor, the need for costly replacement of floor coverings is greatly reduced.

Whilst cork itself cannot be coloured, the inclusion of rubber in the products ensures that colour choice is not restricted, in fact 22 colours are available across all the range. As Comcork is not a Plastic (PVC based) flooring, welding is not required which means patterns, logos and many other designs are possible.

Whilst Comcork flooring had its introduction into schools as a trade room flooring, it quickly became obvious that the excellent properties of the product meant it could be used in almost every internal and external area of schools, a testament to its durability and versatility.

With decades of success within the school environment, the Comcork team are able to give advice on any area where you are in need of a flooring solution. ▲



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Control classroom climate for optimum learning

An oh too familiar phone call received at the office from Block B, where 25 five-year-olds revolt in the background as the supply teacher frantically tries to communicate that the air con is not working. These calls are often triggered by an unruly air conditioning remote. (Or, possibly, the teacher's inability to navigate said air conditioning remote.)

Even in winter, some teachers love nothing more than to stick on the air-con, and keep those students alert. As families continue to feel the effects of an ongoing, global recession; air conditioning is generally something reserved for extreme heat at home. Yet, at school, where any slight discomfort is fair game for a protest, teachers might turn up the icicles to satisfy the sweaty masses.

Of course, with the climates

of 50 or more classrooms to control, the school budget can only extend so far, which is why capping temperature is an essential part of any commercial system.

So, is there an ideal temperature? A study published in an article titled, 'Effects of Classroom Ventilation Rate and Temperature on Students' Test Scores', which appeared in peer-reviewed open access journal, *PLoS*, explored that very question. Beginning with the hypothesis upheld by past studies, researchers, Shaughnessy and Haverinen-Shaughnessy, were testing whether the optimum temperature for student learning falls between 20 and 24 degrees Celsius in the winter, and 23 and 26 degrees in the summer. After multilevel analyses of seventy elementary schools in Southwestern US, they upheld

the hypothesis that higher temperatures "might not be ideal for school buildings where students are expected to learn and perform".

There is an optimum temperature for learning, and there's a good reason why weather reports talk about actual temperature and 'feels like' temperatures. Factors such as wind-chill and cloud coverage affect outdoor temperatures, and for the classroom climate, things like ventilation, and how many bodies you have in the room might affect the experience. By running a master setting at the office, the system's thermostat can regulate against these features and keep the room at optimum temperature for concentration and mood.

System controls

If you can't centralise the controls, at the very least,

how clear can you make user instructions so teachers know what they're doing?

It might seem obvious to the caretaker, but many staff members won't have a clue how to use the remote. It isn't always as simple as an 'on' and 'off' switch, particularly when there are multiple units, timers and fluctuating temperatures involved.

To avoid these stressful challenges for teachers standing in a room full of expectant eyes, (not to mention under the scornful gaze of those irritating experts-on-everything kids), training, training, training.

A short session with the maintenance department, and sign or note situated somewhere obvious, detailing how to work the air conditioning in the room are invaluable. ►



Keep your school cool this summer.

When looking for an air conditioning system for your school office or classroom, Fujitsu General can provide the ultimate comfort solution for almost any space.

Educational institutes have complex cooling and heating requirements. Whether it's a new project or an existing building, the specific needs should be assessed to ensure the best fit. Fujitsu General offers an extensive range of products that are compact, efficient and reliable to match the needs of a wide range of air conditioning applications for schools and other educational precincts.

With various control options, ranging from individual remotes up to advanced central management systems with energy saving features, flexibility in monitoring and operation is assured. Choosing the right air conditioning solution will influence energy consumption and can lead to efficiency improvements.

Speaking to a professional will ensure the most optimum solution is selected to meet your schools unique requirements.

To keep your school cool this summer, contact Fujitsu General on 1300 882 201 or visit fujitsugeneral.com.au.

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◀ Refurb and repairs

Air-conditioning systems come in a variety of shapes and sizes, which makes repairing and servicing them quite complex. Upgrading an air conditioning system altogether can also present some, perhaps, unforeseen difficulties.

The main incentives for regular maintenance and repairs are, first and foremost, teacher and student health and safety. Longevity of life for the machine itself is another key imperative. If allowed to become dirty and fester, air conditioning units may swiftly become a breeding ground for harmful bacteria and mould. Legionnaires' disease is one nasty consequence that

can result from microorganism growth in badly maintained air conditioning. The cooling tower is the part of the system that can really promote these health hazards, so it is vital that they be kept resolutely spick and span with a chlorine treatment or other recommended maintenance upkeep.

If rooms are kept too cold, it can also dry out children's airways, leaving them prone to infection and illness. The same goes for staff, which is why air conditioning in staff rooms and common areas should also adhere to the same strict maintenance schedule. Humidifiers are another option to counteract this dryness and many air conditioning systems

now come with a variety of dehumidifying settings for the sticky summer months that prevent spaces from becoming too chilly.

Energy efficiency

Some type of dehumidifier setting is also handy over the hot season when it comes to limiting power consumption. If staff members (or even senior students) are allowed to eat the school's energy bill by flipping the air conditioning all the way down to sub-zero temperatures, it won't just burn a hole in the school finance manager's pocket. The environment is a pressing issue (or should be) for all who like to breathe.

Sadly, instant gratification is

too much for so many people to resist, and we all know that student who will sidle up to the temperature control and surreptitiously adjust it so they can keep their jumper on.

This is why it's essential to put as many restrictive air conditioning measures in place as possible. Of course, you still want your students and teachers to be comfortable so there is a fine line to be toed. Erring on the side of research, and setting the thermostat for a number within the optimum range should keep your learners happy, and stop your teachers from breaking into a sweat on even the hottest summer's day. ■

By Rosie Clarke,
Industry Reporter





Photos provided by the Australian Boarding School Association

Traditional boarding experience in a modern context

As a child, I had whimsical thoughts (modelled on Enid Blyton in the absence of Hogwarts) about boarding school. I could see myself sharing secrets over midnight snacks; tearing up the hockey field and then laughing with my friends all the way 'home' on the bus.

Modern boarding schools are no more like an Enid Blyton novel than Hogwarts, with its disappearing doors and moving stairwells, marauders maps and air-born school sports - but what muggle boarding schools do have in common with literary exemplars is a sense of belonging – a bond of shared experience to last a lifetime.

The changing face of boarding

It's not just country kids and expats who board these days. Schools offer weekly boarding, or even temporary boarding when parents travel for work to meet the new market. With rising flexibility



expected of boarding schools, management solutions must keep up.

Do boarding schools require NASA-style security to keep track of shifting boarder populations? How can schools deliver the level of flexibility parents expect when requesting leave? What are the biggest issues facing boarding staff in the 21st century? *School News* caught up with Australian Boarding Schools Association's

(ABSA) executive director, Richard Stokes to learn more.

We were lucky to catch Mr Stokes; who was diligently preparing for the 2017 Leaders' Conference in Sydney that very weekend.

The year's theme is 'Positive Change' and focusses on ABSA's catch phrase of 'creating the future for boarding schools.'

The modernisation of education, through technology, innovative

infrastructure and progressive pedagogy are the talk of education circles countrywide and boarding schools are no different. Mr Stokes has been working in boarding schools since the early 1980s and he said, "put simply, boarding schools have changed dramatically over the last 30 years, but they've changed more in the last five years than the previous 25".

So, what has changed? While dormitory facilities have modernised, Mr Stokes says most still provide graduated privacy and privilege as students age.

"I've seen schools with single rooms for every student, but most often it's four to six beds to a room for the younger students; two to a room for the middle years and single for seniors."

What has changed is the added complexity of the internet, and this generation's ardent engagement with connectivity.

Schools face it by day, and parents struggle with it by night. ▶

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There's a lot to do in boarding schools, and Garry Jowett, Director of REACH Boarding says their software system brings all required boarding activities into a single, user-friendly system.

"Ten core modules in REACH manage all boarding activities, helping boarding schools to manage risk, gain efficiency, and improve communications."

"As 24/7 care providers, the duty of care requirements for boarding schools are significantly elevated," he said. "The storage of records

and the implementation of school policies are critical for a school's risk management and student care procedures. REACH saves many hours of work, with efficient, fully traceable, and reportable transactions."

"Launched in 2013, REACH has worked closely with the Australian Boarding Schools Association to create a system that is used by more than 60% of Australian boarding schools." Mr Jowett said. "We now service more than 250 schools across five continents, setting the global benchmark for best practice in boarding school management." ●



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◀ Boarding house supervisors and leaders face the same slippery challenges, but *en masse*, and 24/7.

How do boarding schools deal with the issue of cyber safety? "It's vital that boarding school leaders and supervisors receive specific training in this," Mr Stokes urged. He says this is why ABSA conducts industry training for boarding school leaders.

"Former headmaster at The Kings School, Dr Tim Hawkes, wrote a book called *Duty of Care*. There's a section on modern technology in there, and the theme is about education rather than avoidance," said Mr Stokes.

The ABSA training draws on Dr Hawkes' book and the key message is 'educate kids about operating safely and legally online rather than relying on prohibition'.

After all, 1920-30s American history tells us how well that worked.

Mr Stokes says confiscation is ineffective in the long run: "Lots of schools take phones and lock them up but the kids find a way around." Apparently, most have spare (undeclared) devices.

"The biggest challenge we've got is to make sure we educate students about how to behave online, including the ethical and legal implications of online activity, such as 'sexting' and sending inappropriate images electronically." 'What goes online, stays online' is a reality for the current generation of teens, who must cope with their unfinished



prefrontal cortices in a much more complex environment than generations past.

"Boarding schools need to find a way to manage this, so that students are able to enjoy the things that were supposed to be good about boarding school." He says boarding schools must find ways to get students off their devices and involve them in their school community. "Different schools do this differently. One head of boarding had the girls lock

their devices away at 5pm one night without warning. Once the ban was over, she said, 'I'm not going to do this again, unless you do something wrong.'"

He says another school took the devices from 5pm Friday to 5pm Sunday, also without warning: The boys had a tech-free weekend, and the only complaint they received (apart from the boys, from whom they had plenty) was from the kitchen staff, who were convinced there had been twice as many boys to feed because they ate so much after such an active weekend.

"Another school has 'unplugged Thursday': devices are put away and they play board games and Twister and hang out together."

We've discussed the dangers of technology, how about the benefits? Mr Stokes says tech has made life enormously easier for boarding schools to track students. The systems facilitate last minute visits or outings; keep track of who is onsite, as well as integrating academic, wellbeing and attendance data for parents to access online. "The REACH Boarding School System can track leave for kids, and allow parents

to submit a leave request from their phones," Mr Stokes explained. "You can even send your itinerary to the system and it will extract the dates and submit the leave request for you."

"The software will track where all the kids are, and there's a function where pressing one button notifies all the right people in an emergency situation." Mr Stokes said this sort of system is necessary in the frenetic context of modern life, and it means necessary parental spontaneity (and increasingly busy student schedules) can be accommodated.

It seems much has changed at boarding school, while much has remained the same. Tradition continues as surely as the moss gathers on sandstone walls, but the future is upon us. By embracing technology both in administration; to manage risk, gain efficiency and improve communications, and by upskilling in safe cyber-management, boarding schools are uniting tradition and the future with old school finesse. ■

By Suzy Barry,
Industry Reporter



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