Australian Principals Federation

President's Message—Julie Podbury



Many Issues to Discuss!

It's been an interesting week or two. The news Monday, about a significant investment in school's facilities is a great boost to morale, when disengagement and disenfranchisement are markedly increased throughout the Principal Class.

The Minister announced a \$515 million 'maintenance blitz' for schools. (https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/massive-maintenance-blitz-to-upgrade-every-state-school/)

The funding is over five years, with an extra \$97 million in 2019 school year and an extra \$236 million in 2020. Following the 'blitz', there is \$72m extra in the 2021 school year and then an extra \$43m ongoing.

Mark, John and I spend a great deal of time discussing our individual cases and sharing the concerns that are emerging. Workload is without doubt the biggest factor for both SEILs and Principal Class. You can only endure a demanding workload for so long before there is a proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back. Sometimes that can be a threatening email from a DET bureaucrat, simply doing their job, but the language is harsh and it tips you over; sometimes it is the constant demand to comply and submit documents when you have a monumental internal matter you are dealing with, which MUST come first. Additionally, of late, there has been a significant number of people really struggling to handle severe behaviour of students and disengaged or uncooperative parents.

Then this: One member wrote to me, "Things have gone to a new level for me this past week. I've been desperately trying to reduce my workload and protect my own mental health by delegating a little bit more than what I usually would and now I find that some incredibly competent and usually resilient middle leaders are breaking down in my office and off on stress leave.

For those who are mathematically inclined, here's the equation:

Principal health and wellbeing = delegating to Assistant Principals and Middle Leaders = AP's and ML's mental health and wellbeing suffering from a greater workload = break downs and days off = **students disadvantaged with teachers and key people missing/no improvement in outcomes**

So the workload reverts back to the stressed and exhausted principal, causing more stress and exhaustion"

There have been many more individual and collective matters, however, you get the point. I read an outstanding Thesis this week, from one of our members, describing the disempowerment and disengagement caused by the approach taken by DET in implementing the new initiatives. She will be making her key points available to members In future issues for comment. Being a learning organisation: We can all learn from this work.

Mark Arkinstall share his views on Sustainable Principalship on P2.

victorian institute of teaching

VIT Consultation

On Monday 2nd September I attended a consultation meeting with the VIT, which is currently undertaking substantial work to develop a new teacher registration system. In this work they intend to transform and improve the way this organisation interacts with it's constituents and stakeholders. The AEU was not represented at this meeting.

Interesting statistics presented include 132,926 teachers on the register, of which 30% are not teaching. 41% are in DET schools, 13% in Independent schools and 15% in Catholic schools. The other 30% includes CRTs. Demographically, 20% 50-59 age group with 16% over 60.

A refreshing meeting in many ways, as there was an admission from the VIT that they needed to improve their game. There are three areas of communication needed in my view:

- 1. The website is hard to navigate and can improve;
- 2. Communicate to constituents in a variety of ways to ensure communication is reaching people;
- 3. Improve response times, which may be by removing the bottleneck of renewals and enrolments happening in the same time period. Registering pre-service teachers may assist this.



In this issue:

Member workload and stressors continues to dominate discussions on P1.

APF involvement in VIT consultation about the re development of the Registration System is on P1

A reminder about <u>VIT</u>
Registration P2

Updates re NAPLAN on P2

Mark Arkinstall has a deep dive into

Sustainable

Principalship,

commencing on P2

Information about a special offer to all members and their school communities from Superloop is on P7.

Annual PD Day information on Inclusive Education is on P6.

Register via links.

Only 40 places remain.

Mark McKelson returns with blog no. 10—Day 3 rule on P7.

The performance of the VIT does impact on schools and school leaders, so there needs to be a way to ensure that the VIT is not an impediment to the employment of staff in schools, either graduates, qualified teachers from OS or interstate, while doing their important work.

Annually there are over 103,000 interactions with the VIT by members contacting the VIT. It is hoped that the planned improvements will significantly reduce that number.

Changes to Teacher Registration

VIT annual registration is due now. Remind your staff, and remember your own. Changes to the on-line process, to accommodate the changes required under the ETRA 2006, recently enforced, has not added much time at all to the process. I completed the process from start to payment in about 5 minutes. It may be longer for a classroom teacher.

A person with reportable offenses under the Criminal Code of the Commonwealth will be refused registration.

A teacher who is working with children outside their teaching role will be required to obtain a WWCC. If a WWCC is cancelled, their teacher registration will be cancelled by the VIT. The VIT Website has further information on this.

2019 NAPLAN updates

As you would be aware, a number of schools who undertook NAPLAN online in 2019 experienced connectivity disruptions during the writing test on the first day of the assessment period. It was agreed nationally that the Test Administration Authority in each jurisdiction could offer affected students the opportunity to retake the tests. It was also agreed that the results of these resit tests would be the results recorded and reported to parents through Individual Student Reports.

The VCAA has provided specific advice to online schools regarding resits and results reporting. If you have any queries please contact the VCAA NAPLAN Helpdesk on 1800 648 637 or email vcaa.naplan.help@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Sustainable Principalship, Mark Arkinstall, APF Industrial Officer



Leading schools is a challenging and complex task for even the most highly skilled amongst us. It is also an incredibly rewarding role and all principals and assistant principals take great pride in doing their job to the absolute best of their ability. School leaders are selfless people with the highest levels of integrity and a great sense of purpose. Most in the community recognise this and hold their school leaders in very high regard.

The APF take calls from school principals and assistant principals on a daily basis. Some want to discuss relatively minor issues or just get a second opinion before they act. Others are incredibly distressed and need a high level of support. This is not a reflection of their abilities or skills, as many are highly regarded principals with decades of experience in leading schools, it's more that the job itself is so relentlessly demanding.

In 1998 the Department conducted a major research project on teacher stress. This resulted in the introduction of a range of organisational health initiatives such as the School Climate Survey and the annual Opinion Surveys of staff, parents and students within schools. (I'll happily leave it to the reader to consider how successful this strategy was.)

In 2003 the department undertook further research into principal class health and wellbeing. As a result, in August, 2004 the department published "The Privilege and the Price, A Study Of Principal Class Workload and Its Impact on Health and Wellbeing". This was an admirable and comprehensive piece of research aimed at helping the department to better understand the organisational risk factors facing the principal class and to identify those areas that require organisational interventions to protect safety and health. Amongst other things the study found that on average, principals worked 59.6 hours per week while assistant principals on average worked 57.7 hours per week.

In 2010 Phil Riley won an inaugural Monash Researcher Accelerator award, which funded the first two years of the now annual Principal Health and Wellbeing Surveys. The survey has run nationally every year



Podium 2, Tooronga Village, 766 Toorak Road, Glen Iris, 3146. Tel: 0412 584 002

Thank you for all the new referrals.

I have been very busy enrolling new members this month thanks to our current members.



Gemma Naylor

APF Executive

Officer

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Join the APF

www.apf.net.au

Forms can be completed on line.



since 2011 in response to growing concern about principals' occupational health, safety and wellbeing. Some findings from the 2018 survey, as reported in the Full Report found at https://www.principalhealth.org/au/2018 AU Final Report.pdf include:

- Average working hours have remained stable over the 8 years of the survey. They remain too
 high for a healthy lifestyle to be maintained.
- On average, 53% of principals worked upwards of 56 hours per week during term with ~24% working upwards of 61-65 hours per week.
- During school holidays, ~40% work upwards of 25 hours per week.
- A new study by Australian researchers found mental health declined beyond 38 hours per week for women and 43.5 hours per week for men (Dinh, Strazdins & Welsh, 2017). In 2018, 99.7% of school leaders worked beyond this limit.



Prof Dr Phil Riley

 The two greatest sources of stress that have remained consistently high over the length of the survey have been Sheer Quantity of Work, and Lack of Time to Focus on Teaching and Learning.
 The upward trend in both since 2015 is very concerning.



• Principals and deputy/assistant principals experience far higher prevalence of offensive behaviour at work each year than the general population. The prevalence rate for Threats of Violence is extremely high (in 2011, 38% of participants had been threatened. This rose to 45% by 2018; close to 1 in 2 principals receiving a threat). The highest prevalence is in Government primary schools (49%).

A series of recommendations are made in the report and I strongly recommend you read them all. As a snapshot though, the following recommendations particularly resonated with me:

Governments: Stop looking for short-term quick fixes and concentrate on getting a better grip of the fundamentals (collaboration, creativity, trust-based responsibility, professionalism and equity).

Employer: Take the moral choice of reducing job demands, or increase resources to cope with increased demands. Better still, do both. This will help to increase the level of social capital in schools. Trust rather than rule educators. Leave the mechanisms for producing the best educators to the educators.

Professional Associations and Unions: Collaborate and speak with one voice.

Community: Support your local school and stop the offensive behaviour.

Individual Educators: Take responsibility for your personal work-life balance. Only you can know what is reasonable for your long-term health and wellbeing. It is therefore incumbent on all of us to find and maintain a healthy balance. This cannot be done for you from outside and is too important to be left in other's control. Ensure your passions are harmonious. This means to be in control of them. For example, love your work but do not let it dominate your life.

In July 2017, the department published its Principal Health and Wellbeing Strategy Discussion Paper. This work led to the April 2018 launch of the Principal Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018 – 2021, with a number of outstanding initiatives aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of our principals. (https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/PrincipalHWB.aspx)

The strategy stated, "Schools thrive when principals thrive. A great education starts with confident, committed and passionate leaders. The wellbeing of our school leaders is central to creating a positive school culture for teaching and learning. We are all committed to supporting our principals to be their best, so that they can bring out the best in our teachers, support staff and young people.

The Victorian Government has invested over \$50 million in the key initiatives that form part of this Strategy. It has been co-designed with the profession, for the profession. We have all worked together to create a team around the principal – central and regional employees, principals and your peak associations and unions – to develop this Strategy and its key initiatives. It represents our collective



- Be productive and results-oriented. This includes walking the talk and making sure employees have the tools to do their work well.
- Be a good communicator; listen and share information. The biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has taken place. Managers need to tune in to what their colleagues say.
- Have a clear vision/ strategy for the team.
 Ideally colleagues help develop this, and then it's revisited frequently.
- Support career development and discuss performance. People crave feedback and you owe it to them. People work to bring meaning to their lives, and meaning comes from personal growth and development.
- Have expertise to advise the team. Employees want to know that their manager has "been there, done that," but it's also important for leaders to read a lot and stay on top of recent developments in the field.
- Collaborate. This is an essential component of effective work; the absence of collaboration kills culture, productivity, and results.
- Be a strong, selfconfident decision maker.
 Indecision leads to doubt, uncertainty, lack of focus, resentment, and paralysis.

Acknowledgement: "Google Tried to Prove Managers Don't Matter. Instead, They Discovered 10 Traits of the Very Best Ones" by Scott Mautz in *Inc.*, June 9, 2019

commitment to strengthening the health and wellbeing of school principals in a systematic and sustainable way."

APF perspective:

- The Department's Principal, Health and Wellbeing Strategy is a well-thought out, admirable
 response to concerns about the health and wellbeing of school leaders that have been well known
 now for a number of years.
- Despite the positives above, the fact is that several things have not changed. School leaders are still
 working ridiculously long hours that research shows must have a negative impact on their health.
 This was identified back in the early 2000s, yet the current research by Phil Riley shows that rather
 than improve, it is getting worse.
- Our members are constantly seeking our support, many of whom feel completely overwhelmed and are struggling to continue. I know of 4 such cases in the last week alone and of many who are really struggling to function and live a normal life. Many tell us of having issues with sleep with some members barely sleeping at all. We're here to help! Call us!
- We understand that the demands vary across schools, but the common demands of the job itself
 have become so large and complex that it requires immediate attention. The strategies developed
 so far have not had a significant impact on lightening the workload on school leaders. Phil Riley
 specifically refers to this when he talks about the need to either reduce the demands of the job or
 increase the resources available to deal with them.
- Over time, it has become acceptable and normal for school leaders to work ridiculously long hours. Working while home either after hours or on weekends is a given. This must be challenged.
- While our most recent agreements have included the introduction of the Learning Specialists, there has been a decrease in Leading teachers from 9.5% of the workforce to 6.8% in 2017. I'd suggest the decrease has been significantly higher if tracked back to the early 2000s. An increased leadership profile that included further leadership support in the form of more Assistant Principals or Leading Teachers to share the load would make a huge difference. In many schools, the principal has few staff available to delegate work to, leaving them to pick up more and more of the work.
- The notion of support and what it really looks like is not as well defined as it might be. Further, it is apparent from the conversations we have with our members that the level of support enjoyed by some is incredibly high and hugely appreciated, yet this varies wildly according to the individuals involved. It's great to hear our members telling us how wonderful and supportive their SEIL or other regional staff are, yet it is also a real concern when our members believe the exact opposite is true leaving them feeling unsupported and abandoned. For those members on extended sick leave, we often ask if they've had a call from a SEIL or EAD to check up on their welfare. The response is virtually always in the negative.
- The department's Principal, Health and Wellbeing Strategy admirably states that the collective vision is to have safe, healthy and resilient school leaders leading positive school climates, supported by strong collaborative partnerships with peers, regional and central colleagues and management. In an environment of comprehensive accountability, it would be great if the effectiveness of this shared vision was objectively measured. School leaders should be given the opportunity to provide feedback similar to that which exists for school staff in the Staff Opinion survey. A survey that allowed Principal Class members to provide anonymous feedback on how they view the effectiveness of the supports provided for them at both regional and central office level would be a welcome step. This was done many years ago with the "Your Job Your Say" surveys for school leaders.
- Finally, the number of applications for advertised principal vacancies is well and truly on the
 decline. One very large school has recently advertised for a new principal on two occasions without
 the job being filled. It is our view that people are choosing not to apply for principal roles because
 of the sheer workload involved. They've seen just how demanding the job is and choose not to
 apply.

On the following we provide a call to action and a strategic approach to protect your health and wellbeing while undertaking the important work in a leadership team at a school or region.



Support for members

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

Julie - 0419 103 664

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Ring us direct



Mark Arkinstall

APF Industrial Officer

GOOGLE'S TRAITS OF THE BEST MANAGERS

- Be a good coach. Care about your employees, invest time and energy in helping them get better, and be a facilitator, not a fixer.
- Empower teams and don't micromanage. Research shows that employees perform better, have higher job satisfaction, and are less likely to leave when managers lead with a light touch.
- •Create an inclusive team environment, showing concern for people's success and well-being. Esprit de corps and interdependence boost performance and individuals' sense of fulfillment. (See next page)

What can we do right now?

Spend less time at work! We know that working such long hours is damaging to your health and leaving it to the department to cut back your hours simply isn't realistic. Delegate where possible, say no occasionally, shut the door to get some uninterrupted time, outsource jobs where possible, etc. I know one principal who rarely opens emails before 11.00 in the morning. This allows him a solid block of work without the constant distraction of new emails coming in and helps cut back on his time at work.

Don't be alone. For industrial needs join the APF, for professional needs join the VPA or VASSP. While our respective roles vary, we are all here to support our members. If you need us or even just want to talk to people who understand, pick up the phone and call. Membership also gives us strength in numbers when raising issues and negotiating on your behalf.

Do use the initiatives the department is offering to support you. We know from experience that the Principal Health and Wellbeing Strategy initiatives are excellent and worth exploring. https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/PrincipalHWB.aspx

Make the time to have a regular catch up with other principals and school leaders to informally debrief, let off steam, share ideas and expertise and generally support each other. I was lucky enough to have a wonderful group of colleagues who all became great mates. The support we received from a regular coffee catch up with people who do the job and understand the challenges was wonderful and we were all better principals for it. (We still catch up to this day.)

Take charge of your own destiny as much as possible. Give yourself permission to get away from school at a reasonable time without feeling guilty. Enjoy your weekends without attention to work and genuinely recharge the batteries when you get a chance. Holidays are great, treat yourself to one. Many people will be aware of Stephen Covey's Sharpening the Saw story. Sharpening the Saw basically means preserving and enhancing the greatest asset you have – You. Put yourself and your family first and take action to give yourself a break.

Take regular breaks during the day. Make sure you're catching up with staff in the staffroom at recess for a cuppa and make the time to eat your lunch with others. As well as being a great break for you, it also helps build relationships in an authentic way. Taking this time out of a hectic day is vitally important.

Use the term breaks as a chance to rest, relax and recharge. Stay away from school and school work.

Try not to take work home, leave work for work and home for living. We're all in the habit of constantly checking emails but it's rare that something is so important that it couldn't have waited until the next working day. Do you really need to be contactable 24/7? Don't allow to emails become part of your home routine and never check emails before going to bed. Do not check emails at all on a weekend. Whatever is there can wait until Monday.

Use some of that Long Service Leave to have a well-deserved break and treat yourself and those you care about to something special. Take that trip you've always wanted to go on.



Maintain a healthy lifestyle and get plenty of sleep.

Spend time with family and friends and take the time to enjoy your hobbies and passions in life. You deserve a bit of pampering, be kind to yourself and the people who love and care about you.

Begin making changes today!



"Studies from the past several decades consistently show that students in most classrooms rarely have the opportunity to participate in an open, extended, and intellectually rigorous exchange of ideas, during which they get to formulate and defend their own opinions, and consider alternative propositions offered by their peers... Such a classroom culture hardly prepares students to become active participants in today's information-rich, globalised, and rapidly-changing society, in which multiple, competing, and, often, false claims to knowledge abound."

"Teaching Students How to Think and Argue Together" by Alina Reznitskaya and Ian Wilkinson in Voices in Education, Harvard Education Publishing, May 7, 2019

from Hippocampus,
an email publication of



https:// apf.net.au/apf -agm-2019/



Reminding you about the annual PD which is designed to address the most pressing of all issues facing our members. APF members and DET experts are working together to make this a valuable day from which you will take away valuable knowledge and skills. Places are limited. Book now to ensure your place.

Inclusive Education is Complex

Pathways to Success

APF Annual PD & AGM

8.30 to 8.55 Registration & Coffee

9.00 Welcome: Julie Podbury, Victorian Branch President

9.05 Opening Address: Stephanie Woollard, OAM, Seven Women and Hands on Development: Education of Women & Girls with disabilities in Nepal and study tours for students to Nepal to broaden perspectives through hands on experience. (30mins)

9.40 Session 1. Policy Framework Snapshot & Navigating Pathways; Sharon Barry, Todd McBeth. (Data Capture, Knowledge building, Problem Solving) (50 minutes)

10.30 Session 2. Working with Parents & Advocates; Best Practice; Frank Handy, Chair, Independent Office (50 minutes)

11.20 Morning Tea (15 mins)

11.45 Session 3. Case Studies; Neil Cunningham, Brent Heywood (PINs, Staff Wellbeing, Restraint & Seclusion, Facilities, Legal matters, BCBA's) (45 mins)

12.30 Lunch (30 mins)

1.00pm Session 4. Opportunities; John Mooney, Todd McBeth (Sharing Session. Training of staff, Scholarships, Specialist Schools supporting mainstream schools, Case Studies)(45 mins)

1.45pm Session 5. Panel: John Mooney, Emerson School, Murray Geddes, Lookout Centre, Neil Cunningham, Kilberry Valley PS, Georgina Lyell (DET NDIS), Helen Quiney DET Safety, Todd McBeth, DET Inclusion (each panel member has 5 minutes to talk about their area of expertise relating to their portfolio (30mins).

Panel members are invited to respond to three set questions (15-20 mins) then we open for Q&A (20-25mins) (Total 70 Mins)

- 2.55pm AGM (15 mins) Peter Beckingham, Federal APF President
- 3.15pm. Close, Thank you, Sponsors and Door Prizes
- **3.30pm** End

APF Councillors note: A brief State Council meeting will be held at 3.40pm



Thursday 24th October, 2019

9.00am-3.30pm Riversdale Golf Club 200 Huntingdale Road Mt Waverley, 3149

Members \$65
Non-members \$85
See Map

Parking information: Enter at front gate and park in designated spots. For overflow parking follow the road past the back of the clubhouse.

Note: If travelling by Train, Jordanville Station (Glen Waverley line) is a 9 minute walk to the front door of the club. (36 mins from Flinders Street)

Contact

Gemma for information

0412 584 002

EMAIL:

gnaylor@apf.net.au

This is the link to registration and payment on our website.

https://apf.net.au/apf-agm-2019/



Abstract

Of all the matters our members deal with, the issues around inclusive education and severe behaviour disorder generates the most stress and pressure. Inclusive education is very complex and vet some of our members have faced the most incredible challenges and found a way forward in the best interest of both the school and the child. The aim of this day is to discover how to find the way forward in this space and share best practice.

40 places
Remaining

Don't miss out!



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



No 10— 3 Day rule

I almost did again last week. I half read an email, got a head full of steam and stormed up to the teacher's classroom. I've been telling myself for years now 'sleep on it'. Luckily this time, I had some common sense and thought I really needed to use my '3 Day' rule at this very moment. And even more fortunately, when I got back to my desk and re-read the email, the teacher had done precisely what I had asked of her in the first place.

Incidents happen that make our blood boil sometimes and how we handle them defines our reputation as a leader. I can think of many times as a young leader where I would go and speak to the culprit straight away. The problem being, I hadn't calmed myself down, thought through the conversation and prepared for multiple responses. I was reactionary, because I'd get into a bit of a panic that I wouldn't be able to handle the stress of waiting a few days for the difficult conversation. So, over time, I've learnt to give myself a few days to ready myself for the follow up. Don't get me wrong there are times that require you to act quickly, but more often than not a couple of sleeps will certainly help you out.

Day 1.

You hear about an incident, have a complaint from a parent or observe some poor teacher practice. This is the time you are at most risk of an emotional response. If you are feeling frustrated you need to sit on the emotion and let it pass. I find talking the problem through with a trusted colleague, the best way to manage this. If it's after hours, I write down my thoughts into my phone, so I can go back to them tomorrow. This certainly helps at bedtime when we often run things over and over in our head.



Day 2.

Hopefully you're feeling a little better this morning. You are aware you have one of those difficult conversations ahead, but the nights sleep has done you well. Today, you need to plan out your strategy, whether that's with a colleague, a mentor or the conduct branch there are lots of people willing to help. Plus, it's great learning for your AP to be involved with your thinking. When debriefing, think about the key issue, plus what the underlying issues are. It's often what isn't said in the heat of the moment that's causing the behaviour. Is the staff member overwhelmed, having personal life problems or having trouble with a difficult student?

Like it or not we have to support our team in all elements of life. The things I always think about are:

- How can we use this incident as a learning experience for the teacher? and
- How can you grow their capacity to support themselves in the future?

This is different to how can I support you in the future? Beware of this trap as they will think you are going to always rescue them. You need to think of questions you are going to ask them, so they can reflect and move forward.

Day 3.

Time for the conversation. I often will have these conversations at the end of the day as it allows staff the time to process and go home if they need to. By giving yourself a couple of days to think about how you are going to manage the situation you should be on your game and ready for what eventuates. We can all get tricked up and sometimes stumble through these meetings, but it's always better if you have taken the time to prepare and calm your nerves.

Please, above everything else avoid 'avoidance'. If you want to establish yourself as a strong, supportive and consistent leader you must have these conversations in your school. The staff need to see that you will follow up unprofessional behaviour and have those difficult conversations. You may not see it at the time but word will get out that you mean business and you handle yourself professionally. That is leadership!

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.



Our partner CyberHound has a new look

Our longstanding partner CyberHound, provider of education focused cybersecurity and connectivity solutions, has recently moved to better align the CyberHound brand with their parent brand Superloop. For those not familiar with Superloop, they are a leading independent provider of connectivity throughout Asia Pacific. While this change has introduced a new name and look for CyberHound, it will not change the solution they offer in anyway. In addition, it enables them to offer schools a single trusted provider for critical connectivity and security services with enhanced support and development resources. As Superloop is delivering seamless secure internet

seamless secure internet experiences to many schools throughout Australia, they want to extend this experience to your school communities for them to continue their learning journey at home with super internet. As such they are offering our APF community, and their school families, their first month FREE on any of their nbn plans!

To take advantage of this offer simply navigate to superloop.com/education and during signup select one of their nbn plans and enter the code APF-2019. They are kindly extending this offer to your broader staff and family communities so please feel free to share this information in your school communications.