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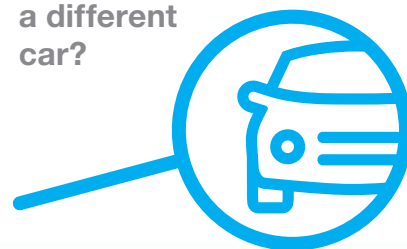
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The scandalous lack of adequate sexuality education

This issue, industry reporter Sheetal Singh shines an important light on the failures of sex-ed in Australian schools to teach students consent in a nuanced, practical way.

Interviewing Chanel Contos about her recent experience urging the government to change its policy, and speaking with various experts on student health and wellbeing, Singh finds out what teachers are being told to teach right now when it comes to sexuality education, what the gaps in this pedagogy are, and what schools can do to improve the way they teach consent in class (Page 6). It's a compelling story that asks you to question your school's approach to sex-ed. Has the policy shifted in your school this year? If not, does it plan to? We would like to feature some case study examples



Rosie Clarke,
Editor, *SchoolNews*
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of sex-ed pedagogy change next issue, so write in and let us know.

On page 8, Campbellfield Public School Principal Nicole Wade pens a fantastic Principal Speaks column this issue. She illustrates her pathway to becoming an educator by taking us through her formative experience as young Aboriginal person in school who felt disconnected from her

identity to her current role as Principal where she champions an inspiring pedagogy centring 'Kulcha Classes', which teach local histories and support students' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities.

Check out our profile of regional coal-mining school, Richard Gill School, which has developed a pedagogical practice combining music and STEM (Page 10). The school hit headlines for its innovative arts-based framework that caters primarily to mining families.

Elsewhere this issue, we have fantastic features showcasing different solutions and options available to schools in all forms. Beginning with the learning zone boom happening in library refurbishments (Page 12) and a closer look at two schools refreshing their reading rooms with stellar new furniture solutions

(Page 16-18). On Page 20 we get stuck into school management systems, eyeing up the latest and greatest new tech solutions and features. Mathematics pedagogy is a central concern for schools and on Page 28 we explore key considerations for choosing a new programme. How can schools meet their science room needs? We find out on Page 30 and explore the results of St Catherine's School's epic Sydneysider revamp.

Check out our smart classrooms feature for all you need to know about empowering teachers to create their own pedagogy (Page 39-42), and turn to Page 44 for some tips and tricks to teach students leadership skills.

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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Survivors and experts blame negligence in sex-ed for assault

By Sheetal Singh
Industry Reporter

Failures in sexual education in schools have significant consequences, as has been evident these past few months.

Chanel Contos, Brittany Higgins, and Grace Tame faced the price of these failures.

These three women could have led very different lives if sex-ed was diverse and inclusive.

Sexuality education isn't easy; it's complex and ever evolving. However, its current failures are too huge to miss.

Deakin University Lecturer Claire Stonehouse said sexuality education in schools needs to be more explicit.

Professor Stonehouse is a Lecturer in Education and specialises in student health and well-being.

"Sexual education has improved in these recent years with students becoming more aware; however, it needs to include more explicit terms. Words related to private body parts shouldn't be

sugar coated anymore," she said.

"The unclear curriculum added to parents refusing to teach kids about consent early on is a part of the problem."

"They say things like 'no don't teach my kid that, or don't use this word in classrooms.'"

Advocate for holistic sexuality education in schools, Chanel Contos, said she was taught about consent much later in her school life.

"In my school, students were taught about consent in Year 10. We were 15 when we were first taught that we need to take and give permission," she said.

"And my school is supposed to be one of the good progressive ones."

She launched a petition 'Teach Us Consent' earlier this year where women as old as 80 and as young as 13 have identified themselves as sexual assault survivors.

The petition has gone viral with over 6000 testimonies since late March this year.

Ms Contos grew up in Australia and is currently finishing her

masters in London. She talked to School News Australia from her apartment in London.

She said the failures of sex-ed in Australian schools are glaring and her page is a direct product of these failures.

"I was sexually assaulted in school and I got to know last year that my friend was assaulted by the same man that assaulted me," she said.

"We suddenly found out one day and we were just sitting, crying, shaking and being traumatised by it.

"But here's the thing, we didn't know then that we were assaulted and the guy who did this to us didn't know he had to ask. We weren't taught consent or permission.

"That is how the page came about. I realised schools need a better consent education."

The page started as an Instagram poll, and soon Ms Contos realised her assault isn't an isolated incident. Thousands of girls from schools in Australia have submitted their testimony.

"Sexual assault isn't rare, like we all thought. We know now

it isn't," Ms Contos said.

"My own sexual assault experience could have been preventable. It was easily avoidable by educating me and him."

The heartbreaking testimonies come with a trigger warning and tell its reader that sexual assault isn't uncommon; speaking up about it is.

"The more I think about it, these repressed memories (of sexual assault) come back, I'm so thankful we can finally speak about it," one testimony reads.

Failures of sex-ed

Despite improved sex-ed recently, Ms Stonehouse said sexuality education, the Australian government needs to do more. She added, the recent milkshake smearing advertisement is a step back to the process.

She criticised the advert and said it was regressive and embarrassing.

The advertisement that now has been taken down is considered derogatory and confusing by rape prevention campaigners.

The outlandish video features a woman smearing a milkshake all over a man's face. The video, which is supposed to inform students of sex education, fails to mention sex or consent.

Professor Stonehouse said the advertisement is a 'big fail'.

"As a Year 10 student, I would be offended. The government is trying to push an analogy that doesn't even make sense," she said.

"It is bizarre and confusing."

Professor Stonehouse believes the \$3.7 million campaign that has received fierce backlash from experts and students alike could have been better with an expert's guidance.

The government has spent millions of dollars in the past two years on the campaign; however, as far as I know, none of the experts were contacted," she said.

"The government wasted money, and they didn't use the existing resources."

Talking about the advert, Ms Contos said, "it is insulting that the government believes that is the level of intelligence we have".

"It just shows how disconnected they are. The ad is impractical and a major part of the problem.

"It puts ordering beverages and sexual assault on the same table. It is okay to compromise on drinks, not your body.

"But the issue doesn't stop here, their website was equally problematic."

The website used the phrase 'moving the line' instead of abuse which, Ms Contos believes, undermines the victims and survivors of abuse.

"Another phrase used on the website was, 'It is okay to persuade them but don't use force' and that is wrong. They are not deciding on pizza that you have to convince someone, it's a sexual act," she said.

Sexuality education today

Justine Kiley-Scott, the co-founder of Sex Education Australia (SEA), has worked with over 100 schools in Australia, teaching students about sexuality education.

She said consent is not taught

"My own sexual assault experience could have been preventable. It was easily avoidable by educating me and him."

- Chanel Contos tells *School News*

explicitly in schools because sexual assault is a "menaced and a sensitive topic".

"The topic of rape culture, slut shaming and sexual assault hasn't been tackled head-on," she said.

"For that reason, there is misinformation about what consent is, how to give it and how it looks like, feels like and sounds like.

"It isn't just 'no means no', there's reading body language and enthusiasm."

She adds that she has noticed different responses from boys and girls while delivering the curriculum.

"When we are in a girls' school, students often ask us if we are teaching consent to boys," she said.

"They want to know if boys are being taught this as well because it is important that both the genders know equally about consent.

"In boys' school we also go beyond and ad focus on what not to do and what is absolutely wrong."

Brandon Friedman, the co-founder of Elephant Ed that conducts sexual education workshops in schools, has also noticed different reactions from the two genders.

"Boys tend to pull up a wall or a barrier rather than talking about it," he said.

"Which is why our workshops make an effort to create a safe non-judgemental space for them to engage in conversations."

"Whereas girls want to learn more, and they proactively engage in conversations."

Mr Friedman said sexual education has changed over the years, and it is progressing. The workshops include the cultural and emotional aspects

of sexual education rather than being confined to the traditional elements of physical health and the onset of puberty.

"For instance, we focus on the dramatisation of pornography. It degrades women and our workshops focus on teaching students the effects of such misinformation."

Elephant Ed workshops also focus on consent. Mr Friedman says, "We talk about consent laws and legality."

"We also go around consent and talk about gender and power balance in a relationship and victim-blaming.

The problem

Sexuality education in Australian schools is inconsistent across states. In addition, even though sex-ed is compulsory in schools, there is no fixed structure across schools in Australia.

A holistic approach to sexual education is not accessible to all students around Australia. The state government has set up guidelines that schools need to match; however, it still lacks accountability.

"The schools are told what to teach but not how to teach. It is open to interpretation and there is no accountability," Professor Stonehouse said.

"Additionally, we need to develop education around respect in relationship."

Ms Kiley-Scott believes teaching students more about respect in and for a relationship is vital.

"They need to know when they will be ready and they need to be taught about consent, which they will not find in mainstream media," she said.

She said that students today can learn more about sexual activities on the internet, which can lead to misinformation.

"Students can easily access information on the internet through pornography and media, but here consent is not clarified.

"These problems need addressing outside of the school campus by educating parents and teachers."

How should it be?

Failures in sexuality education is also a result of systematic issues based on gender roles and stereotypes.

Ms Kiley-Scott said society needs to shift from policing to educating.

"Chanel Contos's petition had a lot of signatures not only because of school's curriculum but also systematic errors," she said.

"The schools should go beyond biology and talk about STD's, condoms and consent."

"The conversations should also focus on relationships being pleasurable with both sides being excited and happy about it."

Professor Stonehouse said there are no standard guidelines to teach sexuality; some things should and should not be done.

"The right approach to take is evidence-based and acknowledging what is being talked about," she said.

"The wrong way would be making fun of it and not being honest about it.

"Kids are impressionable and not pitching the idea of sexuality education at the developmental stage is also wrong.

"We also need a supportive government making uniform and informed curriculum for sexual education in schools across Australia."

As a lecturer in education, she teaches her students, who are future educators, about sexuality education.

"All pre-service teachers need to be taught how to teach it and professional learning for in-service teachers is essential."

Sexual Education must be inclusive, and responsibility lies on teachers and parents alike. ■

Kulcha Class: Valuing & promoting our students' identities

It is hard to believe that an individual could go from a school refuser to a school principal, yet that is exactly what I did.

In fact, it is the collection of challenges that I faced that paved my pathway to becoming an educator.

My early memories of school are an uncomfortable mesh of disconnect and dislike. I remember having an overwhelming feeling that school was not for me. I spent my days becoming invisible, never saying a word or contributing my ideas. I was like an outsider viewing the happy kids learning and playing.

Reflecting back, school created a disconnect between the strong Aboriginal identity that had been nurtured in me by my Nyoongah family. I went from being proud to be Aboriginal to feeling like I was not valued or even recognised as being Aboriginal at school. I remember frequently being told, "You don't look Aboriginal" or "You're not a real Aboriginal person." These remarks deeply wounded my inner spirit, voice, and confidence as a child.

In high school, I learnt how to hide my feelings and play the school game. I became



Nicole Wade, Principal,
Campbellfield Public School, Minto, NSW

compliant; however, my internal dialogue remained the same, that school was not a place for me. It was not until I was 16 and pregnant that I found a fire burning inside me to do better. I completed my HSC across two years through Sydney Secondary Distance Education with not one, but two children. That fire to provide a better life for my children ignited my self-belief that I could achieve. I ended up gaining a UAI of 94.5 and became the Dux of my school.

It was at this point that my pathway to become an educator emerged. I thought to myself, what if my teachers had connected with that invisible girl, valued her identity, and made her feel that school was a place for her? I can't help but wonder what potential I could have achieved earlier and how different my

What if my teachers had connected with that invisible girl, valued her identity, and made her feel that school was a place for her?

I was going to become that teacher

experiences would have been. My pathway was clear. I was going to become that teacher. One that made sure every child felt connected and successful.

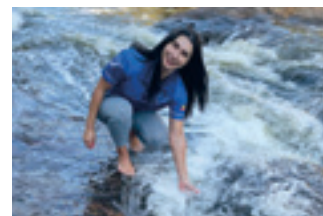
Fast forward 21 years down the track and now I am a proud Principal of an incredible school in Minto, Campbellfield Public School.

Alongside a talented team of educators, we have worked tirelessly to build a culturally safe learning community focused on belonging, connectedness, and evidence-based teaching. Our learning community firmly believe, "Every Face Has a Place". High expectations for all students, including our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are interwoven into our fabric. We ensure

students receive evidence-based pedagogies that are research driven. This means that every child's learning is challenged and that closing the gap becomes a reality of our daily work.

For our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, this learning occurs in a space that not only maintains but promotes their culture and histories. Schools send powerful overt and covert messages about belonging. It is important that school leaders are aware of the messaging they send to their community. A school vision and school plan need to include strategies that ensure Aboriginal students are attending, engaged, and achieving by valuing, respecting, and promoting their identities.





At Campbellfield Public School, a successful strategy to achieve this vision is achieved through our weekly Kulcha Class lessons. Teaching these classes is the highlight of my week. Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students learn about the histories of the local Dharawal people, whilst strengthening their cultural knowledge from Elders in the community. We also learn about contemporary issues such as Reconciliation, the Stolen Generations and protecting Sacred Sites. Our students have reported that Kulcha Class is, "the best part of school", "makes me feel special as an Aboriginal person" and "ensures that our histories are learnt, shared with all Australians" and "don't just get washed away". When I listen to how students view their Aboriginal identities within our school, it brings me an overwhelming sense of pride.

We also hold regular Junior Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) meetings with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These meetings provide a forum for our students to share their ideas about how Aboriginal culture should be shared with all staff, students, and families in our school community. It develops their leadership and public speaking skills. Students have worked in partnership with The Fields AECG to develop our own Acknowledgement of Country for our school community.

As an Aboriginal principal who grew up in South-West Sydney, I also believe that building

Reflecting back, school created a disconnect between the strong Aboriginal identity that had been nurtured in me by my Nyoongah family



aspirations for all children from a young age is powerful work. Schools are in such privileged positions to have conversations with kids about dreaming big. My experience is that children do not get asked enough, 'What do you dream of being?' When kids shrug their shoulders, the conversation can't stop. 'What do you enjoy doing? What are you passionate about? Who are some people in the community that you want to be like?' These questions generate the basis of a conversation. I had one young Aboriginal boy who told me weekly that when I retire, he will become the Principal of Campbellfield. This is a boy with diagnosed disabilities and a complex home life. These strengths-based aspirational conversations were powerful because he does not see adversity, just opportunity and success for his future. These conversations build trust, connectedness, and a self-belief in students that they can succeed.

Building a learning community where all our Aboriginal and Torres Strait students are growing up strong in their

culture, know that are valued as individuals and that their voices are heard, is incredibly rewarding. It is a genuine privilege as an Aboriginal principal, to give back to community and to support our emerging Elders who will be the leaders of tomorrow. ■



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Regional coal mining school combines music with STEM

By Sheetal Singh
Industry Reporter

The tune of a coal mining region of NSW country has changed as a regional primary school starts its day on a musical note.

Richard Gill school, an independent primary school in the booming Muswellbrook town of Upper Hunter Valley Region, has introduced music and physical activity "at the very core of the curriculum".

The program aims at delivering music education to the kids while educating them on the core Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) curriculum.

The appointed Principal of the school, Chris English, says the inclusion of the music program is in its early stages and is developing as the school is growing in size.

"The council wanted us to have a focus on STEM, and that is perfectly suitable to the community, but music and art allows students to develop finer motor skills," Principal English said.

"There has been a huge push towards STEM education generally over the past few years, and it also fits the dominant profession of the region, that is mining engineering, but soon mines might not be the main employer in the region."

Though the town's economy currently depends on coal mining, the local council and its people are aware of their uncertain future.



"So, it is the council and school's vision to set up the children of Muswellbrook for a curriculum that will make them job-ready in the future.

"Possibly we could have the community shifting towards more arts jobs because of the program, but the introduction of music is about increasing intelligence and using more parts of the brain.

"The program is also about creativity through sparking imaginations and creative thought in children and can be integrated into any Key Learning Areas in the school."

Mr English was appointed principal at the start of 2020, and since then, has been handling the administration works to get the school started this year.

He is an educator and a musician who has worked in various leadership roles in the town.

He says teaching music is "very fulfilling in its own right".

"The program is especially age-appropriate, and we have a philosophy that lets children be children for as long as possible," he said.

"It is a critical skill in almost any field."

The program is based on extensive research and analysis that music has on social intelligence, motor skills and neurological connections. Mr English believes music helps the mind and body to work together.

Richard Gill's brainchild

The Richard Gill School is a comprehensive, secular, independent primary school with a musical focus tailored around the educational philosophy of Richard Gill AO. Richard Gill was an Australian Conductor known for his passion and advocacy for musical education for children. He started the *National Teaching Mentoring Program*, which focuses on improving the quality of music education in schools.





Principal English says Richard Gill is the brainchild of the school. Before his passing in 2018, the loved musician set up a board for the school where he appointed the former CEO of NewsCorp and his closest friend, Kim Williams as chairman.

"Mr Gill and Mr Williams put together the guiding mission and vision for the school," he said.

The inaugural meeting, which Principal English describes as "magical", took place in the hospital room of Mr Gill.

"The inaugural meeting was held between Mr Gill and the Muswellbrook mayor Martin Rush discussed the school's vision and how the children of Muswellbrook can prepare for the future."

The town's council that was

looking to move to another place leased the building to the school.

"When the council were looking to move to a different location and wanted the site to be of value. So that is how it started."

"The inaugural role of the council to lease us the building at a very affordable price."

The onset of the program

Richard Gill school started earlier this year, and the program received a positive response from parents.

"A number of our parents are in the mining industry, and they are eager to see how they can implement the program in the extensive curriculum and the STEM elements as well," Mr English said.



"It has been very well received; the only challenge is to get everyone in Muswellbrook to know about the school and what we do."

The school has "very empowered teachers" working towards constantly developing the program and supervising students during their physical activity like dance, drama, or outside games.

"The teaching and learning aspect regarding STEM are still developing. In terms of music, we are delivering music education to the children every day, Principal English said.

"The idea is to start every school day with music and with the whole school singing and having physical activity as a significant

part of the school day as well."

Principal English also says that school is "very normal like other schools in the hearts of it."

"Whilst we want to be STEM-focused, I want the children to have less screen time and contribute to their personal development in other ways," he said.

"The technical side of the curriculum keeps them in front of screens so music and physical movement will divert them towards healthier options."

"[Music] is most likely going to be a by-product in our school, but given the frequency of our music delivery, we need to be cautious that we don't burn the kids out musically." ■

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Library learning zone refurbishment boom



Image courtesy of Autex Industries

By Rosie Clarke, Editor

Schools are increasingly looking to create a range of learning zones with their library refurbishment, according to the experts we caught up with this issue.

School libraries are tasked with providing a range of learning spaces for both large and small groups, facilitating different learning styles while aiming to inspire and stimulate students. Learning zones are a core strategy for designers: configuring a layout to provide teachers and learners with a variety of spaces to meet different needs. Learning zone solutions encompass furniture,

acoustic materials, shelving, soft seating, technology, and more. The goal is to create areas that quiet enough to concentrate and read, near spaces that are roomy and sound-enough to collaborate and play.

Library innovations in schools around Australia

To look at some of these strategies in more depth, we spoke with a selection of expert suppliers to the school library sector to find out what's trending in 2021, and which solutions might help schools create these learning zones.

Sebel Furniture's Stephanie Cox told us she has noticed schools increasingly combining shelving into their soft furnishings.

Are you thinking of transforming your school library space?

Libraries have to be versatile and flexible. Space planning plays an important role in creating an engaging space for students to learn, discover and reflect. Find out how.

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St Margaret Mary's School | SA

"Settings that combine seating and tables together with shelving are very popular," she revealed. "This not only looks great but is extremely practical. Librarians are looking for flexibility; wanting all the soft furniture, including the shelving with casters, which allows the design of the library to change and the room to transform when functions and events like Book Week take place."

In addition, "different seating for the students a mixture of stools, chairs, and lounge-style seating. Booths are ideal for collaboration, and writeable benchtops and tables in collaboration areas are also beneficial and popular".

One design technique schools have been exploring is colour-coordinated zones, separating collaborative, computer, and classroom study areas with different fabrics. At one school, Stephanie recalls, a Junior area was separated using yellows and oranges to combine floor space for Infants using a tiered cave option with smaller and standard-sized curved ottomans, which have shelving around



Image courtesy of Resource Furniture

the back for easy student book-grabbing access.

Her top tip to avoid ineffective design is "to consider how many students will use the area and for how long". She added: "CAD drawings of the space are useful to show the furniture in the area and not to clutter. I also suggest schools cater for the maximum number of students using the library at one time. Does the space need to be able to change when events or meetings take place? Are flip tables needed and do you need flexibility to move tables into different group sizes?

"Finally, on higher benches or tables, if you are coupling a bench with a stool, it is important to consider how long a student will be sitting there. It is often better to consider a stool with a backrest than one without if a student will be there for an extended period."

For Creative Manager at Resource Furniture, Michael Merlino, there's been a trend towards muted colour tones with fabric selections on upholstered furniture and carpet features in school libraries. He noted: "A combination of

neutral warm whites mixed with lighter timber tones on the library shelving units.

Also, adding darker charcoal tones to the backs of library units has been very popular as the contrast allows the colours of the books to 'pop' on the shelves.

"Reading booths are also often requested in library spaces as they are a perfect little pocket of breakout furniture that offers students a quiet place to disconnect from their surroundings and focus on themselves." ►

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◀ What sets apart a truly well-designed library shelving system, however, is a versatile and multifunctional shelf. According to Michael, this should not just transform from a flat shelf to a display shelf, “but a system that caters for the whole book collection”, informing us that face out collections tend to have much higher loan rates. “So the ability for a shelving system that allows library staff to easily transform a shelf from spine out to face out is a key consideration when choosing library shelving.

“When designing library spaces, I like to include a mix of different seating options. Study desks should include chairs with upholstered seats to ensure students remain focused. Upholstered breakout seating should be modular and easy to configure to suit the task at hand. And bench seating or stools are well utilised as students love the added height and the ability to choose their ideal learning experience.

Finally, Michael told us: “Castors are a must on shelving units and with clever design, bays can be used to zone areas to aid with acoustics.

“With regards to visibility, if we can utilise wall space for shelving units where possible, we can often increase the heights of the single-sided units on the wall and reduce the height of the double-sided units on the floor. This provides a nice open feel and clear lines of sight across the library space.”

Autex Australia’s Technical and Development Manager, Rob Jones took us through some of the pros and cons



Image courtesy of Resource Furniture

for different seating, flooring, and shelving options from an acoustics perspective.

“Flooring from an acoustics perspective is better as carpet or carpet tiles. These lower the physical generation of noise where people are moving around or shifting chairs and furniture. Hard resilient flooring will result in noisier space. Additionally, upholstered seating provides bonus absorption rather than non-upholstered seating.”

Rob advised that schools should undertake acoustic assessments of their space to ensure the layout and proposed furnishings will result in acceptable acoustic conditions. “Acoustic engineers are best placed to offer this advice,” he clarified.

“A good place to add absorptive products is anywhere shelving

units are single-sided, have a solid back, and are being left exposed rather than up against a wall. These can be especially helpful when arrayed correctly in larger open spaces. They help lower noise levels but will assist in controlling cross reflections between parallel surfaces, and these can be used to create nooks where individuals or small groups can gather as well.”

Top tips for designing a library with learning zones?

For maximum acoustic benefit, Rob’s top tip for schools is simply to undertake a thorough acoustic assessment: “The absence of physical barriers is needed to maximise distance between groups. This will reduce noise interruption by increasing absorptive surfaces

around and above these areas.

“Ideally, using upholstered furniture and absorptive screens close to these areas will greatly reduce noise spill from one zone to the other, helps control reverberation time (RT) levels.”

Offering some more technical tips, Rob suggested that in places like entrance halls, “where high activity areas are located or regular disturbance is expected, full height glazed panels can be placed between these zones or other areas to keep visual connectivity and lower noise flow”.

“These panels are reflective,” he explained, “so try not to have them arrayed to become parallel surfaces. If this cannot be resolved then, at a minimum, one surface will require absorption to be added.” ■



Image courtesy of Autex Industries



Image courtesy of SEBEL Furniture

Excessive noise *and* reverberation interfere with *speech* intelligibility, resulting in *reduced* understanding and therefore *reduced* learning.

That means *that*, in speech intelligibility tests, listeners with normal *hearing* can understand only 75 percent of the *words* read from a list.

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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>



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Rich learning spaces at new Gold Coast school

All Images courtesy of SEBEL Furniture

Foxwell State Secondary School has worked with SEBEL to create an innovative library space.

The state-of-the-art educational facility is a coeducational public secondary school that provides a world of opportunities for students.

When the Gold Coast's newest high school opened in 2020, its proud Principal Kym Amor and the school team committed to provide students with a "rich learning environment" that is both "innovative and future-focused".

This is a school that prides itself on "academic, sporting, cultural

and community excellence" and believes that the pursuit of knowledge and the development of 21st Century skills will equip and enable students to make a powerful difference in the world.

With this ethos, the school team sought to create an ideal learning environment throughout the whole property and worked with

architects to turn their vision of a warm and supportive learning environment into reality.

As an experienced, diverse industry furniture manufacturer, SEBEL also worked alongside the staff team to supply furnishings across the whole new educational facility including the library space.

Foxwell State Secondary called for innovation and a "future-forward library space: SEBEL were open to ideas for design and layout. Library furniture was carefully chosen to achieve the desired aesthetic, alongside form, functionality and flexibility and a library space was created that is comfortable, inviting and inspires discovery.

The school wanted to create a "comfortable space where students can study and research as well as participate in group activities".

SEBEL helped achieve these goals by using flexible and modular furniture as a tool to create functional, great looking and fun learning hubs. The new school presents a library space that stirs creativity in all learners and encourages collaboration. ▲



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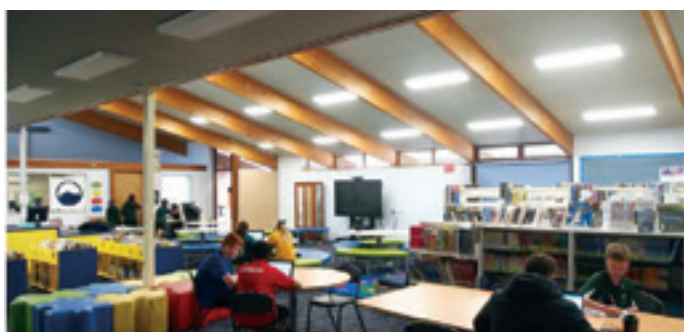
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Resource Furniture helps create innovative library space for Loreto College

A South Australian all-girls day and boarding school, Loreto College Marryatville, has redeveloped its junior and senior school libraries with an imaginative and thoughtful new renovation.

The college, established in 1905, is set on beautiful heritage grounds and the new library spaces were re-designed to take full advantage of the stunning environment.

Loreto College Business Manager Phil Kightley told *School News* that the decision to renovate the school libraries was part of a plan to update the whole property and the core design inspires a creative aesthetic for future renovations.

The priority for both refurbishments was to bring the traditional library spaces into

the digital age. Architects were engaged to open-up, modernise and create a fun environment with a “nod to the past but preparedness for the future”.

Phil expanded on the project saying, both libraries were very traditional, but we wanted more flexibility, we wanted research spaces and creative zones to inspire a variety of learners.

The junior school library space was opened to increase connectivity with classrooms and the outdoor nature play area. The size of the bookshelves and number of books on display were reduced but the visibility enhanced of the fiction and non-fiction on smaller, lower shelves.

The design successfully de-clutters the space and allows more natural light in, making way for green spaces and indoor nature.

Phil added: “A surprising consequence of reducing the

number of books on display is an increase in books on loan!”

With a theme of “discovery and imagination”, the junior school library now features a showstopping focal point - the central wooden tree installation created by The Adelaide Festival Centre Workshop.

Phil revealed: “The central focus of the library is the learning tree; its trunk, tunnel, branches, foliage, fairy and spotlights enrich the whole space and inspire storytelling and discovery. It really grabs the attention of the students who love to climb, play and crawl, and then settle down under a spotlight to read in the quiet nooks.”

The library also has a beautiful fireside area with circular seating, an array of zones for quiet reading, discovery and play time alongside a research area and digital spaces. The librarians are thrilled with the

new space and are located near the learning tree.

Meanwhile, the senior school library, renamed the Senior School Information Resource Centre, is now celebrated as being the “core of the senior campus”. It is lighter, brighter, less cluttered, and has space dedicated to research, collaboration, and project-based learning, alongside a tinker space and lecture theatre for up to 100 people. The library’s technology is built for the future and ‘tech booths’ allow students to study quietly on their laptops.

What impresses *School News* most is how much Loreto College has invested in the design and aesthetic of its library renovation. The use of colour, shape, installations, and furniture creates a unique learning space, and we are excited to see the core of these designs taken forward across the whole campus. ▲



Have you considered RFID for your School Library?

What is RFID?

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) utilises the application of electronic tags to an object to enable identification from a distance without a direct line-of sight.

This is achieved using radio waves over distances ranging from millimetres (mm) to hundreds of metres (m).

RFID comprises a set of technologies that enables storing and remotely retrieving (reading) data from the tag.

An RFID system has two main components:

- The Radio Frequency (RF) Reader (base-station or interrogator)
- The Radio Frequency (RF) Tag (transponder)

When RFID tags are attached to physical objects (books, magazines, DVD's, CD's etc) they enable these objects to identify themselves to RF Readers (Staff Workstations, Self Service Units, Security gates etc) via radio frequency communication.

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- 2 x Staff Workstation with Conversion Software
- 1 x Dual Aisle (3 antenna) RFID Security System
- 1 x Staff Training

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Implementing a new school management system

By Rosie Clarke, *Editor*

Every school has suffered the consequences of poor management at some point...

Administration is one of the most difficult, and most important, aspects of daily operations.

Too often, schools approach their system management by trial-and-error rather than carefully considering how to upgrade for maximum efficiency.

The first step is auditing your existing system to work out what is not working, and why. What kind of data are you currently able, or unable, to collect and how is this impacting your procedures? What is the existing mechanism of communication between staff, parents,

teachers, school leaders, and administrators? How might it be simplified? If your existing system has additional features not currently being used, it is worth assessing why this might be. Do users require more training and support or is the functionality of the system inefficient? Approaching your current system critically, and with fresh eyes, will enable you to make more empowered decisions on behalf of your school community.

Changing your school's management system is a significant investment in time, resources, and money, so the right decision is critical. This issue, we spoke to key school management system representatives to find out what the benefits are, and how schools should approach their purchasing decisions.

GradeXpert's Anthony Sacker explained to us that Australian

schools are increasingly urged to use student assessment data to track student growth and achievement, which means they face pressure to figure out how to use this data.

"There's not much point in testing students and recording outcomes if that data is not then used to inform the next steps of teaching. Schools armed with this data can make more informed judgements about strengths and weaknesses for both individual students and whole cohorts, resulting in more successful long-term student outcomes.

"Being able to identify students falling behind or moving well ahead of expected achievement levels in any learning area allows schools to differentiate themselves from other schools not applying these analytic methods to their student data. Combining assessment data into a single view for teachers

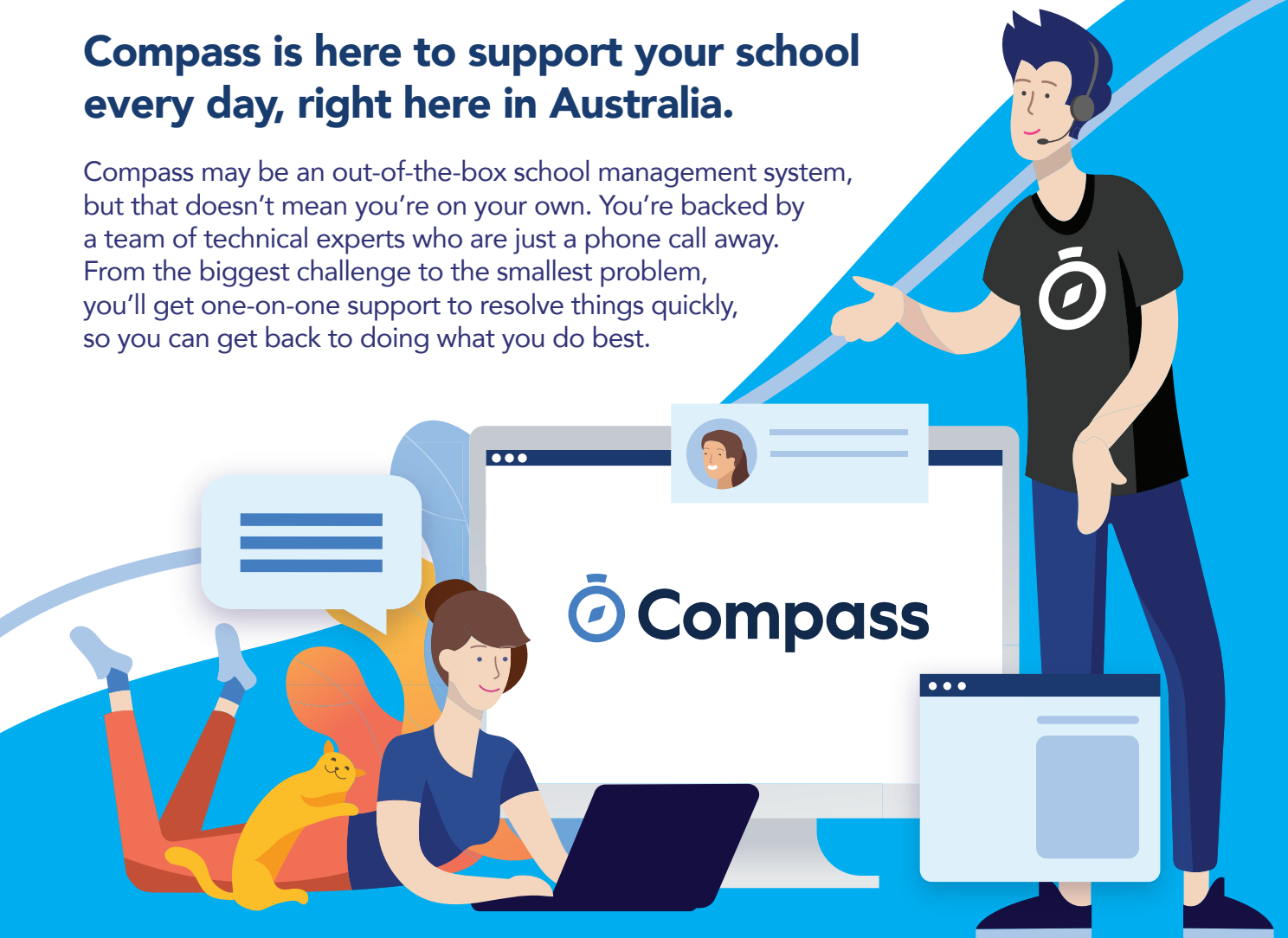
(for example, PAT Reading and PAT Maths, PM Benchmarking, TORCH, NAPLAN, Australian Curriculum, and hundreds of others), triangulating assessment data, colour-coding assessment data, calculating growth and effect size of cohorts and displaying this data graphically, are all incredibly useful tools to apply to your data. All this gives teachers and school leadership a clear and concise picture of student learning outcomes across all subjects and learning areas."

Critical for schools to understand, is that "when your student data is separate from your school management system, e.g., when using Excel or paper-based assessment data recording, it becomes very difficult to get a clear picture of what affects student learning. It also becomes near impossible to track student growth over a number of terms or years".

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On the other hand: "When your student data collection and analysis is part of your school management system and can be consolidated into a single view, then other information related to a student, such as attendance history, incident management and wellbeing, individual learning plans and more, can be used to more effectively determine issues that may affect their learning outcomes. You can, for example, easily see that a student's lower than expected academic performance may be caused by their poor attendance record, or by many negative behavioural incidents. When you can see all student information in a single view, teachers are better placed to make informed decisions on their students learning.

"Improved student outcomes can also be achieved when this information is clearly communicated, in a timely manner, to parents and students. It gives parents a complete picture of their child's progress and achievement and allows them to be part of any required adjustments before any learning issues become more difficult to address."

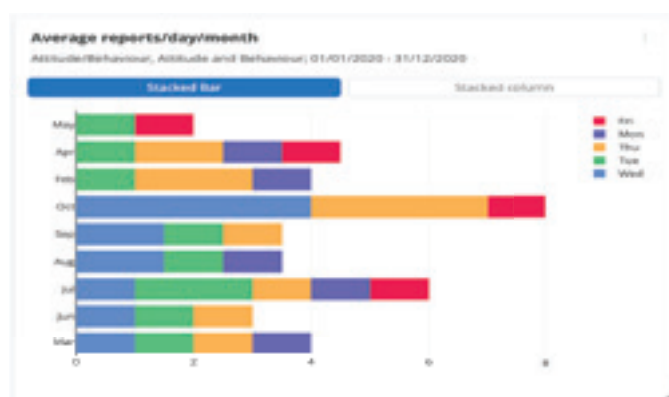
Jerome Muldoon, Head of School Engagement at Compass, described for us one of the most important aspects of any school system: "The quality of the data that is input".



Jerome Muldoon

He said: "It can impact the effectiveness of any system if, for example, the contact details of parents are out-of-date or incorrect. Ensure that your new school management system allows parents to update their contact details directly, removing error and administrative burden!

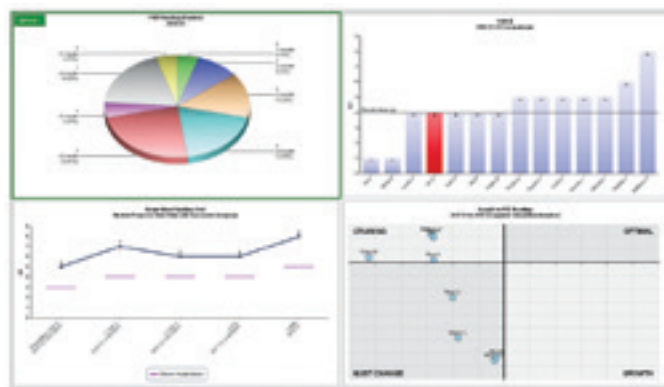
"Aim for a holistic approach - jumping between many different systems can be time-



Compass' data visualisation & reporting module Pulse



Screen Capture images courtesy of GradeXpert



consuming and confusing. With multiple products for multiple processes in your school, every time a parent or teacher's contact details or profile details change, you need to update multiple systems and it can be a nightmare to keep it up-to-date. For most schools, an all-in-one solution makes the most sense. Roll-out plans can usually be very flexible. If schools require a quick implementation the vendor can work alongside the school to fast-track integration, training and support. Be sure to discuss your timings when you're talking to vendors to ensure they can meet your needs.

"The inclusions you get in school management systems have grown exponentially over the past 10 years. From initial online enrolment applications at the school, to the recording of academic achievements,

attendance wellbeing, behaviour - the list goes on! While it is important to be able to store this information - the biggest benefit for staff is how it can be analysed and used to drive beneficial change within the school. For example, do you have a problem period for attendance or behaviour management? Look at the current timetable structure to investigate if changes could be made to improve this."

Not to mention, Jerome added: "A system should enable information to be shared between schools, parents, and students at the click of a button. More than 80 percent of adults own a smartphone in Australia and the average Facebook user is over-50 years' old. People are a lot more tech-savvy, especially parent communities!

"Not only does the introduction

of a school app reduce SMS and/or mail costs, but you can also track engagement rates with the school community via push notifications. Many schools severely underestimate the staff time and printing costs involved in their current approach to newsletters, parent updates and other notices. A high-quality school management system will allow high-quality, engaging communication to your whole school community and to specific class groups, year levels and other specialist groups such as sports teams.

Kate Poffley, Head of Product for PCSchool, spoke with us about how school management systems can be tailored to specific needs. She advised that it is important to select a flexible platform that can align with the vision and education philosophy of the school. For example, Montessori or Steiner; a religious philosophy like Yiddish, Islamic, Catholic; or a specialty area like gifted, learning support, or international schooling.

"Creating connected school communities is essential, but the need to ensure best practice methods are maintained is equally important. Schools come in all shapes and sizes, from 10 children in remote Indigenous communities to small schools of 50-100, to larger schools of 1000+. Internal structures at these schools differ greatly from having the principal also being the lead teacher and admin person to large schools with 200+ staff. The platform selected should be agile enough to cater to these different roles and requirements with the highest level of security in mind. It must be easy to use for one person doing everything, to a very detailed level where every team member has a specific role and needs relevant data access."

On top of this, Kate clarified: "Schools should reassess their chosen platform regularly to ensure that it is meeting their needs. It is essential to take the complexity out of school management and look for a comprehensive platform that partners with your existing systems and can manage the complete student life cycle. I have seen several schools that run two or three (some even four) SMS solutions concurrently. This may be due to several reasons; the finance staff liking how the

Creating connected school communities is essential, but the need to ensure best practice methods are maintained is equally important.



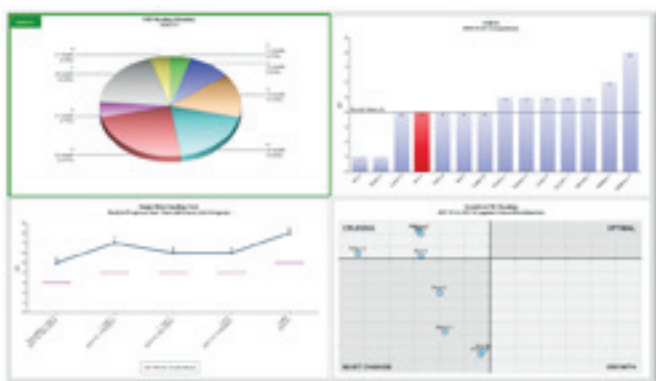
financials are run/managed in one solution, the primary school likes the curriculum and add-ons for their area, while secondary prefer another SMS's features in another system. This creates a very fractured system requiring lots of manual double entry to keep data up to date in all systems. For example, a caregiver changes a phone number, which then needs to be modified in all systems to ensure the contact is correct should it be required.

In Kate's experience, "Not knowing what you don't know can contribute to poorly managed systems. Most providers update their platforms regularly, providing excellent opportunities for schools to improve their understanding and application through online knowledgebases,

support desk services, webinars, workshops, and conferences. But if the information is not getting to the correct person, or schools are not making it a priority to involve key staff in the learning opportunities, this slowly leads to a belief that the system cannot meet their needs. Crucial data becomes disconnected via non-integrated software options or storing data in spreadsheets or word documents, leading to a fractured and untrustworthy system."

"A quality school management platform should be at the heart of any schools' operations – but it must be supported by the right systems, infrastructure, best practices and include quality on-going service and training to be most effective." ●

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Novated leasing is one of the most cost-effective and convenient ways to own and run a car. Not only will you save thousands of dollars on the cost of buying and running your car you will also unlock handsome tax-free benefits. Here are the top five benefits you can enjoy with a novated lease.

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a brand-new car. Your leasing provider will be a great help to you here, organising a quote on a new car, arranging your test drives, and taking care of the paperwork. If you are a customer of Smartleasing, we'll even sell your old car on your behalf!

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We have the evidence for what works in schools, but that doesn't mean everyone uses it

By June 2020, the COVID-19 crisis had forced schools to close in 188 countries, disrupting the learning of more than 1.7 billion children. The OECD estimated the impact of these school closures would be at least two months of lost teaching for half of primary and secondary school students.

In Australia, modelling by the Grattan Institute estimated disadvantaged students — including those from low socioeconomic families, Indigenous backgrounds and remote communities — had lost around two months learning during the remote learning period in Victoria.

Some states have invested in tutoring schemes to help students catch up. This includes the Victorian government's A\$250 million Tutor Learning Initiative, South Australia's Learning+ program and New South Wales' plan to employ up to 5,500 staff to support students who may have fallen behind.

Evidence suggests some groups of students, such as students in the most disadvantaged schools, have felt the effects of lockdowns more than others. Evidence also suggests small-group tuition can make a difference. But this is only the case if the tutoring itself is evidence-based.

Between March and September 2020, we surveyed 492 teachers and school leaders from 414 schools across New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland about their use of evidence — particularly research-based evidence. Our sample included primary, secondary, combined (K-12) and special schools. They included a spread of government, Catholic and independent schools.

While the study was not specifically prompted by the pandemic, our emphasis on the use of research evidence became particularly relevant as schools — like the rest of the



world — grappled with the virus.

While most educators said they regularly consulted evidence, only 43% did so for university-based research. Participants cited a lack of time and a lack of access to the evidence they needed.

Less than half regularly consult university research

School leaders and teachers involved in tutoring initiatives — and teaching more broadly — have to make nuanced decisions about how best to address learning.

They must draw on various sources of evidence to understand how different factors have influenced their students' learning and then decide on the most effective way forward.

A key question, therefore, is how confident and able are our leaders and teachers to use evidence to inform their responses to the effects of COVID-19?

Our survey aimed to find out:

- what types of research and evidence teachers and school leaders value
- how and why they source different kinds of evidence
- whether and how they use research in their practice
- what they believe "using research well" in practice means.

Over two-thirds of survey participants (70%) said they had recently used evidence in their

practice. Most consulted with familiar and readily available evidence types such as "student data" (77%) and "policy and curriculum documents" (72%).

Remote learning set many students back, especially those from disadvantaged groups. Shutterstock

But respondents used research-based sources much less frequently. Only 43% said they regularly consulted "research disseminated from universities" and 36% engaged with "university-based advice or guidance".

Nearly half (43%) of respondents indicated "teacher observations and experience should be prioritised over research". These educators were less likely to source research-related evidence types.

We also asked educators to reflect on the evidence types they have used in relation to "a specific initiative related to improving student outcomes that [they or their] colleagues have started to use in [their] schools or classrooms in the past 12 months".

Some answers related to COVID-specific initiatives such as the transition to online learning and the best learning platforms to use. Others spoke about interventions to address poor student behaviour or phonic programs to improve literacy.

Schools need to help

Educators reported three particular challenges in

relation to using research: access, organisational culture and confidence.

First, many said they didn't have sufficient access to research (68%), or adequate time to access and review it (76%). More than three-quarters (76%) also indicated they can't keep up with new and emerging research, such as studies of the educational impacts of the pandemic.

Second, organisational cultures are important supports for enabling the use of research. Respondents reported they use research-related sources more often when their schools had processes designed to support their research use.

Finally, many respondents reported lacking confidence in their own skills and capacities to use research.

Addressing the first two challenges is an important first step to building educators' skills and capacities to use research.

Laureate education professor Jenny Gore recently wrote:

The success of the tutoring programs being used by schools to help students recover post-COVID-19 will depend heavily on the quality of the tutoring they provide.

Our findings suggest evidence use can play a key role in improving the quality of teaching, both in COVID-19 tutoring programs and classrooms generally. But this can only happen when educators feel they have the appropriate access, support and confidence to make evidence-informed judgments and practices. ▲

Authors: Lucas Walsh, Professor, Education Policy and Practice, Monash University; Blake Cutler, Research Assistant in Education, Monash University; Connie Cirkony, Research Fellow, Faculty of Education, Monash University; Joanne Gleeson, Research Fellow in Education, Monash University; Mandy Gayle Salisbury, Research Assistant (The Q Project), Faculty of Education, Monash University, and Mark Rickinson, Associate Professor of Education, Monash University. This article is republished from The Conversation under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article online at theconversation.com.

Decision making made easier

One of the things that makes leading in schools difficult is a sense that you're required to be all things to all people.

Now, the people part of that oft-used cry is not something we can do much about. Schools are human institutions by design and connecting with, supporting and empowering the people within it is probably something that connects deeply to very reason for choosing to lead.

But I'd like to spend this article examining the "all things" component and see if we can't find some room to make our leadership lives a little easier, a little more focused and a little more productive.

In essence, I'd like to suggest that you stop doing important things. The word 'important' has been thoroughly ruined by those who discuss education. Originally a word intended to allow us to prioritise, it's now become a word used to describe absolutely every aspect of life that society wishes schools to take responsibility for.

Counterproductively, our habit has been to accept that responsibility.

As a result, we label all of literacy, numeracy, science, the arts, social skills, healthy eating, problem solving, physical activity, digital literacy, financial management skills, time management, history, manners, reporting, assessing, planning, reflecting ... you get the picture as the list builds ... as being of importance.

Not only is this leaving us feeling exhausted, but it's hard to even know where to begin when everything is apparently so important. Even on your staff or leadership team, there's unlikely to be any sort of agreement about what's the most important aspect to pour our time and effort into. Arguments about importance actually then tend to lead to compromises, a



Adam Voigt,
Founder, Real Schools

watering down of commitment and major projects that absorb vast tracts of energy and make just the tiniest difference.

This low return on investment for your most precious commodities – your time and effort – needs to end. No longer should we focus on importance. Instead, let's adopt what controversial Danish academic Bjorn Lomborg call's 'the economist's mindset'.

When we adopt this mindset we stop arguing about importance and start to ask questions about what would be the action we could take that would have the highest ROI in terms of impact with the lowest possible investment of resource. In a school, that resource is your investment of time and energy.

Let me give you some examples:

- Instead of combing the corners of the globe for a new numeracy program, paying a fortune for it and spending years implementing it, just conduct a new Maths activity with your staff in every second staff meeting ... and see what happens.
- Instead of looking to strategise the elevation of Student Voice in your school strategic plans through a raft of changes that require a full retraining of the pedagogical model used by your staff, just steal the Real Schools Student

THE CHEAT SHEET

Don't have time to absorb the whole article today? Here's the big points ...

1. Stop adding to your list of what's important.
2. Nothing is important if everything is.
3. Adopt the "economist's mindset" and chase a high ROI.
4. If you're investing your time and effort, there needs to be a bigger reward.

5. Improve your school through small actions that have big potential – not the other way around.

The Big One

PP3 – Leading improvement, innovation and change.

But also ...

LR1 – Vision and values.

PP2 – Developing self and others.

PP4 – Leading the management of the school.

Leadership Program, run it ... and see what happens.

- Instead of re-writing the entire canteen menu to reflect your commitment to healthy nutrition just delete the highest-selling unhealthy food from it ... and see what happens.
- Instead of writing a yard duty policy that insists teachers arrive on time to their designated duty in the correct area (a policy that nobody ever reads anyway), pause your staff meeting just once and ask teachers to pop their yard duty schedule into their phones with a 10-minute reminder alarm set ... and see what happens.
- Instead of writing a 'Principal's Report' for your next Newsletter (that is also almost never read by the target audience), record yourself speaking for two minutes about something that matters in your school,

standing in your yard at lunchtime and post it on your school social media channels ... and see what happens.

- Instead of bemoaning the lack of parental attendance at assemblies, just pop the assembly on Facebook Live ... and count the views.

Eliminating the futile quest for importance and instead adopting the economist's mindset provides a new lens through which you can view improvement in your school. Not only are the possibilities for both impact and efficiency exaggerated through this new mindset, but it just feels better when the pay-off for your efforts is larger too.

For too long, we've burned out our School Leaders by asking them to do more. Even worse, we've asked them to divide their time and energy across an exponentially expanding list of supposedly important work aspects. That's not on. It's time they got a better return for their toil. Like, much better. ■

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.



Mathematics practice makes progress

By Rosie Clarke, Editor

Mathematics is a core component of any school curriculum, and choosing the right programme is an essential but complex process.

Schools must find a programme that will push students to reach their full potential while lessening maths anxiety by building confidence in cautious learners and extending challenge to more confident learners.

Michelle Kelly from Modern Teaching Aids, a leading Australian supplier of educational resources, spoke with us about the company's partnership with US-based, not-for-profit organisation Mind Research, bringing their patented spatial-temporal approach to Australia for the first time. Mind Research's innovative approach utilises the brain's ability to manipulate objects in space and time to solve problems via their research-based digital maths platform, ST Maths.

With ST Maths, explains Michelle, the foundational concepts are taught visually, then the ideas are connected to the symbols, language and robust maths conversation. "This approach works so well because, with visual learning, students are better equipped to tackle unfamiliar maths problems, recognise patterns and build conceptual

Teacher reports are helpful to illustrate the maths outcomes each student has covered, as well as the amount of time spent using the platform and puzzle completion.



understanding. When you remove language barriers, the problem becomes accessible to all students, regardless of skill level or language background.

"A web-based program that provides scaffolded support to students and non-linear learning journeys allows students to move at their own pace, repeat problem types they struggle with and apply mathematical thinking strategies to a diverse range of problems, which is beneficial to all students.

"Teacher reports are helpful to illustrate the maths outcomes each student has covered, as well as the amount of time spent using the platform and puzzle completion. While some struggle is beneficial, teachers can also check on students' pre- and post-quiz scores and receive alerts when students are struggling.

"It's easy for teachers to track the individual progress of students at a granular level. Each student can be assigned to individual learning journeys based on their

strengths and weaknesses.

Although students are initially set at a grade level based on their class, there is no limit to where they can be placed on the maths skills continuum. This means that a student who is confident with Number and lagging in Algebra can be set lower-level Algebra problems to support their development while moving ahead a grade level in Number."

Maths anxiety is very real, according to researchers from Queen's University Belfast and Loughborough University. "The feeling of tension and fear that many people experience when called on to work out a sum ... can lead to behavioural problems in class, as well as physical symptoms such as butterflies in the stomach and a racing heart," they write in *The Conversation*.

Where maths anxiety can impact student performance, the research recommends encouraging learners and their families to engage in gamified

maths experiences and to develop positive attitudes towards mathematics especially in the first few years of school.

A mix of gamification and activities benefits students, according to Michelle. "There are a great many online maths learning programs that gamify student activity using points, rewards, flashy arcade game style animations and/or rely on speed. The trouble is that these types of gamification create a system that can actually be demotivating for some students or produce shallow learning where students have only learned to apply a specific function in a specific context. However, in the case of ST Maths, gamifying with engaging characters and problems can encourage students to engage and persist while developing the deeper conceptual understanding or mathematical thinking skills that are needed for long-term success in mathematics."

Maths Day events work wonders for schools

Expert on all things maths incursion, we spoke with World of Maths' Tim Tritton, who regularly works with schools to stage 'Maths Day' events and hands on learning.

He described the approach as a unique way to explore general problem solving with teachers and learners. "We take the students away from devices and 'textbooks'

for a guided discovery lesson with our large Maths activities. The activities provided apply to real life tasks allowing students to relate to the activity and feel engaged.

"We have hidden all kinds of complex maths problems in our activities, which means students instead focus on the full sensory experience to come up with solutions – listening, watching, reading, speaking, and manipulating ideas with their hands."

The pedagogical opportunities are exciting for teachers, Tim has found: "We see many teachers wanting practical, 'back to basics' Maths where students can explore, communicate and relate to the learning. Hands-on sessions come with worksheets for students to fill out so teachers can check student progress. There is also the opportunity for students at the end of each session to explain their answers for the Maths activities provided.

"Students work in groups so our teachers can track group progress during the session, witnessing the engagement, willing participation and enjoyment of the students.

Teachers are also supplied with an eight-page answer booklet with follow on work and ways the activities may apply to other real-life situations.

Which aspects of maths programmes best develop problem solving skills and confidence while keeping students with varied abilities and needs engaged?

"Mathematical anxiety is something that I do hear about often from teachers, and I think this is something that approachable and enjoyable activities can assist with on a basic level."

Tim suggested the best and simplest way to accomplish this is to offer activities with instructions that students can comprehend, that they find relatable, and that they find fun. "If students feel they are having a fun experience, they may be more willing! Confidence is key... We use different sets of 17 large colourful activities in sessions with students of varied abilities to encourage students to approach each at their leisure and simply have the confidence to give it a go." ●



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How to meet your science room needs

By Rosie Clarke, *Editor*

Science is a hands-on subject for teachers and students alike.

Class time can involve high-level or low-risk experiments, collaborative group work, more traditional lecture-style learning, and everything in between. Students taking part may be working with flames, mixing chemicals, building and testing electronics, or dissecting things. As such, it is important for schools to have adequate equipment, a fresh and intuitively designed room, and enough bench space to ensure the safety of both staff and students.

We approached key school science room suppliers this issue to find out what you need to consider when stocking your facility. According to the experts, lab equipment required by a science room can vary from microscopes and Bunsen burners to spectrometers and voltage sensors, while general-use lab equipment, consumables, and chemicals must also fit the bill with adequate storage. Science benchtops, cabinets and fume cupboards come in both stationary and mobile applications, so schools do not just need to consider how much storage they require, but how accessible they need it to be and whether they must consider transporting equipment or other items such as goggles, lab coats and safety gloves between rooms.

To find out more, this issue School News interviewed industry expert Jon Rogow, the Co-Director at school science room supplier Amicus.

Q: Which new design trends are schools picking up on for their science room installations?

A: Regardless of the budget, the one standout for all labs is the focus on flexibility. As a school grows and land is at a premium, ways of increasing the utilisation of the current spaces becomes



a necessity. To be able to have a laboratory with a science focus while also allowing it to have a multipurpose function is the overarching imperative.

Schools want flexible furniture that can be easily reconfigured. This can be a daily, weekly, or monthly requirement. There is a trend to move away from a teacher focus; instead providing a collaborative environment for students to engage in, and share, knowledge and ideas. The teacher moves among the students, sharing in their experiences.

Q: What are the equipment basics that all schools should have, and what are the more exclusive items that offer additional educational opportunities for schools?

A: The fume cupboards are an essential part to any laboratory as well as the usual pipettes, beakers, and appropriate PPE.

The biggest and ever-changing component within the laboratory environment is the technology. Students are provided workbenches that can accommodate laptops and be neatly stowed away when not in use. Wifi is imperative.

In larger environments, where a teacher's demonstration may not be visible by all students, this can be viewed on overhead TV screens, where the teachers experiment is videoed and even recorded by a camera and projected to the other TV screens scattered across the labs. Online learning, where students can follow online videos of syllabus material is also becoming more widely used.

Every school has their own unique requirements for storage and part of any design process is to understand their workflow and needs. Some schools will limit the amount of storage within the science lab either for security reasons or aesthetics, while others prefer to provide storage below bench to each lab station. Each has its merits and will depend on the requirements of the school.

Q: What are some of the worst science room elements you have come across?

A: I wouldn't view it as worst... Sometimes it boils down to budget constraints and it is then about finding the best solution that suits that budget. The challenge in converting an old science lab to a more modern

style, where the budget only allows for the reuse of existing services in its current location, is that the existing services will often be in the middle of the room.

This prevents those benches from being mobile and therefore limits the ability to provide a multipurpose environment. With some clever design work, this challenge can be significantly reduced.

Q: When it comes to chemical storage and safety items like goggles and lab coats, what should schools be aware of?

A: Never underestimate the amount of storage required for the day-to-day PPE. Items need to be readily and easily accessible. Providing 2.4m high storage may utilise all required space but it becomes out of reach to students.

Standing on ladders or chairs becomes an OHS issue and potential risk to the teacher and students. Planning ahead during the design stage to understand how each bench, storage area, and station may be used, is key to a successful design. ■

Stellar science room revamp for St Catherine's School



All Images courtesy of Amicus

The St Catherine's School is a private all-girls school located in Sydney's Eastern suburbs.

Due to the outdated nature of their science labs, a need emerged to refresh and energise the existing space. Amicus were engaged to modernise the labs and create a flexible environment for both staff and students to interact with educational material, encouraging classroom participation.

A total of five labs were refitted and contained all standardised services focusing power, data, gas and water. There was an emphasis on safety with extra precautions including safety eye washes inside and outside each lab and emergency shower facilities.

A solution that works for staff and students

Amicus worked closely with St Catherine's to understand the brief and took into consideration stakeholder requirements. The prime objective was to achieve a clean fresh finish, provide better facilities and ensure students

were excited and inspired to work within the new classroom environment. There was an increased need for flexibility to move furniture and create more open spaces to foster collaboration. Equipment was meticulously positioned to ensure the best functionality of the space. The project was designed by our in-house team providing a turnkey solution and central point of contact. The full project was managed from design to manufacturing including coordination of all trades involved including demolition, partitions, flooring, electrical, AV, hydraulics and painting.

Complying with strict safety standards, laboratories were installed with gas safety shut off valves. Chemical grade compact laminate Bench tops were used to ensure chemical resistance and stainless-steel grade 316 sinks - marine grade for additional chemical resistance and longevity. The teacher's demonstration bench was fitted with an emergency electronic gas shut off valve. A special under

bench area was crafted to allow for student laptops. Outdated projectors were removed and reinstalled fitted with new HDMI cover plates to maintain careful attention to detail.

Benefit

The product is a laboratory space which has received positive uptake from teachers and students alike. The bespoke safety features fitted to specific requirements, different coloured frames to differentiate the labs, improved demonstration bench, sufficient standing space and storage all contribute to overall value of the project.

Amicus walked the stakeholders through preliminary design, offered technical perspective, assisted with material selection to ensure better functional properties and provided a tour of previous project, Ravenswood School which had similar design requirements. Striking the right balance between functionality and cost, and delivered within timeline parameters, St Catherine's School are the proud recipients of an educational space set to benefit generations of students to follow.

Response from the school community

School News approached Barry Madden the Facilities Manager at St Catherine's School to talk about how the school responded to the renovation of the school's five science laboratories.

The original (pre-renovated)

laboratories needed attention. They were old and Barry described walking into them and feeling as though he had gone through a time machine because some dated back to the 1960s and 1970s. Now, after an incredible transformation he says the labs look like a seriously up-to-date science block and feel like a university.

The labs were completely refurbished with new flooring, furniture, walls, and even the lighting was replaced with cutting-edge LEDs. The rooms have become much safer and much more functional.

With new benches, storage, and seating, they are ergonomically designed, making them much more comfortable to work in.

Amicus was chosen to complete the project due to its solid record of experience in science lab renovation and its profound ability to complete the entire work within a fixed frame – during the summer break. The school team was able to look at a science lab that Amicus previously completed in another school and, impressed with what they saw, moved ahead with the design process.

About St Catherine's School's new science block, Barry added: "I am happy to say that we are very satisfied with our new science block; it is a big win for the school. Both students and teachers love it! The lighter, brighter and more modern environment has addressed all of the problems. ■"





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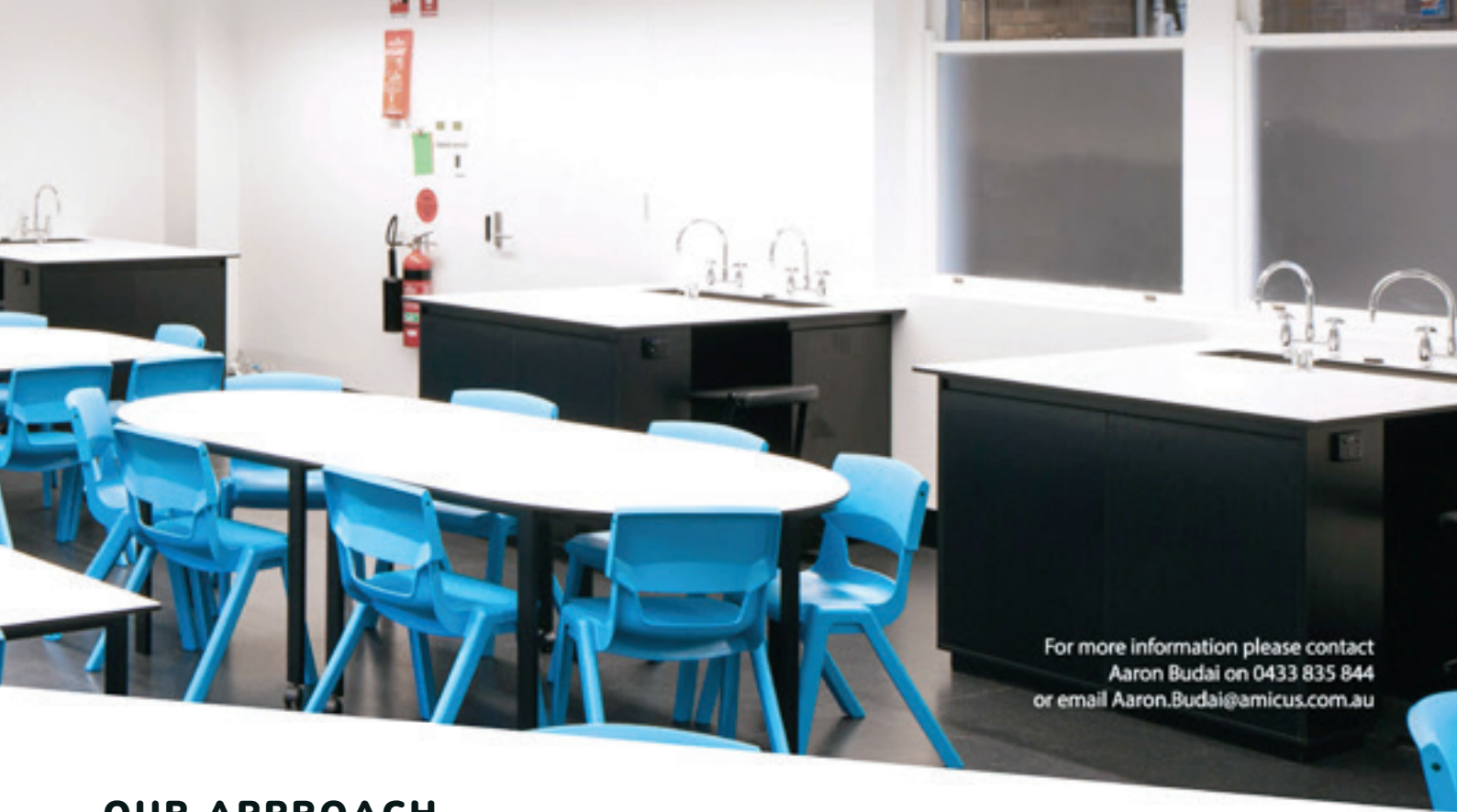
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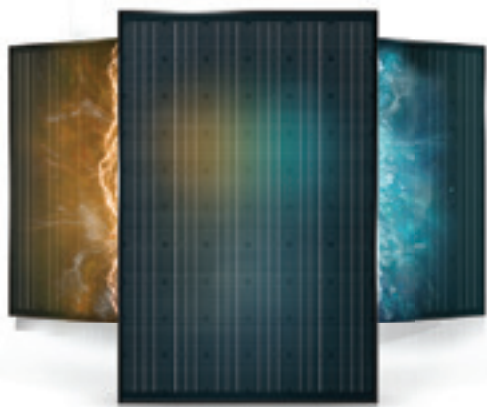
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Curl Curl North:

Leading learning innovation

Curl Curl North Public School recently celebrated the opening of its new campus and learning spaces.

Minister of Education Sarah Mitchell visited classrooms to witness how 21st century learning will be facilitated by the design of the learning spaces and the technology the school has strategically implemented.

Under the leadership of Principal Donna Blatchford, the school has undertaken a learning journey informed by latest research in Visible Learning, Learning Spaces Design and understanding how EdTech capabilities can impact on learning.

In 2019, each member of the school as part of its strategic journey undertook the SMART EdTech profile. Later that year, the principal represented the school a part of a panel of Global Leaders at the Inspire Greatness Conference sharing the results of the analysis of the school's results.

Research conducted by Harvard University and commissioned by SMART Technologies identified 22 EdTech capabilities which schools need to address for technology implementation to successfully impact student learning outcomes. These include:

- Leadership vision and stakeholder alignment
- Strategic planning
- Technology change management
- Evaluation of technology and implementation effectiveness
- Teacher participation in technology planning
- Student participation in technology planning
- Parent and wider community engagement
- Acceptable technology use policies
- Embedding technology in teaching and learning
- Use of digital content



Sue Beveridge, *Integrate AV*

and applications.

- Assessment of student progress
- Support for social and emotional learning
- Development of teacher and staff mindset
- Professional development planning
- Focus of professional learning
- Training offerings and options
- Evaluation of professional development effectiveness
- Opportunities for collaborative professional development
- Network infrastructure
- Design of learning spaces
- Technical support
- Compatibility of learning technologies

Using the results of their EdTech profile, the school focused on three action areas:

1. Embedding technology in teaching and learning

2. Support for social and emotional learning
3. Design of learning spaces

Having these areas of strategic focus has resulted in the creation of inspiring learning spaces, the social and emotional skills being explicitly taught and technology adoption for teaching and learning.

During the pandemic, the school was therefore well placed to deliver blended learning beyond the walls of the classroom using the SMART Learning Suite Online. The software seamlessly integrates with Google Classroom, Apple iPads supporting the school's learning ecology.

Teachers are able to deliver high quality content for learning remotely but importantly enabling interaction and engagement. Just-in-time feedback using a range of assessment tools in the software supported formative and summative assessments so that using SLSO meant that the students were engaged rather than simply viewing passive content.

Curl Curl North teachers are also educational leaders conducting virtual workshops during the pandemic with hundreds of teachers across Australia able to view their practice and ask questions using the SMART 360 Conference platform.

Curl Curl North's blended learning strategy is in line with global trends. In a recent review of the original research educators

across the world were asked to rate the 22 capabilities clustered into four areas, or "pillars": leadership and engagement, technology integration, professional development, and technology infrastructure.

As a result of the collection of this data for the visual report, the EdTech Assessment Tool has added a fifth pillar: blended learning. A recent companion report shows "Remotely Ready: Global Insights into Effective Teaching and Learning in a Pandemic," established solid connections between those capabilities and student learning outcomes.

You can learn how to prioritize and focus your school's effort for better technology and professional development investment to enhance learning outcomes. In an era of in-person, remote online and blended learning using the EdTech Assessment Tool self-assessment, your school can receive a custom profile, at www.smarttech.com/profile and advice for areas of action.

If you are looking at prioritising and planning your schools focus, Integrate AV has a team of experienced educators who can assist schools to improve their technology readiness. They can support you to evaluate your stage of EdTech development and provide support with professional development and training services as schools undertake the for next steps in their technology journey teaching and learning. ▲



Sue Beveridge has been an educator for more than 32 years with a strong focus on quality teaching and learning and the use of ICT. She is currently the Education Advisor for SMART Technologies ANZ, working with the Global Education Strategist, Director APAC and National Manager to inform the pedagogical Roadmap for SMART and the effective use of SMART Technologies in the classroom.



Image courtesy of Viewsonic

The smart classroom empowers teaching and learning

By Rosie Clarke, Editor

Smart classrooms have never been smarter.

And teachers are reaping the benefits. For example, a Vietnamese teacher at Cabramatta High School was praised recently by the NSW Department of Education for designing an interactive, computer-based phonics database that would enable her to teach her students the Vietnamese alphabet.

This kind of ingenuity comes about when teachers use pedagogy or create new pedagogy that requires teaching resources or materials that simply do not exist yet. The right digital tools offer them the means to extend their own practice while engaging students in interactive, tech-centred learning.

By integrating learning technology such as, touch screens, smart boards, interactive whiteboards, computers or tablets, etc., schools open up infinite new teaching and learning opportunities.

Key industry perspectives

"Primary and secondary schools are continuing to focus on class collaboration, the 'talk and listen' days are well behind us," according to Martin Moelle, the Managing Director of BenQ Australia.

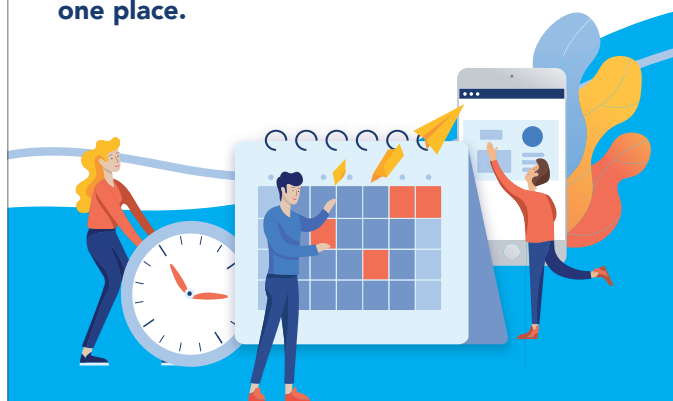
"The old style of overhead or data projection offered little to no collaboration opportunities for students. With the implementation of interactive technology like interactive boards with 'smarts', the opportunity for extended collaboration has opened. The really exciting part of interactive technology in 2021 is the ability to conduct remote learning and bring communities together.

"In an intra/post-pandemic era, remote and blended styles of learning are more important than ever. Interactive technology has evolved into not just a requirement, but a necessity to the curriculum.

"Interactive flat panels are now dominating because they offer numerous hardware and software benefits.▶

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◀ Gone are the days where a projector would be mounted on the roof of a classroom and be routinely maintained by setting up a ladder or lift device, which becomes an OH&S liability. Interactive panels are easily maintained both physically and through something like a remote desk scenario. Things like over-the-air updates can be pushed to devices remotely using in built management software. This is popular with school IT managers looking to save precious time.

"Display resolution is another driving factor for schools. The industry standard is now 4K UHD which helps with visibility in a classroom where students may have trouble viewing content at the front of the class. This can be particularly problematic in larger public-school classrooms."

Student devices are a school mainstay now, what are the key purchasing considerations?

In Martin's view: "Things to consider when purchasing devices is how platform 'agnostic' they can be. Most schools have a myriad of different devices like Windows laptops, Apple, and Android tablets, and this can make integration time consuming or even impossible. Of course, lifespan and warranty also play a large part, along with how easy they are to control (either locally or remotely), and the overall cost. Products that do not discern between specific software ecosystems are able to adapt to any kind of BYOD environment."

Everyone talks about VR technology but how can schools use it in-class?

"VR technology is great for immersion as we know quite



Image courtesy of BenQ

well," Martin notes: "Schools can utilise this technology in a couple of ways: one student wearing the headset and rest of the class watching on a big screen, or individual students working on their own. The latter is particularly useful when students need to do a highly dangerous chemistry experiment, for instance. It allows them to stay safe without the need for a controlled physical environment; they can simulate experiments with hazardous substances."

Drastic change for classroom tech

ViewSonic representatives, Marketing Specialist Melanie Adan and Product Manager Michael Zhang, explain how the pandemic has accelerated the development of education technology.

Melanie says: "The teaching and learning patterns have drastically changed over time, presenting new pain points and unique scenarios for EdTech companies to creatively solve. For example, teachers find it time-consuming to prepare lessons for virtual classes as they need to record, edit, and upload

their videos rather than simply presenting them to their class. Meanwhile, students are burnt out with piles of assessments and videos to watch.

"Interactive teaching tool technologies are being developed and improved to offer students and teachers a seamless transition from live classroom setting to hybrid or completely remote learning situations." Michael adds that it is important schools remain focused on engaging students both physical and remote, "as you can guess, it is more difficult to tell whether a student is engaged or not when they are not physically present. The right interactive software creates solutions that solve this pain point by providing more tools for the teacher to know whether a student is interested, happy, sad, or distracted".

Student devices are a school mainstay now, what are the key purchasing considerations?

Melanie suggests: "Before making any purchases, school leaders should have a good review of their current IT infrastructure

and plans. They need to consider classroom design, connectivity options, device and software integration, support, durability, product lifecycle, and total cost of ownership to have a full understanding of which products best suit their needs and preference. For example, consider each space: if you plan to get a display solution for a large hall, a projector will be a better and cheaper option than getting a large interactive flat panel."

Additionally, "find out how new products will connect to your existing infrastructure and identify what other connections are supported, i.e., DisplayPort, HDMI, USB-C, etc. Ask questions like: What operation system does the solution require? How are you going to transmit data to learners? Does the device connect to cloud storage services or store files locally?"

Everyone talks about VR technology but how can schools use it in-class?

"A great example of this is how you can drop a Google Maps AR experience onto an interactive whiteboard or display," says Michael, "and then virtually walk-through a museum in Europe, while annotating, drawing, and capturing interesting points of this virtual trip with screenshots for discussion". Melanie finds VR exciting in educational contexts: "Classrooms can recreate important historical events and present new perspectives that pique the interest of both teachers and students. Although VR technology has long been present, there is still not a lot of VR content available. Also, the technology itself can be quite costly. Augmented reality is a cheaper option with more content in the market for public use." ■



Image courtesy of Viewsonic



Image courtesy of BenQ

Video-assisted learning for Australian teachers and students

Recent times have seen video-assisted learning gain real momentum in Australian classrooms.

Educational videos are revolutionising the way we teach and learn. They support learning by bringing important information to students in a visually engaging way.

If you are sceptical about incorporating video into your classes though, you are not alone. It is not uncommon for teachers to feel that video is time-consuming to prepare, will require a steep learning curve, or that quality video content is difficult to access.

While this may have been true at one point in time, advancements in EdTech have well and truly transformed the way video-assisted learning is used in the classroom. Now, it is easier and more effective than ever before.

There are online platforms dedicated to creating high-quality educational video content, which are user-friendly and can be navigated with ease. After quickly familiarising yourself with them, you and your students can enjoy all of the benefits that come with video-assisted learning well into the future.

Save time and improve outcomes with video-assisted learning

Video-assisted learning tools can include everything from short explainer videos, to in-depth documentaries. By creatively leveraging videos for learning, teachers can raise students' interest in topics and jumpstart classroom discussions – and that is just the beginning.

- Provide students with extra materials for any

subject: students can access helpful videos after class during self-study.

- Support different types of learners: students have a variety of learning styles and video caters to this by providing materials in a new format.
- Bring global insights to the classroom: share curated videos from across the world, such as those on different cultural traditions.

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myViewBoard Clips from ViewSonic makes bringing educational videos to your classroom easier than ever before.

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Purpose-built for educators, Clips is compatible with and works across the entire myViewBoard ecosystem. Drag and drop videos directly onto your Whiteboard, annotate over them and even run interactive quizzes while the video plays.

myViewBoard Clips is readily available to Education Entities from Whiteboard and any web browser. Simply follow the step-by-step instructions on the myViewBoard Clips Wiki: https://wiki.myviewboard.com/MyViewBoard_Clips.

Get in touch with ViewSonic to find out more about implementing video-assisted learning in your classroom. ▲



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Ignorance is bliss but poor air quality is a learning roadblock

Interactive, anti-bacterial touch screens that test air quality, kill most germs, and protect from eyestrain will provide your teachers the peace of mind they deserve post-COVID.

With school health and air quality concerns at an all-time high across Australia, BenQ's latest interactive boards are a breath of fresh air. They enable your teachers and learners to interact in a classroom space that supports healthy collaboration day-to-day, wall-to-wall, whiteboard-to-whiteboard.

'Deep breath in, slow breath out...'

Breathing techniques to quieten chaotic classrooms are vital, but not so calming in low-quality air. Just last month, cutting edge research undertaken at UNSW Sydney's School of Built Environment brought to light the shocking issue of poor air quality in Aussie schools. The research team found that concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in classrooms peaked significantly higher than the 850-ppm threshold prescribed by the *National Construction Code* and suggests that enhancing ventilation and environmental quality must be a critical consideration for schools equal to enhancing teaching materials.

As children spend the vast majority of their school days learning inside classroom environments, indoor air quality should be a core concern for schools. In fact, based on government figures, we know that Australian students are couped up in classrooms for at least 25 hours per week, spending more than 1000 hours inside on school property every year. Inadequate air quality can cause pollutants to spike, and microbes to circulate; excessive exposure to pollutants during early development can cause a plethora of respiratory infections, eye irritations, allergies, headaches, and even lifelong issues.

UNESCO has further warned that poor indoor air quality



affects student attention and school performance, with worse outcomes in mathematics and reading noted for students exposed to poor indoor air quality. US studies have also noticed that students in classrooms with higher quality ventilation even score 14 to 15 percent higher on standardised tests.

Tracking the quality of the air that your staff and students breathe is how your school can make healthy adjustments to benefit wellbeing. For instance, UNSW Sydney's study installed a demand-controlled ventilation system to monitor air pollutants in real-time, so they could regulate air quality to meet recommended levels.

'Sick building syndrome'

Have you heard of it? The term refers to more chronic symptoms people may face due to indoor air pollutants. The Australian Government's Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment remarks, "The health impacts of many chemical components in building materials are not well understood", noting that sick building syndrome could be indicated by shorter term

symptoms like skin or eye irritation, headaches and drowsiness, or by longer-term symptoms like respiratory disease. The latter would follow periodic exposure to chemicals that have historically been used in school construction materials, like formaldehyde.

Here in Australia, new school buildings must be designed to comply with the *National Construction Code*, ensuring both natural and mechanical air ventilation but there is confusion around how schools should regulate air quality. Existing, older buildings have more leeway regarding the Standard but should always be risk assessed and managed as best as possible. RMIT University researchers analysed 10 classrooms around Victoria and found that 80% recorded ventilation rates below the national requirement, and noted that while schools comply with specifications, teacher preferences often dictate the ambiance in a classroom. As a result, unless teachers can effectively monitor air quality, they cannot effectively reduce risk.

Passionate about empowering teachers to improve classroom air quality, BenQ's ground-

breaking new smart interactive display screens have stellar Air Quality Sensors. These help schools measure and display key environmental parameters in classrooms, such as temperature, humidity, PM2.5, PM10, CO₂ and Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) concentration levels. With these screens installed, schools have more power to intervene with appropriate adjustments that will benefit teachers and students alike.

Collaborate in clean air with ClassroomCare®

BenQ education interactive flat panel displays are further empowered by a multilayer coating of the non-toxic, nano ionic silver agent to kill most germs that accumulate on touch screen surfaces, preventing cross-infection or epidemic in classrooms. With longer-lasting antibacterial properties than any conventional germ-resistant screen or spray on the market, these screens are a no-brainer in the business of promoting healthy development.

BenQ RP02 education interactive flat panel display provides a comfort and cleanliness level unheard of, until now, for Aussie teachers. The new smart display not only boasts a proven germ-resistant screen, but the friendliest digital whiteboarding and collaboration tools around. With EZWrite cloud whiteboard, wireless screen mirroring and casting app InstaShare, blended STEAM learning has never been more seamless as schools create healthy, collaborative classroom learning experiences.

Built using BenQ's unique ClassroomCare® technologies, BenQ's interactive smart boards cover everything from eye care and germ resistance to CO₂, temperature, and humidity monitoring, creating safe and healthy spaces for students and teachers.

To find out more about BenQ Interactive Flat Panel, head over to BenQ.com.au.▲



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Exclusive Air Quality Sensor displays key environmental parameters including temperature, humidity, PM 2.5, PM10, CO2 and Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) concentration levels.

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Teaching students to take the lead

By Heather Barker Vermeer
Industry Reporter

"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other."

– John F. Kennedy

There is no denying that universities and employers seek individuals with the skills and capabilities to lead. What qualities do effective leaders exhibit in the 2020s? And how do schools develop leadership potential in their students?

Forbes magazine last year published 'The Seven Characteristics of Great Leaders' by Forbes Council Member and executive coach Molly Walsh.

Giving students the space to grow as leaders; to think, to decide, to struggle, to fail



In her October article, Walsh listed the following traits, "Great leaders are constant, genuine and curious learners... create and articulate a clear vision... do not have to be the smartest person in the room... focus on outcomes not credit... do not waver on ethics... can show vulnerability... want others to succeed and help them do so."

Opinions on this subject, of course, vary as do the requirements and contexts of leadership. In the classroom, however, there are many steps educators can take towards helping develop leadership skills among their cohort.

Offering students opportunities to assume responsibility in the classroom and wider school

can start with assigning simple tasks, such as reading classroom notices or announcements, handing out papers, or giving out verbal instructions to everyday activities. In short, putting them in charge.

To widen this, students could be tasked with running assemblies, hosting visitors, or showing new students around the school. Students generally lead most comfortably when engaged in an area they have a passion for, knowledge of, and experience in. Giving pupils a chance to lead or have input into activities such as sports, cultural, drama or environmental projects can be met with enthusiasm, which is often infectious. P46 ►



Images courtesy of Burn Bright

Burn Bright

At Burn Bright we work with students from year 5 to year 12.

Our vision for the world is one where all young people flourish, understand their influence and impact the world selflessly. This forms the foundation for all of our programs and camps, and is a vision we hope to leave with every school we enter. But what does this really mean for what our programs teach students?

Flourishing

Burn Bright uses the word 'flourishing' to describe individuals who exhibit high levels of emotional and psychological wellbeing, and high levels of positive functioning (i.e. psychological and social wellbeing) (Venning et al., 2013). Our hope is that

by helping young people build positive relationships, understand their own values, build grit and set goals for the future, we can give them the tools to be able to flourish.

Influence

We find that the most accessible way to define leadership is through the lens of influence. Using the idea of influence provides an opportunity for all young people to understand and live out leadership in their school contexts. Our message is that every single one of us has influence: the question is how do we use it? We can then understand that leadership isn't only about having a badge or giving a speech, it's about the example we set through our words and actions, using



our influence to positively impact those around us.

Selflessness

We believe that acting selflessly is the greatest outworking of influence. When we can use our strengths for others, then we can have long lasting impact on our communities. Using service as this foundation, we challenge young people to shift their focus from "me" to "we" and consider how their influence puts others first.

Program delivery style and follow up matters

At Burn Bright we believe in taking an evidenced based

approach to our content and program delivery. Generally, we work with a year group or leadership team for full day programs. Our delivery is designed to expertly engage young people in every moment of the day. Our programs are tailored, experiential, student focused, multi modal and authentic. We carefully design and deliver our programs in partnership with a school, their values and important priority areas for their students. We then use a digital platform as a follow up resource to cement and extend the learning in a way accessible to the school and students. ▲



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WELLBEING PROGRAMS

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DIGITAL PROGRAMS

Our Digital Programs are 100% online. Students receive an individual login with the ability to stop at anytime and pick up where they left off.



Schools can offer students leadership opportunities through the roles of student council representatives and, when the age and stage is right, school prefect, house captain, sports captain and more. Local youth boards can offer community-minded kids the chance to take on a role with the potential for impact beyond the school. These need not involve party politics and can provide wide ranging benefits for learning and networking in their community.

Young leaders can be encouraged and nurtured through mentoring programmes. Peer support or buddy systems are multi-beneficial, but in a leadership frame, offer the mentor and the mentee to experience leading and being lead. These relationships can involve a senior/junior or a same-age partnership, particularly for new students or to pair together those with high and low levels of understanding of a particular task, activity, or subject.

Walk the talk: let your leadership be a living example. Talk to



Image courtesy of Venture

students about your views on how leadership works. Stimulate discussions on what makes a good leader. Make these relatable to their age, interests, and culture. Share your experiences and anecdotes - because that is what good leaders do.

Encourage students to become invested in their potential impact through leadership, starting with the school community and its culture. Is there a school-related issue they get heated about? Is

there any opportunity for them to help bring about change? It could be an anti-bullying initiative, an environmental project, tech recycling drive, anti-racism campaign or a fitness project. The act of influencing and effecting change can empower a student, creating a strong sense of self-belief that can have a profound, wide-ranging and long-lasting impact on their learning, and her/his life. Celebrating and rewarding student leadership initiative and success is

important too. Recognise leadership achievements, from the small to the large, to encourage others to follow suit.

Giving students the space to grow as leaders; to think, to decide, to struggle, to fail. Setbacks can be the nuggets that enable golden leadership down the line. Educators can't stop their young leaders from failing but they can be there with support and encouragement when they do – an attribute of great leadership too. ■

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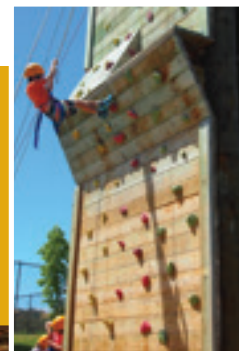
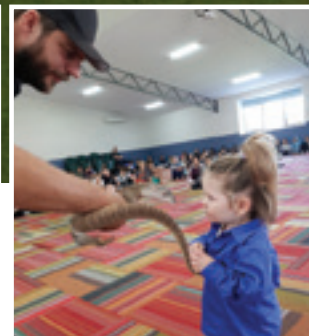
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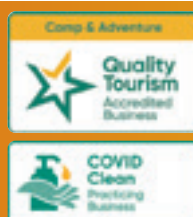
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Aerial photo credit - Richard Fraser

COLA schools: cracking the shade protection code

By Rosie Clarke, Editor

Western Sydney researchers hit headlines earlier this Term with claims that Australian school children may need to be kept indoors unless schools are fitted out with enough external shade structures.

Researcher Sebastian Pfautsch, from Western Sydney University's School of Social Sciences, told the *Australian Associated Press* that he'd heard of children being sent home from school with nose bleeds because of rising heat levels and inadequate sun protection.

Shade Protection is not just to keep the sun out in Summer; however, it also enables teachers and students to learn and play outside during wet weather with benefits throughout the year. There is a vast array of different options available to education facilities when it comes to shade, including shade sails, canopies, permanent structures, and portable umbrellas, but more recently we have seen rising interest in what are dubbed COLAs.



Images courtesy of Profile Shade Structure Solutions

Covered Outdoor Learning Areas

These structures are a lifesaver for schools around the country, and would be a much-needed addition at many others. While more traditional COLAs are made from a wide range of materials (primarily steel), there are a variety of different options available.

Sharing his industry perspective on what schools should consider when investigating COLAs, Profile Shade Structures' Barry Black said that schools should prioritise aesthetic design and practicality. "Uglier COLA structures tend to require much more steel and don't have the modern aesthetic that schools are looking for in 2021."

He explained that lightweight,

waterproof fabric options offer more architecturally desirable COLAs for schools: "I am seeing schools take full advantage of the unique possibilities offered by fabric structures because of their dramatic and striking effects".

There are generally three steps to the COLA installation process: design, manufacturing, and installation.



Ideally, your chosen team will advise on your school's required dimensions and functionality, then liaise with you while the designs are workshopped by engineers, and finally implement the design by installing it for you. Barry added that experienced riggers should install the steelwork and fabric "so the tension is correct, to obtain a wrinkle-free membrane skin".

He explained: "There are two types of shade structures. One that is purely for shade from the sun using shade cloth. The other is waterproof membrane that is in tensioned and watertight.

"There is a considerable price difference as the shade cloth only requires posts to hold it over the play area. Whereas a tensile membrane structure requires structural steelwork to tension the vinyl fabric so as to get storm runoff.

"When the idea of a COLA came out the education department decided to bring out old blueprints that had tin roofs and were dark inside. They called them spade ready to build and a lot of schools have these ugly structures that look like the titanic with several wind extractors.

UV can damage skin even when it is cloudy and overcast, which is why it is important not to rely on temperature to decide whether sun protection is needed.



"The trend then changed with funds being given to parent associations who looked around for other designs such as membrane structures."

Sun exposure under the age of 18 is a huge predetermining factor for skin cancer.

Yet, children spend hours playing, walking between classes, attending assemblies and learning under UV rays around the country. The accumulation of time under the sun, particularly if a child's skin (which is thinner than adult skin) suffers sunburn or tanning, makes sun safety an important health and safety issue that all schools should address.

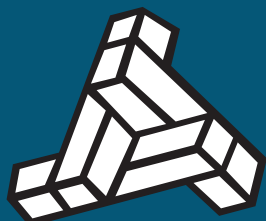
Over several decades now, sun safety in the form of hats and protective clothing have become a standard addition to many school uniforms. In fact it is more common for schools to address hats and sunscreen than shade, according to one report by the Cancer Council. But while it may be relatively easy to encourage hats in primary school, it can be more difficult to insist fashion-conscious secondary students don the broad brim. Hat and sunscreen usage in secondary schools is generally lower than primary schools, according to one report, highlighting the importance of shade as a sun protective measure.

UV can damage skin even when it is cloudy and overcast, which is

why it is important not to rely on temperature to decide whether sun protection is needed. It's also easy for students to forget that UV rays can make their way through cloud and can even be stronger because of the reflection factor. Despite schools imposing rigid hat rules, studies do show that older children are more prone to removing their hats and therefore putting themselves at a high risk of sun damage and cancer.

When implementing a school sun protection policy, schools are encouraged to consider shade as part of a suite of sun safety tools. The Cancer Council encourages schools to undertake a shade audit and has advice on planning and implementing a shade project, which we encourage our readers to seek out online.

Schools can help reduce risks associated with sun exposure by providing a system of both natural (trees) and shade installations around the property so that students can both seek shade and be shaded as they walk from class to class or participate in outdoor activities such as swimming and sport. ■



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When to upgrade: Outdoor sports surfaces

By Rosie Clarke, *Editor*

Aussie sports groups are pushing to boost participation post-COVID.

Netball, for example, has slid 4.5 percent in its rate of participation; something new Netball Australia Chair Marina Go has put down to competition from soccer and AFLW. Likewise, ARL Commission Chairman Peter V'landys told Channel Nine's 100% Footy that "the biggest issue for rugby league is participation" resulting in a crackdown against high contact to encourage new players.

We all know there are wide-ranging benefits to sports participation, but for schools, getting students out onto the field or court is half the battle.

Offering strong sports programmes at your school requires providing quality opportunities and facilities.

Playing surfaces must be well maintained and designed in order for your sports surfaces to win fans and build up a



Image courtesy of GrasSports Australia

reputation for hosting quality sporting events and games.

If your sports surfaces need some TLC, there are many considerations to take into account but if you get it right, you can achieve year-round, quality coverage for a wide range of sports and reduce spend on several sport-specific solutions.

So, when should you upgrade your sports surfaces? What are the key considerations? We approached outdoor school sports surface specialists to find out what different types of surfaces are available, what the best maintenance practices are, and what designs are trending at the moment.

Industry insights from sports resurfacing experts

Ash Whitfield, a sports resurfacing expert from GrasSports Australia, outlined for us the key considerations for schools upgrading their outdoor spaces.

Foremost, he suggested that schools should examine the "existing condition of the area, including the base works required".

This is because "they need to know that the resurfacing may not be 100 percent unless it's rebuilt". Other key considerations, he explained, include:

- Drainage of the existing area.
- Type of surface required, for instance, synthetic or acrylic.
- Expected usage, whether the surface will be used for physical education and general play, or competitive school sport, as this will determine the size and material installed.

Additionally, he noted: "Ongoing maintenance will be required and should be budgeted – ►



Image courtesy of GrasSports Australia



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are the only manufacturer to produce its own yarn in Australia. Across our leading brands we have the widest range of surfaces including over 100 types of synthetic turf as well as athletic tracks, acrylic tennis and netball courts, indoor sports flooring and playgrounds.

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◀ expect a minimum of two visits per year - maintenance of synthetic surfaces compares with maintenance of natural surfaces (i.e., mowing, watering, chemicals, etc.)."

Ash also recommended that schools check whether their sports surface has a UV rating for Australian conditions.

How should your school know when to resurface its outdoor sports landscape?

Look out for "worn and weathered asphalt", Ash advised, because "cracked and sunken asphalt creates a trip hazard". Other things to look out for, include "old synthetic surfaces with seams falling apart or with UV damage, as well as synthetic grass running tracks at the bottom of a small hill. In the latter case, when it rains, mud pours across the surface and because it's flat it just sits there, so that surface is now very slippery".

What are other schools getting up to?

Here at *School News*, we



Image courtesy of West Coast Sporting Surfaces

have noticed that schools are increasingly trying to cater to more varied sports, including hockey, netball, basketball, and cricket.

Ash told us: "All of the above can be captured into one sports field using the one surface, depending on usage. For general

PE and passive play areas, this is very useful. There is some compromise on playability, but this is where the pre-design consultation is important.

"The most popular thing I've noticed in primary schools is basketball/netball/hot shots, which also includes four squares."

APT Asia Pacific put us in touch with two of their installation partners and industry experts this issue.

Mark Tucker from West Coast Synthetic Sports in Western Australia specialises in acrylic hardcourt projects at schools while Hayden Garn from Synthetic Sports Group in NSW specialises in synthetic turf projects.



Hayden Garn, Synthetic Sports Group

Hayden has noticed that "schools are increasingly utilising space to cater for multi-use applications as well as installing smaller courts for the likes of basketball or football.

Even just plain synthetic grass areas with no line markings at all are being installed for leisure and quiet areas, especially where grass just can't hold up to the traffic or weather conditions."

How should schools know when to resurface an outdoor sports landscape?

Mark explained: "There is a life expectancy of sports courts, and in some of the schools that have courts with very old asphalt, the base becomes very uneven with cracks and tree roots appear through the surface making the courts unsafe to play on.

"If you see this starting to happen, it is a pretty clear sign that something needs to be done. The earlier something like this is addressed, the easier it is to fix."

Hayden revealed: "Some of the worst surfaces I've seen in schools have been where contractors are using imported products suitable for domestic use but not high-traffic school use. Another issue is surfaces not using enough ballast infill to protect the seams."

Are you aware of any checks, procedures, or required maintenance for schools?

"In terms of maintenance, schools should regularly clean debris off the courts as it can block up the drainage," said Mark.

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Image courtesy of West Coast Sporting Surfaces



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"I have also noticed that sometimes school chairs have been used on hard courts. The pressure can sometimes crack the surface which can void warranties, so being mindful of what they place on their hardcourts is also helpful in maintaining them.

According to Hayden, "It is a good idea to undertake site investigations before commencing any work which can identify things such as whether

there is any underground power or water services available, drainage requirements, and the right pavement to install. A maintenance manual should also be provided with any project.

Routine maintenance can be undertaken by ground staff or the general maintenance personnel; however, we recommend engaging an independent synthetic maintenance provider annually to undertake major maintenance services." ■



Image courtesy of West Coast Sporting Surfaces

When is an outdoor space more than just a space?

Children spend at least 30 hours a week at school, but commonly more especially as they get older.

So it makes sense that the environment where children spend so much of their time should feel safe and welcoming, but also motivating and engaging.

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Founded in 1994, APT Asia Pacific is the only fully integrated manufacturer of Australian Made synthetic sport and recreational surfaces. Our huge range of artificial turfs, acrylic courts and rubber surfaces have been played on across hundreds of Australian and New Zealand schools.

Through our large network of qualified installation partners and distributors we are seeing a huge trend towards more innovative and multi-functional



sport and recreational spaces at schools. Available space and budget restrictions can certainly influence the design and products used for an outdoor area, however, other factors such as wellbeing, inclusivity and good old-fashioned fun are becoming increasingly important considerations.

In 2020 Synthetic Grass & Rubber Surfaces Australia was contracted to transform a rooftop terrace at a Community School in Sydney using APT's 23mm Australian made Coolplay surface available in 12 vibrant colours.

The results are outstanding – a visually appealing multi-purpose area that caters for half-court

basketball, foursquare and table tennis, with plenty of funky furniture, décor and shade.

More recently Surface Pro Group in QLD completed a central play area as part of a school extension which included 15 new classrooms. Surface Pro Group used APT's Melos and Ecolastic NEO rubber soft fall systems in five amazing colours to transform the space, which also included 12 playful mounds. ▲

If you would like more information, please contact APT Asia Pacific on 1800 652 548 or email info@aptasiapacific.com.au



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School pool refurb essentials

By Rosie Clarke, Editor

The use of a swimming pool on school grounds is privilege many Australian students are fortunate to enjoy.

School swimming pools provide students with opportunities to exercise, compete in sports, learn an array of important life skills, and let's not forget all the fun!

However, for school property managers, pools are a big responsibility that require some attentiveness: safety, of course, is critical and not simply in terms of supervision but in terms of water quality and temperature too. Keeping your pool well-maintained, and well-heated will make sure its well-loved by your students and wider community.

Finding the correct balance of water quality and temperature throughout the year is essential. School pools must meet all the relevant Australian and state safety requirements, and pool water quality standards.

To ensure the health and safety of students and all users of the pool, schools must have a tight planned schedule of regular pool cleaning, monitoring and

Don't forget the microbiological monitoring of pool water



maintenance. This must include microbiological monitoring of pool water to make sure it is up to the required standards.

A heated pool allows students to use the pool 12 months of the year. Typically, water temperature between 25°C and 28°C is regarded as optimal for swimming pleasure and younger children may like it even warmer. Without some form of heating, most pools in Australia hover between 18°C and 20°C therefore the power of the sun on its own cannot be relied upon to warm a large volume of water to the desired temperature for children even in summer.

However, there are some easy and inexpensive options to heat pools:

Solar power systems used to heat swimming pools offer environmental benefits and are cost efficient over the long-term once the initial expense of installation is covered.

Electric heat pumps use electricity combined with extracting outside air temperature to create extra energy to heat a pool in a method like air conditioners. They generally come in two models, known as on/off heat pumps and inverter heat pumps. Inverters are now considered the market leader and typically use far less power. Swimming pool heat pumps with inverters allow the heat pump to adjust its heating capacity depending on the temperature of the pool.

A gas pool heater works in

a similar way to a gas water heating system in the home, heating the air via a burner tray at the bottom, and then transferring the heat to the pool water through a heat exchanger. Whether you heat your pool with solar, electric heat pumps or gas heaters, automated systems offer integrated pool heating functionality across the board. This gives you the ability to check and control pool water temperature and outside air temperature on screen.

Schools can also reduce heating costs by utilising integrated commands that maximise the use of free energy from the sun. An automation system does much of an owner's work, such as turning on and off pumps, dosing the pool with sanitiser and monitoring the water chemistry.

Research into a new microchip developed by the University of South Australia that enables continuous monitoring of pH and chlorine levels, shows it can deliver consistent and accurate pool chemistry for reliable pool management. New "lab-on-a-chip" technology makes monitoring swimming pools more affordable, more reliable, and easy to install – even on existing pools.

UniSA researcher and micro/nanofabrication expert, Associate Professor Craig Priest, says the chip could be a vital addition to Australian swimming pools, particularly as COVID-19 makes people more aware of the importance of pool hygiene.

"Pool chemistry keeps swimmers safe from viruses and bacteria, yet getting it right takes a lot of effort," Assoc Prof Priest says.

"The sensor that we've developed is essentially a 'lab-on-a-chip' – a network of microscopic pipes running through a credit card-sized chip."

Industry professionals all tend to agree that pool covers are a must with any form of heated pool. This is because they retain heat far better than pools without a cover, and they can also help raise the pool temperatures from 4-8 degrees. This means the pool will not take as long to heat, saving electricity and money.

Pool covers, can in fact reduce the cost of heating a pool by up to 80 percent and save water by dramatically reducing evaporation. They



also save wear and tear on filters by reducing debris.

But the fabric of the cover can break down over time. The constant temperature variations lead to cracks and peelings. Pool chemicals and ultraviolet light also can have long-term adverse effects on covers. Often, pool covers contain sewn threads

that will become frayed, cut, or will even disintegrate over time.

Pool covers should be checked regularly and if the fabric is brittle and stiff, or it has loose or broken threads, it is probably time to replace it.

You should always consult an industry professional before upgrading your school's pool,

the heating system or the pool cover as a professional can give you the best advice. An expert will recommend technology that is best suited to your school, the size of your pool, its users and of course the environment. It is vital to use a reputable company with a long history to avoid costly repairs and maintenance in the longer term. ■

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Dualsun won a host of gold awards for sustainability and product of the year in 2018 when it was released in Australia. The Dualsun cell has a patented water jacket attached to the underside of the PV panel. The heat energy removed from the panel by the cooler water running through the water jacket, allows the panel to function with greater optimal efficiency and provides an abundance of hot water for the swimming pool.

The Dualsun solution also extends to any other hot water application within the facility, and the fact that the water jacket is not exposed to UV radiation creates an ever-lasting lifespan.

The revolutionary Dualsun panel maintains the energy being produced and allows for peak performance by up to 20%. Compared to a standard PV, this solar cell can utilize up to four times more energy.



Our latest project at the University of Queensland had 326 Dualsun panels installed, providing electricity for their buildings as well as heating their three pools. Their mission was to showcase, to the community, the benefits of committing to green energy, by building the largest Dualsun PVT system in the world.

The system has provided the university with an initial 90% offset of all associated heating and with expected rising energy prices, will become one hundred percent renewable. The roof space could not accommodate a separate PV electric panel and a conventional solar pool heating system; with our product, we were able to provide both in one footprint.

The zero-energy pool refers to people being able to create their own clean, reliable, and 100% renewable energy from Dualsun.

The panels can neutralize the ongoing energy costs of pool heating with simultaneous generation of solar electricity and heated water, which reduces the expenses and CO² output of associated fossil fuel heaters.

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It is designed to withstand the demands of aquatic facilities, regardless of size and location. Offering both a heating and cooling solution, as well as an automatic mode to suit all pool temperature requirements and weather conditions. You hold the power; with the Wi-Fi module enabled, you can change the temperature, turn it on and off, all with the tap of your finger.

The inverter heat pump provides enhanced performance and reduced electrical consumption. It is at least 30% more efficient compared to the previous on/off heat pumps. The spiral titanium heat exchanger ensures a maximum heat transfer, heating pools faster, and lowering operating costs and CO² emissions.

The Co-Efficient of Performance (COP) of this heat pump is 16. The higher the COP, the less energy that is required to heat the pool, making it an eco-friendly solution. The temperature can go as low as -7 degrees Celsius and as high as 43 degrees Celsius, accommodating all pool requirements. The inverter compressor makes for an almost silent heat pump, only drawing the power that it needs.

A pool cover is a necessity for a heat pump, and it provides minimal pool maintenance and cleaning. Our Heatseeker Opal Pool Cover is custom-made for commercial pools and is used to retain heat, conserve water, and save on operating costs.

Supreme Heating takes pride in being the industry leaders. We continue to invest resources to ensure quality products and innovation, towards a sustainable future. Our objective is ultimately achieving successful outcomes for your projects. ▲



What are your storage options?

According to Australian government data, cycling is safer than netball and cricket.

Only around 2.5 percent of Australia's annual road toll reflects cycling fatalities, and helmets reduce the risk further by about 50 percent. Skateboarding, too is an exciting way to engage students in physical activity. So long as schools follow the Skate Australia codes of practice, implement safety protocols, follow sun safety practices, and mandate protective gear, it can also feature as a curriculum activity. While young people engage in physical activities they enjoy, it is critical to provide them with quality parking and storage so that schools and families can avoid major concerns surrounding theft, property



Image courtesy of Area Safe Group

damage and access issues.

In order to support and encourage students in taking part then, schools must ensure adequate storage facilities in terms of construction and design, materials, installation considerations, and security. Schools therefore need to be familiar with the types of commercial bike, scooter and

skateboard storage options available to best suit their facility and student requirements. With this in mind, we spoke with a range of expert suppliers to the school sector this issue for some insights.

Len Place, CEO of Leda Security, explained that when providing bicycle parking at outside locations, consideration

should be given to also providing protection against the elements, particularly in locations where the bicycles are parked long-term.

"Particularly in schools and colleges where bicycles are parked at outdoor locations all day. More and more schools are enquiring about shelters and bike enclosures, where they want to convert their traditional old sheds into a modern bike cage." Len has been part of projects to build bike cages and shelters for schools fitted with bike racks: "Working closely with the school's requirements, we came to a solution for a secured bike parking area for a State School in QLD. With 16 x bicycle parks and 26 x scooter parks in a lockable area with a level slab, allowing students to park their bicycles securely and conveniently."

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Images courtesy of Leda Security

In terms of preferred materials, Len told us: "Most bicycle parking products are available in either galvanised mild steel or stainless steel. I recommend robotic cutting, welding and powder coating equipment to ensure a consistent, high quality finish. Stainless steel provides an attractive, durable, low maintenance and corrosive-resistant product. Stainless steel and hot dipped galvanised bike parking products are easy to maintain. A more frequent cleaning routine is advisable for more corrosive environments, however, such as seashore areas, laden heavily with wind-borne sea salt particles."

Making the most of existing spaces

"One of the easiest ways of providing additional bicycle parking is converting existing car parking spaces," Len said, taking us through the guide to security classes as defined by *Australian Standards AS2890.3*:

Security Class 1

An individual locker with a high security locking mechanism is considered high level.

Security Class 2

Cage: a secure structure, protected from the weather, containing bicycle parking devices that allow users to lock the bicycle frame and both wheels. Users are provided with security access devices for communal cages.

"Users may provide their own locking devices for individual cages. Chain mesh is not suitable. Boom gates are not considered a security layer, and roller doors should default to closed unless in use.) Entrance gates are self-closing and self-locking."

Security Class 3

A bicycle parking space, where

the bicycle frame and both wheels can be locked to a bicycle parking device using the owner's own locking device.

Multifunctional trends for school construction

Area Safe Group's Lindsay Stead spoke with us about new construction trends he has noticed schools gravitating towards: "Schools are noticeably trending towards designer-style outdoor furniture that is multi-functional. This means furniture that looks good, coordinates with the colour of adjacent buildings, and can be used for lunch breaks, outdoor learning, and wider community use such as during events."

He's also noticed that schools are becoming more interested in modern materials such as "recycled composite enviroslat and wood grain powder coated aluminium to eliminate the ongoing cost and time involved with re-polishing timber seating".

To ensure a seamless installation, he advised utilising "supplier installation guides and products that are fit-for-purpose for the surfaces they are being mounted onto, including fixtures from recycling bins to outdoor seating; car park speed humps to signage".

Are there dos and don'ts regarding inground, surface mounting, and vertical to wall mounted options, etc?

"Wall mounted options are good for levelling seats where ground is sloping and also make it easy for cleaning or mowing. Inground mounting is more secure in public places such as street front bus zones, and also helps with sloping ground. Surface mounting is usually the simplest and easiest installation method on flat surfaces in school facilities.

Are there dos and don'ts regarding storage?

"Security for school bags is usually directly related to bag racks being placed in highly visible locations.

"Not always so easy with bike racks as these often need to be installed away from classrooms near school entries or car parks.

"The most secure bike racks to consider are those that meet *Australian Standards AS2890.3* for Class 2 or 3 security level of bike parking, which includes not only being able to lock both the wheel and the bike frame but also to support the frame to prevent accidental damage to the bike." ■

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Riskier play, safer surfacing for school playgrounds



Image courtesy of WillPlay

By Rosie Clarke, Editor

A little bit of risk is good for kids, according to researchers, because it helps promote resilience, more advanced social development, and general curiosity in physical activity.

Good playground design reflects this, with varied equipment and natural play elements like balance beams, steppingstones, logs, and creek or mud beds. Still, increased perceived risk for students playing on the equipment should be paired with increased understanding of what makes a safe playground surface.

Australian standards for playground safety were updated in 2017 to consider the benefits and dangers of risky play more effectively. One of the people who oversaw the updates, Associate Professor David Eager from the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Technology

Increased perceived risk for students playing should be paired with increased understanding of safe play surfaces



Sydney, enthusiastically justified it at the time: "We know from the research that kids who are exposed to good risk will develop into better-functioning adults, so we introduce them to graduated risk and we don't wrap them in cotton wool."

Because of this trend towards play designs that embrace a healthy amount of challenge for students, it has become even more essential to keep every school playground surface-type on a rigorous maintenance schedule that will help prevent injury and satisfy compliance standards.

Speaking with playground safety auditors, *School News* found that in-depth inspections should be taken out at least once a year; particularly if you have organic surfacing that will require topping up. Look out for signs of wear-and-tear in synthetic surfaces as well as play equipment and any shade installations. If your surfacing needs replacing, this should be done as soon as practical. And, of course, if a child sustains an injury on the playground this should be investigated immediately, regardless of how minor the injury.

School News interviewed school softfall expert supplier Nathan Lee, general manager at WillPlay.

Q: Which options best suit different types of schools?

A: Equipment and softfall options needs will differ from high school to primary school. Primary schools will be more suited to conventional play equipment and organic softfalls, where high schools should look at more fitness-based play and artificial surfacing like rubber and synthetic grass. The softfall

options will also be determined by budget constraints and artificial surfacing has a higher installation cost. In primary applications, organic softfall can offer an added play element, with sand and bark being used as an extra play media.

Q: What is your recommendation and why: woodchip, bark, or other?

A: As long as the softfall option is compliant to Australian standards, there are no wrong options as each style of surface has their own benefits and applications. In some cases, organic softfall selection will be dependent on what is available in the local area to allow for cost effective top ups over time. In some regions, sand is more economical to purchase and replenish than bark or woodchip and vice versa.

Q: How can inspections make sure school playgrounds are compliant?

A: Organic softfall will compact and migrate from the area over time.

It is important to ensure the area is topped up on a regular



Image courtesy of WillPlay

basis to ensure minimum depth is maintained.

Schools need to keep an eye out for wear and splitting in synthetic surfaces.

This is usually a visual inspection; however, synthetic surfaces need to be tested for ongoing compliance over time. This can

be incorporated into the school's annual Independent Inspection.

Q: What are the Australian Playground Safety Standards that schools must meet?

A: All surfacing needs to be compliant AS4422:2016 at the time of installation and must be maintained to ensure

compliance. Manufacturer's recommendations in regard to care and maintenance should be adhered to ensuring compliance and that warranty conditions are met. I am not an expert on this part of the standards. Might be best getting an opinion from a certifier or inspector. ●



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What's the least hygienic spot in the school washroom?

By Rosie Clarke, Editor

Nope, you can rule out the toilet seat...

I was surprised too, but we'll get to that in a moment.

Even with all the bacteria coating every shared toilet seat, they are generally not the most germ-riddled surface in a washroom.

The truth, according to a study carried out by BioCote, the toilet seat ranked ninth out of fourteen commonplace items and surfaces found in public area washrooms.

Technically, the toilet seat ranked joint-eighth alongside the waste bin.

The side wall came seventh, the floor came sixth, the toilet paper dispenser came fifth, handrails came fourth, third came the tap, second came the radiator, and wait for it...

Most bacteria was found in the sink.

This particular study suggests that the toilet paper dispenser might bring you into contact with more bacteria than the loo seat itself.



Image courtesy of Davidson Washroom

Hand dryers should be a serious consideration, not just for hygiene but to prevent mess and vandalism



However, a different academic study led by Gilberto Flores and Noah Fierer and published in *Scientific American* a few years ago established three groups of bacteria: gut, skin and shoe. The gut-group of bacteria were found predominantly on loo seats and flusher handles where 'splashing' may have occurred or hand-transference was involved; skin-group bacteria was largely identified on doors and other places that people were likely to touch with their hands; and the shoe-group of bacteria coated the floor and sometimes toilet flush handles. This latter phenomenon is

something scientists have put down to people flushing the loo with their feet.

In an overview of these results from the University of Colorado's 'Microbial Biogeography of Public Restroom Surfaces' study, the scientists stated: "Coupling these observations with those of the distribution of gut-associated bacteria, indicate that routine use of toilets results in the dispersal of urine- and faecal-associated bacteria throughout the restroom."

That's right, there really is poop everywhere!

The chances of passing on a

nasty bacterial infection or worse (cough) COVID-19 is greatly reduced with simple measures and the most effective method is a good handwashing technique, but...

If we have learned anything from the 2020 pandemic, it is that many adults (let alone children) do not know how to wash their hands properly.

It is even more doubtful that we can trust students to scrub their sticky digits until they are bacteria free, but a well-designed and well-stocked school washroom should at least make it possible.

Do your school washrooms need a refresh?

Without splashing the cash on a whole bathroom refurbishment, Ray Smith from supplier Davidson Washroom advises that the basic needs of any school washroom can be quite low cost to replace. Sharing his industry viewpoint with us, he says it is a priority to replace the "soap dispensers and toilet roll holders and make sure they are lockable, vandal proof and look nice".

The replacement of washroom hand dryers should also be a serious consideration.

Mr Smith says: "Washrooms today lean towards using hand dryers as they offer superior hygiene for users from pre-school to high school.

"Installing modern hand dryers, along with sanitary bins, and soap/sanitizer dispensers can help control infection, and this has been highlighted throughout COVID-19.



Image courtesy of Davidson Washroom

"Suppliers can offer a variety of hand dryers to suit all needs, for instance a smaller, gentler unit may suit little hands but larger blasts from a powerful unit is better suited to a senior sport area.

"Many schools choose to replace paper towel dispensers with hand dryers, not just for hand hygiene but because it prevents the mess from wet paper towels and blocked toilets. New hand dryer technology offers energy efficiency and superior hygiene capabilities. This can save schools thousands of dollars in maintenance costs."

In a busy school with overworked staff, it is easy to run out of hand soap and this is something that takes a bit of foresight to avoid.

There are a variety of soap/paper dispenser options to help



Image courtesy of Davidson Washroom

lessen the frequency of refills and it is the same with toilet roll dispensers. Another benefit of upgrading your old dispenser is that newer models can have an antibacterial coating.

Automated, handsfree sanitary units might be an ideal solution for sanitary disposal: a school is not the place for an oversized, overflowing sanitary bin. Automated or not, it's imperative that these units are regularly attended, and kept fresh, clean, and odourless.

Mr Smith points out that schools are increasingly looking after their own maintenance needs: "It is important to look after the school's feminine hygiene disposal, and now there are cost saving and more aesthetic looking sanitary units on the market where you do not have to engage a third part to look after.

"Urinals can also be notoriously sour and the best way to avoid this is to have them regularly maintained. Now there are vandal-proof, self-clean models available. Moreover, an installation of a good quality air freshener/sanitizer system may reduce foul odours as well as alleviate 'bathroom fear'."

Student opinions are crucial: as a wise *Principal Speaks* contributor for *School News* once wrote: when asked what they would change if they could be principal of their school, almost all students say 'improve the toilet facilities'. Clean, well-designed washrooms show schools have respect for their learners. And teachers too, as Mr Smith adds: "Never forget teachers because they to deserve to have beautiful washrooms too!" ■



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