

SchoolNews

The essential industry guide

Issue 25 | Term 3, 2022



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decolonise our
teaching approaches

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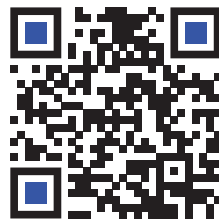
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11



38



42



56

inside term three

FRONT DESK

Editor's Note: Schools piloting program innovation 05

EDUCATION

Special Report:
A clinical-style training model for teachers? 06

Principal Speaks:
Determined to decolonise our teaching approaches..... 08

Profile:
A taste for agriculture at Dakabin State High School..... 10

How to create inclusive classrooms 11

ADMINISTRATION

Trends in 2022: Flexible School Seating 16

Case Study: Custom fit-out for Modbury High School
Innovation Hub 22

Case Study: Permanent Modular Project
at St Margaret's Anglican Girls School..... 24

Revamp the bell..... 26

TEACHER'S DESK

Op-Ed:
Why Brilliant Minds should enter your school library 30

TECHNOLOGY

Leading Learning Innovation 32

Laser focused purchasing decisions..... 36

FOOD & BEVERAGE

"Drink some water, please" 38

EXTERNAL LEARNING

Around the world in educational ways..... 42

Why strategy and risk management matter
for school touring programs..... 44

How travel connects to the classroom 46

Learn wild, explore wildlife sanctuaries..... 48

SPORTS & RECREATION

Sports Uniform Superstardom..... 50

PROPERTY

Out of Order:
School Washroom Crisis Needs Renovating 54

Getting to grips with school outdoor furniture options..... 56

Digital Signage Dos and Don'ts..... 58

A 'learn first' playground design 60

WHAT'S HOT 62

Front Cover: Image courtesy of Thornbury Primary School

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Schools piloting program innovation

In the week *School News* was heading off to print, headlines covering the sector revolved around Victorian Premier, Dan Andrews' promise to do what he can to help after one of the state's private International Baccalaureate World Schools announced in a shock email to families that it must enter administration.

The decision has been linked to the loss of international student enrolments during pandemic border closures. Elsewhere, prestige property reporter for *Sydney Morning Herald*, Lucy Macken, reported that private schools have been spending the most money during NSW's COVID house price boom, pointing out



Rosie Clarke,
Editor, *School News*
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that Sydney Catholic Schools alone have splashed out on nine neighbouring properties worth \$24 million. Statistics have shown a significant increase in private school enrolments since 2020, but the need for additional teaching space may not be the driving reason behind these purchases. Macken's report, for instance, found that specific planned usages for some of these multi-million-dollar purchases included wellbeing

hubs, staff spaces, uniform shops, and other non-teaching spaces.

This issue, *School News* had the great honour of featuring Thornbury Primary School's phenomenal achievements. In conjunction with local community partnerships, the school has successfully developed and implemented an Indigenous Studies program centering First Nations languages. On page 8, Acting Principal Megan Noy talks about how the school seeks to facilitate Koorie Language and Culture classes with learners that amplify the guidance of the Wurundjeri Council Education Team and their deep knowledge and connection to Wurundjeri Country. Students are taught by Aunty Terri Lee-Fitzpatrick and introduced to aspects of the Woivurrung language spoken by the Wurundjeri people. Federal Labor has said it wants to fund First Nations language programs nationally, a move that would doubtless be welcomed

by schools—many of whom are monitoring the development of Thornbury's program.

Elsewhere this issue, Shannon Meyerkort unpacks one of the proposed solutions to the teacher shortage being successful piloted in regional schools (page 6), and Sarah Davison catches up with Dakabin State High School in Brisbane, where Year 7 students are taking agricultural studies and a new *Certificate III in Rural Operations* is being introduced to Year 11s.

We want to feature your school programs! Write in and tell us what you are doing. ■

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A clinical-style training model for teachers?



By Shannon Meyerkort,
Industry Reporter

The growing teacher shortage is affecting schools across the country.

One option that has been proposed as a way to help solve the crisis is for educators to adopt a clinical-style model that embeds student teachers in schools just months into their training. It has been proposed as a particularly effective way to staff regional schools. But what does it involve?

The Hub model centres around regional school partnerships with tertiary providers; it sees teaching students employed part-time in local schools within months of starting their degree while being mentored closely by established teachers within their school. Just like the clinical model, teaching students are embedded into the community from the very start, with the intention of attracting and retaining future teachers within the local area.

The Teaching School Hub model has been piloted for five years in the Hunter region and other hubs around the country, and with the NSW budget recently injecting \$2.9m to expand the number regional hubs around the state. One of the recommendations submitted to government has been to invest in regional hubs that allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to train as teachers while remaining in their local communities.

As this issue goes to print, a roundtable meeting has been set for August 12, to be convened by new federal Education Minister Jason Clare, that will bring together education ministers, educators, and principals to discuss an *Initial Teacher Education* (ITE) proposal by NSW Education Minister Sarah Mitchell.

Under Mitchell's wider strategy to increase the number of teachers in high-demand subjects, 28 industry specialists will begin part-time work in NSW public schools this term as

educational para-professionals while training to become fully-qualified teachers. After more than a decade working as a chemical engineer, Mr Fadzli Bin Abdul Rahman will take up a teaching position with North Sydney Boys High School this term, where he says: "I can give my future students an insight into my experiences and provide them real life examples and link the abstract subject to real-world problems."

Regional Teaching Hubs: A Case Study

Implementing the Hub model, Alphacrucis University College offers a tertiary teacher training program and operates a number of teaching hubs with dozens of schools across the country.

Designed to 'flip the classroom', students spend more time inside real classrooms and from an earlier stage in their degree, than with traditional universities.

"While the staffing crisis is felt nationwide, the impact is even greater the further West

you travel into the state," says Carmen Nash, Recruitment and Liaison Coordinator at Catholic Education Wilcannia-Forbes (CEWF), which has partnered with Alphacrucis to establish its own regional teaching hub.

She advocates: "This new approach to teacher education flips the conventional model of teacher training by bringing nationally accredited tertiary education onsite to our own school communities."

Describing how the model operates, Nash explains that trainee teachers are employed in schools as teacher aides one day per week: "In addition to a school-based mentor for additional support, they also meet with a Teaching Schools Manager one day per week via zoom for insight sessions, where they receive a high level of support and system-based professional learning in a collegial group session with their peers."

"The model that we have adopted through our teaching

schools hub does work, and it is my hope that the government will recognise this need, and think carefully about the allocation of Commonwealth-supported places to ensure the longevity of initiatives just like ours."

Nash adds: "I am really encouraged and very hopeful given Sarah Mitchell's recent comments indicating a necessity for a national approach to teacher supply in Australia, with a focus on modernising the profession through new and innovative thinking around ITE."

Anna Plant, Teacher Training School Coordinator for the Christian Education Ministries (CEM), sees the retention of teachers as being the primary issue that needs to be addressed, and says CEM has eleven school campuses across the country which are feeling the challenge of teacher shortages, especially in the casual teacher space: "We are planning for the future shortfall that is predicted... and have chosen to take responsibility for the training of teachers by partnering with Alphacrucis University College."

She adds: "We plan to mitigate the trend demonstrated by research, which points to the early departure of new graduates in the teaching profession through adopting the Initial Teacher Training Model that embeds trainee teachers in the art and practice of teaching from the beginning of their degree."

Plant sees the retention of teachers as being the primary issue that needs to be addressed: "The TTM seeks to mitigate this issue as the training teacher has experience of the challenges teachers

face and can build the skill set required to thrive post study."

Retaining Local Trainees

One aspect of the Hub model is that future teachers are sourced from within a local community, and their experience in the classroom while training is then indicative of what their post-graduate experience will be like, making them more prepared, realistic and classroom-ready.

Cheryl Lacey is a leading agitator for rational change in school education and has been advocating for the clinical model of teacher training as one of several options to solve the teacher shortage crisis.

"We should go back to that model. It works because it's an apprentice model, they are guaranteed employment, they work in the area they will be employed so they – and the school – know they will fit," says Lacey.

For Nash, there are significant benefits of this model for remote and regional communities: "We are delighted to be able to provide pathways and access to tertiary education that would otherwise be unavailable for many people in our remote and regional communities."

In fact, Nash points out: "The majority of our 2022 cohort of trainee teachers are mid-career individuals with families. They are enthusiastic, passionate and extremely capable individuals with a desire to remain in their communities upon the completion of their degree, thereby addressing the issue of teacher retention."

"These trainee teachers are receiving four years of system-

based professional learning, on top of a rigorous tertiary level academic education."

Shorter Term Solutions

The clinical model is a good solution, reports Lacey, but it's a long-term solution, not a short-term one to fix the teacher shortage.

Offering one example of a shorter-term solution, Lacey suggests considering introducing retirees from other occupations, such as law, engineering, and accounting—training them up as teachers much like what was done in nursing when graduates of other degrees could do short courses to become qualified as nurses:

"They'd already have a four-year degree minimum, though they'd need a bridging degree, but they'd have the maturity and availability," she says.

Another solution Lacey suggests is that the sector "goes back to non-negotiable curriculum in core areas and schools then offer specialised subjects based on their teaching specialists and resources".

Many teachers feel that too many of them are being forced to teach outside their specialist areas, a factor that leads to exhaustion and disillusionment. Further, in the post-COVID world, Lacey says, remote learning for specialist subjects is a real option, as is having specialist teachers employed as independent contractors who are able to move around between schools.

A Principal's Perspective

Bishop Druit College is part of a Teaching Hub, and Principal Nick

Johnstone sees it as a logical way forward in conjunction with traditional university placements. Johnstone describes how he works at mitigating the steadily reducing number of applicants for positions at the college in a number of ways: "Regional and rural areas are certainly hardest hit on this issue," he says.

"The college actively supports staff to retain to support areas of need, i.e., retraining primary staff to become qualified secondary mathematics teachers.

"We are also investigating teacher housing options due to increased costs and housing shortages in our area."

He says the situation leading to the teacher shortage is complicated and multi-faceted, citing falling numbers of younger teachers, teaching conditions and wages, professional and compliance requirements, excess governance, and an escalation in communication demands:

"The ever-increasing role of schools, and therefore teachers, to solve societal problems coupled with the increased levels of compliance and bureaucratic paperwork needs to be addressed."

He also works with other NSW independent school principals to design innovative, evidence-based solutions to support the recruitment, development and mentoring of new teachers under the auspice of the 'Growing and Nurturing Educators' group.

School News will continue to report on the teacher shortage, proposed solutions, and the upcoming roundtable on our weekly newsletter. ■

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Determined to decolonise our teaching approaches



Images courtesy of Thornbury Primary School

By Megan Noy,
Acting Principal,
Thornbury Primary School

Embedding a culture of continuous improvement, looking both inwards and outwards as a system, ensures that Thornbury Primary school will achieve excellence in teaching and learning for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

We value and utilise the knowledge and skills within the school of the Language and Culture Teacher Aunty Terri, Tutor Aunty Mel, Wellbeing support Aunty Lee, alongside teacher Kim.

Thornbury Primary has a long history of trust and connection to the community, with third generation children now enrolled at the school. Celebrating our families and their stories connected to the school builds a collective spirit of dedication to making a difference for all students in our community.

Creating networks and partnerships is a key element to being a changemaker, to ensure we understand the real needs of the community, deeply value their input, and ensure we are culturally aligned. Beginning with our Koorie Education Support Office and the Department of Education Koorie



Outcomes Division, we have built strong relationships that guide us to meet the outcomes of the *Marrung Education Plan*.

Our learning begins locally by linking closely and taking guidance from the Wurundjeri Council Education Team, amplifying their deep knowledge and connection to Wurundjeri Country. My role is to build and foster connections with all staff supporting them to being culturally safe and responsive in their approaches to teaching and the curriculum.

As Acting Principal, I have supported system change within key networks of Darebin Council, VAEAI, Principal networks and the wider Indigenous community. We are able to focus on the role of mentor and coach to other colleagues across the network and state, and we also have an ongoing partnership with Monash University, ensuring that we are building skills and understanding for new teachers entering the profession.

The current focus on improving the use of *Koorie Literacy and Numeracy Program* funding is having an educational impact on students this year. This is improving outcomes in reading and numeracy. It also influences decision-making around how to enact the program in other school settings.

Culturally Safe and Proud Environment for Learning

Continuous improvement of learning outcomes for our Koorie students is the core characteristic of Thornbury Primary.

This is achieved by continuing to connect with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, which provides a culturally safe environment of pride in identity. A family described it to me as the DNA of the school. Every staff member completes *Community Understanding and Safety Training* (CUST) and is provided with ongoing learning



throughout their time at the school. Pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is evident as you walk into the school: there is a native plant weaving and food garden, shadowed by the Aboriginal Flag and a wooden carving of Bunjil. The playground proudly displays murals, mosaics and Wurundjeri Woiwurrung words, and each classroom has a totem animal and displays flags, images, colours so students can see their culture in the teaching and learning that takes place every day.

Even our school uniform, which is designed by students and the community, incorporates red, black, and yellow in Aboriginal-inspired designs. Using the Koorie English term, 'Deadly', to mean 'excellent', has been key in our school values and vision. The community knows that we have Deadly Learners who can demonstrate our school values every day, supporting wellbeing and engagement.

Marrung Education Plan at Thornbury Primary

In our strategic plan, we identified that a deeper focus was required to continue to ensure that we achieve excellence in teaching and learning so that all “Koorie students engage fully throughout their schooling years and gain the knowledge and skills to excel at year 12 or its equivalent,” as said in the Murrange Education Plan Strategy.

We developed a theory of action, which is a strength-based approach and shows our belief that children need to be both strong in culture and strong in learning: “If, the students set meaningful goals, personalised to their interests, strengths, and ambitions. The student in collaboration with teachers will identify their learning needs to achieve that goal.

“Then, working together with their coach and teacher to achieve that goal. We facilitate communication regularly with the teacher and family to update the learning progress of each student.

“Which will result in a transference of learning confidence to classroom settings and across the curriculum. The student will be empowered to articulate their learning growth and success.” The school improvement plan began to inspire a shift of thinking. We moved to a culturally responsive teaching approach that integrated both a socially and intellectually safe space for “Deadly Learners”. Some important elements of this approach includes:

- Building confidence in learning – mindset, independence, resilience, and agency – with a focus on positive relationships and experiences in the classroom.

- Developing partnerships with parents/carers through *Deadly Learning Plans* that balance care and push.

Increasing challenges and expectations in areas of strength to increase engagement by using strength-based pedagogies such as the *Stronger Smarter Approach* developed by the Stronger Smarter Institute and the *8 Ways Framework*, which is Aboriginal Pedagogy that came from country in Western New South Wales. Baakindji, Ngaympaa, Yuwaalaraay, Gamilaraay, Wiradjuri, Wangkumarra and other nations own the knowledges this framework came down from.

Improved Teaching and Student Outcomes

We deliberately used a whole-school approach to change as it occurs at multiple levels and one size does not fit all students, staff, or families. High levels of differentiation in teaching and learning are key to ensure that the needs of each child are understood and addressed, and their capability and growth are extended regardless of the starting point.

At the same time, we direct resources to those students who have additional learning needs to improve their literacy skills with 1:1 intervention.

To think evaluatively, we created and monitored success using both qualitative and quantitative data.

Teacher feedback reported less time was spent out of class and there was more active participation in the tasks.

There has also been an increase in families' engagement and collaboration in developing learning goals for their children. Students have become more engaged in developing their own



It is our role to **amplify** Aboriginal voices and perspectives but not to speak on their behalf



learning plans and celebrating their successes by showing their learning to the Principal.

Teacher judgments have found that fewer students are scoring below the expected level and NAPLAN data also shows improvement in both reading and writing from Year 3 to Year 5 in the top two bands.

There is more structured and dedicated accountability of Professional Learning Communities and the KLPN coaching program also tracks and monitors data through the online platforms and teacher created spreadsheets as well.

This displays great indicators of academic success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at our school.

Get Up! Stand Up! Show Up!

Thornbury Primary is dedicated to decolonising our teaching approaches, lesson structures, and whole-school curriculum delivery to ensure that Aboriginal perspectives are our first priority. If we include and meet the needs of Aboriginal learners, we build strength in our teaching practice, raising outcomes for all students. All staff and community members view themselves as allies. We know that we have a lot to learn and research, watch, read, and deeply listen to and hear the perspectives of our community. It is our role to amplify Aboriginal voices and perspectives but not to speak on their behalf.

Collaboration and consultation are essential in everything. ■



A taste for agriculture at Dakabin State High School

By Sarah Davison,
Industry Reporter

For students at Dakabin State High, a typical day at school may involve blow-drying cattle or cleaning out a chicken coop.

Located on the outskirts of Brisbane, Dakabin State High School is one of only a handful of Queensland schools to offer a *Cert III in Rural Operations*, and it's proven a popular choice with students.

General agriculture studies begin at the school with a compulsory semester in Year 7, and students can then elect to continue studying agriculture from Year 8 all the way up to certificate qualifications.

Impressively, the school boasts its own stud beef, sheep, poultry, and bees, and students are able to attend local and royal shows as part of their studies.

Head of Agriculture, Fiona Lester has worked at Dakabin for over 30 years, and told us she would happily encourage other schools to consider implementing agricultural studies into their own curriculum.

Ms Lester said that Dakabin's focus on agricultural studies throughout high school has opened students' eyes to the wide range of career opportunities in the industry, and the Certificate III qualification puts them on the road to full-time employment.



Head of Agriculture, Fiona Lester and the Cattle Team.
Images courtesy of Dakabin State High School

"We're not a particularly academic school, but I will generally have one or two students each year who may go on to study agricultural science at university or study biology or animal science," she said.

"But for many, they might go on to work on a station or in the animal care industry.

"There are so many jobs in ag [agriculture], so when a kid does ag science, there are heaps of jobs around here as well that they would be qualified for."

Even for students who do not move into the agriculture industry after graduation, Ms Lester said it is an important lesson for all students on the importance of agriculture for Australia's economy and food security.

"With kids, they really need to understand how

important agriculture is and how important it is to buy Australian produce," she said.

"Our economy is driven by a lot of our exports, and we want to keep eating fresh fruit and vegetables and eating clean meat, so it's extremely important that they know where it comes from."

Deputy Principal Rae Ellis said that the Dakabin school community had been asking the school to offer the Certificate III qualification for years, and she is thrilled that it has now become a reality.

"The certificate has been offered for the first time in 2022," she said.

"It has been very popular, and we have a Year 11 class that is close to capacity."

The Certificate III qualification will enable students to pursue jobs in cropping or livestock, including

work as a farmhand, farmworker, or livestock transport driver.

Ms Lester said one of her favourite parts about teaching agricultural studies was seeing students who may struggle in other subjects finding a place they can shine.

"Animals are so therapeutic, kids with ASD or kids with special needs, seeing them work with animals and just excel is amazing," she said.

"And the fact that I take these kids from school and take them to shows is just a completely different dynamic than having them in a classroom for 50 minutes.

"Former students come back to visit me all the time, I have a young man who finished school five years ago and he still comes and fits cattle for me. It's just amazing."

Ms Lester designed the new Certificate III offering herself and based it upon the different farming enterprises they have onsite at Dakabin.

"I designed this course specifically for us, I have the core stuff, and then we're doing a term on showing the line up with the Ekka and a course on tractor driving and hydroponics," she said.

"It's just a really exciting course, and I have 17 students enrolled already who are absolutely loving it." ■



School Principal Pete Keen and Deputy Premier Steven Miles, Member for Murrumbidgee.



How to create inclusive classrooms

By Shannon Meyerkort
Industry Reporter

“It is a heart and a head attitude. Inclusive classrooms recognise and nurture the abilities and the possibilities of all students,” says Ruth Croser, Inclusive Education Consultant with Independent Schools Tasmania:

“Inclusion begins as a core value on which physical structures, policies, processes and school communities are intentionally built by committed school leadership, each classroom teacher and teaching assistant and in fact all school staff.”

Schools should make or provide

‘reasonable adjustments’ for students to enable their access and participation within the classroom. As the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority states: “Students with disability are entitled to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning opportunities drawn from age equivalent Australian Curriculum content on the same basis as students without disability.”

According to the *Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability* (NCCD) nearly one-in-five school students received an adjustment due to disability in 2019, making it clear that providing an inclusive classroom should be a priority for schools across the country.

A truly inclusive classroom takes into account the needs of all



individual students, adopting a partnership approach between the school, teachers, students, and families to determine the best ways to support learning.

As such, *School News* sought to share some of the assistive

devices, sensory tools, programmes and learning aids currently on the market for schools to better support their students with ASD, ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, as well as physical, hearing, and vision impairments. ►

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◀ Physical adjustments

For students with physical limitations, mobility issues, or vision difficulties, providing safe access into and within the classroom becomes a priority. Specialised furniture to accommodate wheelchairs and other mobility aids is important, as is flexibility within the space so clear paths can be maintained for movement around the classroom.

It is vital that students with physical disabilities are not segregated away from other students. When designing new buildings, entrances and access should be able to accommodate all students, and not require separate entrances and paths for wheelchair-bound students.

An inclusive classroom also ensures that essential classroom items are placed within reach for all students, including desks, bookshelves, boards, and workstations. This can be achieved with adjustable desks and workstations or by providing a range of desks at



Image courtesy of Speld SA

different heights, which can then accommodate a variety of seating options to suit students who might prefer wobble stools or yoga balls to traditional chairs.

Learning differences

Proximity to the teacher and the board are two considerations when designing a classroom for students with learning difficulties, as is providing a quiet space within the room

where students can work one-on-one with teachers or retreat to as a safe space when feeling overwhelmed. For dyslexic students who use text-to-voice or voice-to-text equipment, having a space within the classroom where they can work without disturbing other students but without being physically segregated is also important.

For students requiring additional

accommodations, such as tablets or laptops, designing an inclusive classroom might include access to charging stations or power points.

Methodist Ladies College in Victoria, for example, established a uniquely inclusive approach to core units by pairing classroom teachers with a specialised Learning Diversity teacher in the hopes of better supporting students with additional needs within the classroom and reducing rates of student withdrawal.

As Ruth Croser remarked: "Inclusion involves considering what the possible barriers might be in terms of these physical structures, policies, processes, and community and either removing these or making adjustments so students can participate as much as possible just like their peers in school life.

"Inclusive classrooms consider and adjust for the individual, personalised learning needs of students to enable them to reach their potential." ▶



Image courtesy of Scanning Pens



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◀ Industry Insights: Inclusive classroom tools and program design

Director of Education and Professional Learning at Speld SA, Kerry Williams, is also an accredited Sounds-Write trainer, and told us: "When choosing a quality classroom program, it is important to look for the evidence of its efficacy; teachers often require additional training in evidence-based practice too.

"Reading and spelling programs should be explicit, systematic, and cumulative, gradually building on skills and conceptual knowledge with multisensory engagement. This means abandoning some practices such as predictable readers and sight words.

"Learning abstract literacy and maths concepts can be supported with concrete materials that provide visual support, for example the use of MAB blocks in maths and sound/spelling tiles when teaching literacy. Ensure tasks are broken down into smaller steps and carefully scaffolded so that the task is clear and not overwhelming."

Centrally, Kerry advised schools to "seek out training in supporting students with learning difficulties and disabilities".

"There are many free or low-cost webinars available online, but also collaborate with others who work with your students,

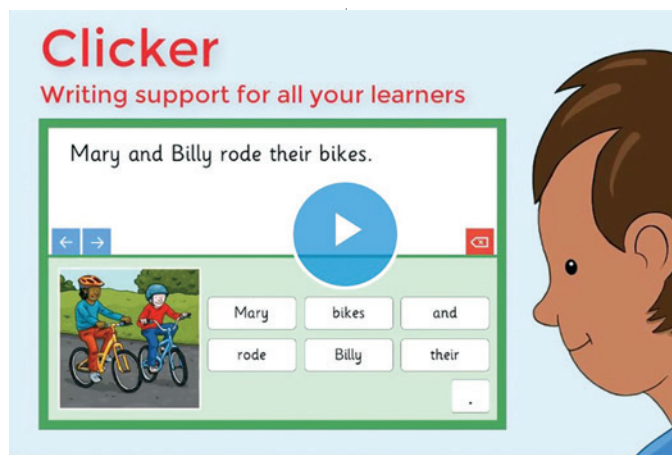


Image courtesy of Spectronics

including inclusive education teachers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, and support staff. Parents can also be a wealth of knowledge when it comes to working with their child.

"High school can be particularly challenging for students with additional learning needs, as they move between teachers with different expectations throughout the school day. Draw on the strengths of your students and adjust tasks accordingly to allow them to demonstrate their skills and knowledge, and to experience success – it's a great motivator!"

For Julia Clouter, Global Head of Education at Scanning Pens: "An assistive technology toolbox to support literacy is a quick win but nearly as rare as hens' teeth in the primary classroom.

"They don't have to be high tech – think colour overlays, pencil

grips, tangle toys, a magnifying lens, rulers with colour slots to help read single lines of text, highlighters, post-it notes, ReaderPens, audio books, and motivational bookmarks." Sharing her top five inclusive practices for teachers, Julia advised:

1. "On your seating plan, include the student's reading age score. This is my top tool when scaffolding readability for all of my students."
2. "Support the need for sensory feedback by sticking a bit of velcro under the student's desk and explain there's gritty material on one side and smooth on the other. This can be a discreet but helpful soother for sensory-seeking students."
3. "Take a photograph of your students' workstation with all the tools that help them

laid out and their name in the middle. This creates a record of supports you can share with a supply teacher, or pass to the student's next teacher."

4. "Help dyslexic students to help themselves by providing a ReaderPen that will do the reading and de-coding for them so your TA will have more time to support learning rather than reading."
5. "Students with ADHD find time turners helpful so build transition time into your instructions. For example, announce that everybody is going to work for 10 minutes and then have two minutes of tidy up time."

"Quite often a school will purchase a single-user software application for a particular student, then realise it can benefit all students so purchase a multi-user licence," revealed Michael O'Leary, Managing Director at Spectronics, as he shared some examples of classroom tools and software with School News:

"Software applications such as Boardmaker and Clicker for primary school students, and Docs Plus for high school students, have ready-made and shared activities and classroom resources available for download that can help teachers with preparation time and are packed with multi-media features like videos, graphics, talking books,

Be here,
Be You,
Belong.

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picture communication symbols, as well as accommodations such as mind mapping programs and tools like word prediction, text-to-speech, and even symbol software."

Moreover, he said: "The same software applications have analytics tools that can give unique insights into each learner's writing process, helping teachers to make informed decisions about their current support levels and the most effective next steps."

He added that "many States and Territories have approved the use of Reader Pens for

students in their exams, so that students who have reading difficulties such as dyslexia can independently take exams—no special access arrangements are required.

"For people with hearing impairments, the BrightSign Glove, is the only smart glove in the world that can translate any sign into any spoken language, and for people with mild-low vision impairment, reading fatigue, or reading challenges, the OrCam Read is a handheld device with a smart camera that reads text from any print or digital surface." ●



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Images courtesy of Furnware

Trends in 2022:

Flexible School Seating



By Heather Barker Vermeer
Industry Reporter

Inflexible seating design can inhibit discussion, pedagogy, and performance.

Thus, it will come as no surprise to most teachers that flexible seating is now one of the key trends driving market demand for school furniture over the next five years, according to global market research by Mordor Intelligence, published in January of this year.

The research suggests strong demand for flexible seating configurations in classrooms is connected to growing concerns around children's posture, and flags school sector interest in eco-friendly furniture, design innovations resulting in new flexible products, and multi-functional chairs and tables,

as influencing this growing trend. In the Asia Pacific region specifically, the report adds that demand for flexible seating and furniture is also due to increasing private school enrolments and the expansion of extra-curriculars.

Clearly, there are big benefits to flexible seating for schools. The first is student agency: learners feel empowered by having a degree of choice and control over their environment and flexible seating enables autonomy as students choose how they sit. Certain pieces enable them to rock, wobble, bounce, and these movements help them to self-regulate during class, aiding blood flow, metabolism and even core strength.

Aesthetic appeal makes the classroom more attractive to children, staff, volunteers, and parents. ►

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◀ Flexible seating options are also varied enough that co-ordinating colours across your floorspace can add impact, create a calming environment, soothe, or liven things up.

Of course, flexible seating still needs to be durable, which is where quality suppliers are an essential resource, so we spoke with four experienced suppliers this issue to find out what flexible seating trends are gaining popularity here in Australia...

“Ingenious” students use seating to their creative advantage

Furnware representative Helen Jones informed us there is “a definite shift towards recognising ergonomic performance” and that “the most creative use of seating I see is from students!”



Image courtesy of Maxwood Technology

She said: I am always amazed at the ingenious ways students position seating to meet their individual learning needs, especially in junior schools. For this reason, students must be provided with a variety of seating options that they can move themselves. Floor cushions and small ottomans are ideal, and younger students love booth-style seating that

allows them to create a quiet nook for reading or collaborative work. This is particularly important in large ILEs as it allows students to create a more intimate micro-environment within the larger, busy space.

“Not only does this create a dynamic environment for all types of learning, but it also gives the students greater agency. The key is to consider

pedagogy and how activities will be delivered; not only do flexible seating options empower students, but they allow teachers to mix up the delivery and break down the student-teacher classroom hierarchy to boost engagement.

“For more traditional learning at individual desks or tables, a well-performing ergonomic student chair at the correct size for each age group is the best option. For more collaborative learning, couches, ottomans, or stools positioned around collaborative tables might be more effective. Too often, we see schools investing in great student chairs and then opting for hard rigid stools for art rooms and labs. Another common misconception is that student stools should have backs. On the contrary, a well-designed student stool will position the user's body at the correct angle to engage core muscles, encourage correct posture, and effectively keep students more actively engaged. Stools should be selected at the right height for respective tables and it is the distance between the seating surface and tabletop that is critical, not the height from the floor (assuming the stool has a correctly positioned footrest for students' age and size.”

Moreover: “We often see school gymnasiums doubling as venues for performing arts or assemblies, so it is important to consider all potential uses for the space.” ▶

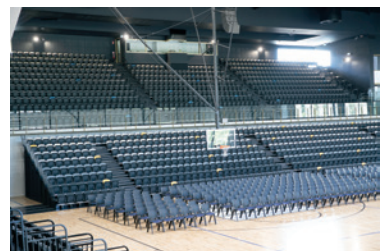


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Image courtesy of Resource Furniture and Seaton High School

◀ “Some fantastic, tiered seating options are now available that retract back against the wall when not in use. Alternatively, quality linking seating that can be stacked and stored when not required is a good option.”

Mature ‘senior area’ designs for high school students

“Flexible seating trends have become popular because schools want to encourage a comfortable environment for their students to learn,” *Sebel* representative *Stephanie Cox* said.

“Teachers want their students to enjoy each learning experience as much as they want them to be engaged: this extra level of comfort helps.

“A growing trend in purchasing requests I have noticed from high schools is the desire to create a ‘senior area’. Schools want this area to reflect a workplace with a mixture of settings; a café-style area with a coffee table or laptop tables coupled with lounge chairs, and then stools around high benches for collaboration.

“Consistently, furniture and seating must be able to move easily between different groups and group sizes so the room may be used for multiple activities. This can involve stools in different



Image courtesy of Resource Furniture and Murray Bridge High School

heights and shapes, with and without backrests, as well as soft ottomans, side chairs, and armchairs with different upholstery options. There is a huge range to suit every purpose and allow students to engage in different activities.”

It is also important to schools that “the gym can be used for meetings, school functions, and assemblies as well as sports”.

“As such, chairs often need to be stored in a small area on trolleys to be wheeled out for a quick set-up. I often suggest portable units that attach four seats to a metal frame that can be wheeled out for this purpose.”

“The school crest can be stamped onto the back or front of the backrest, creating a more formal look that is ideal for speech days, award ceremonies, or exhibitions. Linking chairs

are also a great option with individual chairs that can be put in rows but have additional flexibility as individual chairs.”

Shift toward aesthetic learning spaces

Resource Furniture’s Creative Manager *Michael Merlino* recently worked with a school to incorporate a ‘Materialised’ fabric design by Walmatjarri artist, *Jimmy Pike*, into some angled ottoman seating for a collaborative breakout space: “When the school found out about the story behind Jimmy’s work, they were excited to incorporate his work in the school space and share these stories with their students, aiming to show respect to this land. Taking flora and fauna inspiration unique to his Australian desert life, *Jimmy Pike* utilised whatever

medium he needed to express his stories in his art.”

He continued: “There has been a strong push towards stools in classroom learning spaces to provide students with a choice of seating options. Stackable sled chairs are still the most popular element of any learning space.”

“Sled base chairs are often preferred over four-leg chairs from a safety point of view and the ability to quickly stack chairs away and reconfigure spaces is key. Soft seating continues to be popular for collaboration, in both common and classroom spaces as they allow students to go off and focus in dedicated and comfortable areas.

“There is a shift towards improved aesthetics in learning spaces—they still need to be functional but with a more sophisticated colour palette, introducing neutrals and muted pastels.”

“We have seen a trend moving away from primary colours and incorporating more calming, tonal colours. Schools are seeing value in spending a bit more on aesthetics and functionality with their furniture as they can see the positive outcomes it has with student learning.

“This can also be achieved by sourcing seating options that offer a family of base options. For example, a chair design

that comes in a sled base is also available in a castor base, an upholstered version, and a stool option. This allows them to create a range of formal, informal and breakout spaces with complementing colours, tones and look and feel."

In terms of stools, he added that schools "should be able to design the bench height to suit the stool", and "should source stools that are easy to clean".

Accessible design is important for equitable outcomes

Michael Donnelly, General Manager at Maxwood Technology told us that fast growing student enrolments means "space is often at a premium in schools".

"As such, schools often need their sports halls and auditoriums to be multi-functional. The school hall may hold PE classes in the morning, transform into a performing arts space in the afternoon, then be hired out by a local sports group in the evening. Likewise, the auditorium needs to accommodate lectures, assemblies, as well as musical



Image courtesy of Maxwood Technology

performances. Retractable seating systems continue to gain in popularity with schools to meet this design brief."

He shared his top tips for schools looking to purchase retractable seating units: "Talk to other schools: there are so many seating styles, the key is to decide which will best suit your space. There is no better source than other schools to find out maintenance requirements and ease-of-use. The easier the unit is to operate, the more use it will get and the more value it will offer your school.

"Consider talking with an

independent building certifier if you are looking to manage the purchase of a retractable seating system. There are a number of building code requirements for these seating units including structural engineering certification, fire compliance of materials, stair nosings and aisle lighting (in some cases), dimensions of handrails, slip ratings of steps, to name a few. The quality and engineering of the structures underneath a retractable seating system are vital for long-term return on investment. Also, the floor needs to be a flat, hard surface strong enough to take

the rolling and point loads of a retractable seating system.

"Look for suppliers that can install your stage/theatre/sports floor as well as your retractable seating—ask about options to warranty both systems independently and collectively to reduce the school's own liability."

He has also seen renewed focus around compliance and safety: "Particularly around accessibility for wheelchairs. Good, accessible design is important for equitable outcomes for all students, so ensure that products are safe and facilitate inclusiveness." ■

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Modbury High School, South Australia. Images courtesy of Resource Furniture

Custom fit-out for Modbury High School Innovation Hub

By Shannon Meyerkort
Industry Reporter

Creating an innovative and customised hub for Year 7 students transitioning from primary school was the motivation behind a new building project at Modbury High School in South Australia.

"We undertook a building project to develop a new hub for our Year 7s transitioning from primary. We wanted to create an open, flexible space that facilitated new and innovative pedagogies," said Assistant Principal Hannah Downes.

The transition from primary to high school can be a challenging one for any student, especially when combined with a huge increase in fellow students,

teachers and subjects and expectations of an entirely new way of learning. For this reason, Modbury wanted to provide students with a bridge between the primary school environment students were used to and the new high school setting they were entering into, with its different requirements and demands.

Resource Furniture Business Development Manager, Emma Gillings worked on the project to

"come up with furniture suitable for the students' needs that provided flexibility, function and aesthetics".

She said: "The whole process was very collaborative as we worked with the school and architect concurrently, which meant that all parties were engaged and understood the process, and this made project managing the order and installation fairly smooth, even during a time of great uncertainty over the last couple of years."





Assistant Principal Downes added: "The furniture choices had to reflect these decisions... and we selected Resource Furniture for the quality of the product they supply and the range of options they had for us to select from within our budgetary constraints."

"The process from selection through to installation was very smooth and they ensured their timelines fitted with ours. We have had tours and visitors to the site

who have commented on the fresh environment and productive working space that our Year 7s are operating in," she added.

The goal for the new hub was to create a collaborative space with furniture that could be transformed into different configurations: "Students have enjoyed the flexibility their new furniture offers, especially in the main collaborative area where they have been able to create seating and working

areas that meet the needs of the tasks they are working on.

"With new subjects, such as drama, entrepreneurship, and Spanish being introduced, the range of teaching strategies has increased [and] this would not have been possible with the older design furniture."

Resource Furniture offers schools the option of a trial period before committing to the final order, to ensure that the set-up meets the

needs of the space and students. Hannah happily recommended other schools take up this offer and accept feedback from both staff and students to ensure the combinations chosen to provide the desired flexibility: "A mix of larger and smaller tables would increase the number of arrangements possible and give staff more control over student seating arrangements when explicitly teaching," Assistant Principal Downes said. ■

Creating Your Space

With so many choices available, selecting school furniture for various age groups and learner types is more necessary than ever. Why not get assistance from the experts with the most cutting-edge knowledge in the field?

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Permanent Modular Project at St Margaret's Anglican Girls School

By Shannon Meyerkort
Industry Reporter

Growth in enrolments was the driver behind the urgent need for more classrooms at Queensland-based St Margaret's Anglican Girls School. The solution needed to be implemented within a tight time frame and needed to meet specific design and budget requirements.

St Margaret's is an independent day and boarding school for girls from Pre-Prep to Year 12 in the northern suburbs of Brisbane. In February 2021, growth in enrolments saw the need for two new learning spaces in the secondary school to be built within the calendar year.

"The modular solution was chosen due to needing the two classrooms within a ten-month time frame... by the start of 2022," said Toni Williams, Director of Business and Operations for the Society of the Sacred Advent Schools who own St Margaret's.

A prime consideration when reviewing tenders was the desire for the new structure to blend in with the school landscape and campus. "We have heritage and modern buildings on campus... [and] we needed the building to integrate into the existing gardens and treescape," added Toni.

The winning bid came from



St Margaret's Anglican Girls School. Images courtesy of ATCO

ATCO Structures, who worked with the school's architect Blight Raynor to ensure that the building was complementary to the surroundings. Clint Cunial, Business Development Manager at ATCO, said the project brief was that the new structure did not look like a typical 'modular' building while affording all the advantages of a speedy modular build.

"The school wanted to use the benefits of a modular build, that being short lead times and less disruption to the school," said Clint. "The site was right in front of the main part of the school and the lead time on a more typical style of construction was not favourable to the school.

"ATCO was awarded the project in May 2021 and the handover was completed in November. The detailed design, manufacture and installation was completed in 24 weeks," added Clint.

"We were really happy with

ATCO as they worked with the school the whole way to achieve our vision and meet the tight timeframe," added Toni. "Clint is extremely knowledgeable about all things modular and the expectations of independent schools, so he was great to work with."

Despite some COVID-related delays affecting contractors and causing supply chain issues, the building was installed by November 2021, landscaping completed by January 2022 and the classrooms ready for the first day of school.

Part of the successful build was properly preparing the site before ATCO arrived. "We needed to demolish an existing building and do some civil works, including retaining walls, so the building would nestle within the landscape," said Toni.

"This work took some additional time and cost but was undertaken by the school before ATCO arrived

on site, although they were part of the consultation process.

"When you see the finished product, it was definitely the right decision and vision of our architect to sit the building lower than the original land height."

Clint agreed: "The school absolutely loves the new facility. It fits within the surroundings like it has always been there. You can't tell it's a modular building."

In addition to the shorter build time and reduced disruption to the campus, other advantages of a modular build include the options of both permanent or relocatable buildings and high-quality finishes which are comparable to, or even exceed, those of traditional builds. "The benefit of building indoors in a quality-controlled environment means the workmanship and finishes are of the highest quality," said Clint.

The 23x10m double classroom is a balanced mix of materials including wood, glass and metal with an entire wall of windows, including louvred glass. A deep veranda on one side protects the building from the sun and elements, while decorative metal panelling on another provides both access and privacy.

And the response from the staff and students? "The whole school community loves the building," said Toni. "It's light and airy and very comfortable to work and learn in. The girls all want to have their classes in the modular building." ■



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Image courtesy of School PA

Revamp the bell

By Heather Barker Vermeer
Industry Reporter

Has your school considered upgrading its communications system?

When deciding on budgets and key purchases to streamline school operations, it's important to note that IP paging and PA systems have moved on from the classic brass bell that used to signal break times.

In fact, IP paging and PA systems have a range of new functions that boost security, enable creative use of speakers for school-wide events and competitions, more efficient communication between classroom teachers and school administrators, emergency messaging, and more.

A traditional system requires installing speaker cabling from the school's office to every

classroom or location that you need a speaker inside. An IP-based paging system allows information and messages to be broadcast anywhere at any time, through a central control interface. Audio over IP means using your existing IP network to connect your speakers to allow your school to

broadcast audio such as speech, a bell, music, or pre-recorded messages, from anywhere.

Pre-recorded announcements can also be triggered and shared through your system when an alarm is activated, automatically or manually.

In recent years, this technology

has been available at your fingertips – literally – as a downloadable app on your smartphone or tablet. Still, few school staff seem to know about these innovative features and technologies. So, *School News* decided to investigate how IP paging and PA system designs have evolved to meet new needs in today's rapidly evolving educational landscape...

Misconceptions about school PA systems

School PA representative, *Paul Matthews* pointed out "there's a lot of confusion out there about school PA systems".

He told us: "Some vendors focus on recommending IP technology for schools, but it might not always be the best solution. IP solutions distribute audio through your computer network to amplifiers in each block or directly to IP enabled speakers. ►



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◀ Some view this as efficient because it uses existing infrastructure, however, my view is that in many schools the cost per speaker adds up to significantly more than just installing a conventional 100v line PA system.

"Another problem with IP systems is who to blame when things go wrong and there's always the issue of what happens during a power failure. A conventional PA system has one 'head end' that is easy to provide UPS power for—on the other hand, distributed IP solutions need reliable power in every block and sometimes at every speaker, which must be regularly tested and maintained. IP infrastructure can quickly become outdated and need upgrading, whereas 100v line

solutions provide decades of service without maintenance.

Paul acknowledged: "IP solutions may suit new schools where space use changes and dedicated infrastructure is installed, whereas conventional, wired 100v PA is best for retrofitting existing school campuses where room use remains constant year after year.

"The cost between using IP vs 100v PA varies widely between vendors, and my advice is to be wary of the assumption that digital is always better. Schools should always insist on speakers in every teaching space, not just outside or in hallways.

Additionally, "Most modern PA systems provide a web-style interface to upload bell

sounds or other MP3 files and schedule them to play at certain times, but they should also include buttons for instant emergency messages to play."

Integrating with existing systems

Advance-NET representative, *Linus Pinto* informed us that "IP PA Systems are modular and flexible they can work standalone or integrate with existing legacy PA systems. Since many schools are migrating to IP based phone systems following the implementation of NBN, we see a clear trend towards SIP enabled PA systems.

"SIP PA systems offer the option to integrate with IP phone systems, reducing hardware costs and increasing system

flexibility by enabling users to use phones to make live announcements or trigger bell or alarm tones. SIP PA systems also offer the option of adding two-way talkback speakers, emergency call buttons and visual alerting devices like strobes and LCD message boards. With the two-way function, speakers with integrated microphones can be used for remote monitoring of classrooms, play areas, etc. With emergency call buttons, these can be added to speed up response time during emergencies, enabling school staff to quickly communicate with the office."

He added that "call buttons can also be paired with video cameras for monitoring outdoor open areas".

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"The option to integrate with IP phone systems adds to the flexibility and convenience of making announcements from a phone handset. Bells and recorded announcements can also be triggered by dialling a code or pushing a pre-programmed button on the phone handset."

For instance, he said schools might "add an IP bell scheduler to an existing legacy PA System without causing too much disruption or replacing existing hardware so you can have the classical school bell tone or play a music file instead".

He said he believes that "IP/SIP PA systems, with their ability to integrate with VoIP and 4G networks, offer schools a host of mobility options because admin staff can dial into PA systems installed locally or in remote geographical locations and make live announcements, trigger tones, or make pre-recorded announcements."

Questions to ask ahead of upgrades

Prolinx Audio Visual Director, Michael Kaloudis advised that

Call buttons can also be paired with video cameras for monitoring outdoor open areas



school requests for IP systems have increased "especially over the past 12 months".

He explained: "We are often asked whether IP systems are better than a traditional 100-volt line system. While both have a place depending on the application, IP systems have gained popularity as they offer extra features over 100-volt line systems..."

"Features such as creating zones throughout the school and having the ability to isolate certain areas if required. For example, the library or school hall during exam periods.

"The main system encoder has inputs for background music and the bell timer allows for playback of school bells, alerts, and evacuation notices/tones. There is also a Do Not Disturb option that prevents background music and only allows emergency and PA tones only.

"If the school already has an analogue system in place, a hybrid solution can allow both systems to be combined as a cost-effective option.

He said he has noticed a trend "moving towards SIP enabled IP/PA systems, which offers more

flexibility and allows integration with existing systems".

Michael offered three central questions schools should ask when looking to upgrade their system:

- Is the new system compatible with the existing infrastructure?
- How will it be used? Do you require a single zone or multiple zone paging system for announcements and bells?
- Can it be expanded if required as the school grows?

He also emphasised the importance of outdoor PA systems, "which are ideal for any event including school carnivals, sporting events, outdoors fetes etc., and portable PA systems are beneficial to schools as they link together wirelessly and cover a much larger area if required".

A "fixed COLA PA system is another great option for all year-round use, including outdoor assemblies and school plays". ■

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It's a familiar story.

It was her kindy teacher who first suggested she might be different; that her results didn't line up with expectations. She avoided testing scenarios, confused letters with numbers, and had difficulty recalling words when she spoke.

The canteen manager pulled me aside one day to say that my daughter had not been able to remember the word banana but had used her hands to mime peeling and eating the fruit. Suddenly I realised that she often used her hands, body, and face to communicate when words had failed her.

It wasn't just a quirk of her personality; it was a symptom.

By the time she started Year 1, it was clear that my daughter had a significant learning disability.

Costly diagnosis

To diagnose dyslexia is a long and expensive process. Wait lists for assessment in the private sector can run to six months, and that's if their books are even open for new patients. You can double that if you're going public.

First, we attended a private clinic where she underwent a lengthy assessment, at least four hours spread over two sessions. Then she required six months of targeted literacy intervention.

I was fortunate that the primary school she attended had a literacy specialist who was able to take her for small group work a couple of times each week. I also worked with her daily at home and she attended speech therapy weekly. After six months, we returned for a second assessment to determine what progress had been made, before completing her diagnosis at the Dyslexia-SPELD Foundation which included an assessment of cognitive processing and an IQ test by an Educational Psychologist.

The entire process cost nearly \$2,000 (not including speech therapy) with at least six hours of private testing and regular input both at school and at



Shannon Meyerkort
Author

home. The demands of formal diagnosis puts it out of reach for many families. This is why, when you look at statistics about the prevalence of dyslexia in the community, the numbers vary between 5 and 10 percent. There are many undiagnosed children struggling in a system that is not designed to assist them.

Just as she finished Year 1, we received confirmation of what we already suspected. My daughter met the diagnostic criteria for a

Specific Learning Disorder with severe impairment in reading (commonly known as Dyslexia). She was also at significant educational risk in the area of written expression (Dysgraphia).

Although her diagnosis was not a shock, our world changed that day. And we are not alone; there are up to 400,000 children with dyslexia in Australian schools or, on average, 40 in every school in the country.

Searching for the book

I did what many parents and teachers do during this process and went researching. I was looking for motivating and inspiring stories—I knew there were plenty of incredibly successful people with dyslexia, Jamie Oliver and Richard Branson came to mind, so I reasoned there must be a book detailing their stories.

But no matter where I looked, I couldn't find one. And when I couldn't find it, I decided I would write it myself.

At first, I just researched and wrote the stories for my daughter, snuggling up with her at bedtime and telling her about writers and artists and athletes and princesses all who lived with dyslexia. I wrote stories about entrepreneurs and actors and astronauts: dyslexia might slow you down, I told her, but it can't stop you.

One characteristic many dyslexic people have in common is empathy; I've noticed that constantly working through challenges has made my daughter uniquely attuned to distress in others. She was the one who told me I needed to share my stories with other families.

Brilliant Minds

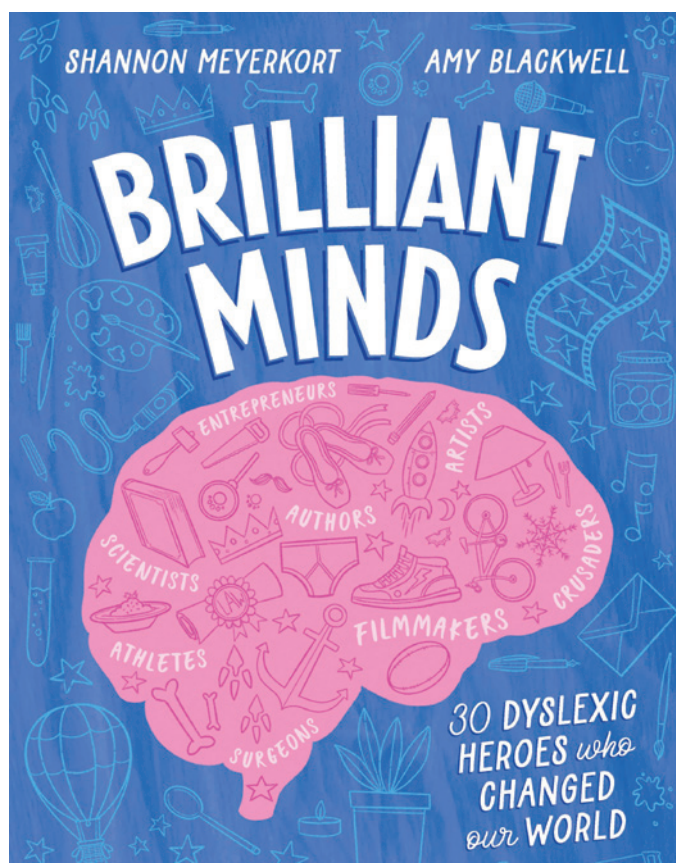
Brilliant Minds: 30 Dyslexic Heroes who Changed our World is precisely the book I wish I had found all those years ago, and it's a book I think teachers will love. It doesn't hide the fact that kids with dyslexia find school tough. It doesn't gloss over the years of struggle, the extra work they need to do, the resilience they need to develop.

But it offers hope. Nothing is off limits. Erna Solberg is the Prime Minister of Norway. Steven Spielberg is an award-winning director. Jackie French is one of Australia's most popular authors. Dr Cathy Foley is Australia's Chief Scientist. Pete Conrad piloted a mission to the moon.

Published by Affirm Press, *Brilliant Minds* will be coming out in October which is Dyslexia Awareness Month. I hope to see it reach the hands of children in their school libraries who, diagnosed or not, live with dyslexia or other specific learning disorders and might be doubting themselves.

But it's also for the teachers, school librarians, support staff, and parents too, because we're all on this journey together.

Shannon Meyerkort is a freelance writer and author of *Brilliant Minds: 30 Dyslexic Heroes Who Changed our World*, being released by Affirm Press in October 2022. ▲



25 October 2022, RRP: \$35, ISBN: 9781922848079
Hardback, 128 pages, Juvenile Nonfiction

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- Instantly grant or revoke access

- Automated and remote locking
- Lockdown function

Decrease costs

- Choose who can/can't access campus, down to what day and time, and create user groups for easier management
- Have a complete audit trail
- Instantly grant or revoke access
- Automated and remote locking
- Lockdown function

Eliminate complexity and integrate easily

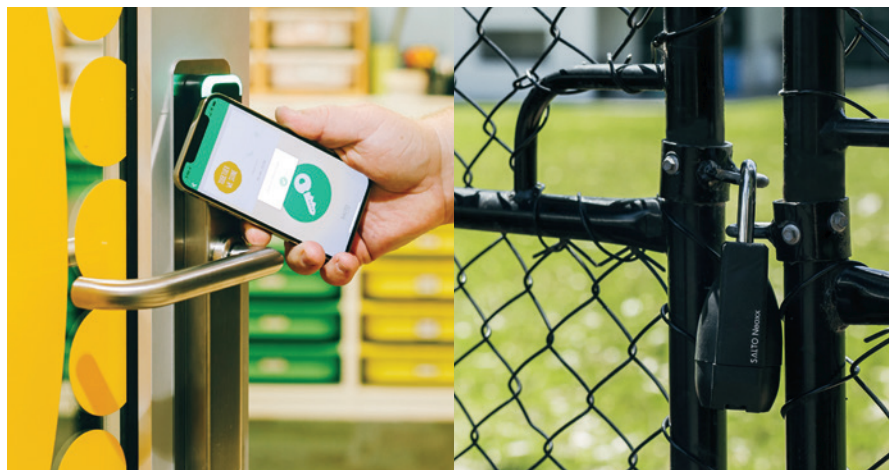
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Images courtesy of Integrate AV

Leading Learning Innovation



Curl Curl North Public School, NSW celebrated the opening of its new campus and learning spaces mid-2021.

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.

Research conducted by Harvard University and commissioned by SMART Technologies identified 22 EdTech capabilities 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



Sue Beveridge

*Educator, and Education Advisor,
SMART Technologies ANZ*

- 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 and applications.
- Assessment of student progress

With the rebuild, the school had to create a new set of rules about learning in alternative spaces



- 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 their results of their EdTech profile, Curl Curl North Public School focused on three action areas:

- Embedding technology in teaching and learning
- Support for social and emotional learning
- Design of learning spaces

Having these areas of strategic focus resulted in the creation of inspiring learning spaces, social and emotional skills being explicitly taught, and technology adoption for teaching and learning. During the pandemic, the school was well placed to deliver blended learning beyond the walls of the classroom using Lumio by SMART.

This software seamlessly integrates with Google Classroom and Apple iPads that support the school's learning ecology.

"The School Garden an Inclusive Space for Students and Community" is a Unit of Work that was designed and completed by Curl Curl North Public School. This work utilised Lumio to create an active and collaborative learning experience that engaged students on their own devices.

"The Best Day of My Life": Curl Curl North Public School's Sustainable Garden Unit

This was the view of one Curl Curl North Public student as he and his classmates spent the day digging in the dirt preparing compost for the school's community garden.

The outdoor activity was part of a unit of work designed by Gretel Watson Assistant Principal and her co-teacher Nicholas Deeney entitled "The School Garden, an Inclusive Space for Students and Community". The unit was captured and delivered using Lumio to enable real time sharing within the co-teaching environment.

Curl Curl North Public school had an extensive rebuild and the gardens in the school required a significant upgrade. This provided the context for the unit of work the teachers designed, making the learning authentic, purposeful, and extending beyond the walls of the classroom. Students could access the learning and interact with the Lumio lesson from any device in any location around the school. With the rebuild, the school had to create a new set of rules about learning in alternative spaces.

A critical problem was to improve the quality of the soil and so they created



Image courtesy of Integrate AV

wicking beds as the basis for the garden. The students undertook all the research in how to build the wicking beds and parent experts advised the best designs. They also went on an excursion to Kimbriki Recycling and Resource Centre. The students captured their learnings digitally and then collaborated in small groups within Lumio to determine each groups' wicking bed design.

Once the wicking beds were created the students produced instructional videos for other students at the school on how to compost and videos to advertise the importance of the community garden. The videos were incorporated into the School's Induction package so the students' knowledge could be shared with the whole school community.

The garden flourished, even though there were periods of lockdown with no students around as the wicking beds provided a reservoir of water for the plants.

The learning journey was captured by Gretel and Nick in Lumio and shared to the community of teachers at

the school. The students then used their technology skills to produce a cookbook using Google Slides.

Ms Watson said the results of the unit of work were outstanding: "All the students thrived in the garden, there was a corner and a space for everyone".

For further information or support on implementing any of the technologies or teaching and learning activities mentioned in this article you can contact the team at Integrate AV. Integrate AV has a dedicated education team who can assist you with technology solutions for your school. ▲

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 a Member of the Australian College of Educators and the Australian Council of Educational Leaders, and has served in public education as Chief Education Officer Professional Development, Assistant Director at the Centre for Learning Innovation and Senior Executive in the Connected Classrooms Program.



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Laser focused purchasing decisions

By Heather Barker Vermeer
Industry Reporter

During World War II, physicist Charles Townes used radar assisted bombing systems, microwave generators, following a theory developed by Einstein.

Einstein in the 1950s, created the “MASER” (Microwave Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation) before joining forces with his brother-in-law Arthur Schawlow and a graduate student called Gordon Gould to develop what they called the “LASER” (Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation). They understood the principles but could not build a working prototype themselves. It was in the 1960s that Thomas Maiman made the first synthetic ruby laser, producing a straight red laser beam.

Decades later, schools have added this technology to their toolkits, manufacturing unique designs with wood, MDF, acrylic, cardboard, and even leather materials. Computer-controlled, commercial laser cutters use high-powered infrared lasers to burn, melt, or vaporise material and activate assisting gas to clear away



Images courtesy of Trotec Laser

burned matter, resulting in cuts as small a diameter as 0.1mm or even smaller with ultra-specialist equipment.

Another popular option for schools is the ‘computer numerical control’, otherwise known as the CNC router. A machine that cuts hard materials

like wood, stone, and metal, as well as softer materials such as various plastics and foam, CNC routers cut directly into the material as opposed to the impact being laser driven. Device software is programmed by the user, transmitting instructions to the router to carry out the task.

With these technologies, students convert product ideas into prototypes, construct scale models of buildings, vehicles, and project dioramas, create or engrave jewellery, awards, and other accessories. Schools can also use them to make promotional materials, display stands, and other useful items. Of course, schools should understand the laser safety classification and the safety protocols of their new machines, implementing well-documented operating procedures. Don’t forget to utilise available training sessions provided by your chosen laser supplier and continually upskill your operators to meet safety requirements.

Industry Insights on Machine Use in Schools

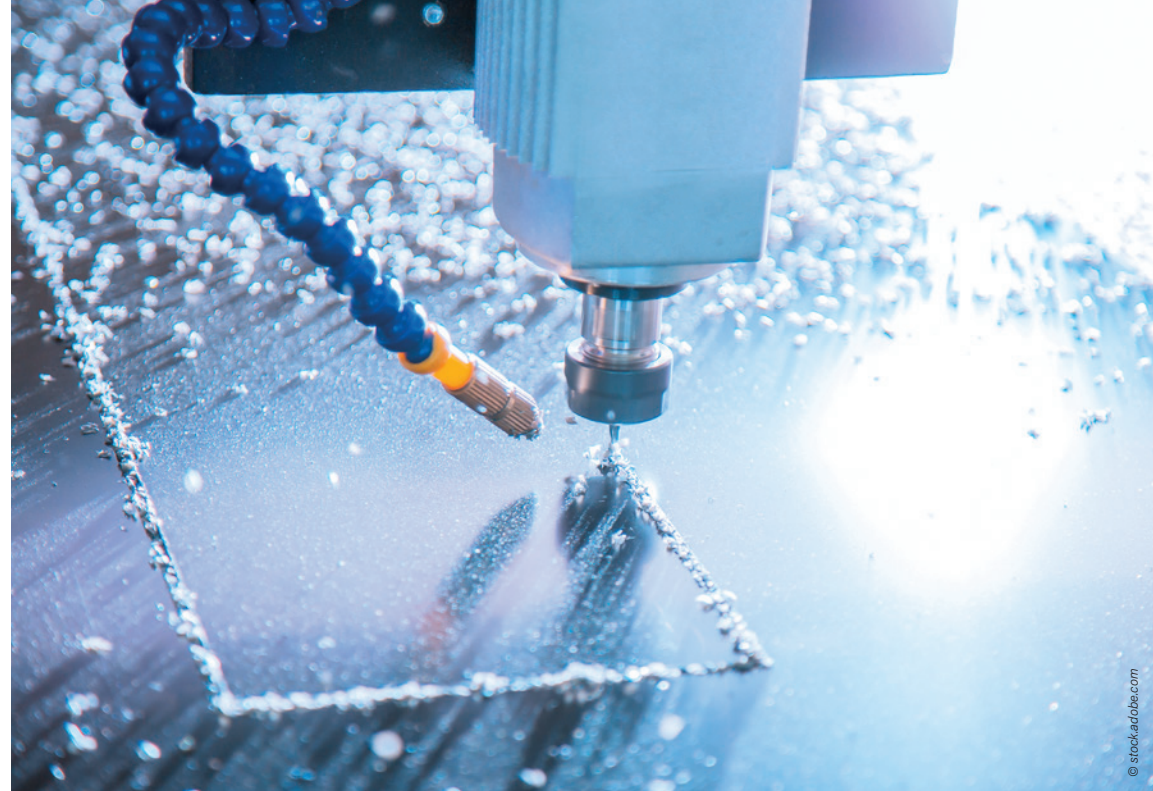
School News sought advice from experienced suppliers about what should be key considerations for schools that are choosing equipment to purchase for student-use.

Interestingly, Trotec Laser representative *Reece Moore* has noticed a shift in how schools now integrate these technologies: “Until recently, laser technology was predominantly used in secondary schools, but we are experiencing increased integration between primary, early learning, and senior schools.



"From the school's perspective, open plan and multi-use spaces enhance collaborative learning, encourage accountability, and maximise the potential for integrating the laser across many areas of the curriculum. Some schools develop collaborative projects between early learning and senior school programs. A popular idea is to integrate the laser into a 'greater good' program, which can be as simple as creating a laser group within the school to bring about positive interactions with the wider community. For example, laser cutting COVID masks for nursing homes; working with the local community shed; and supporting charitable initiatives or outreach programmes.

"School-made products we have seen include earrings and other personalised gifts, to raise money for consumables at recess and lunch time; flat pack easter bunnies, where students learned to temper chocolate and laser cut; furniture construction with complex joining mechanisms and inlays; marshmallows and engraved staff gifts; fabricated plastic components for the Subs in Schools programme;



and schools have also been processing recycled plastics to reduce landfill."

On how teachers might integrate the machines into the curriculum: "Schools are increasingly thinking outside the box and no longer teaching students to use a laser just

to make a keychain. Instead, thinking about processing different levels of material, testing, and reporting. For example, students can collaborate with mathematics for instruction in creating geometric shapes using Bezier curves.

"Alongside the traditional design

and technology curriculum, consider opportunities to integrate the laser into studies related to enterprise and business innovation. After all, it is not uncommon for school leavers to start their own laser businesses after graduation by utilising skills they learned in the classroom." ■

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“Drink some water, please”

Images courtesy of Civiq

By Shannon Meyerkort
Industry Reporter

State-of-the-art drinking water facilities make a big splash in schools.

When fluid intake is inadequate, dehydration can lead to reduced mental and physical performance, headaches, dizziness, tiredness, and more significant medical issues. In the context of schools, inadequate fluid intake can impact learning and behaviour and so it is vital that schools both encourage and provide sufficient drinking water options for students.

Government advice: children aged between five and eight should aim to drink one litre of water a day, children between 9 and 12 should drink 1.5 litres, and teenagers should be consuming around two litres of water per day—even more during hot weather and when participating in sport.

Encouraging students to drink more water can be a challenge, and the different drinking water products available to schools each have their pros and cons...

Bubblers and water fountains

Drinking fountains or bubblers



have long been ubiquitous in schools across the country as a way of making water accessible in schools. However, concerns about hygiene and impurities from aging pipes and fittings have led to their decrease in popularity. The latest designs seek to solve these issues using durable, rust-proof fittings to prevent impurities that affect water quality and can be fitted with filters to remove contaminants.

Other designs combine multiple bubblers in a traditional trough configuration together with bottle refill nozzles. Some units provide taps at different levels to accommodate wheelchair users and students of different

age groups, which is helpful at larger schools or sports facilities.

Hands-free sensor options

Since COVID, everyone is more aware of hand hygiene and sensor options that avoid the need to touch buttons are more popular. By waving their hand in front of a sensor, students can have the option of a traditional water fountain or bottle refill, with automatic timers that shut off the water flow after a designated time to reduce wastage. While these units offer filtered and refrigerated water as options, they tend to come in single

or double units making them less suitable for large locations where tens or even hundreds of students need to access drinking water at the same time.

Bottle refill stations

These can provide purpose-built, anti-bacterial nozzles to allow students to fill their reusable water bottles with fresh, clean water, reducing plastic waste so they work well as part of a whole-school sustainability initiative. There are many designs available including wall-mounted units, standalone units and those that combine with drinking fountains. Wheelchair-accessible stations are available, as are vandal-resistant designs suitable for school ovals or public areas.

Almost all units – water fountains, bottle refill, hands-free – offer refrigerated water options for both indoors and outdoors. While these are perfect for Australia's long, hot summer, you should ensure your unit has an automatic energy-saving option that turns off the chilling system in cooler weather.

For outdoor units especially, vandal-resistant materials are helpful—these reduce the need to twist or turn taps by providing simple pushbuttons with automatic shut-off valves



are less likely to be broken. Chrome and stainless-steel finishes are hardy, easy to clean and scratch-resistant too.

Filtered water systems

Almost all modern drinking water options come with in-built filters to ensure the removal of contaminants, sediment, and impurities. Different geographical areas will experience different water quality issues, which may impact on the most suitable type of filter technology.

So, when choosing a system, it is vital to enquire with suppliers about any ongoing maintenance regarding filters. How often must they be replaced? What is the ongoing cost of filters? Can it be done by the school, or must it be performed only as part of a regular service? Is there an automatic display that indicates when the filter needs changing or does the installing company send an email reminder?

Likewise, when installing a new system, it's important to set up a safety maintenance plan. For instance, water quality issues after sitting stagnant in pipes over the long school holidays are a unique challenge faced by schools, and there have been instances where children have ingested high levels of metals from drinking water when school returns after the holidays. This issue can be solved by adequately running the taps prior to staff and students returning.

Packaged water back-ups

Schools can find important uses for packaged drinking water offered to staff and students. For instance, during 'boil water' alerts when local water supplies have been contaminated due

to flood or fire, having a stock of water in individual or bulk-sized bottles is vital to provide students with necessary and portable access to fresh, clean water.

Approaches to promote drinking water

Schools can encourage students to stay hydrated and consume water during the day by providing clean, tasty water which is easily accessible. But simply providing the system may not be sufficient without an accompanying framework that educates students about the importance of drinking water.

Joining government initiatives or programs that actively promote drinking water during class is one way to increase water intake; in primary schools, an annual poster competition about the benefits of water might provide incentive, for example. Schools could also initiate community fundraising using sustainable, reusable water bottles.

Supplier Insights: Hybrid solutions a hit with schools

"Many schools across the country are grappling with old

infrastructure," said *Brittany Thompson*, Manager at *Civiq*.

"They want to update these older buildings; implement green, sustainable, high-performance solutions. And they want to do all this in order to transform schools into healthier, happier spaces. Yet, too many seem to forget that drinking water facilities are a huge part of how to foster positive teaching and learning."

"I'm sure you have seen the horrible, outdated bubblers with no option to fill a bottle. Those troughs do not encourage students to drink more water, let alone enjoy it.

"Schools can be a powerful force in driving change towards sustainability within our communities. Drinking water stations in schools foster good habits for life and teach students to reuse and refill. Banning single-use plastic from school grounds could also benefit the environment while helping to clean up the school grounds."

There are so many options now available to schools, from fountains, drinking stations and bottle refills to bubblers, and Brittany advised: "Schools love

hybrid units that combine a fountain with a bottle refill outlet in one drinking water station. It allows for popular bottle refills but also caters to students that forget to bring their own bottles.

"Another popular solution for schools is a station that has many drinking water outlets to reduce waiting time. Colourful custom art panels make drinking water more fun, while filters and chillers improve the taste. This type of unit is what schools need to encourage students to drink more water."

Making water available to students throughout the day is important, so the location of your new water station is important to consider. Place it where students gather, and it's even better if they can access water without needing to leave a learning space. Being able to refill their bottle means they can stay in class and stay hydrated.

A big part of solving the drinking water problem for schools is funding. According to Brittany: "Access to fresh and clean drinking water should be a priority for all schools but funding can be a challenge. However, grants, P&C funding and fundraising efforts by students can put good hydration within everyone's reach." ●



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Around the world in educational ways

By Rosie Clarke, Editor

Overseas student group travel has surged in popularity since COVID borders re-opened, with a few key improvements.

Dan Kellerd, Head of WorldStrides Australia, advised *School News* that "post-COVID, schools are assessing what protocols are in place and what support is available should a student get COVID while on-tour, and they should partner with an educational travel company with booking policies in place to minimise risk, allow for postponements and booking transfers or refunds if the tour cannot go ahead.



Dan Kellerd

"Addressing these elements during the planning process can provide peace-of-mind for parents, teachers and the school, taking the worry out of international travel in this new environment."

More efficient protocols and more focus on curriculum-linked itineraries has meant that advance planning is more important than ever, but that the breadth and



Image courtesy of WorldStrides Australia

pedagogical rigour of activity options is better than ever.

Jenny Murphy, Founder at Latitude Group Travel pointed out to us that when tours are custom designed, they are able to "offer teachers a huge range of choices of workshops and other activities the students can do".

"Timing is vital to ensure that we can book all the elements in time. We need as much time as possible prior to departure to get you the best of everything, so quick decision making is important."

Dan emphasised that overseas tours offer limitless activity potential: "Whether students follow in the footsteps of Australian soldiers in WWI uniforms or get hands-on with STEM learning in workshops at world-class museums, an international tour will take students on an inspiring journey of discovery that delivers curriculum-linked educational outcomes.



Jenny Murphy

For this reason, she explains that advance planning is crucial in order to "build a solid understanding of what curriculum-linked learning outcomes the teacher wants for the students".

"Student-athletes also benefit from programs to the UK, Spain, and Italy. Soccer players never forget the experience of playing against international teams in some of the biggest and most


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Image courtesy of Latitude Group Travel

renowned stadiums in Europe. Overseas tours open their eyes to the sheer magnitude of soccer's global impact, and students can experience playing a professional match in Barcelona or playing local teams in different countries to make friends and experience new cultures."

Jenny also told us that: "Experiential learning is fun, sometimes adventurous, and should always be curriculum linked! These are the activities that students love to do, rather than sightseeing, and when tours are custom designed, schools can combine subjects together while giving each subject their own activities. This helps keep students fresh and engaged throughout the tour."

"STEAM tours are so impactful because the itineraries are filled with experiential learning activities, so that students learn by doing. They are also exposed to subject experts and future careers they may not have thought about. The UK, Europe and USA are best for STEM, Performing Arts/Art and Sports. Europe and Asia are great for Languages, though we can also even offer these in Australia if schools want to stay local!"

In one activity example from

a school tour, Jenny said "students can dress up as diggers in 1917 and re-enact a specific event in history", while in another, "STEM students can experience astronaut training over a period of several days".


Another core tour consideration from Dan is that "Music festivals like *Rhapsody Rotorua* in New Zealand and *Summa Cum Laude* in Austria deliver a significant impact for students in terms of musical, social and personal growth, and language students also thrive when they find themselves at the heart of the language and culture they are learning.

"So, plan tours that will test language and music skills in real-life settings as opposed to the classroom. Immersed in their subject area and surrounded by individuals with a similar passion, students experience a deeper level of learning and skill development."

Additionally, Jenny noted: "Arts tours include behind the scenes technical, set and costumes workshops, Q&As with professionals in each area and students can even perform at Disney!" ■



Image courtesy of Latitude Group Travel



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Why strategy and risk management matter for school touring programs

By **Jenny Murphy**, Founder,
Latitude Group Travel

Secondary school leaders want more strategic touring programs than were available pre-COVID.

Previously, many schools took an 'ad hoc' approach to planning tours and individual teachers may have even designed and managed touring experiences themselves.

Unfortunately, this approach can create inconsistent student experiences and from a risk management perspective, it is much harder for executives and board members to have full visibility over things like activity inclusion, logistics, and operational decision-making.

Therefore we are encouraging school leaders to undertake a thorough strategic review



Jenny Murphy
Founder, Latitude Group Travel

and risk management audit of their school touring program.

Why a touring review, and why now?

Travel is an important experience for young people, especially when it is designed to engender true learning outcomes that support your classroom teaching.

A review offers the potential to maximise valuable educational

tour opportunities. The right tours include real world, experiential learning activities to engage students, giving them a wonderful way to absorb knowledge. In our experience, schools who have previously used traditional, off-the-shelf touring solutions may not have the opportunity to take advantage of customised, educationally powerful touring programs that are aligned to the school's strategy, vision, brand, and curriculum.

The right strategic partner will work with you to dig deep into each of these considerations, as well as looking at your current or previous touring programs, in addition to really listening to what you want to achieve through educational tours. They will then work with you to design a customised tour plan that is strategic, educational, and helps to extend student agency and leadership

The importance of a customised touring program

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to school touring. The program that is right for your school will be aligned to your strategy, mapped to your curriculum, and will cover domestic and international opportunities across all subjects and combination of subjects, including general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.

Importantly, it will also ensure sound environmental and ethical choices for the planet, as well as creating meaningful learning outcomes for students. Safety and risk management should also be carefully considered in both the review and the tour planning. Finally, the right partner will also be aware of your school's socio-economic situation for budgeting purposes.

Tyama: A deeper sense of knowing is Melbourne Museums latest exhibition, grounded in First Peoples Knowledge, this multisensory experience of nature explores Victorian animals and ecosystems using senses beyond human perception.

Tyama (Chah-muh) blends physical, digital, and audio scapes, transporting students into a 360-degree scape of Victoria's nocturnal world and creates an unmissable immersive learning experience connecting science and history learnings to the natural world.

Students can explore and play through six digital experiences and bring untold stories to life; chase pheromones with moths, use sound to see like a bat, learn from fish to sense without touch and swim with whales to discover the songlines that connect us all.

Tyama provides curriculum links from F to 10, including biological sciences, science as a human



endeavour and history while emphasising cross-curricular priorities of sustainability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

Amplify student learning with educational tools and resources in the museum and beyond the doors.

Gain knowledge in a personalised learning itinerary for your class, with a map of activities to each gallery and exhibition space in the museum to expand your *Tyama* experience.

See through sound with a guided nine-minute audio adventure and be taken on a journey, guided by animals that do just that and meet the storytellers Keerray Woorroong citizens Yoolongteeyt Dr Vicki Couzens and Yaraan Bundle, generously sharing the First Peoples ways of Being, Knowing and Doing that frame this experience, as well as their knowledge and language. Bookings made between the following dates including additional themed activities for students:

- **5-9 September:** National Biodiversity Month (including Threatened Species Day, 7 September)
- **4-7 October:** Australian Wildlife week (including World Habitat Day, 4 October)
- **14-18 November:** National Pollinator Week

Tyama: A deeper sense of knowledge educational sessions deliver a holistic approach to learning, encouraging deeper thinking through a range of learning activities supported by a multisensory experience rooted in First Nations Knowledge.

Make your next education excursion a *Tyama* one, only at Melbourne Museum.

Book your sessions:

- Terms 3 – 4
- Monday – Friday

Scan the QR to book your session and find out more. ▲





Students taking part in a tea ceremony. Image courtesy of Latitude Group Travel

Parents will appreciate not having to pay excessive amounts of money for tours without a strong focus on meaningful, engaging education!

Questions to consider

Consider the checklist below and how confidently you are able to respond to each with a 'yes'. If not, it might be time to undertake a strategic review and forward planning process:

- Is your school touring program educationally robust, meaningful, inspirational, linked to the curriculum you teach and custom designed to engender true learning outcomes and support classroom teaching?
- Does it include subject related, real-world, experiential learning activities that engage your students? Does it expose students to subject experts and potential future careers?
- Does it offer travel/unique learning opportunities for your whole secondary school, simultaneously relieving the burden from your teachers?
- Are identified/unidentified risks being mitigated through careful risk management, education and planning?
- Is your tour program planned out over a 2- or 3-year cycle so that the school, teachers and parents all know what opportunities will be offered at each year level well in advance?
- With ethically grey areas surrounding Service-Learning tours, have you considered alternatives?

- Does your school have tours that have been running for many years, which are not regularly reviewed for their educational merit, or risk, in line with current best practice?
- Do you have a best-practice risk management system in place so you can confidently run safe tours and programs for your students?

Benefits for the school community

We believe that the right touring program can be a key asset in the education of your students; particularly when packed with unique, experiential learning activities. Teachers, school leaders and parents will have peace of mind knowing that tours are educationally robust, more accessible to a wider range of students and that risk is managed appropriately.

Another benefit of a more strategic touring program is that it can be a standout feature of your marketing to prospective students and their families, and a real differentiator in building your school's unique brand proposition.

Imagine the power of being able to share the touring calendar with parents years in advance – and even highlighting this on your website as a key part of your marketing strategy.

And finally, perhaps the most important, non-tangible benefit of this process is the peace of mind from knowing you are armed with the information you need to improve transparency, educational merit, learning outcomes, and safety! ★

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Attention Teachers: Want your class to experience authentic primary sources and deepen their historical learning? Escape the classroom for an engaging, Outcomes-based learning experience at Cockatoo Island / Wareamah, Sydney Harbour!

Formerly a convict prison and dockyard, Cockatoo Island is a great place for students to extend their understanding of Australia's layered historical narrative. As they explore historical spaces with a knowledgeable guide, they will learn about the people who once lived and worked here and develop their historical learning skills. Critically, our education programs meet NSW Syllabus and Australian Curriculum Outcomes.

- **Cost:** \$14 per student (min. 10 per group), teachers/supervisors are FREE
- **Available:** Monday to Thursday by appointment



PRIMARY SCHOOL PROGRAMS

- Three programs available: *Making History* (Stage 1), *Convict Times* (Stage 2) and *Then, Now and Tomorrow* (Stage 3).
- Bookended by pre- and post-visit lesson plans, forming a lesson sequence.
- Pre- and post-visit lesson plans, resources and activities provide teachers with excursion-specific orientation and consolidate student knowledge.

PRIMARY SCHOOL PROGRAMS

- Two programs available: *History Site Study* (Stages 4 & 5) and *Social and Maritime Case Study* (Stage 6).
- Programs use storytelling and on-site resources to extend and consolidate historical learning.
- Students will consider what it was like to be a convict and a dockyard worker, and reflect on community-led actions to protect the island from developers.

Looking to enrich your school excursion? Arrange for your class to stay in our campground, situated alongside the island's Industrial, Docks and Convict Precincts.



To book an education program or school camping trip, scan the QR Code.

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How travel connects to the classroom

Image courtesy of WorldStrides

Travelling creates stronger teachers and, in turn, stronger students.

Studies continuously show that travel improves academic performance. Moreover, there are learning opportunities for students before, during, and after they return from an overseas school tour. For teachers, travel is professional development at the highest level. Travel brings lesson plans to life for classrooms, and the benefits are shared by the entire school community.

Learning about your destination

Before you travel, there are endless academic opportunities available for students to explore their destination. From key moments in history, to the music that found its beat in that particular location; each destination holds a vault of information. Students travelling to Rome can learn about ancient history and some of the most prominent sites before their trip so that when they arrive, they can delve even deeper into the topics that interest them.

Humanities classrooms can explore the literature, sociology, and language of a destination. On the other hand, science classrooms can study the plants, animals, and geologic features of the region they decide to visit. Use your tour as the setting for your next great lesson plan.



Walter Doyle
WorldStrides

Developing research skills

Research skills have become entirely digital for many of our students. So, take the learning offline and have students prepare questions for your local guides before you travel. Your students will be collecting primary sources that will reinforce their research. Take it to the next level and have students interview a local while on-tour. In doing this, students will understand the value of authentic resources, learn about ethnographic research methods, and how the secondary sources taken off the internet don't always tell the full story.

What can students research?

Use your itinerary to create a list of research topics, or have your students strengthen their intellectual curiosity skills by creating their own thesis statement.

Strong writing takes practice

Writing by hand may seem tedious to some, but the slow process gives your brain time to process the information. Have your students respond to reflection journal prompts each day to recount the experience by hand. Each student will create a narrative that makes sense to them, instead of the verbatim note-taking habits they sometimes fall into.

In doing so, you will be helping students increase both reading comprehension and literacy as the brain must actively engage with what they are writing. These small snapshots of their experience can roll into a larger, cross-curricular assignment after tour in the form of a short story, presentation, artistic, or multimedia project.

Students can teach their classmates about what they found especially interesting; they love being the experts!

Civics in the digital age

Our students seem to know their way around a phone or a computer better than we do, so let them use those skills for good.

During a travel program, mobile devices can help students complete a scavenger hunt or conduct research on the fly. Give students a specific topic to capture, or collectively get behind a specific cause, theme, or event. Deepen the learning experience

by limiting the time students have in which to capture the necessary content at each destination. This keeps them off their phones the entire time but still gives them space for at least one good selfie.

Lesson plans come to life

When teachers travel, it shows up in their lesson plans. The amount of information available can seem overwhelming at times, but allowing educators the time and opportunity to explore their passions further can only heighten the learning that takes place when they return.

Teachers capture the information shared on tour in a number of ways and use the experiences to create context for their instruction. By sharing experiences with students, you open the world to the entire classroom. Students may be unaware of how diverse and information-rich the world is, and first-hand experiences help broaden that perception. Primary sources, whether in the form of photos or video, motivate students to collect their own meaningful sources and seek out travel experiences of their own.

Regardless of what grade level or subject area you teach, your tour and classroom instruction can work hand in hand. You will be creating a unique learning experience for all your students; one that will stay with them for a lifetime. ★

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By Heather Barker Vermeer
Industry Reporter

Chances are, you'll have memories of a school trip to the zoo from when you were a student.

It's one of those school experiences that stays with you. On mine, a greedy goose ate someone's sandwiches, we temporarily 'lost' one of the less attentive members of the group, the orangutans got overly amorous, someone stank out the coach with their egg mayonnaise sandwiches, and sick bags proved convenient for someone up the front.

Never a dull moment. However, modern zoos and wildlife centres are now places of education, not entertainment. Facilitating a student excursion to a wildlife sanctuary or zoo is a versatile way to expose them to a range of new ideas, activities, real-world issues, and hands-on learning experiences that can be linked to curriculum topics across many subject areas.

4 known positive impacts in outdoor education

Outdoor learning experiences, commonly referred to in school environments as Outdoor Education, are becoming of greater focus within the educational curriculum.

What was once considered a novel form of entertainment in the outdoors to break up the seriousness of the school year has quickly become an important factor within educational success.

These days quality Outdoor Educators are expected to create custom outdoor experiences that follow yearly curriculum structures, ensuring long-term benefits are provided to students and faculty alike.

Positive impacts Outdoor Education has on the classroom are wide ranging. Four of the most well documented ones include –

1. Increased capability for self-evaluation, self confidence and ability to tackle real world scenarios.
2. Development of interpersonal relationships, leadership capabilities and abilities to work together to accomplish goals.
3. Positive influence on interactions within the classroom.
4. Diminishes the perception of underachievement perceived in the classroom.

Wilderness Escape has been running Outdoor Education programs for 30 years and is one of SA's largest and most respected outdoor companies. Our highly qualified Outdoor Educators are happy to talk to you about how we can formulate the best outdoor camp or day program to achieve the above positive results for your students and teachers. ▲

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Some wildlife sanctuaries around Australia work in close partnership with Traditional Owners to engage respectfully in knowledge sharing and ensure that educational presentations provided to students is grounded in conservation and caretaking efforts.

After absorbing some new knowledge and admiration for the wonders of the animal world, children are more likely to become ambassadors for its protection, on learning about the impact of conservation efforts. This can lead to in-depth projects post-visit and help develop compassionate kids with a thirst for lifelong learning.

One-of-a-kind memories cement learning

It's less about getting up-close-and-personal with a wild animal, and more about conserving the future of our planet. Wildlife sanctuary excursions lift the veil for students on the challenges of climate change, the science behind environmental protection and the impact of conservation

efforts and increasingly require active participation in learning.

Clearing out animal dung is a fragrant but fun task that might just provide a sensory experience to remember! Younger students will enjoy learning about different ecologies and food chains by watching a crocodile feeding presentation or maybe feeding some different animals themselves: the sensation of having a giraffe wrap its long tongue around a stick of celery and extract it from small hands is a memory will live on long after the meal has been digested. Throwing apples to the elephants and watching how they twirl their multi-purpose trunks to acquire their snacks is a sight to behold.

These venues often offer educational activities, special events, conservation days, field trips, a chance to be involved in research programs, the chance to become a keeper for a day and educational STEM-related workshops. Some also offer curriculum-based learning plans and can transform the zoo into an outdoor classroom for students of all ages and abilities,

even integrating specially formulated sensory experiences.

Research from the University of Warwick re-affirms the importance of a trip to the zoo for students, showing that a zoo visit can boost a child's science and conservation education more than books or classroom teaching alone.

Eric Jensen, the Professor of Sociology that produced the research report, found: "53 percent [of students aged 7-14] had a positive change in educational or conservation-related knowledge areas, personal concern for endangered species or new empowerment to participate in conservation efforts" after a school zoo excursion. He even found that educational presentations by staff increased learning by double over self-guided trips.

To test what information children were absorbing, the study asked students to draw favourite animals and their habitats before and after a zoo excursion with their classes. For 10-year-olds, 51 percent were able to identify

and label scientific terms like 'canopy' and draw more animals in their correct habitats.


A safe place for children to gain confidence in navigating their way, zoos and wildlife centres can also be ideal locations for orienteering or navigational activities that allow students to gain map reading and directional skills.

Research from a leading International Zoo Association, estimates 183 million people visit an accredited zoo every year, 69 percent of which are made up of groups or parties that include children.



Development of language skills, understanding of biological concepts and knowledge of different habitats are all on offer, beyond learning about various animals and their conservation.




So, whether travelling locally or venturing farther afield, conservation trips provide an opportunity for developing interpersonal skills, as well as conservation and climate health learning, animal care and environmental protection. ■

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Sports Uniform Superstardom

By Heather Barker Vermeer
Industry Reporter

When one of Australia's oldest single sex schools enabled a trans student to remain at the all-boys school despite having transitioned to female, in a largely student-led decision, it made headline news earlier this year.

One of the key factors in creating a sense of belonging was the school uniform. The school collaborated with the student to custom-redesign a version of the school uniform for her that would make attendance feel more comfortable. This story highlights the importance of school uniforms in community

building. Whether it is in the classroom or on the sports field, clothing speaks powerfully to our sense of personal identity and collective belonging. In sport, the power and pride that comes from shared identity and team recognition can make a huge difference both on and off the field.

Sports uniforms are also widely popular among students: fascinating research published recently in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* found that 62 percent of students who participated in their study reported a desire to wear their sports uniform every day. In the same study, two thirds of students also reported feeling they would be more physically active during breaktime if they were wearing their sports uniform. However, researchers McCarthy et al pointed out that many

schools still have policies in place that insist students must not wear sports uniforms on non-sports days. They write:

"Given the low prevalence of children, particularly girls, meeting physical activity guidelines and the decline in physical activity as children age, allowing students the opportunity to wear more activity-friendly uniforms may represent a simple, inexpensive and potentially effective strategy in achieving population-level improvements in children's physical activity" (94-95).

Moreover, in his well-known research, Jon Swain from University College London found that for primary school pupils' "style of dress was intrinsically linked to their own identity" and so clothes act as a powerful signifier for students' feelings of worthiness and

form an essential ingredient of social acceptability (or, on the flipside, rejection) within their specific peer-groups and cultures. Twain's study showed that from a young age, students' sense of identity, community, and belonging are impacted by their clothing. As such, at all age levels, team uniforms instil a sense of unity, value and belonging that can help symbolise the school's values far beyond distinguishing players across opposing teams.

Interestingly, in their 2021 study, researchers Bass et al delved deeply into the correlation between professional sport team identification and community pride, exploring links between feelings of "pride in possessions" and "pride in performance", which authors suggest "create a perception of prestige among sport consumers".

As relevant to the school sports field as the international sport world then, pride is a powerful cornerstone in sport team allegiance, and one which can be enhanced in various ways. Wearing the school colours and crest on your chest can be as symbolic as it is practical on the field.

The makings of a stellar school uniform

As design and manufacturing innovation continues apace, with a trend towards sustainable production, school uniforms are increasingly created for practicality and performance. With unlimited budgets, the sportswear world is a school's oyster – aerodynamics, breathability, and ergonomics can all come into play at a level accessible to a school's clothing coffers.

Modern fabrics include bamboo and hemp for their sustainable properties. Adding garments made from these game changing components can provide a boost in unlikely

62 percent of students who participated in their study reported a desire to wear their sports uniform every day

ways, such as environmental feelgood among players and perhaps even a quirky news story to share in the school's communications to its community or local media. It is certainly unlikely to do your brand any harm.

Schools usually aim to strike a balance between fashion, innovation, performance, practicality, and the aforementioned sustainability. Keeping it cool is important both during the heat of sports battle and in the minds of fashion-conscious students. It's all well and good having

the very latest in hi-tech fabric and design if clothing doesn't fit with students' perceptions of 'cool'. There needs to be an acceptable level of wearability for most teens. In other words, school sportswear needs to be a 'no cringe' zone.

Durability and washability are key considerations and, in 2022, there is no excuse for providing shoddy short-life sports garments. Warm waterproof jackets are a heavy-duty item with a long shelf life and seasonal use that can be customised with initials, for example, as well

as the school logo and sport name. Initialled pieces say, 'I'm a part of the team, but I'm also uniquely me.' They promote inclusion and individuality – cornerstones of sport and life.

Off the field, supporters, often passionate parents and caregivers, love being part of the school sports community. Enabling them to demonstrate their support outwardly with their clothing is a way to include and celebrate, both on the side lines at game day and beyond. ■

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The US Open surface offering so much versatility for schools



Cranbourne West PS. Project by Grassports Australia



St Martin's College. Project by TEB Contractors

Very few sports surfaces used in schools come with such global credentials as Laykold. In 2020 Laykold became the official court surface of the US Open – the first surface change for the Grand Slam in 42 years.

Since its introduction in the 1940's, millions of square meters of Laykold surface have been installed worldwide.

From tennis and netball clubs to the Miami Open and Davis Cups, it is an incredibly popular surface choice for tennis, netball, basketball and multipurpose applications.

Many schools within Australia and abroad have chosen Laykold for sport and recreational purposes due to its versatility, colours, durability, ease of maintenance and all-weather performance.

Whilst there are a variety of Laykold systems available, the most popular systems for schools include Laykold Masters Float - the perfect choice for revitalising tired facilities suffering from cracked or deteriorated court substrates.

The system provides 21% force



Project by West Coast Sporting Surfaces

reduction due to the inclusion of a shock pad layer, resulting in better protection for student joints and fewer injuries.

The shock pad contains recycled tennis balls (4,000 balls used in a single court), with the topcoat also consisting of 50% renewable material by weight.

St Martin's College in South Australia recognised the benefits of the Laykold Masters Float system which has recently been installed at the school by Laykold experts TEB Contractors.

Students were welcomed back in 2022 with bright, new multi-sport Laykold courts replacing

worn synthetic turf ones.

Another popular system for schools is Laykold Advantage which is a high performance 3 – 4 coat acrylic system with a hard wearing and long-lasting, non-slip surface.

The specially designed surface is also cooler and better to play on than bare asphalt. It does not include a cushioning layer.

Grassports Australia recently completed an amazing transformation of existing asphalt courts at Cranbourne West Primary School in Victoria. Using Laykold Advantage in midnight blue and dark

green, Grassports created two vibrant multi-sport courts that have reinvigorated a tired and neglected space.

Laykold is also a great canvas for creating amazing ground art. West Coast Sporting Surfaces in Western Australia recently completed a multi-sport and recreational play area for a High School, again using the Laykold Advantage system.

However, they incorporated some fun, educational games into the design which were meticulously painted onto the surface.

Laykold is proudly manufactured in Melbourne, Australia by APT Asia Pacific.

It is the only fully integrated manufacturer of synthetic sport and recreational surfaces with ISO 9001 certification for quality management in Australia.

All Laykold systems come with a 2-5 year Warranty, are available in a wide range of colours, cater for multiple line markings and are suited to all weather conditions. ▲

For more information on Laykold please visit aptasiapacific.com.au, call 1800 652 548 or email info@aptasiapacific.com.au



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Out of Order:

Image courtesy of Solaris Paper

School Washroom Crisis Needs Renovating

By Shannon Meyerkort
Industry Reporter

Students deserve school washrooms they aren't afraid to use...

A parliamentary hearing in May heard from the NSW P&C Federation and representatives from local schools that students were anxious about using public school bathrooms due to their disgraceful state.

For some, the experience is so distressing they try to avoid using the bathroom during school hours by limiting water and food intake, which can cause dehydration, discomfort, and even long-term health issues.

Response by the Department of Education

A Department of Education spokesperson told *School News*: "Addressing maintenance to

keep students learning in some of the best school facilities is of the highest priority.

"The NSW Government is investing \$8.6 billion in school infrastructure over the next four years, continuing its program to deliver 160 new and upgraded schools to support communities across NSW.

"Even with such a significant amount of funding being directed towards maintenance, as well as numerous upgrade and refurbishment projects being delivered under the capital works programs, there will always be maintenance work to be done in a property portfolio worth approximately \$33 billion."

Old, unrenovated washrooms have a host of problems, including broken or empty toilet paper dispensers, lack of soap and paper towels, toilets that do not flush or are easily clogged, bad smells and pools of water

on the floor and in sinks from blocked pipes, mould, lack of privacy caused by broken latches, and vandalism.

Ways to improve the bathroom experience

School washrooms need attention and resources, and they need to be designed with student safety and wellbeing in mind. Here are some of the ways schools can effectively refurbish student washrooms:

Ensure partitions and doors provide maximum privacy by making walls full height, reducing the gap under walls and minimising the gaps around doors. Also, Design cubicles to be large enough for students to enter and exit with a large school bag and provide hooks on the doors so they do not have to leave bags on the floor.

Floors should be easy to clean with large tiles and

minimal grout, while paint for walls and ceilings should be treated with anti-mould/anti-bacterial additives. Natural light and improved ventilation will also help keep mould and bad smells at bay.

Sink design should ensure water cannot pool; concealed cisterns may help to reduce surfaces that can be damaged or require cleaning; hands-free sanitary products also help to reduce germ contact points.

Provide gender-neutral designs or all-access bathrooms and ensuring adequate facilities for students who use wheelchairs or with mobility issues and provide adequate sanitary bins for students—including primary schools and including free menstrual products where possible. Increasingly, schools are looking to install vape and smoke detectors that deter their use in high school washrooms.



For some students, the experience is so distressing they try to avoid using the bathroom during school hours

Industry Q&A:

Refurb Tips for Your School from Washroom Paper Specialist and National Business Development Manager at Solaris Paper, Jeff Lewis

Q: What is the first thing you would consider when refurbishing a school washroom?

A: High-capacity dispensers that are strong and durable and have a viewing window so cleaning staff can see how much is left without opening each unit.

Q: What important considerations do schools overlook when redesigning washrooms?

A: Toilet partitions must not only provide privacy but also need to be able to support the toilet paper dispensing unit that is mounted to it.

Also, toilet cisterns are increasingly designed to use less water, so schools need to ensure the toilet paper they purchase breaks easily to prevent blocked pipes.

Q: Hand sanitising and drying solutions have higher priority since COVID. What do schools need to know?

A: It has taken a pandemic, and a lot of signage in school washrooms, for students to take hand hygiene seriously, and hand drying is just as important as handwashing because wet hands spread bacteria more easily.

Many studies have shown that drying with paper towel is more effective at removing bacteria and preventing cross-contamination than electric hand dryers, but not all hand towels are created equal in my view.

Technological improvements

in the drying of paper have created a new type of paper called *Through Air Dried* (TAD), which is dried by a process of blowing air through the sheet.

This process means the fibres in the paper are not as compressed as traditional paper towels; air pockets between the fibres improve softness, thickness, stretch, and most importantly – absorbency – so when wet hands touch TAD paper, the water is quickly drawn into those air pockets.

Q: What are the benefits of TAD hand towel for schools?

A: First, less towels are needed to properly dry hands.

But also, the extra softness means it is less abrasive for regular hand washing and the extra absorbency means it is quicker to achieve dry hands, which

helps maintain good hygiene among children and teens.

Over time, fewer dispenser refills save schools time and money, and it's better for the environment too.

Q: Have you noticed increased environmental concern among schools?

A: We are seeing schools focus on products that come with a PEFC or FSC certification, so they know the product comes from an independently certified sustainable source.

Recycled products can often have a similar carbon footprint to virgin products due to the collection, transportation and chemical converting that needs to take place and many substitutes for tree paper, such as bamboo, are less regulated and often deforestation of native forests remains a concern. ●

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Getting to grips

with school outdoor furniture options

By Shannon Meyerkort
Industry Reporter

There is a growing body of research that shows spending time outdoors for play and learning is beneficial to children's development, wellbeing, and health.

Specialist designs should be able to cater specifically to outdoor classroom pedagogy. So, what outdoor furniture options exist for schools?

Social school furniture for outdoors

Seating has moved on from the basic two-person side-by-side buddy bench. Outdoor furniture can now be customised to any space and shape, from octagon benches that wrap around trees to curved seating arrangements reminiscent of story circles complete with special seating for the teacher. Armless seating provides easier access from all directions, while backless benches can allow children to sit facing either direction and can be used for seating in the middle of a playground or courtyard.

Outdoor options now prioritise social furniture that promotes group interaction. For instance, varied circular, angular, and staggered seating, so students can choose their own informal arrangement, and new jumbo-sized table arrangements for large groups of students to sit together.

Colour is a helpful tool for schools, so many modern outdoor table options allow teachers to group students by assigning certain tables. Traditional picnic settings are still popular in primary schools but larger four-sided settings are gaining momentum as they can accommodate bigger groups of older students working on laptops.



Image courtesy of Felton

Portable seating gives maximum flexibility and empowers teachers to design different layouts. Versatility is essential: furniture arrangements that are dual-purpose (such as benches that double as planter boxes) offer students creative functionalities to engage with.

Safety and material considerations

Will your furniture be in direct sun and pose a safety risk, or protected from the elements?

Options include permanent roofed structures as well as table settings with umbrellas. Greater awareness of sun-smart behaviours and growing weather extremes have made sheltered outdoor furniture an increasingly popular solution for schools. These enable students to sit in the shade during the summer months, and work protected from wind and rain during the winter months.

Aluminium is a popular choice for the Australian climate as it will not rust or deteriorate, and it is lightweight making it suitable for portable seating and benches.

Some metal furniture also comes coated in a special thermoplastic coating to prevent corrosion. Wood is also a sustainable substance that blends into the natural environment, while plastic is lightweight.

Concerned about vandalism? Some materials are more resistant to graffiti than others, so enquire with your chosen suppliers, particularly if purchasing outdoor furniture that will be publicly accessible after hours.

Industry Perspectives

Versatile trends for schools to adopt

"With added pressure on schools for spacing, they are purchasing outdoor furniture to help create valuable multipurpose outdoor spaces for breaktimes and scheduled class times," Felton National Sales Manager, Gus White informed us.

"From formal-style outdoor classrooms to stackable bench seating, schools are utilising outdoor spaces more and more and require versatile outdoor furniture to meet these needs.

"This furniture needs to be durable, practical, and cost-effective. Aluminium is popular with schools because it is both hardwearing and long-lasting. Its lightweight nature means freestanding outdoor furniture can be easily moved around school environments. In addition, aluminium requires very minimal maintenance to keep it looking like new. In a high usage environment like a school, these factors equate to value for money and make aluminium a popular choice for school outdoor furniture.

"Bench seating is a staple in all schools: permanent seating solutions include bolt down or inground benches that work well in playgrounds and adding powder-coated colour on leg supports or through end caps can brighten outdoor spaces to align with school colours.

"For multipurpose areas though, temporary, or free-standing bench seating offer more versatile solutions, allowing space to be used differently depending on the required activities. Table settings with seating on all sides is good

options for enabling face-to-face interaction at breaktimes, enhancing sociability and saving space in compact areas."

In addition: "Sheltered seating offers important weather protection and means outdoor spaces can be used year-round. These options come in all-in-one units as standard and are bolted down for stability. Designs often feature a sturdy slanted Colorbond roof for maximum shelter."

Outdoor style tips for schools

The Area Safe Group General Manager, Craig Light told us: "There is definitely a growing trend among schools opting for more commercial-looking furniture in secondary schools."

He said: "it helps close the gap, preparing students to enter higher education and the workforce".

"There is a general misconception that aluminium slats are too hot to sit on, but the interesting fact is that hardwood and recycled composite slats are dense materials that can



Image courtesy of The Area Safe Group

reach higher temperatures than aluminium, heat up more quickly, and retain the heat for longer.

"Schools can get good looking, functional outdoor furniture within a very reasonable budget," he advised, listing some of the different outdoor furniture styles that he recommends for schools, which included:

"Collaborative styles where students can sit in more of a group layout (four-sided or

circular settings); and Indigenous designs, including yarning circles, which are also popular with groups. There is also a trend towards covered picnic settings that complement the aesthetics of the school and are very attractive looking compared to plain aluminium settings. Free-standing aluminium shelters that are maintenance-free compared to more high-maintenance timber or steel framed shelters are also becoming popular for

school sports sidelines, bus waiting areas, bike compounds, BBQ areas, and passive seating."

Finally, he pointed out schools should know "not all furniture should be in the shade", and to "make sure there is sun available for winter". For benches around sports courts, he said "portable may be better whereas benches in quads or lunch areas need to be fixed. In-ground-style mounting, or wall mounting is also better on sloped ground". ■



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Digital Signage Dos and Don'ts

By Shannon Meyerkort
Industry Reporter

The demand for up-to-date information is constant, and digital signage can play a big part in keeping parents, students, teachers and the broader community informed.

Digital signage can be used to share school achievements, warn of closures, promote upcoming events, or simply display the time and date, and it is regulated under three main areas: dwell time (how long each message appears for), luminance (how much light the sign gives off) and animation (moving images). Here are some tips to consider when purchasing or upgrading:

DO consider the range of

messages you will want to promote. Your set-up should be capable of displaying the messages you want, whether that involves text, images, video, or a range of the above.

DO consider location – will your sign sit at the corner of a busy intersection that will be viewed by thousands of people or stationed outside the school building just seen by staff and students? Consider weather exposure and check if there are local council regulations concerning signage and possible distractions to drivers.

DON'T disregard your older, existing signage if you are tempted to dispose of it as some companies may be able to retrofit new digital screens into existing frames—check with your chosen supplier first to get advice tailored to your school's situation.



Images courtesy of Signpac



DON'T forget to ensure the materials used are suitable for the space. Are your signs going to be weather and vandal-proof? How easy is it to replace broken elements? Communicate with your chosen supplier to ensure you purchase the right product for your school's budget, capacity, and needs.

Industry Viewpoint: Why do schools choose digital outdoor signage?

For schools trying to better manage their digital signage content, "interactive technology is at the forefront of the modern world and signage is no exception," according to School Signs by Signpac General Manager, Sam Nguyen.

"Ensuring safety and security for all teachers, students, and stakeholders is one of the most important foundations of any school, and centrally controlled 4G connected software is the solution to this. Products that

are connected by an internet connection can be accessed from anywhere on earth, at any time, which means that messages can be instantly visible on 4G connected digital signage boards. Most importantly, they can also be time programmed, which means that if there is an emergency, the community will be made aware instantly."

Schools also use digital signage to boost community morale: "This community engagement is central to any school's vision; it influences perception and often the everyday reality that students experience.

"Programmed displays can promote student achievements, markers of school progress, or messaging as simple as 'Happy Holidays'. All this provides extremely engaging content, and with the new digital signage board technology available, it can be in the form of images, messages, videos, or custom designed graphic displays.

Off-the-shelf options
can only tackle top
temps *to some degree...*



“Simple acts of kindness show relevance and importance to all members of the wider community and greatly assist in building a school’s ethos and sense of its values.”

There are some common purchasing mistakes that crop up around digital signage among schools, though: “Often, signage providers compete on costings and cut corners.

“Schools need to know that quality digital signage is a product that pays dividends in the long term, so quality and performance consistency should be at the forefront of any decision making.

“Signage is a niche industry and specifications are often

misunderstood, which is where experience matters.

“Access points, electrical connections, safety requirements, and design features are all areas where mistakes are commonly made.

“Specialist providers are those that have multiple decades of experience in this field and work to ensure that our signs are of the highest pixelation quality with market leading warranties and service. With limited exposure or experience, it is often difficult to comprehend issues that may occur in the entire project experience. So, the best way a school can ensure the right specifications are met, is by talking to a signage expert – particularly for digital signs.” ■



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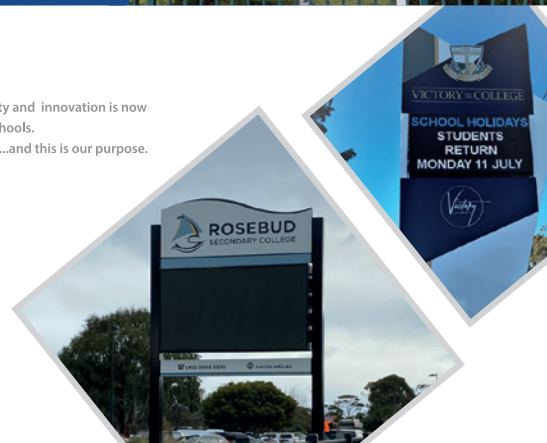
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A 'learn first' playground design

By Heather Barker Vermeer
Industry Reporter

Playground design, inclusive of equipment and landscaping, is an educational priority.

Learners – particularly learners who find concentrating in class difficult – spend a considerable amount of focused time in the playground, and in the right environment, there are opportunities for them to develop a wealth of skills that will help them back in the classroom. Play panels and sensory spaces like sand pits and musical play equipment can help students soothe while building cognitive skills, for instance.

It's well known that playgrounds are not only good for students' physical health and overall mental and emotional wellbeing but, more and more they are being recognised as providing important learning environments for schools.

2022 playground design trends: sensory, fitness, and risk

Design trends have leaned into inclusivity and innovation over the last several years and there is still an emphasis on accessible equipment. Playground accessibility encompasses many things, including wide ramps to cater for mobility aids, sensory play areas and opportunities for those with sensory processing disorders to explore, or perhaps a sound element or braille panel to enhance the play experience for visually impaired children.

Innovative design creates new and novel playground experiences. One popular item we noticed striking a chord internationally is a piece of net climber equipment where a transfer platform attaches to an accessible route, then leads to a six-foot long zip slide. This obstacle course style-design enables learners along a spectrum of physical ability and age group



level to challenge themselves through mitigated risk while they experience a super fun ride!

These designs that encourage positive risk-taking have become more abundant in recent years. Climbing, swinging, sliding, and transferring between pieces of equipment can give students the chance to explore their boundaries, increase courage and self-confidence and achieve goals. Providing a surface that minimises any fall damage is also key! Playground towers are another way designers are utilising innovative design techniques to maximise the play possibilities in 2022.

Spire towers, for example, use square platforms to save space and reduce cost, by providing different levels to a structure for different needs. It may be to provide an entrance to a tube slide or to house an interactive feature such as a steering wheel or weather dial.



There also continues to be an increase in popularity of multi-use and intergenerational play and exercise spaces. Studies show when adults and children engage in playful activities together, they experience more profound and significant benefits than playing alone.

Adapted to the school context, this could look like playgrounds that are thoughtfully designed to appeal both to older and younger students by facilitating levels of sensory and social engagement.

And hey, why not create a playground that benefits staff too; it's not unheard of for professional development, team building, and even staff meetings to receive a much-needed injection of fun.

Fitness-style equipment, zip-lines, and larger equipment pieces make great ice-breaker activities for staff as well as students, and gamified, social designs like disguised seating and thermoplastic markings

can facilitate creative thinking, as well as offer neutral, productive space for conflict resolution to take place.

Exercise and fitness equipment

Increasingly, high schools are keen to add fitness equipment to their playgrounds; this age group of students may be less likely to make use of traditional playground equipment but will relish the opportunity to utilise an outdoor gym.

From sit-up benches and balancing boards to cardio-boosting air walkers and ladders, integrate a variety of equipment to encourage students to use during lunch or breaks – it's a great way for students to develop healthy habits as they learn to associate physical activity with leisure rather than high pressure sports or formal learning environments.

Culturally informed designs for playful learning spaces

Playground design has become more thoughtful, with panels sharing some of the stories and histories of the land on which the students play and acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of those lands. Schools should partner with their local communities to find out how they can best care for their outdoor spaces and create school play designs that feel connected to the wider school community.

Some playground designs can even double as dedicated learning areas that supplement indoor classrooms.

This concept really came into its own over the past two years when well-ventilated, socially distanced spaces were at a premium. They enable schools to provide hybrid teaching environments where children can learn in alternative surroundings. Here, it's important to consider things like rain cover and shade in your discussions with suppliers. ■

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