

Australian Principals Federation

President's Message—Julie Podbury



Last APF newsletter for 2019

I trust you can see some light at the end of the tunnel in this the second last week of the school year.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results have generated a lot of media in the past week after the release of the 2018 result on December 3rd. I have problems with the concept of PISA as a reliable tool for comparison of education systems across so many countries. It is not a fair indicator because the cultures in comparison are so vastly different, particularly in Asian schools. You are comparing apples with oranges! There are however, some interesting comparisons in the Australian data between the states, gender differences, the sectors and those where English is not the main language spoken at home. The full results are worth downloading and reading at acer.org, where the PISA publications and data can be found.

The results show China in the lead on reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy. Australia's mean performance in Reading and Mathematic literacy has not worsened from 2015 sitting us slightly above the OECD average. Australia's mean performance in Scientific literacy has worsened 7points. China's lead in this programme has as much to do with the Chinese culture as it has to do with the political agenda of the nation.

Malcolm Gladwell's book *Outliers* is an excellent primer on amongst other matters, the cultural differences between Asian education, particularly in mathematics, and other nations. Mark McKelton has an interesting take on this which is presented on the last 2 pages of this newsletter.

I made a comment in the media about seeing order and engagement in the schools I visit, which did not resonate with the 70th ranking for student behaviour. Think for a moment about the typical 15 year old Australian student (14,273 Government, Catholic or Independent school students participated) yanked out of their routine to undertake a random test that has no bearing on their outcomes. I sense they would not be happy. I also imagine when they were then asked a question about student behaviour, their response could reasonably tinged with rancour. This attitude is a uniquely Australian one and would be unlikely to be found in many other countries; it is a cultural difference, that would impact on these findings.

I do see order and engagement in our schools however, this does not mean there is no student misbehaviour. There is most certainly misbehaviour, but it is well managed as it can be with the resources available by teachers and principals. I received a fairly unpleasant email from a person claiming to be a teacher in NSW because the quote was also used in the Sydney Morning Herald. He claimed that as a VIP I would never see the real picture in schools as such visits are orchestrated. As you all know my visits are private and no-one is out to impress me, so I see the real operation of a school.



One can only feel sorry for such an angry person, who claimed that principals and education officials emasculate teachers, and results would never improve until this is fixed.

When describing this exchange with a group of principals I talked about my belief that it is the role of the principal to empower people. This comment resulted in an email from an assistant principal

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 McKelton**, delivers another insightful Blog 15 on the challenges of **Week 9**.

(continued on P2)

attending this event that is worth sharing (with his agreement). It is food for thought for us all, at this time of the year in particular.

I just wanted to thank you for a brief but important comment you made. "Good Principals empower people. They don't emasculate."

The comment has stayed with me since, and although it seems a basic and something I have long been aware of. It was important to hear it again.

I am fortunate to be working with a principal who trusts and empowers. That has generally been my experience and what I strive to do myself. Having also experienced the other side of the coin I am so aware of the impact of any leader who doesn't do this.

I just really appreciated it being reaffirmed. Sometimes a few words of wisdom can be a well-timed anchor for people.

Do you need Professional support over the summer break?

Holiday advice from **InjuryNet** for all Principal Class using or requiring their service as part of the **Early Intervention Program**, which is part of the Principal Health & Wellbeing Project.

Counsellors are on deck right through the summer break, except for the public holidays.

If you need to talk to someone, please ring them on **1300 090 924**

A message to members from our Executive Officer, Gemma Naylor



I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for welcoming me to the APF over this last year. I greatly appreciate the experiences I have had working with the Council and Executive members and more closely with Julie, Mark, John and Ian in our Vic Branch, as well as Bevan, Peter and Kate from the WA branch. I look forward to continuing our work to support and act exclusively to represent the interest of the principal class. Wishing all our members a safe and happy festive season and hope you all find some rest over the break.

A message to members from Industrial Officer, Mark Arkinstall

Merry Xmas

It's been another huge year for our members! The work you do is amazing and our state and communities are all hugely better off for your efforts. Thank you!

We've literally worked with hundreds of principals and assistant principals this year. As a group, you are incredibly admirable and have so much to be proud of. Despite the challenges that come with the job, I still believe being a school leader is the most wonderful work we could choose to do. The positive growth in our students, their smiles when they see you and the knowledge that you've made a difference in their lives are what keeps most of us going. Sometimes the challenges and pressures are relentless,



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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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www.apf.net.au

Forms can be completed on line.



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but the work you do is unbelievably important and we recognise it and thank you for it. It's also the sort of job that you have to have actually done to fully appreciate. Others may think they understand your role, but if they haven't actually done it themselves they really don't get it. This is one of the reasons why the support principals and assistant principals give each other is so crucial to the wellbeing of the principal class generally. We hope we make a contribution in that space too. Julie, John and I all had significant experience and success as principals and we're only a phone call away if you need us.

The challenge now is to take some time to genuinely recharge the batteries and do those things you really enjoy but never seem to find time for. Put your own needs and the needs of the people you love first for a change. Stay away from school, stop checking emails and make the most of the holiday break. Have a wonderful Christmas and a proper break. You deserve it!



Message to members from Julie Podbury, and the APF Council

The message from Mark Arkinstall, encapsulates the most important of all messages we have for you.

We see how hard you work. We know that you put your school before your family and yourself all too often. We know in spite of all the pitfalls in your role, you love your job and it brings joy to you to see your students thrive, or even just "get it" and engage. We know how hard you work to support your teachers and support staff and give them the best circumstances for their jobs that you can manage. We congratulate you for your incredible efforts and perseverance, often in the face of incredible challenges.

Mark, John Handley and I are at the chalkface in our roles and we help and support our members through all manner of challenges and adversity. We get the most humbling feedback from members who say that the only people who truly support and understand them are those at the APF. Mark's success supporting members matters at the MPB is now somewhat legendary, and he does great work at the Conciliation Commission as well in WorkCover matters. Beyond that he is the most amazing person to be supporting you because he is wise, patient and endlessly kind in the service he provides. While John makes a great contribution in the newsletter and keeps us all reflecting on our work, he also chalks up many K's in travelling to provide outstanding support to members directly. While there are many big issues, we look after remuneration issues, including negotiating Executive Principal Contracts. We also assist with more technical matters of school operation and staffing so that we prevent matters from emerging as an issue. Sometimes we just offer an ear for members who need to off-load or vent. It's all part of the service.

Next year, outstanding principals who are recently retired APF members will join Ian Sloane as part of the broader support team at the APF, significantly boosting our capacity to service your needs.



A special thank you to Gemma, who has been an absolute star in managing the engine room of the APF. She is a joy to work with.

Please have a good break...that means stop and let school matters rest for as long as you can, so you can tackle it all refreshed and renewed in 2020.

Cheers to you all. Julie and the APF Council members



Support for members

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

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Ring us direct



Mark Arkinstall
APF Industrial Officer

REPORTING HONESTLY

These days, kids — and parents — who need a reality check are less likely to get it. If we want our kids to prepare our kids for the real world, teachers should be able to give them a figurative boot up the bum. If more teachers told it like it was we'd have a few less self-entitled brats who think the world owes them a living. And a few less deluded parents.

Edited from Cheryl Critchley, Australian journalist From Hippocampus

Index for 2019 Newsletter articles of note.
In 2019 we produced 25 newsletters, 139 –163



TOPICS A-Z

Details

Author

Issue

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.

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



Blog 16—The Pizza Results

It's a bit like getting a knock on the door and the home delivered Pizza arrives, but the problem is you didn't order it. Then the kids start complaining that you didn't order a Hawaiian and a BBQ chicken. As a passionate educator, I've probably paid too much attention to the commentary on the Pizza results in the past week.

Just to be clear, this is how crap we are:

Pisa Results	2013 Australian Ranking	2018 Australian Ranking
Reading Literacy	4th	16th
Mathematical Literacy	11th	29th
Scientific Literacy	8th (2016)	15th
Student Behaviour	New category	70th

Funnily enough at the same time we have avoided economic recession, unemployment has remained low and GDP per capita has more than doubled. So maybe the VCE and VCAL aren't too far off the mark. And those improved retention rates have helped a little too.

If we want high Pizza results, we can't be ordering a Pizza with the lot. Year 6 teachers have to assess Critical and Creative thinking, Intercultural Capability, Personal and Social Capability and Ethical Capability. I'm not an expert in the Shanghai curriculum but I bet my bottom dollar their teachers aren't assessing these areas. If you are ordering a pizza with Pepperoni and Cheese you it's a lot easier to cook it correctly.



We ranked 70th out of 77 countries for behaviour. If you want high Pizza results you can't have the inclusive system our system now demands. In addition to making an assessment task and rubric for intercultural capability we have to complete ILP's for learning difficulties, the child living with Autism, the Koori Child and safety plans for the anaphylactic child and the anxious child. It sounds so simple to just say teach Maths and English. How about we get some acknowledgement for the complex profession this has become.

Minister Merlino has called for a "National Maths Curriculum overall". If we are lucky we might end up with Rudd's Australian Curriculum again. The problem in Victoria with the Australian Curriculum was the VCAA couldn't let go of VELS and ensured the curriculum grew again. Now we have the Victorian Curriculum with its cross curricula priorities. The minister can call for an overall but the problem is each time that happens, we just keep adding toppings to the pizza.

Federal Education Minister Dan Tehan added his thoughts "We have to get back to putting literacy and numeracy at the base of everything that we do," With the utmost respect minister, I think you need to come and visit our schools and see what we are doing. He also added "And we have got to make sure that when it comes to our education system, we allow our teachers to teach." I'd really like to understand more about what he means here; we are only doing what

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blackboard and partly like it's 1999.

There is another point of view here. Maybe we are doing an outstanding job maintaining the levels we are. The population has increased dramatically, the technology revolution has changed learning forever, teachers are trained differently, children are more inquisitive and have a thirst for information. They consume information faster than we can give it to them. The brain is changing and we need to change with it.

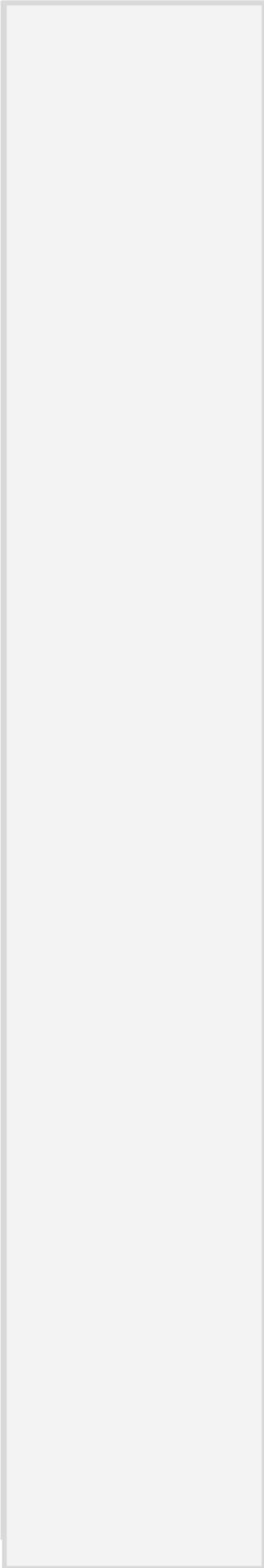


From my point of view we desperately need new measures that define or work. We aren't going to move away from our inclusive system. At our Term 4 Principal Forum, Deputy Secretary David Howes challenged us to develop tools that can measure resilience and personal and social learning capacity. It was great to hear a senior DET official acknowledge the other great work happening in our schools. Until we get such data nationwide we are going to be continually bashed around the head with NAPLAN and Pizza results.



The process for cooking the pizza has changed. We can have a pizza with pepperoni and cheese and get amazing results. But our system is way more complex than that. We are cooking delicious stone baked pizzas with onions, garlic, mushrooms, basil, oregano, capsicum, kale and Vegan parmesan.

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. From time to time Mark will write opinion pieces for all members. The opinions expressed are his own and do not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the APF.



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