

Australian Principals Federation

President's Message—Julie Podbury



It's December!!!

You can tell it's December because schools are like pressure cookers, and people are cranky. I had three exchanges with members this week that I'm sure will resonate with you.

One principal told me he was losing three days a week, dealing with a couple of really troubled kids in his school, whose behaviour was becoming increasingly destructively disruptive as the end of the year nears. He was taking these kids on for one on one activities, just to give his teachers and the other students in the class a break to allow them some productive working time and try to diminish the anguish in the balance of the students.

Another told me about the challenges from the region when trying to impose a suspension to a deeply disruptive student with whom all possible measures have been attempted. Staff and students needed a break from the violence, disruption and deep anxiety being caused in classes. She also told me of the threatening and abusive emails from parents making demands regarding subject choices for their children.

Yet another told me that if one more person dares tell her "you'll be winding down now", she may just "dong" them.

This is just a snapshot and I'm sure you get the picture and can identify with one or more of these stories. John Handley has heard similar stories and has seen the pressure building up as demands are made on Principal Class Employees, from all directions. He has penned a reminder of how we can change the narrative and regain control. Mark McKelson has looked at the same issue through his lens.



Recent APF Elections. The post election report from the AEC identified some APF rules that were hard to interpret or implement. As a consequence we are required to determine our course of action, report back to the AEC, and then if rule changes are required, make the necessary changes and report those changes to the Registered Organisation Commission. Any members who wish to see this information, the report is published in the members only section of the APF website. While minor, we are taking advice from our lawyer in relation to the matter, and anticipate making the recommended changes.

Applications for positions in schools—Selection Criteria. I was at a meeting at DET last week and during a report on the new financial incentives for hard to staff schools, a conversation about selection criteria arose.

One Principal indicated he would not even look at an applicant who had not addressed the selection Criteria. This was challenged. **The conversation caught a few people off guard** and is worth reporting.

Some individuals from outside DET are applying for these positions advertised under the incentive scheme, and **not addressing the selection criteria**. Many principals discard these applications and would not even consider such applicants. The point made was this: If you have a good field to select then follow the normal process. But should the field be light then it is worth remembering that there are three methods for determining if the SC is met: 1. Application, 2. Interview and 3. Referees. In my view the application is the least reliable as they have become so generic. The referee reports may not always accurately reflect the qualities of an applicant and become the second least reliable indicator. The interview is likely your best guide.

The consensus was that in a light field, providing an applicant is assessed against the Selection Criteria in one or more of the three methods, it is acceptable to consider those who have not addressed the selection criteria in writing and **not have to face the MPB for a process failure**. As long as you can verify their capacity to meet the selection criteria through the referee checks or the interview, it may be worth persevering and **not losing a good candidate** who may not yet know the DET ropes.

There was a further suggestion that a model lesson with students is a very reliable indicator, as part of the selection process.

In this issue:

It isn't the festive season in schools just yet as the related tales indicate on P1.

A comment about **Selection Criteria** is a must read piece on P1

John Handley delivers another impressive piece about **PCEs getting some perspective back in the end of year onslaught** on P2.

Parenting. One of the greatest challenges we face in our roles as school leaders, is managing poorly behaved and disruptive children, as well as the impact this has on other students and staff. An article commencing on P3 of this newsletter by **Victoria Prooday**, hits the nail on the head regarding [parenting in the last decade](#). I suggest reprinting it in your school newsletter.

A brief **Professional Learning Day report** from [24th Oct](#) is on P5

Finally, on P6 **Mark McKelson**, delivers another insightful Blog 15 on the challenges of [Week 9](#).

Reflection and Celebration - Let there be Light! John Handley, APF Advisor



Amidst the tumult of school life in this final passage of time in the 2019 school year so often our physical, mental and emotional capabilities are stretched to the limit. It seems everybody wants something from us – the union sub-branch wants to talk about workload or consultation, the SEIL wants to meet regarding our 2020 AIP or PDP, parents and students have concerns about 2020 classes, teachers want to be appreciated for their efforts, you're still trying to finalise staffing for 2020, and, if you are unlucky, somebody has complained enough to bring the Merit Board or some other investigation into play. Many are cantankerous, demanding and even selfish, and we have so much on our 'must do' list. There is arguably no more stress on you as a Principal than at this time of year. It's difficult to focus on the positives, and to recognise our achievements and successes for the year.

So 'what's new'; 'Let's just get through this' and 'bring on 21 December asap' I hear you say!

Maybe it's time to reshape this situation. Let's not wait until a last day luncheon or morning tea. Stop just doing and being influenced to react, and focus on those most important values that should underpin our individual and collective personal and professional interactions. We might take this as an opportunity to turn it into a time of reflection and celebration through the quality of our leadership.

This need not create additional workload for us. In fact, there is no better time to influence the climate and culture of a school than during its most stressful and distressing periods.

In this context it enables us to revisit our narrative of leadership and school improvement. It can include (a) restating our understanding of context of the work at our school; (b) reminding others of our school values and goals; (c) in the context of current school performance and aspirations, highlighting our progress and achievements in the school's improvement plan (SSP, AIP), especially that made in the school's teaching & learning practices, both explicit and implicit, what we hoped to see and are seeing; and what each staff member's responsibility has been in this context; and (d) reinforcing our understanding of expectations of each other as colleagues, community members and member of the profession, including recognition of the commitments and sacrifices each has made. This is both a reflection and celebration of what we've achieved and experienced in 2019.

It can even reflect your understanding of your school's progress against key elements that underpin high performing schools, (imagining where you sit on an improvement continuum):

- consistency in expectations for high level student learning
- consistency in practice across classrooms and grade levels
- cross-talk amongst teachers and school leaders about problems of teaching and learning (reciprocal responsibility)
- collaborative planning and problem solving around instructional practice
- level of agreement (and explicit statements) among individuals about norms, values, and instructional practice
- agreement about what high-level student work looks like
- processes and structures for making common problems common
- collective ownership (responsibility & accountability) of student learning

In this time of tension and tumult, which will vary in intensity across our schools, it's about taking the opportunity to model and influence the quality of human interaction that upholds the values of your school. This can be special; it can be an event; you can lift the tone and focus on so much that's good; and it can be uplifting for you and your staff.



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*** NOTE: Monday, Thursday & Friday are my APF working days. If you need assistance on Tuesday and Wednesday, text Julie or Mark directly please.**



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Join the APF

www.apf.net.au

Forms can be
completed on line.



join

The Silent Tragedy Affecting Today's Children, (and what to do about it)



Victoria Prooday, Occupational Therapist.

There is a silent tragedy developing right now, in our homes, and it concerns our most precious jewels - *our children*. Through my work with hundreds of children and families as an occupational therapist, I have witnessed this tragedy unfolding right in front of my eyes. *Our children are in a devastating emotional state!* Talk to teachers and professionals who have been working in the field for the last 15 years. You will hear concerns similar to mine. Moreover, in the past 15 years, researchers have been releasing alarming statistics on a sharp and steady increase in kids' mental illness, which is now reaching epidemic proportions. (APF Note: the statistics cited in the links below are from the US, however this is a world wide phenomenon).

- [1 in 5 children has mental health problems](#)
- [43% increase in ADHD](#)
- [37% increase in teen depression](#)
- [100% increase in suicide rate in kids 10-14 years old](#)

No, "increased diagnostics alone" is not the answer!

No, "they all are just born like this" is not the answer!

No, "it is all the school system's fault" is not the answer!

Yes, as painful as it can be to admit, in many cases, **WE** parents are the answer to many of our kids' struggles!

It is scientifically proven that the brain has the capacity to rewire itself through the environment. Unfortunately, with the environment and parenting styles that we are providing to our children, we are rewiring their brains in a wrong direction and contributing to their challenges in everyday life.

Yes, there are and always have been children who are born with disabilities and despite their parents' best efforts to provide them with a well-balanced environment and parenting, their children continue to struggle. These are NOT the children I am talking about here. I am talking about many others whose challenges are greatly shaped by the environmental factors that parents, with their greatest intentions, provide to their children. As I have seen in my practice, the moment parents change their perspective on parenting, these children change.

What is wrong?

Today's children are being deprived of the fundamentals of a healthy childhood, such as:

- Emotionally available parents
- Clearly defined limits and guidance
- Responsibilities
- Balanced nutrition and adequate sleep
- Movement and outdoors
- Creative play, social interaction, opportunities for unstructured times and boredom

Instead, children are being served with:

- Digitally distracted parents
- Indulgent parents who let kids "Rule the world"
- Sense of entitlement rather than responsibility
- Inadequate sleep and unbalanced nutrition
- Sedentary indoor lifestyle
- Endless stimulation, technological babysitters, instant gratification, and absence of dull moments



Could anyone imagine that it is possible to raise a healthy generation in such an unhealthy environment? Of course not! There are no shortcuts to parenting, and we can't trick human nature. As we see, the outcomes are devastating. Our children pay for the loss of well-balanced childhood with their emotional well-being.

How to fix it?



Victoria Prooday

Victoria is a registered Occupational Therapist, Psychotherapist, founder and clinical director of a multidisciplinary clinic for children and parents. Victoria is an internationally-known educator, motivational speaker and a popular blogger on modern-day parenting and high-tech lifestyles impact on a child's nervous system. Victoria's blog has been visited by over 20 million people in the last two years. Her articles have been translated to over 30 languages. Victoria believes that the first step towards helping children begins from parents' education. Victoria empowers parents with practical tools proven to facilitate positive changes in children and their families.

[Website](#)

If we want our children to grow into happy and healthy individuals, we have to wake up and go back to the basics. It is still possible! I know this because hundreds of my clients see positive changes in their kids' emotional state within weeks (and in some cases, even days) of implementing these recommendations: Set limits and remember that you are your child's PARENT, not a friend.

Offer kids well-balanced lifestyle filled with what kids NEED, not just what they WANT. Don't be afraid to say "No!" to your kids if what they want is not what they need.

- Provide nutritious food and limits snacks.
- Spend one hour a day in green space: biking, hiking, fishing, watching birds/ insects
- Have a daily technology-free family dinner.
- Play one board game a day. ([List of family games](#))
- Involve your child in one chore a day (folding laundry, tidying up toys, hanging clothes, unpacking groceries, setting the table etc)
- Implement consistent sleep routine to ensure that your child gets lots of sleep in a technology-free bedroom

Teach responsibility and independence. Don't over-protect them from small failures. It trains them the skills needed to overcome greater life's challenges.

- Don't pack your child's backpack,
- don't carry her backpack,
- don't bring to school his forgotten lunch box/agenda,
- and don't peel a banana for a 5-year-old child. Teach them the skills rather than do it for them.

Teach delayed gratification and provide opportunities for "boredom" as boredom is the time when creativity awakens:

- Don't feel responsible for being your child's entertainment crew.
- Do not use technology as a cure for boredom.
- Avoid using technology during meals, in cars, restaurants, malls. Use these moments as opportunities to train their brains to function under "boredom"
- Help them create a "boredom first aid kit" with activity ideas for "I am bored" times.

Be emotionally available to connect with kids and teach them self-regulation and social skills:

- Turn off your phones until kids are in bed to avoid digital distraction.
- Become your child's emotional coach. Teach them to recognize and deal with frustration and anger.
- Teach greeting, turn taking, sharing, empathy, table manners, conversation skills,
- Connect emotionally - Smile, hug, kiss, tickle, read, dance, jump, or crawl with your child.

We must make changes in our kids' lives before this entire generation of children will be medicated! It is not too late yet, but soon it will be... -Victoria Prooday



Support for members

We are here to support and offer advice to all members at any time.

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Mark Arkinstall
APF Industrial Officer

"In any collaboration there are times for open discussion of ideas and times when someone, regardless of whether he or she is a leader, needs to cut through the confusion and clearly articulate the path forward,"

"Cracking the Code of Sustained Collaboration: Six Tools for Training People to Work Together Better" by Francesca Gino in *Harvard Business Review*, November-December 2019

Quote
from Hippocampus,
an email publication of
Principal's Digest

Report on the Annual APF PD Day- 24th October 2019, Julie Podbury



Our event was opened by a remarkable guest speaker, **Stephanie Woollard OAM**, On a trip to Nepal, a 22 year-old Stephanie stumbled across 7 disabled women living in a tin shed and heard their stories of suffering and stigma. Her visionary leadership led her to start an organisation called *Seven Women*, which has now educated, **trained and employed over 5000 disabled and marginalised women in Nepal through education, skills training and employment pathways.**

Our next presenters were **Sharon Barry** the Director, Inclusive Education at the DET and **Todd Macbeth**, currently the Director of the Inclusive Education Professional Practice Branch. Todd and Sharon provided a fact filled and interesting presentation, demonstrating the scale of the challenge and the strategic response. eg: In 2018 of the 618,846 students in Victorian government schools, those identified through the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data identified 19% or 118,066 students required support to engage effectively in their education. 4% of students are funded under PSD, with 11% of these students in specialist schools, and 89% in mainstream schools.

Next was **Frank Handy**, Chair of the Independent Office. His engaging presentation ended up being a model lesson, which clearly demonstrated the message he was so eloquently presenting. If you have not heard Frank speak, you need to do so as an important part of your own professional learning.



After morning tea we had **Neil Cunningham**, Principal, Kilberry Valley PS presented on how he manages a very high number of PSD in his mainstream school. **Brent Hayward**, Principal Practice Leader for restraint and seclusion in DET presented information on his role and how this supports schools.

Session 4 was a presentation from **John Mooney** on his work at Emerson School, where he is principal and **Gail Preston**, former principal of Eastern Ranges School for Autism, who now operates as a specialist consultant at **ThinkOrganiseDo**.

Geoffrey Robertson would have been proud of how **John Handley MC**, managed the panel in the next session. We welcomed contributions from **John Mooney, Neil Cunningham, Frank Handy** as well as **Georgina Lyell (DET, NDIS), Helen Quiney (DET H&WB)** and **Murray Geddes, (SERV Lookout Centre)** who provided excellent responses to some targeted questions.

Federal APF President, **Peter Beckingham**, then conducted a brief AGM.

Feedback about the day was very positive, especially in respect to the topic, the speakers, the venue and the catering. The personal feedback that I was provided made it clear that people did learn on the day and went away with information and hopefully skills they might be able to use in schools.

We were very grateful to **Sharon Barry**, for her involvement in the organisation of the day and for the involvement of all presenters from DET, the Independent Office, and schools for their contributions. Thank you also to John Mooney and Neil Cunningham for their involvement in organising this event.

A special mention to **TheirCare** for underwriting some of the costs, and for footing the bill for the drinks session at the end. That session did not go as planned, because I had anticipated people could talk to Michael and Steve Baldock, about **TheirCare** over drinks, but Riversdale had other ideas in what for them was a last minute change to arrangements. This was my error.

Thank you as well to **Gail Preston** for stepping in at the last minute to fill a gap crated by an absence.



**Role of the APF:
Industrial Relations 101**

At the **APF** consistent with industrial relations '101' we are concerned with matters such as your salaries, classification, entitlements, protections, contracts of employment and amongst other matters, the manner in which you are assessed and the consequences thereof.

Further, your access to industrial and/or legal advice, advocacy and support in relation to matters of discipline, conflict resolution, conflict of interest, complaints and/ or performance.

**Role of the APF:
Industrial Relations 102**

Industrial matters arising from the management and implementation of one's professional role. Specifically as a function of the Principal Class Employee interpreting and performing their accountabilities and obligations as defined by their contract of employment; the operation of industrial agreements, Ministerial Orders and the changing compliance environment determined by legislation, regulations and policy.

The industrial organisation for the Principal Class

101 Things you need to know about being a principal, Mark McKelson



Blog 15—Week 9

I thought it was about time I published the findings of my research “hypothesis” that week nine is officially the shittiest week of the term. Sometimes it’s week eight and sometimes it’s week ten, but week nine rarely lets us down. You might not see it coming but something is really going to get on your nerves this week. It might be a phone call from a parent, a teacher does something that makes your jaw drop or another complaint to the Minister. More often than not you are going to deal with something from left field. So harness your inner Baden Powell and ‘Be Prepared’.

It’s not uncommon for those high needs staff and parents to be extra demanding during this time. Not that I’m one to avoid difficult conversations, but pushing some of these back until the new year might not be a bad thing. The break will give everyone perspective and you can come back to the table with some fresh ideas. As much as you might want to have ‘your say’ if it can wait till the new year you might thank yourself later.



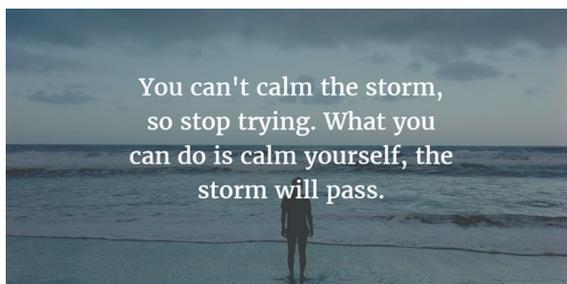
Even the most positive of teachers can have a downturn during report writing. They are nervous about how the parents are going to react. Our expectation is for the teachers to call home when students don’t move during the semester. I can see the anxiety in their faces before they make the phone calls. We all know the value of being on the front foot, we just need to remember they are worried and we need to support them.



Teachers want to know what class they are teaching next year, who’s in their team, who the team leader is, where their room is and their timetable. As positive as most teachers are it wears them all down. I remember a SIT meeting a while back and it was like everyone had woken up on the wrong side of the bed. I said to them it’s week nine and it’s going to be OK. It didn’t work, I think they were angrier at me for not taking them seriously. I did laugh to myself the next week when the mood was significantly lighter.

My advice is to make a note of this in your diary and make sure you bring extra positive energy during these weeks. In every school right now, there are unhappy parents, grumpy teachers and tired kids. Your job is to keep the energy level up and power through. It’s easy to get bogged down in the admin at this time, but a walk around the corridor to lift the energy will do you and your staff the world of good.

It’s all going to be OK. You will get your PDP comments in, the AIP is almost done, the reports are finalised, recruitment is done and the end of year checklist is almost complete. You probably won’t have time to re-write your graduation speech, but last years will do just fine. Just remember once week nine is done, it’s statistically proven that things are going to get a lot better.



APF Member, Mark McKelson, has been a member of the principal class at a number of schools across Victoria. He is currently based at Camberwell South PS. He is writing these “blogs” based on his experiences, in support of new or acting principal members of the APF, and has endless topics that he will write about which will appear in future issues of the Vic Branch, APF Newsletter.

ACEL National Fellowship

Julie Podbury was awarded an ACEL National Fellowship as an esteemed member who has made an outstanding educational leadership contribution to ACEL, and whose work has influenced educational practice at a national and international level.



Julie with ACEL National President Stephen Gniel



Julie with APF member Helene Hiotis