

SchoolNews

The essential industry guide

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SPECIAL REPORT:

Teachers battle toxic culture and sinking mental health

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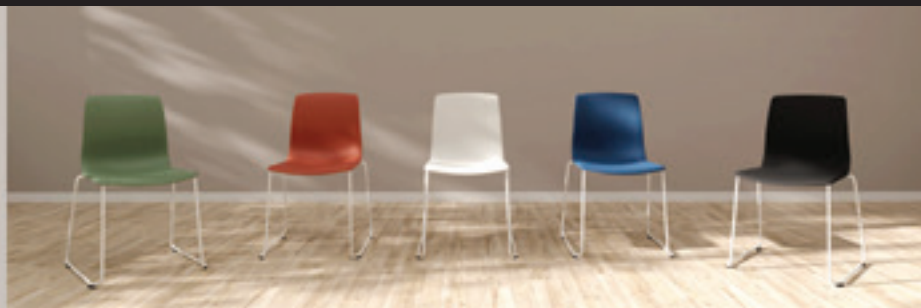


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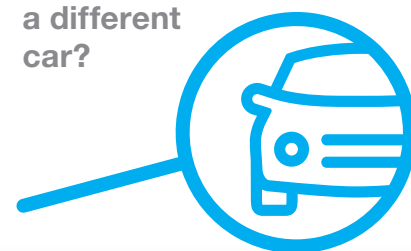
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A whole new world for new recruits

The impact of 2020 is just beginning to shine through as we hear unbelievable stories from early-career teachers.

Industry reporter, Sheetal Singh spotlights the experiences of two teachers pushed out of their schools due to a toxic culture of bullying, harassment, and 'high school' mentality among management. Have you experienced anything like this? What does your school do to make sure incoming staff feel comfortable? Write in and let us know.

David Carroll's special report highlights another central topic post-COVID this issue – the possibility of a shift towards subject specialised teachers. It is too early to tell whether this trend will manifest but with early research projections suggesting an influx of new people into the teaching profession, it stands to reason there will be more



Rosie Clarke,
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competition for posts. Would subject specialisation be good for learners? Or should teaching pedagogy always be at the forefront? STEM subjects are particularly central to the debate, as students are now increasingly learning skills that their teachers simply do not have.

On page 12, we have a fantastic piece on raising a beautiful school community, from Nepean Specialist School Principal, Carolyn Gurrier-Jones. She talks

about how her transdisciplinary team of teachers, physiotherapists, nurses, speech pathologists, and others, work together to cultivate high quality learning experiences for students with complex medical needs.

Our *Principal Speaks* column this issue is by Dr David Nockles from Macarthur Anglican School. In it, he talks us through his personal goal to teach every Year 7 student in his school every year. He has a research-driven approach, having developed a passion for centering school improvement around student voice during his doctorate. Asking students what they find effective in a school setting is a gamechanger!

Elsewhere this issue, we have fantastic features showcasing different solutions and options available to schools in all forms. Beginning with some discussion of the latest research around dyslexia among young learners from our new industry reporter, Heather Barker Vermeer (page

18), and exciting ideas for how to guide your school's move to flexible learning (page 20), plus advice on branding your school like a business, getting ahead of contact tracing with innovative visitor management systems, and some expert insights on designing acoustic-led school facilities.

Check out our theatre and staging feature for all you need to know about producing high quality performances and events for your community. The benefits of school productions are not just for students, but for teachers and wider communities too. We also have a heavy STEAM focus this issue, showing off some of the original projects and programmes you are creating around the country.

If you want to showcase the work of your teachers and students, write in and let us know!

Enjoy this issue of *School News* and stay safe! ■

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Teachers battle toxic culture and sinking mental health



By Sheetal Singh
Industry Reporter

Students of at least two Melbourne schools have missed out on lessons over the past two years as teachers have taken sudden leave after being bullied by the school management, *School News* has learned.

Teaching is a demanding profession. Rebellious teenagers, blaming parents, and skyrocketing workloads makes it even more challenging. But this issue we heard from teachers who feel the profession has become unbearable due to name-calling, bullying, emotional distress and harassment at the hands of school leadership and management.

Lack of support from school management and ignorance towards raised concerns have forced these teachers to move away from the profession by taking sick leave for months and even leaving their school altogether.

Benny, a secondary college teacher and Bianca, a Victorian primary school teacher, recounted the toxic culture they have faced in their schools by the leadership team. That leadership team includes principals, assistant principals, and older staff members.

Describing the school environment, Bianca said: "It is a very dog-eat-dog environment, especially between the leadership team and teachers."

Benny alleged that his principal was mentally abusive while he was battling depression and overcoming a child's loss.

"At least three teachers in my school were bullied apart from me. One took unpaid leave for three months, and others left the job itself," he said. However, teachers are not the only ones suffering. Students face teacherless classes.

As several teachers used sick leave to battle their mental health issues, they found schools failing to provide students with a substitute teacher. *School News* was told it is almost impossible for schools to recruit teachers in the middle of the school term to replace high numbers of teachers going on sick leave. This may pose a significant disruption to students.

"I just got tired of being treated like crap," one teacher surmised.

Feeling bullied in team meetings

When Bianca joined her primary school as a teacher, she had an excellent start - at least for the first seven weeks.

She joined the school around three years ago as a substitute teacher. Having a picture-perfect start, she wondered why the old teacher had left in the middle of the school term.

In less than two months, she was overworked, embarrassed in meetings, and looked down upon by her team leader.

Bianca said that because it was a big school, a group of teachers functioned under a team leader. The leader would hold meetings to prepare for classes and allocate subjects to the teachers.

"So the team leader would pass on information to all the teachers but wouldn't tell me, and I would look like an idiot," she said.

"And then there were weeks when she and I were supposed to teach together, but she would decide to go work with another teacher, and I would be then in charge of preparing two subjects.

"I was overworking because I was so scared that she will just get up and leave the class with her group, and students will not learn anything."

Bianca said that her team leader followed whatever another teacher told her. This teacher was a little older than Bianca, and she calls them a '100 percent bully'.

As a relatively new teacher, and with nowhere to go, Bianca

approached the leadership team with her concerns, but their lack of support frustrated her. "Their solution was very temporary. The management didn't retrain anybody or talk to anybody; they just moved me to a different year level," she said.

However, after she had reported the bully, their attitude towards her got worse. To add to her misery, the school promoted the bully to a leadership position.

"Things got so [much] worse that I had a major meltdown and was pulled into the principal's office for a chat," she said.

"They were 'apparently' concerned for my mental health."

She told the principal that the bully's promotion was hard because her job depended on them now.

"Management team told me that I need to give them a chance and ignore everything and to have a clean slate," she said. "And this was after eight people had a mental breakdown hearing about the promotion."

Her ex-team leader and the bully started talking behind her back with other teachers. She felt isolated.

"My new team was great, but the environment in the staff room was getting more toxic now," she said, explaining that the school's toxic environment reminded her of high school where the students had categories. ►

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◀ There was a 'cool kids' table and 'the rest of the students' table in the staff room.

"You weren't allowed to sit on the 'cool table'. If you sat there, you were ignored or treated like crap," Bianca said. "It came to the point where I stopped going to the staff room altogether and kept to my classroom."

Bianca said she is not a closed person, and she talks to everyone. Her friendly personality allowed her to learn that there was a lot of bullying going around.

"The recruits were recent grads at that time, and this competitive bullying was the first school environment that they were exposed to. When they went to the leadership team to report the harassment, the school would transfer them to a different year level.

"That was their solution. Simple and temporary.

"Teachers were hysterical, crying and looking to get out of school."

While Bianca was already seeing a psychologist, her visits to seek help have increased in the past year. She also said she knows at least three to four teachers seeking help because of overwhelming work and bullying.

"The year before the last, I would go about two times a year, but last year I went multiple times over the pressure of remote learning and what the school demanded of us."

During the last year, she felt she couldn't give enough attention to her students and was more occupied with other 'unnecessary works' for the school.

Overworked and mismanaged

"Teachers were rostered for two days a week to be in school, and there wasn't enough time to finish up everything in that time," Bianca said.

"We would be teaching classes that weren't our students, and then prep and teach our students, attend meetings, execute meeting points and also make instructional videos, all in two days."

She again went to the leadership

team for possible solutions but with no result. She was upset with the management for not taking the teachers seriously and her students missing out on lessons: "Our school is band-aid fixed with no long-term solutions."

She added: "After the teachers approached the assistant principal with this, we were given an hour off the next day. They fixed it for that week, and after that, it was back to the same."

Teachers' mental health should be on the forefront of school leaders' minds. If teachers are overworked they are less able to pay enough attention to their students, and their lessons will be negatively impacted. Bianca said her school could have organised better in this crisis and students wouldn't have had to suffer.

Bianca's isn't an isolated incident in Victorian schools.

As a new teacher, Benny was a part of the *Teach for Australia* program in 2019. During this time, he was also diagnosed with severe depression.

He said he spoke to the principal about his diagnosis and possible leave days. His principal was comfortable with this at the time and offered his support.

However, when his mentor retired at the end of his school year, his school did not provide him with a new mentor, which was a crucial part of the program to assist new teachers.

The "school said that I had taken off too many days due to my mental health, even though I still hadn't used up my allocated sick days," Benny said. "When I spoke to my principal about this, he told me that my mental health had let my students down and that I should be ashamed of it."

Sadly for Benny, this was just the beginning of a series of harmful interactions that he feels contributed to his worsening mental health.

He said that without assistance from his school, he was overwhelmed with work and his studies. This, combined with negative comments the previous year further declined his mental health: "I attended more psychologist sessions, and they increased my

antidepressant dose, but my mental health didn't improve."

Benny underwent further distress after finding out his unborn child had a congenital brain defect, and that his wife's pregnancy would have to be terminated. He shared his situation with the school: "I clarified with my principal and took off three weeks of leave for this. He offered one week of paid parental leave, one week of paid carers leave, and one week of unpaid leave."

Returning to a "toxic culture" after leave

"My mental health was again quite low, but after my allocated leave period, I returned to school," Benny described: "This was when the real toxic culture began."

On his first day back after the turmoil, Benny was shamed and blamed for letting his students down and annoying the parents. He said the management had not provided students with a substitute teacher and blamed students' learning hindrance on him.

He recalled being undermined continuously in front of his students by the leadership staff, and after dealing with the fallout, he decided to resign at the end of the year.

"The principal then decided to find out where I had applied and tried to give a bad reference," he said.

"I was eventually accepted to a school near where I'd grown up. My principal also said he'd be calling my new school to recommend I not be hired."

He said this did not work out for the principal as Benny's old connections with the leadership team allowed him to explain the situation.

"They sympathised with me and hired me straight away rather than at the start of the next year so I could resign from the school and get away from the near-constant abusive behaviour," he said.

"So, I quit. My old principal, of course, refused to accept my resignation at first, but I quoted what the union had advised me.

"He was not pleased and yelled at me before I walked out of the school."

Benny said the abusive behaviour did not stop there, however, and the principal continued to send Benny abusive emails and letters.

"As a result of the lack of support from the school during this unfortunate time in my life I fell into a deep depression and developed PTSD," he said.

"I still have nightmares every night about the school, and for a while, I was having panic attacks when thinking about teaching."

Benny is now happy teaching at his new school, and since last year he is recovering mentally and emotionally.

Small steps by school management can improve the workplace environment

"Managers and [the] leadership team at a workplace must acknowledge the boundaries between work and home," said Marcela Slepica, Clinical Services Director at AccessEAP.

AccessEAP is a not-for-profit Employee Assistance Program (EAP) organisation. It assists employees to make complex workplace issues manageable. Ms Slepica believes many factors are involved in a toxic environment; however, harassment and bullying are the two significant factors.

She added that management can help their employees in many ways like training their employees and 'recognising that it is tough'.

"The management should train staff members about resilience and respect for co-workers," Ms Slepica said. "Teachers are under pressure from students and parents. They have to meet the expectations of people."

She said that employees face hardships at work and sometimes in their personal lives as well. The leadership team must support them by addressing their concerns adequately.

"The leadership team should understand that different problems have different solutions," she said.

The Australian Education Union was unavailable to comment. ■



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By David Carroll,
Industry Reporter

The latest Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) show "encouraging" signs for Australia with improvements in Year 4 science and Year 8 maths and science, but the results have done little to quell concerns about a shortage of suitably qualified teachers in Australian schools.

Australia has one of the highest rates of out-of-field teaching (teaching outside field of expertise) in mathematics and science in the world and education experts have warned a lack of appropriately qualified teachers will have long-term negative consequences for the Australian economy.

Dr Maaïke Wienk, research and policy officer from the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) told *School News* that high-level skills and knowledge in science, technology, engineering

Industry is crying out for people who have those skills



and maths (STEM) subjects are crucial in an increasingly technology-rich world.

"Industry is changing," Dr Wienk said. "What we are seeing now, especially in the last couple of years, is the importance of things like data analysis and statistics analysis. Those types of skills have become more and more important and it's really important we have a lot of students engaged in mathematics and sciences."

"Industry is crying out for people who have those skills."

That is echoed by a CSIRO report which shows 75 percent of the fastest growing occupations will require high-level skills in

STEM subjects. The national science research agency said the speed of technological change in today's workplace is unprecedented and has called for targeted investment in education and training to ensure a sustainable and more productive economy.

"For most, if not all science and technology areas, a good understanding and working knowledge of mathematics is crucial," Dr Weink said. "It's one of the basic skills that all students should have."

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) is among the institutions that have identified out-of-field teaching as an ongoing concern to

improving educational outcomes but deputy CEO Dr Sue Thomson said the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement's (IEA) new TIMSS results "show that some progress has been made".

Conducted every four years since 1995, the TIMSS is the world's longest running large-scale international assessment of mathematics and science. More than 580,000 students from 64 countries and eight benchmarking systems participated in the 2019 study, including 14,950 Australian students from 571 Australian schools.

The latest results, released in December, show Australia's achievement in Year 8 mathematics and science, and Year 4 science has improved both in an absolute sense and relative to other countries since the 2015 assessment. Year 4 maths results were however exactly where they were in 2007.

Also of concern, is that only 70 percent of Year 4 maths students achieved the TIMSS intermediate international benchmark – the nationally

agreed proficient standard. Since 2015, the only cohort to have shown improvement in Australia in relation to the benchmark is Year 8 science.

Despite there being areas of concern, Dr Thomson, the national research coordinator for the TIMSS, said in a statement the overall performance would be welcomed by many Australian schools and teachers but conceded “there is still a solid tail of underachievement that needs to be addressed”.

“More work needs to be done to achieve our national vision for educational excellence, particularly in Year 4 mathematics,” she said.

Addressing that “underachievement” requires a concerted effort and while there is widespread consensus that the *quality* of teachers matters for positive student outcomes, there is less agreement on which aspects of teacher quality matter. Both ACER and the AMSI have however highlighted out-of-field teaching as a key aspect which has the potential to affect teaching effectiveness.

Dr Wienk said with all other things being equal, teachers with domain-specific qualifications – having completed both content and methodology training in the area – should be more effective than those without that expertise.

“The benefit of teachers who are trained to teach mathematics, they are the teachers who are best qualified to teach mathematics to a high a standard and also to make maths interesting, relevant,” she said.

The *quality* of teachers matters for positive student outcomes, but which aspects of teacher quality matter?



“They are better able to make connections between different areas of mathematics.

“There’s an analogy there: If you send to children to take swimming lessons you would want your teacher to be a qualified swim instructor.”

While some teachers thrive on the challenges presented by out-of-field teaching, Dr Wienk said for many, teaching outside of areas of qualification can be detrimental.

“There is research about how teaching out of field impacts the way they teach,” she said.

“The evidence is that those teachers don’t have the same self-confidence in their ability, they feel like they are not much further ahead than their own students so that is going to impact on the quality of their teaching.”

Dr Wienk said motivating students to learn STEM subjects can also be a challenge and teachers have a critical role to play with studies in Australia consistently showing

participation in secondary school advanced maths continues to decline.

Ongoing data analysis of Year 12 mathematics enrolments shows that while national participation rates in final year maths subjects are still high, at about 80 percent, the proportion of students choosing advanced maths subjects has declined in the past 20 years. In every year of the past decade, fewer than 30 percent of Year 12 students chose intermediate or higher mathematics. In 2019, only 10 percent of all Year 12 students studied higher maths and only 20.5 percent of all final year students studied intermediate maths – the lowest participation rate since 2015.

“What we see, and I’m talking about high school here, students do disengage from mathematics. They don’t perhaps see the point of it, or they might not see a career path in it,” Dr Wienk said.

“Even if they don’t want a career in it, they don’t see the point of taking it to support the skills development in other areas,

particularly in other science and technology areas.

“It’s a very complex issue to tackle and I don’t want to pinpoint and say there is only one cause of the malaise, but of course out-of-field teaching is a key one.”

Australia has one of the highest rates of out-of-field teaching in mathematics and science in the world with data showing 22 percent of Year 8 students were taught by out-of-field teachers, compared to an international average of 13 percent.

ACER’s *Crunching the Numbers of Out-of-Field Teaching* report shows less than one-in-four Australian high school students have a qualified maths teacher and a survey by the Australian Education Union showed that 45 percent of secondary school principals reported they had maths and science classes being taught by teachers who weren’t fully qualified in the in the subject area. Secondary school principals also reported that vacancies in the curriculum areas of maths, technology and science were the most difficult to fill.

“It is a real issue,” Dr Wienk said.

“There are not enough teachers that we would called fully trained to teach mathematics in Australia.”

The AMSI has labelled out-of-field teaching in Australia a “crisis” but the institution still believes the issue can be turned around. It has however warned any solution “will need a long-term commitment to attracting more mathematics teachers and retraining existing teachers”. ■



Proudly leading a beautiful school community

By Carolyn Gurrier-Jones, Principal, Nepean Specialist School

I count myself as truly blessed to have been entrusted with the privilege, joy, and challenge of leading Nepean Special School.

I walk alongside our school community in building a 'child centered' organisation that exemplifies, personifies, and celebrates our motto: *Together we achieve the extraordinary!* We are committed to excellence and underscore our practice and expertise with love and kindness.

Nepean Special School is situated in the Victorian suburb of Seaford and provides a unique and specialised educational choice for students who have physical disabilities and/or complex health impairments. The specialisation of our school setting enables us to bring together a dedicated and knowledgeable transdisciplinary team of



teachers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, music therapists, education support staff, registered nurses, a psychologist and other specialisations, to ensure we offer our students the very best, individually scaffolded opportunities for learning. We work in partnership with our students, families, and outside professionals in developing bespoke learning opportunities and seeking the

very best individualised learning outcomes for each student who attends our school.

The dedication and specialisation of our Transdisciplinary Team ensures that each day we can offer our students (from 5 to 18 years) valuable and differentiated learning opportunities while meeting their therapy and medical needs. Education, therapeutic and medical needs are seamlessly met throughout

the school day, in small class groups, led by a teacher who is supported by two education support staff, with direct input of ten hours of small group therapy per week, including, three hours of physiotherapy, three hours of occupational therapy, three hours of speech therapy and one hour of music therapy. For example, picture a child undertaking their math or literacy learning as they fulfil their physical therapy needs of weight bearing in a standing frame, with a prescribed set up by an occupational therapist, to ensure that the student has the best and most independent access possible to their learning materials and that they are in the right 'zone' for learning.

It is important to note that they are not the only child in the class accessing therapy inputs while they are undertaking learning activities. Or imagine a child who uses a wheelchair being actively encouraged or supported by the staff team, to ambulate as independently as possible, throughout the school day,



Images courtesy of the Nepean Specialist School



rather than spending long hours sitting passively in a wheelchair or picture a nonverbal students, having expertise around them, that allows them to use low and high tech tools to be able to have their wishes or opinions heard and met or acknowledged, or a chronically ill child being able to undertake medical treatment at school during the school day so that learning is less disrupted by hospital and medical visits or a purpose built environment, with individually prescribed equipment for each student to ensure they can access the curriculum in the way that best suits them. This seamless, expert, and dedicated approach to the school day, ensures that learning and therapy goals are developed, scaffolded, assessed, and practiced with peers in a meaningful and practical way, rather than focused on separately and practiced in isolation.

Students are involved in goal setting and act as their own and each other's mentors

and champions, by helping to motivate, support, provide feedback and evidence achievement of learning goals.

Our school is committed to kindness. Our school rules are *Kindness to Ourselves, Kindness to Others and Kindness to the Environment*. A schoolwide commitment to positive behavior support and explicitly teaching, representing, modelling, and acknowledging expected behaviors has proven very beneficial to the sense of safety and wellbeing of our students and community.

Autonomous communication lies at the heart of our work

This is an area where we continually strive to seek improvement on the continuum toward excellence. Communication accessibility and alternative and augmented communication is a stalwart of every school day. We are deeply and actively committed

to the right of our students of all abilities to be heard. Our whole school literacy approach, 'A Balanced Approach to Literacy' ascribes to the words of Dr David Yoder that, "no student is too anything to be able to read and write".

Working in a school community with an incredibly strong commitment to student, staff, and community learning, allows us the opportunity to learn from each other's expertise and experience, bring the knowledge from our different disciplines and perspectives to the transdisciplinary approach and use this to ensure the child has the very best wrap around approach to their learning.

An active and strong commitment to student, staff and community wellbeing practices underpin our work and decision making.

Nepean Special School is a

school of excellence. We have a strengths-based focus and a distributive leadership model. The incredible joint commitment of our students, team and community makes our school the special and magical place that it is. Our school is full of learning, laughter, encouraging words, belief in the students and each other, developing independence, commitment, and love. I am incredibly proud to lead this beautiful school community.

My leadership style is reflective of 'imperfect leadership' with a focus on 'power and love', as described by Steve Munby. This year in growing our work together our School Improvement Team plan to study Brene Brown's, *Daring Leadership*. We are looking forward to seeing where immersing ourselves in this journey will take us and the impact it will have on and within our organisation. ■





Images courtesy of Macarthur Anglican School

Why my goal is to teach every Year 7 student each year

As a school student growing up in South Africa, I loved learning, and this set my course to become a teacher and ultimately a headmaster...

However, I did not enjoy the way we were taught to learn content, rather than *how to use* that valuable content.

These early experiences forged my thinking and gave me the impetus to ensure that as a teacher and leader I would focus on guiding students to interpret and use content, rather than just memorise it.



Dr David Nockles, Headmaster,
Macarthur Anglican School, Cobbitty, NSW

At school, I had a keen interest in geography and history, but I didn't enjoy the subjects in those early years because they were always about dates

and place names. I went on to become a geography and history teacher after my undergraduate university training in Australia and realised that teaching and learning was really all about the understanding of the content.

Those early experiences had a major impact on my teaching, and my leadership style. As a leader, I choose to ensure that I have good advice and research behind me and to listen to many people, including students, when I make decisions.

My approach has always been research driven. As I began my research for my doctorate I realised after conducting

a thorough literature review that there was no research on student voice in relation to school improvement. At the time I was the Deputy Headmaster at Macarthur and that is when we began to focus on measuring effectiveness. Many people describe this approach as being data driven, but I prefer to call it research driven because it takes in both qualitative and quantitative measures.

My research, which is reported in my 2012 book, *Determining Effective Schools for Parents and Adolescents*, focussed on the key drivers of school effectiveness.





I took the existing academic research and asked the students if they agreed with 10 drivers of school effectiveness that I identified. I utilised qualitative and quantitative measures and discovered that there was a strong alignment from the students, with the academics.

What the students shared with me was insightful and open. The Year 9 and 10 students ranked 'safe and secure' as the most important driver, followed by 'good teacher/teaching'. Interestingly, the Year 11 and 12 students flipped those around and ranked 'good teacher/teaching' first, followed by 'safe and secure'.

I also found it interesting that they could differentiate between the two parts of a 'good teachers' noting a split between being a good teacher and being good at teaching as two separate things. They told me that, depending on the situation, one side was more important than the other, however all agreed that the best teachers had both, often in equal measure.

As a headmaster, I use this research and subsequent research to guide me to make improvements with facts to back up the changes implemented. I look for research driven improvement – you need to find what we know about the past and present to design the future. Data is not just numbers. The numbers only tell one side of a story. The real insight is in the combination in qualitative and quantitative, which is true research.

While I make fairly authoritarian decisions, because I believe that's what good leaders do, I always ensure that I receive good advice prior, I have

research behind me, and that the people are with me. Then I am confident to take my foot off and let others lead the way.

I do not want anyone to follow me blindly. I want them to follow me asking questions.

The other basic premise of my leadership is that I believe I am leading culture, not people. Our leadership team at Macarthur has worked for many years to establish an academic culture, and we listen and learn from our students, just as much as they learn from us.

We undertake research at Macarthur to measure culture from both students and parents on a regular basis.

For some, academic culture might sound like we focus on academic results, but while results are important, we look well beyond the numbers.

We encourage innovative thinking, risk taking, creative thinking, resilience and persistence or grit. These so-called soft skills are those which we believe equip our students for the modern world

and showcase student's potential learning aptitudes for the future.

We report on marks, but we also ask teachers to grade each student on their creativity, response to feedback, and other soft skills.

One of our long-term goals that goes well beyond academic success is our efforts to break the shackles of regionalised inward thinking. We have intentionally set out to ensure students know that the world is at their feet and that they do not have to be pigeon-holed as kids from regional Sydney.

We are also realistic enough to know that academic success is also important for our students. It is about striking the right balance. I believe we achieve that and are consistently placed in the top 100 schools when it comes to HSC ATAR results.

As a leader I also believe that it is imperative to keep in touch with the students. As headmaster, my interactions with students are very formal, so I choose to teach, allowing me to really connect with students.

My goal is to teach every Year 7 student at Macarthur Anglican School each year. I have taught Biblical Studies over the past nine years, but this year I will be switching to my real teaching roots with geography.

I know I do not have the time to teach the whole subject to every Year 7 student, so I will be focusing on the area of geographic skills where I'll cover important life skills like map reading.

It is easy to assume you know what is going on, but unless you've really been there 'in the field' regularly you can lose touch and be seen to be in an ivory tower. I love getting to know the students, being part of the teaching faculty and being human with my students.

Nothing gives me more pleasure than equipping students with important life skills. It is how we teach our students to use content to develop their analytical skills, their resilience, their creativity, and their innovation. That is what good leadership is all about. ■



Principal Perspectives on the impact of COVID-19

In late 2020, our researchers at Pivot Professional Learning, in partnership with the Coalition of Australian Principals, invited principals of primary and secondary schools across the nation to participate in an online survey about their experiences during the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

In all, 456 principals and other leaders across the government, Catholic and independent sectors responded to the survey.

As with our survey of over 3,000 teachers published in July 2020, this latest research titled, 'Principal Perspectives on the Impact of COVID-19: Pathways toward Equity in Australian Schools', provides stark insights into the challenges faced by school communities during the continuing COVID pandemic. Moreover, the research has laid bare profound underlying issues in the school system, particularly relating to inequality, that long predate the pandemic.

Along with some of the more troubling findings, principals who took part in the survey also reported a surprising number of positive outcomes and discoveries from their experiences during the pandemic. Some of these insights will inevitably lead to positive and permanent changes in the way many schools operate, and children are educated in the years and decades ahead.

Key findings of the research

Despite the adversities of 2020, our survey revealed how school communities



Amanda Bickerstaff, CEO,
Pivot Professional Learning

have overwhelmingly rallied together to support one another through the pandemic.

As the principal of one relatively disadvantaged government school in Victoria reported: "This school community has been remarkable in the way it has endured and then thrived during the pandemic. Care, compassion, generosity of spirit and goodwill have existed throughout."

- Many schools responded to the crisis by expanding support services to their larger school communities.
- School principals have reported an increase in workloads – but not a corresponding decline in job satisfaction.
- Communication and crisis planning were the most helpful skills for leading schools during the pandemic.
- Many principals (65.7 percent) thought the pandemic had a positive impact on the quality of teachers' instructional practice, but a negative impact on teachers' mental health (81.2 percent) and social-emotional health (76.5 percent).
- A large majority of principals (79.5 percent) reported that the pandemic negatively

impacted students' mental health and wellbeing.

- Principals of socio-economically advantaged schools were significantly more likely to report a successful transition to remote learning than those leading less advantaged schools.
- Principals at lower ICSEA schools were significantly more likely to believe the impact of the pandemic on student learning had been negative (52 percent versus 30 percent)

Our recommendations

Based on our research, there are some clear recommendations for the future for policy makers, principals, teachers, and the greater community:

1. Expand digital inclusion across Australia.

In the short-term, we urge policy makers to conduct a nationwide audit of access to technology and connectivity and make plans to close remaining gaps. Policy makers can also support schools in upskilling teachers in digital pedagogy. Over the long-term, the federal government should plan for and invest in wide expansion of broadband infrastructure to make remote, hybrid, and flipped instructional options more widely available. Doing this not only offers benefits in terms of inclusion and academic achievement; it is also fundamental to crisis preparedness.

2. Mitigate learning loss among vulnerable students.

We recommend that policy makers and sector leaders allocate additional resources to support extra tutoring in under-served communities. Some tutoring could be done

through schools, with peer or teacher-led tutoring targeted to specific learning gaps.

Given the likelihood of the need for distance learning in the future due to fire, pandemics or other reasons, clear plans and non-digital solutions must be developed to reach students in areas without sufficient broadband infrastructure. Schools must also create clear plans to adapt individualised support services (e.g., speech, physical, or occupational therapy) to reach students with disabilities when schools are closed. Similarly, schools should explore new approaches to teach the youngest students remotely.

3. Prioritise teacher wellbeing.

In the short term, we recommend that policy makers temporarily expand alternative pathways into the classroom for teachers and support staff to help ease educators' workloads. In addition, we propose more inclusion of teachers in school wellbeing initiatives.

4. Care for the wellbeing of students.

In the short term, school leaders should connect with wellbeing tools and interventions that are vetted by researchers and mental health professionals. In addition, organisations can develop coalition approaches to sharing best practices in cultivating wellbeing at schools. ▲

Pivot Professional Learning

is an education technology company that provides evidence-based tools, data analytics and practical support to help improve teacher effectiveness in schools. We provide actionable insights to educators and a voice to students, using technology to enhance education outcomes and learning experiences in more than 600 schools.

For more information about the 'Principal Perspectives on the impact of COVID-19 in Australia' research. Please visit www.pivotpl.com/landscape-of-school-leadership-2020/



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Reading between the lines

By Heather Barker Vermeer
Industry Reporter

How well are we supporting students with dyslexia?

It may be safe to say that dyslexia affects one-in-five Australians when including the continuum of mild to severe dyslexia, according to the Australian Dyslexia Association (ADA).

In psycho-educational assessments, the terms SLD (Specific/Significant Learning Difficulty/Disability) or LD (Learning Difficulty) are commonly used interchangeably in Australia, as an umbrella term for reading difficulties, which may or may not be dyslexia.

When diagnosed, there are widely believed to be six types of dyslexia: phonological, surface, visual, primary, secondary/developmental and trauma dyslexia, also referred to as acquired dyslexia. The disorder is recognised in Australia under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and by the Human Rights Commission.

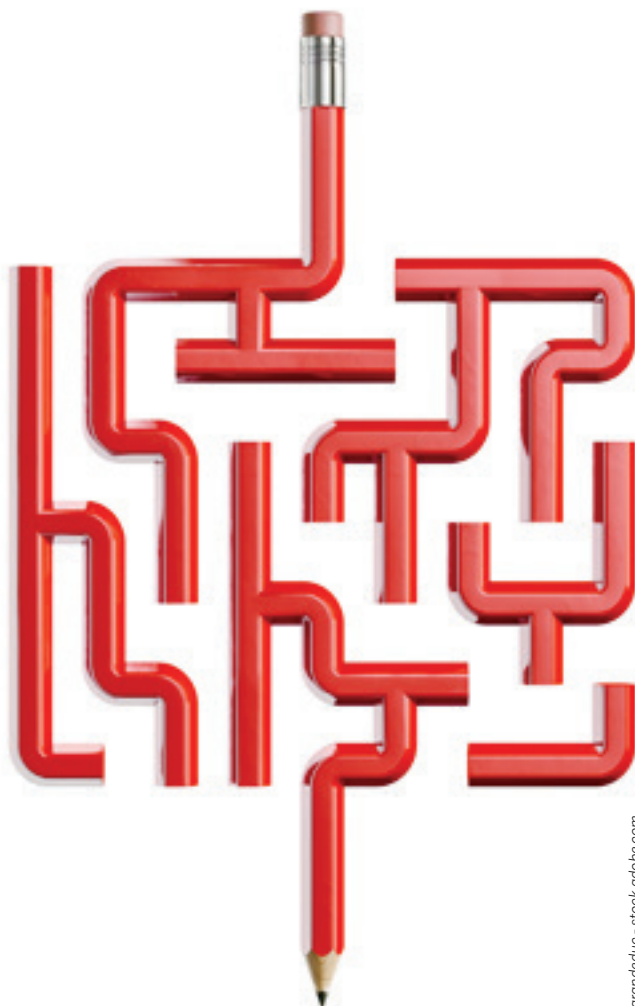
Dyslexia often becomes apparent during the early years of schooling, when a child shows an unexplained difficulty in reading despite having the capabilities to learn, according to the ADA. A child whose dyslexia has not been identified may show frustration, low self-esteem, have a loss of motivation for learning and social and emotional issues, including attention difficulties.

Before they are diagnosed, many children develop coping strategies to try to disguise their dyslexia. Negative coping mechanisms include students pretending to be less capable than they are, in order to hide this gap in their otherwise strong abilities. Or they may channel their efforts into other pursuits, often in artistic or sporting areas, which do not require any reading – a positive coping mechanism.

Research carried out by the Dyslexia Research Trust (DRT) in the UK found 52 percent of teachers reported having

had no dyslexia training at all. And nine out of 10 of those that said they did receive any training say it lasted for less than an hour. Figures on dyslexia training among Australia-based teachers are hard to find.

In his 2019 article, *Dyslexia in the Classroom* published by ADA, Daniel Patterson asks whether schools are doing enough to support dyslexic students in the classroom. He quotes ADA President Jodi Clements as saying the research that has been gathered surrounding dyslexia should inform universities on how to train teachers better and believes there's still a fair way to go. It would appear the answer to Patterson's question is *no, there is work to be done*.



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information for personalised understanding and support.

Once a diagnosis has been received, teachers and aides can take several steps to help a dyslexic child. The DRT says that "it is important to make sure that the student is exposed to written material as frequently as possible, as practice is the most important thing.

"Providing written information in a simple 'sans serif' font (without flicks and tails on the letters) such as Arial or Calibri helps the letters to be recognisable and using a larger font size than normal is also helpful. If possible, print in black onto light beige paper to reduce visual glare, and avoid using colours that could reduce contrast.

"When students are slower at writing than typical, there is an increasing trend to provide them with a laptop and excuse them from physical writing. We strongly advise against avoiding writing with a pen or pencil. Studies show that the actual physical process of forming letters is extremely important in learning to read. This also applies to the increasing trend in education to use digital screens for learning, instead of pen and paper."

It is clear that if a child is struggling to read, they will have difficulty progressing in many of the school curriculum subjects and the wider implications can be far reaching. The Australian National Institute of Child Health and Human Development research found, "When intervention is delayed, it takes four times as long to intervene in fourth grade as it did in late kindergarten, because of the increase in content for children to learn as they grow older."

The ADA urges swift action by teachers to reduce the impact of delayed diagnosis. "If you feel that a child is displaying indicators of dyslexia, do not listen if someone says, 'They'll grow out of it' or 'All children progress at their own rate'. No one grows out of dyslexia and time is valuable when it comes to dyslexia and a child's positive self-esteem." ■

What, then, should teachers do if they feel a child in their class may be dyslexic?

The ADA recommends: "Learn[ing] about the common characteristics of dyslexia, trust your gut feelings and do something about it. Effective screening for dyslexia will tell you a lot about the type of teaching [a] child requires."

Teachers should, of course, discuss any difficulties with the child's parents or guardians and could recommend an assessment. The ADA offers a thorough pre-assessment service for students of all ages. This can assist the school and assess the relevant needs of the individual student, providing a report containing

10% of all students have Dyslexia



Dyslexia is a learning disability that affects approximately 10% of the population. So it follows that 10% of students at your school will have Dyslexia – most of these students will be undiagnosed.

In addition to students with Dyslexia, there are other learning difficulties that effect a student's ability to read such as Autism, ADHD, mild cognitive impairment or auditory & visual processing disorders. What assistance can a school provide to these students?

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across Australia and around the world by students with reading difficulties. It not only allows them to read independently but it also boosts self-confidence & reduces reading anxiety.

"Our staff have found that the Reader Pen is very beneficial. It is another assistive technology tool that our school is using to support the learning needs of our students."

Assistant Principal, Taylors Lakes School, Melbourne, VIC

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"The Scanning Pens have changed the way our learning support students, including students from an EAL background, access learning in the classroom"

Learning Support Team, Bossley Park High School, NSW

The ReaderPen is endorsed by Dyslexia organisations and speech pathologists globally. It also helps students with a low reading level or students learning English. The pen is GST free as it is an accredited assistive technology device. Scanning Pens is a registered NDIS Provider.

To arrange a free trial of the ReaderPen contact Scanning Pens on 02 8855 7100, email auinfo@scanningpens.com, or register at www.scanningpens.com.au. To order a pen, or a set of 10 x C-Pen's, email your order to auorders@scanningpens.com ▲



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- Learning Support Team, Bossley Park High School, NSW



Images courtesy of Resource Furniture

Guiding flexible learning trends in 2021

By Rosie Clarke, *Editor*

Active, adaptable, advantageous to learners: flexible learning environments (FLEs) are here to stay.

Still, schools struggle to get on-trend and match their pedagogy to a configuration that works for both students and teachers. Key to flexible learning design is understanding that the educational space is as much for teachers to interact with learners as it is for learners to interact with each other; and the furniture too becomes an active participant in the learning process rather than a stage set for lecture-style teaching. In 2021, with blended classroom trends on the uptick as schools merge their remote learnings with in-class

activities, flexible environments are all the more enticing.

There are three elements that we feel should guide flexible learning design in schools:

- **Movement.** A learner's newfound ability to make the classroom environment more comfortable for themselves, to explore resources and learning tools in the space, to shift somewhere quieter or gravitate towards a group of fellow learners, are all principal design features of FLEs.
- **Technology.** This depends on the functionality required of the space, but FLEs should have capacity to integrate technology-based activities. This could mean flexible

storage for devices, clever projector/screen designs, or charging stations.

- **Collaboration.** Flexible learning spaces are designed to encourage creativity, problem solving, and inquiry-based learning. If your learners are not able to form hubs or groups in a learning space without disrupting others, reconfiguring your design is a must.

All this being said, the clue is in the title: flexible learning environments are *flexible* so the designs should always be amenable to change and evolve with the needs of your school. But what about some specific design dos and don'ts? Is there any way to trial an FLE before making a whole-school commitment?

Here are some helpful hot tips from trend-setting flexible solution suppliers that will hopefully answer all your burning questions...

Resource Furniture's business development manager, Emma Gillings has been immersed in South Australia's Building Better Schools Program helping schools plan and design their furniture spaces.

She said that when considering flexible learning spaces, it is important to get the right mix of design and practicalities: "Teachers understand their environment; students and space, and they have experiences from their current furniture of what they like and dislike." ►



Images courtesy of Winc Australia

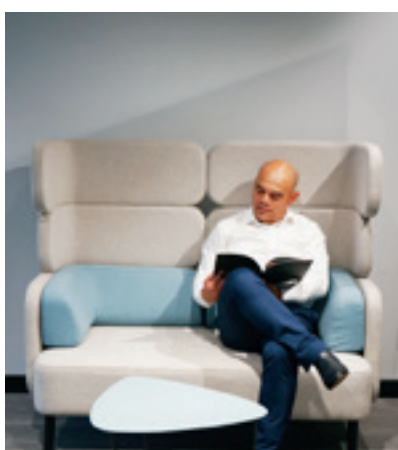


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- Junior Ruaporo, Furniture Solutions Specialist

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◀ She told us that she has seen schools take a range of different approaches to furniture designs that have given her a practical perspective on what makes a project successful.

"Available space and teaching methods practised at the school need to be factored in when looking at design layout. If space is not at a premium, it is sensible to look at the basics of tables and chairs and introduce a range of soft furnishings and 'fun stuff' into the breakout and communal areas. This is not to say that a classroom must be static and boring but that quick, turnaround furniture is the key.

"Throwing lots of shapes at a classroom does not make it flexible and, in fact, I would argue that it can make a classroom inflexible. It is amazing what a rectangular flip table on castors (some with a gas lift for height) can do with stackable chairs and stools. It is pointless to design a furniture layout for a school with the most up-to-date flexible furniture if it will not be used the way it was intended. That is why I encourage schools

to seek advice early so that there is plenty of room for discussion and teachers have the option to trial the furniture.

This provides the opportunity to challenge assumptions that might cloud design ideas, and it encourages listening to teaching staff and students about what works best for them. Pilot classrooms are a fantastic way to provide teachers and pupils the opportunity to trial furniture onsite, so that they can get a good feel for the way the furniture can be used and be easily integrated into everyday teaching."

Junior Ruaporo works as a furniture solutions specialist for Business Interiors, a division of Winc Australia, to help schools design their very own flexible classrooms.

He spoke with us about the rise of modern and flexible learning environments across the education sector, remarking that they stand in stark contrast to traditional rigid classroom environments.

Those "outdated teaching methods and rows of static

desks and chairs", are something he is passionate about helping teachers and learners say goodbye to for good.

"Schools across Australia are beginning to adopt modern furnishings that encourage independence, collaboration and creativity among students.

These contemporary learning spaces have embraced a more flexible approach to layout, furniture options and use of space to facilitate a range of valuable learning experiences.

To successfully foster intellectual, mental, and emotional growth, schools need to develop a spatial design that supports a variety of interactions between students and teachers.

"A truly versatile learning space must be capable of facilitating a mix of individual, small group and large group dynamics. Classrooms should therefore be sectioned into smaller purposeful spaces. David Thornburg, an award-winning futurist, author and consultant, identifies three archetypal learning spaces in his research. These are the Watering Hole

(home of dialogue), the Campfire (home of the lecture) and the Cave (home to cognitive construction of understanding).

"Ergonomics, modularity and ease of maintenance are three trends that we've seen emerge and they're all absolutely necessary for schools in the future. Furniture needs to be comfortable, durable, and easily maintained but also highly adaptable. I recommend integrating modular furniture in school designs as this really makes the most of the space and helps facilitate tailored learning experiences."

Junior explained that the adaptable nature of flexible working spaces cultivates higher interaction and engagement with lesson content. He said: "Furniture designed to accommodate flexible, creative and independent learning will play a vital role in schools of the future by elevating the student experience, supporting their learning and growth, and cultivating their ability to work both independently and collaboratively." ■



Visitor management expertise for schools

By Rosie Clarke, Editor

Visitor sign-in systems rose to a whole new standard during the pandemic.

There is more pressure than ever, thanks to contact tracing efforts, to keep tabs on visitors and have a high level of accountability across your school.

Digital visitor management systems provide schools with an automated system to implement vetting procedures that keep students safe without overwhelming staff with new duties, and while maintaining a welcoming ambiance. Almost the entire process, from scheduling and room booking



Image courtesy of Passtab

to reminding school leaders and staff about a new arrival, to carrying out ID checks, printing name tags, directing visitors around the school, distributing and recording health and safety messages, can all be

programmed and streamlined with a digital system. Every moment a visitor spends at your school can be recorded and tracked in real-time, without impeding on their experience or the experience of students/staff.

Interview with an industry expert: Passtab director Steve Camm shares his viewpoint on school visitor management tech and trends...

"Visitor management has automated many time-consuming tasks for administrators and improved safety and security at the school," explains Steve.

"I have seen a trend towards further security in the form of co-operation from governments to allow programmatic access to databases that store information relevant to a person being safe to visit a school. This can improve visitor screening during the sign in process and provide an added layer of protection for schools. ►



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◀ “There is also a trend towards product integrations within schools, which improves the transfer and consolidation of data between systems. While the role of school visitor management is continuing to expand, we make sure it remains very intuitive and minimal training is required.”

Q: Do you recommend management tools that allow schools to schedule group arrivals ahead of time?

“There are a number of methods available to sign a group of people into a school quickly. The most popular is where the school issues invitations to each person in the group who can then pre-register and complete the school’s induction training process. Once pre-registration is completed, they are automatically issued with a QR code that allows them to simply scan in as they arrive.

“If it is a group of contractors carrying out work at the school, they can also complete the compliance requirements and upload all required documents before arriving.”



Image courtesy of Pitney Bowes

Q: What are some of the customisable options for messages, welcome screens, and creating identification labels that schools might not know exist?

“In terms of customisable options, messages, welcome screens, and labels are just the beginning. While workflow is of the most importance, a professional, welcoming image is also important. Many schools like to use a screen saver option to display images of the school as a welcome, which allows for up to 10 images to be presented on the iPad. By simply touching the screen, the sign in process is activated.”

Q: What are some pros and cons for iPad station or mobile device options?

“While mobile sign in methods can be more convenient for some visitors, it generally does not benefit the school as an identification label can’t be printed. This is because personal phones are unable to casually connect to a school printer. An iPad station sign in will result in the printing of an identification label.”

“These identification labels are a vital part of the sign in process as it is a visual confirmation that the visitor has met all of the school’s terms of entry. This means they have completed COVID-19 screening questions; up-to-date induction training; a valid *Working with Children Check*; and, in the case of a contractor, valid compliance documentation allowing them to complete work at the school. Identification labels can also be customised to include important information like ‘COVID-19 screened’.

Interview with an industry expert: Vice president and country manager at Pitney Bowes Japan, Australia and New Zealand, Stephen Darracott talks functionality and device options.

Q: How do notifications work?

“When a visitor or contractor arrives at the school, they can select the person responsible for their visit and this will trigger a notification for any member of staff or an administrator. Once the visitor has registered, the selected staff member receives a notification via email or SMS that someone has arrived for them. The visitor management system should automatically print



Image courtesy of Passtab

a badge, with photo ID, which the person then needs to be asked to wear while they are at the school. This makes it easy to identify them as an authorised visitor.”

Q: Has COVID sparked any changes in school needs that you have noticed?

“COVID-19 has certainly heightened the need for a simple yet secure way of managing visitors and contractors. Especially at the peak of the pandemic in Australia, there was an increased demand to be able to assist with contact tracing where needed.

“Schools want to capture a visitor’s details and save them to a cloud-based repository so the school can easily contact people if needed. A visitor management system is also a great screening tool: visitors and/or contractors are asked to answer health-related questions and sign a health declaration. In addition, integrated Bluetooth infrared temperature scanning features let you quickly check a visitor’s temperature before they enter your premises. The system notifies your organisation if an elevated temperature is detected and prevents the person further entry and contact with others at your premises. This means you can protect your students and staff even further.

“Even as we start seeing the

COVID-19 vaccination rollout and we move past the peak of the pandemic, simply and securely managing visitors and contractors at schools will continue to be high on the agenda, as a way to keep staff, students and the broader community safe.

Q: What do schools need to know about customising sign-ins and staff training requirements?

“It’s helpful for visitors and staff if you can fully customise your system, especially the welcome screen, with graphics and messaging. You can create a custom sign-in by including specific questions relating to health and safety requirements. You can also create branded labels for added security.

“If your system is easy to set-up and use, your staff don’t need specific training. With a user-friendly touchscreen monitor, image scanner and integrated temperature scanner, the goal is to capture all the visitor information your school needs. Devices can automatically print visitor badges and capture emergency contact details. You can generate real-time reports to always see who’s on your premises, enhancing your school’s existing security processes.

“Address book features can also provide a predictive-like key stroke experience that lets visitors check in without staff involvement.” ■

Know precisely who is on your school grounds.

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— Sarah Redfern Public School



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Save your voice, cut the noise



Image courtesy of Autex Australia

Do you raise your voice during class?

Teachers are at a higher risk of developing voice disorders, according to multiple studies. In fact, while exact statistics vary by survey, research suggests between 10 and 70 percent of teachers develop a voice issue. Primary school teachers are at a higher risk, along with teachers using a loud voice, excessive voice use, teaching in noisy environments, and those who have worked for more than 15 years. A comparative study undertaken in the US, 'Voice Disorders in Teachers and the General Population: Effects on Work Performance, Attendance, and Future Career Choices' found that 94 percent more teachers reported voice

symptoms than nonteachers.

Moreover, according to a 2016 review of national and international classroom acoustic standards by Macquarie University and the National Acoustic Laboratories in Sydney, students spend 45-75 percent of classroom time listening to their teacher and classmates. Kiri Mealings noted in the report that "as current teaching methods have a strong focus on group work activities, contemporary classrooms are prone to high noise levels".

"Therefore, the classroom acoustic environment needs to be designed appropriately."

Studies have found that not only do noisy classrooms contribute to voice damage

among teachers, but that noise also impairs speech perception in children more than adults. For children with speech or language processing disorders, attention deficits or other learning difficulties, this poses even more significant concern. Background noise from traffic, HVAC systems, and appliances are not the only source of noise pollution. According to studies, flexible learning environments where moving furniture is encouraged and students take on a more active learning role rather than remain seated quietly at desks, have contributed to noisier activity-led classroom environments.

While these modern pedagogies prioritise collaborative learning in flexible environments, they can be a recipe for excessive

noise unless paired with careful planning and design. So, how can schools manage noise without compromising modern learning experiences?

Acoustic tips from trend-setting flexible learning solution suppliers...

Autex Australia's national technical manager, Rob Jones discussed the differences in approach to acoustic design when schools are dealing with a new facility versus a refurbishment:

"First up, floor planning. This is key for both new and existing projects. Make sure activities likely to be disruptive are separated from spaces with more sensitive acoustic requirements. ►

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*Seep, Benjamin., Glosemeyer, Robin., Hulce, Emily., Linn, Matt. Aytar, Pamela. (2009) Classroom Acoustics – A Resource for
Creating Learning Environments with Desirable Learning Conditions. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED451697.pdf>



Image courtesy of Lotus



Image courtesy of Lotus

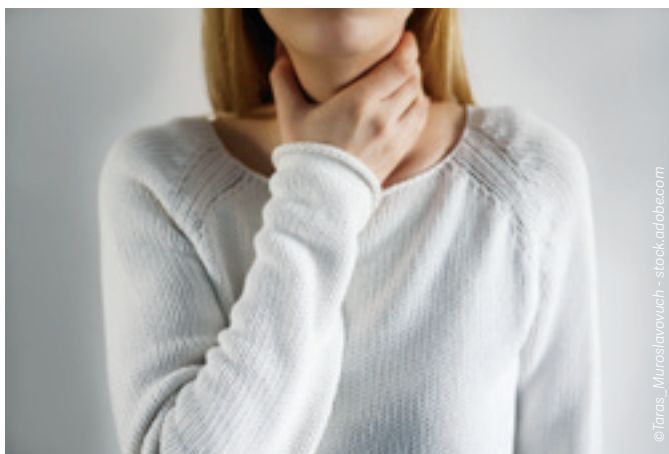
◀ This is easier when creating a new facility but should be considered for refurbishments wherever possible.

"Given the importance of acoustics in facilitating positive educational outcomes, the design should ensure acoustics are embedded into its core construction and not just part of the aesthetic. Something that is often ignored is that each state sets out mandatory minimum acoustic performance specifications. This is because not achieving the acoustic performance compromises the building's primary function, 'learning'. The negative impacts of this will be played out repeatedly for many year groups using the space well into the future."

Flexible learning spaces, on the other hand, pose some challenge to every acoustic engineer: "There simply won't be sufficient surface area in proportion to the rooms volume and physical dimensions to achieve the required reverberation times. With many dividing walls deleted and those that remain often consisting of glazing, the importance of considering the room geometry along with material selections will be required to not only control RT and reduce noise flows through the spaces."

He had some other hot tips to share with us this issue: "The humble old notice board is just that - a notice board! "The use of continuous acoustically absorptive lining like composition provides not only a practical and maintainable display space, but greatly assists in controlling lateral reflections and lowering reverberation times. Being continuous, this also improve the noise

How can schools manage noise without compromising modern learning experiences?



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separation (transmission loss) between adjoining spaces while improving the thermal efficiency of external walls.

Another core design element worth investigating: "Modern ceiling systems should effectively soak up a wide range of noise types while allowing access and adaptability for future technologies. Once upon a time, all we really had was a drop in ceiling tile effectively a one function and not so high up on the aesthetic scale. Suspended canopies and baffles provide good acoustic performance while visually defining zones with textural and height variations and can be quickly changed or even relocated should the need arise. Being adaptable to suit the site they offer up good value and performance."

Architectural solutions manager for Lotus, Gary

Wardle had some practical advice for schools looking to refurbish existing buildings:

"Works are limited by the current build, structural requirements, and site conditions. How much additional work are you willing to do on the surrounding structures? I.e., installing additional support beams, acoustic baffling, levelling floors. Without treating the surrounding areas, the full benefits of a high specification product may not be achieved.

Moving on to new builds, he suggested "there is more flexibility to put forward the most appropriate system and for the architect to ensure the surrounding elements are treated accordingly. Key to effective flexible learning spaces is incorporating a mix of products, including traditional high acoustic build-operable walls.

These can incorporate 'usable' surfaces, such as pinboards and whiteboards. Along with glazed sliders and solid, higher rated sliders with or without viewing windows and other acoustic soft furnishings in a space."

In recent years, he explained, "there has been an increase in the use of acoustic glazed sliders between classrooms, for visual connectivity, where traditionally it would have been an operable wall or a solid acoustic slider".

"While glazed sliders are quicker to operate than operable walls and more visually appealing than solid sliders, they have a lower performance in terms of sound transmission. This compromise has an impact on noise transmission between classrooms, however it is generally acknowledged that two groups will generate a lesser volume of 'noise' if it is observed there are others potentially impacted in the adjoining room.

"Among the finish materials available for acoustic sliders and operable walls, the most commonly used material in schools is typically pinboards. These are cost-effective as teachers and students can pin or Velcro their artwork to them, they have a good noise reduction (NRC) rating which assists in absorbing sound and are available in a range of vibrant colours that are perfect for classrooms. Matching acoustic wall panels which provide an even higher NRC value are also commonplace, even suspended from ceilings as a design feature. Perforated timber panels with acoustic backing for spaces requiring an integrated aesthetic look are also an option should budgets allow." ■



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Raising profits outside the box

By Heather Barker Vermeer
Industry Reporter

If baking's not your thing and you cleared out the garage already, what are your options for raising money for your school?

The fundraiser has come a long way in recent years, with Australian schools now producing professional standard products and

In 2021, sustainable, eco-friendly options will be increasingly sought-after...



events and, in some cases, employing professional fundraising companies to run their fundraising programmes for them.

Simple, profitable ideas that generate extra income to allow the purchase of school equipment and resources beyond the existing budgets

are what every school seeks. Actively involved parent volunteers are the cornerstone of any successful fundraiser, so schools need to make sign-up as appealing as possible to maximise support or pivot to online options like auctions or other app-based purchases.

Great fundraising ideas encourage parental buy-in.

Big ticket events such as school fairs are a great way to attract attention, raise large amounts of money and create lasting memories associated with the school.

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However, as they require plenty of voluntary help, organisation, health and safety considerations, and are weather influenced, they can be the most difficult fundraisers to co-ordinate.

Sponsorship of local sports events such as fun runs, swimming challenges and walks have gained popularity as fundraising options, with the organisational onus being on events companies and schools taking a cut.

Some schools may choose to sell products donated by companies, or bought at reduced rates, for fundraising purposes. Wine and chocolate sales are usually a hit, and household items such as pegs, or tea towels may not make your school

millions, but can all be added to the money-making mix.

Items designed by pupils generate good emotional buy-in. For example: greeting cards, mouse mats, calendars, keyrings, and coasters, can make easy gifts for relatives and can be produced affordably.

Photography is another winning way to add to school funds, ideally if you have a talented photographer within your school community who is willing to help for minimal outlay.

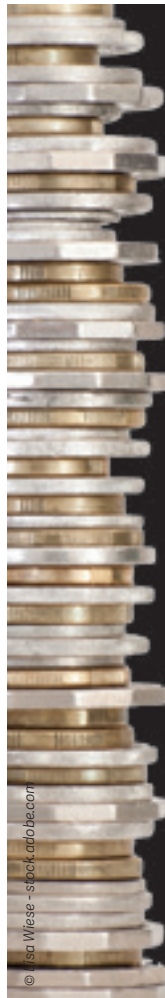
In 2021, sustainable, eco-friendly options will be increasingly sought-after, so how about trying some upcycling, vintage clothes sales, reusable coffee cups or tote bags? ■

Fundraising brings in big bucks for Aussie schools

Did you know that, per state school child, \$752 is raised by parents and friends? It adds up to \$1.8 billion.

This phenomenal figure has caught the attention of education experts like University of Queensland's Dr Anna Hogan, who says it's important to recognise the "inventive fundraising methods" that schools are using to make up for funding deficits in public education. She told UQ News that some public schools have been known to raise more than \$1 million a year, adding: "We know from previous research that the schools most successful at fundraising are those with established philanthropic relationships with their alumni and local businesses in their communities."

Parent volunteers are often key to successful fundraising events, with the goal of fundraising to generate extra income for purchasing new school equipment and resources that would not otherwise be possible within budget constraints. A big drive for state school fundraising is to match resources and facilities available at private schools and it seems to be working for many of them.



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By Rosie Clarke, Editor

Every school has a story. What's yours? What makes your community unique?

Branding is not reserved for corporations: you are in the business of being good educators. In 2021, it is imperative that schools are able to market themselves effectively. Not only does well-designed branding model professionalism to students, but it also instils a sense of pride among families, promotes your school as a hallmark of the community, and creates space to showcase the phenomenal work your staff and students are doing. From graphic logo design and uniforms to welcome and entry signposts, stationery, sports marquees, and banners, to website design and social media, powerful branding requires careful consideration and skill.

What is your school's point of difference?

Are you a STEAM school? Do you focus on sustainability, or prioritise sporting prowess? Perhaps you have a unique pedagogy, or structure learning around nature play, or religious education. Whatever your key focus is as a community should be clear from your logo, the first glance at your entry sign, or the first click on your website. Not only will this attract future staff and enrolment enquiries from likeminded families but focussed branding will help hone a whole-school approach to whatever is your differentiator.

If in doubt, lean on the history of your school. When was it built? Whose land are you situated on? Delving into your school's history can be an effective way to build connections with community whether your school is 100 years old or opened this year.

Make your message a promise

Your core focus differentiator makes your school unique, but what's the point of it? What are you promising families, students, staff, the community? The perfect tagline should signal that promise and be consistent with your logo and wider branding strategy. Experts recommend keeping your tagline as short as possible – less than six words and use high impact, active language.

Too late to change your branding?

School News asked School Signs general manager, Larry Wainstein what common mistake schools often make with their branding decisions.

He suggested: "A lot of schools think it's too hard to change their logo or add a modern brand element into the school." When, in fact, "modern schools should be seeing themselves as an individual marketable brand like Apple or Coca Cola".

Another warning for schools, he said: "Make sure that your branding is not segmented. I often see schools with great stationery, but that's where it ends. Follow through with that branding element into other areas of the school. If there are doubts about an old logo

Brand your school like a business



All images courtesy of School Signs



or school colours that are not appealing or old fashioned, do not leave it and work around it. Change can do wonders for the appeal of your school."

Forming a brand identity as a school

Larry specialises in brand identity, and told us: "Most schools have a logo and school colours that present themselves on their school uniform only, but they can create a brand

identity using those assets, or new elements that add a fresh twist, that extend across from uniforms, to signage, to websites, stationery, etc."

His top tip is for schools to work towards creating a style guide that dictates all things school branding. "This style guide is the reference point when you are doing new signs, for example. With the exact colour settings and design layout set-out in the style guide,

everything across all branding in the school is the same. Once a style guide is in place, the whole school can be branded so that what people see from the outside is appealing and modern and extends into the school grounds and classrooms."

What about new trends in logo design?

Larry revealed: "Logo design has changed dramatically, we can see this in the commercial

world, there is no reason why a school couldn't follow this trend. More and more are implementing modern design elements into new school signs, which can then be implemented across the school so that there is brand uniformity."

Doing some research around colour combinations and typography to match your school's area of focus and vision with any new designs will benefit you in the long run by creating cohesion and appealing to the right entities. A secondary school looking to form industry partnerships as part of a STEM programme, for example, should consider a more corporate aesthetic with a focus on web design and tech-branding while a sustainability-focused primary school should favour eco-friendly materials and earthy colours. Discuss design options internally so they feel authentic, and work with a professional design team that can harness good ideas, make suggestions, and tie your brand identity together for you. ■



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Linking character education & wellbeing with community service learning

School life typically revolves around exams, classrooms, and instruction-based learning.

But is this routine enough for young minds looking for guidance, insight, and future direction, for their lives? Does this constitute a 'good school'?

In 2006, Christopher Peterson released, *A Primer in Positive Psychology* and argued that schools needed to be enabling institutions. He identified the 'good school' as one that fosters academic excellence, while also contributing to moral fulfillment.

He claimed that it was partly in schools that individuals were taught how to be caring and responsible, and social-minded young adults. For this, schools need to explicitly teach character strengths such as those of kindness and empathy. And to do so, a well-planned curriculum involving the same degree of planning and research as the traditional academic subjects, is needed.



Jill Margerison PhD,
Amazing People Schools

Gandhi once said, 'the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others'. It is practical advice that continues to resonate with passionate educators who create best practice, through implementing a variety of volunteer programs and service learning in schools.

Students who are connected to their community and experience a purpose from authentic learning, begin to understand the challenges that life throws at people. It is this kind of experience that contributes to authentic leadership, problem solving and social responsibility.

Action learning supporting character development

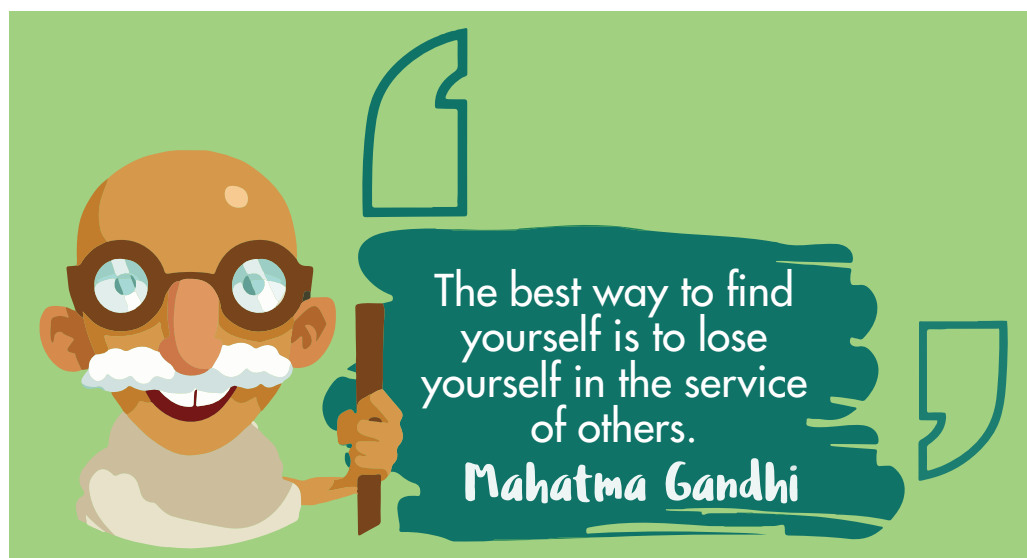
More recently, schools are realising that providing a structured service-learning component to education is an essential part of building character and educating holistically. In Australia, there is a shifting role of schools to reflect the need for students to be engaged within their community. Students are required to be 'active and informed citizens' as highlighted by the *Melbourne Declaration* and the *Australian Curriculum*. They are required to commit to 'national values of democracy, equity and justice' and they must 'participate in Australia's civic life.' The document also highlights the need to see students 'behave with ethical integrity' and 'act with responsibility at local, regional and global levels.' These policy documents point to the significance of core values and the need for strong character education. Developing key character strengths, to support service learning is one way that schools can harness

these policies into practice, in a meaningful and relevant way. It is this kind of holistic education that supports the academic approach because it gives students a meaningful understanding as to what is required in the real world.

From our work in Amazing People Schools, it has been fascinating to hear how action learning from engaging in community service supports character development in a very real way. Teachers have told us that it is the implementation of service-learning programs that show students an outward perspective: "Service-learning offers students the opportunity to recognise the needs of others and respond." And, it is in these moments that student's lives can change, because they are offered purpose. With purpose, they are given a chance to achieve.

Yet, merely providing volunteer work for students in schools, does not go far enough. In addition to the co-ordinated community programs, there is much to be learned from clearly designed lessons that embed self-development and awareness of character, using life stories from amazing achievers in history who also made significant contribution to their societies. Amazing People Schools has been successfully embedding character-based education, via interactive stories and activities that are based on the contribution of key influencers in history.

In one Brisbane school, students were fascinated by the story of Mary Seacole. Teachers focused on her tolerance, integrity, and selflessness, as students compared her story to their own perspectives, about how to strengthen their own character strengths to contribute



by volunteering. One of the students commented that “a combination of service activities with character building resources helped me come to know myself better”. This, in turn, contributes to raising self-esteem and self-worth, which results in increased feelings of wellbeing.

Knowing thyself, building character

We know that schools are committed to the vision of character building. Their mottos exude character and wellbeing. Their school vision statements hero ‘globally minded’ citizens, committed to integrity, fairness, and leadership. These are the kind of character strengths that all societies surely favour.

Yet, increasingly in this age of cloud and wireless technology, we need to remember the importance of empathy, and have a healthy appreciation of diversity and inclusivity. Explicitly teaching these character strengths using stories from amazing role models and linking them to a service-learning program is a vital part of 21st century education. ▲

Jill has experience in both secondary and tertiary education and holds a PhD from the University of Queensland. She has spoken internationally and locally on a variety of education topics from wellbeing to TechEd in the classroom. Please share your views to jill@amazingpeopleschools.com.

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How to source high-calibre principals, teachers & staff

By **Graham Howard**,
*Industry Recruitment Specialist,
Frontline Recruitment Group*

There are three moves a school should make if it wants to successfully source high-calibre principals, teachers, and other staff members:

Provide a strong brief!

Give an in-depth overview of what they are looking for, not just around the skills and experience required but also around the ideal culture fit for the school."

Trust your recruiter to go beyond the job ad.

Most sector specialist recruitment agencies will have a database of both active and passive candidates. Your recruiter will be able to access a pool of the best 'active candidates' (those who are active in the market and overtly looking for a new position) and 'passive candidate' (those who have come to the agency through referrals, a previous application, or marketing).

Commit to outsourcing.

Letting your recruiter get on with the job of sourcing and securing an educator that is going to add value to the school. Outsourcing your recruitment will allow you and your team to do what

you do best, delivering a great education to your students.

My tips for hiring relief staff:

Always meet and interview a casual or temporary member of staff in the same way that you would when recruiting for a permanent role. A casual teacher may spend just as much time in front of your students as some of your permanent part-time staff. They should be given just as much scrutiny as a non-casual employee to ensure they are a good culture fit for your school.

Reference checks are key - as in any recruitment process - always ask for a reference from someone who has seen the person teach.

Keep in touch with your casual staff about their availability weekly! It changes all the time and that can be very time consuming and onerous. Using a recruiter to do your temp recruitment can be beneficial both for a small school with fewer resources and for a large school with lots of staffing requirements.

The most common misconception about a recruitment agency is that it is expensive. But when schools recruit themselves, it takes time and money to write an advert, post the job, pay for any advertising fees, process applications, phone, and

screen candidates, arrange and conduct interviews, and manage feedback to unsuccessful applicants. On top of that, there is reference-checking and negotiating the offer. All of this takes people away from their core role within the school, and often its more than one person when you involve middle and senior management.

Then, of course, if the candidate rejects the role or changes their mind or does not work out, you have to do it all again. So, the time that the process consumes and the cost of that time across various people in the school can be very expensive indeed.

As most candidates from a recruitment agency have been screened, shortlisted, and interviewed prior to being presented to the school, the process for the school is usually faster and more streamlined. An agency can also act as a mediator when it comes to the negotiation process working to the benefit of both parties and looking to secure a result without risking alienating the other party if it were left to the school and the candidate alone. When you partner with a specialist education recruitment agency, you are able tap into their knowledge of the education sector, what candidates are currently looking for, current and future recruitment market trends, the state of the candidate market

and where the 'subject teacher shortages' are. An education-specific recruitment agency should also be exceptional advocates for the school they are partnering with, selling the candidate on the benefits of the school, role, faculty, location, etc.

Should schools use different approaches for rural versus city-based schools, or other factors?

While there aren't any notably different approaches, schools in regional and rural locations really need to be conscious of the challenges in finding quality teaching staff who are open to moving to a regional location.

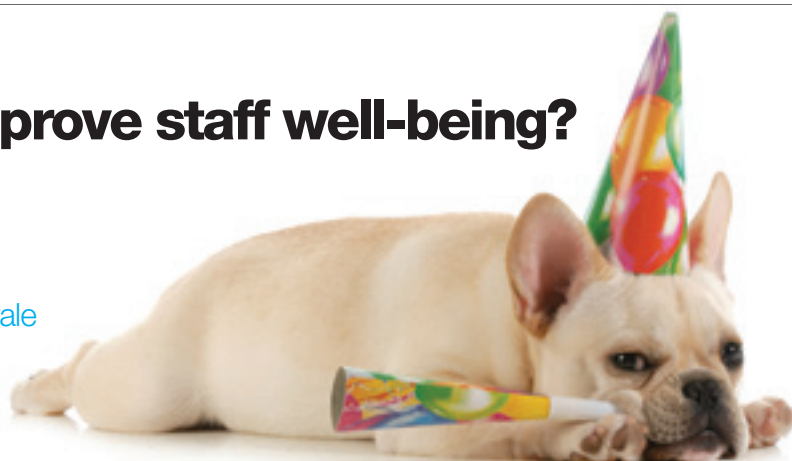
This means that the pool of candidates to select from is much smaller. Therefore, during the recruitment process, the speed of responses to the recruitment agency and the candidate is critical. From reviewing the candidate, arranging interviews, and offering a role, the speed of the process can determine if you successfully recruit your preferred candidate. Schools further away from a metro location may find it harder to secure top quality staff, schools should try to offer additional benefits or incentives. ★

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Staff morale and wellbeing – who is responsible?

The importance of staff morale and wellbeing have never been as significant as they are in these challenging times.

In high functioning schools, both morale and wellbeing are a shared responsibility for the leaders and the individual staff members. It is not up to leaders to 'fix' the wellbeing of staff, but they have a huge impact on ensuring a positive school culture that supports staff.

One of the biggest factors that impact on staff morale is leadership. It is essential that leaders focus on a culture that supports staff to do their best work. Positive and upbeat leaders create a 'ripple effect' leading to positive and happy communities. The happiness of individual leaders has a far-reaching affect. According to author Andy Cope: "As a leader, your happiness reaches three degrees of people removed from you, so if you're really happy and positive, then every single person you meet during that day is going to be a minimum of 16 percent happier, just because they met you."

The principal sets the tone. Their attitude is contagious. If they are positive and upbeat, staff, parents and students will be positively impacted. If they are negative, short tempered and gloomy, do not be surprised if those around them are too.

Being positive and upbeat in January is easy when you are well rested and recharged after the Christmas break. It is more challenging to also finish the term well. Students (and staff, for that matter) need positive role models in their lives. As school leaders, we have the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives each and every day. According to Cope: "Your job is not to inspire other people; your job is to be inspired. If you can be inspired and become a



Steve Francis,
Creator, Happy School

people person, then your school magically will be inspired too."

Five tips for school leaders having an immediate impact on staff morale:

1. Fake it 'til you make it!

Even if you are not feeling excited, put on a brave face. The fastest way to do this is to change your automatic response to the inevitable social inquiry of 'How are you?', from 'not bad' to 'fantastic!'.

2. Use the Pareto Principle

More commonly known as the 80/20 rule, Pareto proposes that there are a small number of critical tasks or times during the day where we achieve most of our results. Pareto calls them our critical few as opposed to the trivial many. He says 80 percent of our results are achieved through 20 percent of our tasks. Knowing which are your critical few is the first step. As a principal, my critical few for setting the tone in the school included: being available to staff in the hour before school formally began each day; being visible in the playground at the start or end of breaks; being at the school gate at the end of the day as parents collected their children; and, making sure staff meetings started and finished on time, stuck to the agenda, valued people's time, and recorded decisions made.

3. Praise often

Both public and private praise are important. The praise needs to be genuine and as specific as possible. Saying to an individual staff member, 'I really appreciate the way that you calmly managed Johnny's behaviour during his meltdown', is far more powerful than the broad statement, 'thank you everyone for a great term'. Do not stop doing the broad praise but look for more opportunities to give individual praise.

4. Sniper instead of shotgun

Where the behaviour of some staff has not met your expectations, have a quiet word to the individuals concerned (sniper) rather than raising the issue with the whole staff at a staff meeting (shot gunning). ►



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◀ 5. Feed them at or after school meetings and professional development sessions.

We all know how draining a day in front of students can be. To increase staff morale and the effectiveness of after school meetings and PD sessions, provide some food to reenergise the staff. This small investment will reap big rewards.

While these five strategies are sure to help, one of the best things that you can do to boost staff morale is to find out what is annoying or frustrating staff and take action to fix the aspects that you can change. Even if you cannot fix it, asking the question and taking a genuine interest in their responses is powerful. This is a key step in becoming a School Employer of Choice.

Five tips for staff in schools to improve their wellbeing:

1. Set your golden rules.

Setting boundaries is important to limit the impact that schoolwork can have on the rest of your life. The rules or boundaries that you put in place are a personal decision that depends on you and what works best for you.

Here are some examples of golden rules:

- Limiting the checking of work emails to 10 minutes (set a timer) and only Sunday to Thursday nights.
- Do not take work home.
- If you must do some work at the weekend – specify the time and stick to it. Do not

wreck the whole weekend!

- Sit down at the dining table for dinner three times each week.
- Leave school at a reasonable time (early for you), one day per week and do something for you.

2. At the end of the day appreciate what you got done, not what still needs to be done.

3. Stop and sit down to eat lunch each day and drink plenty of water each day to look after your voice.

4. Make exercise a priority every day, especially when you are busy.

Many people stop exercising when they are busy at school (e.g., report writing time). However, taking a break and

getting some exercise is the most important thing they could do for their well-being AND their effectiveness.

5. Try to avoid multi-tasking

Do this by identifying the most important thing you should be doing with the time available and getting that done, rather than trying to do multiple things at once. Check out and try the Pomodoro technique! ★

Steve Francis is an expert in the complexities of leading effective schools. He works with school leadership teams and staff across Australia and New Zealand and is the author of four books as well as the creator of the Happy School program. This year Steve launched Project: Staff Well-being, which you can read more about online www.HappySchool.com.au.

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How to improve the psychological health and safety of teachers

Mental health is a growing topic in education, with millions of dollars poured into student wellbeing.

While this is necessary given WHO's prediction of depression being the leading illness by 2030, where is the funding to support teachers' psychological health and safety?

National guidelines from Safe Work Australia, identify the legal duty organisations must abide by to 'eliminate' or 'minimise' the risk of psychological injuries caused by work. These guidelines are informed by international OH&S standards (ISO45001).

Unfortunately, many psychological health or wellbeing initiatives for teachers rely on individuals to initiate changes in their behaviour, yet the work-related process within the system that creates stress, remains unchanged. While personal wellbeing initiatives are beneficial, including mindfulness programs and other positive psychology interventions, organisations have a responsibility to 'prevent harm' by fostering healthy workplaces. Daily working conditions need to allow for growth, connection and belonging favourably.

Preventing harm requires a systemic approach to addressing the impact of psychosocial hazards in the workplace. "Psychosocial hazards are anything in the design or management of work that increases the risk of work-related stress," according to Safe Work Australia. This includes:

- high job demand,
- low job control,
- inadequate training and support,
- low role clarity,
- lack of positive feedback,
- inconsistent application of policy and procedures
- vicarious trauma.



Daniela Falecki,

Founder and Director, Teacher Wellbeing

These hazards frequently appear in the literature associated with teacher stress and burnout, where high job demand is one of the critical factors for teacher attrition. Lack of teacher voice in decision-making and poor role clarity have also been cited as factors contributing to teachers' stress.

High-stress levels have been linked with feelings of reduced confidence, low motivation, and poor job satisfaction (McCarthy et al. 2014). Exhaustion from the daily social and emotional pressures of teaching affect teachers' abilities to cope

and their potential to flourish (Parker et al. 2009). Student achievement suffers when teachers become burnt out because their focus is on their survival (Hattie and Yates 2014). To this end, teacher wellbeing can affect student wellbeing and achievement, because "well teachers promote well students" (McCallum and Price 2010).

To properly support teachers' psychological health and safety, schools must assess the impact of environmental structures and organisational processes on wellbeing before they begin to strengthen individual knowledge. Examples of control measures to reduce the impact of psychosocial hazards include:

- increasing role clarity;
- providing ongoing wellbeing training;
- developing systems of recognition;
- encouraging pro-active check-ins between staff;
- leading, promoting, and supporting a positive team culture;

- identifying examples of inappropriate behaviour;
- communicating a shared vision linking to school values;
- streamlining administration; processes to save time
- celebrating individual and collective achievements;
- planning, reviewing, and adjusting workload to changing contexts;
- providing mentoring for effective feedback
- allowing for working flexible hours where possible;
- ensuring policies exist that address psychological health and safety.

The bottom-line is that for students to succeed, they need well teachers. For teachers' psychological health to improve in schools, school leaders must be given opportunities to invest time and resources to identify hazards, assess risk, control risks and review control measures (Safe Work Australia 2019). Leadership support is a critical factor in ensuring any programs' success (Durlak and DuPre 2008), just as consultation with all stakeholders is important.

For teachers to delivery high quality education to students, school policy makers have a responsibility to create the conditions in which teachers can function and perform well. Only when proper investment in time and resources is given to review and reduce the impact of psychosocial hazards, will the psychological health of both staff improve. This systematic process should lie at the foundation of any whole-school wellbeing program. ▲

For more information about how to best strengthen the wellbeing of teaches see teacher-wellbeing.com.au.



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We have school discipline completely wrong

Does your school have a new behaviour management program?

Most do and the decision to implement it comes from an honourable position taken by your school leaders. They genuinely want to do something about the challenge of student behaviour and to also to create a safe and nurturing culture around their school communities.

So, they get a point for trying. As Irish comedian Jimeoin points to upon learning that you can get a point in *Aussie Rules* football just for trying to hit the target: "Ok, I can see what you were trying to do."

Unfortunately, that missed target is genuinely a missed opportunity. No matter how well most behaviour programs are marketed, most with a carefully chosen work like *positive* to invoke a sense of optimism, these programmed approaches fall short time after time.

They fail us chiefly because they are designed to trick the people implementing them into thinking that being busy equals being effective. Today's positive behaviour programs are laden with tasks and activities to keep teachers activated and addicted to the sense of accomplishment that comes when we merely complete a to-do list... while the kids keep going along their merry way doing what they have pretty much always done.

Behaviour management programs are not working for anyone.

Educators seem to be tireless in behaviour program implementation. They teach the mini-lessons, they construct murals, they go to the training days, they photocopy the workbooks, they endure pointless meetings discussing pointless topics like whether the value of 'kindness' is better than the value of 'respect' and



Adam Voigt,
Founder, Real Schools

they build exhaustive behaviour matrices that seek to control and prescribe responses to every imaginable student behaviour in the name of consistency.

It's little wonder our teachers are tired.

And yet, most teacher stress studies point to student behaviour and workload issues as being chief among the factor that keeps teachers awake at night and drive them from the profession.

They deserve a better 'return for investment' on all that time.

So do our students. Student suspension rates are up around the country as school leaders struggle to catch and release students who artfully find the cracks and gaps in our cage-like matrices that they have never really noticed anyway.



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We can do better.

Instead of routinely implementing one more tired behaviour management program spawned from edu-preneurial businesses and think tanks who reckon they have unlocked the positive behaviour program mystery – and they have not – let us talk about how we really learn to behave appropriately.

Firstly, know that behaviour is a response to stimuli. Something happens, we think or feel something about it based on our current circumstances and we do stuff – that is about it.

Our quest should not be the elimination of stuff that happens. Firstly, schools are chock full of young people with unfinished brains who are prone to choosing the wrong thing to do as a matter of physiology. In fact, schools should be places where we learn to navigate at least a little human stuff in our lives.

Our opportunity lies in impacting the thinking that happens next.

In punitive systems based on control, students think negatively. Perhaps recall a time that you got a detention in school. What did you think? Perhaps, *Gee, I really am learning a valuable life lesson here! I should thank Mrs Johnson for this opportunity!*

I didn't think so. It was more themed "I hate this Johnson clown. He drives the blue Camry.

I'm egging that thing after school."

We need to honestly consider what students really think in detention, even if they refrain from egging a car, and how likely it is to lead to better behaviour.

We need to question our kids – instead of delivering sermons and handing out mandated consequences – in such a way that they learn to understand what was going on in their moment of error, how it impacts others and then, together, we can devise a plan for cleaning up the relational mess.

Building empathic responsible kids.

And you know what? Then our teachers can avoid those long, tedious meetings about values. Because we will have already taught two, in just that brief past-present-future conversation, that arm young people to navigate imperfect social systems filled with imperfect people. They are empathy and responsibility.

Neither of these highly valuable character traits can be taught in a mini lesson. Sure, you can learn about them, but I can know about playing a piano and never be able to do it. Our kids need practice, opportunity, and support if we want them to learn the art of better choices. They need to get good at this stuff in order for us to build schools with a tolerable level of stuff that happens.

And our teachers need a better 'return on investment' for all of their time and work. After what they have endured in 2020, they deserve it. ■

Adam Voigt is a former successful School Principal and system leader who is now the Founder & CEO of Real Schools. Adam is also the author of 'Restoring Teaching', a groundbreaking book aimed at restoring esteem for the role of educators through establishing strong, productive, and restorative cultures around Australia's schools.

No business like school showbusiness



One of Maverick Musicals' newest productions, *Rocktopus* by Mark Bourgeois and Craig Chambers performed at the International School in Bangkok. Image courtesy of Maverick Musicals

By Heather Barker Vermeer
Industry Reporter

The art of putting on a show is as old as time...

For schools, it can represent a highlight of the calendar year. Production time for students is often a love or a hate affair, but even for the most reluctant performers or stagehands, school shows represent a huge learning opportunity.

Whether a school is hosting their own performance or inviting another company to perform, plenty of preparation is required. Engaged, enthusiastic staff provide fuel for the process and the performance itself, and benefits to staff can also be huge. For some, drama and musical theatre will be their passion and driving a school production can provide an opportunity to share this passion

with the next generation. As well as being a creative outlet, production time offers staff many leadership opportunities, requires excellent organisation, communication, and an ability to motivate and inspire.

Confidence is king, or queen, for performers and the courage it takes to grace the stage for some can be a huge barrier to overcome. The self-belief, sense of pride and joy that can come

from this can impact students for life. Teamwork is promoted, memories and friendships made.

Backstage, too, there are many opportunities for students of varied talents and interests to get involved. Tech-minded pupils may enjoy working on sound and lighting, hard tech students might get on board with set construction and design students may wish to work on set and costume design. ▶



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Bingle Jells
Large mixed cast 6 - 10 years old
The impish *Audley* must learn to use both his head and his hands to outsmart the forces of evil and save his family, his friends, and of course, Christmas...

Middle
Smithy
Large mixed cast 10 - 15 years old
This is the musical of the school play - a riotous parody of the annual nightmare... Miss Hyde is a fresh out of college drama teacher and Smithy is the school villain. Every student, teacher, and parent will identify with this musical!

Senior
Shifty Crooner
Medium Mixed Cast 15 - 18 years old
It's 1926. And Shifty Crooner is in his prime. He has planned his greatest con to date, but can Crooner pull it off? Or has he gone too big this time? Follow the characters into the maze of the unknown as the plot twists & turns and never ends. Fantastic toe-tapping music tops off this fast paced musical.



Image courtesy of Select Staging Concepts



Image courtesy of Select Staging Concepts.

◀ The school show represents a chance for the whole school – and wider – community to come together. Parents may get involved in costume creation, prop sourcing and ticket promotion, while the wider local community is invited to along to support the school and enjoy some local theatre. Guests may include local dignitaries and school alumni, representing an opportunity for renewed engagement and support.

Music scores and scripts must be obtained by licence to avoid copyright infringement. For some schools, performance art and theatre departments are well resourced treasure troves of treasures and technology. For others, equipment, costumes, and sets must be sourced externally. To find out more, *School News* approached school theatre industry insiders for professional viewpoints and advice.

Speaking exclusively with us, company director Rachel Fentiman from Maverick Musicals and Plays, emphasised the importance of production quality for the whole school:

"No matter whether a student is in the chorus or a lead, each takes away with them a sense of pride that they were part of a perfectly oiled machine that they created. Once they achieve something of this magnitude confidence naturally increases, which ripples through to the school community resulting in a self-confident young person who knows what they are capable of..."

"The closer and more disciplined the cast, the better the performance. Students and teachers are able to develop respect and understanding for each other through working

together to create a memorable show. It's an exercise in trust; trusting your fellow actors will remember their lines, trusting that sound effect will come at the right moment, trusting in yourself that you can carry your character through the story."

The modern school production, she advised, is perhaps surprisingly traditional! "People are most definitely heading back to the classics. After an interesting 2020, to say the least, people are trending towards the comforting tales that we all love and know so well. *The Jungle Book*, *Man of Steel*, or *Treasure Island* for example, have been popular because they are charming and take you on a joyful journey that people of all ages enjoy."

For teachers concerned about where to start when choosing a production for students, Rachel revealed that in her experience there's no harm in 'going big! "If you are reading a musical script, thinking 'oh my gosh, this musical has a cast of hundreds and a huge set, there's no way we can do this show,' you'd be surprised how much grandeur you can create with a minimal budget and how a small cast can seem like

a huge one if you give multiple roles to your students, or space them strategically around the stage so it seems fuller.

"A few willing art students to paint cardboard flats for your sets, multiple tiers if you have access to stage risers, can help to fill a stage with interesting features while sticking to a tight budget.

"As for the music - never fear - if you don't have access to a band, there is a myriad of shows that have full musical backing for your students to sing along with."

COVIDsafe theatre assembly have been on everybody's mind now that schools are back in session, but future restrictions are an ever-present worry. Select Staging Concepts' Leonie McDerby shared some recommendations for schools looking to bring their special event offerings into the post-COVID era...

"Government recommendations

advise us to use the great outdoors for gatherings and events, so why not take advantage of Australia's excellent weather and design a stage system for exterior and interior school plays and assemblies? Portable and permanent stage solutions perform indoors and outdoors. I recommend schools look for systems that provide multi-functional solutions for every school event requirement. Ask the following: Does the stage floor finish allow for exterior use? Can a purchase of a flat performance stage provide the opportunity to convert the stage to a multi-height stage, tiered seating system, choir riser, catwalk or even into dining tables for graduation, just by changing a few stage leg heights and adding safety rails? How easy is the stage to move from indoors to outdoors? Can it be done with just one or two people?"

She added: "Aside from COVID-19 affecting all school events and performances, 2020 saw the trade war spark a real movement among Australian schools to look more closely into where their purchases are manufactured and where the hard-earned budget dollars are spent. The majority of staging systems sold in Australia are premade overseas and generally for interior use only – a very limiting option - so look for Aussie made options. Heading into 2021, schools are passionately looking to encourage positive students and staff wellbeing with diverse activities and events." ■



Image courtesy of Maverick Musicals

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WE ELEVATE YOU

STEAM programme rollout

By Rosie Clarke, Editor

It's being described as a 'synergy of discovery', and the 'exploration of design innovation', combining skillsets across subjects like Science, Technology, Art, Engineering, and Mathematics. At its core, STEAM education looks for innovative solutions to community problems.

Statistics vary but STEM career pathways are rapidly expanding. One Pew Research Center study found that STEM employment has increased 79 percent since 1990, while an Australian government report predicted that opening up 75 percent of jobs will require workers with STEM skills by 2026. Pew also found that today's STEM workers tend to earn more money than similarly educated workers and that women are underrepresented in many STEM careers. With a more diverse, creative approach to STEM learning, it is possible that a STEAM programme can better capture girls' interest. A report developed by Deakin University and the University of Melbourne, *Girls' Future – Our Future*, researcher looked into this phenomenon, asking why girls aren't studying stem. The researchers found that despite equal mathematics ability, girls were often deterred from STEM subjects because they perceived them as lacking creativity.

STEAM could go a long way towards reversing this trend by integrating the arts to develop more creative modes of inquiry-based STEM learning. This shift towards creativity is why many educators tout STEAM as the next great educational frontier, and schools around Australia are searching for ways to become STEAM-led or build an exciting new programme for their students. We ventured around the country this issue to get a snapshot of what programmes are in play for 2021.

Impressive initiatives run the

gamut: from an independent public school in Darwin prioritising whole-school STEAM assessment, to a Victorian specialist school spearheading student agency, to a Portland-based Lutheran school tapping into nature learning with a sprawling new insect project.

School News interviewed Trotec Laser's Reece Moore, to find out more about innovative school use of STEAM technologies during COVID and beyond.

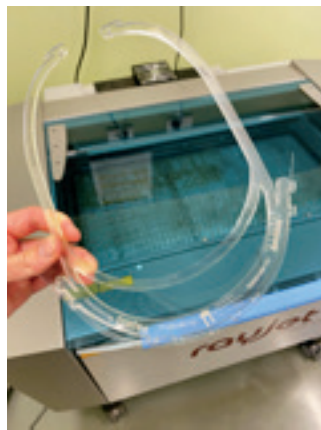


Image courtesy of Trotec Laser

Q: What trends emerged through COVID?

A: With the emergence of COVID-19 this past year, one of our West Australian schools met a need in their local community by utilising their school's laser technology to create face shields, which were then distributed amongst their rural community.

Q: Have you noticed a change in what schools are looking for regarding their STEAM projects?

A: Many schools are now looking to purchase their second or third laser machine, which almost always means they want to take it to the next level with a bigger cutting/engraving bed and a higher laser power with faster engraving/cutting speeds.

Q: STEAM technology and equipment is used across multiple subjects, but how might laser devices be used in the arts compared to maths or science?

A: While the CO2 laser has traditionally been associated

with design and technology departments, the STEAM curriculum has sparked a more recent increase in the use of laser technology across subjects. Art and design classes have become one of the most popular subjects utilising lasers in the classroom. Perfect for sealing the edges of fabric to prevent fraying while cutting, the CO2 laser has proven popular for shaping a variety of materials for projects such as the cutting of fabric and textiles for fashion and design, to jewellery making, cutting paper and card designs for advertising, and even the creation of stage props for drama classes.

For students in mathematics, the laser can be used to create almost any geometric shape, or at a more practical level can be used to make puzzles and rulers and a wide variety of various measuring instruments.

With the ability to adjust variables such as the laser dot size, laser power and the speed of travel, a variety of Science experiments relating to the effects of controlled light on a very wide range of materials can be carried out by students and examined accordingly.

Q: What are your tips for schools looking to boost their STEAM capabilities?

If your school is looking to purchase a laser, local service and support and ongoing training is paramount. If your school already has a laser, why not make the most of it and get in touch

with the teacher in charge to find out how you can maximise its use in your classroom.

Combining skills with ICT & Art specialist teachers

STEAM coordinator and senior teacher, Bradley King reached out to us from Larrakeyah Primary, the first NT Government Cambridge International School and the home of an impressive whole-school STEAM pedagogy.

Bradley explained that his school's approach "has not been observed in any other primary school in the Northern Territory, with the then CEO of the Northern Territory Government Department of Education stating that it is 'real STEAM and 21st Century Learning in action'.

"Earlier this year, we began a trial that brought Arts and ICT specialist teachers into the classroom program. The specialist teachers, in collaboration with the classroom teachers, developed a unit of work that combined their skills and expertise to support an area of the classroom program, giving the children access to resources that may not be used in their usual classroom setting. The classroom and specialist teachers created an inquiry rich environment, sharing their expertise supported by the use of direct questioning and discussion, the use of topic related media and images and regular referral to the goals and unit outcomes to ensure the



Image courtesy of Larrakeyah Primary



Image courtesy of Larrakeyah Primary

students were able to tap into their inquiry skills and their current knowledge of the topic.

"All upper primary and specialist teachers - referred to as project leaders - facilitate a small group of students and focus on a particular area of inquiry, working with industry professionals and targeted members of local community to obtain specific knowledge and skills for the future."

The initiative, according to Bradley, was born from "a simple conceptual idea developed by

the school Principal following research and readings on STEAM and 21st Century Learning, and ways to prepare students for a future and jobs that do not yet exist".

Integrating nature and flexible project design

For St John's Lutheran Primary School Principal Tara Pritchard, STEAM should enable students to "wonder, inquire, design, and problem solve".

She explained: "We integrate subjects as much as possible to engage in many areas of the curriculum, including Mathematics, Science, Technology and even Writing.

For example, students observed insects in our school garden after researching about fruit trees and vegetables and establishing an orchard. This involved measuring the area to be planted, calculating the amount of mulch needed, and working together to prepare the soil and plant the trees. Students contacted the local nursery and wrote thank you letters acknowledging their assistance. The students then designed an insect and used a variety of construction materials from our STEAM room. The senior students were challenged to also include a lightbulb on their insect which required a good understanding of electrical circuits."



Image courtesy of St John's Lutheran Primary School

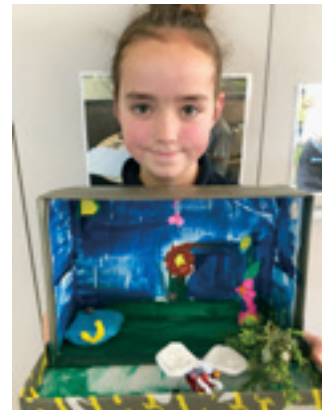


Image courtesy of St John's Lutheran Primary School

Tara noticed students work together on projects in unexpected ways: "Our program encourages collaboration because our projects are not from a textbook or worksheet. Students are involved in hands on tasks that are relevant to what they are learning about in class and the community. The students learn by talking together, comparing solutions, and discussing outcomes. Junior students learn from senior students who in turn share and talk about their discoveries. It has become a rich and vibrant learning approach in our school." ►

Product Safety Recall

Product description

All Epson projectors **except** the L, Z, LS and EV series. For a full list go to epson.com.au/projector_recall/ or scan the QR code below.

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If the projectors are ceiling or wall mounted in a location that can result in their exposure to smoke, steam or vapours containing oils and solvents, the plastic casing can be weakened near where the projector is attached to the ceiling mount and the plastic may crack. If this occurs, the projector may fall from its mounting. Locations where these exposures are most likely to occur include near kitchens or near exhaust extraction fans.

What are the hazards?

If a projector falls from its ceiling or wall mounting, it may cause an injury to a user or a bystander.

What should consumers do?

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See productsafety.gov.au for
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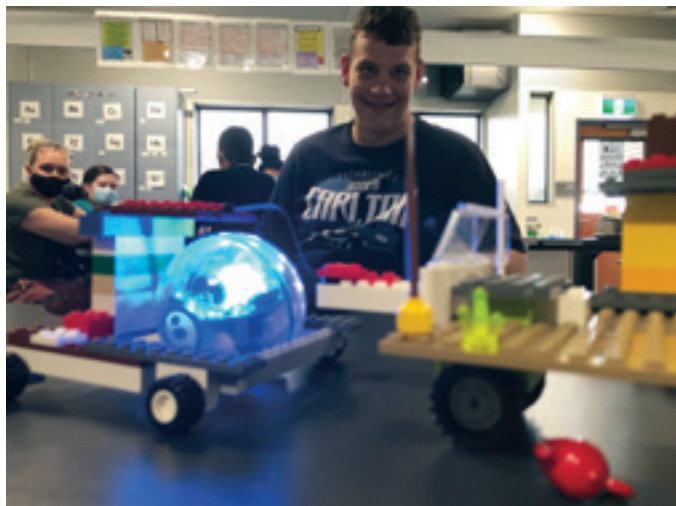


Image courtesy of Nepean Specialist School



Image courtesy of Nepean Specialist School

◀ Having a variety of resources is one crucial element to STEAM learning. Tara elaborated: "We have committed a very large learning space just for STEAM, which houses a variety of construction materials, displays of Science artefacts, technology devices, Art supplies, tools, ingredients, and books. Our planning considers how we can incorporate the curriculum and we are thankful to our parents and friends in the community who regularly donate materials and resources."

Ethics should centre technology studies

Agency and "design thinking" is a central component of the STEAM programme at Nepean Specialist School. Teacher at the school, Christine Ferra took us through her STEAM journey: "

We were lucky to have had a strong STEM program which acquired some fantastic technology resources – robots



Image courtesy of Larrakeyah Primary

like spheros, beebots, dash and dots, and LEGO Mindstorms. So, we were off to a flying start." After introducing students to design thinking problems during lockdown last year, Christine told us the school dove right into its new STEAM focus: "When we returned, one project our

students relished was exploring designs for our school's Frog Pond in our Indigenous Sanctuary Garden. Their Design Thinking process involved visiting the pond many times, understanding the life cycle of frogs, and what they need to thrive - and creating a plant design that would encourage

frogs to move right on in!

"Incorporating robotics and the ethics in technology was a focus for the remainder of the year across the whole school (ages five to 18), both during our second lockdown and during our final hands-on term.

"Our students use technology all the time – for many it's essential. Technology is not just for entertainment but drives wheelchairs and provides communication devices. It supports students to move, connect with others, and express themselves. People with disabilities use and depend on technology, but often see the development and design of tech as done by people without disabilities. And a focus was to ensure they saw people with disabilities building, creating, and testing technology and robotics. You cannot become what you cannot see and our students should aspire to be testers, builders and



Image courtesy of Nepean Specialist School



Image courtesy of Larrakeyah Primary

makers of the tech that they so depend on every day."

Some of the projects Nepean students have taken part in include creating emotion maps for programmable robots, building puzzles, learning about technology activists and tests, and exploring issues around accessibility and the marginalisation of people with disabilities from technology sectors. "Nepean School has a huge focus on communication for all students, using Alternative Access Communication with electronic devices or analogue PODD books. Student voice and expression is important within our school culture and embedded in our pedagogy. STEAM is a perfect match."

Teacher planning for STEAM success

Taking us through the STEAM planning process from a teacher's perspective, Bradley said: "We provide our teachers a full planning day early in the school year to collaborate on projects, share ideas, and devise authentic and rich learning

experiences. These planning days are key to the success of the program on a larger scale as the conversations (and laughs) that occur bring out every teacher's strengths.

Students have over a dozen different projects to choose from in STEAM learning areas within the school, so they develop a passion about their own project, leading to higher engagement. Excursions and connections outside of the school are crucial for student engagement and ownership of the project.

"The teaching and learning undertaken in the weekly two-hour sessions are guided by a specific inquiry question as developed by the project leader to lead students throughout the term.

The projects culminate with a grand finale of knowledge exemplified in the *Expo of Learning*, where all learning is showcased back to industry professionals, parents, students across the school, and Department of Education representatives. ■



Image courtesy of St John's Lutheran Primary School

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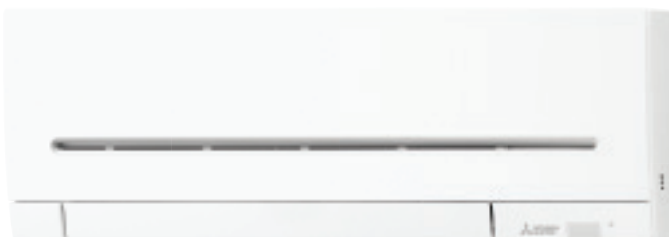


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Holroyd High School:

Images courtesy of IntegrateAV

A transformative journey

The journey of one Sydney high school's decision to upgrade their classroom technology has led them down a very interesting path, resulting in some unexpected outcomes.

The school's holistic approach to managing technological change has transformed not only the hardware in their classrooms, but also the delivery of teaching and learning and the development of student wellbeing.

Holroyd High School is characterised by its diversity. Located in Sydney's west, Holroyd draws from a lower socio-economic area, and the vast majority of students come from non-English-speaking backgrounds. Holroyd has an Intensive English Centre catering to new students with diverse linguistic backgrounds. It also has a support unit for students with intellectual and physical disabilities. Over half of the student population is made up of students from refugee backgrounds. This context is represented in the Holroyd school credo: *Our diversity is our strength, and we celebrate our differences.*

In 2018, Holroyd began this journey to ensure the school's



Chris Ransom,
*Head of Training and Development,
Integrate AV*

diverse student population would have access to the best possible teaching, facilitated by the best possible classroom technology. In the end, the journey was not just transformative in terms of hardware in the classroom, but in demonstrating how schools can take a whole-school approach to redesigning teaching and learning.

Holroyd's all-inclusive journey has not only taken a 'whole school' approach but is characterised by consultation and collaboration. The project began with an all-staff survey aiming to identify areas where teaching and learning could be improved. Classroom technology was the area overwhelmingly identified as needing improvement.

The school decided to move away

from fading, outdated projectors by installing an interactive panel in every learning space. Holroyd was fortunate in that it was in a financial position to do this over a relatively short space of time, however the same approach to transforming a school's classroom technology can obviously be implemented by any school but, if necessary, over a longer period and as budget permits.

After researching different interactive technologies and after much consultation, the school executive planned the rollout of SMART MX panels across all learning and meeting spaces; a decision that would have lasting positive consequences.

Reflecting on the early stages of this journey, deputy principal Matt Fields remarked on having made such an investment in new technology: "We had to do this right." Holroyd created a group of teachers to spearhead the project under Matt Fields' leadership, called the 'SMART Team' and, importantly, they made a decision to view this not only as a hardware purchase, but holistically as a project to transform teaching and learning across the school.

The school worked closely with Integrate AV and SMART Technologies ANZ, engaging in the 22 EdTech Capabilities survey, which is a global initiative involving 481 education leaders



across 10 countries. All staff contributed to this survey, and Holroyd analysed the results in consultation with SMART Technologies' head office in Calgary, Canada. This survey investigates a school's entire approach to education technology and identifies areas of strength and weakness. The outcomes of this investigation guided the school's approach along its journey, particularly in terms of managing technological change, as identified in the survey.

The 'SMART Team' concluded that the school needed to invest not just money for hardware, but to time for meaningful and consistent staff professional development. Holroyd's model for staff development is called '3-6-9'.

Each term, in week three, staff participate in an in-depth three-hour PD session followed by 90-minute sessions in weeks six and nine. This provided an excellent opportunity for Integrate AV to deliver a number of thorough NESA-accredited professional development towards the beginning of term, and then to consolidate and practice skills throughout weeks



six and nine. Training and PD has addressed not only how to use the SMART panels, but integrating SMART software, interactivity and pedagogical practices into teachers' praxis to increase student participation and engagement.

Through further consultation with staff, the school also introduced internal 'SMART 101' sessions led by members of the school's 'SMART Team', where staff can come, ask questions, and practice the basics in a safe and supportive environment. In order to facilitate even more high-quality staff-led training and professional learning, deputy

principal Matt Fields, special education teacher Nada Soliman and mathematics teacher Farid Awad worked with SMART to become SMART Certified Trainers, making them an extremely valuable resource for the school.

As a result of the investment in quality professional development and training, a recent staff survey indicated that 97 percent of the staff used their new technology either 'always' or 'usually', with the remaining three percent using it 'sometimes' – a remarkable adoption of radical technological change across a large and diverse staff body. Holroyd's technological journey has also

led to a 'whole school audit' of each learning space's physical and visual layout, with rooms now being transformed with new modular and re-configurable furniture, in order to create new, flexible learning spaces.

Since the project began, student outcomes have demonstrably increased, but as an unintended side effect, student wellbeing and morale have also increased. As a special education teacher (and a SMART Certified Trainer) Nada Soliman has attested, students are much more excited to come to class, much more engaged, and much prouder of their school.

Holroyd's transformation, then, has not just been about classroom technology, it has been a school-wide change in teaching and learning, with remarkable results. ▲

Chris Ransom (PhB, GradDipEd) has taught at universities and in NSW high schools. In his current role, his main passion is to help teachers create the most interactive and engaging learning experiences for their students with the assistance of cutting edge classroom technologies.

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ViewSonic Solutions: Wireless Screen Sharing

What is wireless screen sharing?

As the name suggests, wireless screen sharing is the act of sharing your screen to a display without the use of cables.

With the option to share screens wirelessly, school personnel can create safer, more collaborative learning environments for teachers and their students – with ease.

Wireless screen sharing can be utilised in numerous ways to support interaction and enhance the learning experience.

If a teacher or student wants to share a picture, video or assignment from their personal screen, they can do so by effortlessly casting to a bigger display, such as a ViewSonic ViewBoard.

Overcoming challenges with wireless screen sharing

Collaboration

In the classroom, collaborating or showing something on a small screen like a phone or laptop is impractical and ineffective. But, with wireless screen sharing, teachers and students can cast their screen to a larger, more easily visible display that allows everyone to participate.

Ensuring use

When technology is not simple and seamless to use, teachers may be hesitant to actually utilise it. ViewSonic wireless casting solution is a free feature that comes with every ViewBoard and has been designed for users – making it easy to use even without extensive training.

Cables

Traditional setups involving large screens use cables, such as HDMI cables, to connect devices to a laptop and share screens. This

means keeping cables handy and ensuring they are not faulty – and what happens if devices are not compatible with the required cable/s?

With ViewSonic wireless screen sharing, this feature is built into the ViewBoards and is compatible with all types of devices and major operating systems, so cables are no longer a requirement.

ViewSonic solutions

vCast

vCast, also known as ViewBoard Cast, is a free wireless screen sharing software built-in to every ViewBoard.

Key features:

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- Easy to use;
- Has a moderator function and is secured by PIN code,

so you can prevent unwanted sharing:

- Can simultaneously cast numerous screens to one ViewBoard.

myViewBoard Display

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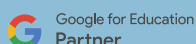
- Allows any laptop to wirelessly share their screen to the ViewBoard, even if you are on different Wi-Fi networks;
- The **laptop** user does not need to install anything to cast;
- Uses a PIN code for security, which refreshes every 30 seconds. ▲



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about the outdoor experiences they then take on. As the level of challenge and experience increase, the students develop increased positive emotion through their achievements. The students also have the opportunity to develop essential life tools such as personal responsibility, problem solving, independence as a leader and the ability to work with others.

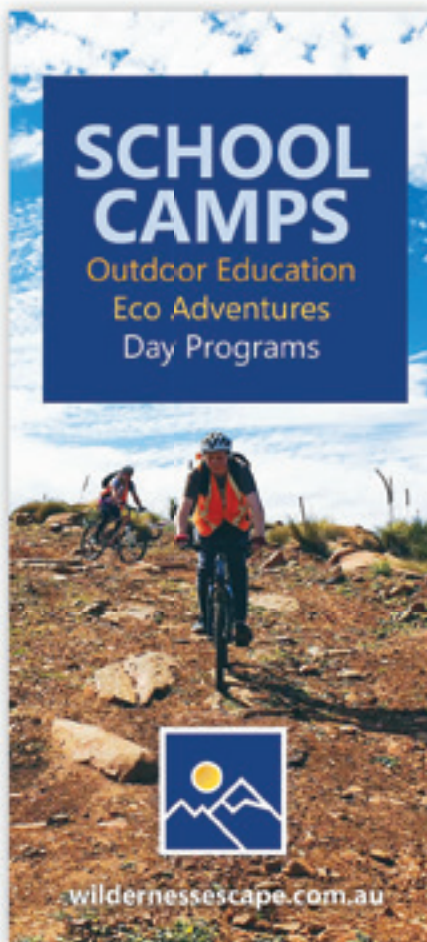
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Carry on camping!

And do it well

By Heather Barker Vermeer
Industry Reporter

It is one of the most highly anticipated events on the school calendar – camp.

Whether the adventure is met with excitement or trepidation, the experience of school camp is an Aussie rite of passage that creates countless opportunities for growth and memories for life. If the NZ bubble reopens long-term post-COVID, as we glimpsed late last year, camping across the pond could be an exciting alternative to your school's traditional overseas trips.

Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand have some enviable environments that schools can make the most of camping opportunities. From bush to beach, mountains to riverside, there are some truly top spots to use as a base, with adventure activities galore on offer.

Accommodation options vary from basic tents to bunks in

dormitories, to open air shelters and the more well-catered cabins. Age and stages, as well as accessibility requirements, dictate different needs. Schools must strike the balance of comfort and challenge, while allowing students of all abilities to feel supported, which is not always an easy ask! Don't forget – some children may not have ventured beyond their family homes for a night before.

Overall, the key to creating a positive camp experience, like most things in life, is in the planning. Camps need to be about increasing students' learning outcomes by providing quality education outside the classroom (EOTC). The camp's facilities and the activities on offer should support this.

The range of activities on offer across the country is vast, but usually includes team building challenges, caving, rope courses, kayaking, go-karting, sailing, rafting, bush survival lessons, cooking, weaving and more. Some of these will require

trained instructors, some can be run by parents, so it is important to consider how this will affect logistics and to weigh up budget implications.

How do you feed all those hungry campers?

A camping stove and a few marshmallows will not cut it with most teenagers. Depending on the camp, in-house kitchen catering facilities may be available or, either way, external suppliers can be employed. Key points to remember in cooking for yourselves are the number of helpers needed, people available to go grocery shopping, the amounts of non-perishables needed and what can be transported versus what needs to be bought nearby – and where fresh items can actually be bought locally.

Any special dietary requirements of campers – adults and children – need to be catered for and their needs, of course, to be strict hygiene rules adhered to. No one wants an outbreak of vomiting

or diarrhoea to contend with!

Talking of health and safety, it goes without saying that this is paramount. Risk management is serious business and should be treated as the number one priority in any camp planning.

There are organisations schools can turn to if planning a camp feels like it is falling in the too hard basket and schools need to weigh up the cost of this versus the impact of running the show internally. Providing equipment lists, jobs lists, having plenty of hands on-deck, being well supplied, encouraging high morale among helpers and considering accessibility for a range of students are all necessary to keep front of mind when choosing the latter option. The stakes are high, but with the right planning and attitude, so is the fun factor!

Keeping things simple, having excellent communication – lists, lists, lists – throughout the process and always putting safety first will set a school up with the best chances of camp success. ■



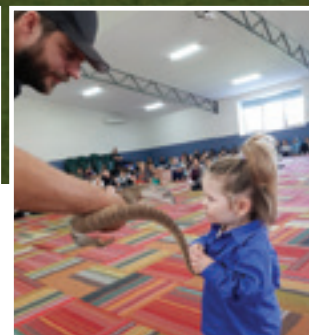
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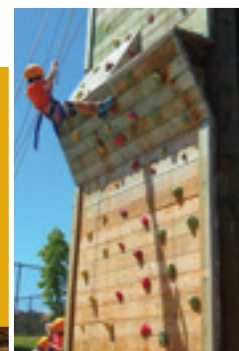
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Aerial photo credit - Richard Fraser

Know your AEDs

By Rosie Clarke, Editor

More than 30,000 Aussies experience a sudden cardiac arrest every year and most die.

The chance of you, a co-worker, parent, or even a student surviving such an incident could rest entirely on whether someone in the vicinity has access to a simple, often misunderstood, device.

Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) are devices that assess a heart's rhythm, provide instructions to the user, and where applicable provide a shock to the arresting heart. AEDs are extremely user-friendly as they are designed for anyone to be able to use them in a cardiac emergency with no formal training required. However, misconceptions around their



Images courtesy of AED Authority

functionality mean too many people might not think to reach for one when called upon and there simply aren't enough of them around. This issue, we spoke with some key AED suppliers to uncover some of

these misconceptions and offer informed industry perspectives.

Present statistics show that only 5-10 percent of people who experience a cardiac arrest survive because of response time delays – every minute counts

and waiting for an ambulance is usually too late. For every minute that defibrillation is delayed, the survival rate drops by 10 percent. Stationing AEDs in workplaces, schools, public spaces, and other highly populated areas could significantly increase someone's chance of survival in this case.

AED Authority's Joanne Feehan explained: "There are a lot of myths and misconceptions around AEDs but one of the most common is that you could accidentally shock someone or yourself and cause harm. You cannot do this. AED pads measure the person's heart rhythm and will only ever shock if needed.

"All AEDs do the same thing: deliver life-saving shocks to restore regular heart rhythm. However, they each do it slightly differently.

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In choosing an AED program for a school, it important to consider the model's ease-of-use, its ability to cater to both children and adults, and the level of experience of the likely first responder. I.e., are they first aid trained?"

Dush Dedic from St John Ambulance Australia (VIC) noted: "One of the main misconceptions is that children do not have sudden cardiac arrests, this is not true. Although it might not be as common as it is in adults, it does still occur, so it is vital that schools are fully prepared for this situation."

Intensive Care Paramedic with over thirty years of paramedicine experience, and managing director of the Defibshop, Carpet Hughes emphasised the importance of simplicity for schools. He said: "Choosing one for instance that has one set of defibrillation pads for both adults and paediatrics makes using the device easy and saves confusion about what pads to use."

Offering some quick tips, he said to make sure the devices are accessible: "Make sure the cabinet or bracket is easily visible and identifiable, and that the



Images courtesy of Defibshop

cabinet door can be opened easily. Make sure you change the cabinet alarm battery annually (if fitted). A good time is when you do your smoke detectors! Make sure the cabinet or bracket is kept clean and under cover (an awning, for example, in

outdoor locations - wall brackets are for indoor use only!)."

He added some warnings too: "Don't lock the cabinet or bracket in a room, office, first aid room or similar. Don't locate it too high or place items in front of

the cabinet or bracket – leave free space around for access. Don't turn the cabinet alarm off permanently (if fitted), and don't install it in permanent sunlight or heat if possible. Also, don't obstruct fire equipment and extinguishers! That is illegal." His top tip is to make sure "the bottom edge of the cabinet or bracket is 1200 to 1500mm from the floor and to locate it where most people will know, such as the entrance foyer, outside first aid room (unless first aid room is not lockable), or near lifts".

Discussing the responsibilities schools have with us, Joanne said: "Defibrillators (PADS) are designed to be used by both trained and untrained personnel; however, basic life support/first aid training will benefit any first responder, particularly in terms of the delivery of CPR, which needs to be done in conjunction with using a defibrillator. I recommend that everyone in the school community becomes familiar with the chain of survival. Put simply, the chain of survival is a series of steps (forming a virtual 'chain') which if followed promptly, give the best chance of survival from a cardiac arrest. ►



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Images courtesy of St John

◀ “Schools have an obligation under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to ensure they have sufficient staff trained in first aid and CPR. Both the Australian Resuscitation Council and Safe Work Australia recommend CPR skills should be refreshed at least annually.”

“Access is the most important factor in the placement of AEDs as using defibrillation within three minutes of a sudden cardiac arrest is crucial. That means the AED should be

located within 1.5 minutes of the victim in case you need to go from the victim to the AED and back. Also consider locations where the risk of incident is higher. With the above in mind, arming yourself with a stopwatch and floor plan will help map out the best locations. AEDs should be clearly signed, and their locations shared with the school community.”

Dush also clarified that “when purchasing an AED for a school, it’s important to consider the

size of the school and the number of students, visitors, and staff it has”. He explained: “Primary schools should also look at ensuring the device they purchase has paediatric pads, as adult pads will not be suitable on smaller children due to body size requiring a lower shock.

In terms of training for staff and school personnel, he added: “It is recommended that all staff have at least formal CPR training that includes AED training. There should also be selected first aiders who have completed *Provide First Aid* and *Provide Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation* (CPR). Basic first aid training must be completed every three years, while a refresher course in CPR must be completed annually. Although it is not mandatory for schools to have an AED, it is highly recommended as it may be needed at any time and it significantly increases the chance of survival if someone suffers a cardiac arrest.

“Some AEDs include CPR feedback to help the responder and provide useful prompts, such as ‘press faster’ or ‘press softer’ which improves the quality of CPR during what

can be a stressful scenario. All AEDs perform self-maintenance checks on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis to ensure they are ready for use. If the machine fails part of the test, the machine will beep to alert you there is a fault with the machine. St John recommends a weekly inspection be performed on the machine to ensure the machine has not failed a self-check; this inspection only takes a minute to complete. Batteries and pads will need to be replaced from time-to-time depending on the type of device.”

Carpet added: “In terms of ‘servicing’, that is up to each individual school, but a service will include making sure the unit is delivering the correct amount of energy with each shock. It runs the unit through specific cardiac rhythms to make sure it will identify properly any life-threatening rhythms that need defibrillation to save a patient’s life. Servicing of your AED fleet for your school is also a *risk management* process. By making sure your AEDs are serviced properly and provided with a report, you know the unit will work when needed for that lifesaving moment.” ■



NEW



IS YOUR SCHOOL PREPARED FOR A SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST?

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Out of lockdown? Back into sun safety!

By Rosie Clarke, Editor

Melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, is the most common cancer among Australian adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 24 years, accounting for almost 15 percent of all new cancers.

Australia's sun is harsh, and when children are at school, daily ultraviolet (UV) radiation levels are at their peak. This makes schools responsible for teaching sun safety to kids, as well as ensure school grounds are as 'sun safe' as possible.

With twice as many men than women dying from skin cancer in 2019, according to survey results reported by SunSmart, it is vital that schools promote sun safety and skin health among students, particularly boys.

Victorian educators upskill in sun protection at unprecedented rates

After months spent indoors during lockdown, Victorian educators flocked to online learning platform *Generation SunSmart* in record numbers to upskill in sun protection and be ready for rising UV



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levels as children return to school and early childhood services late last year.

The resource was developed to help improve the UV and sun protection knowledge of educators, and it saw an overwhelming uptake in registrations with a year-to-date increase of 248 percent year on year (1392 to 3456 registrations). The months of

July and August, typically slower months, saw a whopping 450 percent increase year on year (341 to 1590 registrations).

Heather Walker, Head of SunSmart, said the number of registrations was extremely encouraging and timely with Victorian schools and early childhood services starting their return at a time when UV levels regularly climb above

three, the point at which sun protection is required.

"The numbers also reflect how seriously Victorian educators are taking their duty of care in helping to protect the next generation," Ms Walker said.

Ms Walker said sun exposure in the first 15 years of life determines to a large extent the lifetime potential for skin cancer. Reducing UV exposure in the early years reduces the risk of skin cancer later in life.

"Children are exposed to the sun during peak UV times of day for all outdoor activities including recess and lunchtime. The average UV in Melbourne in October is 7. At this level, skin damage from overexposure to UV can occur more quickly. When the UV is three and above, schools and early childhood services are advised that children should be using the five forms of sun protection," Ms Walker said.

Skin cancer is one of the most prevalent forms of cancer in Australia with two in three Australians being diagnosed by the age of 70. Ms Walker added that despite its prevalence, skin cancer is also one of the most preventable forms of cancer.

"Careful sun protection at all ages when the UV is three and

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above drastically reduces the risk of skin cancer - and starting those practices early in life is the best form of prevention."

With educators taking positive steps towards protecting the next generation, Ms Walker highlighted that sun protection was a shared responsibility between school, care, and home.

"As a result of lockdown, children are likely to be out of practice with sun protection routines – particularly when it comes to sunscreen application."

However, she clarified: "Although educators play an important role in encouraging good sun protection, teachers at school are not expected to apply sunscreen to the children.

"If children are over three years, we'd encourage parents to have a few practices applying sunscreen with them at home, so they'll be ready to confidently do it on their own."

Tips for promoting sun safety among school-age children:

- School uniforms should aim to cover as much skin as possible. SunSmart recommends Australians "SLIP on clothing with tighter weaves, higher necklines and longer style sleeves and legs". Uniform

committees should consider whether their school uniform meets Australian standards and how it might be more sun safe.

- Families should be encouraged to apply a generous amount of SPF30 or higher, broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before drop-off. Schools should broadcast permission for students to reapply sunscreen during the day. Parents can pack it in their child's bag, or schools can make sunscreen readily available. Students should learn to SLOP on their own sunscreen so they can do it independently.
- Students should have a clearly labelled sun protective hat each day. According to SunSmart: "Children need to SLAP on a broadbrim, bucket or legionnaire style hat that shades the face, neck and ears."
- Encourage students to SEEK shady spots for play.
- Schools can also encourage students to "SLIDE on close fitting, wrap-around sunglasses that cover as much of the eye area as possible and meet Australian Standards. ■



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Hit the ground

running, jumping, leapfrogging

By Heather Barker Vermeer
Industry Reporter

Sport: it is big business for schools.

The standard of sport played is on a continually upward trajectory. Providing the most up-to-date, professional standard facilities can help schools attract the strongest sporting students and produce winning results.

With the sports hall, or gymnasium, sitting at the centre of the school sports hub, how do schools make sure they get it right when choosing that all-important surface? Every school has significant decisions to make when installing, refurbishing, or replacing their gym flooring. These decisions can have huge bearing on which sports can be offered at the school, the level sports can be played at, as well as other purposes the hall can be used for.

First, a school must consider who will be using the floor and for what.

Age and stage will dictate need: university students will have different requirements from primary school pupils, for example. Like everything within the school sphere, there isn't a one-size-fits-all. The school's project leader and PE programme leader must work to create the best outcomes for the school and its community.

When contemplating any significant outlay, schools are wise to consult experts from

the off. Flooring companies can outline the different types of surfaces available for installation for your sports hall and illustrate options to have any current flooring refurbished for better use.

Wood versus synthetic

Traditional timber flooring can vary hugely in its quality, cost, and purpose. Wooden sports flooring typically consists of a solid timber surface with shock absorbing pads underneath. As hardwood surfaces are more rigid than many other materials, impact is dispersed over a wide area.



With area-elastic flooring fitted, the wooden surface returns energy back up to the user who is walking or running on the surface, cushioning the impact over a large area. Pitfalls of area-elastic floors can be uneven 'spring' performance over the surface, due to the necessarily spaced placement of shock pads and other underfloor supports. A quality area elastic flooring system will provide enhanced performance and greater shock absorption for high intensity sports such as basketball and netball.

Sports flooring materials such as vinyl, rubber, polyurethane, and linoleum represent what are known as point-elastic flooring systems.



These gym floor options have uniform performance across the whole playing surface. This means that every point on the floor will have almost identical shock absorption and rebound.

A point-elastic floor interacts with each user on an individual basis and activity can be localised and will not impact on the surface elsewhere in the hall.

These materials can come in a range of thicknesses to suit different requirements, such as a thicker weight vinyl cushioning for older, heavier students, thinner for younger, lighter children.

Benefits of cushioned vinyl are that it is a resilient surface that helps reduce injury from falls. It also provides comfort for running and is effective at noise reduction. It is generally one of the lower cost surfaces to purchase and install.

There are also options for a combination of both point elastic flooring and an area elastic system, which can create the best of both worlds for multi-use facilities.



Other considerations

Schools must also consider how easily the floor can be marked out with lines needed for sports courts, etc. Which sports do you want to be permanently marked out on the surface? How easy will the surface be to clean?

Another thoughtful consideration to bear in mind here, as with all school projects, is environmental impact. Is the

flooring sustainably sourced? Have recycled material been used in its production? Are heavy chemicals used? Can the flooring be recycled eventually?

In the cost versus quality debate, remember, community groups and sports clubs that hire the facilities after school hours can provide income that can be used to offset the cost of installing a high-quality floor.

And some projects which may seem, to the untrained eye, in need of a wholesale overhaul, involving costly removal of old flooring may in fact be suited to a new surface being overlaid on the existing floor.

Refurbishment of old flooring can sometimes be the smarter option, when some, for example, point elastic floors can be laid directly over existing wood or concrete. ■

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Camberwell Grammar - Image courtesy of Nellakir



St Kevin's College - Image courtesy of Nellakir

Timber sports flooring – nothing compares

By Nellakir

Today's timber sports flooring owes much to the progression of the sport of basketball.

Basketball's origins can be traced to Springfield Massachusetts way back in 1891 where, to cope with long periods of inactivity due to winter blizzards at the YMCA training school located there, a young Canadian 2nd year graduate student named James Naismith developed a game to keep the attending students fit and active.

Naismith cleared the Gymnasium's timber floor of equipment and made do with two peach baskets at each end of the gym, nailed to the lower rail of the balcony, 10 feet off the ground. A soccer ball was used in those first ever games at the YMCA.

After the first game, Naismith sat down and devised 13 rules. No running with the ball – it had to be batted (bounced) or thrown. The new rules were introduced, and the 'rough house' elements of the game were eliminated – tackling and slugging resulted in 'fouls', which now ultimately advantaged the other team.

The game spread quickly. By 1898 a *Professional League* was established in the USA. The new game took hold in the US, Canada, and the UK. 'Dribbling' was introduced in 1901.

The game rapidly gained popularity and refinement. A women's variant, netball, was established in England soon after basketball was created by Naismith. Like basketball, its popularity spread quickly and this time throughout the British

Empire. The facts are that at the highest levels of participation, basketball, netball, and gymnastics have generally been played or performed on timber courts. From old fruit packing sheds with peach baskets, to unique proper sprung timber flooring.

This remains the case today. As Olympic sports, both basketball and netball are played on sprung timber sports flooring. In Australia, the timber used is more often either Tasmanian Oak or Messmate. A true timber court is not unlike a musical instrument, tuned to provide the ultimate in pace, bounce and compression, lessening the strain and risk of injury to competitors.

Worldwide, major competitions are played on timber sports flooring. The court is highly polished and finished with protective coatings. The NBA is the premiere basketball competition. All NBA games are played on FIBA approved courts. The same is true for Australia's NBL competition and the premiere netball competition – the *Suncorp Super Netball*

Competition – all are played on sprung timber sports flooring.

Timber sports flooring can be provided using 'stump thrust technology' for difficult uneven surfaces, it can be overlaid on to a concrete slab or be provided as a completely portable unit (as has been used for exhibition games at Melbourne's Hisense Arena or Marvel Stadium).

Maintenance is relatively simple. Annually the following tasks must be undertaken:

- Annual line marking on sport floors.
- Annual maintenance programs.
- Re-coating after 12 months on all sprung timber sports flooring.

Other tasks that must occur over longer periods (seven years or more) include:

- Resurfacing of existing floors – sports floors on stadiums, halls and gymnasiums, timber flooring in churches.

- Re-sanding of all sprung timber sports floors.
- Removal and refitting of existing floors.
- Removal and replacement of stadium seating.
- Protective floor covers.

After a specific period, all sports flooring will need replacing depending on usage, level of upkeep, and general 'wear and tear'. Timber flooring with correct maintenance and cleaning is long lasting, up to 15-20 years without major refurbishment, and sometimes much longer.

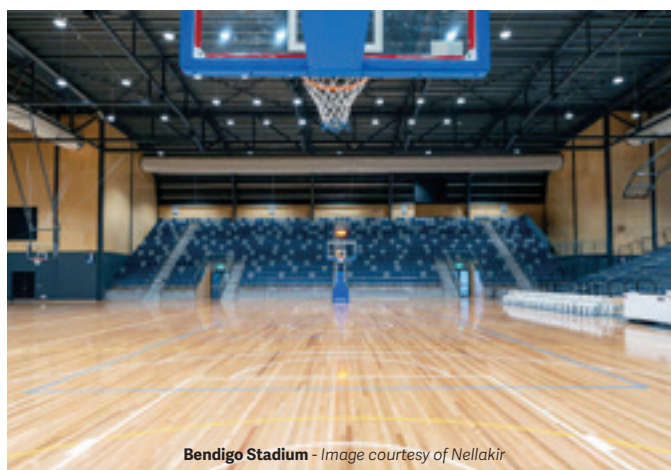
There is no reason why timber sports flooring cannot be laid over synthetic surfaces as a replacement effectively.

The installation of timber sports flooring requires a specialist team with both knowledge, experience and effective access to FIBA approved sports flooring systems or similar, to ensure a premium finish and longevity.

Timber flooring in a school situation offers the opportunity of a multi-purpose Assembly hall when conditions externally are inclement. The court can double as a gymnastics area, volleyball court, badminton, futsal, or dance area.

Timber is a natural material that simply looks stunning. Where schools are a planned extension of the local community, timber sports flooring on competition courts encourage older competitors to exercise and play. And, quite frankly, there is nothing like the sound of the ball being bounced down the court in an attacking move on the boards.

It is the stuff of legends – ask Ben Simmons, Andrew Bogut, or Joe Ingles. All tread the boards here as kids in Australia, to launch their careers as NBA superstars. So, its timber sports flooring for an authentic and safe playing surface always Play ball! ▲



Bendigo Stadium - Image courtesy of Nellakir

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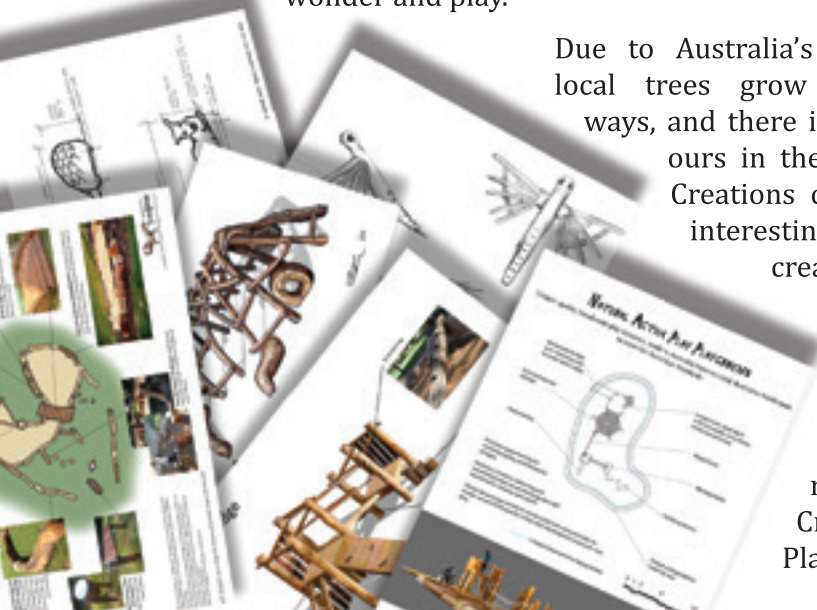




Image courtesy of Austek

Nature's best teacher



Image courtesy of GDL Nature Play Spaces

By Rosie Clarke, Editor

According to a systematic review published in 2020, 'The impacts of unstructured nature play on health in early childhood development', children have a lot to learn and gain from natural landscapes.

These are outdoor learning environments where children

can simply and freely explore the earth; learn by doing and playing. Perhaps unlike a modern playground, nature play prioritises natural materials and elements, focussed on creating a landscape with tools for self-directed play rather than structured games or activities. While research often centres the child-led aspect of nature play though, it can be more teacher directed. For example, a teacher may guide a child towards a fallen log or other nature play item. As a learning

facilitator, you might prompt a child to join a group immersed in imaginative play with a sandpit or rock stream but ultimately, nature play appeals to educators because it creates organic ways for children to become more independent. It helps them develop and practice all sorts of social and cognitive skills and because nature evolves with the seasons, children grow with it rather than become bored by the same play items. It also helps instil a natural sense of responsibility for land, and awareness of climate issues.

Different studies looking at the outcomes have found children can benefit from participating in nature play in terms of health, academic performance, social development, and even mental health and cognitive development. While the benefits are clear to researchers and educators, what can be less clear is how to define nature play and what level of design it requires to install. The best way to find out, we thought, would be to see what nature play specialists and playground designers are doing with schools.

So, this issue, *School News* spoke to some of Australia's nature

play experts, asking about the benefits, special requirements and design options available.

Nature play expert George Davidson from GDL Nature Play Spaces told us why he is so passionate about using nature-based designs in schools:

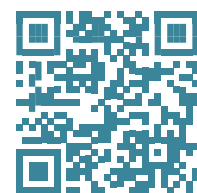
"Generally, there is no special equipment required to create a natural play space. It can start with just a pile of sticks to build cubbies or rocks to sit on. Hardwood logs and rocks can be used in so many ways; imagination is the only limit.

Natural products like sand and pebbles also add interest because these items have many different textures for sensory play. I would not incorporate items from conventional playgrounds, like ropes and nets, but would try to fix them to natural products." Benefits to installing a natural playscape, he explained, are manifold: "They can be made to fit into any environment or size; materials are natural and sustainable and can teach children about how to repurpose items around them; and most spaces that involve plants evolve over time, changing through the year. ►



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Image courtesy of Wearthly

◀ It is a good idea to make the *planting* an important part of nature play spaces so that it becomes a hidden oasis for students but using natural and generally locally sourced items also helps keep costs down.

"As spaces evolve, items can always be added or removed to keep children interested in the area and teach them more about risk-taking and observing their environment. There is never a right or wrong way to use the space!"

Combatting some misconceptions around nature play, Timber Creations' Madelyn Smith said: "Often people think they need to have a large, clear, flat space to work with, but often the best projects are those with interesting features to work around. Slopes are fantastic for play and can be used to make a really creative non-prescriptive play space.

"Other awkward spaces can be turned into great play areas, such as at Windale Public School, where they had a retaining wall about 1.5m from the fence, that took up a large portion of the space that was unusable. With that



Image courtesy of Timber Creations

installation, we turned it into a climbing and clambering wall and used the space on top to create a cubby area by adding wide timber palings.

Madelyn told us: "My favourite structure of the year is a big whale climber at Windale Primary School, that is made from some incredibly rare timbers that were collected, White Cypress is normally straight but due to an accident

while the trees were growing, they grew in a curve, and have been utilised to create an amazing domed climber that is absolutely one of a kind. This climber uses several other interesting pieces from the timber creations collection, including hollow log eyes, a curved log tail, and custom milled flipper boards. It is also appreciated as an aboriginal totem and significant for the local Awabakal people."

Sustainability is a key feature for new nature play spaces, according to Wearthly playground designer Lukas Ritson. He explained: "We have to be the bridge to nature so we can enable children to explore."

Working with early childhood centres and schools on sustainable projects has been eye-opening: "One of the oversights I've witnessed time and time again is trying to teach children about sustainability in an abstract way when children need to make a connection with the environment by caring for it and seeing how it cares for them.

"It is important to consider that environmental sustainability starts with a social practice – one of engagement, fulfilment and true wonderment of a childhood experience. I encourage educators/teachers to get children involved from a young age in cultivating vegetable gardens or raising chickens. They can also install sting-less bee boxes and landscape playgrounds with butterfly attracting plants that will deepen the nature connection for children." ▶

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Kenmore Kindergarten – Image courtesy of Austek



Image courtesy of GDL Nature Play Spaces

◀ In a recent playground project in Floraville, Newcastle, Lukas told us he started off with an amazing foundation in the form of a huge space with giant established trees. “It’s integral when designing a space that we work in alignment with the existing environment. Each project is about complementing what is already there, not trying

to recreate or prescribe the types of play for the children. This playground now features big raw logs and boulders, a traditional sandpit, a treehouse, hidden monkey bars, mud kitchens, wilderness areas, a riverbed with loose rocks to build dams and play with flowing water, a sustainability learning zone, raised garden

beds, compost unit and a cubby building and rope tying section.”

Glenn Williams is managing director at Austek Play and spoke to us about what is involved in designing a natural play space installation in collaboration with schools. Glenn said:

“Designing successful nature

play areas needs to be a collaborative approach. As the space is a built playspace, it is important to ensure the proposed design does not present unacceptable injury risk by engaging a qualified playground company.”

Special materials help create special environments, unique to



Image courtesy of Timber Creations



Image courtesy of Wearth

each design: "Where possible, recycled Australian hardwood timber such as Ironbark, is a tremendous option for materials selection due to its natural resistance to rot and termite attack. Natural stone is also a great maintenance-free material. The key is finding products that suit the local geographic region."

Kenmore West Kindergarten

directors and teachers, *Natasha Moore and Robert Pratt, were excited to talk to School News about their recent collaboration with Austek Play:*

"The collaborative approach helped ensure the outcome suited our environment and provided a wonderful, challenging play space for the children. Because the design includes a balance of

elements that are accessible yet physically challenging; spaces to hide and spaces that provoke the imagination, the children are always drawn to the area engaged in meaningful play. For some, just being able to reach the monkey bars is an achievement, for others, eventually being able to cross is so exciting!"

They advised that schools

aim to: "Ensure the design complements the landscape, contours, vegetation, etc. Ensure there is a balance of physical elements that are challenging, accessible, and imaginative. Use natural materials as much as possible. Listen to the children during the design process - they know better than anyone what they want." ●



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Air considerations for school buildings

By Rosie Clarke, *Editor*

Hot on the heels of Queensland's Cooler Cleaner Schools Program, promising \$477m over four years to get kids into 10,000 newly air-conditioned classrooms across the state, schools are getting serious about air control.

Indoor ventilation a hot topic health concern

Existing research is inconsistent around the risk of COVID transmission through HVAC or air conditioning systems, but the Victorian government has most recently advised schools not to have air conditioners on recirculate and broader advice recommends proper filters in conjunction with other ventilation strategies.

In Australia, COVID concerns are thankfully low, with cases down and life largely returning to normal at schools around the country. Still, however, proper ventilation is always vital: filters and systems should be regularly cleaned and professionally maintained. School building managers should seek out relevant information from their system manufacturers and make sure regular audits are carried out to fend off any nasties and make sure upgrades are scheduled when required.

Education outcomes affected with temps above 23°C

Shockingly, research going back to the 1970s has shown temperatures above 23°C can negatively impact student comfort and concentration, particularly in subjects like reading and mathematics. A 2018 Harvard Kennedy School study of 10 million secondary school students found that they had better academic results



Images courtesy of Mitsubishi Electric Australia



after a cool school year than after a hot school year. In fact, student achievement dropped by one percent per additional degree in temperature (in Fahrenheit as this was a US study). Associate Professor Joshua Goodman reflected: "School air conditioning penetration reported in 2016 mitigates the adverse effect of hot temperatures substantially, such that moving from a school with no air-conditioned classrooms to a school with all air-conditioned classrooms reduces the impact by approximately 78 percent."

\$477m over four years will get QLD students into 10,000 newly air-conditioned classrooms



This is big news for Australians as we experience the effects of living in an increasingly hot country thanks to climate change. Schools must seek to balance these competing issues. Mitigating concerns about environmental efficiency, for example, the QLD government has confirmed "an additional \$71 million over three years [will] expand solar panel installations on state school rooftops to assist in offsetting the additional energy air conditioners will use".

Industry hot take:

Atesh Mani is the National Product Manager and knower-of-all-things-air-con at Mitsubishi Electric Australia. He explained how modern systems can be designed to meet the needs of challenging layouts in schools.

"For a typical single classroom," he advised, "a ceiling cassette or ceiling-suspended system is often used".

"Ceiling cassettes are selected when there is a false ceiling



where the indoor unit can be installed. Ceiling-suspended systems are an ideal choice for classrooms that have no false ceilings, like sites with concrete ceilings. There are two features that should be on the top of any list for model selection for classrooms: fresh-air intake and air volume (air flow). Air conditioning systems perform at their best when windows and doors are shut. This presents a problem with rising carbon dioxide levels and other air contaminants. To address this issue, models should be selected with fresh-air intake enabled for the induction of fresh outside air which is critical to the health of students and teaching staff.

"Single classrooms with ceilings as high as 4.2m can be air conditioned with a ceiling cassette or ceiling-suspended system equipped with a high ceiling mode. This mode makes it possible to switch the airflow volume to match the room height. Where several rooms are required to

be air conditioned and there is a requirement to reduce the number of outdoor units due to minimal space availability or aesthetic requirements, a multi-system can be used. Depending on the total capacity required (measured in kW) a single outdoor unit can be connected to multiple indoor units, including a combination of wall mounted, floor consoles, ceiling-suspended and ceiling cassettes.

"For larger spaces, a commercial air conditioning system with Variable Refrigerant Flow (VRF) allows connection to multiple systems with advanced central monitoring and control. VRF systems often selected for new building contraction."

Schools have some unique requirements to consider as well: "Installations for schools should consider fixed temperature settings and time of day operation. Every single degree of temperature setting change can affect energy consumption as much as 10 percent. The ideal set temperature is around 23°C. Locking temperature control can save the school in energy costs." Notably, he added: "The *NSW Cooler Classrooms Program* specified that air conditioning would automatically shut off after two hours. Pressing a button would turn the system back on for another two hours.

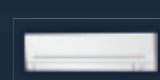
"Another requirement of the program was the installation of monitors that notify teachers and students when the weather outside is optimal for opening windows." ■



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