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Special Report

Sir Ken Robinson on
the future of schools:
questioning the status quo

Teacher's Desk

Adam Voigt changing
culture with restorative
justice

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Editor's Note

With Easter holidays just around the corner, educators will be feeling breathless from the pace of term one – class allocation issues to iron out, establishment phase challenges, and the new faces in an increasingly mobile population – and that's aside from lesson prep, teaching, reflection, assessments, and PD.

This issue, we have Steve Francis of Happy School reminding us to avoid 'workaholic' so we avoid becoming a teacher or principal burnout statistic. So, sit back, make a cup of something warm and read on!

Sir Ken Robinson is in Melbourne for the FutureSchools Expo and Conferences and *School News* has an exclusive interview for you on page 9.

From the field, you'll hear from our term one 'Principal Speaks', Darren Trippett from Yarra Valley Secondary School on their great culture turnaround; drama teacher, Warren Flanagan on inclusive theatre with a twist; and from River Stanley, principal of a brand-new school with a mission to deliver real world learning in a holistic culture of empowerment.

From providers of learning outside the classroom, you'll read about STEM depth studies and first aid training for remote locations, as well as civics enrichment in Canberra and ski trips.

For matters inside the school gates, we have sports days to remember; acoustics for learning optimisation, and a school playground that inspires children as much as (or more than) a day in the forest.

As I draw this issue to a close, another transition looms. Having utterly galvanised myself into action, I have decided to trade the discussion of education for the implementation of it. This will be my last issue as editor of *School News*, as I return to my own gates of learning to complete my Master of Secondary Teaching.

I leave you in the capable hands of Kat Donaghey, an experienced journalist and editor, who will steer this ship into its next phase and continue to bring you a comprehensive overview of education matters, from foundation to year 12 in Australia and beyond.

I may see you in a staff room one day, but until then, I will take my own advice – noli cedere cognoscere – and I won't stop learning!



Suzy Barry, editor,
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Education news from around Australia



National review of teacher registration

In an announcement that could signal an overhaul of teaching as we know it, the federal government has launched a national review of teacher registration "to help tackle key inconsistencies in systems across the country".

The minister's office reports the move was "endorsed by state and territory ministers at the Education Council".

"We want to ensure we have teacher registration systems that are high-quality and more consistent; and that complement our existing reforms to improve the initial training of teachers," Minister Birmingham said.

"There's inconsistency in our teacher registration systems across the country and we need to understand what's working and what's not in key areas to set a bar everyone can work towards.

"Australia has fantastic teachers across every part of the education system and parents rightly expect teachers to have the right skills

and training before they step into classrooms. We've been working hard since our Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group to deliver reforms to boost the quality of teaching in Australia.

"Those reforms include tests to ensure new teachers have literacy and numeracy skills in the top 30 percent of the adult population, new accreditation standards for teacher training courses, and a need for training organisations to demonstrate their graduates have the knowledge and experience to be successful educators.

"As our teacher education reforms flow through, we also want this review to look at how teaching graduates make the transition to working in schools. Too many teachers report how they struggled making the jump from university to working in a school and so the registration process should ensure classroom proficiency is attained."

Minister Birmingham said one of the review's aims would be to explore how school systems could make it easier for people with other real-world skills to become

teachers. "Having a former tradie or nurse as a teacher can bring more perspective to a classroom and can be especially beneficial for the teaching of vocational and trade skills," Minister Birmingham said.

"Teachers who have been working in other jobs can be a great way for students to learn about life after school and the different options open to them.

"Ensuring effective pathways for tradies to teach their trades in schools could really boost the delivery of vocational education.

"Those different life experiences could shake up Australia's schools and add more depth to the talented teachers we have.

"Students need to learn from people from all walks of life and if a talented professional wants to change careers to become a teacher, we should be working to ensure that transition is as straightforward as possible."

Minister Birmingham said the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) would facilitate the review that was being led by Mr Chris Wardlaw PSM, currently chair of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and deputy chair of AITSL as well as a panel of eight education experts.

Minister Birmingham said he looked forward to constructive suggestions about Australia's teacher registration systems: "This is an opportunity to ensure Australia's teacher registration systems are working as effectively as possible."

Australian Capital Territory



Bridging the digital equity gap for secondary students

Every child "deserves an equal chance for a great education" according to the ACT government and to remove technology access as a barrier, the ACT government is issuing every secondary student in a Canberra public school a free Chromebook laptop.

The roll-out will begin with years seven to 11 in term one, 2018. By 2019, all Canberra public secondary students will have received a Chromebook.

This initiative will ensure that every secondary student in Canberra public schools has the same access to a device to enhance their learning through technology. Every student will have an equal opportunity to access technology, to ensure they can access information, wherever they are - and use technology whenever they need it. ►

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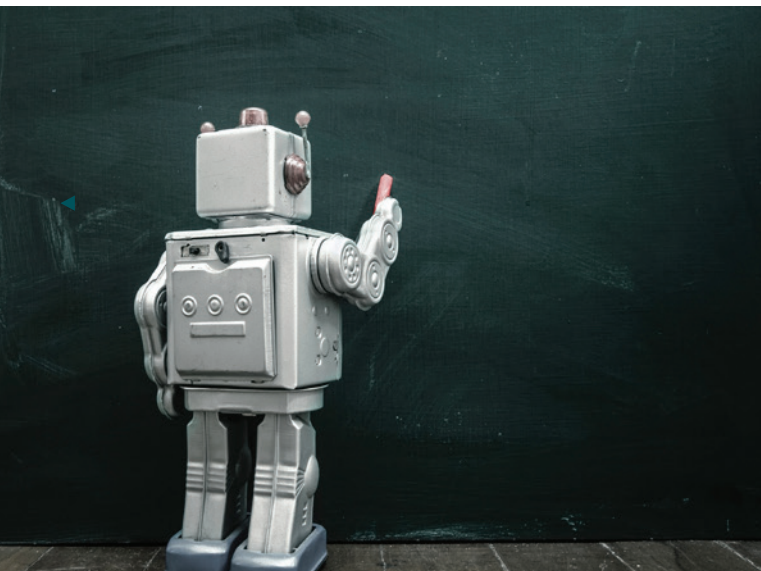
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New South Wales

Robo marking "a direct attack on teaching": Rob Stokes

NSW Education Minister Rob Stokes has ruled out allowing computers to mark NAPLAN writing tasks, warning it is "preposterous" to suggest machines could do a better job than humans and describing it as a "direct attack on the teaching profession".

The comments followed ACARA's announcement that NAPLAN writing tasks completed online in 2018 were to be marked by a person as well as an automated scoring system.

The move was justified, using an ACARA report, released in late 2015, which said a "significant body of literature confirmed that automated essay scoring met or surpassed the quality of human

markers", however, Mr Stokes said he was opposed to that argument.

He said a move to robo marking "misunderstood the power of marking because teachers learn from marking".

"I have been unconvinced by ACARA's explanation of the benefits of robo markers," Mr Stokes concluded.

"The more I talk to a range of people, the more I realise this is a big issue across all sectors and unions and it gets a strong, visceral reaction across the board."

"Robo marking has no place in NSW schools and I can't foresee a future where there will be an increase in machines marking something as deeply personal as writing."

He conceded there was an argument for robo marking of multiple choice questions but not beyond that.

"Any further machine marking is a direct attack on the teaching profession," Mr Stokes said.



Renatu Primary School in Timor Leste. Photo: Bakewell PS

Regional schoolgirls step up for national STEM program

Fifty-eight NSW school girls headed to the University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Sydney on 11 December for the start of the six-month Curious Minds learning and mentoring program for girls in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM).

More than half of the Year 8, 9 and 10 high-achieving schoolgirls were from regional Australia, representing a 20 percent increase from last year.

Northern Territory

International partnerships reap rewards

Bakewell Primary School continues to strengthen its relationship with Renatu Primary School, international partner in Timor Leste, an association that enhances cross-cultural

understanding and promotes interactions between the students and teachers of both schools.

The coalition followed a visit to Timor Leste by principal, Paul Nyhuis, and assistant principal, Cindy McLaren, to meet with the Renatu Primary School leadership team. Mr Nyhuis said: "Our proximity to Timor Leste allows practical engagement with another country, shows our sense of moral purpose, and helps our students build their competence in language and communication skills."

"Students and teachers from both schools share knowledge, develop friendships, and better appreciate their importance in a wider international context."

"Our students have been enthusiastically raising money for the school, including Crazy Hair Day, where they could sport imaginative hairstyles for a gold coin donation."

Through the *Friends of Bakewell* initiative, there are plans to involve the Bakewell business community in fundraising for Renatu Primary School.



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Queensland

Minister hosts swim safety summit

Education minister, Grace Grace, hosted a February roundtable discussion with key stakeholders to explore options for improving swimming and water safety skills for all Queensland children.

"In a state like ours, swimming and water sports are a way of life and the safety of our children in and around water is paramount," she said.

"We already know, because research tells us, that the earlier children learn to swim, the better – and I urge every parent to ensure their child can swim before they reach school age."

"We all have a role to play in addressing this issue of water safety and that is why I wanted to bring stakeholders together today."

"One of the most important statistics is that we have 1003 state schools in Queensland, and there are currently just 18 that do not have a learn to swim program."

She said, "a range of issues were discussed – not only potential strategies for our schools, but also in the broader community."

Surf Life Saving Queensland CEO, John Brennan, said, "no single body has responsibility for this issue. It is very exciting that for the

first time in Queensland so many stakeholders are sitting around the same table and discussing what we can do to improve swimming safety."

Paul Barry, executive director of Royal Life Saving Society Queensland said it was misguided to think that simply making swimming lessons in schools compulsory would improve outcomes.

"What is clear is that schools are innovative and many of them have great programs that would be lost or weakened if they were made to fit a centralised model," he said.

South Australia

SA: Safe Schools in peril



In the case of a Liberal victory at the next elections, the South Australian version of Safe Schools would be scrapped. It would be replaced with what the Liberal opposition is terming "a broader, evidence-based, anti-bullying program."

The replacement program would focus heavily on cyber-bullying. A Marshall Government would also deliver laws to make it easier to prosecute serial bullies.

Assessment tool to focus on ability of students with disability

Educators and support staff will find it easier to recognise and respond to the learning needs of students with significant intellectual disability, due to the rollout over the next two years of ABLE: Abilities Based Learning and Education Support.

The resource provides a suite of curriculum, teaching, assessment and reporting resources that guide educators to accurately identify students' individual learning goals, and track their progress against an individual learning plan over time.

A number of South Australian special schools that have piloted the assessment and reporting tool have responded positively to how easy it is to report and evaluate student outcomes and create learning plans specific to individual strengths and needs.

The SA government has indicated between 1000 and 1500 students will benefit, annually.

Tasmania

Govt ad campaign tackles drop outs

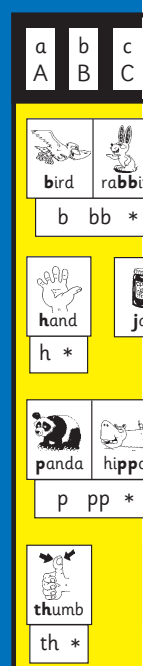
The Tasmania government has backed its new Education Act 2016 extended education requirement with an advertising campaign with the slogan: 'Anything can happen' when you finish school and 'Nothing happens' when you drop out.



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◀ The Department undertook a comprehensive research and testing phase when developing this campaign in order to better understand the issue of why students were dropping out of school or not attending school. Unequivocally, young people liked the use of comedy and reverse psychology as a way to draw attention to an important issue, and also believed that the simplicity of the concept assisted with understanding it.

They felt that the communication was clear, and they understood the key message in that if they stay at school there would be so many more opportunities available to them. For more information, visit: www.anything.tas.gov.au.

Victoria

School breakfast serving up more than toast

School Breakfast Clubs have served more than three million

meals to children from families in need, ensuring they start their school day on a full stomach, since the program was put in place by the Andrews Labor Government.

Research has shown that since the program started, nine out of ten teachers have seen improved student concentration in the classroom, while seven out of ten teachers have noted improved attendance and more than eight out of ten teachers said they now had better relationships with their students.



Victorian students top of the class in reading

Victoria has topped an international study of reading literacy.



The results of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) found the proportion of Victorian students excelling in reading literacy has increased.

The result placed Victoria well ahead of every state and territory with a mean score of 560, ahead of the ACT with a mean score of 552.

While 13 countries outperformed Australia in PIRLS, only seven outperformed Victoria.

Western Australia

School of the Air among the axed services from 2019

An ABC report has indicated that WA's Schools of the Air (SOTA) will be among the services to be shut down. Education minister Sue Ellery has maintained, however, that existing SOTA students will continue to receive the same service.

ABC provided the list of cuts below:

- 170 positions to be axed
- Cuts to deliver \$64 million in savings
- Schools of the Air (SOTA) to close down
- Tuart College to be closed down
- Canning College enrolment restricted to overseas fee-paying students
- Six camp school sites to be closed
- Landsdale Farm School funding to cease
- Funding for gifted and talented programs at 18 schools cut 25 per cent
- Vacation swimming fees to increase more than 100 per cent from \$13.50 to \$30
- Teacher accommodation in Moora and Northam to close
- Intake into Level 3 classroom teacher program on hold until 2020



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The future of schools lies in questioning status quo

In teaching circles, Sir Ken Robinson may be most famous for his TED talk titled: *Do Schools Kill Creativity*, as well as his ongoing campaign to make education more relevant, interesting and productive for children.

On March 21st and 22nd, Sir Ken will host a variety of sessions and give a keynote speech at the National FutureSchools Expo and Conferences, where educators from all over Australia will converge at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre to be inspired by the best in educational leadership, innovation and technology in Foundation – Year 12 schooling.

While we all wait for March, *School News* has connected with him for his take on the future of education: what we should change, what to hang on to, and how teachers and principals can transform learning for their 21st century learners – so schooling in Australia is meaningful, fulfilling and relevant.

Sir Ken has often said, “teaching is an art form, not a delivery system” and with more Australian educators turning to ‘clinical teaching’ (the process of overlaying clinical practice onto teaching practice to assess and ensure teaching practices have an impact), it seemed pertinent to ask Sir Ken if there’s room in creative teaching for science and art.

“We make too much of a difference between science and art,” he replied. “It’s often assumed that to be a teacher you just need a good degree in whatever it is you are being paid to teach, but it’s simply not true, it was never true.”

He says, while “a great teacher obviously knows their material”, the real skill is “engaging people in the material” and “firing up their imaginations”.

“Great teachers are like great doctors or lawyers. They have a whole reparatory of skills; techniques and approaches, and a lot of experience, but the real skill is knowing which skill to apply

where, and how to adapt it to the people in front of you.”

He explained that great teaching is about “judgement and connoisseurship”, and while gathering relevant data means “you can be objective about what you’re doing”, he posited that education “has become far too data driven”, sidelining teachers’ judgements.

“It’s like a medical examination happening with data being generated, while the patient is dying on the table. You need to make sense of the data, so you can apply it to the situation you’re confronted with – here and now.”

Sir Ken says he doesn’t see instruction as a separate science. He said, “there are elements of teaching that can be learned that are skilful and informed by experience and information, but it shouldn’t be reduced to some sort of algorithm”.

Sir Ken is not against all forms of

standardised testing. “There are some areas where it’s perfectly legitimate, like with language learning”.

“There are all sorts of things that go on in schools that depend on human contact. Contact with individual teachers, your interaction within the school community, and your links with the broader community. None of them is more important than another.”

“Having a rich curriculum and having expert, well supported teachers; having informed assessment, and having links with the greater community is what makes a great school.”

Sir Ken often speaks about “organic systems” being key for situations involving people.

“Education is more like gardening than manufacturing: the thing is that gardeners know that there are conditions under which plants flourish and that’s true of all human communities – what

it comes to is the culture of the place,” he reasoned.

Creative schooling: the wider view

Sir Ken maintains that his approach to education is neither hypothesis nor theory: “I’m simply describing what happens to be the case when you go into schools. If there’s a rich curriculum, if there’s interactive teaching, if there are close links with the community, kids flourish. If they’re sitting at desks all day having the life tested out of them, they don’t.”

So, what can be done?

He suggests persuading policy makers, “who are setting the tone from above” that “standardised testing, narrowing the curriculum and imposing more conformity are actually counter-productive in their own terms,” must be part of the discourse to influence the political conversation.

“A lot of things get in the way of students and teachers realising their potential: one is the great pressure of testing, and there’s every reason to push back. One of the reasons I wrote my new book, *You, Your Child and School*, is because parents are disaffected about testing and they are pushing back too – and I’m keen to encourage them because it’s counterproductive and doesn’t serve anybody,” he noted.

While the cogs turn at the usual pace of an institutionalised system, I wondered how school leaders can support teachers within their own micro-society to enact the ‘education revolution’. Sir Ken began with defining the difference between learning, education and school.

“Children love learning; they learn voraciously. They don’t all get on with education and some of them have a bad time with school. The difference is that learning is a natural process of acquiring skills and understanding; education is a more organised approach to learning, a more formal approach very often; and school is a community of learners.” ►



Sir Ken Robinson

◀ Building innovative culture: 'ask forgiveness, not permission'

"We've come to think of schools as particular sorts of places, with their own habits and rituals and routines, but schools don't have to be the way we think they are."

"There are all kinds of institutional habits and expectations that have gathered around schools, which are often obstructing learning and stifling the enthusiasm and curiosity on which great education depends."

"Principals have a great opportunity - I know there are often oppressive political pressures on schools, but as well as pushing back against some of these harmful pressures, there's also room for change within schools - even within the systems. A lot of what goes on in schools isn't mandated; it's just habit. And if we start to reimagine how schools work, you tend to see bigger improvements in the quality of teaching and learning than otherwise."

He added that the marginalisation of programs in arts and humanities, PE and even playtime



"in the interest of high stakes testing obsession" has resulted in "impoverished culture in education, which deteriorates people's enthusiasm for learning."

"There's an awful lot that principals can do to rectify that, by looking at the balance of education and by getting to teachers to collaborate across disciplines."

Sir Ken said, "change always happens from the ground up; it happens in real places with real people" and he says principals can set the tone in their organisations to "shift the zeitgeist". So, how does this look in practice? He

explained that culture is about permission: it's about 'what's ok' and 'what isn't' - and in some schools, leaders are facilitating a school culture where innovation is encouraged, "despite the prevailing political climate".

"It's happening because the leadership of the school is allowing people to try things differently. It's about being prepared to make mistakes and try things out on the basis of trial and error, which is how innovation works."

"It's not about commanding control; it's about climate control. If you're able to set a different

series of boundaries in schools and give people permission to try things, they will.

"There's a lot of creative energy in schools that we are not tapping into, and if we start from the premise of 'schools as a community of learners' and then decide what type of community it should be, we can strip away things that may be preventing it being that way, because they are mainly conventions we've become used to, they're not laws that we have to obey."

A case for collaboration

As an advocate of collaborative teaching, Sir Ken says there's plenty to be gained from eschewing the strict demarcation between disciplines in high school and pooling expertise. He admitted that "people get the shivers when you talk about collaboration because they think it automatically means 'team teaching', which it may or may not", but he argued that "outside of schools, most collaborative work normally comes from people crossing disciplines and sharing expertise".

"My experiences have shown me that, in education, the more people get to understand each other's disciplines, the more fertile and productive the conversation tends to become. There are lots of ways that joint projects and cross-disciplinary work can excite the imagination of teachers and students alike."



If it's hard to conceptualise how cross-discipline collaboration could possibly work across subject lines Sir Ken reminds us that when great things have been achieved, there has always been collective effort from people with diverse expertise. More importantly, these achievements have always been accomplished under "constraints" that were "accepted" and worked around. He reasoned that back when Kennedy committed the USA to putting a man on the moon by decade's end, "nobody said, 'Mr President, can you just move the moon a bit closer?'"

"All innovation happens within constraints. Whether you're writing a poem in iambic pentameter or building a bridge that spans a gorge, there are constraints. In education there are constraints, but that shouldn't lead us to believe that there are no options other than the way we do things now – and collaboration is one of the ways of overcoming them."

He says another way is to cross age boundaries: "We tend to think, in schools, that we need to keep kids in segregated age groups, but we don't do this anywhere else. Outside of schools, age groups mix naturally."

"The third way is to look at the timetable. It tends to create a set of railway lines across the day, which people find hard to get off. It's an arbitrary system that we divide the day up into 50-minute periods, punctuated by bells. We don't need to do any of that; there are better ways of organising people's time. In fact, we have the technology to give everyone an individual time table."

The role of technology in creative schooling

An article on the future of schools is bereft without the mention of technology and Sir Ken said, "there's no question the internet is transforming education." He identified Wikipedia as a fantastic resource. Far from the days and hours he spent at the library



as a student, he says people now enjoy access to a rapidly growing culturally inclusive global encyclopaedia; "a collaborative enterprise, which is coalescing all that we understand and know, as a species".

He acknowledged it contains errors, but said, "there are mistakes in most books and newspapers and the thing about Wikipedia is that it is self-searching, self-analysing and ruthlessly self-correcting."

"The downside is the vast ocean of nonsense out there," he conceded.

"There was a time when it was straightforward: some people wrote, there were some publishers and most people read what other people had written, it was one-way traffic."

"Now, everyone is a publisher, writer and producer; everyone's a consumer, and that's good; everyone has potentially got a voice. The down side is people have to be even more ruthless in separating truth from nonsense."

"That's a big role for schools; it's not enough to throw people at the internet and say, 'go research something.' It's even more important that we remain critical and use our sense of judgement."

"The other big issue is the miasma of social media – it's a complete misnomer – it's an ironic title because they're not social, for the most part. They're antisocial."

"Print and television was the same. There's always a down side to mass communication, but the

trick is to take control of them and to be moderate in how we use them. The answer is not to shy away from it, to just ignore the internet and technology would be ridiculous, but we do need strategies to help kids get the best of them and not get lost in them," he advised.

A year ago, I asked Sugata Mitra what he thought we should keep from the old system, and he suggested the "memory of an incredibly primitive past" would suffice. Sir Ken was more positive: "There are great schools and wonderful teachers working in them, and kids who go to these schools and love and enjoy them."

Sir Ken's own schooling was a roaring success, but he has often attributed that to the individualised attention he received and his suitability to academic learning. He said, "I'm not arguing against any sort of academic work, it's been wonderful for many, including me; it's been a liberation."

"The education system has been populated by people who have been wonderfully dedicated, often very gifted, and have transformed the lives of millions of people – but that doesn't mean that it can't be improved or that the political pressures on the schools are justified."

So, it's not a matter of throwing out the baby with the bathwater? "No, but it's about finding out what the baby is, and what it is we are trying to protect," he counselled.

Students of design at a university

level are often introduced to a book called *The Metric Handbook*, which covers how body dimensions relate to ergonomics. The book covers how the bell curve is employed to determine standardised dimensions for items like tables and chairs, door height and width and so on. So how do we decide what size a 'standard' chair will be? Or a 'standard' sized school chair, more pertinently? It's based on the bell curve, and the result is that a small cluster of people feels comfortable in their seats. The clusters on either side are uncomfortable, but they manage to cope, though not necessarily enjoy their time in the chair; and for the outliers, it's a disaster.

What actually happens when education is designed using the same statistical approach? Does our education system only serve a small cluster of academically minded students? That is, those who are gifted both in the synthesis of large amounts of information and the forms of output that are typically tested; and are of a temperament that can manage large stints of desk work? If so, what happens to the second group? They might be called the coasters – they cruise along under the radar, manage the work, stay out of trouble. They survive schooling, but do they thrive? The outliers: these might be our 'high/frequent flyers', our drop-outs, and our sufferers of anxiety and mental illness, or even victims of suicide.

Sir Ken says part of the problem is that we're working on a deficit model. "One of the consequences of having such a narrow view of ability in this testing mania is that it generates a very wide perception of inability."

"Truthfully, I've never encountered anyone in my life who doesn't have special needs, (some of them are social, some are psychological, and some are physical) – and the sooner we recognise this, the more healthy and humanitarian our education systems are likely to be." ■

By Suzy Barry, Editor

A school's journey to embed restorative practices

Darren Trippett

Collage Principal,
Yarra Hills
Secondary College



Yarra Hills Secondary College is a multi-campus college of around 900 students in the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne, with campuses in Mooroolbark and Mt Evelyn.

Since taking on the role of college principal in 2013, Darren Trippett and his leadership team have prioritised the development and implementation of restorative practices across the campuses. - to improve student-teacher and student-student relationships, as well as to provide a more stable and orderly environment for student learning.

Why the change?

In reviewing past practices across all campuses of the college, I identified that the default management of student behaviour was very reactive and prescriptive, without much thought of how things could change as a response.

If an adolescent gets a maths question wrong, we don't just 'punish' them and tell them we expect them to get it right next time, we discuss what exactly they did wrong, talk them through why it was wrong, so they understand it and then provide strategies on how to get it right. It is a learning experience. Why do we then default to punishment when that



Yarra Hills Secondary College students experience a calmer, more pleasant environment.

same student gets their behaviour or relationships with others wrong?

In looking into the school's responses to student management issues, it became clear that staff were struggling to deal with some students, particularly 'repeat offenders'. Year level coordinators were spending a great deal of their time quashing 'spot fires' and there were a large number of subsequent detentions and suspensions as a result. On top of this was the huge workload

for these staff members in investigating every incident to find out who was at fault, or to blame, and then the allocation and follow up of consequences. Clearly, what was being done was not working, as the behaviour kept happening.

Restorative practices

Around this time, I was attending a principals' conference and heard Adam Voigt (Real Schools) speak about this very issue. Adam's philosophy is very much built around establishing and maintaining effective relationships in the school setting, not only student to student, but also student to teacher. A key part of this is encouraging students to actually understand the damage they may have done to their relationships with others, due to incorrect behaviour and to then help them through the process of being better at 'getting it right' i.e. restoring the relationship. This resonated strongly with me and shortly afterwards Yarra Hills Secondary College embarked on a partnership with Real Schools to start the process of creating a restorative environment and embedding it in school practices.

How?

After committing to a partnership with Real Schools, the Yarra Hills leadership team, Adam and I sat down and plotted out a 3-year plan on how to become a 'restorative school'. The first part of this was all members of the college's leadership team undertaking intensive restorative practices training with Adam. It was crucial that all leaders were not only familiar with what to do and how to do it, but also that they would be in a position to mentor and guide other staff. These leaders were then given a period of time to test things out in their own 'real world' settings to ensure that the model fitted the college, but to also iron out any inconsistencies or issues before other staff were brought on board. Once this team were all familiar and proficient, all other staff were then taken through the same intensive professional development to prepare for whole school implementation.

A crucial part of the implementation was assisting the staff to develop and trial many of the strategies, including the use of 'affective' statements (linked to an emotional response) such as



Classes are more productive at Yarra Hills with fewer behaviour management issues.

"I felt let down when you" or "I appreciate the fact that you" These statements not only focus on the link between the action and the effect on the relationship, but they provide the student with immediate feedback on the impact of this. Staff then worked together to develop a 'bank' of these statements, which has been added to the college online Moodle curriculum resources, along with many other restorative practice materials.

Another strategy that staff embraced was the use of 'restorative circles' in their classes to foster a better environment. In fact, as a part of the partnership with Real Schools and following the earlier PDs, Adam came out to the school and provided in-class support to teachers wishing to learn, try or demonstrate these. In essence, he made himself available to run a class and be observed, assist a teacher with a class, or just observe and provide feedback. These sessions were considered highly valuable by staff, many of who observed others' sessions and/or tried out their own.

Those staff members in student management positions were also stepped through a number of processes to address higher order issues in a restorative way - with the focus going away from the 'blame game' and detective work, to a more consistent, rational approach that allows for a student to understand and learn how to manage themselves and others.

The final piece of the puzzle, before it could be implemented, was to inform the community. Much information was sent out to parents regarding the college's move to a restorative model, including the reasons for doing so and the expected outcomes. A large part of this was also holding a parent information evening where the college leadership team and Adam ran through restorative practices and how things would be different and why. This is most important because the college needed to have the parents on board when the first instance



Principal Darren Trippett with the student leadership team.

arose regarding their own child. Again, it is important to not default to blame and punitive measures. Almost without exception, the parents have also embraced the model and do continue to support the college and the procedures.

Outcome: where are we now?

While Yarra Hills still considers itself on the journey to full implementation and embedding restorative practices into the culture, the feedback and data has been very pleasing. Anecdotally, staff believe that the classroom environments are clearly calmer, with fewer 'spot fires' occurring. Coordinators have found the process particularly effective when dealing with higher order issues, as well as in response to bullying incidents. They also find they have more time available for other things.

Objective measures have shown that there has been a reduction in volatile incidents occurring in class at all year levels, as well as a reduced level of escalation for any incidents that did occur. Student removal from class has dropped significantly, partly on the basis of staff developing better relationships with the students and having a calmer environment, but also due to teaching staff themselves feeling they have better strategies in place to manage concerns in their own class. Despite increasing enrolments, the number of suspensions has dropped across the college over each of the last three years, as well as an associated decrease in repeat offences or offenders. The college's Attitudes to School Survey data has also shown that students feel safe at school and there is reduced evidence of bullying behaviour.

Where to from here?

As a college, we continue to work on embedding and reinforcing restorative practices, including the inclusion of school student leaders as 'champions' within the school. With a growing school enrolment, it has been crucial to also train all new staff in the expected practices, as well as to continue to provide professional development for others trying to improve their own practice. Having now significantly progressed down this path, the most valuable resource for staff seems to be other staff who have trialled, tested and refined these skills.

In summary, I believe that embedding restorative practices across the college has been an incredibly positive development for Yarra Hills Secondary College and one which continues to improve the learning environment for all students. ■



Staff practise restorative circle time with Adam Voigt.

Why students lie and how relational culture makes them stop

Adam Voigt

Founder and director
of Real Schools



This issue, Adam Voigt of Real Schools takes a look at what makes students lie and how a change in culture can shift students' focus from 'talking themselves out of trouble' to self-responsibility.

I look back with a wry smile at some of the odd things I've said to students as a teacher. Some are statements, like the day that I told my class that if they were all going to have a rubbish attitude that I'd be making each of them stand in the dumpster at recess.

Clearly a ridiculous threat that would never be carried out, all of us were left falling about in laughter for a moment while I came back to my senses.

I also chuckle at the silly questions I've asked and one, perhaps not so silly when first examined, is "Why did you do that?". As if there could be a logical explanation for wrapping a full roll of sticky-tape around a student or for trying to cut your apple into slices with the woodwork room bandsaw. What answer was I possibly hoping for?

Something like "Well sir, I'm building an audition tape for Mythbusters with full consent from the principal. We're hoping to prove that dropping a bowling ball from the gym roof will in fact fall faster than this year seven student?"

The question "Why did you do that?" is representative of the wrong system, an adversarial or judicial style of system, where seeking to understand is really only code for seeking to ascertain blame. Blame and punishments (or consequences as we've so tended to commence calling them) are things we all seek to avoid – at any cost. We'll sacrifice our dignity, our honesty and our integrity if we can only mitigate the severity of any pending consequence. This system encourages exaggeration and minimisation at best. At its worst, it rewards creative dishonesty.

Even in the adult world, we'll pay



Schools are not, and should never be viewed as, judicial systems."

– Adam Voigt

huge amounts of money to lawyers should the judicial system choose to pick a fight with us. We actually outsource the lying! We'll have them word our story in more a favourable light, call on irrelevant character referees and blame others for choices that we should be owning. Why? Because we wish to reduce the potential price of our choices.

The result – a whole community's rather sceptical regard for the honesty of all lawyers. Further, we make the very same morally bankrupt lawyers immorally rich! Within the judicial system, we'll do almost anything to reduce or avoid wrath.

Let me make my next point as clear as possible ... **Schools are not, and should never be viewed as judicial systems.** Blame, punishment, accusation, winners/losers, exaggeration, acrimony, judgement, appeals and especially the proliferation of 'bush lawyers' should not be the hallmark aims of the systems we deploy. The presence of these cultural hallmarks is **why students lie.**

Schools should be collaborative systems. These systems are marked by honesty, respect, cooperation, consideration and responsibility. Not for a second do I suggest that these more appealing descriptors are easy to achieve, but if we don't at least start using approaches that target them, how can they ever become a reality?

As an example, let's take responsibility as a target and ask ourselves what a *responsible* student does.

Is it one of the following?

1. Understands the impact of a poor behaviour choice and, through repeated practice, takes supported or self-directed action to right the wrong.
2. Lies, denies involvement and likely endures an uncomfortable detention, while plotting revenge against all those who have aggrieved him/her.

I think we know the answer.

In stepping away from the adversarial/judicial system, I'd like to suggest that a restorative system be your target. Within this system, students are asked questions (better questions than "Why did you do that?") that help them to understand the impact on others and to choose physical, personal actions to fix it up. It doesn't always work perfectly – hey, what does? – but at least it's geared towards the outcome we're looking for. In this case, responsibility.

A former student of mine was a world champion when it came to lying. He had significant biological and environmental factors that meant his social/emotional intelligence was coming from a long way back. Exposure to two years of restorative questions resulted in a moderate decrease in behaviour problems. But we also got a massive increase in responsibility – framed by the student self-directing visits to teachers where he would clean classrooms and provide hugs until we were "sweet" again. If he can do it... ■

THE CHEAT SHEET

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

Here's the big points...

1. **Schools are not judicial systems.**
2. **Ask smarter questions of students.**
3. **Reflect on your school's system and its behavioural hallmarks.**
4. **Seek a system that promotes honesty and responsibility.**
5. **Consider a restorative pathway when dealing with poor behaviour choices.**

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The Big One –

4.3 Manage challenging behaviour

But also ...

1.2 Understand how students learn

3.5 Use effective classroom communication

4.1 Support student participation

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*.

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Sydney, NSW

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www.agileschools.com

National FutureSchools Expo and Conferences

20–22 March 2018

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre

The National FutureSchools Expo is Australia's largest education showcase, bringing together 80+ suppliers over two days. The event will feature world-class speakers such as Sir Ken Robinson, and five conferences have been designed to cater for senior leadership working in different roles within K-12 education.

www.futureschools.com.au

Ignite the Spark, Fuel the Fire: Differentiating Assessment

6 April 2018

UNSW, Kensington, NSW

The conference, now fourth in the series, will focus on ideas and practical ways to differentiate assessment, in the context of the classroom, whole school and community of schools.

www.education.arts.unsw.edu.au/events/ignite2018/

Beyond the Digital Revolution in ELT: NEAS 2018

9–11 May 2018

Doltone House Darling Island, Pyrmont, NSW Australia

NEAS is excited to present the theme for the NEAS 2018 Management Conference – Beyond the Digital Revolution in English Language Teaching. NEAS would like to hear from students, teachers and professional staff about their experiences inside and outside the classroom with technology.

www.ieaa.org.au

2018 ASEPA National Conference

16–18 May 2018

Stamford Grand hotel, Glenelg, SA

Exploring their theme, 'Turning Tides. Inspiring Minds': The South Australian Special Education Principals' and Leaders' Association offers the opportunity to learn, improve and lead outstanding practice within the field of education for students with disability.

www.asepaconference.com.au

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www.edutech.net.au

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www.velgtraining.com

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www.deeperlearning.com.au

The National Education Summit

31 August - 1 September 2018

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre

The National Education Summit is a meeting of educational minds. The summit draws principals, school leaders, business managers and educators from K-12 to share ideas, problem solve and learn.

www.nationaleducationsummit.com.au

The Education Show

31 August - 1 September 2018

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre

Part of The National Education Summit, The Education Show includes 100+ exhibitors showcasing school resources, products, services and technology for classrooms, schools and careers.

www.theeducationshow.com.au

Australian Council for Computers in Education (ACCE) Conference

2–8 October 2018

Royal Randwick Racecourse, Sydney

The theme is ImpaCT, and presenters will demonstrate how we can ensure maximum effect on student learning using the technologies we employ. The conference will also undertake a 'health check' on the rollout of technology curriculum and ensuring the many resources produced to support this can be shared.

www.acce2018.com.au

Australian International Education Conference (AIEC) 2018

9–12 October 2018

International Convention Centre, Sydney

The theme of AIEC 2018 will be 'Empowering a new generation' and will feature a host of sessions, workshops, roundtables, an exhibition and social events attracting world-leading experts and representatives from all education sectors as well as government, NGOs and private providers. The call for proposals will open in January 2018, and registrations open in June 2018.

www.ieaa.org.au

ICME 2018: 20th International Conference on Mathematical Education

3–4 December 2018

Sydney, NSW

The conference aims to bring together leading academic scientists, researchers and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of mathematical education.

www.waset.org/conference/2018/12/sydney/ICME

Transnational Curriculum Inquiry: Challenges and Opportunities in a Changing World

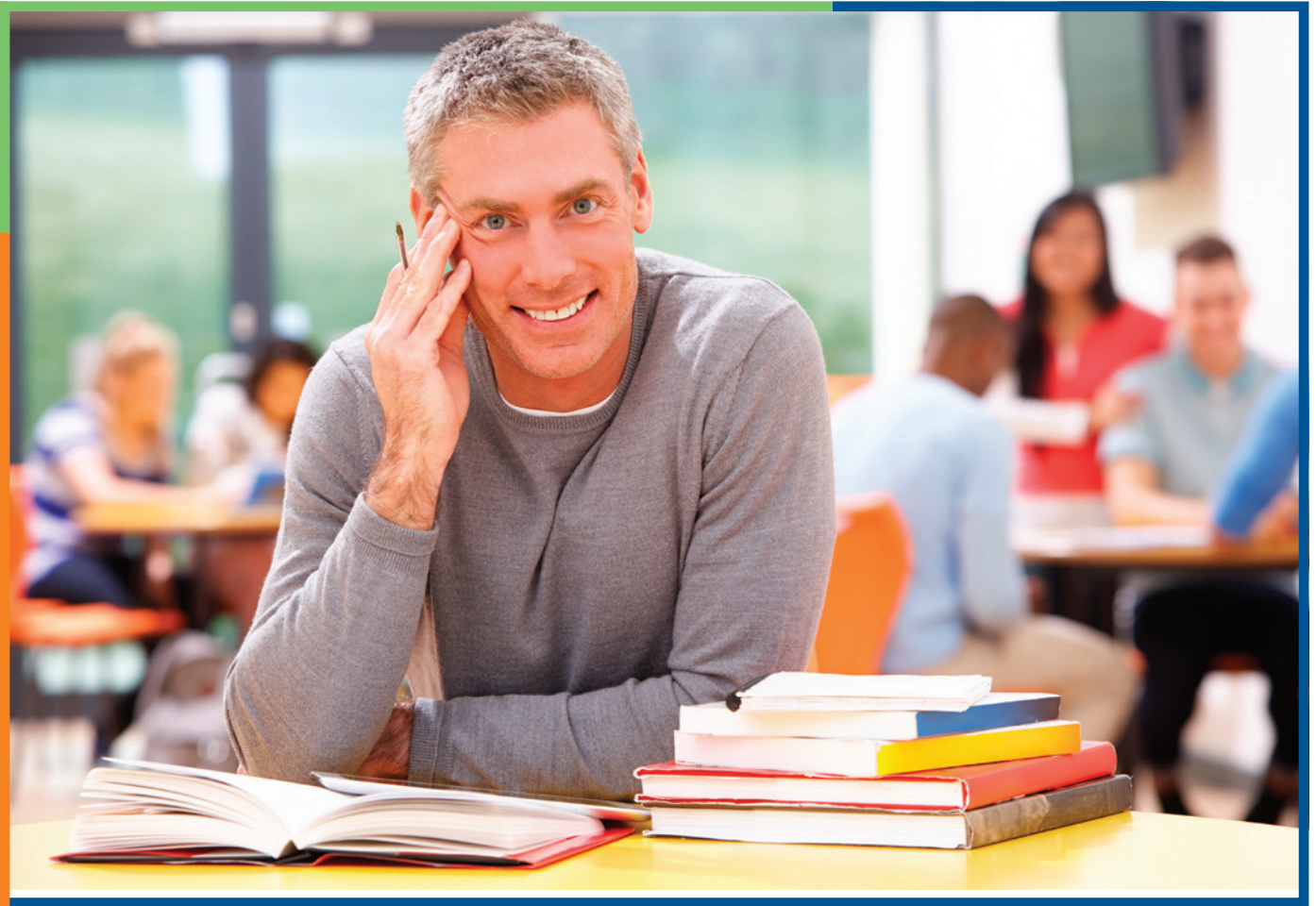
10–12 December 2018

The University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

The conference, under the auspices of the International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (IAACS), will be co-hosted with the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) and the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE). The conference will have an explicitly international orientation, with a view to furthering the project of transnational curriculum inquiry, albeit drawing on what are often distinctively national perspectives, and working within and across them.

www.iaacs2018.info

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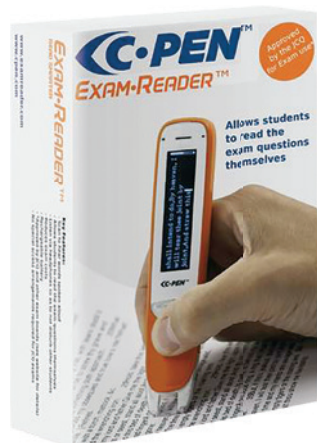
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Real life learning 'takes a village'

Located in the heart of Maleny, a Queensland town with a population of around 3,500, Maleny Independent School is a brand-new school with a vision to "instil a love of learning with a deep, intrinsic understanding of self within each student".

The school was born from the determination of a dedicated group of local parents and their collaboration with River Stanley, an exceptional and passionate teacher, who is now the school's principal.

School News spoke with Mr Stanley about both the rationale, and the mechanics of the new school. He began, "on January 22, 2018, after three years of planning and preparation by a core group of local parents and specialists, Maleny Independent School opened its doors with 12 amazing students, enrolled in years seven and eight".

"This is a fantastic core group to start with to set the foundation for our neo-humanist educational journey ahead. Facilitating academic success, while providing life skills and a nurturing path of self-development are all part of the aims for our students," Mr Stanley said.



River Stanley was interviewed on January 26, this year. Two days later, his beloved 17-yr-old daughter, Serena Joy, was taken in a tragic horse riding accident. With this photo of them together, we honour her memory

So, what is neo-humanism and how does it relate to educating adolescents, or even just general education? Mr Stanley says neo-humanism "relates to life *full stop*", but in the sense of education, he says it's about educating the whole child - with a focus on each child's "inner core and innate self-worth", also with an emphasis on how the individual fits into the "web of life". Characteristics of a neo-humanist education include a focus on service to others; compassion for all living things, and a prioritisation of the

development of self-awareness.

This philosophy will underpin the culture of the school, permeating everything from pedagogy and activity design to service projects and excursions. The students will be knowledge seekers, and not only in the areas of maths, science and English, though these will be well catered for, but also in matters of society, relationships, community engagement, and in humanity itself.

"The school offers a neo-humanist, holistic approach, where students can create experiences linked to their interests and initiatives. Students will be encouraged to learn through 'real world' experiences, extension programs, and through making educated choices themselves; managing risks, and aiming for their personal best, at all times," Mr Stanley elucidated.

While senior years will see students branching off into their individualised education plans, Mr Stanley says that in years seven and eight "there's so much in the curriculum" the format will, necessarily, be more 'conventional'.

"I've said to the parents, 'seven and eight will be more like a normal classroom - I'll make it as engaging as I can, we'll do as many project-based and multi-curricular things as we can, but,

in essence, there's a lot to get through."

"I wanted to expose them to all the different subjects. At some schools, they do an art strand for half a year and maybe another one in another semester, but they still don't get all five over the two years. This is usually because of staffing and timetabling issues, but we are hoping to harness the experts in our community and aim to cover everything."

"I find it sad when students only get exposure to one or two arts strands, and in a place like Maleny where it's so arts-enriched, we thought, 'let's expose them to all five arts strands of visual arts, media arts, dance, drama, music'."

The local community has a statistically high proportion of artists, and arts-based events for a country town, and Mr Stanley says this has provided a resource for the school: "I can bring people in to teach the different elements - so long as I am there, so long as I am writing the program and learning outcomes are met - I can bring in 'experts' to assist."

"The example I give to people is: 'if you saw me dance, you wouldn't want me teaching your child dance', but I match each subject to the curriculum requirements, I set the assessment task for it."



Dance instructor, Kester Chalkley, works with a student. For these students, dance education will be about joy of music and movement.



Preparing modelling clay figures to represent first civilisation people - to be used in 'Dig Tech' as students play with the Mblock program to make their own computer game with Mike Dash.



Maleny Independent School students keep cool in sweltering February heat. Photo: Jody Gilchrist

Essentially, Mr Stanley is the 'teaching expert', and the other party is the 'talent' whom students can emulate, learn from, and draw on as a source of inspiration.

The school has invited a STEM and robotics expert trainer, Mike Dash, and he will be providing the stimulation for their STEAM specialisation.

Mr Stanley said he wanted to avoid the common situation where the school is guided in what subjects they can offer by the teachers they have on staff - rather than the talents and interests of their students.

This is where the benefit of the small school really shines: "if we had 500 kids it would be a nightmare bringing in all these extra people, but for me, it will be the norm."

Maleny Independent School has bypassed the usual timetabling regime of 'exposure bytes' once a week, in favour of block teaching. Students have maths, science and English instruction every day, and the rest of the time is dedicated to one elective at a

time - in an 'intensive' block.

This serves a dual purpose: students are immersed in their learning and allowed the time and space to deeply engage in projects and activities, without the jolt of the bell signalling the need to shift their focus - or losing the thread of engagement during week-long gaps between classes.

"The other benefit is that we bring a specialist in just for the block of subject learning, as opposed to having them on staff forever and a day," Mr Stanley reasoned.

Although he "had to explain to the parents, 'the first two years are going to be more like a normal classroom situation'", every effort has been made to maintain exposure to the Australian Curriculum, but to spice it up, so learning is more engaging.

A major focus of the school management team is to "bring our amazing community together, through community workshops and service opportunities that focus

on enhancing the Maleny community, while supporting students in their understanding of being an integral part of an enriched community".

In an era where politicians lament the lack of 'civics and citizenship' awareness in the younger generations, Maleny Independent School has a firm focus on community engagement, and importantly, contribution.

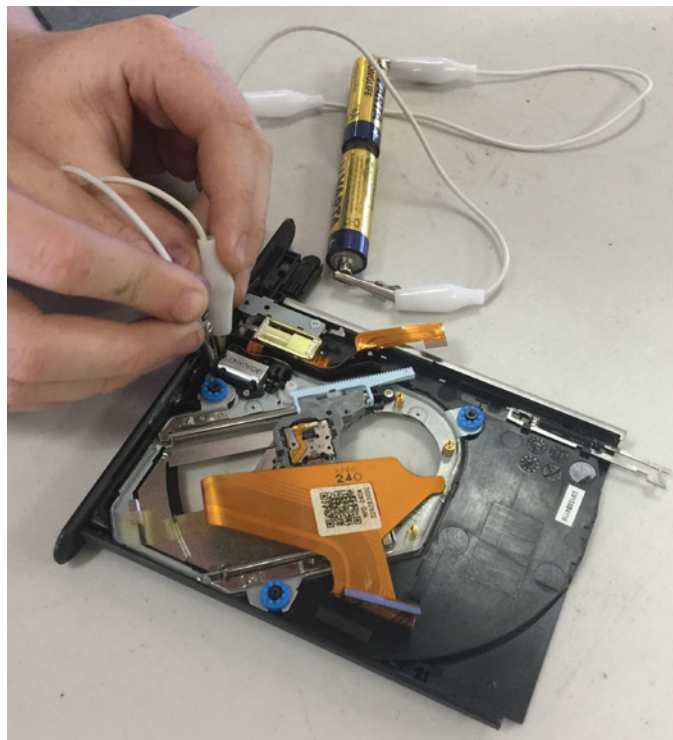
Every Friday afternoon is a community engagement session, and this term, the students have committed to work on a local community garden - revitalising it for use by the local community. The students will be assisting a local arts group that has obtained a community grant to reinvigorate the space, so it can be enjoyed by all.

Food will be grown, as well as native plants for the purpose of species regeneration and community enjoyment. Mr Stanley said the early childhood directors are keen to use it as a mini-excursion for their energetic little charges, but to do so, they

require some infrastructure. Maleny Independent School students will be engaged in building, working with wood and stone, to create a sandpit and a stage for community performances, such as poetry readings and live music.

This school leader is determined to get his students into the real world as much as possible and the all-inclusive school fees include the cost of regular excursions on the last three Fridays of every term. These will be planned responsively to interest, and naturally, will be curriculum aligned.

Yet another benefit of the small school, Mr Stanley says these will be entirely managed using public transport, another real-world skill he would like to impart. "I'd really like to take them to Melbourne to the National Gallery Victoria, to participate in an amazing cross-curricular visual arts and literacy program; we can do it in one Friday. We will have to be at the airport at 6 am, and wouldn't be back till 9 pm, but what an experience!"



More STEM studies with Mike Dash

"For me, the point of camps and excursions is to expose students to things they wouldn't do otherwise, due to family constraints and so on." He says school trips of any sort must be educational but also fun: "It's about making memories that students will keep with them forever."

This real-world engagement is not all fun and adventure; the students also engage in real-life work. The school doesn't employ a cleaner; after being inspired by the TED talk of Peter Hutton of Templestowe College, Maleny Independent School students

are required to clean their own school. The students will be responsible for the upkeep of the space they share with their school 'family', and as the saying goes, 'a family that eats together stays together' - and this family eats breakfast together every morning. School starts at 8.45am with sport, followed by a leisurely breakfast and catch up session, from 9.15am.

Students enjoy the company of their families during school hours as well, due to the open-door policy at the school. Mr Stanley says while the school doesn't *require* parent participation,

they welcome it. "It's about including, rather than excluding the parents," he continued, and the welcoming atmosphere is creating a groundswell for our community connections. "One parent is running adult singing workshops at school," he noted, expressing an expectation that the activity would subsequently capture the students' enthusiasm.

Mr Stanley welcomes parental input: "We say, 'if you've got something to share, let us know and we'll find a way to use it.'"

"The Maleny community has so many talented professionals

who have already offered their services to encourage the students to achieve their potential and follow their individual passions throughout their high school years."

The school currently offers years seven and eight, and Mr Stanley said each year, another grade will be added: "Thus, in 2019, we will have students enrolled in years seven, eight and nine."

Maleny Independent School is a registered school and will follow curriculum benchmarks, however, as a small school, Mr Stanley says staff can offer alternative methods to achieving these benchmarks.

"With plenty of project-based learning and encouraging the families to be interactive in the process, students will be guided through their learning journey with support from local specialists and mentors to enrich the educational experience."

With the key objectives centred around rich, engaging and varied learning, the school will "use pedagogical approaches that account for students' needs, interests, and the school and community context".

For River Stanley, it's always been "about the kids" - after 20 years in holistic neo-humanist education, he took a couple of years away, working in rural and remote locations - including some projects that challenged



Students ready themselves for work at the community garden.



Hands on learning: making clay tablets and looking at cuneiform text as part of study on Mesopotamia. *Left Photo: Jody Gilchrist*

him and provided a deeper context for his vision to create real-world learning within a school setting. He has scheduled weekly one-on-one mentoring sessions with each student, to explore goals, concerns, or just to check in about progress and emotional wellbeing. This is something he will continue to manage himself as the school grows, even if, as principal, the increased workload means he

must step back from teaching somewhat. Hearing him talk, that old analogy of the 'two legs of the compass' came to mind.

This approach to education provides a solid anchor point, embedded deeply in a warm engaged school and wider community.

The other leg of the compass reaches along the circumference of a 'wide enough' circle, as

students engage in inquiry-based learning that addresses individual needs and allows them to grow as a person - gathering perspective, life skills and direction - until they are ready to unhinge from the centre leg and follow their path.

And all this "aligns with the established protocols of the Australian Curriculum and the Queensland Curriculum

and Assessment Authority" - operating within its constraints, which brings to mind a certain Sir Ken Robinson assertion, which appears in this very volume of *School News*.

He said, "In education there are constraints, but that shouldn't lead us to believe that there are not options about the way we do things..." ■

By Suzy Barry, Editor



Smart classrooms for engaged 21st century learning

In recent years, the positioning of Smart technology in the classroom has quietly shifted from a novelty to a necessity.

As learning becomes increasingly digitalised, loosely tethered to its advancement outside of schools, more students, especially in independent schools, are accessing 1:1 laptop programs. Elsewhere, as teachers gain confidence through tech-related PD and in-school training, BYOD culture has taken hold in earnest. In the ACT, every student will receive a Chromebook, in a program to roll out over the next few years, while, in other states, government directives continue to urge teachers to incorporate 21st century teaching methods into their pedagogy.

School News spoke with Epson's Nathan Fulcher about the role of technology, particularly Smart technology, in the classroom.

Industry view

He began, "the use of Smart tech in the classroom facilitates the development of students' proficiency in using technology to synthesise and report information".

"Any technology aid in the classroom has the potential of enhancing the delivery and pace of the classroom session." With the volume of curriculum today's teachers are wading through, anything that streamlines delivery and enhances the pace could be seen as a plus.

"With this objective, Epson has created solutions that lay down learning pathways for achieving 'digital literacy' in students, before they face the complexities of an increasingly digital world as adults," Mr Fulcher noted.

With school uptake of BYOD technology on the increase, Mr Fulcher says it's vital that interactive projectors allow the teacher to connect to a variety of devices, including Windows®, Mac®, iOS® or Android devices.



"It's important that this technology allows multiple displays on a number of device screens simultaneously, so as to accommodate all students around the classroom."

He says projectors have come a long way: "Interactive functionality is also available without a PC connection, so drawing on the projected screen is now possible when connected to other devices, such as visualisers or DVD players."

Mr Fulcher explained that developing solutions for teachers means focussing on what sort of functionality is required in the classroom, to support the performance of both teachers and students.

"Functionalities like allowing for two people to write simultaneously on the interactive area - using the two interactive pens - is key for the collaborative culture that is emerging in high-functioning schools."

"Another exciting development is the finger touch interactivity, which means no pens are required and greater spontaneity is facilitated," Mr Fulcher added.

"Certain models now allow teachers to operate intuitively using their fingers on the screen - now you can annotate, open and close files, scroll through pages, move and enlarge objects."

"With the finger touch interactive models, multiple users can annotate on the interactive area using a combination of two pens and up to six fingers at the same time! Perfect for classroom collaboration."

With flexible learning areas on the up, Mr Fulcher says interactive functionality without a PC connection allows for free movement around the school: "Drawing on the projected screen is now possible when connected to other devices, such as visualisers or DVD players. Even when there is no input source, you can annotate on the screen like a whiteboard."

He says innovation in Smart tech is all about enriching learning, while making life easier for educators: "features like on-screen operation, allowing teachers to perform operation functions on screen means there's no need to look for the remote control when the projector can be easily operated directly from the screen!"

He noted that using wireless projection and interactivity software, with a networked interactive projector, has emancipated teachers from restrictive and confining cables.

"Educators can wirelessly display and interact with content as they move about the classroom with their laptop, experiencing a whole new level of interactive freedom."

He said, "education solutions have proliferated in recent years, and teachers really can expect Smart technology to challenge the parameters of what's possible in class."

According to Mr Fulcher, advanced network connectivity and management capabilities can allow educators to present A/V content over the LAN, or to annotate on network content using instant annotation tools.

He says the technology exists for teachers to display, annotate, and control content from their iOS® or Android mobile devices with a free 'iProjection' app and the optional wireless card.

"Teachers can walk around the class and still share engaging content," he advised, saying that while he understood teachers found the new developments daunting at times, developers have been working on ensuring operation is straightforward and interfaces are intuitive.

Mr Fulcher says Smart technology is bringing people together in an education setting, by enhancing engagement due to the multi-channel input and output capabilities that will inevitably replace the 'teacher-talks-while-students-listen' model of instruction.

Another key application of Smart technology in student engagement is in its entertainment value. "I think a major benefit of having Smart technology in the classroom is that they allow students to play!" Mr Fulcher noted - and the utter saturation of the educational app market shows he's not alone. ■

By Suzy Barry, Editor



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Life skills centre stage with high school performance

Staging a school drama production may seem a daunting task, but according to Warren Flanagan of Northmead Creative and Performing Arts High School it's a task well-worth the benefits to students, teachers, and the wider school community. *School News* caught up with Mr Flanagan to demystify the process and help equip teachers for taking on a student cast.

Suzy Barry: What are the legal considerations for putting on musicals? Copyright for songs and plays and what about if students write the play?

Warren Flanagan: In many cases, you have to apply for the rights to use creative content. Necessary rights vary in cost



Warren Flanagan

depending on the musical or play. Hal Leonard Australia provides all information on rates and fees, rehearsal material and orchestral material.

If students write their own material, they have to make sure their work is original and does not plagiarise other works. This also includes using iconic characters

or branding such as Mickey Mouse as you have to seek approval for the use. However, you can create adaptations from stories for example creating a modern adaptation of a Shakespearean play as plays by Shakespeare, Wilde and many other pre-twentieth century plays can be performed freely without obtaining a licence.

You DON'T need a licence if your production will be performed only for students and staff as part of your usual school activities, within school hours and no outside guests will be present.

You DO need a licence if the production will be public. That means anyone who is not a current student or staff member at the school will be present (whether or not they have to pay for a ticket) or the performance will take place outside of normal school hours.

Almost every song, musical or play performed in public is subject

to the payment of royalties, and this includes excerpts, except in cases where copyright is no longer required, because the period of protection has expired (70 years after the artist's death).

You can use songs in your devised play, however, you still need to seek approval and buy the licencing rights to have the songs played during your production. APRA and AMCOS Australia provide information on licensing rights for music. However, students can write their own musical score as there are no licensing rights for originality.

My advice is to do both (scripted and devised) for experience, as you learn new things along the way. Producing a play or musical is never the same experience twice, as there are always new challenges to face. The remarkable thing about producing a student-devised work is the satisfaction of witnessing a student's creative production coming to life on stage.



SB: How does costume provision work these days – not so many stay at home parents to sew on sequins and ruffles?

WF: Sourcing costumes from Op shops, eBay and Gumtree are the best, as you find things that save you time. Get in contact with local theatre groups and schools that may have a costume wardrobe they are willing to lend, rent, or in some cases, donate. Seek, ask, and you shall receive.

Advertise within your school community for a group to help out with costuming. You'll be surprised at how many parents or grandparents will be interested to attend, bringing an array of creative skills.

SB: What sorts of AV equipment is required for a school to put on quality performances? Is it just a PA? What about lighting?

WF: For a quality performance, I would seek out equipment to mic the stage properly for effective audio projection. This may require an assessment of the performance space and venue, making sure the audio equipment will satisfy the acoustics, and that there is a clear balance for the performers as well as the audience. Hiring equipment for audio can be costly, however some companies are willing to negotiate to give you the best deal.

I believe lighting is very important as it creates the atmosphere within a production. Once again,



lighting hire companies are willing to help – patching in lights with special effects and will even demonstrate how to operate and cue lights into the lighting desk. Visual projections are a great way to utilise the stage to add to a set creating depth or even create a minimalist effect.

Overall you can hire an operator for lighting and sound. Try to provide students with the opportunity to learn new skills in production elements, such as lighting and audio systems.

SB: What benefits do students derive from participating in

performance-based activities at school?

WF: Whether a student seeks a career in the industry or not, the benefits gained are life skills. Drama teaches students to explore universal concepts and develop skills, such as improvisation. It develops confidence in students and a self-belief in knowing how to present themselves to others. Performing prepares young people for similar scenarios, like job interviews, presenting, and auditions, which are all improvised situations; un-scripted.

Back stage roles can be offered to less extroverted students, however, these students need to be effective communicators. They are the spine of the performance, which provides the support required for the show to run smoothly.

SB: Should all students give performance a go or are some students just not suited?

WF: Only if they enjoy it. However, I do believe every student should give performance a go, because they'll discover something about themselves. Even if they didn't do well, they can learn to laugh at themselves and develop resilience. It's all about experience.

SB: What are the biggest issues you face with directing/producing live performance with children or teenagers?

WF: The biggest issue is around commitment to the production. Rehearsals take up a lot of time and some students are unaware of the time needed to stage a production. I've had to re-cast due to lack of commitment.

SB: What else should teachers consider before producing live performance projects at school?

WF: Teachers should know their students well, and effectively communicate with parents about the expectations of the performance and rehearsal process. Keep your principal well-informed about all processes and developing ideas. ▶



Take a revolutionary step with your school stage



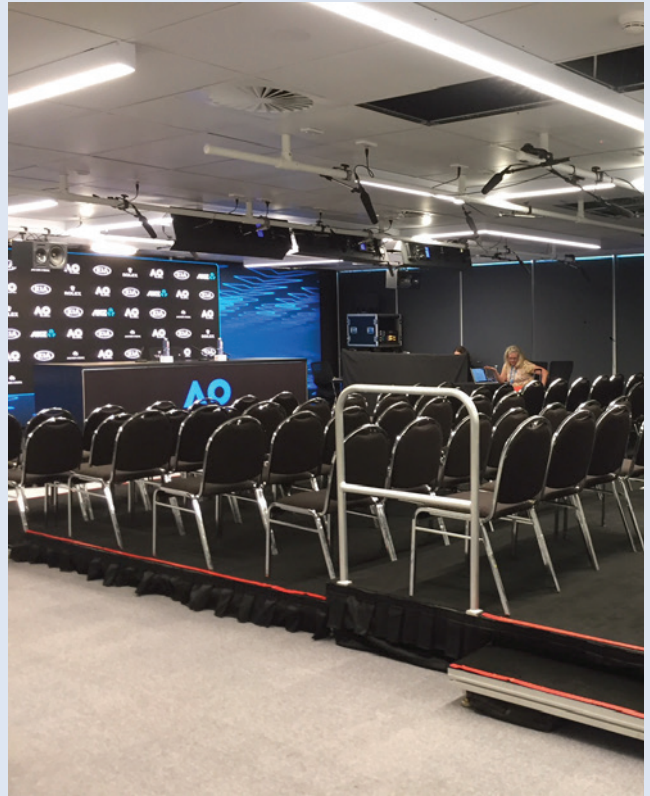
Adam Trivett of Transtage says schools require a staging system that must be lightweight and easy to set up; compact for storage and transportation; and cost effective.

He says there's no reason why schools can't achieve professional grade staging: "Our portable stages are widely used by professional events company around the nation. Schools can create the exact same set up as professional venues."

Mr Trivett says quality staging equipment is only the beginning: "It's vital to look after our customer before, during and after sales."

"When schools find that they are repeatedly hiring a stage for events, it is time for them to consider buying their own stage, as it will be a lot more cost effective in the long run," Mr Trivett noted.

He says that with options such as Transtage's rent-to-own scheme, schools can take a revolutionary step in the right direction, lifting their theatre space to a whole new level of professionalism, permanently. ●



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- Simple ideas can turn into a big mess with students who don't communicate to their parents effectively. Use every form of communication: Email, notices, verbal, meetings etc.

SB: Can you tell us about a recent performance you have produced with your students?

WF: In 2016, we produced William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. I had a drama company numbering 42; 20 boys and 22 girls. The dilemma was to find a play that would suit a large cast. As difficult as it was, *Lord of the Flies* came to mind, as it is studied within our junior English curriculum. I decided to split the cast along gender lines and stage two productions,

which served to create inclusivity, regardless of gender.

The challenging, yet rewarding, part was the process of adapting the play to the female cast. The female cast went into a writing process to rework the script from a female perspective. The workshopping process derived from the question: 'Would girls act differently on the island?' This led our female students into a study of human behaviour and defining differences between boys and girls, exploring how they would approach confronting issues.

Characters' names were changed and even characteristics had to adopt a female flair. My female students loved this process of



reworking a script and so did the school audience. The male students' performance was remarkable and full of violence and suspense. Devoted fans of the play supported the male version, as it was true to the script, which made our female cast concerned that their version would not do the story justice - though this expectation proved far from correct.

The audience found the violence performed by the girls far more confronting. My female students wanted to express that bullying and violence among girls is just as savage as boys, but society is used to seeing males fight, while

females fighting seeming to be more confronting and awful to witness.

My students workshopped the fight choreography, learning stage combat, which they enjoyed. The production received praise from the staff and students who felt that our adaptations of the play brought a new creative and confronting light to William Golding's concept of displaying human ugliness. We adopted a new title for our productions, calling them: *Kill the Beast - an adaptation of William Golding's Lord of the Flies*. ■

By Suzy Barry, Editor

World-class kit makes school performance the main event

Jamie Cashmore of Edwards Sound Lighting and AV says there is no one-size fits solution for school theatre audiovisual requirements. With variables including space dimensions, audience size, types of performances, and budget; he says expert advice is vital.

"Quotes and designs are usually provided at no cost - if you can supply a scale drawing of the venue we can really help," Mr Cashmore noted.

He says school theatre is becoming more 'professional', with increased performance

skill from children and greater access to world-class equipment that rivals the set-up at the local theatre! "Schools can buy the base equipment (permanently installed speaker system) and rent peripherals or one-off required pieces of kit," he explained.

He says when a school partners with Edwards, they benefit from 50 years in business, talented staff; and access to partner companies (and installers) all over Australasia, who are dedicated to providing the right solution every time and backing it up.

"For spare parts, repairs, expanding on the original purchase, or simply support; we are there." ●





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Quality kit and expert training for school AV and lighting

School is often where an interest in lighting and AV begins, which is something Dyke Dunning of High Noon Stage Production knows personally, as this is exactly where it began for many of their staff.

"They've never lost that enthusiasm, which means we're happy to help if you're taking your first steps into the technical world," he said.

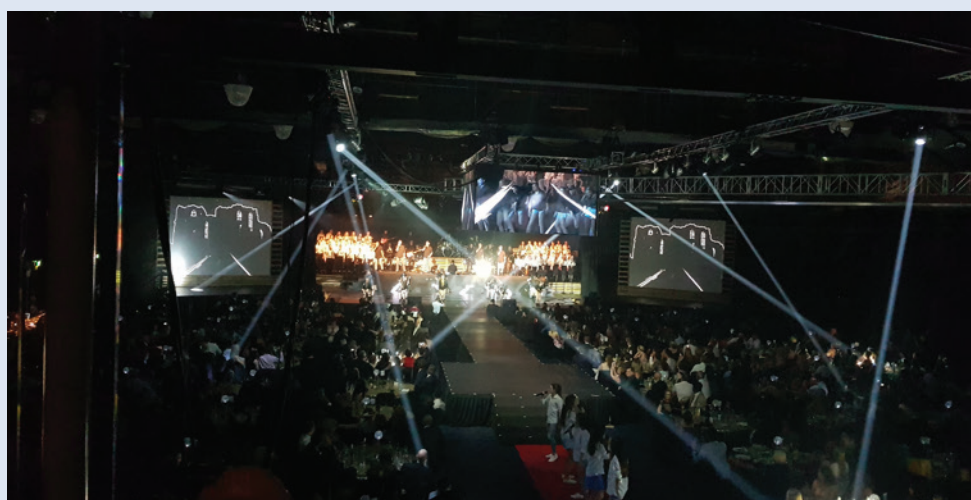
He said, "with our extensive range of lighting, audio, video, staging and rigging fixtures, High Noon can supplement a school's existing equipment with a set-up perfect for any occasion."

"We also have the expertise to replace a lighting rig or upgrade your spaces with the latest audio system," he added.

"In every case, we work with you to ensure you get the most versatile gear and best possible value for money."

"Our experienced service technicians will ensure that everything is not only working safely, but to its maximum potential," he advised.

Mr Dunning says High Noon regularly holds classes for students, offering both a wide variety of product-specific training, and exploring the parameters of technical production. ●



Expert guidance ensures audio & lighting systems are fit-for-purpose

Lighting and PA requirements for school theatres require planning and expertise.

Michael Stephens of The P.A. People said, "40 years of experience and excellent relationships with manufacturers allow us to provide well-designed professionally-installed systems, backed by a comprehensive warranty and reliable service long into the future".

He says factors including theatre and

audience size, the acoustic properties of the space; existing lighting, intended performance types, budget and the skill level of the users must all be considered: "Ensuring that a system is fit-for-purpose is paramount in any system design and installation."

"The system design will need to work within the physical constraints of the building; it is self-defeating to design a system if speaker arrays can't be hung in required locations or an architect



prefers speaker cabinets flown in certain positions," he cautioned. Mr Stephens says with experience ranging from commercial arts venues like the Sydney Opera House to schools and tertiary

institutions, The P.A. People are well placed to design and install full-spec sound and lighting theatre systems for any 21st century school theatre space. ●

Keeping drama onstage and costume stress to a minimum



Tracey Nuthall of Costumes without Drama says while parents are expecting higher standards in costumes, most don't have the time or the skills to produce them. To ensure uniformity, quality and reliable costuming, Ms Nuthall recommends hiring quality costumes from a specialist provider.

"Pricing is affordable and laundering on return means teachers aren't left with post-production tasks."

She says admin is a breeze: "Costumes are all barcode labelled, so everything is scanned out on dispatch and scanned back in on return. A detailed inventory of costume items hired by each child eases the burden for drama staff."

"With postage available Australia-wide, costumes can be made available up to two



weeks before the show, to avoid last-minute panic." A personalised service is available: "We attend to any last-minute changes and can provide 'bump in' or 'bump out' options for Melbourne schools."

With dedicated service staff with experience providing costumes for children, Ms Nuthall says she will ensure your school production can have costumes without the drama. ●



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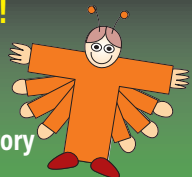
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Online literacy tools help decode reading



Discussion (actually, heated debate) around literacy in Australia shows no sign of abating, as the pro-phonics and anti-phonics factions continue a spat that has lasted years - with the fresh stimulus of the Year One Phonics Check proposed by the federal government.

While most with an opinion are happy to leave the 'whole language' movement in the past, the degree of importance of phonics and the level of integration with other elements remains unresolved.

Academics have sparred over the proposed phonics test in essay form across platforms such as the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) blog and *The Conversation*.

These bouts have elicited passionate comment from phonics proponents, school teachers at the furnace of literacy education, not to mention disaffected, and occasionally irate parents, who feel their children have been let down by a wishy-washy approach to literacy. This clanging of academic pots reached a crescendo in 2017, as those invested in early literacy scrambled to influence the government's position on the test and see the decision go their way.

A running theme from teachers and some academics has been that the year one phonics check implemented in the UK doesn't show teachers anything they didn't already know – yet, without widespread interviewing of year one teachers in England, it would be difficult to gauge just how useful (or useless) it had been. And actually, as the British government does seem to be

flagging improvement in early literacy, many feel compelled to take note – including our own prime minister.

It seems there might be a point to the admittedly narrow test: It tells us only if early learners have a grasp on phonics, that is; have the cracked the linguistic code. For anyone who missed the furore, the phonics check involves testing year one students with pseudo-words, which are presented to children for decoding. As they are invented nonsense words (not taken from Dr Seuss books), children can *only* use a system of phonics to decode them – there is no contextual help and no recall possible. This gives teachers the starting point to teach that child under a grapho-phonemic approach.

With a general consensus that phonics is at least a part of a sound literacy education system,

perhaps the next question is mode of delivery. Technological advancements are transforming delivery of education in all areas, and the challenges of differentiating literacy teaching are no different.

For an industry view of literacy education in Australia; what the problems are, and possible solutions, *School News* spoke with literacy education experts.

Industry views

A balanced approach to closing the literacy gap

Paul George, general manager of Sunshine Books Australia, says the significant changes to literacy pedagogy over the last 40 years have been largely positive. He says changes have been "focussed on gaining further understanding of the reading process and improving learning outcomes for students".

According to Mr George, closing the gap for those who are not reading well must be the main priority. He suggests balance is preferred over either "extreme" (all phonics approach or a whole language approach).

He says explicit and systematic phonics instruction are imperative in the early years: "Children need the skills to be able to decipher words (decoding) but they also need to be able to construct meaning. Phonemic awareness and phonics are key building blocks to becoming successful readers. Equally important are comprehension, vocabulary and fluency. The Australian National Inquiry into the Teaching of Reading (report published in 2005) recommended an integrated approach to teaching reading that supports students'

development in all the above areas. This supported the US findings of the National Reading Panel Report in 2000, which also recommended an integration of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary knowledge and text comprehension via explicit instruction."

More on differentiation: how is a teacher to manage the immense spread of abilities in any given class? "Welcome to a teacher's world!" was Mr George's reply: "Individual assessment" is the first step, and must be ongoing."

"Grouping children with similar learning needs for instruction and scaffolding their learning is the next part, then re-assessment." He says digital literacy resource allow teachers to "differentiate instruction so that students can work at their own level independently". ▶



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AMPLIFIERS

According to Mr George using online technology aids can also assist teachers with other time-consuming tasks: "Online tools are making it increasingly easy for teachers to track student learning and also to assess and report."

With 21st century students arriving with sophisticated tech literacy, he said it can be "harder to engage today's students if you don't integrate technology into your teaching- but easy if you do!"

Our brains are wired for spoken language

Celeste Musgrave of Jolly Discoveries attributes the decline in literacy achievement to two factors.

She says the removal of phonics from the curriculum 35 years ago (recently reinstated) has left many teachers unable to conceptualise

let alone teach the grapho-phonemic connection, and she feels universities are failing to equip new career teachers with "the knowledge of how to teach children to read and write".

A strong proponent of synthetic

phonics, Ms Musgrave says literacy instruction needs to consist of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and comprehension.

She said that all schools should

implement synthetic phonics in the early years, owing to "a plethora of scientific research evidence available proving the benefits".

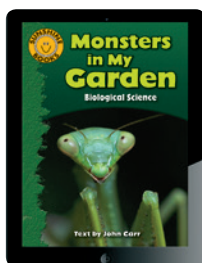
She says the teaching of reading and writing must be systematic



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Supplier Profile | Sound Waves

Sound Waves Online wins national award

Sound Waves Online was crowned Best Student Resource – English (Literacy, Literature, Language) in the 2017 Educational Publishing Awards Australia.

Sound Waves Online is packed with printable, projectable and interactive tools that support teachers with explicitly teaching phonemic spelling.

Sound Waves Online is just one of the resources from the Sound Waves program, written by accomplished educators Barbara Murray and Terri Watson and published by the passionate team at Firefly Education.

Ann Smales, one of Firefly's directors, said 'The Sound Waves program has been very popular in Australian classrooms for years, and even more so now with the recent focus on phonics in the Australian Curriculum.'

'We knew that teachers were searching for more support and easy-to-use resources to teach the phonemic approach effectively, so we

decided to breathe some new life into Sound Waves Online to better support busy teachers and continue to engage students.'

The 2016 relaunch of Sound Waves Online included all the favourites alongside a raft of improvements and additions, such as:

- Weekly Lesson Plans
- Warm Up slideshows
- Brainstorm Kickstarter slideshows
- Find a Word and Helpful Hint slideshows
- List Word Flash Cards
- Extended Sound Boxes.

Sound Waves is the only whole school approach to phonemic spelling that covers all three threads in the phonics and word knowledge sub-strand of the Australian Curriculum: English. ●

because "our brains were never wired to read and write print". According to Ms Musgrave, our brains are wired to understand the spoken form of a language, therefore, "reading and writing does not come naturally and must be taught, unlike speech which is acquired by immersing children in spoken language".

She added that vocabulary development assists with reading comprehension and "reading is not successful unless a child is able to comprehend what they have read".

What is the role of technology for the 21st century learner? Ms Musgrave agrees that engaging the modern child can be a challenge with the hyper-stimulation of the modern world, and the increasing likelihood of often-unfettered access to tech devices. She says if devices are available, then using tech to the teacher's advantage is the way to go: "an innovative teacher is able to design interesting lessons around technological devices – fun educational apps can be incorporated into the classroom during rotational group work as a means of consolidating previously taught concepts."

Ms Musgrave is pleased to see

that phonics is no longer "a taboo word" as it was when she studied education at university: "The whole language theory lasted for over thirty years and a fall in literacy skills amongst students was noticed world-wide."

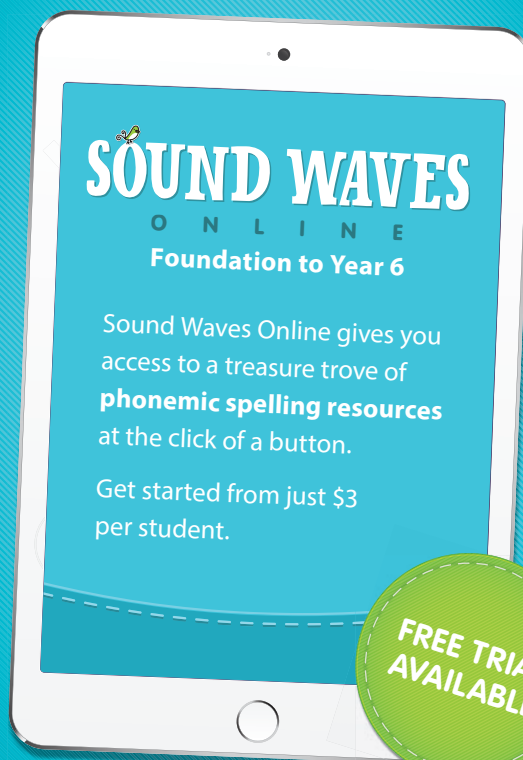
Training and systems key for success in literacy

Nicole Forrest, literacy specialist and presenter of Firefly Education's Spelling Masterclass, listed two factors that contribute to effective literacy development. These were: establishing systematic synthetic phonics as the main approach to teaching spelling; and providing teachers with adequate training, support and resources to effectively implement this form of instruction. According to Ms Forrest, lack of teacher training and support can fuel debate around approaches to how spelling is taught.

She said, "while systematic synthetic phonics is the most consistently backed by evidence-based research, if educators are not confident in implementing the phonemic approach – its effectiveness can stumble in schools". ►



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◀ *What exactly is systematic synthetic phonics? According to Ms Forrest, "systematic synthetic phonics is the explicit teaching of how speech sounds are represented by letters and letter combinations. Instruction is intentionally pre-planned so that students progress from learning simple, broadly applicable sound-letter relationships to those that are more complex and unusual. The approach is closely tied to instruction in phonological awareness that includes syllables, rhyme and phonemic awareness."*

"Systematic synthetic phonics relies on explicit instruction. In a (very small) nutshell, findings suggest that novice and intermediate students learning new information (e.g. sound-letter relationships) require direct, unambiguous teaching to avoid 'cognitive overload'. Learning to read and write using the alphabet is not innate – it requires explicit instruction."

Ms Forrest's perspective on management of multi-ability classes is that the trend to level students according to their ability can cause its own issues. She said, "teachers become thinly spread" and "students can be channelled into completing work that they 'can' do instead of being given the opportunity and challenge to tackle work that they 'should' be able to do for their age."

She said, "Even within a single curriculum level, there's plenty of scope for differentiation to support struggling students to reach the expected standard, while extending fast finishers with meaningful activities, without fast-tracking these students to work above their year level (which will only cause a knock-on effect for the next teacher to do the same). A well scaffolded program will include support and extension activities *within* a year level – so teachers do not have to resort to using resources from different year levels."

And the role of technology? She says technology must enhance the pedagogy of any lesson or



it shouldn't be included. "For example, when practising the pronunciation of sounds spoken in Australian English, projecting a close-up video of someone slowly forming the sound with their mouth (and voice) is more effective than a teacher standing in front of a class where only the front row of students can see the shapes being formed with their mouth."

In light of raised awareness and recent support for the year one phonics check, Ms Forrest says many schools want to adopt, or further enhance, a phonics approach and while educators are turning to digital solutions to achieve this, she said, "schools are recognising that simple repetitive practice and drill programs are not the only way to use technology in education."

"Teachers are on the search for more meaningful uses of technology, where the teacher still remains at the heart of the learning."

Cracking the code crucial for proficiency

Michelle Kelly is general manager, schools and publishing at Modern Teaching Aids and she says for literacy education to be successful, students need to master different areas of reading and writing. "They need to learn the 'code', learn to make meaning, and learn to think critically, and a balanced approach to literacy teaching encompasses all three key areas." How can

teachers achieve this? "The best teachers ensure that students are immersed in an environment that encourages literacy development. Today's students are expected to be proficient in multiple 'literacies' including digital literacy, which can be supported by curriculum-aligned resources and programs across all media," she advised.

Technology can also assist with the inevitable spread of abilities, according to Ms Kelly: "It's about taking the fundamental best practice elements of teaching reading and overlaying it with the use of 21st century technology."

"It's vital to differentiate literacy instruction to support and motivate individual students at their own level," she noted. She says this can be achieved via digital reading programs, through the creation of different levelled reading groups in class, and individualised home reading practice so the level is just right for each learner.

According to Ms Kelly, in the early stages of reading, the best way to accelerate progress is to read *more*: "A connection between home and school is vital, giving students access to texts at the right reading level." She says audio narration can support young learners but advised an educator can decide when to use it, so programs should allow teachers to switch it on or off.

Digital tools allow for easy tracking: "Online comprehension quizzes and activities also provide

engaging ways for students, parents and teachers to check progress. Data such as time spent reading a particular book, or the number of times a book is read, along with choices of books can be monitored by teachers to again reinforce the home/school links," she advised.

Ms Kelly says the question of whether students are harder to engage because of technology is an interesting one: "Children are certainly bombarded with highly stimulating technology both in and out of school. Many digital education resources work on a game-based methodology with rewards, avatars etc to engage children and keep them interested."

"Conversations with educators and parents suggests that there needs to be a balance between game-based learning resources and those that follow proven methodologies."

She added that maintaining a primary focus on pedagogy over entertainment was key in their creative process: "We were deliberate in our decision to implement a pathway that reflected best practice in the teaching of reading – from guided and shared reading through to independent, complemented by a rich repository of supporting teaching resources and assessment." ■

By Suzy Barry, Editor

Phonics: the building blocks of reading and spelling

Mandating the teaching of phonics will make a major difference to literacy results in Australian schools, but only if it is mandatory that all teachers are given adequate training in the explicit understanding and teaching of phonics. Initially, this should be provided for pre-service teachers by universities, and through high quality in-service training for practising teachers.

Phonics is to reading and spelling what times tables are to maths: it is the foundation on which reading and spelling are built. Likewise, communication in the written form is the cornerstone for learners' continued independent development.

Teachers who have a deep understanding of phonics are able to make informed professional choices when employing teaching processes and programs in their schools. They are able to competently analyse children's spelling and reading, which allows them to evaluate, remediate, and provide the necessary intervention.

Using phonics for reading and writing is a lifelong skill. Even the most literate of adults when faced with an unfamiliar word revert to phonics to decode and encode.

Our knowledge of letter patterns (graphemes) for speech sounds (phonemes) allows us to 'guesstimate' the pronunciation or spelling of a word. Therefore, developing learners' phonic knowledge from the beginning of the literacy process becomes a sustainable process for lifelong learning.

For this learning to be successful and sustainable, it is imperative that the teacher has explicit knowledge and understanding of phonics - they need to explicitly



understand the alphabetic principle and the phonetic structure of English.

Speech is a natural process. Early language is acquired through the hearing of sounds, words, syntax and grammar used in the home environment. Very young children produce and synthesise sounds into words; words are then strung together to form sentences. As children receive feedback on their attempts at this process, they start to understand and accommodate for differences (for example house - houses, mouse - mice).

Acquiring language involves a process of modelling by adults and requires trial, error, hypotheses, repetition and most importantly opportunities to practice. As a child's curiosity and communication needs expand, so does the development of their oral language skills.

Reading and writing are both learned skills that require learning a written code. Written English requires the learner to understand that there are 26 symbols used to represent 44 spoken sounds - therefore there cannot be a sound to symbol correspondence. Unfortunately, many early synthetic phonics programs promote a 'letter/symbol to sound correspondence', only to find that this then becomes unsustainable. English is not a one letter makes one sound process. Unfortunately, many schools now employing these letter-sound programs are not getting the required or expected outcomes from their phonics teaching. This type of phonic teaching relies on the learner ignoring the teaching and employing a visual approach to move forward. This is the reason these programs require the creation of a bank of 'sight words' for words that don't fit their teaching methodology.



Students experiencing spelling difficulties tend to develop behaviours to minimise errors and their spelling becomes less adventurous. There is a tendency to select words they can spell or with which they feel confident, instead of more appropriate and meaningful words that mirror their oral language skills.

Phonics is the code breaker. As words are made up of speech sounds, every word in English can be sounded out. Understanding that letters don't have a sound but represent sounds is the key to breaking the English code.

Sustainable phonics teaching requires the teacher to have explicit knowledge of the sound system of English and the written patterns used to represent speech sounds. With this knowledge they are able to help learners with the reading and spelling of any word in English. Gone are the terms 'tricky words' or 'sight words', as every word can be sounded out and the written patterns explained. Teaching the reading and spelling of English should be approached in a similar way to language acquisition. We don't start teaching speech by introducing a sound at a time. We say whole words, so the child hears all the sounds in that word simultaneously.

Teaching reading and spelling is the same. We need to see patterns in words for reading and we need to hear all the speech sounds in words for spelling. Teaching reading and spelling requires modelling by teachers. Learners need strategies, trial, error, hypotheses, repetition, and, importantly, opportunities to practise. Most importantly, this should be in a controlled environment that values risk-taking by a teacher who understands the phonic structure of the language they are teaching. ■

By Kelly Phillips,
The THRASS Institute

3D printers: another dimension to learning



3D printers in every school? What's in it for the kids?

Problem-solving: With all the considerations for successful 3D design, students will need to develop problem-solving skills and use critical thinking to create something that's going to come out the way they'd planned.

Resilience: Most students will need to try more than once to get their projects to come out the way they'd imagined. This could mean they'll need to design and redesign their projects until they are just right. This teaches them that just because they fail the first time doesn't mean the project is a complete failure; it just means they'll need to try again.

Collaboration: Most schools encourage students to work together on their 3D printing projects. This gives them a chance to work on their collaboration skills, which is something they'll need to know how to do when they get to university and the workforce.

As schooling hurtles towards the kind of future the older generations can barely imagine, technology like 3D printing is on the minds of many a STEM-enthusiast educator. School News spoke with Jason Spark of QPCA to better understand just what 3D printers can do for our students' learning.

Industry view

As teachers scramble to engage a cohort of technology-soaked youths, Jason Spark says 3D creates "another dimension to learning", making learning fun and interactive: "It enables students to design, feel, and interact with their subjects."

He said, "learning has become very two-dimensional over the years; to activate students' creative thinking is a real step forward".

"I've seen this first hand with kids who come into our office and see the 3D printer in action – they're mesmerised by the process and

the resulting prints." Mr Spark says 3D printing has the potential to re-engage kids in learning, while providing something tangible for them to take home to their parents: "Explaining their creation can only reinforce what they learnt and create a discussion around the dinner table."

How to integrate 3D printing into existing curriculum

"The better 3D printers provide approved step-by-step STEM lesson plans, so the teachers can use the 3D printer easily," Mr Spark advised.

With such a wide array of applications, he says teachers can use their 3D printer to implement a multitude of projects from mathematics through to geography.

"Forward thinking schools are excited by the way 3D in education can integrate multiple subjects with the one 3D project, significantly expanding the learning process and real-life application."

For schools on a budget, he

suggests asking providers about financing options, such as leasing and rental arrangements: "There are also grants available for schools from local and federal governments that can supplement or almost cover the cost of 3D printers."

And is it worth it? Mr Spark thinks so: "A recent search on Seek.com.au showed 850 jobs around Australia that require some kind of 3D design or print experience." (I think we can all agree that there were exactly zero jobs requiring this skill when most of us were seeking our first jobs.)

"The word on the streets is that 3D printers will be the next industrial revolution. This means that manufacturing and prototyping will change drastically from what we know today into a nimble and fast process that will be unrecognisable to the past generations," he continued.

He predicts 3D printers will one day be as ubiquitous as mobile phones are today- with households printing things "we can't even imagine". ■

By Suzy Barry, Editor





Fieldwork depth studies for *real* STEM engagement

Recent changes to the NSW Curriculum now require schools to include 'depth studies' in science instruction for students. A depth study is any type of investigation/ activity that a student completes, individually or collaboratively, that allows the further development of one or more concepts found within or inspired by the syllabus.

Jenny Murphy of Latitude Group Travel has been designing experiential learning programs for many years. *School News* contacted her to investigate what depth studies mean for student

learning and engagement.

Industry view

Suzy Barry: What is your view on the changes to the NSW Curriculum to include depth studies?

Jenny Murphy: We have a strongly positive view of the inclusion of depth studies because they have a focus on learning scientific principles, theories and laws, and then applying them practically. We love the idea that instead of passively absorbing knowledge and learning about discoveries, students will hopefully make discoveries of their own. This will require a lot of adaptation for teachers, but at the same time it will be exciting for them to see their students thrive and enjoy this different type of learning. ►

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◀ **SB: Why is this type of learning important?**

JM: If the teacher chooses an experiential learning option such as fieldwork, this will be a wonderful opportunity for students to really engage in an in-depth science study, where they will learn all aspects of how to formulate a question, collect data; and prove or disprove their hypothesis. These are the building blocks of science in the real world. Also, instead of just learning scientific facts, students learn the 'how' and 'why' about scientific investigations.

SB: What are some ways that students can be exposed to this sort of learning?

JM: One of the best ways, we believe, is to undertake fieldwork (experiential learning), exposing them to real world investigations- and to then give them an understanding of how to formulate a hypothesis, which they can use for their assessment task. During the extra fieldwork time, they can also collect data to use for their own depth study, so the training and the opportunity to start their assessment task is available in the same exercise.

SB: What are the benefits of experiential learning? What does the research say?

JM: There is no doubt that the benefits of experiential learning are enormous. It engages students much more than book learning as they are involved hands-on activities and, planned

well, it engenders real educational outcomes that meet the needs of the curriculum. Equally, it can expose students to experts in their field who can further inspire them to consider Science/STEM careers in the future.

SB: How does the concept of depth studies prepare today's students for the probability of a future their parents won't recognise?

JM: While in-depth studies have always existed, the techniques and equipment being utilised in today's real world are far more advanced. By exposing students to what is being used in the real world, we allow them to see what possible careers now exist that did not exist in the past. What was once simple now requires complex investigations to



reach the next level of scientific understanding and knowledge.

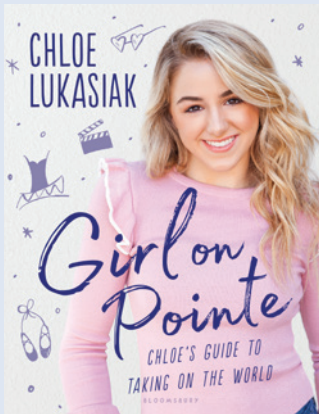
SB: Why do you believe that fieldwork is one of the best ways to undertake a depth study?

JM: Research shows that getting students out of the classroom is key to getting them excited about

what they are learning, leading to greater absorption of knowledge and experiences. There is also a big push to increase the number of students going into STEM careers - so what a great opportunity to open their eyes to what's possible for their future. ■

*By Suzy Barry, Editor
Photos Latitude Group Travel*



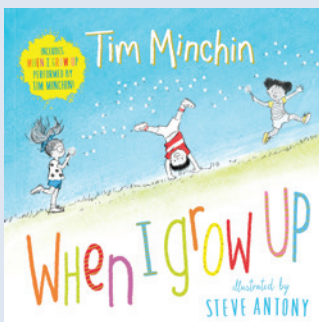


Girl on Pointe

By Chloe Lukasiak

For readers 13 +
Bloomsbury

Chloe Lukasiak is a big believer that things happen for a reason. She knows that life would be easier without disappointments, bullying, and medical issues-but sometimes it takes challenges to inspire you to achieve big things. From her status as fan favourite on the hit reality television show *Dance Moms* through her life as a social media star with millions of fans, Chloe has found that self-acceptance and kindness are the key to getting over the rough spots in life and realizing your passions. This full-colour, heavily designed book featuring never-before-seen photos, inspirational quotes, and Chloe's own doodles and poetry offers exclusive insight into Chloe's world as well as a message that will inspire all readers to be their very best selves.



When I Grow Up

By Tim Minchin

For readers 3 to 6
Scholastic

This hugely exciting picture book collaboration by internationally celebrated musician-comedian, Tim Minchin, and award-winning illustrator, Steve Antony, is an absolute treat for all ages. Inspired by Tim Minchin's hit song *When I Grow Up* from *Matilda the Musical*, the book takes a humorous yet moving look at adult life from a child's perspective. Grown-ups surely have all the fun as they must eat sweets every day, climb the biggest trees and watch cartoons till their eyes go square. But do they really...? A truly magical picture book by two incredible talents.

NEW TO THE BOOKSHELF



Indigo Blue

By Jessica Watson

For readers 9 +
Hachette

Alex feels like a fish out of water in her new hometown - the sleepy little lakeside village of Boreen Point where she is reluctantly sent to live with her slightly eccentric aunt for her final year of high school. None of Alex's classmates could care less about the new girl, so Alex couldn't care less about them... or so she tries to tell herself. As a distraction



from what is quickly shaping up to be a very lonely year, Alex spends her savings on a rundown little yacht and throws herself into restoring it. A curious discovery leads to the beginnings of a friendship, but it's Sam - the sailmaker's apprentice - and his mysterious ways that capture Alex's attention and force her to question what is

real and what matters most. A captivating novel about fate, friendship and finding yourself from Young Australian of the Year 2011, Jessica Watson.



Australia's Great War: 1918

By Libby Gleeson

For readers 12 +
Scholastic

The planes kept flying low above them. They were dropping bombs and the noise drowned out all other sounds. After an hour the signal rang out and they surged forward through the smoke. Thousands of men screaming and yelling, their line was kilometres wide. Behind them came Monash's tanks, those huge, new mobile machines. They smothered the land they ran over; flattening the crops and then any wire left standing. With Russia out of the war, the Germans have sent all the troops to the Western Front. Almost defeated, a small group of Australians fight to hold the enemy back at Villers Bretonneux. Weary after years of fighting and deadlock, Ned and his mates know that the war will be lost if they can't turn the tide. More and more, Ned's thoughts turn to home, not knowing if he will ever see his family, or his brother, again.



The Girl with the Lost Smile

By Miranda Hart

For readers 10 +
Hachette

This is a story guaranteed to make you laugh and cry: the first children's book from award-winning, bestselling author and comedian Miranda Hart. Chloe Long has lost her smile. She's looked everywhere for it. (Under her pillow. Under her bed. Under her nose. Obviously.) She's tried everything to bring it back. (Her favourite cake. Her favourite gran. Her favourite joke. Obviously.) But nothing seems to be working! Until one night, something utterly magical happens - and Chloe finds herself on an adventure that is out of this world. With fabulous illustrations by Sainsbury's Book of the Year winner, Kate Hindley, *The Girl with the Lost Smile* takes you on an action-packed, magical journey that celebrates the power of the imagination, the wonder of true friendship and is guaranteed to make you smile.

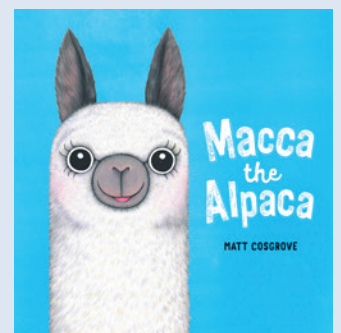


Sam's Surfboard Showdown

By Allayne L. Webster & Amanda S. Clarke

For readers 8 +
Scholastic

Sam's Surfboard Showdown is Allayne's seventh publication, co-authored with her sister, Amanda S. Clarke. Set in Robe, South Australia, the novel explores themes of sporting rivalry, competition, friendship and jealousy. Full teaching notes available from Allayne Webster's website: www.allaynewebster.com



Macca the Alpaca

By Matt Cosgrove

For readers 4 +
Scholastic

Macca the Alpaca is small, kind and friendly. His days are easy and carefree until he accidentally bumps head-first into Harmer the llama. Harmer is big, unkind and never, ever friendly... Can little Macca find a way to teach Harmer a lesson he'll never forget? ■

Innovative, versatile furniture creates flexible learning for all

The Temple Christian College Student Learning Hub is housed in the iconic 'Thomas Hardy & Sons' building, situated at the Mile End Campus in Adelaide. Architecturally designed as a blend of traditional stone and wood with the latest in functional furnishings and digital media, the multi-level space provides a number of functional features including a new circulation desk, senior study areas, collaborative work areas, individual work areas, and storage for teacher resources.

Teacher librarian Kelly Anderson



said, "the Student Learning Hub provides a flexible range of spaces for classes and students. Taking on different forms and sizes these spaces are sometimes referred to as 'camp fires': spaces where an expert shares to a group, 'watering holes': where

collaborative group work can occur and caves: spaces for individual study".

"The 'hub' is used for a variety of purposes but primarily it was designed as a versatile or flexible learning space, where students and teachers can approach

learning in new ways, outside of the traditional "forward facing" classroom," Ms Anderson explained.

"By far one of the most important keys to the success of the area has been the deliberate selection of functional tables, chairs and work stations, which has afforded a level of versatility and flexibility to the 'hub', enabling quick format changes."

The chairs and tables were provided by Resource Furniture and Michael Merlino of Resource says they have proved their versatility in ways that have exceeded expectation: "In particular, Trama flip-top tables allow for swift redesign of learning spaces, and their mobility means you can arrange them however you like, and then nest them away in tight storage space."





"We supplied several types of chairs, one was a standard four-leg chair, Spacio, ergonomically designed for comfort, as well as a height-adjustable 'drafting chair' version - suitable for both standard desk height and the Prisma bench tables we provided. This allows the bench to be standing desk or a drafting desk with a 'stool'."

"Another flexible chair option is the Wing chair; these can accommodate a standard seating position. You can also swing around to have an arm rest," he said, and a real bonus is that

these chairs only weight 5kg each, making it easy staff (and students) to move. "They also come in some funky colours," he added.

Mr Merlino says the hub is also being used for staff meetings, and all manner of learning activities, and teacher librarian, Ms Anderson, confirmed that the new Student Learning Hub provides flexible spaces for students and staff, in the surrounds of a welcoming and inspiring educational and study facility. ■

*By Suzy Barry, Editor
Photos by John Montes*



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Curb bullying with smarter timetabling

Bullying is an increasingly difficult problem to tackle in schools. Restricting mobile phone use or blocking access to social media within school hours can reduce cyberbullying, but anti-social behaviour in the classroom is still a serious issue.

The 5 Smarter Timetabling approaches, coupled with advanced timetabling software, can help in reducing bullying in your school.

Flexible class structures - dynamically tuned

Allowing 'pairs' or groups of classes to be scheduled together allows for easy movement of students in/out of classes. This doesn't impact other class changes, nor restrict the timetable, like fully blocked subjects. Advanced software can group classes effectively, but also dynamically respond to issues. E.g. a school may pair group classes 7A+7B and 7C+7D but later decide 7A+7C and 7B+7D is a better mix of social groups.

Being able to 'regroup' classes in a working timetable in minutes, and to see different combinations, is powerful. It allows schools to tune the timetable dynamically. It also helps show 'what if' scenarios, and to address social problems arising during the year.

Clever class list management tools

Software that can show issues with class lists, and help to resolve them quickly with minimal disruption, can be invaluable.

One such issue is undesirable student combinations in classes. This can be avoided by tagging 2+ students for separation. If the students are placed together in the same class, they will be flagged, signalling adjustments need to be made. Conversely, pairing students with others who may protect or support them,



can insulate against antisocial behaviour. Here, students are flagged if they are not placed into the same class.

Smaller class sizes allow for better supervision, and naturally discourage negative behaviours. While it's easy to balance classes in blocks, balancing class sizes across elective blocks is complex. Smart timetable software can manage size balance via complex algorithms during generation and facilitate cross block movement of students.

Increase rooming consistency and reduce student movement

Smart rooming also helps curb anti-social behaviour. Reducing movement lessens opportunity for bullies and victims to cross paths while unsupervised.

The ability to define preferred rooming for student groups increases rooming consistency for classes, benefiting both teachers and students. Knowing the spatial arrangement of rooms (how far apart each room is from others), sequential lessons are scheduled to limit movement to

the same area. This is otherwise time consuming and difficult to do manually.

Improve staffing quality

Students placed in classes that are shared between two teachers may suffer from reduced supervisory oversight. Shared classes are more disruptive to students and can aggravate negative behaviours. A teacher may not be aware of social issues occurring in a previous lesson of that class, taught by a colleague. Consistent staff for a class helps teachers in managing bullying.

Using algorithms to perform staffing according to rules determined by head teachers, can balance load across teachers and reduce the need for split classes. Enhanced reporting gives visibility of students who have many different teachers, scheduled in too many split classes. This may be a contributing factor to anti-social behaviour.

Increase student engagement

According to a 2004 American Educational Research Journal

article by Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris, "students motivated by and engaged in learning, perform considerably higher academically and are better behaved than unmotivated or unengaged peers".

Students given choice in elective based subjects are happier, more motivated and engaged in these subjects if granted. Smarter timetabling grants more requested subjects to students than legacy methods. Improvements here keep students focused on their education and less disruptive in class.

Conclusions

Forward thinking school leaders see smarter timetabling as an effective strategy towards reducing bullying.

Rather than waste time dealing with distressed students, angry parents and poor grades, reconsider your timetable, and software. The solution to bullying may lie here - an area you hadn't previously considered as such big lever for change. ▲

By Chris Cooper, Edval

Fundraising ideas to engage busy parents

As school budgets feel the pinch, the same conditions are putting the squeeze on the resources families have at their disposal - both financial and otherwise.

Schools may be feeling the sting of a dearth of support from the school community, as one or two parents answer the call for volunteers...

The solution is to select fundraisers that offer easy ordering, a product that people want to buy, and/or no-risk arrangements where you pay for what you sell and return the rest.

More families than ever have two parents working and any fundraising aspirations have to take this into account, but according to one Queensland state high school P&C member, the key is to make it easy on the parents.

The good news? Companies are coming to the party with ideas that take the headaches out of fundraising and allow parents to be involved, without spending hours baking cakes. Parents really do want to help, she says, and the key is to let them know what you need in plenty of time: "Issue a steady stream of communications through whichever channels you have - the newsletter, Facebook page, assemblies and so on. We need to remind families that help is needed."

Parents want to contribute, but they need the fundraising to be straightforward, not too time-consuming, and profitable enough to warrant their time.

Choosing a provider that makes the process simple is paramount, as is aligning the labour requirements to your specific school community - and don't forget to involve the kids! ▶



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Fundraiser for creativity and commemoration



Katrina Tunhasana of Dress My Bear says effort cannot exceed gain if a fundraiser is to be successful, "which is why we ensure ordering and processing is straightforward and stress-free."

She added that a successful fundraiser must suit the community: "The sell price must align with the economic resources of the community, so parents can participate."

"The time of year is also a factor and coinciding your fundraiser with a main event can increase exposure and community engagement."

She says Dress My Bear is an all-year-



round favourite for primary schools: "Younger age groups find it rewarding to create personalised items as they can be used for gifts or treasured keepsakes."

"However, at any age from pre-school to university, everyone loves receiving a personalised graduation gift. Our cuddly personalised graduation bears, and teddy bears can have artwork, handprints, photos, school logos, and personalised messages printed on the t-shirt as a memento for years to come," she noted. ●

Personalised fundraising with everlasting appeal

"The best types of fundraising activities are those that generate an emotional connection," according to Frank and Tony of Design a Brick, producers of engraved fundraising pavers that offer an everlasting, personalised reminder of a contributor's support of the school.

They said, "the fundraising activity must also have a clear purpose; people are more likely to participate if they know how the money will be invested in students' education and wellbeing."

Frank and Tony are dads of teenagers and have been around plenty of fundraising activities and

they understand the associated challenges, which is why they have created templates, order forms and instructions that can be modified to suit the campaign "without too much fuss".

Bricks come in three different sizes, offering a range of price points - and with no set RRP, the school determines the mark-up to suit their community.

Ordering is flexible: "Schools can run a short campaign over a couple of weeks, or longer campaigns involving the broader community and past students/families over months."

"Once we receive the final order, we generally have the pavers ready for shipping in the time it takes to arrange the working bee to landscape the site!" ●



◀ Your student body is fantastic resource of motivated, energetic fundraising operatives and depending on the age of your students, they may be able to leave the parents entirely out of the labour equation. The realism must extend to the age of your students: "Primary schools can run fundraisers that use children's creativity, such as volunteer card-making workshops at lunchtime leading up to Christmas and Easter, while high school students can probably be trusted to sell chocolates outside the local supermarket after school - depending on your school's

location." Mobilising the student body is the domain of school staff, and not something the P&C can do without you. All school leaders will have examples of times their students showed amazing determination and creativity in reaching a fundraising goal.

With the guidance of a tenacious staff coordinator, a culture of service and self-responsibility can ensue, engendering both a sense of accomplishment, and an uplifting atmosphere of school pride. ■

By Suzy Barry, Editor



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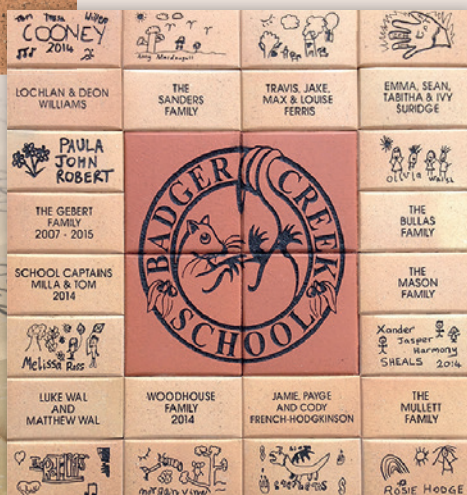
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The downhill highlight of the whole school year

For many students, the school ski trip represents not only the highlight of the school year, but one of the best experiences of their entire school career. Certainly, the fun and excitement they enjoy has the students (and accompanying adults!) talking about the trip for many years to come.

But this is hardly surprising. A school ski trip offers all the benefits of normal school sports and excursions – stepping out of comfort zones, overcoming fears, promoting teamwork, achieving personal goals and the like – all while in an exhilarating mountain environment, with snow to boot!

While there are snowfields in New South Wales and Victoria, hopping across the ditch can add a cultural aspect to the school ski trip.

New Zealand is blessed with a great variety of commercial and club ski fields, ranging from volcanic mountain settings in the North Island to the wondrous winter playgrounds of the South Island's Southern Alps. With the ski season running from June to October, schools have almost five months in which to slot in a trip – surely a bright spot during the dark winter term!

Ski areas in New Zealand:

- **North Island** - Ruapehu, Taranaki

- **South Island** - Nelson, North Canterbury, Canterbury, South Canterbury/Otago, Wanaka, Queenstown

Larger commercial fields, whose facilities often include snowmaking and grooming, plus user-friendly chair-lifts, are often the first choice for schools, especially as they offer more extensive equipment hire options, and the all-important ski and snowboarding lessons for beginners. Nevertheless, while club fields offer fewer facilities, they are often less crowded.

Après-ski

However, it is not just the ski field themselves that are important when planning school ski trips; as crucial is the après-ski accommodation and social activities (often a highlight in themselves to away-from-home school students). Yet again, larger commercial fields may be the best option here, especially as they tend to be nearer ski resort towns – themselves with a range of accommodation choices – or have their own on-site accommodation options.

Bear in mind, then, that effective planning of a school ski trip is a complex business. It involves weighing up appropriate ski field facilities, accommodation and food, travel (from school to the ski area) and transport (from accommodation to the ski field), plus entertainment and activities at day's end or in inclement weather.

Fortunately, many specialist travel operators offer all-in-one school ski trip packages that take much of the hassle out of organisation – though at an additional cost. At the same time, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to planning, with costs versus time, versus convenience, all specific to individual schools. The process, therefore, must also include how and where the trip will fit within the school-wide curriculum, especially if students from different year groups are involved.

Life skills

Nevertheless, a well-planned ski trip comes with numerous additional benefits – as well as being fun and memorable, such trips promote valuable social and practical skills that are more widely applicable at school and later in a student's life.

For example, taking students away from familiar comforts and routines helps solidify existing friendships and create new ones, especially as the group explores new places and shares new challenges together. Students also get to see that their accompanying teachers are real human beings – shock horror! – providing a positive effect on the classroom environment upon return to school.

Not only is a school ski trip often the first time many students have felt snow, but it may also be the first time that they get to travel away from home, allowing them to explore their independence while

still in a monitored environment.

More than snow

As marketing manager at Mt Ruapehu ski area Matt McIvor also points out, a ski trip is not just about the snow. "Taking the classroom outside will get students stoked! There's nothing quite like a geology lesson held on an active volcano." Much the same can be said for other ski fields, with geological process – such as glaciation, tectonic uplift, and the effects of erosion and climate change – right in front of students' eyes. Social and cultural history, too, can be included: the sacred nature of mountains to Māori, Māori and European exploration, the advent of eco-tourism and more. As Matt says, a ski trip provides "plenty of hands-on learning opportunities for students to discover the history and stories of the mountain".

Risk management

Of course, part of the fun and exhilaration of skiing and snowboarding is the risk element, without which you might as well be sat in front of a screen watching someone else ski! But the inherent hazard of youngsters plus speed plus excitement carries with it the need to mitigate dangers as much as possible. Ensure that all service providers, including the those transporting students to and from the fields, have an up-to-date health and safety policy – and factor insurance cover into the costs of the trip. ■

By Patrick Whittle

Why learners love Mt Ruapehu



At Mt Ruapehu, we pride ourselves on being the best place to learn to ski or snowboard in New Zealand.

Our qualified instructors help students have fun, feel safe and build up their

confidence through tailored lessons in a friendly environment where celebrating successes with fellow students creates a great bond and sense of accomplishment within the group. This may be the first time touching snow for many students, creating an experience

they'll never forget.

Mt Ruapehu's Whakapapa ski area is New Zealand's largest, home to the nation's premier beginner playground, Happy Valley. A fully self-contained learner's area, Happy Valley boasts its own cafe, rental complex and ski school

meeting area, while also being free of advanced skiers and snowboarders.

The gentle slope is nice and long, allowing for plenty of time to really get the hang of turning and stopping, with easy to use carpet lifts and a slow-moving chairlift for quick progression. ●

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Canberra: The ultimate civics and citizenship education resource

Canberra, Australia's national capital, is the perfect destination for civics and citizenship education. Its rich collection of cultural institutions and attractions provides well developed, curriculum-linked education programs that immerse students in hands-on learning in spaces where real life democracy takes place.

Nowhere else can you watch government representatives discuss important national issues, sit in the seats where past political figures made decisions that shaped Australia, view the nation's founding documents (with the actual seal of Queen Victoria), or watch the highest court in the country monitor our constitutional rights. Over 160,000 students visit Canberra each year for these experiences. *'A visit to Canberra enables students to have a deeper understanding of many areas covered in the curriculum. They are able to link their understandings to direct real life examples.'* (Teacher)

The Canberra excursion experience has changed over many years.



Students at Parliament House, Canberra

The pilgrimage to Parliament House, with a wave to the Prime Minister and then on to pay your respects at the Australian War Memorial, has been replaced by a sophisticated range of intertwined programs offered at over 23 cultural institutions and attractions, all with a focus on supporting the successful delivery of the Australian Curriculum. Of those 23 learning experiences, there are nine that

provide what we consider core civics and citizenship education, assisting teachers to delve deep into topics surrounding systems of democratic government, the Constitution, Australia's justice system, freedoms and responsibilities, Australia's social and indigenous history, and our national identity. More broadly, many other experiences contribute to the idea of national identity,

and the roles Australians play in our society's evolution. These range from learning about our scientific research achievements at the CSIRO Discovery Centre or Questacon, visiting the Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex to focus on Australia's contribution to exploring the universe, and delving into how sport is an inherent part of our culture at the Australian Institute of Sport. ►

YHA Canberra: the youth travel expert

YHA Canberra hosts around 160 school groups per year, and manager Arthur Lee says that as due to the steady increase in popularity, YHA has undertaken expansion to include eight more ensuite rooms for teachers and drivers.

YHA has a long history in educational tourism and Mr Lee said, "being not-for-profit, we exist solely to make sure people have a great stay and hopefully use our facilities again." Founded by a German teacher, Richard Shermann, 103

years ago, the international association has at its core a desire to remove the financial barrier to travel.

The hostel offers eight-share or four-share rooms, and he says facilitating easy supervision for teachers is key when allocating rooms. Meal provision is the norm but self-catering is possible when budgets require it.

Canberra school tours are tailored to education and schedules can be arduous, so YHA strives to keep things moving smoothly for stressed teachers, by taking care of the details and ensuring a good night's rest. ●





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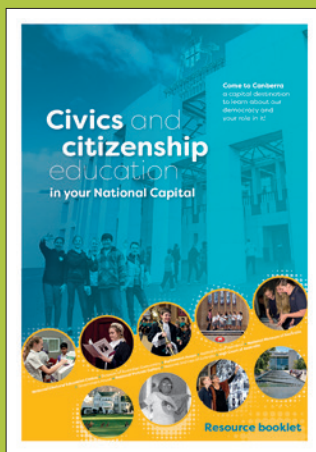
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◀ This is just a sample of the broad concepts that students can explore that, on initial glance, may not be seen as core civics and citizenship.

A visit to Canberra in itself is an immersive civics and citizenship learning experience. The process of coming to the nation's capital is all part of the learning process: why do we have a capital, how does it operate as a reflection of the nation, how Australians feel about the central seat of government. All this helps students see themselves as part of a broader society, not just of their own town, city or school community. The visit helps students understand they are part of the future, that their vote counts, and that, even as students, they have rights and responsibilities as citizens of Australia. *'It has helped me to understand more about government, so I am trying to watch the news when there are government related things on.'* (Student)

The personal development value of an excursion to Canberra must also be recognised. Students are often on their first trip away from home alone, travelling with friends, learning to share with others and participating in an extremely well organised program of activities. *'Practical experience of the parliaments, the other attractions, experiencing life away from parents and with their peers, speaking with politicians and people closely associated with the everyday life in Canberra is far more advantageous than using technology or reading about these people and places. The*



For the pure civics and citizenship minded, a resource booklet and poster contain information on the Civics and Citizenship education offering at nine civics and citizenship cultural institutions. The booklet is an easy-to-print resource with live links taking you straight to the content descriptions on the Australian Curriculum website for Parliament House, the

Australian War Memorial, the High Court of Australia, the National Archives of Australia, the Museum of Australian Democracy, the National Electoral Education Centre, the National Museum of Australia and the National Portrait Gallery. Download a PDF copy at www.canberraexcursions.org.au/ncetp-newsletter

revealed students had significantly increased their understanding of how the government and the voting system works, how laws are made, and why Canberra is important. *'Well now I know about Canberra and most importantly the system of government! Now that I know about what it means to be an Australian I think I'm already a better Australian.'* (Student)

The quality of the Canberra learning experience can be attributed to the education staff of cultural institutions, a colony of worker bees scattered across these institutions all focussed on making these concepts exciting and meaningful to even the most unengaged student. They consider things like the Australian Curriculum and pedagogy, while transforming what some consider a bit boring into lightbulb moments for many who participate. As one teacher commented *'Personally experiencing the venues and the enthusiasm of all our guides inspires me to teach Australian history, Civics and Citizenship with passion. It enables me to plan more interactive and exciting learning experiences with my students.'* (Teacher)

A recent research report conducted by the University of Canberra, *The Size and Effect of School Excursion to the National Capital 2015*, established that 93.1 percent of teachers surveyed agreed a visit to Canberra's National Capital increased a student's understanding of civics and citizenship. This research report also indicated a nine out of



Students at the High Court of Australia, Canberra

students gain so much more from being there than any classroom lesson can teach them.' (Teacher)

The excursion may also be the first time a student visits a national cultural institution, an art gallery or a museum. *'We come from an area in Australia that has little access to the institutions Canberra has. Our kids live very rural lives, so this is a*

great opportunity.' (Teacher)

In 2015, the University of Queensland conducted research to truly understand the impact of an excursion to Canberra on a student's engagement in civics and citizenship education; surveying students before and after a Canberra excursion. Responses post-excursion



Students on Anzac Parade near the Australian War Memorial



Students at the Government House, Canberra

ten rating of teacher satisfaction with these programs.

As an indication of the importance of a school excursion to Canberra, over the past 12 years the Australian Government has supported the journey of young Australians through a subsidy accessed by students travelling from as close as Sydney or as far away as Broome. Just spend a moment imagining how students travelling from the furthest part of Australia feel, walking up to the doors of Parliament House or catching a glimpse of the Governor-General at Government House.

Importantly, the experience goes beyond the actual visit. Institutions use their expertise in civics and citizenship education to assist teachers with the creation of practical classroom activities, whole school activities and local

community activities. For example, after visiting the Parliamentary Education Office teachers often run a mock parliament in their classrooms or run school elections, as experienced at the National Electoral Education Centre. As a reflection of a visit to Australian War Memorial, schools have conducted wreath laying service involving local veterans and local community groups, and a visit to the National Portrait Gallery has framed many local portrait competitions.

National cultural institutions assist teachers in creating class outlines and guiding them in the use of primary sources. They also assist the development of research skills, by teaching students how to access the vast collection of online information regarding Australia's political and social history, such as programs like the National Library of Australia's Trove and the

National Archives of Australia's Vroom.

Canberra, Australia's national capital welcomes all Australians, but particularly those young students who will be in charge one day, to help them understand democracy, impacts of history, national identity, and most importantly how to be better Australian citizens.

Quotes contained in this article are from two research reports: *Size and Effect of School Excursions to the National Capital, 2015* by Dr Naomi Dale and Professor Byron Keating Centre for Tourism Research, University of Canberra, and *Measuring the impact of school visits to the national capital on students' civic literacy* by Associate Professor Jan Packer and Professor Roy Ballantyne, University of Queensland Business School, Visitor Research Team.

The NCETP is a partnership representing over 23 cultural institutions located in Canberra, plus the ACT Government, delivering an awareness program that ensures schools and teachers throughout Australian understand the importance of a visit to Canberra in supporting a range of learning areas, including civics and citizenship, Australian history and culture, science, art and environment. The NCETP produces publications, undertakes displays at teacher conferences, develops teacher programs and assists in improving the overall education experience through ongoing research projects. ■

By Natasha and Garry Watson,
*National Capital Educational
Tourism Project (NCETP).*

Photography, courtesy of NCETP,
photographer Steve Keogh

DISCOVER YOUR NATIONAL CAPITAL ONLINE

CANBERRAEXCURSIONS.ORG.AU

This website aims to provide you with information about planning a school excursion to Canberra, Australia's National Capital.

- DISCOVER** the many and varied attractions and cultural institutions that provide stimulating educational programs focused on the teaching of civics and citizenship, history, science, art and culture
- EXPLORE** helpful planning tips
- REQUEST** a copy of the *National Capital School Excursion Planner*
- FIND OUT ABOUT** upcoming teacher programs

CANBERRA EXCURSIONS.ORG.AU

Planning, sun safety and comfort for successful sports days

Sporting culture has a long history in Australian schools, with a focus on 'having a go' and 'having a laugh' while you're at it. Australian schools have another enduring tradition (imported from English schools) of separating students into houses for sporting days.

This can be an excellent opportunity for student leaders to shine and the parameters of mateship and teamwork to be explored. As students file into school adorned in their house colours from head to toe, house spirit is palpable. Naturally, some students are too cool for enthusiasm - this nonchalance usually peaking in year nine - but the critical mass of students love sports days - and not just the sporty ones.

For those naturally athletic students, the school sports carnival is the qualifier for district and then interstate competitions. According to School Sport Australia, interstate school sporting competitions can be traced back to the 1920s (and even earlier for districts sports meets), when even rural and remote schools saw interstate sporting competitions as an excellent reason for a road trip. The network of competitions started to expand rapidly in the seventies.



While enthusiasm is already on track from this quarter of district interstate hopefuls, the key to an all-round successful sports day lies in engaging those students who are generally less involved in sport. Novelty events can be great for this, with some schools introducing a 'sports trivia' general knowledge event, for the more mental competitors.

Field events can be varied to include diversions such as the egg and spoon race, a beanbag throw or a silly hat walking race. Parents can be involved with a parents' event, though this event can bring out a competitive streak in some parents that is more

suited to the Olympics. A timely reminder about sportsmanship and 'sporting for enjoyment' can keep these in check.

All staff members work long and hard in the lead up to the school sports carnival, training, teaching new events to the new recruits and drilling shotput safety measures into exuberant budding 'Olympians'. More planning goes into sports days than most school days, and contingencies must be devised for unforeseen weather events, first aid and accident emergencies, as well as general crowd control, catering, sun protection measures and event scheduling. Shade for officials

who are stuck out in the middle of the field for six hours straight is vital, as well as somewhere to shelter and water the first-timers as they wait for their first big race.

Students of all ages require adequate shade, because in this great brown land, sunstroke might just be as common as the sports day sausage sizzle. Shade structures can be purchased or hired, and usually companies have special rates for schools and sporting clubs. If purchasing your shade tents or gazebos is an option, branding them in school or house colours is a nice touch for an event to remember.



Another element that makes a great sports day is family and community support, which is where comfort is important.

Portable seating for parents and friends, enough toilets, a P&C catered barbecue with cold drinks and fruit juice ice blocks will encourage more grandparents to pull up a chair under a gazebo and cheer for their grandchildren on their big day.

While some schools have purpose-built stadium seating at their school oval, other schools simply don't have the budget to purchase permanent seating.

Events companies offer seating solutions that can involve anything from deluxe grandstand models seating 100, to small rollaway units that can be moved around to sit under existing shade structures or natural shade from

trees. While schools do schedule sports days for terms two and three to avoid the hotter months, for the northern states, even a day spent outside in May can result in sunstroke.

Programs like SunSmart Schools from The Cancer Council have raised awareness about melanoma to the point where a child playing outside at lunch without a hat is now unheard of.

To ensure students finish the day on a high note, sunstroke, sunburn and heat exhaustion can be combatted with water, shade tents and a steady supply of friends and relatives to help keep students well cared for and school sports day on track. ■

By Suzy Barry, Editor

Quality shade structures as a branding tools

When schools select permanent or temporary structures for outdoor events, safety should be the number one concern.

BigTop Shades manager, Michael Merra said, "the safety of a marquee comes from two elements: its frame and its fabric."

"A good, sturdy frame will provide you protection from windy weather and ensure the marquee is not blown away by the first gust of wind," Mr Merra advised.

"Overall weight, thickness of truss bars, and quality of the brackets are paramount. As a rule of thumb, avoid lightweight frames with cheap plastic connectors. The heavier, the more stable. BigTop Shades offer a variety



of frame strengths, adapted to all budgets and requirements."

"A good fabric will provide protection from rain and UV radiation. Our canopies come in PVC-coated polyester or 580gsm 100 percent PVC, which are both waterproof and UV protected."

Mr Merra says BigTop Shades provides school-branded marquees, with free professionally designed artwork, featuring school crest and colours. "We take pride in printing beautiful marquees that reflect a school's identity and values." ●

Upgrade your events with safe, versatile seating

More schools are realising the importance of shade and shelter when planning upgrades of sporting facilities and with more than 25 years' specialising in aluminium seating, Felton Industries is leading the way, according to their business manager, Jonathan Wiggins.



He says safety and innovation are two things that set Felton's grandstands, spectator seating and change room furniture apart.

"All our products are made to Australian Standards and feature the patented safety end cap which is unique in the market and ensures that there aren't any rough edges to tear clothing or injure users."

He says schools and sports clubs are increasingly looking for structurally sound shade and shelter for their grandstands, spectator seating and outdoor settings.

"Our Sunsafe Select Grandstand is really popular for sportsgrounds especially where there is a lack of existing shade. Studies have shown the incidence of skin cancer begins with early exposure to the sun and in a time when people need to be more active and find more ways to get outdoors I think the providing adequate shelter from the sun is so important." ●



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High prices plague healthy foods at Australian school canteens

Looking for more reasons to prioritise the provision of easy, accessible, cost-effective healthy canteen items for your students? This information from the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) highlights how important it is to make healthy food affordable.

The DAA has released the results of an Australia-wide study of pricing in school canteens, which indicated most schools are selling less healthy, nutrient-poor items at a fraction of the cost of nutritious choices.

The study of 200 government schools across five states found 76 percent of primary schools and 59 percent of secondary schools sold 'amber/red' lunch items more



cheaply than 'green' lunch items - while healthier options were 85c to \$1.25 more expensive.

The research, a collaboration between Deakin University and Monash University, was presented at the Dietitians Association of Australia's National Conference in

Hobart, last May.

Accredited practising dietitian, Natassja Billich, says encouraging steps are being made to improve the foods sold in Australia's school canteens, but price is a key factor standing in the way of further improvements.

Her research found the greatest price differences between healthy and unhealthy items were in schools in disadvantaged areas and rural areas.

Ms Billich reports 92 percent of primary schools in the most disadvantaged areas and 77 percent of secondary schools in rural areas sold 'amber/red' lunch items more cheaply than 'green' lunch items.

"We want to support kids to make healthy choices at school and we want them to eat more fruit and vegetables, and one way to do this is to close the price gap between the nutritious menu items and the less healthy options.

"Our research found the majority of canteens are selling foods such as meat pies cheaper than salad sandwiches or stir-fries containing vegetables, and in many cases, chips cost less than apples, so there's still some work to do," said Ms Billich.

Ideally, Ms Billich would like 'green' items, like lean meat and salad sandwiches or stir-fries containing vegetables, to be subsidised as much as possible, so that these foods at least match the price of red items such as hot dogs, meat pies and sausage rolls.

"Canteens can also promote 'green' or healthy items by including them in meal deals, making them front and centre at the canteen, and presenting them in enticing ways. This would help school menus become compliant with canteen guidelines and give kids a better chance of making great food choices," said Ms Billich.

She said the whole school community, with everyone from the principal to the parents, must be on board, supporting canteen managers to make these changes, and that government backing is vital in fostering healthy school canteens.

Dietitians Association of Australia president, Liz Kellet, says school canteens play an important role in supporting healthy eating messages and modelling a healthy food environment for students.

"Many school canteens are working hard to change their menus by offering healthier options and reigning in 'red' food items, containing excess kilojoules, saturated fat, added sugar and salt without much nutrition, and we support moves to make healthier menu items cheaper as an important next step," said Ms Kellett.

According to Australia's National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines, green or 'everyday' items include fresh vegetables and salad, baked beans, wholegrain bread, plain rice and pasta, canteen-made soups that are lower in salt, air-popped popcorn, fresh or canned fruit (in natural juice), low or reduced fat milk, lean beef and chicken, unsalted and unroasted nuts, and eggs.

The most recent ABS National Health Survey found just five per cent of Australian children aged 2 to 18 years met the recommended daily serves of both fruit and vegetables. ■

By Suzy Barry, Editor

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Are you an adrenaline junkie?

Steve Francis

Happy School



Educators are very busy people. Just ask them! The most common response you'll hear when you ask someone how they are, is, "BUSY!" Being busy has acquired a new status. It is now equated with importance. Many educators only know two speeds – flat out and asleep! This is typical of the adrenaline junkie.

Working in schools is complex and can be intensive. There is always a lot to be done and the workload appears to be increasing exponentially. Educators often rush from one priority or crisis to another. We often complain about being overloaded but somewhere inside we also like the sense of being indispensable and in-demand. Adrenaline junkies are susceptible to packing their days to the brim. The trap is that being busy can add up to lots and lots of activity that isn't all that productive in the end.

In his 2012 book *The Advantage*, Patrick Lencioni highlights the 'The Adrenaline Bias': "Many leaders suffer from a chronic case of adrenaline addiction, seemingly hooked on the daily rush of activity and firefighting within their organization". I believe that many

educators suffer this bias.

The feeling of an adrenaline high is addictive. The natural chemical of speed, adrenaline gives you a 'rush'. When you're on adrenaline you think quickly, talk quickly, eat quickly and even finish other people's sentences. A crammed life is typical of the adrenaline junkie – you try to be 'on' 100 percent of the time. If you have been an adrenaline junkie for some time, you may have lost the ability to relax, according to Matt Church, author of 2007 book: *Balance Your Body Chemistry and Feel Uplifted*.

However, the rush that we get from adrenaline is not sustainable and may not be helping us. When the entire day becomes one big stress event, fuelled by adrenaline, this can lead to burnout and exhaustion. This can contribute to serious stress-related illness and premature ageing. It also makes you less fun to be around.

There are two ways to get a natural high – one from adrenaline, which makes you feel switched on for short bursts; the other from serotonin, which makes you feel calm and comfortable for longer periods. The real natural high comes from an appropriate balance of both adrenaline and serotonin. The first step is becoming aware that you may be an adrenaline junkie.

According to Church, if you do everything in fast forward, you need to slow down and make some space in your life. When you learn to switch onto adrenaline only when you need to, and manage the rush in a healthy, balanced way, you can be naturally high more often, rather than using your 'drug' to get through everyday life.

Take responsibility for your own personal well-being

Many educators put themselves last! They work long hours and tirelessly try to be all things, to all people. Looking after your own well-being needs to be a priority.

Undertake a thorough health appraisal every year

Early detection is often better than pursuing a cure. It is important to commit to a full health appraisal on an annual basis.

Replace the term *work-life balance* with *work-life satisfaction*

'Balance' can be very difficult to achieve. Our work in schools takes up a significant amount of our waking hours. It is important that

we get satisfaction from our work as well as the other aspects of our lives. Instead of aspiring for work-life balance, aim to get satisfaction from your work as well as the other roles that make up your life.

Set boundaries on your work hours

There is always more that can be done. No matter how many hours you work there is always more that could be done. It is vital to set boundaries to stop work overtaking and having an impact on the other aspects of your life. Which day of the week could you leave school at 3.30pm and do something for you?

Monitor your self-talk

It is vital that we monitor that little voice inside our heads and ensure that our expectations of ourselves are fair and realistic.

Clearly communicate that harassment and violence are NOT tolerated

It is a sad reflection on our society that many public hospitals now display 'Zero Tolerance to Abuse' signs clearly communicating that harassment and violence towards staff will not be tolerated. ►

◀ Ensure that your expectations of yourself are realistic

At times, as educators, we can be our own harshest critic. At the end of each day we should reflect on what we have achieved and not be too harsh on ourselves if there are still tasks on your *TO DO* list. School days can be unpredictable.

Seek expert help if feeling over-whelmed

If you are feeling over-whelmed, seek professional support. It is not a sign of weakness but a recognition of the real complexity of the role we play.

Book a holiday - every break

It is vital that we take some time each school holidays to rest and recharge. A holiday doesn't have to be extravagant. Even if you only go away for a night or two, the change of scenery and short break are worthwhile. The anticipation of the holiday can be almost as good as the holiday itself.

Establish and commit to an exercise routine

Exercise has benefits for both our physical and mental health. Establishing an exercise routine

Steve Francis created the Happy School program to reduce stress and improve the well-being of people who work in schools. Steve works with staff to optimise schools. He is the author of four books including *First Semester CAN MAKE OR BREAK YOU!* and *Time Management For Teachers*.

is one of the most powerful actions you can take. Choose an exercise that works for you and establish regular exercise as part of your routine. Often when we get busy and stressed, the first thing many people stop doing is exercising. Yet exercising is the best thing they could do for their well-being. Don't make that mistake.

Stop for lunch

We know eating well is important to looking after our health, but we often skip lunch, and eat on the run or at our desk. Take at least 15 minutes away from your desk to stop and eat lunch.

Drink more water

We should drink at least 2 litres of water per day. This equates to about 8 glasses of water.

Prioritise ruthlessly

Time is one of the most precious resources we have. It is vital that we use it well. Ask yourself often, *"Is this the most important thing I could be doing with the time I have available?"* A good way to feel that you are moving ahead and gaining traction is to identify at the beginning of each day, one important task that we need to make sure is completed that day, for the day to feel successful. ■



Sun Smart schools: protecting from harmful UV rays

A few generations ago, sunburn was seen as a normal by-product of childhood fun, just like skinned knees and bumps on the head. As skin cancers plague the adulthood of those burnt babes, childhood sunburn has loomed as a serious health risk to Australians.

Australia's sun is harsh, and when children are at school, daily Ultraviolet (UV) radiation levels are at their peak. This brings responsibility to schools, as well as a wonderful opportunity to engender sun smart behaviour as second nature.

The National SunSmart Schools Program was launched in 1998, and is offered in all primary

schools nationwide. In Western Australia, where temperatures regularly reach 40 degrees Celsius in the summer, the program is gaining popularity in secondary schools. The Cancer Council provides support and tailored educational resources to schools, for improving the sun smart behaviour of their students.

Age appropriate lesson plans are available for download from www.cancer.org.au, complete with instructions and resources. A Cancer Council Australia release indicates that melanoma skin cancer as the fourth most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australia in 2012, and estimated that it will remain so in 2018.

Childhood is the ideal time to change the culture of 'tanned is beautiful,' and to promote a healthy approach to absorbing the sun's rays in a responsible



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manner. While Vitamin D, which is absorbed through the skin from the sun, is vital for synthesising other vitamins and minerals, levels can be sufficiently obtained during the safer times of the day; early in the morning and later in the afternoon.

The difficulty, as stated on the Cancer Council's website, is that the sun's rays are the major cause of skin cancer and the best natural source of vitamin D, which is needed for strong bones and overall health.

Bearing in mind that Australia is a large land mass with diverse climates and conditions, a policy that may suit schools in Broome will have little relevance in the chilly Tasmanian hills. Knowing the importance of Vitamin D for mood, energy levels and immunity, the Cancer Council recommends a balanced UV approach in order to reduce the risk of skin cancer, while ensuring some sun exposure for vitamin D. How this looks in the playground will vary from location to location, and schools will need to consider their own climates when developing policies.

The general guidelines across all states are the common goals of preventative care. The enduring campaign: Slip, Slop, Slap can be supported through measures such as, school uniform design, including wide brimmed hats, replacing athletics singlets with short-sleeved shirts and making a sunhat like a second skin during high UV months.



Photos courtesy of Cancer Council Queensland

SunSmart schools also make a commitment to minimising exposure by increasing shade in outdoor playing areas, through shade sails, tree planting and playground design measures.

SunSmart school support in WA

For much of the school year, Western Australian students are playing, doing sport and learning in high UV periods of the day. Schools need not go it alone when creating a sun smart policy.

While all states have access to sun smart policy and recommendations, The Cancer Council WA has these particular encouragements for SunSmart Schools membership.

From Cancer Council WA

If your school becomes a SunSmart School, Cancer Council WA provides you with the following free resources:

- a SunSmart sign
- a curriculum resource book
- advice on health promotion strategies including policy development
- access to educational resources
- SunSmart lesson guides and activities
- SunSmart talks to parents, staff and students.

Benefits of becoming a SunSmart school member include:

- **Peace of mind** - Cancer Council endorsement of your policy and procedures lets you know you have it right.
- **Comprehensiveness** - have you thought of everything? There is much more to sun protection than a 'no hat no play' rule.

- Access to accurate, current information on sun protection issues such as sunscreen allergies, nanoparticles, vitamin D, occupational safety and health and duty of care.
- **Support** - you get information about how other schools have dealt with particular problems, free teaching resources, access to competitions and discounts on sun protection items at the Cancer Council shop.
- **Advocacy** - Cancer Council speakers can talk to parents and staff about the risk of skin cancer and the value of good sun protection policies and procedures.
- **Critical mass** - formally joining the program allows Cancer Council to count your school in the program membership. In turn, higher participation rates add weight to our representations to government departments to help convince other schools to join the program and demonstrates your commitment to reducing the burden of skin cancer in the community.

State specific SunSmart guidelines

For information regarding SunSmart policy and support available in your state, visit www.sunsmart.com.au. ■



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First aid training vital for intrepid outdoor education students

For the past three years, Red Cross has delivered a blended 'HLTAID003 Provide first aid' and 'HLTAID005 Provide first aid in remote locations' to Year 12 students at Golden Grove High School.

Golden Grove is not in a remote location, but as part of the year 12 SACE course, outdoor education, students have some big adventures.

Students experience a range of outdoor activities, which develop skills that are transferrable to expeditions and day trips. The course has a strong emphasis on skilled-based learning, combining theory to practical scenarios.

The course outline includes theory topics such as first aid, navigation and map skills, expedition skills (tenting, menu selection, camp cooking) and environmental studies.

Assistant principal, Mike Meredith, says the school conducts expeditions into remote outback locations, that require not only intrepid attitudes, but safety measures.

"The students kayak at Kataraptko National Park and bushwalk in Mt Crawford. The last of their journeys this year will be a 'self-reliant' trip, where students plan and conduct the expedition with minimal staff input. As they visit national parks and remote natural environments, they require first aid skills and Red Cross has provided an excellent training program for both teachers and students."

"He said, these skills are vital for their safe travels in natural areas away from major metropolitan locations. The awareness of injuries and treatment, as well as the risk management process they are taught, develops good skills for avoiding incidents as well as the ability to deal with emergencies if they arise".



First Aid Saves Lives

Did you know that injuries are the leading cause of death in Australian children?

(Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006c, Causes of Death, 2004, cat no. 3303.0, ABS, Canberra.)

Most common causes of childhood injuries:

- Falls
- Road accidents, such as running out into traffic
- Poisoning
- Burns and scalds

(The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2009 report)

Images courtesy of Red Cross

Mr Meredith says it certainly puts parents' minds at ease somewhat: "They are appreciative that students gain a recognised qualification, which can assist some in the workplace, as well as giving them skills for everyday life and their travels in the outdoors."

"Our teachers who have undertaken the training similarly need this first aid certification to lead groups in remote areas. The program gives them the confidence and skill set to plan

for and deal with emergency situations if they occur."

Mr Meredith had no life or death stories to tell, as he says the training is preventative as well as response-based: "Fortunately students who have completed the course have managed to avoid serious emergency situations. Students have always been able to apply their learning from the course to plan for and avoid hazards and associated risk."

Mr Meredith reports the Red Cross training has been of great benefit to his students. He says the sessions have provided targeted learning for their involvement in outdoor activities - and hopefully for lifelong engagement with natural areas. "Time spend in preparation is time well spent," he advised. For more information, call 1300 367 428, or visit: www.redcross.org.au/get-involved/learn/first-aid. ■

By Suzy Barry, Editor

Red Cross is the world's leading first aid training provider and has been providing first aid training in Australia for over 100 years.

First Aid Training for Australian Schools

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Modular classrooms: versatility, comfort and style

Innovative learning spaces have taken Australian education by the horns and dispersed classrooms with rows of desks all over the country – replacing them with flexible spaces, comfortable seating, reading nooks and breakaway collaboration hubs.

While educationalists tear down the walls of traditional education, building providers increasingly field requests from school management teams for innovative, cost-effective solutions to provide learning environments that support the objectives of 21st century learning.

School News caught up with Clint Cunial, an education building veteran of 15 years' experience, and Business Development Manager – Education for ATCO Structures & Logistics.

Mr Cunial says schools are requesting bigger spaces with



operable walls to provide the flexibility to open up spaces or close them off depending on the learning activity.

"They're after open spaces for kids to engage in a variety of learning activities, and to accommodate alternative furniture items, such as beanbags and collaboration pods."

He says the profile of requests has shifted: "They are also asking for structures that create outdoor learning areas for children to learn closer to their natural environment."

"We also work with some after school care clients and they need a large open space with the versatility to set up on 'nooks' for reading, or media corners, as well as kitchen and toilet facilities."

He said, "in the past, schools only cared about a square classroom, and now they are looking for spaces that accommodate their new teaching styles. They are thinking more about how the space can influence learning outcomes".

With this sort of flexibility requirement, versatility of design

is key: "Modular buildings can be built to order, using the same quality of materials as regular buildings."

The buildings are fabricated with steel frames, and anything from plasterboard, fibre cement or Colorbond material. Mr Cunial says interiors for modular buildings have also come a long way with top of the range carpets, glass, and timber feature walls.

"The design is flexible: designers can put together different modules of any scale and dimensions to custom build whatever space suits the school's pedagogical aims."

"You can move it to another site once built, or if initial outlay is a problem, classrooms can be hired for a period of months or years, while capital is raised for outright purchase."

Modular buildings may conjure images of the old rural transportable that sweltered in the midday sun, but Mr Cunial reports that the modern modular building is as sustainable and comfortable as it is versatile.

"All buildings have either reverse cycle air conditioning or fans, depending on the climate of their intended location," he said. Sustainable building applications for modular classrooms include solar panels, as well as careful planning of placement and orientation, to optimise energy efficiency.

"The buildings can be positioned anywhere, and as the buildings sit on stumps, level ground is not even necessary," he added.

The interior is also a far cry from the blue carpeted boxes of days gone by.

"Schools can request anything they need: amenities, food technology kitchens, and science labs, fitted out with gas taps, benches and sinks."

Certain applications require



altered specifications such as manual arts spaces, which require heavy duty benches, and three-phase power. "We also need to reinforce the steel in the flooring, because of the heavy equipment," Mr Cunial added.

He says the flexibility extends over time: While it's a permanent design, schools can add on

modules, pull off modules or remove internal walls to create a new space of any dimensions.

He says the solution has attracted schools with fluctuating student populations: "The offsite manufacturing also means reduced disruption and less external personnel on school grounds – not to mention the

cost factor." With overheads considerably lower for factory construction than onsite building, and a possible turnaround of six classrooms in six weeks, Mr Cunial says schools are applying the responsiveness of modular building to the demands of 21st century learning. ■

By Suzy Barry, Editor

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Designing a nature play space for school

Anyone who has watched a toddler open a present, toss it aside, then play with the box, knows that simple things are enough to engage a child's imagination, but does this extend to the school playground?

Dr Elizabeth K Nesbit of Trent University in Canada has been researching the effects of 'nature connectedness' and has found that, just like the Japanese custom of 'forest bathing', wellbeing can be improved through the freedom to whimsically connect with nature.

Much of a child's school day is teacher-directed, and break times are their chance to imaginatively create activities and explore - guided by what they can see, touch, hear and smell. Could it be that the more high-tech the playground, the less satisfying the play? We spoke with some industry experts on the benefits of nature play, creating the space, and risks and benefits.

Industry views

George Davidson of GDL Nature Play Spaces in Queensland says nature play is about the use of natural materials, but also design: "A nature play space is about 'open ended play'; the result should be an unstructured space that encourages children to make their own way through the equipment." He says, while features can offer possible uses, nature play equipment does not "dictate" the function of any given piece. It is also about stimulating the senses in ways modern life has forgotten.

"It's the difference between a wooden platform in a shape that hints at being a boat, versus a fully-fledged 'boat', which couldn't be anything else." He says, once you've played with it as a boat, "there's nowhere else to go, but with a simple platform, today a boat tomorrow a fort."

He says nature play should include



Photos: GDL Nature Play Spaces

loose materials for children to create their own fantasy play, such as sticks to create shelters, loose stones for dams or bark for boats. It could also include and other items we find in nature, like gumnuts for counting or leaves as money. "It's also great to add

sound into an area as this can help to soothe children."

So, what's the benefit of a purpose-built 'nature play' space over playing in the forest?

"Both are important, but the reality is, it's a more controlled

environment," Mr Davidson replied, explaining that, with health and safety requirements, the space can be designed with "managed" and "controlled" risks, as opposed to the wild cards school staff can't control or predict.

It's these risks that underpin the main benefit of nature play, according to Mr Davidson. "It gives them back the confidence we had as kids; plus the chance to problem solve, learn things themselves, push themselves out of their comfort zone."

He says it's a chance for children to develop self-esteem, as they overcome challenges in a safe environment against the backdrop of a society that has become "all too much against taking risks."

He says that while safety standards are necessarily stringent, they can be worked with to achieve great results: "For example, to avoid the requirement of synthetic soft fall surfaces, we can just work below the minimum heights for the natural surface options. You can create a challenging feature without taking it too far." He says it's all about how much risk you are prepared to give the children, along with fulfilling your obligations as a school.

Planning is important for engaging children: "I try to design areas, so they flow. I will have little sections where different things happen, but then link them together with stepping stones or a path."

"I like to hide little things that aren't immediately apparent, for them to find; I add little cubby areas that they can relax in. It's no good putting all the fun parts in one place!"

"The planning process starts with a site visit to see if there are already some key elements to use as a backbone to create a play space; trees, mounds or open spaces. From here a list of needs and wishes are put together and from this a concept plan can be drawn. It's not all about the wow factor but that they flow." ►



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Photos: Jeavons Landscape Architects

“The real creativity starts with the arrival of the raw materials on site. Although there are plans in place we work also with the materials we can source. Using natural materials means not all pieces are identical and it cannot be 100 percent planned how the space will evolve. This generally happens after the first few stones are laid and the key items are in place. From then on, the rest will fall into place.”

Mary Jeavons of Jeavons Landscape Architects in Victoria says a nature play space comprises predominantly natural materials; is inherently open-ended; includes loose materials; facilitates the development of skills in children and is ideally backed by an education program.

She listed three essential themes of nature play: “The first is the concept of ‘looseness’, which invites true engagement; children building, constructing, arranging objects creatively (and often socially). The second is that materials are not perfectly smooth, purpose-designed, evenly spaced or predictable and are completely

open-ended in how they may be used. Thirdly, the setting provides some living elements, most likely vegetation that will attract birds, insects and wildlife, exposing children to the local environment, seasonal change and natural processes.”

“Sensory gardens and therapeutic or respite spaces have become important in recent years, and these make a vital contribution to children’s well-being at school.”

She said, “many schools in Victoria also recognise the importance of children building their own cubbies and role play spaces, and either provide loose branches for this purpose, or allow their use. These are frequently carefully managed, with rules about containing the loose materials and making sure that play with sticks does not cause injury.”

Ms Jeavons says there is considerable evidence indicates that interaction with nature is vital for all humans, not only children, however, she said, “natural elements, especially plants, provide

a calming respite for children undergoing sensory overload.”

However, Ms Jeavons said, “nature play zones do require special considerations in schools” and “should be located where through-traffic, running (and especially ball) games will disturb the play.”

“Loose sand, leaves, pebbles etc. need to be well contained and should not be allowed to drift across paths or courts or into buildings and plant materials are fragile and will not survive unless they are carefully protected from trampling when young,” she cautioned.

She says the Australian Standards for Playground Surfaces and Equipment (the AS4685 suite) should be consulted: “Falls from heights more than 600mm need to be managed, and the surfaces designed to attenuate impact. Mild roughness and splinters are considered acceptable, unless they are sharp protrusions that can injure a child.”

“The recently published AS4685-Part 0 2017 explicitly states the

value of nature play and the need for children to experience non-standard, natural settings for their play.”

Ms Jeavons says children will play with anything that is not “out of bounds”, so schools should pay attention to auxiliary features in school grounds: “For example, when selecting tree species for a school, consider whether they might provide useful flowers or seedpods for play, branches for climbing, and useful shade, while withstanding heavy use and compaction around their roots.”

Arun Kosh of Surfacing Contractors Australia says a natural play environment can be created anywhere, but surfacing has become important, due to a culture of risk-aversion and a prohibitive concern about “kids getting dirty”.

He said, “the nature play design movement came out of Europe years ago, and has taken hold in WA more than anywhere.” The spaces facilitate “freeform play with nothing scripted” – a space where play items trigger the imagination.

According to Mr Kosh, the key to engaging children is to randomise the play. He says Frew Park at Milton Tennis Centre is probably the least ‘sanitised’ play space in Queensland: “It’s the most tricky, risky, and therefore, the busiest park in Brisbane. There, children can challenge themselves – there’s nothing unsafe, everything is built to standards, but they’ve created a space that’s challenging, interesting and engaging. Frew Park is not a nature-based playground, but it’s a good example of how kids can be challenged and remain safe. Nature play can be safe and compliant.”



Photo: Surfacing Contractors Australia

So, which are the best surfaces for a nature play space? The solution, according to Mr Kosh, is usually a combination of surfaces. By using rubber in high fall zones, and loose surfaces elsewhere, you can have extra safety measures where you need them, without sacrificing the natural themes.

"You see a lot of decomposed granite, which is a nice natural material, but you get transference; it can become loose underfoot, or it can become contaminated." He says climate will be a factor: wind levels, humidity and heat will affect how a surface behaves.

It's also important to look ahead to the future use of the space: "Will you want to put A-frames on the surface? If so, you need to think about impact. Do you need accessibility facilities to cater for children with diverse needs?"



Photo: Surfacing Contractors Australia

He says impact absorbing safety surfaces can be adapted for nature play "in a way that does not have to jar against the natural intent of the space".

"In some cases, due to excessive shade for example, synthetic grass is more suitable than trying to maintain lawn without sunshine," he noted.

"Rubber can be reserved for high-wear areas, such as at the bottom of the slide or under the swings - and it can be coloured to match organic soft fall surface."

"Living soft fall (real grass) can

be installed over the top of a specialised impact layer for aesthetics, without compromising your impact attenuation," he explained.

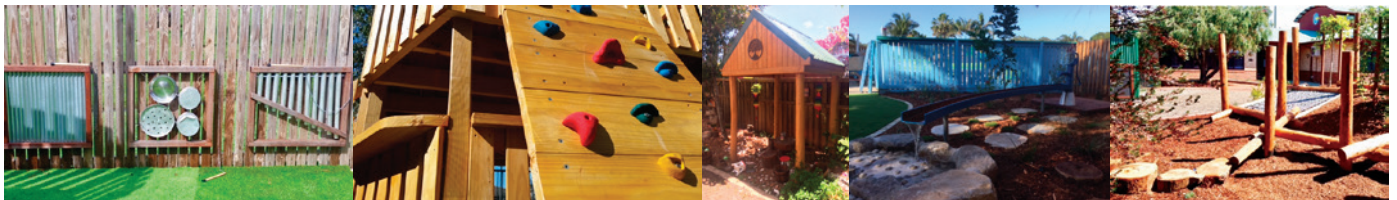
He suggests being a bit brave about small manageable risks:

"Take planter boxes - why are they always tucked away in a corner? Why not centrally located where everyone can engage in them? Think of the possibilities: flowers to smell; to understand that carrots come out of the ground, not a bag; an array of stones, boulders and water; height-varied sandstone boulders, to sit, to run along."

He cautioned that when nature play becomes "a set of 'tick the boxes' designs" something is lost. "A dry creek bed, a plant, and a fallen log does not a nature play space make...! He said, "there's nothing wrong with these elements, but they can be incorporated in much better ways".

However, Mr Kosh is hopeful. He sees the growth in nature play as a rejection of the sanitisation of childhood and "the hysteria around kids and dirt and risk", and a push towards "kids reengaged with their surroundings". ■

By Suzy Barry, Editor



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Nature play is a concept to encourage children to spend more time playing outdoors using their imaginations in a natural setting. It inspires open-ended possibilities for self-designed play, creativity, learning and socialising. In the past, playing outside in nature was a part of everyday, normal childhood experience.

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Why getting children into nature matters

No one wants to be in the last generation where looking at the stars and playing outside is normal. Nor do we want statistics that say the average time an 8-year-old spends on technology per week in the USA is 52 hours.

You are one of the lucky generations because if you're old enough to read this chances are you have a special place in your heart that you went to as a kid. You found something there that you couldn't find elsewhere.

It may have been a hole in the hedge at the end of the garden, a grassy meadow, or the rock pools that you spent hours exploring on summer holiday.

Whatever your version, I'm guessing your special place was outside.

Mine was under an old tree. The branches came all the way to the ground. We made a path of stones to lead you in. It was secret. And quiet. And smelled of earth. Inside were imaginary rooms and the creek was right outside. Mum probably knew where we were. But I can't be sure.

It sounds like a typical childhood. Lots of mud, risk and freedom. But childhood experiences are shifting.

Today's youngsters are spending far less time outdoors than



any previous generation. Their schedules are busier, activities more organised and any free time competes with the ever-present lure of the screen.

Then there's the fear.

Parents go through more emotional gymnastics letting kids out beyond the garden gate than it seems their parents did. Modern day parents have been described as 'marinated in fear'.

Stranger danger, faster cars and the perils of the natural world itself are keeping our kids safely indoors. And it's rubbing off.

A Massey University study found that children are picking up on their parents fears and are reluctant to be alone or venture out. When asked about their adventures the children in the study talked about video games.

Generously, UK author Tim Gill doesn't just put this all down to parental paranoia. It's more of a shift in the way we live.

"Our neighbourhoods are more dispersed and less connected," Gill says. "We're more dependent on our cars. Both parents are working and there's a collective feeling of anxiety that's not just from parents."

More than just childhood memories are at stake

Richard Louv, bestselling author of *The Last Child in the Woods* and *The Nature Principle*, coined the phrase nature-deficit disorder, sparking an international movement and national debate across North America.

Louv suggests the disconnection of children with nature correlates with increasing social, mental and physical health problems. There's growing evidence linking a lack of time outdoors to childhood obesity, vitamin D deficiency and rising rates of depression.

It's no surprise 'nature prescriptions' are being written by pediatricians to help children cope with a range of issues, from difficulty concentrating to autism.

When speaking at New Zealand's Nature Education conference *The Natural Phenomena*, Louv explained: "We're at a moment in human history where more

of us live in cities. And that has huge complications. There's no guarantee there will be a special place in the hearts of future generations."

He asks: "Do we lose the connection we have? Or grab the opportunity for a new way?"

Louv challenges us to develop nature-rich cities and nature-rich schools.

He calls for doctors, parents, educators, developers, designers and conservationists to sit around the same table.

Get outside. Get the kids outside

If you want your kids outside, guess what? Take them by the hand and head into the forest, up the hill, down to the pond. Take a bag for treasures and no agenda.

Building resilience, self-confidence and a love of nature begins at your doorstep - underneath the bare feet of our youngest children.

Getting kids outside is a conscious action led by parents and educators. A bug under a log provides wonder and excitement that can't be felt elsewhere.

A family walk under the stars builds relationships to each other and the wonder of the world.

Encourage children to feel part of nature at a young age. Help them watch clouds, feel grass under their feet, dig a hole in the back yard.

It needn't take a lot of resources. It's a way of thinking about life. ■

By Kate Broughton

Kate Broughton is a writer, lifestyle coach and a member of the Nature Education Network – a group of people who care deeply about children loving the natural world they live in. Together they host *The Natural Phenomena Conference*: a nature education conference in the outdoors. Kate lives on the Tutukaka Coast with her son and partner.



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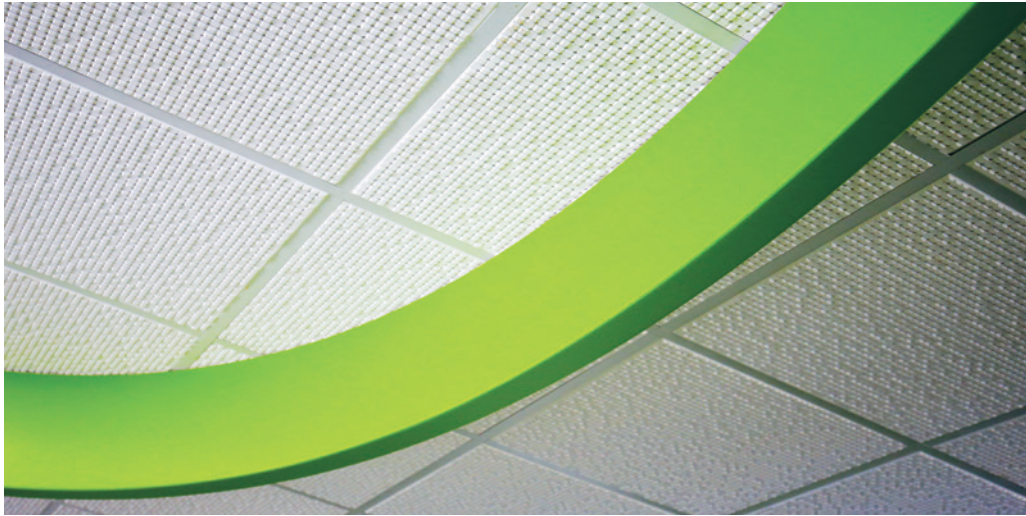
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Acoustics that support clear communication

Roger Bailey

Australian Plaster Acoustics



Creating an environment where good communication can take place should be a goal for any classroom.

Excessive noise in schools has been shown to have a detrimental impact on student learning and performance.

So why is classroom acoustics not yet a prime consideration in the design of new classroom facilities in Australia?

The Building Code of Australia (BCA) details only minimum standards for buildings, but no specific recommendations for educational facilities.

The *AS/NZS2107:2000 standard* recommends levels for ambient noise and reverberation times in unoccupied classrooms, however no recommendations are made for occupied classroom conditions.

There are no other regulations or standards, Australia wide, that covers all aspects of acoustical

qualities in educational facilities.

How do you go about controlling sound without guidelines?

You start with two very basic control measures:

- **Reduce reverberation** - use materials with high noise reduction coefficient (NRC).

Reverberations occur when sound waves strike surfaces in a room, like floors, walls, and

ceilings, and are reflected back into the space. Reverberation will continue until all the sound waves have been absorbed or have dissipated. Excessive reverberation can cause echoes that interfere with speech intelligibility.

The most common measure of acoustic reverberation performance is NRC.

NRC refers to a surface's ability to reduce noise by absorbing sound. NRC ranges from 0 (total reflection) to 1.00 (total absorption).

- **Reduce sound transmission** - use materials with high Ceiling attenuation class (CAC). Open-plan classrooms and classrooms with thin partition walls between instruction areas are problematic as sound transmission between the rooms are not blocked.

(CAC indicates the ability of a ceiling to block airborne sound transmission between adjacent rooms, especially when the dividing wall does not connect with the structural ceiling.

Acoustic excellence at Darwin High School

The Northern Territory Government recently worked on an extensive project with a long-term CSR Gyprock customer and Australian Plaster Acoustics, to help solve a recurring issue with failing ceiling systems.

Mark Taylor | Director of Buildings Maintenance and Minor Works, Northern Territory Government, said, "his project was considerably large in scale, replacing approximately 3000 square metres of ceilings in the administration building of the high school, all while working with a limited time frame during mid-term school holidays".

"There was a need to manage the sound reverberation and reduction of noise within the learning environments at Darwin High School - so an acoustic ceiling tile was a necessary inclusion."

The Solution

Australian Plaster Acoustics (APA) put forward the high quality Shadex option of custom made ceiling tiles - a 600mm x 600mm acoustic bespoke ceiling tile made with Gyprock Casting Plaster, which is a grit free speciality plaster that produces a strong moulded product with a clean cast face.

Incorporating a 3D grid pattern of tiny square blocks randomly aligned on the tile, Shadex provides a rigid, faceted

diamond appearance once installed.

Roger Bailey of APA said, "I wanted to ensure that the ceiling tiles created were unique in style, aesthetically pleasing and most importantly, offered excellent sound absorption capabilities".

The Shadex design offered an attractive ceiling solution with the highest acoustic rating possible, to reduce noise transfer and sound reverberation in crucial learning environments.

Mr Bailey says the Northern Territory Government is extremely pleased with the successful outcome and innovative product delivered by Australian Plaster Acoustics, with the refurbished ceiling improving the overall performance of the administration space. ●



A ceiling panel with a CAC of 40 will reduce transmitted sound by 40 decibels. A ceiling panel with a CAC of 35 or higher offers significant sound attenuation properties.

An acoustical unit with a high CAC (sound blockage) may have a low NRC (sound absorption). Other points to consider when selecting an acoustic product

Who carries out the testing for NRC or CAC?

Ensure that testing has been carried out by a NATA-accredited laboratory.

NATA (National Association of Testing Authorities) accreditation reflects a high level of competence, credibility, independence and integrity to the accredited facility.

Where is the product from? Can you guarantee the quality of your product?

There have been many reports in the past of building materials being imported to Australia, without meeting Australian standards.

Beware that you are not buying an inferior product.

Consider products that are

lighter in weight, with improved acoustic performance.

In the past, heavier products offered greater acoustic properties. Advances in technology now provide a myriad of products that are much lighter and have improved acoustic performance.

It is much more cost effective to install a lighter weight product because more lightweight structural supports can now be used.

Is the product resistant to the local climate/environment?

Past experience has shown that certain products installed in humid conditions may sag as a result of moisture absorption. Some might even be prone to mould causing all sorts of hygiene issues. Be selective in the materials you choose. Ensure that they not only have high acoustic properties, but also applicable to local conditions. ■



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- Noise reverberation reduction
- Echo reduction
- Lightweight
- Humidity resistant - tiles will not sag
- Aesthetically pleasing - more distinct pattern definition



Photo: Darwin Public School



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Optimising classroom acoustics for learners

Acoustic design is often overlooked in classrooms, as well as other school venues like gymnasiums, pools, multipurpose halls, science labs, student kitchens, indoor dining areas, faculty offices, meeting rooms, as well as kindergartens and early learning facilities.

These rooms are usually dominated by hard surfaces such as desks, whiteboards and glass which reflect sound around the room. Many classrooms and other school venues suffer from reverberation levels well in excess of the limits recommended in AS/NZS Building Standards. Speciality sound absorption products can be used to both eliminate reverberation and reduce the overall noise levels in these spaces.

Uncontrolled reverberation has been demonstrated to negatively



impact student learning outcomes in two ways. Firstly, it reduces speech intelligibility, meaning students can simply misunderstand what the instructors are saying. This is especially important for students for whom English is a second language, those studying a second language and students that suffer from hearing loss or damage. A carefully controlled acoustic environment can make a world of difference to these students.

Secondly, excessive noise can simply be distracting or

uncomfortable for the students. This is more of an issue in noisier environments like gyms, wood/metal shops, student kitchens and other activity rooms. Here, reducing the overall noise levels with a targeted sound absorption treatment can increase utility of the spaces. Distracting and uncomfortable noise levels can also be a major issue for students suffering from autism spectrum disorders, which means addressing any excessive reverberation can improve

participation from such students. Finally addressing excessive noise levels and reverberation can also benefit staff members, improving workplace comfort - especially in kindergartens and gymnasiums, where staff and parents can be subjected to dangerous noise levels at times. Making these faculty members more comfortable can increase morale and reduce staff turnover.

It's important to address acoustics with thoughtful planning and an understanding of how sound works. To minimise costly mistakes, and only pay for solutions that work, obtaining expert input from a provider who specialises in designing and installing acoustic treatments for education facilities is paramount. This should result in the delivery of acoustic treatments that quickly and flexibly optimise acoustics, with minimal visual impact. ★

By Jacob McAllister,
Soundfix Acoustics

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Never underestimate the impact of acoustics

Lyn Cunningham is an interior designer and the managing director of Quiet Art, provider of interior acoustic treatments for schools, universities; corporate and government clients. Ms Cunningham says noise control in the built environment is an integral part of the design process and that 'good acoustics' and 'good lighting' are equally important for every interior space.

She says the intended use of the space must be the core initial planning consideration: "For example, acoustic planning is extremely important in classrooms to control noise that may be disruptive to the learning process, affecting speech perception, student behaviour, and educational outcomes."

"Education spaces have a variety of different uses and therefore require different acoustic treatments. A sports hall

may require a heavy-duty sound absorbing acoustic treatment that is durable enough to withstand impact from ball sports, while classrooms are more suited to medium-level sound absorption in the form of acoustic wall coverings and pinnable panels that double as noticeboards, adding colour to the space.

She says other factors for consideration include surfaces and the introduction of interesting visual architectural elements or features to enhance the space: "It's all about making the space 'fit for purpose', by reducing unwanted noise, while providing aesthetically pleasing visual elements.

A perfect example of where good acoustical performance requires thoughtful planning is the school library Ms Cunningham said, "having high quality, flexible acoustics in libraries is paramount to effectively accommodate the range of acoustic absorption required; from almost silent zones, though to high traffic zones where conversations and discussions take place."



"Acoustic comfort allowing library users to concentrate without disturbance is an important factor, so reverberation and disruptive noise needs to be kept to a minimum," she noted.

"Library staff need to communicate, both with each other and library users, which means noise levels in these areas will be raised due to footfall, activities, and or discussions." She says this is where acoustic treatments need to be adequately designed, planned and placed correctly, according to the functions of these library zones.

This principal holds true for every space in the school: "Even when a great space has been designed to facilitate varied educational activities, if the noise in that

space is excessive, affecting the intended function of the space, it is potentially 'not fit for purpose'."

She says occupational health and safety is also a consideration, where challenging acoustic environments are concerned: "Teachers straining their voices and/or suffering from hearing problems due to excessive noise in education spaces, including noisy sports halls, could potentially lead to health concerns and legal issues.

"Don't underestimate the power of noise!" Ms Cunningham cautioned. "Noise disturbance has a negative effect on everyone; it affects our calm, concentration productivity, health and wellbeing." ●

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School lockdown systems explained

Schools in Australia are now required to have protocols in place for those situations where that require the campus to be locked down. These types of events are unique in that they require students and staff to remain within the confines of the school, rather than be evacuated.

The definition of a lockdown would be a situation where harm could come to people should they be outside. This could be a threat to individuals' safety such as an aggressive or violent intruder, siege, hostage incident, robbery or severe storm.

Typically, a lockdown involves the whole campus and requires the cooperation of all staff and students to ensure the safety of all individuals.

Why does your school need lockdown control?

Student safety is paramount in every school, and ensuring clear communication during moments of crisis can minimise risk.

A lockdown controller centralises the response process and ensures your staff are all on the same page when it comes to protecting students from harm.

Lockdown stages

Stage 1 - Standby

A lockdown warning is different to traditional evacuation warnings. Preceding a lockdown condition, a sort of 'secret signal' can be played over the PA to students and staff, usually in the form of a particular piece of music.

This would alert individuals that a lockdown condition may be imminent. This allows staff to get students into classrooms and other safe zones, without agitating offenders with an alarm signal.



Stage 2 - Lock In or Lock Out condition

A repeating warning tone and message would play during these conditions.

A Lock In condition informs students and staff that there is a situation on the school grounds and they should lock themselves inside their classroom until the condition is cleared.

A Lock Out condition informs the students and staff that there

is a situation within the school buildings and they should remain outside until the condition is cleared.

Your school's response protocol may require students to assemble in a safe zone or muster point outside.

Stage 3 - All Clear

Signalling the 'all clear' could come in the form of a tone, message or music track that is known by staff.

Tips for your school's lockdown and evacuation management:

- Define what will cause a lockdown, so the staff involved know the appropriate response for a given situation.
- Review on-site communications, ensure each department has appropriate lockdown and evacuation equipment such as loudhailers, UHF walkie talkies etc.
- Review your school PA system. Does it cover all areas with sufficient volume?
- Nominate safe zones, muster points and a movement plan for students during emergency conditions and review all relating signage.
- Train your staff in the systems and equipment.
- Have a plan to communicate the events back to parents. ■

By Redback Audio

Combined PA system: an all-purpose solution

PA systems have come a long way since the days of screeching feedback that had students in fits of unauthorised giggles. These days, as long as the operator follows a few simple guideline feedback screeches are much less common.

Just in case nobody on staff knows this, here they are:

- Ensure your microphone is at least 5 feet (10' is safer) away from your PA system or if it's a personal portable PA, as far from each other as possible.
- Avoid setting up the PA system right next to a wall or in a corner.
- Place the PA system in front of the microphone but pointing away from it, channels sound through multiple directions, avoiding the creation of the dreaded loop that causes feedback sounds.

Your school PA has an extensive and varied job description. Its classic role includes projecting the sports teacher's voice, as she corrals the under 10 girls to the swimming pool for the 100-metre age race. It has long been employed at assemblies and parades, as bulletins are read out and multiple school representatives come to the front to announce fundraisers, proclaim achievements, and request volunteers.

Increasingly the school PA is broadening its scope and improvements in the usability and versatility of PA systems are paving the way for a much more varied set of applications. Physical education staff are beginning to conduct outdoor lessons, hooked up to a personal



portable PA. This means students can be scattered all over the oval, perhaps engaged in an obstacle course or field events, without the teacher sacrificing connection with (or 'control' of) the class. Who doesn't remember looking down or away to avoid the inevitable instruction to either hurry up or move onto the next physical challenge? With no chance of students deliberately misunderstanding hand gestures, a teacher with a personal PA can be sure their communications are delivered loud and clear, every time.

Upgrading your PA system requires consideration and with options a-plenty, your intended purpose for your PA must be your starting point. Factors to consider will include, the size of your school, the reliability of power sources, your budget, and of course, the nature of your activities. What will you use it for?

Are you after a reliable system to service your school hall, or a fleet of personal PAs for teachers to use in outdoor lessons, lunchtimes and after school sport training? Do you

want to project "Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah" over the school PA for morning calisthenics? Are you a performing arts rich school that stages several productions per year?

Many school leaders will respond 'yes' to some or all of these questions, so for this reason, a combined system can be ideal.

For many school communities, a combination of portable and integrated systems is the only way to cover all bases and meet the PA needs of their multi-faceted campuses.

An integrated PA system is a fixed system, installed by technicians, with multiple speakers often used to project communications into every classroom simultaneously. They can be used for lockdown procedures, evacuations, as well as whole school announcements. Providers have advanced the capability of these systems, so they can be selectively activated, facilitating targeted announcements to certain 'zones' within the school. Why disturb the prep or kindy students at quiet story time when it's only the 'big school' you need to reach?



In a great 21st century twist, many newer models can also be linked to a visual component, allowing the beamed in image of the school principal to compel silent attention.

Portable systems vary: they can be wired plug-in-and-play models or wireless models for those busier occasions when power cables might present a trip hazard. These can allow outdoor education to reach new heights, and these lightweight personal units ease the burden on school staff at sports days, school concerts, excursions, school camps and even overseas trips.



PA systems are a vital tool for everyday communication in schools, and with improvement in technology and innovative product design, reaching your

students how you want, when you want has never been more simple.

A reliable and clear PA system means announcements and

instructions can be projected in a way that gathers even the stragglers at the back of an assembly. The sound at school concerts can make or break a performance night, and the value of rapid dissemination of urgent messages in times of duress cannot be overestimated.

With tech moving forward at an encouraging rate, the range of options is broad, with applications that support the communication aims of a busy contemporary school. ■

By Suzy Barry, Editor

Portable P.A.s for flexibility and performance

Your school P.A. may be illegal, according to Ben Lowe of Altronics. He said, "recent changes to frequencies of wireless audio devices have meant that some equipment is now technically illegal to operate if it uses the digital dividend spectrum (694-820 MHz)".

So, what should a school be looking for

in a P.A.? "Look for systems with quick, easy set-up," Mr Lowe advised.

"Also, wireless linking allows individual use or P.A. or in a scalable network of P.A.s – with variable applications from single classroom use to musical performances and assemblies."

"Wireless microphone support offers users flexibility, and freedom of movement, and reduced trip hazards."

"Newborough Primary School in Perth

recently purchased our portable P.A. system for use with outdoor physical education classes, they highlighted the importance of output power, rechargeable batteries and the hands-free headset."

Mr Lowe says to optimise performance, systems must be fit for purpose, and cautioned that P.A. systems made for live sound, bands and DJs offer clarity parameters suitable for music, so speech clarity may be compromised. ●



The P.A. People taking school public address to new heights

The school P.A. system is about more than morning assembly and the school carnival; it's also a vital safety tool for emergency situations, such as lockdown and evacuation.

Karen Jones, manager – sales, hire and service of The P.A. People, said, "more schools are making use of zoned paging systems which allow quick and easy paging from one or more

microphones". Zoning allows the user to target the announcement to the relevant zone without disturbing the rest of the school.

"We recently installed a site-wide paging system at Orange Grove Public School at Lilyfield, engineered specifically for their requirements." The system will meet their needs for years to come: "We supplied an easy to use microphone, a digital school bells program, offering everything from farmyard noises to Star Wars as a school bell".

The system also provided three distinct zones, operable simultaneously or individually - with speech, evacuation, alert and lockdown warnings." Ms Jones says that when P.A. technology is effectively harnessed, the result is ease and efficiency for staff and high performance for years to come. ●



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"Very easy to operate and provides excellent sound on an oval that can be very windy. The headset is the most practical one I have used as it is hands free so that I can teach and demonstrate skills. It also recharges overnight and does not require expensive batteries" - Kris, Phys. Ed Teacher, Newborough PS.



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